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CANADA

TAKING ACTION TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST YOUNG WOMEN AND GIRLS IN CANADA

Report of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women

**Marilyn Gladu
Chair**

MARCH 2017

42nd PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

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THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

has the honour to present its

SEVENTH REPORT

Pursuant to its mandate under Standing Order 108(2), the Committee has studied violence against young women and girls in Canada and has agreed to report the following:

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TAKING ACTION TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST YOUNG WOMEN AND GIRLS IN CANADA

INTRODUCTION¹

For many young women and girls in Canada, their opportunity to participate equally in Canadian society and their right to lead successful and fulfilling lives may be disrupted by acts of gender-based violence. Acknowledging the serious impact of such violence on young women and girls, the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women (“the Committee”) agreed on 8 March 2016, to conduct a study on violence against young women and girls in Canada. The Committee adopted the following motion:

That the Committee study violence in the lives of young women and girls, with particular attention to (but not limited to):

- The nature and extent of cyberviolence against young girls and women and best practices to address and prevent it;
- The nature and extent of street harassment and disrespectful public behaviour and best practices to address and prevent it;
- Explore issues faced by young women on campus, and how to build a more consistent application of effective strategies by universities and colleges to address violence against young women on campus, including the notion of “rape culture” and definitions and perceptions of consent;
- Explore the impacts of hypersexualization of young women and girls in the traditional and social media and how to engage relevant sectors in countering such practices;
- Explore best practices for engaging men and boys to be part of the solution on these issues;
- Include in the examination of the above those groups in our society who are at particular risk, such as the LGBTQ2 [lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and 2-Spirited] community, newcomer and immigrant young women and girls;

and that the Committee report its findings to the House.²

The Committee received testimony from 93 witnesses – 18 of whom appeared as individuals, with the remainder representing 38 organizations, 2 provincial governments,

1 The evidence cited in this document is from the [House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women \[FEWO\], 1st Session, 42nd Parliament](#), unless otherwise noted.

2 FEWO, [Minutes of Proceedings](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, March 2016.

and 9 federal departments and agencies.³ The testimony was received over a total of 21 meetings held from 12 April to 7 December 2016. In addition, the Committee received written briefs from a number of organizations, many of which had appeared before the Committee, along with speaking notes and follow-up responses to questions from Committee members. Appendix A of this report includes a list of all 93 witnesses and Appendix B includes a list of all submitted briefs.

The key themes that emerged during the course of the Committee's study were:

- 1) the factors that contribute to violence against young women and girls;
- 2) three types of violence that have a significant impact on young women and girls: harassment in public spaces, sexual violence on post-secondary campuses, and cyberviolence;
- 3) young women and girls with particular vulnerabilities to violence; and
- 4) areas for action to address such violence, those being: establishing public awareness and educational efforts; engaging men and boys in addressing violence; improving the law enforcement and justice systems; increasing data collection, research and knowledge; supporting front-line services and community organizations; and collaborating with the provinces and territories.

The significance of this study was recognized by both Committee members and witnesses, as the study examined the violence that affects young women and girls in Canada, violence that can lead to both immediate and long-term physical and mental health problems, reduced economic and social prosperity, and lasting pain and suffering. The Committee acknowledges the significant contributions made by witnesses and sincerely thanks them for sharing their knowledge, insights and recommendations. In particular, the Committee would like to recognize and applaud the courage and strength of witnesses who shared their personal stories of being victimized or witnessing acts of violence.

The Committee members intend that this report will provide guidance to the federal government on measures that can be implemented in order to prevent and address violence directed against young women and girls across Canada, whether on street corners, on post-secondary campuses, or online. These acts of violence must be recognized and addressed through collaborative efforts, led by the federal government, and involving the not-for-profit sector, the private sector, the public sector, and provinces and territories. Through combined efforts, Canadian society can prevent and respond to such acts of violence.

3 The 9 federal departments and agencies were: Status of Women Canada, Statistics Canada, the Department of Justice, the Public Health Agency of Canada, Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, Public Safety Canada, Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada, and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

OVERVIEW OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN CANADA

The Committee was informed that the 1993 United Nations (UN) *Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women* defines violence against women – including young women and girls – as “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.”⁴

Witnesses told the Committee that the violence faced by young women and girls, when compared to that directed against young men and boys, differs in terms of scope, severity, prevalence and impact. Measuring violence against young women and girls in Canada is challenging as such violence is widely underreported for a number of reasons. Firstly, the law enforcement and justice systems have not earned the trust and confidence of survivors of gender-based violence because of long-standing failures and inaction in many past cases of gender-based violence. Furthermore, because of a pervasive culture of victim blaming, victims may internalize feelings of shame and self-blame and may avoid reporting for fear re-victimization. As well, in situations where girls are victims of violence, they may be too young to be capable of making a report.⁵

A. Statistical Overview

Representatives from Statistics Canada shared data on female violent victimization rates in Canada with the Committee:

- according to 2014 self-reported data, for the first time women experienced a higher violent victimization rate than men (85 incidents per 1,000 women compared with 67 incidents per 1,000 men), attributable in large part to the stability over the past decade of rates of sexual assaults, offences involving a majority of female victims, and the recent decrease in rates of other violent crimes, in which the victims are mostly men;⁶

4 General Assembly of the United Nations, [Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women](#), 85th Plenary Meeting, 20 December 1993.

5 [Evidence](#), 5 October 2016, 1610 (Jeffery Adam, Chief Superintendent and Director General, E-Crimes, Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police); [Evidence](#), 16 June 2016, 1635 (Lara Karaian, Associate Professor, Institute of Criminology and Criminal Justice, Carleton University, As an Individual); [Evidence](#), 12 April 2016, 1540 (Yvan Clermont, Director, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Statistics Canada); [Evidence](#), 21 April 2016, 1655 (Lori MacDonald, Assistant Deputy Minister, Emergency Management and Programs Branch, Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness); [Evidence](#), 24 October 2016, 1530 (Farrah Khan, Sexual Violence Support and Education Coordinator, Ryerson University, As an individual); [Evidence](#), 17 October 2016, 1540 (Anuradha Dugal, Director, Violence Prevention Programs, Canadian Women's Foundation); Coalition of Provincial and Territorial Advisory Councils on the Status of Women, “[Brief for the Standing Committee on the Status of Women study on Violence Against Young Women and Girls in Canada](#),” *Submitted Brief*, September 2016; Concertation des luttes contre l'exploitation sexuelle, “[Porn and rape culture: the new modes of communication of male domination](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 2016.

6 [Evidence](#), 12 April 2016, 1540 (Yvan Clermont).

- in 2014, there were approximately 53,000 children and youth who were victims of a violent crime;⁷
- police-reported victimization rates in 2014 of girls and female youths were over 20% higher than those of young boys and male youths;⁸
- 27% of Canadian women in 2014 stated they had been victimized as a child, and women were significantly more likely than men (44% vs 16%) to have experienced physical abuse as a child at the hands of a family member.⁹
- women comprised 70% of sexual assault victims according to self-reported 2009 data and in the majority of all police-reported incidents (94%) in 2014, the accused perpetrator was male;¹⁰
- in 2014, 80% of sexual offences against children and youth were directed at females, especially girls between 12 and 17 years of age;¹¹
- 90% of the perpetrators of sexual crimes against children and youth in 2014 were known to the victims, and most often they were an acquaintances or family members.¹²

The Committee was informed that young girls under the age of 12 years are most often victimized in the privacy of their homes by a family member because they are dependent on adults (e.g., their parents) for their daily needs. Girls between 12 and 17 years old in Canada face an increase in victimization by individuals outside the family, such as peers and dating partners, in particular because girls entering their teen years increase their activities and contacts outside the home as they broaden their independence. Finally, young women between the ages of 18 and 25 are at significant risk of violent victimization because of a number of factors that are a regular part of life for many young persons: this includes new independent living arrangements; schedules that involve being out late at night; using drugs or drinking alcohol; and exposure to new environments, such as university and college campuses.¹³

7 Ibid., 1545.

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid., 1540.

10 Samuel Perreault, "[Criminal victimization in Canada, 2014](#)," *Statistics Canada: Juristat*, 23 November 2015, p. 3; Maire Sinha, "[Measuring violence against women: Statistical trends](#)," *Statistics Canada: Juristat*, 25 February 2013.

11 [Evidence](#), 12 April 2016, 1545 (Yvan Clermont).

12 Ibid.

13 Statistics Canada, "[Self-reported victimization, 2014](#)," *The Daily*, 23 November 2015; Maire Sinha, "[Measuring violence against women: Statistical trends](#)," *Statistics Canada: Juristat*, 25 February 2013.

B. The Role of Status of Women Canada

The Committee heard from representatives of Status of Women Canada, the federal agency which promotes gender equality and the full participation of women in the economic, social and political life of the country, who spoke of the agency's commitment to end violence against women and girls. According to Status of Women Canada's *2016–17 Report on Plans and Priorities*, the agency's organizational priorities include: "preventing and addressing violence against women and girls" and "preventing and addressing violence against Indigenous women and girls."¹⁴ Some of the ongoing work of the agency in this field includes the promotion of the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women, held annually on 6 December,¹⁵ and the collaborative work on the Federal Strategy on Gender-based Violence, discussed in the next section of the report.¹⁶

The agency Status of Women Canada was created in 1976 as a response to a recommendation contained in the 1970 Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women. The agency is funded by an annual budget approved by Parliament. In November 2006, the federal government announced it would be closing 12 of the 16 regional offices. In March 2007, the then-Minister of the Status of Women announced that \$5 million would be reallocated from the agency's operating budget into the Women's Program, a program of Status of Women Canada that distributes grants to organizations.

On 28 November 2016, the then-Minister of Status of Women informed the Committee that Budget 2016 proposed a total new investment in Status of Women Canada over five years, starting in 2016–2017 of \$23.3 million.¹⁷ The Minister also indicated that the number of Status of Women Canada office locations (currently four) will be increased so that there will be a "regional presence" in 15 locations across Canada.¹⁸

14 Status of Women Canada, [2016–17 Report on Plans and Priorities](#), 2016.

15 Ibid.

16 Status of Women Canada, [About the Federal Strategy on Gender-based Violence](#).

17 [Evidence](#), 28 November 2016, 1535 (Hon. Patty Hajdu, Minister of Status of Women).

18 Ibid., 1600.

C. The Federal Strategy on Gender-based Violence

In 2008, the UN Secretary General launched the *UNiTE to End Violence against Women* campaign, which identified five goals to be achieved by all UN members by 2015, one of which was the implementation of a multi-sectoral national action plan to end violence against women.¹⁹ In 2012, UN Women launched the *COMMIT initiative* to urge governments “to take a stand by making new and concrete national commitments to end violence against women and girls.”²⁰

Several governments, such as Australia, Belgium, Finland, France, Norway and the United Kingdom, have implemented national action plans to end violence against women. In countries with a federal system of government, strategies to address violence may be federal or national in approach. National strategies include the participation of all levels of government in their planning and implementation to ensure consistency across jurisdictions and a pan-country approach. Federal strategies are led by the federal government and may involve the participation of other jurisdictions.

The 2015 ministerial mandate letter for the then-Minister of Status of Women called for the development and implementation of “a comprehensive federal gender violence strategy and action plan, aligned with existing provincial strategies.”²¹ In June 2016, an Advisory Council on the Federal Strategy Against Gender-Based Violence was created as a forum for exchanging knowledge, experience, promising practices and research on gender-based violence.²² From July 2016 to September 2016, roundtables were held across the country to discuss priorities for a federal strategy on gender-based violence.²³

Dee Dooley, Youth Programs Coordinator at YWCA Halifax, told the Committee that “I feel so hopeful that we are on the right track with the federal strategy to address gender-based violence that was launched this summer, and through this committee's study on violence in the lives of women and girls.”²⁴ Ann Decter, Director of Advocacy and Public Policy at YWCA Canada, pointed out to the Committee that the federal government was establishing a federal strategy, rather than a national action plan. She recommended seeking national standards to address violence and a collaborative process with provinces and territories.²⁵

19 United Nations Secretary General's Campaign UNiTE to End Violence against Women, [UNiTE Goals](#).

20 UN Women, [COMMIT initiative](#).

21 Prime Minister of Canada Justin Trudeau, *Minister of Status of Women Mandate Letter*, November 2015.

22 Government of Canada, “[Newly formed Advisory Council to help shape Federal Strategy against Gender-based Violence](#),” *News Release*, 27 June 2016.

23 Status of Women Canada, [About the Federal Strategy on Gender-based Violence](#).

24 [Evidence](#), 21 September 2016, 1650 (Dee Dooley, Youth Programs Coordinator, YWCA Halifax).

25 [Evidence](#), 28 September 2016, 1610 (Ann Decter, Director, Advocacy and Public Policy, YWCA Canada).

Several witnesses spoke of the recent consultations on the forthcoming Federal Strategy on Gender-based Violence, and suggested that an action plan or strategy should include:²⁶

- a consideration of the intersectional aspect of sexual violence and an acknowledgement of other forms of oppression;
- a social analysis of sexual violence and measures that address sexual assault;
- a focus on protective factors that promote resilience in youth; and
- a comprehensive, prevention-based approach.²⁷

The Committee heard from two provinces, Ontario and New Brunswick, who spoke of efforts at the provincial level to address violence against women. For example the province of Ontario's "It's Never Okay: An Action Plan to Stop Sexual Violence and Harassment", a three-year action plan launched in 2015, commits \$41 million to anti-violence efforts.²⁸ The province of New Brunswick shared "the provincial strategy on sexual assault services, which is delivered by community partners" and "provides the coordination of community-based sexual assault services, including 24-hour crisis support and training for service providers as well as other sexual violence support services."²⁹

Recommendation 1

That the Government of Canada ensure that the Federal Strategy on Gender-based Violence include violence against young women and girls in Canada and that the strategy be survivor-centric, prevention-based, trauma-informed, and tailored to the unique needs of marginalized groups.

26 [Evidence](#), 17 October 2016, 1605 (Anuradha Dugal).

27 [Evidence](#), 17 October 2016, 1630 (Gabrielle Ross-Marquette); Centre d'aide et de lutte contre les agressions à caractère sexuelle Châteauguay, "[Violence against Young Women and Girls in Canada: A Sexual Violence Perspective](#)," *Submitted Brief*, September 2016; Concertation des luttes contre l'exploitation sexuelle, "[Porn and rape culture: the new modes of communication of male domination](#)," *Submitted Brief*, 2016; [Evidence](#), 14 November 2016, 1535 (Sylvia Maracle); Quebec Council on the Status of Women, "[Violence Against Young Women and Girls](#)," *Submitted Brief*, September 2016.

28 [Evidence](#), 30 November 2016, 1620 (Maureen Adamson, Deputy Minister Responsible for Women's Issues, Ontario Women's Directorate, Government of Ontario).

29 [Evidence](#), 30 November 2016, 1630 (Jocelyne Mills, Assistant Deputy Minister, Executive Council Office, Women's Equality Branch, Government of New Brunswick).

Recommendation 2

That the Government of Canada ensure that the Federal Strategy on Gender-based Violence adopts an intersectional approach, addressing the higher rates of violence faced by some groups of women, including Indigenous women; immigrant and refugee women; visible minority women; women identifying as lesbian, bisexual and transgender; female sex workers; women living with disabilities; women with mental health issues; low-income women; women in Northern, rural and remote communities; and other marginalized sectors of the female population.

Recommendation 3

That the Government of Canada ensure that the Federal Strategy on Gender-based Violence is revised to include the results, once available, of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, and address the specific needs of Indigenous women.

Recommendation 4

That the Government of Canada request that the Minister for the Status of Women, starting at the next meeting of Canada's Federal-Provincial-Territorial Status of Women Forum, urge coordination of federal, provincial, and territorial government responses to help end violence against women and girls.

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO VIOLENCE AGAINST YOUNG WOMEN AND GIRLS

The Committee was informed that many factors contribute to violence against young women and girls and that those factors often intersect with each other.³⁰ The power dynamic and inequalities between men and women are a common denominator in most forms of violence against women.³¹ Some groups of young women and girls are particularly vulnerable to violence; the unique contributing factors for these young women and girls are examined in a further section of this rapport entitled “Young Women and Girls with Particular Vulnerabilities to Violence.”

A. Sexism, Patriarchy and Gender Stereotypes

Witnesses suggested that sexist attitudes and ideas develop at an early age.³² The Committee was also told that gender stereotypes are prominent in Canadian society and that youth are still taught traditional gender roles;³³ for example, 48% of Canadian youth believe that men should be responsible for earning income and providing for the family.³⁴ Walter Henry, Project Coordinator of the Male Ally Network at the Sexual Assault & Violence Intervention Services (SAVIS) of Halton, explained that “[b]oys are born into a toxic masculine culture that has an indoctrinating grasp and far-reaching impact” and that boys are taught “not to cry, to be tough, and not to show weakness.”³⁵ Boys learn this ideology through “music, television, social media, family members, language, and peers. This contributes to the cyber-violence, street harassment, misguided understanding of consent, and rape culture faced by women and female-identified individuals daily.”³⁶ In a written brief, the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre and Sexual Assault Services

30 [Evidence](#), 19 October 2016, 1655 (Lori Chambers, Professor, Lakehead University, As an individual).

31 Quebec Council on the Status of Women, “[Violence Against Young Women and Girls](#),” *Submitted Brief*, September 2016; Concertation des luttes contre l’exploitation sexuelle, “[Porn and rape culture: the new modes of communication of male domination](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 2016; [Evidence](#), 21 April 2016, 1715 (Lori MacDonald); [Evidence](#), 14 November 2016, 1620 (Jamie Taras, Director of Community Relations, BC Lions Football Club); [Evidence](#), 31 October 2016, 1655 (Sandrine Ricci, Researcher, Université du Québec à Montréal, Co-researcher Enquête ESSIMU, As an individual).

32 [Evidence](#), 19 October 2016, 1640 (Nicolette Little, Professor, Sheridan College, PhD Candidate, gender and media studies, York University, As an individual); [Evidence](#), 17 October 2016, 1555 (Anuradha Dugal); [Evidence](#), 16 June 2016, 1550 (Shaheen Shariff, Associate Professor, Faculty of Education and Associate Member, Law Faculty, McGill University, As an Individual); [Evidence](#), 30 November 2016, 1710 (Tessa Hill, Co-founder, We Give Consent).

33 [Evidence](#), 19 October 2016, 1640 (Nicolette Little); Coalition of Provincial and Territorial Advisory Councils on the Status of Women, “[Brief for the Standing Committee on the Status of Women study on Violence Against Young Women and Girls in Canada](#),” *Submitted Brief*, September 2016; Quebec Council on the Status of Women, “[Violence Against Young Women and Girls](#),” *Submitted Brief*, September 2016.

34 Coalition of Provincial and Territorial Advisory Councils on the Status of Women, “[Brief for the Standing Committee on the Status of Women study on Violence Against Young Women and Girls in Canada](#),” *Submitted Brief*, September 2016.

35 [Evidence](#), 23 November 2016, 1635 (Walter Henry, Project Coordinator, Male Ally Network, SAVIS of Halton).

36 *Ibid.*

stated that “female sexuality is relentlessly monitored and judged while male perpetrated misogyny and aggression are applauded or evade scrutiny altogether.”³⁷

Soraya Chemaly, Director of the Women's Media Center Speech Project, explained that when boys are taught to adopt a hyper-masculine identity and values, it can limit the empathy they feel for girls and women and that “a lot of masculinity involves shedding qualities that we think of as feminine.”³⁸ In addition, gender stereotypes, portrayed in the media for example, become normalized, which reinforces sexism and patriarchy.³⁹ Chi Nguyen, Managing Director of Parker P. Consulting at the White Ribbon Campaign, shared her son’s experience:

I have a little toddler at home, whom I hope to raise to be a strong ally and feminist. We're working to give him the tools to intervene, to name and call out acts of violence. I'm teaching him about consent, to name his body parts, and to enjoy twirling in a dress, but the barrage of toxic gendered stereotypes and the images that are already being thrown at him are stunning. He's already been told that pink is for girls, and to stop with his tears and toughen up. He turns two on Wednesday next week.⁴⁰

Witnesses told the Committee that boys need to grow up with examples of healthy masculinity and of equal respect of men and women.⁴¹ Parents and other role models, such as teachers, have an important role in ending sexism, by teaching the next generation about the value of gender equality.⁴² Harvey Bate, Co-Chair of the Board of Directors at New Leaf Program, explained that the idea that “boys will be boys” is no longer acceptable.⁴³

37 Antigonish Women's Resource Centre and Sexual Assault Services, “[Submission to House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women: Violence against Girls and Young Women](#),” *Submitted Brief*, November 2016.

38 [Evidence](#), 5 October 2016, 1650 (Soraya Chemaly, Director, Women's Media Center Speech Project, Women's Media Center).

39 [Evidence](#), 21 September 2016, 1720 (Rona Amiri, Violence Prevention Coordinator, Battered Women's Support Services); [Evidence](#), 30 November 2016, 1710 (Tessa Hill); [Evidence](#), 21 September 2016, 1555 (Valerie Steeves, Associate Professor, Department of Criminology, University of Ottawa, As an individual).

40 [Evidence](#), 23 November 2016, 1645 (Chi Nguyen, Managing Director, Parker P. Consulting, White Ribbon Campaign).

41 [Evidence](#), 26 September 2016, 1730 (Carol Todd, Mother and Advocate, Amanda Todd Legacy Society).

42 [Evidence](#), 28 September 2016, 1605 (Raine Liliefeldt, Director of Member Services and Development, YWCA Canada); [Evidence](#), 5 October 2016, 1655 (Soraya Chemaly); [Evidence](#), 24 October 2016, 1655 (Reena Tandon, Board Chair, South Asian Women's Centre); [Evidence](#), 23 November 2016, 1700 (Walter Henry).

43 [Evidence](#), 31 October 2016, 1610 (Harvey Bate, Co-Chair of the Board of Directors, New Leaf Program).

B. Rape Culture and Victim Blaming

A number of witnesses stated that a “rape culture” exists,⁴⁴ which can be described as a “culture in which sexual assault and other forms of sexual violence are common and in which prevalent attitudes, norms, practices, and media condone, normalize, excuse, or tolerate sexual violence.”⁴⁵ Rape culture can be perpetuated by the language we use to describe cases of sexual violence⁴⁶ and the culture of silence that surrounds cases of sexual assault.⁴⁷ Witnesses stressed that rape culture “does not mean that all men are rapists,” and that such a culture is upheld by both men and women in society.⁴⁸ Rape culture is the opposite of consent culture, a culture in which “the predominant description of sex would be centred around mutual consent.”⁴⁹

According to witnesses, rape culture is grounded in historical patterns and power arrangements between people and is linked to other forms of oppression such as racism and homophobia.⁵⁰ Gabrielle Ross-Marquette, Communications Coordinator at METRAC Action on Violence, said that rape culture also reinforces the beliefs and stereotypes that certain groups, such as Indigenous or racialized communities, are more likely to commit abuse or to be immune to victimization.⁵¹ Other witnesses mentioned that rape culture is prevalent on post-secondary campuses in the country.⁵² Kenya Rogers and Paloma Ponti, representatives from the Anti-Violence Project of the University of Victoria Student’s Society, shared with the Committee a “rape culture” pyramid, which Ms. Rogers explained as “a visual way of looking at the ways in which sexualized violence is upheld in our society.”⁵³ Ms. Rogers explained that the words “floating through the triangle are the things that uphold spaces where sexualized violence can happen. In the middle of the triangle, [the words represent] some of those systemic and root causes we’re talking about. This

44 [Evidence](#), 14 November 2016, 1630 (Lucille Harper, Executive Director, Antigonish Women’s Resource Centre and Sexual Assault Services); [Evidence](#), 17 October 2016, 1640 (Maira Martin, General Director, Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes); [Evidence](#), 14 November 2016, 1640 (Mélanie Sarroino, Liaison and Promotion Officer, Regroupement québécois des Centres d’aide et de lutte contre les agressions à caractère sexuel); Second Story Women’s Centre, “[Brief Regarding Violence against Young Women and Girls in Canada](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 2016; [Evidence](#), 17 October 2016, 1530 (Dawn Moore, Associate Professor, Law and Legal Studies, Carleton University, As an individual); [Evidence](#), 16 June 2016, 1730 (Jane Bailey, Professor, Faculty of Law, University of Ottawa, As an Individual); [Evidence](#), 16 November 2016, 1540 (Tessa Hill).

45 University of Alberta Sexual Assault Centre – Meagan Simon and Meg Anderson, “[Written Brief Submitted to the Status of Women Committee for its Study on Violence against Young Women and Girls in Canada](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 2016.

46 [Evidence](#), 24 October 2016, 1625 (Farrah Khan).

47 [Evidence](#), 31 October 2016, 1640 (Sandrine Ricci).

48 [Evidence](#), 17 October 2016, 1530 (Dawn Moore).

49 Lori Chambers, “[Deposition for Standing Committee, Ottawa](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 19 October 2016.

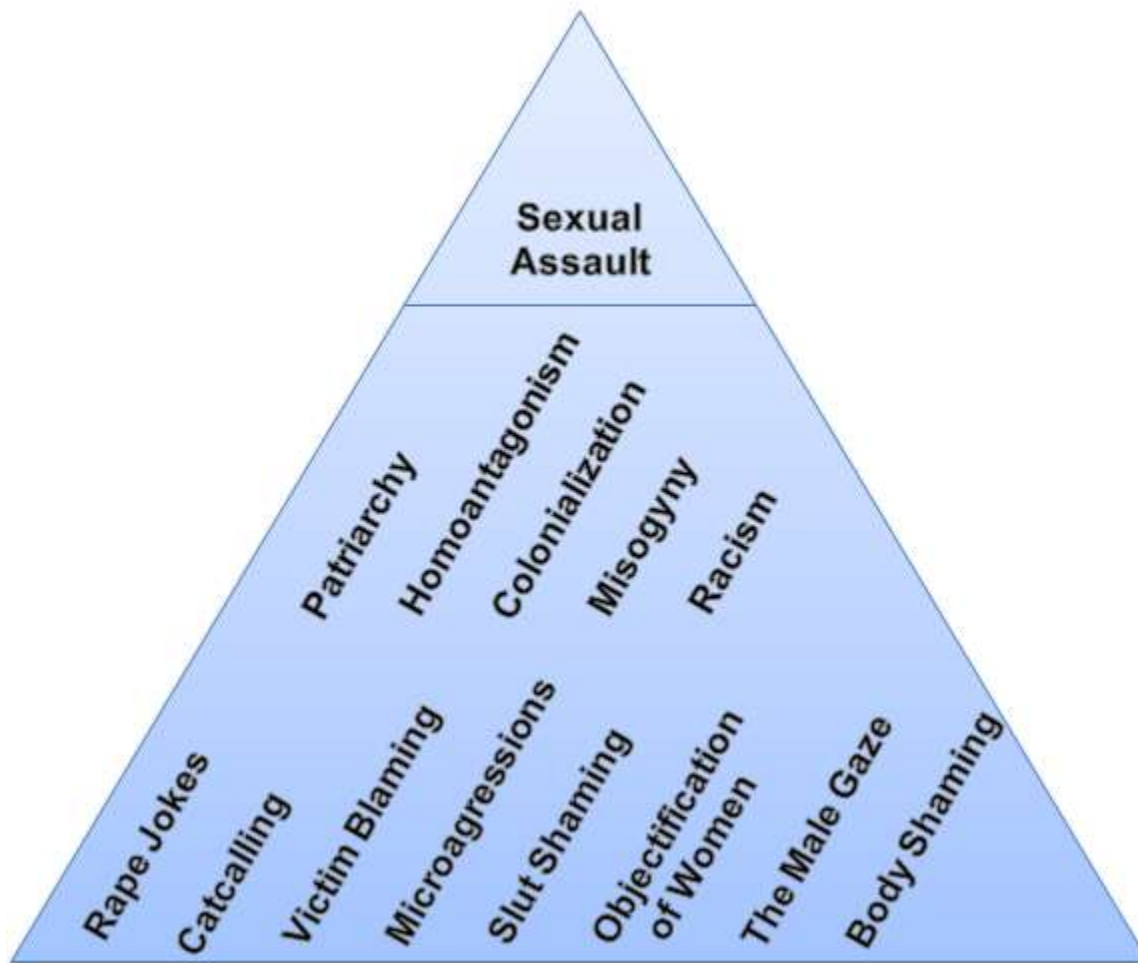
50 [Evidence](#), 17 October 2016, 1630 (Gabrielle Ross-Marquette); [Evidence](#), 24 October 2016, 1540 (Kenya Rogers, Policy Analyst, University of Victoria Student’s Society, Anti Violence Project).

51 [Evidence](#), 17 October 2016, 1630 (Gabrielle Ross-Marquette).

52 [Evidence](#), 17 October 2016, 1630 (Gabrielle Ross-Marquette); [Evidence](#), 17 October 2016, 1640 (Maira Martin); [Evidence](#), 16 June 2016, 1550 (Shaheen Shariff).

53 [Evidence](#), 24 October 2016, 1545 (Kenya Rogers).

can be gender expectations, race, class, and sexism. At the bottom are those everyday acts that uphold rape culture, such as catcalling, sexist remarks, rape jokes, and myths.”⁵⁴



Source: Adapted from the On-Campus Sexual Assault Centre at the University of Victoria, *Anti-Violence Project – “Rape Culture Pyramid,”* 21 October 2016.

Several witnesses also talked about the harmful impacts of victim blaming, a practice whereby victims of crime are held partially responsible for being victimized because of myths placing blame for the violence on their behaviours, actions or identity, and as a result the perpetrators of crime are held less accountable.⁵⁵ Victim blaming is often experienced and internalized by young women and girls; they may be told or may

54 Ibid.

55 [Evidence](#), 26 September 2016, 1715 (Carol Todd); [Evidence](#), 28 September 2016, 1535 (Steph Guthrie, Social Justice Advocate, As an Individual); [Evidence](#), 26 September 2016, 1630 (Leah Parsons, Representative, Rehtaeh Parsons Society, As an individual); Be The Peace Institute – Sue Bookchin, “[Violence Against Young Women and Girls in Canada](#),” *Submitted Brief*, September 2016; [Evidence](#), 3 October 2016, 1720 (Alicia Raimundo, Youth Advisory Committee Co-Chair, Youth Advisory Committee, CYCC Network); Quebec Council on the Status of Women, “[Violence Against Young Women and Girls](#),” *Submitted Brief*, September 2016; [Evidence](#), 16 June 2016, 1555 (Shaheen Shariff); Antigonish Women’s Resource Centre and Sexual Assault Services, “[Submission to House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women: Violence against Girls and Young Women](#),” *Submitted Brief*, November 2016.

believe that they are to blame for gender-based violence they experience, such as harassment, sexual assault or cyberviolence.⁵⁶ Stephanie Chard, in a written brief, explained that “I had learned that because I had been drinking at the time and because I wore a pretty skirt, the assault was my fault.”⁵⁷

According to Ms. Dooley, Youth Programs Coordinator at YWCA Halifax, victim blaming is a way of controlling the sexuality of women and girls.⁵⁸ In a written brief, the Coalition of Provincial and Territorial Advisory Councils on the Status of Women stated that young women and girls are “scrutinized from what clothes they wear and who they spend time with to where they ... go and the time of day or night they were there.”⁵⁹ Leah Parsons, mother of Rehtaeh Parsons and representative of the Rehtaeh Parsons Society, explained her daughter’s situation:

During the 17 months of struggle, Rehtaeh was forced to endure harassment both online and in person from her peer group. She knew what happened to her was not her fault, but society continually told her otherwise.⁶⁰

In a written brief, Maïra Martin, General Director at Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes, outlined the problems with rape culture:

A woman should not have to change her behaviour to “feel safe.” First, we know that, no matter what a woman does, nothing can guarantee that she will not be assaulted. Second, we also know that a woman should not be held solely accountable for her own safety; society has a duty to create an egalitarian, respectful and non-violent environment and culture.⁶¹

C. Hypersexualization and Violent and Degrading Sexually Explicit Material in Pornography and Other Media

Different forms of media have the potential to inadvertently promote systemic gender-based violence against young women and girls. This is particularly so when media hypersexualizes young women and girls or when sexually explicit material depicts violence

56 Coalition of Provincial and Territorial Advisory Councils on the Status of Women, [“Brief for the Standing Committee on the Status of Women study on Violence Against Young Women and Girls in Canada,”](#) *Submitted Brief*, September 2016; [Evidence](#), 21 September 2016, 1715 (Dee Dooley); Second Story Women’s Centre, “Brief Regarding Violence against Young Women and Girls in Canada,” *Submitted Brief*, 2016; Young Indigenous Women from Atlantic Canada, [“Networks for Change and Wellbeing – Addressing sexual violence: Eskasoni – Stuck in the middle: The role of media in the sexual victimisation of women,”](#) *Submitted Brief*, 2016; Concertation des luttes contre l’exploitation sexuelle, [“Porn and rape culture: the new modes of communication of male domination,”](#) *Submitted Brief*, 2016; [Evidence](#), 21 November 2016, 1610 (Patricia Cartes, Head, Global Safety, Twitter Inc.).

57 Stephanie Chard, [“Brief Submitted by Stephanie Chard to the Status of Women Committee,”](#) *Submitted Brief*, 2016.
58 [Evidence](#), 21 September 2016, 1715 (Dee Dooley).

59 Coalition of Provincial and Territorial Advisory Councils on the Status of Women, [“Brief for the Standing Committee on the Status of Women study on Violence Against Young Women and Girls in Canada,”](#) *Submitted Brief*, September 2016.

60 [Evidence](#), 26 September 2016, 1630 (Leah Parsons).

61 Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes – Maïra Martin, [“Brief submitted by Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes,”](#) *Submitted Brief*, 2016.

or degrading treatment directed against women. The Committee heard that violence directed at young women and girls is rooted in the reality that women are often objectified as sexual objects to be used and enjoyed by others.⁶² Media and digital culture contributes to the normalization of the hypersexualization of women.⁶³ According to Meagan Simon and Meg Anderson from the University of Alberta Sexual Assault Centre, “one of the impacts of the hypersexualization of young women and girls is the perpetuation of gendered beliefs and practices that normalize sexual violence, including child sexual abuse, street harassment and sexual assault.”⁶⁴

According to Lucille Harper, Executive Director at the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre and Sexual Assault Services, “adult sexuality is imposed upon children and young people before they are capable of dealing with it mentally, emotionally, or physically.”⁶⁵ Signy Arnason, Director of Cybertip.ca at the Canadian Centre for Child Protection, also talked about the hypersexualization of girls through child modelling, a practice that portrays young girls fully or partially clothed in a highly sexualised way, which does not classify as pornography.⁶⁶ An examination of sexualized child modelling images by the Canadian Centre for Child Protection revealed that 92% of them were of girls.⁶⁷

In a written brief, the Regroupement québécois des Centres d'aide et de lutte contre les agressions à caractère sexuel stated that hypersexualized messages are so normalized that young women have difficulties at times insisting upon “their own

62 [Evidence](#), 26 September 2016, 1635 (Leah Parsons); University of Alberta Sexual Assault Centre – Meagan Simon and Meg Anderson, “[Written Brief Submitted to the Status of Women Committee for its Study on Violence against Young Women and Girls in Canada](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 2016 ; [Evidence](#), 14 November 2016, 1640 (Mélanie Sarroino); Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, “[Submission to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women – Internet Pornography and Violence against Young Women and Girls in Canada](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 2016; [Evidence](#), 21 September 2016, 1610 (Valerie Steeves); Regroupement québécois des Centres d'aide et de lutte contre les agressions à caractère sexuel, “[Brief Submitted by the Regroupement québécois des CALACS To the Status of Women Committee](#),” *Submitted Brief*, November 2016.

63 [Evidence](#), 26 September 2016, 1540 and 1545 (Shanly Dixon, Educator and Researcher, Digital Literacy Project, Atwater Library and Computer Centre); Y des femmes de Montréal, “[Brief to the Standing Committee on the Status of Women: Violence Against Young Women and Girls](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 2016; [Evidence](#), 31 October 2016, 1610 (Cathy Grant, Director, New Leaf Program); Young Indigenous Women from Atlantic Canada, “[Networks for Change and Wellbeing – Addressing sexual violence: Eskasoni – Stuck in the middle: The role of media in the sexual victimisation of women](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 2016; [Evidence](#), 17 October 2016, 1555 (Anuradha Dugal); Be The Peace Institute – Sue Bookchin, “[Violence Against Young Women and Girls in Canada](#),” *Submitted Brief*, September 2016; [Evidence](#), 14 November 2016, 1635 (Lucille Harper); Amanda Todd Legacy Society – Carol Todd, “[Brief for the Standing Committee for Gender Based Violence of Girls and Young Women \(Cyberviolence\)](#),” *Submitted Brief*, October 2016; Antigonish Women's Resource Centre and Sexual Assault Services, “[Submission to House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women: Violence against Girls and Young Women](#),” *Submitted Brief*, November 2016; [Evidence](#), 23 November 2016, 1705 (Chi Nguyen).

64 University of Alberta Sexual Assault Centre – Meagan Simon and Meg Anderson, “[Written Brief Submitted to the Status of Women Committee for its Study on Violence against Young Women and Girls in Canada](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 2016.

65 [Evidence](#), 14 November 2016, 1635 (Lucille Harper).

66 [Evidence](#), 28 September 2016, 1630 (Signy Arnason, Director, Cybertip.ca, Canadian Centre for Child Protection).

67 Ibid.

comfort, right to be respected or well-being.”⁶⁸ They explain: “The [hypersexualized] messages are so strong and omnipresent that our ability to identify and feel outrage has been confounded.”⁶⁹ Hypersexualization and objectification of women also contribute to “increased shame, anxiety and self-loathing” among young women and girls.⁷⁰ Lara Karaian, Associate Professor at the Institute of Criminology and Criminal Justice at Carleton University, stated that young women and girls are sexual subjects, not objects, and that young women should be able to express their sexuality in healthy ways.⁷¹

Witnesses explained the purported link between the widespread availability of violent and degrading sexually explicit material in pornography and other media and men’s and boys’ violence against women and girls.⁷² Ms. Harper said that “[w]ith the advent of wireless Internet tablets and smartphones, children can and do access pornography that contains disturbing, violent, misogynistic images that link sex to violence against women.”⁷³

Jane Bailey, Professor at the Faculty of Law at University of Ottawa, said that, when it comes to “violent pornography,” the “heart of the issue is misogyny” and the “representation of rape or sexual assault as sex.”⁷⁴ She also said that if the focus “of an industry is to make money from enacting sexual violence against women, then we have some hard questions to ask ourselves about what society we’re living in and what kinds of industries we’re supporting.”⁷⁵

The Committee heard that violent and degrading sexually explicit material in pornography and other media is sometimes a source of sexual education for young boys.⁷⁶ Violent and degrading sexually explicit material in pornography and other media

68 Regroupement québécois des Centres d’aide et de lutte contre les agressions à caractère sexuel, “[Brief Submitted by the Regroupement québécois des CALACS To the Status of Women Committee](#),” *Submitted Brief*, November 2016.

69 Ibid.

70 Y des femmes de Montréal, “[Brief to the Standing Committee on the Status of Women: Violence Against Young Women and Girls](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 2016.

71 [Evidence](#), 16 June 2016, 1610 (Lara Karaian).

72 Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, “[Submission to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women – Internet Pornography and Violence against Young Women and Girls in Canada](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 2016; Second Story Women’s Centre, “[Brief Regarding Violence against Young Women and Girls in Canada](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 2016; Centre d’aide et de lutte contre les agressions à caractère sexuelle Châteauguay, “[Violence against Young Women and Girls in Canada: A Sexual Violence Perspective](#),” *Submitted Brief*, September 2016; Glendyne Gerrard – Defend Dignity, “[Violence against Young Women and Girls – A Brief Prepared for the Status of Women Standing Committee](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 23 September 2016; [Evidence](#), 19 October 2016, 1710 (Lori Chambers); [Evidence](#), 30 November 2016, 1655 (Tessa Hill).

73 [Evidence](#), 14 November 2016, 1635 (Lucille Harper).

74 [Evidence](#), 5 December 2016, 1615 (Jane Bailey).

75 Ibid.

76 Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, “[Submission to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women – Internet Pornography and Violence against Young Women and Girls in Canada](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 2016; [Evidence](#), 28 September 2016, 1600 (Ann Decter); [Evidence](#), 19 October 2016, 1710 (Lori Chambers); [Evidence](#), 5 October 2016, 1700 (Soraya Chemaly).

can have a strong influence on how men and youth view sexuality and relationships.⁷⁷ In a written brief, the Regroupement québécois des Centres d'aide et de lutte contre les agressions à caractère sexuel stated that:

The proliferation of pornography and easy access to [pornography] has resulted in pornography replacing the sex education courses withdrawn from our schools as a source of information for our youth. Magazines, videos, pop music stars, advertising of all kinds and especially the profusion of Internet pornography sites routinely portray women's and girls' bodies as objects to be exploited and assaulted.⁷⁸

Two written submissions indicated that some children are learning that "sex is violent and degrading to women"⁷⁹ and that "violence in sex is normal and desirable."⁸⁰ The Committee also heard that "we [don't] actually want to be keeping kids from sexually explicit material ... there's a lot of information that's necessary for kids to know about sexual activity and sexual health, which I distinguish from violent pornography."⁸¹

Ms. Chemaly, Director of the Women's Media Center Speech Project, explained that pornography can be used against women on a daily basis to denigrate them and silence them. For example, she said: "Whether you're a politician, a writer, a scientist, or an economist, when a man wants to shut you down, very often he will send pornography and he will send pornography that is explicit and violent."⁸² Furthermore, she spoke of the "explicit use of pornography as a political weapon," and gave the example of female politicians whose images are turned into pornography:

If you look in the United States at Condoleezza Rice, Sarah Palin, Hillary Clinton, or Michelle Obama, when you Google their names in porn, you get pages and pages of porn. When you Google their male partners, contemporaries, or peers you get pages and pages of their thoughts about porn. That's a radically different thing.⁸³

Witnesses also compared the effects of looking at pornography and the effects of looking at images of objectified and hypersexualized women. Ms. Chemaly explained:

77 [Evidence](#), 14 November 2016, 1635 (Lucille Harper); [Evidence](#), 3 October 2016, 1640 (Nancy Beth Guptill, Cyberviolence Expert, East Prince Women's Information Centre); [Evidence](#), 31 October 2016, 1655 (Sandrine Ricci); Y des femmes de Montréal, "[Brief to the Standing Committee on the Status of Women: Violence Against Young Women and Girls](#)," *Submitted Brief*, 2016.

78 Regroupement québécois des Centres d'aide et de lutte contre les agressions à caractère sexuel, "[Brief Submitted by the Regroupement québécois des CALACS To the Status of Women Committee](#)," *Submitted Brief*, November 2016.

79 Antigonish Women's Resource Centre and Sexual Assault Services, "[Submission to House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women: Violence against Girls and Young Women](#)," *Submitted Brief*, November 2016.

80 Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, "[Submission to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women – Internet Pornography and Violence against Young Women and Girls in Canada](#)," *Submitted Brief*, 2016.

81 [Evidence](#), 5 December 2016, 1625 (Jane Bailey).

82 [Evidence](#), 5 October 2016, 1715 and 1720 (Soraya Chemaly).

83 *Ibid.*

[F]or the last two years I have immersed myself, for good or bad, in studying the effects of pornography, particularly on children and teenagers. As far as I can tell, and I think it's safe to say—I've probably read over 300 studies in the last year—there is nothing conclusive about that.

What I find the most interesting, though, is that the effects of looking at sexually objectified women—whether it is in pornography or sitting on the bus on the way to work—are generally the same....

The effects are that pornified women are considered less moral, less ethical, less competent, less intelligent, baser overall, and are dehumanized. When men are sexually objectified, people do not respond in the same way. There's no equivalence.⁸⁴

Anuradha Dugal, Director of Violence Prevention Programs at the Canadian Women's Foundation, explained that “it's not wholly the education of young men that we're concerned about here: it's also that young women are beginning to see themselves as sexual objects and therefore will play that out in their relationships.”⁸⁵ Matthew Johnson, Director of Education at MediaSmarts, said that “most of the well-documented negative effects of pornography are also found to be caused by other forms of sexualized media that aren't explicit,” such as sexualized advertising or sexualized music videos.⁸⁶

Many of the recommendations included throughout this report are designed to help prevent and overcome the negative social consequences of the hypersexualization of young women and girls. Additionally, many recommendations included in other sections are aimed at ensuring that young women, young men, girls and boys are able to distinguish between violent and degrading sexually explicit material and media that depicts healthy and consensual sexual relationships.

Recommendation 5

That the Government of Canada examine E-safety models or increased controls to prevent violent and degrading sexually explicit material from being accessed by youth under the age of majority and examine how violent and degrading sexually explicit material distorts young people's ideas of consent, gender equality and healthy relationships.

84 Ibid.

85 [Evidence](#), 17 October 2016, 1555 (Anuradha Dugal).

86 [Evidence](#), 5 December 2016, 1625 (Matthew Johnson, Director of Education, MediaSmarts).

D. Intergenerational Patterns of Violence

Several witnesses described the intergenerational patterns of violence that affect families and communities in Canada. For example, Mr. Bate, co-Chair of the Board of Directors at New Leaf Program, suggested that children who are socialized in a violent community tend to grow up to be more violent.⁸⁷

Young women and girls who experience violence or witness acts of violence are also at greater risk of being victimized in the future. Katie Kitschke, Executive Director at SAFFRON Sexual Assault Centre, explained that growing up in an unhealthy environment may potentially lead children to choose unhealthy partners, leading to abusive relationships.⁸⁸ As explained in a written brief by the women's shelter The Redwood, it is essential to provide physical and mental health care to young women and girls who experience violence:

[W]omen's experiences of trauma are not addressed and accumulate over their lives, creating for them a cycle of abuse and a higher vulnerability to experience violence in multiple forms in their future.... [It is] contributing to inter-generational trauma, as female victims of trauma form their own families. These women are at a greater likelihood to begin families with violent partners, compared to women who did not experience violence or received therapeutic treatment addressing their previous trauma exposure.⁸⁹

In turn, the children of these women have “cyclical relational trauma” as the relationship between a mother and her children is harmed by an unsafe home environment and the mother's unaddressed trauma. The brief provided the example of a young woman who experienced “early childhood physical abuse at the hands of her alcoholic father, and a rape in her early adolescence committed by a close family acquaintance,” which led to a “diagnosis of major depression and persistent battles with low-self esteem and danger-seeking activities” and in turn “insecure attachment with [her daughter] and consequent distrust in her parenting abilities.”⁹⁰

Anti-violence efforts must also address the intergenerational trauma in Indigenous communities linked to colonialism, residential schools, child welfare and federal corrections.⁹¹ The intergenerational trauma in Indigenous communities is further explored in the upcoming section on “Young Women and Girls with Particular Vulnerabilities to Violence: Indigenous Young Women and Girls.”

87 [Evidence](#), 31 October 2016, 1550 (Harvey Bate).

88 [Evidence](#), 14 November 2016, 1710 (Katie Kitschke, Executive Director, SAFFRON Sexual Assault Centre).

89 The Redwood, “[Submission to Status of Women Canada – Violence against Young Women and Girls in Canada – The Redwood: Domestic Violence and Unresolved Interpersonal Trauma](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 23 September 2016.

90 *Ibid.*

91 [Evidence](#), 14 November 2016, 1530 and 1535 (Sylvia Maracle).

TYPES OF VIOLENCE EXPERIENCED BY YOUNG WOMEN AND GIRLS AND POSSIBLE RESPONSES

Young women and girls are at risk of experiencing many different forms violence, which can have a significant impact on them for the rest of their lives. While the Committee's study focused on three forms of violence against young women and girls as outlined in the study's motion – harassment in the public sphere, sexual violence on post-secondary campuses, and cyberviolence – witnesses did share information about other serious forms of violence. The Committee heard that young women and girls can be victimized through physical assault, emotional abuse, harassment, sexual assault, sex trafficking and homicide. The Committee was told for example that:

- Physical and emotional abuse or neglect can force young women out of their homes and can lead to homelessness, which in turn increases their vulnerability to future acts of violence.⁹²
- Young women and girls are victims of trafficking for sexual purposes and this occurs in urban centres, small towns, and rural and remote parts of Canada.⁹³ According to Julie Neubauer, Manager of Human Trafficking Services at Covenant House Toronto, “traffickers follow a very similar pattern of psychological manipulation and control that includes luring, seducing, grooming, and then terrorizing their victims” and, in Canada, the majority of domestic trafficking victims are Canadian.⁹⁴ The Committee was told that services for survivors of sex trafficking need to be improved, that research into promising practices to address sex trafficking must be increased, and that there must be an examination into why there are so few convictions despite *Criminal Code* provisions to address trafficking.⁹⁵
- Young women and girls can also be the victims of homicide. Although the majority of victims of homicide are males, representatives from Statistics Canada shared that 9 in 10 female victims of homicide were killed by someone they knew and that Indigenous women were 6 times more likely to be murdered than non-Indigenous women.⁹⁶

92 [Evidence](#), 23 November 2016, 1530 (Julie Neubauer, Manager of Human Trafficking Services, Covenant House Toronto).

93 Antigonish Women's Resource Centre and Sexual Assault Services, “[Submission to House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women: Violence against Girls and Young Women](#),” *Submitted Brief*, November 2016.

94 [Evidence](#), 23 November 2016, 1530 (Julie Neubauer).

95 Antigonish Women's Resource Centre and Sexual Assault Services, “[Submission to House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women: Violence against Girls and Young Women](#),” *Submitted Brief*, November 2016; [Evidence](#), 23 November 2016, 1530 and 1535 (Julie Neubauer).

96 [Evidence](#), 12 April 2016, 1550 (Yvan Clermont).

Witnesses told the Committee about the devastating effects of all types of violence on young women and girls. Such violence limits young women's and girls' social, educational, professional and economic opportunities.⁹⁷ A representative of the Public Health Agency of Canada stated that violence against women and girls has a significant impact on health outcomes, with women who experience intimate partner violence facing high rates of "injury, chronic pain, sleep disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder, and substance use problems," and girls who have been abused or witnessed abuse facing high rates of "developing chronic illnesses such as heart disease, and mental health problems such as depression, anxiety, and self-harm, both immediately and throughout their lives."⁹⁸ The impact on girls and young women after sex trafficking can include lifelong psychological and emotional damage, including post-traumatic stress disorder.⁹⁹

The Committee heard that the trauma caused by such violence can have immediate impacts and can also be triggered many years later. There can be financial costs to such trauma, including "lost wages for work, therapy sessions, school days missed."¹⁰⁰ Moreover, violence during their developing years can impact young women's and girls' confidence and resilience, leading to emotional dependence, vulnerability to exploitation and self-loathing.¹⁰¹

Three forms of violence that have a significant impact on young women and girls – as outlined in the study's motion – are examined in greater detail below, those being: harassment in the public sphere, sexual violence on post-secondary campuses, and cyberviolence.

A. Harassment in Public Spaces

Young women and girls can experience many forms of sexual harassment in public spaces, including harassment on the street, harassment in the workplace, harassment in the education system, and criminal harassment (i.e., stalking). Harassment of young women and girls in public spaces is on the continuum of sexual violence¹⁰² and sexual entitlement and rape culture allow street harassment to occur.¹⁰³ Witnesses suggested

97 [Evidence](#), 5 October 2016, 1640 (Soraya Chemaly).

98 [Evidence](#), 19 April 2016, 1610 (Kimberly Elmslie, Assistant Deputy Minister, Health Promotion and Chronic Disease Prevention Branch, Public Health Agency of Canada).

99 Antigonish Women's Resource Centre and Sexual Assault Services, "[Submission to House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women: Violence against Girls and Young Women](#)," *Submitted Brief*, November 2016.

100 Amanda Todd Legacy Society – Carol Todd, "[Brief for the Standing Committee for Gender Based Violence of Girls and Young Women \(Cyberviolence\)](#)," *Submitted Brief*, October 2016.

101 Y des femmes de Montréal, "[Brief to the Standing Committee on the Status of Women: Violence Against Young Women and Girls](#)," *Submitted Brief*, 2016; [Evidence](#), 21 November 2016, 1630 (Francyne Joe, President, Native Women's Association of Canada).

102 University of Alberta Sexual Assault Centre – Meagan Simon and Meg Anderson, "[Written Brief Submitted to the Status of Women Committee for its Study on Violence against Young Women and Girls in Canada](#)," *Submitted Brief*, 2016; [Evidence](#), 17 October 2016, 1705 (Julie Lalonde, Director, Ottawa Hollaback!).

103 University of Alberta Sexual Assault Centre – Meagan Simon and Meg Anderson, "[Written Brief Submitted to the Status of Women Committee for its Study on Violence against Young Women and Girls in Canada](#)," *Submitted Brief*, 2016.

that street harassment is often a “fact of life” for many young women and girls¹⁰⁴ and that individuals justify such harassment by saying it is a compliment or a joke.¹⁰⁵

The Committee heard that public transportation is a place where many cases of harassment occur.¹⁰⁶ Men and transportation companies are often not aware that women experience harassment in public spaces¹⁰⁷ and people often do not recognize street harassment as a form of violence.¹⁰⁸ Surveys conducted by chapters of the group Hollaback! suggest that at least 88% of Canadian women have been harassed before the age of 18 and 50% of the respondents had been groped or fondled at least once in the past year.¹⁰⁹ Approximately 95% of the respondents in one survey indicated that over a month-long period, they had experienced street harassment, but only 2% of the respondents said they reported these incidents to authorities.¹¹⁰ Julie Lalonde, Director at Ottawa Hollaback!, suggested that anonymous reporting mechanisms would help survivors report incidents of public harassment.¹¹¹

According to witnesses, there is a lack of research on street harassment in Canada¹¹² and more research must be conducted to understand how street harassment affects individuals, in particular young women and girls.¹¹³ An effective way to fight against street harassment is to raise awareness and to develop bystander intervention campaigns,¹¹⁴ two elements which will be examined in later sections of this report.

104 [Evidence](#), 14 November 2016, 1655 (Katie Kitschke).

105 University of Alberta Sexual Assault Centre – Meagan Simon and Meg Anderson, “[Written Brief Submitted to the Status of Women Committee for its Study on Violence against Young Women and Girls in Canada](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 2016.

106 Centre to End All Sexual Exploitation – Kathleen Quinn, “[Brief: Standing Committee on the Status of Women: Violence Against Young Women and Girls](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 2016; [Evidence](#), 17 October 2016, 1650 and 1710 (Julie Lalonde).

107 [Evidence](#), 17 October 2016, 1650 and 1655 (Julie Lalonde).

108 *Ibid.*, 1655.

109 *Ibid.*

110 Clea Glasenapp – Hollaback Alberta, “[Briefing Note for the Committee on the Status of Women: Awareness and Education around Sexual Violence against Women in Edmonton, Alberta](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 2016.

111 [Evidence](#), 17 October 2016, 1655 and 1715 (Julie Lalonde).

112 University of Alberta Sexual Assault Centre – Meagan Simon and Meg Anderson, “[Written Brief Submitted to the Status of Women Committee for its Study on Violence against Young Women and Girls in Canada](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 2016.

113 Clea Glasenapp – Hollaback Alberta, “[Briefing Note for the Committee on the Status of Women: Awareness and Education around Sexual Violence against Women in Edmonton, Alberta](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 2016.

114 [Evidence](#), 17 October 2016, 1655 (Julie Lalonde); Clea Glasenapp – Hollaback Alberta, “[Briefing Note for the Committee on the Status of Women: Awareness and Education around Sexual Violence against Women in Edmonton, Alberta](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 2016.

Recommendation 6

That the Government of Canada fund initiatives, including research, that address street harassment and sexual harassment in public spaces and its effects on women, and that the Government of Canada take action to create secure, confidential and anonymous reporting systems that have appropriate sensitivity and support mechanisms.

B. Sexual Violence on Post-secondary Campuses

1. Understanding Sexual Violence on Post-secondary Campuses

College and university campuses in Canada are communities where young women are at particular risk of experiencing sexual violence. According to METRAC: Action on Violence, “[s]exual violence is pervasive on Canadian campuses, through behavior such as leering, sexual jokes and innuendo, name-calling, unwanted touching and advances, harassing text messages, repeated, unwelcome gestures of affection, threats, and assault, based on a person’s sex, gender identity, race, faith, ability, sexual orientation, age and more.”¹¹⁵ Sexual violence occurs in on-campus bars, residences, surrounding neighbourhoods, during frosh week and social events, and while individuals are walking to class.¹¹⁶ Witnesses suggested that rape culture and victim blaming attitudes contribute to sexual violence on post-secondary campuses across Canada.¹¹⁷

(i) Overview of the Prevalence of Sexual Violence on Post-secondary Campuses

Witnesses presented studies that provided estimates on the rate of sexual violence on post-secondary campuses in Canada; approximately 20 to 25% of college- and university-aged women will experience some form of sexual assault during their time as a student.¹¹⁸ As well, the *Enquête Sexualité, Sécurité et Interactions en Milieu Universitaire (ESSIMU)* [Study on sexuality, security and interactions in a university setting], a study conducted in six universities in Quebec, showed that over a third of respondents “reported

115 METRAC: Action on Violence. “[Campus Safety: Considerations and Promising Practices](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 23 September 2016.

116 [Evidence](#), 19 October 2016, 1545 (Danika McConnell, Representative, Canadian Alliance of Student Associations); [Evidence](#), 14 November 2016, 1645 (Mélanie Sarroino); [Evidence](#), 24 October 2016, 1530 (Farrah Khan); [Evidence](#), 31 October 2016, 1635 (Manon Bergeron, Professor, Université du Québec à Montréal, Senior Researcher, Enquête ESSIMU, As an individual).

117 Canadian Federation of University Women, “[Brief submitted to the Status of Women Committee for their Study on Violence against Young Women and Girls in Canada](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 6 September 2016; [Evidence](#), 17 October 2016, 1545 (Anuradha Dugal); [Evidence](#), 14 November 2016, 1635 (Lucille Harper); [Evidence](#), 31 October 2016, 1655 (Sandrine Ricci).

118 Quebec Council on the Status of Women, “[Violence Against Young Women and Girls](#),” *Submitted Brief*, September 2016; [Evidence](#), 19 October 2016, 1540 (Danika McConnell); [Evidence](#), 19 October 2016, 1550 (Bilan Arte); [Evidence](#), 31 October 2016, 1635 (Manon Bergeron); [Evidence](#), 14 November 2016, 1635 (Lucille Harper); Antigonish Women’s Resource Centre and Sexual Assault Services, “[Submission to House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women: Violence against Girls and Young Women](#),” *Submitted Brief*, November 2016; METRAC: Action on Violence. “[Campus Safety: Considerations and Promising Practices](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 23 September 2016.

suffering at least one form of sexual victimization, committed by another person affiliated with the university, since they arrived at the university” and that 41.7% of respondents “experienced two or even three forms of sexual violence.”¹¹⁹

The Committee heard that “from 2009 to 2015, more than 700 sexual assault cases were reported on university and college campuses across Canada.”¹²⁰ Several witnesses stressed that many survivors do not report assaults to university authorities,¹²¹ therefore, “the extent of violence against women on our campuses is unknown.”¹²²

Witnesses noted that 80% of sexual assaults are committed by individuals who are known by their victims, for example, classmates, friends or current or ex-partners.¹²³ According to Hannah Kurchik, Student Advocate at the Healing Justice Advisory Committee, two-thirds of sexual assaults on post-secondary campuses happen during the first eight weeks of school.¹²⁴ Research suggests that the typical victim of sexual assault on campus is a female student and that the perpetrator is a male student.¹²⁵ Ms. Dugal, Director of Violence Prevention Programs at the Canadian Women's Foundation, cited a study that showed that one in five male students “agreed that forced sex is acceptable if someone spends money on a date, is stoned or drunk, or has been dating somebody for a long time” and that “60% of Canadian college-aged males indicated they would commit sexual assault if they were certain they couldn't get caught.”¹²⁶

Sexual violence, including sexual assault, has long-lasting impacts¹²⁷ and leaves “deep emotional and psychological scars” for the survivors.¹²⁸ Survivors of sexual assault

119 Manon Bergeron, Martine Hébert, Sandrine Ricci, Marie-France Goyer, Lyne Kurtzman et Nathalie Duhamel, [“Sexual violence in a university setting in Quebec: main findings and recommended actions,”](#) *Submitted Brief*, 23 September 2016.

120 [Evidence](#), 19 October 2016, 1540 (Danika McConnell); Canadian Federation of Students, [“Written Submission to the Status of Women Committee’s study on Violence Against Young Women and Girls in Canada,”](#) *Submitted Brief*, October 2016.

121 [Evidence](#), 31 October 2016, 1640 (Sandrine Ricci); [Evidence](#), 31 October 2016, 1715 (Liette Roussel, Manager Consultant, Collectivité ingénieuse de la Péninsule acadienne); Antigonish Women's Resource Centre and Sexual Assault Services, [“Submission to House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women: Violence against Girls and Young Women,”](#) *Submitted Brief*, November 2016.

122 Collectivité ingénieuse de la Péninsule acadienne, [“Appearance before the Standing Committee on the Status of Women,”](#) *Submitted Brief*, October 2016.

123 [Evidence](#), 24 October 2016, 1530 (Hannah Kurchik, Student Advocate, Healing Justice Advisory Committee, As an individual); [Evidence](#), 19 October 2016, 1550 (Bilan Arte); METRAC: Action on Violence. [“Campus Safety: Considerations and Promising Practices,”](#) *Submitted Brief*, 23 September 2016; Lori Chambers, [“Deposition for Standing Committee, Ottawa,”](#) *Submitted Brief*, 19 October 2016; Canadian Federation of Students, [“Written Submission to the Status of Women Committee’s study on Violence Against Young Women and Girls in Canada,”](#) *Submitted Brief*, October 2016.

124 [Evidence](#), 24 October 2016, 1530 (Hannah Kurchik).

125 [Evidence](#), 31 October 2016, 1635 (Manon Bergeron).

126 [Evidence](#), 17 October 2016, 1545 (Anuradha Dugal).

127 Lori Chambers, [“Deposition for Standing Committee, Ottawa,”](#) *Submitted Brief*, 19 October 2016.

128 Antigonish Women's Resource Centre and Sexual Assault Services, [“Submission to House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women: Violence against Girls and Young Women,”](#) *Submitted Brief*, November 2016.

on campus may take leaves of absence, drop-out or interrupt their studies.¹²⁹ The ESSIMU study shows that:

Almost half the victims [of sexual violence] (47.3%) suffered harmful consequences affecting one or more aspects of their lives, such as scholastic or professional success, personal or social life, physical or mental health. For one victim in ten (9.2%), the consequences resembled post-traumatic stress disorder (e.g., making efforts to avoid situations that call the event to mind or being constantly on guard).¹³⁰

Bilan Arte, National Chairperson of the Canadian Federation of Students, suggested that gender-based violence on campus should be considered a serious barrier to accessing post-secondary education for young women.¹³¹ She added that there are disparities between post-secondary institutions on how the institutions address sexual violence and support victims:

[T]his disparity in access is very problematic. It means that students are going to have to make very harsh decisions about whether they continue their studies based on the availability of certain resources, particularly when they are survivors of issues around sexual and gender-based violence. This disparity exists from coast to coast....

This disparity is not working for students. Just because I went to university in Manitoba and perhaps decided to do graduate studies in Alberta should not mean that I have disproportionate access to the types of resources that can help ensure my student experience is as safe and inclusive as possible. That's definitely why we're talking about legislation at the federal level that would mandate all institutions across Canada to ensure adequate access to resources on sexual and gender-based violence.¹³²

(ii) Support and Services for Survivors of Sexual Violence on Post-secondary Campuses

Many witnesses spoke about the lack of data regarding the extent of sexual violence on post-secondary campuses and about the survivors,¹³³ particularly with respect to vulnerable women and Indigenous women.¹³⁴ According to the Collectivité ingénieuse de la Péninsule acadienne, “many acts of violence go unreported.”¹³⁵ Linda Savoie, Senior Director General of the Women’s Program and Regional Operations Directorate at Status of Women Canada, suggested there is a need for a common reporting system for all post-secondary institutions and that they use the same definitions and monitoring

129 [Evidence](#), 24 October 2016, 1615 (Farrah Khan); [Evidence](#), 31 October 2016, 1635 (Manon Bergeron).

130 Manon Bergeron, Martine Hébert, Sandrine Ricci, Marie-France Goyer, Lyne Kurtzman et Nathalie Duhamel, “[Sexual violence in a university setting in Quebec: main findings and recommended actions](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 23 September 2016.

131 [Evidence](#), 19 October 2016, 1550 (Bilan Arte).

132 *Ibid.*, 1610.

133 [Evidence](#), 31 October 2016, 1625 (Liette Roussel); [Evidence](#), 24 October 2016, 1555 (Kenya Rogers).

134 [Evidence](#), 31 October 2016, 1705 (Liette Roussel); [Evidence](#), 17 October 2016, 1610 (Dawn Moore).

135 Collectivité ingénieuse de la Péninsule acadienne, “[Appearance before the Standing Committee on the Status of Women](#),” *Submitted Brief*, October 2016.

processes across the country.¹³⁶ The Committee also heard that the majority of the respondents in the ESSIMU study “[felt] that universities must be more proactive about prevention and develop policies to better inform their community about the steps to take and the existing channels to support victims of and/or witnesses to [sexual violence on post-secondary campuses].”¹³⁷

Danika McConnell, a Representative of the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations, stated that survivors of gender-based violence on campuses may stop their studies because of a lack of adequate services and disparities in access to those services across Canada.¹³⁸ Farrah Khan, Sexual Violence Support and Education Coordinator at Ryerson University, told the Committee that she is “one person for 40,000 students” and that she is expected to provide services for that student population.¹³⁹ Ms. Kurchik of the Healing Justice Advisory Committee shared her story about trying to access services on her post-secondary campus following a sexual assault:

When attempting to access counselling or supports on campus, I was informed there was a six week waiting list for counselling, and that the counsellor I would be seeing would be the same one my friend was seeing for a completely different need.¹⁴⁰

Without access to services or the knowledge that they exist, many survivors of sexual violence feel unsafe on campuses and are unable to heal from the trauma they experienced.¹⁴¹

Many witnesses asserted that post-secondary institutions do not respond adequately to instances of sexual violence on their campus.¹⁴² For example, the Canadian Federation of University Women stated that:

When violence occurs, post-secondary institutions are ill-equipped to deal with complaints. Many institutions are not set up with specific counseling services, safe spaces, or staff trained to take disclosures. As [the Canadian Federation of University Women] has learned in interviews with university staff, young women will often make disclosures to professors or other staff (who are not trained to handle those situations) because there are no obvious support services to turn to.¹⁴³

136 [Evidence](#), 12 April 2016, 1600 (Linda Savoie, Senior Director General, Women’s Program and Regional Operations Directorate, Status of Women Canada).

137 Manon Bergeron, Martine Hébert, Sandrine Ricci, Marie-France Goyer, Lyne Kurtzman et Nathalie Duhamel, “[Sexual violence in a university setting in Quebec: main findings and recommended actions](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 23 September 2016.

138 [Evidence](#), 19 October 2016, 1610 (Danika McConnell).

139 [Evidence](#), 24 October 2016, 1600 (Farrah Khan).

140 [Evidence](#), 24 October 2016, 1530 (Hannah Kurchik).

141 Ibid.

142 [Evidence](#), 31 October 2016, 1725 (Sandrine Ricci); [Evidence](#), 19 October 2016, 1600 (Daphne Gilbert, Associate Professor, Faculty of Law, Common Law Section, University of Ottawa, As an individual); [Evidence](#), 16 June 2016, 15550 (Shaheen Shariff); [Evidence](#), 21 April 2016, 1650 (Lori MacDonald).

143 Canadian Federation of University Women, “[Brief submitted to the Status of Women Committee for their Study on Violence against Young Women and Girls in Canada](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 6 September 2016.

Furthermore, according to some witnesses, many institutions do not, or are reluctant to, collect data on sexual assault, or do not share such data if they have it.¹⁴⁴ Witnesses suggested that sometimes the administrations of these institutions prioritize reputation over student safety and do not want to acknowledge the problem of sexual violence on their campuses.¹⁴⁵

2. Possible Responses to Sexual Violence on Post-secondary Campuses

The Committee heard that effective strategies to end sexual violence on post-secondary campuses involve the entire campus community, including students, survivors of sexual violence, front-line service providers, faculty and administration,¹⁴⁶ and that it is important institutions follow a survivor-centred approach.¹⁴⁷

(i) Establishing Awareness and Educational Efforts

Several witnesses stressed the importance of having ongoing inclusive and relevant education programs and initiatives on campus about gender-based violence and consent that extend beyond the first weeks of an academic year.¹⁴⁸ Sandrine Ricci, a Researcher at Université du Québec à Montréal and Co-researcher for the Enquête ESSIMU, stated that post-secondary institutions should ensure that students are aware of the training and resources available to them.¹⁴⁹

Witnesses explained the value of having “trauma-informed classrooms,” and faculty that is trained to understand how language can shame survivors of violence.¹⁵⁰ Other witnesses suggested that colleges and universities should train faculty members on how to appropriately react to a student’s disclosure of victimization¹⁵¹ and that all faculty members should take the Mental Health Commission of Canada’s mental health first aid course.¹⁵²

144 [Evidence](#), 31 October 2016, 1630 (Liette Roussel).

145 [Evidence](#), 19 October 2016, 1540 (Danika McConnell); [Evidence](#), 17 October 2016, 1615 (Dawn Moore).

146 [Evidence](#), 17 October 2016, 1635 (Gabrielle Ross-Marquette); [Evidence](#), 24 October 2016, 1550 (Kenya Rogers); METRAC: Action on Violence. “[Campus Safety: Considerations and Promising Practices](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 23 September 2016.

147 [Evidence](#), 24 October 2016, 1550 (Paloma Ponti, Volunteer Lead, Anti-Violence Project).

148 [Evidence](#), 17 October 2016, 1620 (Dawn Moore); [Evidence](#), 17 October 2016, 1635 (Gabrielle Ross-Marquette); [Evidence](#), 17 October 2016, 1545 (Anuradha Dugal); [Evidence](#), 24 October 2016, 1620 (Kenya Rogers); Planned Parenthood Newfoundland and Labrador Sexual Health Centre, “[A written brief to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women on Violence against Young Women and Girls](#),” *Submitted Brief*, September 2016; Canadian Federation of Students, “[Written Submission to the Status of Women Committee’s study on Violence Against Young Women and Girls in Canada](#),” *Submitted Brief*, October 2016.

149 [Evidence](#), 31 October 2016, 1640 (Sandrine Ricci).

150 [Evidence](#), 24 October 2016, 1530 (Hannah Kurchik).

151 Canadian Federation of University Women, “[Brief submitted to the Status of Women Committee for their Study on Violence against Young Women and Girls in Canada](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 6 September 2016; [Evidence](#), 19 October 2016, 1650 (Nicolette Little).

152 [Evidence](#), 19 October 2016, 1650 (Nicolette Little).

The Committee also heard about the success that some post-secondary campuses have experienced in requiring varsity teams to attend consent workshops.¹⁵³

Lori Chambers, Professor at Lakehead University, stressed that though universities “are hot-beds of student activity to educate the public, and the student body, about sexual violence, the meaning of consent, and the responsibilities of bystanders, minimal funding is available to student organizations for this work.”¹⁵⁴ In a written brief, the Canadian Federation of Students recommended that the federal government “create a Sexual Violence Support Resource Fund to fund initiatives combatting sexual violence at post-secondary institutions” that would be available to student and campus groups as well as faculty, staff and college and university institutions.¹⁵⁵

(ii) Improving Services for Survivors of Sexual Violence on Post-secondary Campuses

Services for survivors of sexual violence on post-secondary campuses across Canada are limited, as explained in a previous section of this report. In a written brief, Clea Glasenapp from Hollaback! Alberta suggested that more funding for sexual assault centres and for counselling services at post-secondary institutions is necessary to improve services for survivors of sexual violence on campuses.¹⁵⁶

In a written brief, Ms. Chambers said that:

Universities and colleges must strive to provide proactive, sustained and multifaceted assistance and support those for who have experienced sexual violence. Such supports must include, but are not limited to: immediate security assistance for those who make calls with regard to assaults or harassment; safety planning; counselling; health care, including testing for [sexually transmitted diseases] and pregnancy and assistance with the completion of a rape kit if desired; accommodations with regard to academic requirements; accommodations to ensure no-contact with the perpetrator; and connections to peer supports.¹⁵⁷

As survivors of sexual violence must often repeat their stories several times to different offices and community services, witnesses suggested empowering “an individual at each institution, perhaps associated with an equity office or sexual assault centre ... at the explicit request of the student, to advocate for those who experience sexual violence and to navigate the system with students.”¹⁵⁸ According to Manon Bergeron, Professor at Université du Québec à Montréal and Senior Researcher for the

153 [Evidence](#), 24 October 2016, 1555 (Farrah Khan).

154 Lori Chambers, “[Deposition for Standing Committee, Ottawa](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 19 October 2016.

155 Canadian Federation of Students, “[Written Submission to the Status of Women Committee’s study on Violence Against Young Women and Girls in Canada](#),” *Submitted Brief*, October 2016.

156 Clea Glasenapp – Hollaback Alberta, “[Briefing Note for the Committee on the Status of Women: Awareness and Education around Sexual Violence against Women in Edmonton, Alberta](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 2016.

157 Lori Chambers, “[Deposition for Standing Committee, Ottawa](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 19 October 2016.

158 Ibid.

Enquête ESSIMU, “support services must be accessible and confidential for anyone who wants to use them.”¹⁵⁹

Dawn Moore, Associate Professor of Law and Legal Studies at Carleton University, told the Committee about simple anonymous reporting mechanisms that have been tried on campuses in the United States that would increase the “ability to capture the prevalence of sexual violence on campus”:¹⁶⁰

There is software available now that allows students to just simply go online, and from their dorm room, they can explain the circumstances of the assault and put in the name of the assailant. This information sits in a database, and the student will be notified if another student reports that she has also been assaulted by this person. In some interfaces, university security might have access to that information, but in an anonymous way, so that they can see the prevalence of incidents of sexual violence on campus without knowing names.¹⁶¹

The Committee heard about the success of York University’s program, where support centres for survivors of sexual violence are run by students who are paid for their work, thus providing peer-to-peer support.¹⁶²

Witnesses also talked about the importance of having strong working relationships among post-secondary institutions and campus police, police officers and community organizations in order to protect women and make them feel safe on campus.¹⁶³ Several witnesses suggested that some post-secondary institutions, in order to protect their reputations, do not want to keep public records of sexual assaults on their campuses or encourage individuals to report these assaults to law enforcement authorities or post-secondary administration.¹⁶⁴

(iii) Implementing Stand-Alone Sexual Assault Policies

The Committee learned that around 12% of Canadian post-secondary institutions have a stand-alone policy on sexual assault and only Ontario and British Columbia, and soon Manitoba, require post-secondary institutions to have a stand-alone policy on sexual assault.¹⁶⁵ The Committee heard about the province of Ontario’s legislation, entitled *Sexual Violence and Harassment Action Plan, 2016*, which requires “colleges, universities,

159 [Evidence](#), 31 October 2016, 1635 (Manon Bergeron).

160 [Evidence](#), 17 October 2016, 1615 (Dawn Moore).

161 Ibid.

162 [Evidence](#), 19 October 2016, 1610 (Bilan Arte).

163 [Evidence](#), 21 April 2016, 1650 and 1710 (Shirley Cuillierier, Director General, National Aboriginal Policing and Crime Prevention Services, Royal Canadian Mounted Police); [Evidence](#), 24 October 2016, 1615 (Farrah Khan); [Evidence](#), 19 October 2016, 1535 (Elizabeth Sheehy, Professor, Faculty of Law, Common Law Section, University of Ottawa, As an individual).

164 [Evidence](#), 17 October 2016, 1530 (Dawn Moore).

165 [Evidence](#), 19 October 2016, 1545 (Danika McConnell); [Evidence](#), 19 October 2016, 1535 (Elizabeth Sheehy).

and private career colleges to have stand-alone sexual violence policies that are developed with student input and reviewed at least every three years” by January 2017.¹⁶⁶

Several witnesses emphasized that Canadian post-secondary institutions should develop stand-alone sexual assault policies¹⁶⁷ and stressed that those policies must be survivor- and student-centred.¹⁶⁸ Witnesses stated that stand-alone sexual assault policies should:

- be reviewed frequently and/or as necessary;
- be applicable to all members of the post-secondary community, both on-and off-campus;
- be clear and accessible;
- maintain survivors’ confidentiality;
- not replicate processes in the justice system; and
- cover all situations where violence can occur.¹⁶⁹

In a written brief, Ms. Chambers said that:

Universities must be clear and unequivocal that all forms of sexual violence are prohibited and that we will not condone or tolerate any form of sexual violence. We must articulate a standard of behaviour that values respect for all individuals, civility, diversity, dignity, equality, and freedom. Such values are essential to the health and safety of our students and employees. It must be clear in all such policies that rules and sanctions apply to everyone: no one, no matter their position in the institution, is exempt. To fail to articulate such standards is to fail to respect the law.¹⁷⁰

166 [Evidence](#), 30 November 2016, 1625 (Maureen Adamson).

167 [Evidence](#), 19 October 2016, 1545 (Danika McConnell); [Evidence](#), 19 October 2016, 1650 (Lori Chambers); [Evidence](#), 19 October 2016, 1635 (Alexander Wayne MacKay, Professor of Law, Schulich School of Law, Dalhousie University, As an Individual); Canadian Federation of Students, “[Written Submission to the Status of Women Committee’s study on Violence Against Young Women and Girls in Canada](#),” *Submitted Brief*, October 2016.

168 [Evidence](#), 19 October 2016, 1545 (Danika McConnell); [Evidence](#), 19 October 2016, 1530 (Daphne Gilbert).

169 [Evidence](#), 19 October 2016, 1555 (Bilan Arte); [Evidence](#), 19 October 2016, 1540 (Danika McConnell); Canadian Federation of University Women, “[Brief submitted to the Status of Women Committee for their Study on Violence against Young Women and Girls in Canada](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 6 September 2016; Paulysha Veronica De Gannes, “[Brief to the Status of Women Committee for its Study on Violence against Young Women and Girls in Canada](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 19 September 2016.

170 Lori Chambers, “[Deposition for Standing Committee, Ottawa](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 19 October 2016.

Witnesses explained that post-secondary institutions should appoint external investigators in cases of sexual assault in order to build a climate of trust with survivors of sexual violence and to give both parties involved due protection.¹⁷¹

As well, witnesses suggested that the federal government encourage post-secondary institutions to develop and implement stand-alone sexual assault policies¹⁷² and that leadership is required from the federal government around the issue of violence against women on campuses.¹⁷³ Elizabeth Sheehy, Professor at the Faculty of Law at University of Ottawa, explained that there is a disparity of practices across the country and a lack of uniformity in sexual violence policies among post-secondary institutions;¹⁷⁴ federal leadership would ensure coordination and a common standard of practice and guidelines across Canada.¹⁷⁵ Ms. Rogers, Policy Analyst at the University of Victoria Student's Society's Anti Violence Project, stated: "We need federal leadership because we need the campaigns, the resources, and the dialogues to really be across the country."¹⁷⁶ Furthermore, Ms. Moore of Carleton University suggested: "The federal government could take leadership and work in coalition with the provinces to develop a national strategy for colleges and universities that would ensure impactful prevention initiatives, largely in the form of ongoing education."¹⁷⁷ The Committee is aware that post-secondary education falls under provincial and territorial jurisdiction, thus there are limits as to what the federal government can mandate in this area, but acknowledges the call for federal leadership.¹⁷⁸

Recommendation 7

That the Government of Canada request that the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, starting at the next meeting of Canada's federal, provincial and territorial Ministers Responsible for Justice and Public Safety, take leadership and urge all jurisdictions to discuss mechanisms, including legislation, by which Canadian post-secondary institutions could be required to implement stand-alone sexual assault policies. These policies would be informed by evidence-

171 [Evidence](#), 19 October 2016, 1530 and 1620 (Daphne Gilbert); [Evidence](#), 19 October 2016, 1615 (Elizabeth Sheehy); [Evidence](#), 31 October 2016, 1635 (Manon Bergeron); [Evidence](#), 24 October 2016, 1535 (Farrah Khan).

172 [Evidence](#), 19 October 2016, 1555 (Bilan Arte); Canadian Federation of Students, "[Written Submission to the Status of Women Committee's study on Violence Against Young Women and Girls in Canada](#)," *Submitted Brief*, October 2016.

173 [Evidence](#), 24 October 2016, 1545 (Kenya Rogers); [Evidence](#), 19 October 2016, 1550 (Bilan Arte); [Evidence](#), 19 October 2016, 1615 (Danika McConnell); [Evidence](#), 31 October 2016, 1700 (Liette Roussel).

174 [Evidence](#), 19 October 2016, 1535 (Elizabeth Sheehy).

175 [Evidence](#), 31 October 2016, 1630 (Liette Roussel); [Evidence](#), 19 October 2016, 1600 (Daphne Gilbert); [Evidence](#), 31 October 2016, 1720 (Manon Bergeron); [Evidence](#), 16 June 2016, 1635 (Lara Karaian); [Evidence](#), 17 October 2016, 1535 (Dawn Moore).

176 [Evidence](#), 24 October 2016, 1545 (Kenya Rogers).

177 [Evidence](#), 17 October 2016, 1535 (Dawn Moore).

178 [Evidence](#), 28 September 2016, 1610 (Ann Decter); [Evidence](#), 17 October 2016, 1535 (Dawn Moore); [Evidence](#), 17 October 2016, 1605 (Anuradha Dugal); [Evidence](#), 24 October 2016, 1545 (Kenya Rogers); [Evidence](#), 31 October 2016, 1700 (Manon Bergeron).

based research, include anonymous, confidential and secure reporting mechanisms for survivors of sexual violence on campuses, and provide sexual violence intervention and sensitivity training for all employees of post-secondary administrations, campus police, students, faculty and other staff during orientation times. Furthermore, all university and college administrations should proactively disclose to the public, on a yearly basis, all statistics on sexual violence on their campuses.

Recommendation 8

That the Government of Canada request that the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, at the next meeting of Canada's federal, provincial and territorial Ministers Responsible for Justice and Public Safety, urge all jurisdictions to discuss mechanisms by which the provinces and territories could require all university and college administrations to establish sexual assault centres on campus, which would offer free and accessible counselling services for students and other members of the university community.

Recommendation 9

That the Government of Canada request that the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, at the next meeting of Canada's federal, provincial and territorial Ministers Responsible for Justice and Public Safety, urge all jurisdictions to discuss mechanisms by which the provinces and territories could require all universities and colleges to make the Mental Health Commission of Canada's mental health first aid course mandatory for faculty members, employees of university and college administrations, and campus police.

Recommendation 10

That the Government of Canada, through Status of Women Canada, examine best practices for reporting, investigating and adjudicating cases of sexual violence on post-secondary campuses.

Observation 1

The Committee heard evidence regarding anti-sexual violence and anti-harassment policies and legislation that have been implemented in certain provinces and territories. The Committee encourages provinces and territories that currently do not have existing or sufficient legislation in this area to champion the implementation of standardized anti-sexual violence and anti-harassment policies across university and college campuses, and that these policies stand alone from other human rights policies or student codes of conduct.

C. Cyberviolence against Young Women and Girls

1. Defining Cyberviolence

Cyberviolence involves the use of social media and information and communications technologies (ICTs) for committing an act of violence or extending an act of violence in order to harm the well-being of an individual or group.¹⁷⁹ While both men and women experience violence through social media and ICTs, witnesses noted that women and girls are at greater risk than men and boys of experiencing cyberviolence, especially severe types of harassment and sexualized online abuse. Acts of cyberviolence, while enabled by ICTs and social media, are rooted in larger social and cultural problems – including sexism and misogyny – that contribute to violence against young women and girls in the offline world, as outlined in the earlier section “Factors Contributing to Violence against Young Women and Girls.”¹⁸⁰

The Committee heard that ICTs and social media are being used as “weapons” and have expanded the scope, nature and impact of violence against women and girls.¹⁸¹ The Committee was told that the online realm is the “Wild West”¹⁸² and “a new frontier”¹⁸³ shaped by ideas of freedom, anonymity and lack of accountability.¹⁸⁴

The Committee was told that cyberviolence against young women and girls is similar to other types of gender-based violence: it is used as a tool to control women, to maintain men’s dominance over women, and to reinforce patriarchal norms, roles and structures. In addition, while there are limited data, evidence suggests that the majority of victims are female and the majority of perpetrators are male.¹⁸⁵ Witnesses also stated that it is unclear how many acts of cyberviolence are perpetrated by strangers online or by individuals known to the victim, such as classmates.¹⁸⁶

179 [Evidence](#), 28 September 2016, 1545 (Raine Liliefeldt).

180 [Evidence](#), 21 September 2016, 1545 (Rena Bivens, Assistant Professor, School of Journalism and Communication, Carleton University, As an individual); [Evidence](#), 26 September 2016, 1540 (Shanly Dixon); [Evidence](#), 21 November 2016, 1540 (Patricia Cartes); [Evidence](#), 21 September 2016, 1645 (Dee Dooley).

181 East Prince Women’s Information Centre, “[Cyberviolence Needs Assessment for Prince Edward Island](#),” *Submitted Brief*, October 2016.

182 [Evidence](#), 28 September 2016, 1555 (Ann Decter).

183 [Evidence](#), 21 September 2016, 1635 (Angela Marie MacDougall, Executive Director, Battered Women’s Support Services).

184 [Evidence](#), 28 September 2016, 1555 (Ann Decter).

185 [Evidence](#), 5 October 2016, 1635 and 1710 (Soraya Chemaly); [Evidence](#), 28 September 2016, 1630 (Signy Arnason); East Prince Women’s Information Centre, “[Cyberviolence Needs Assessment for Prince Edward Island](#),” *Submitted Brief*, October 2016.

186 East Prince Women’s Information Centre, “[Cyberviolence Needs Assessment for Prince Edward Island](#),” *Submitted Brief*, October 2016.

However, cyberviolence is different from other forms of violence against women because of certain characteristics.¹⁸⁷

- *Accessibility and relentlessness*: Victims can be attacked online at any hour and on any day in typically “safe” locations, such as their homes.
- *Disinhibition*: Perpetrators may feel less empathy and find it easier to be cruel when they cannot see or be seen by their target.
- *Audience*: The online realm has a potentially huge audience.
- *Anonymity*: Perpetrators can use deception or anonymity to undertake their activities.
- *Ease of access*: The automation of technology requires little technical knowledge and the affordability of most technology provides access.
- *Digital permanence*: Content posted online about a person becomes a part of their permanent online identity, difficult to erase.

Some witnesses cautioned against using the term cyberbullying because it does not reflect the seriousness of the violence and because youth do not identify with the term.¹⁸⁸

(i) Forms of Cyberviolence

Cyberviolence against young women and girls can take many different shapes.¹⁸⁹ A common form of cyberviolence is the non-consensual distribution of sexual recordings and images – also referred to as revenge porn – sent with the aim of harassing, shaming or ruining the reputation of the targeted individual.¹⁹⁰ In some cases, the distributed video or image is of a sexual assault, which can doubly victimize the individual.¹⁹¹ In other cases, the distributed content consists of consensual sexual acts, forwarded or posted without the victim’s authorization.¹⁹² In a written brief, the East Prince Women’s Information Centre stated that: “males in junior high and high school have locked photo albums on their

187 [Evidence](#), 5 October 2016, 1545 (Jeffery Adam); [Evidence](#), 28 September 2016, 1635 (Signy Arnason); [Evidence](#), 26 September 2016, 1530 (Kimberly Taplin, Director, National Aboriginal Policing and Crime Prevention Services, Centre for Youth Crime Prevention – RCMP); [Evidence](#), 3 October 2016, 1650 (Alicia Raimundo); [Evidence](#), 21 September 2016, 1645 (Dee Dooley).

188 [Evidence](#), 16 June 2016, 1705 (Matthew Johnson); [Evidence](#), 28 September 2016, 1545 (Raine Liliefeldt); [Evidence](#), 21 September 2016, 1615 (Valerie Steeves).

189 [Evidence](#), 3 October 2016, 1635 (Nancy Beth Guptill).

190 [Evidence](#), 5 October 2016, 1640 (Soraya Chemaly); [Evidence](#), 19 October 2016, 1635 (Alexander Wayne MacKay); [Evidence](#), 16 June 2016, 1550 (Shaheen Shariff); [Evidence](#), 16 June 2016, 1600 (Lara Karaian); [Evidence](#), 16 June 2016, 1650 (Jane Bailey); [Evidence](#), 12 April 2016, 1535 (Linda Savoie).

191 [Evidence](#), 26 September 2016, 1630 (Leah Parsons).

192 [Evidence](#), 26 September 2016, 1640 (Carol Todd).

phones with hundreds of nude or near-nude photos of female classmates, and they view and swap images on their way to school, during lunch, and on breaks.”¹⁹³

A number of witnesses reminded the Committee that the act of sexting – sharing intimate images through social media or ICTs – was not a form of cyberviolence if it was consensual. Rather it is a means by which today’s youth express their sexuality.¹⁹⁴

The Committee heard that cyber-harassment and cyber-stalking can also be defined as a form of cyberviolence, whereby a perpetrator (sometimes a former intimate partner) or group of perpetrators (in a “mob-style” attack) uses electronic means to relentlessly pursue a victim. Tactics include monitoring or disrupting online communications, making threats (particularly threats of sexual violence), stealing personal information, and spreading false accusations.¹⁹⁵ Cyberviolence can also include “sextortion,” whereby victims are threatened with the electronic distribution of sexual images or information, otherwise known as “sexual blackmail.”¹⁹⁶

An emerging form of cyberviolence is doxxing which involves the releasing of an individual’s personal information (such as pictures, social insurance number and home address) online against his or her wishes. It has commonly been used against women, at times because they opposed sexism or turned down sexual advances online.¹⁹⁷ The Committee also heard about “brigading,” whereby skilled individuals can manipulate algorithms to “amplify harassment” and boost harmful content.¹⁹⁸

Another form of cyberviolence is the luring and online exploitation of minors by adults. In these cases, adults share existing or self-produced sexual images of children (also referred to as child pornography) or communicate with children over the Internet for the purpose of committing a sexual offence or trafficking.¹⁹⁹ The Collectivité ingénieuse de la Péninsule acadienne, in a written brief, explained: “Social media are the preferred means of communication for young people and are therefore the ‘bait’ of choice for sex offenders.”²⁰⁰

193 East Prince Women’s Information Centre, “[Cyberviolence Needs Assessment for Prince Edward Island](#),” *Submitted Brief*, October 2016.

194 [Evidence](#), 16 June 2016, 1620 (Shaheen Shariff); [Evidence](#), 16 June 2016, 1640 (Matthew Johnson); [Evidence](#), 5 October 2016, 1650 (Soraya Chemaly); Alexander Wayne MacKay, “[Revenge Porn: When Sexualized Violence, Freedom of Expression, & Cyber Bullies Collide](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 26 July 2016.

195 [Evidence](#), 5 October 2016, 1640 (Soraya Chemaly); [Evidence](#), 17 October 2016, 1615 (Anuradha Dugal); [Evidence](#), 14 November 2016, 1655 (Katie Kitchke); [Evidence](#), 26 September 2016, 1540 (Shanly Dixon); [Evidence](#), 12 April 2016, 1535 (Linda Savoie).

196 [Evidence](#), 5 October 2016, 1640 (Soraya Chemaly); [Evidence](#), 28 September 2016, 1635 (Signy Amason); [Evidence](#), 26 September 2016, 1645 (Carol Todd).

197 [Evidence](#), 3 October 2016, 1650 (Alicia Raimundo); [Evidence](#), 5 October 2016, 1640 (Soraya Chemaly).

198 [Evidence](#), 5 December 2016, 1535 (Matthew Johnson).

199 [Evidence](#), 26 September 2016, 1540 (Shanly Dixon); [Evidence](#), 12 April 2016, 1545 (Yvan Clermont); [Evidence](#), 28 September 2016, 1635 (Signy Amason); [Evidence](#), 14 November 2016, 1710 (Lucille Harper).

200 Collectivité ingénieuse de la Péninsule acadienne, “[Appearance before the Standing Committee on the Status of Women](#),” *Submitted Brief*, October 2016.

(ii) Available Data on Cyberviolence

Because cyberviolence is an emerging phenomenon and is underreported, data are limited on the frequency, nature and intensity of such violence in Canada.²⁰¹ At the international level, the Committee was informed that a 2014 UN report on cyberviolence against women estimates that 73% of women globally have been exposed to or have experienced a form of online violence.²⁰²

Specific to cyberviolence in Canada, witnesses provided the following data to the Committee:

- In 2014, 6% of Canadians 15 years of age and over who use the Internet had been victims of cyberbullying in the past five years.²⁰³
- The most common cyber offence against female children and youth is child luring, followed by invitation to sexual touching.²⁰⁴
- Over 4,000 child sexual exploitation offences were reported in 2014, a 6% increase over 2013.²⁰⁵
- A January 2016 report revealed that of 44,000 images of child sexual abuse examined, 80% of the children in the images were female. In addition, 79% of them appeared to be prepubescent (under 12 years of age) and of that number, around 65% were under eight years of age.²⁰⁶
- In images of child sexual abuse, the perpetrators are disproportionately male; in one study, 83% of images had a male perpetrator visible.²⁰⁷
- The Canadian Centre for Child Protection receives around 15 reports a month dealing with online extortion of youth, although this figure is the “tip of the iceberg.” The majority of these reports involve female child victims (70%).²⁰⁸

According to a December 2016 Statistics Canada report, 2014 data indicate that “17% of the population aged 15 to 29 (representing about 1.1 million people) that accessed

201 [Evidence](#), 28 September 2016, 1610 (Raine Liliefeldt); [Evidence](#), 26 September 2016, 1605 (Peter Payne, Officer in Charge, National Child Exploitation Coordination Centre, Centre for Youth Crime Prevention – RCMP); [Evidence](#), 16 June 2016, 1700 (Matthew Johnson).

202 East Prince Women's Information Centre, “[Cyberviolence Needs Assessment for Prince Edward Island](#),” *Submitted Brief*, October 2016.

203 [Evidence](#), 12 April 2016, 1545 and 1550 (Yvan Clermont).

204 *Ibid.*, 1545.

205 [Evidence](#), 21 April 2016, 1545 (Lori MacDonald).

206 [Evidence](#), 28 September 2016, 1630 (Signy Arnason).

207 *Ibid.*

208 *Ibid.*, 1635.

the Internet at some point between 2009 and 2014 reported they had experienced cyberbullying or cyberstalking.”²⁰⁹ The report indicated that young women were more likely to “have experienced both cyberbullying and cyberstalking in the last five years.”²¹⁰

(iii) The Impact of Cyberviolence

Witnesses told the Committee about the devastating impact that cases of cyberviolence can have on young women and girls. Among many of today’s youth in Canada – including young women and girls – the distinction between cyberspace and real space is virtually meaningless. Their identity and reputations are intrinsically connected to the online world and what occurs online can have significant consequences in the real world.²¹¹ As explained in a brief submitted by the East Prince Women’s Information Centre:

Youth are online for huge chunks of the day. Many use social media and smart phone applications as their main communication method. Rather than speaking on the phone, most youth prefer to text or chat via instant messaging apps. Facebook. Twitter. Instagram. Snapchat. KIK Messenger. WhatsApp.²¹²

Young women and girls experience physical, psychological, emotional, and financial consequences from cyberviolence.²¹³ Furthermore, a victim of cyberviolence is re-victimized every time a hateful message or sexual image is redistributed or viewed without consent.²¹⁴

The Committee heard that cyberviolence can lead to serious mental health problems, even in resilient young women and girls. In many situations, young women and girls will suffer from damaged self-esteem, a loss of self-worth, feelings of sadness and anger, anxiety, fear for personal safety, social withdrawal, and depression.²¹⁵ In the most serious of cases, cyberviolence can lead young women and girls to commit suicide.²¹⁶ Members of the Committee were particularly moved by Leah Parsons and Carol Todd, who shared the stories of their daughters, Rehtaeh Parsons and Amanda Todd, both of

209 Darcy Hango, [“Cyberbullying and cyberstalking among Internet users aged 15 to 29 in Canada,”](#) *Statistics Canada: Insights on Canadian Society*, 19 December 2016, p. 3.

210 *Ibid.*, p. 4.

211 Jane Bailey and Valerie Steeves, [“Submission to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women Relating to Violence against Young Women and Girls in Canada,”](#) *Submitted Brief*, 22 September 2016; East Prince Women’s Information Centre, [“Cyberviolence Needs Assessment for Prince Edward Island,”](#) *Submitted Brief*, October 2016.

212 East Prince Women’s Information Centre, [“Cyberviolence Needs Assessment for Prince Edward Island,”](#) *Submitted Brief*, October 2016.

213 [Evidence](#), 26 September 2016, 1540 (Shanly Dixon).

214 [Evidence](#), 28 September 2016, 1700 (Lianna McDonald, Executive Director, Canadian Centre for Child Protection).

215 East Prince Women’s Information Centre, [“Cyberviolence Needs Assessment for Prince Edward Island,”](#) *Submitted Brief*, October 2016.

216 [Evidence](#), 14 November 2016, 1635 (Lucille Harper); Antigonish Women’s Resource Centre and Sexual Assault Services, [“Submission to House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women: Violence against Girls and Young Women,”](#) *Submitted Brief*, November 2016.

whom experienced extensive cyberviolence and subsequently committed suicide due to the prolonged strain on their mental health.²¹⁷

Ms. Parsons spoke about the impact of the persistent nature of cyberviolence experienced by her daughter, stating that: “Rehtaeh was assaulted by four males in November 2011. A photo was taken and shared without her permission or knowledge.... [E]very time she attempted a fresh start, she was faced with the reality that the image continued to be shared as she moved from school to school.”²¹⁸ Ms. Parsons told the Committee how her daughter’s mental health was seriously affected by the online harassment:

Rehtaeh was just 15 years old at the time of this trauma. At this young age Rehtaeh was just developing the very core of who she would become. She left grade nine just a few months prior as a straight-A student with big hopes and dreams for her future. Once she became a target of cruelty and ridicule, her mental health started to deteriorate, and it happened very fast. Soon my bright, confident girl was struggling with thoughts of suicide. Panic, anger, and sadness were emotions she cycled through on a regular basis. She just didn't have enough time and life experience to see that it was possible to navigate through this dark period. She became terrified of her own thoughts.²¹⁹

Ms. Todd also shared the impact of cyberviolence on her daughter’s mental health:

[Amanda’s] peers continued to taunt and ridicule her face to face, online, in school, and in our community. This left Amanda powerless, fearful, and anxiety-ridden and not wanting to leave her own house. This alleged profile made by the predator continued to follow, terrorize, and threaten Amanda over social media, even after she went off social media ... as had been recommended. When we allowed her to go back online, the person came back and continued to taunt her, harass her, and threaten her. Amanda moved schools multiple times, and it is known to us now that this person created a hundred alias profiles and followed her around.... My once-spirited and adventurous child became more reclusive and sad, and she felt alone.²²⁰

The Antigonish Women's Resource Centre and Sexual Assault Services explained that particularly in cases involving the distribution of non-consensual sexual images: “[girls] are tormented, re-victimized, cannot escape from [their sexualized] images, consumed and condemned again and again by peers and strangers.”²²¹ The Committee heard that young women and girls whose sexual images are distributed without consent experience the incidents as violations of their sexual autonomy and privacy, and are traumatized psychologically and emotionally.²²²

217 [Evidence](#), 26 September 2016, 1630 (Leah Parsons); [Evidence](#), 26 September 2016, 1640 (Carol Todd).

218 [Evidence](#), 26 September 2016, 1630 (Leah Parsons).

219 Ibid.

220 [Evidence](#), 26 September 2016, 1640 and 1645 (Carol Todd).

221 Antigonish Women's Resource Centre and Sexual Assault Services, “[Submission to House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women: Violence against Girls and Young Women](#),” *Submitted Brief*, November 2016.

222 [Evidence](#), 16 June 2016, 1600 (Lara Karaian).

The Committee heard that women who are survivors of cyberviolence can also suffer harm to their financial well-being and career development. They experience anxiety applying for jobs when they know an online search may be conducted. They may face difficulties securing employment because of a damaged digital reputation, and they can experience the potential loss of employment because of mental health problems or because an employer discovers harmful digital content, such as libellous statements or intimate images distributed without consent.²²³ Furthermore, cyberviolence can lead to social isolation; it can be accompanied by the loss of friendships and social contacts, estrangement from friends or family, and negative impacts on interpersonal and romantic relationships.²²⁴

Malika Saada Saar, Senior Counsel in Human and Civil Rights at Google, emphasized the impact that a “digital footprint” can have on a person’s emotional and financial well-being. She told the Committee that she had been cyberstalked:

This individual aggressively stalked me online, created false websites against me, and sent shaming emails to former colleagues at the Department of Justice, at the White House, and to my funders. He invented false identities through which he further harassed me.²²⁵

Ms. Saada Saar said that she had been approached by a young woman whose sexual images had been distributed without her consent:

Those revenge-porn images were essentially her only digital footprint. As a result, no firm would hire her for the summer. I realized that while the cyberviolence done to me had real emotional consequences, I already had a digital footprint that balanced all of the wreckage done to me, but this young woman did not. As with all forms of gender-based violence, there are emotional as well as economic consequences of the violence against us as women and girls.²²⁶

Beyond individual cases of cyberviolence, the Committee heard that young women and girls internalize the negative and hypersexualized messages they see on the Internet, which may lead to poor self-image and self-esteem²²⁷ and mental health problems such as depression.²²⁸

223 [Evidence](#), 16 June 2016, 1600 (Lara Karaian); Alexander Wayne MacKay, “[Revenge Porn: When Sexualized Violence, Freedom of Expression, & Cyber Bullies Collide](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 26 July 2016.

224 East Prince Women’s Information Centre, “[Cyberviolence Needs Assessment for Prince Edward Island](#),” *Submitted Brief*, October 2016; [Evidence](#), 16 June 2016, 1600 (Lara Karaian); Alexander Wayne MacKay, “[Revenge Porn: When Sexualized Violence, Freedom of Expression, & Cyber Bullies Collide](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 26 July 2016.

225 [Evidence](#), 7 December 2016, 1530 (Malika Saada Saar, Senior Counsel, Human and Civil Rights, Google).

226 Ibid.

227 [Evidence](#), 26 September 2016, 1635 (Leah Parsons); East Prince Women’s Information Centre, “[Cyberviolence Needs Assessment for Prince Edward Island](#),” *Submitted Brief*, October 2016.

228 [Evidence](#), 3 October 2016, 1645 (Lisa Lachance, Executive Director, CYCC Network); [Evidence](#), 28 September 2016, 1545 (Raine Liliefeldt).

2. Navigating the Digital Environment

The Committee heard that the online realm provides an important way to connect and share experiences with friends, family, organizations and other individuals and can be “profoundly positive” and “transformative.”²²⁹ Youth, including young women and girls, are “immersed in these systems” and the Internet and technology plays an important role in individuals’ daily lives.²³⁰ While there are serious risks online for young women and girls in particular, witnesses reminded the Committee that it is important that young women and girls have equal access, compared to young men and boys, to the opportunities for expression, debate and personal development in the online realm.²³¹

Ms. Saada Saar of Google explained the balance that must be found between the benefits of the online realm and protecting individuals from violent and harmful content:

The free flow of information is essential to creativity and innovation, and leads to economic growth for countries and companies alike. However, there are legitimate limits we must look at, even where laws strongly protect free expression and we have clear processes for removals if content violates local laws.²³²

(i) Digital Citizenship

The Committee was reminded that adults are responsible for the design of the online environment, and for the societal and cultural norms in the offline world, which are reflected in the online world.²³³ Some witnesses said that the online realm is a “community,”²³⁴ with a range of appropriate and inappropriate behaviours,²³⁵ including misogyny, homophobia, transphobia, hypersexualization, ableism and racism.²³⁶ According to Mr. Johnson, Director of Education at MediaSmarts, more than one-third of Canadian students in grades 7 to 11 come across racist or sexist content online at least once a week.²³⁷

A number of witnesses asserted that online violence has become normalized, with many youth believing that cyberviolence is an inevitable component of Internet and mobile

229 Facebook Inc. – Kevin Chan, “[Submission to the Parliamentary Committee on the Status of Women](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 2016.

230 [Evidence](#), 5 October 2016, 1700 (Soraya Chemaly); [Evidence](#), 26 September 2016, 1530 (Kimberly Taplin).

231 [Evidence](#), 28 September 2016, 1545 (Raine Liliefeldt); [Evidence](#), 28 September 2016, 1620 (Ann Decter); YWCA Canada, “[Safety for Girls and Young Women Starts with Leadership](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 23 September 2016.

232 [Evidence](#), 7 December 2016, 1530 (Malika Saada Saar).

233 [Evidence](#), 21 September 2016, 1550 and 1555 (Valerie Steeves).

234 [Evidence](#), 3 October 2016, 1700 (Alicia Raimundo); [Evidence](#), 21 September 2016, 1635 (Angela Marie MacDougall).

235 [Evidence](#), 3 October 2016, 1700 (Lisa Lachance); [Evidence](#), 3 October 2016, 1700 (Alicia Raimundo).

236 [Evidence](#), 16 June 2016, 1650 (Jane Bailey); [Evidence](#), 26 September 2016, 1545 (Shanly Dixon).

237 [Evidence](#), 16 June 2016, 1640 (Matthew Johnson).

device use.²³⁸ Online violence in turns makes violence in off-line environments more acceptable.²³⁹ Shaheen Shariff, Associate Professor in the Law Faculty at McGill University, discussed one study in which 65% of young people between the ages of 9 and 17 years said they would engage in the non-consensual distribution of intimate images and sexting for fun or to make friends laugh.²⁴⁰

Many young women and girls learn quickly that the online realm may not be a safe space for them.²⁴¹ Mr. Johnson told the Committee that girls are significantly more likely than boys to feel the Internet is a dangerous space for them and to fear getting hurt online.²⁴² According to witnesses, responses to cyberviolence should include the reinforcement of women's right to expression online and the establishment of limits to control unacceptable online behaviour.²⁴³

Witnesses acknowledged that surveillance of youth, especially young women and girls, is not the solution to address cyberviolence. In fact, surveillance can exacerbate the problem, because it tells children that they are the problem and children then feel that the trust between them and their parents (or other authority figures) is lost.²⁴⁴

Rather, witnesses said that there must be greater education and awareness of the concept of "digital citizenship" whereby users of social media and ICTs understand and exercise their rights to safe and inclusive online communities as citizens and consumers.²⁴⁵ Developing a generation of good digital citizens includes teaching children and youth about empathy and respect online,²⁴⁶ showing children and youth that they have the ability to make a difference online; and sharing the steps they can take to oppose and report cyberviolence or hateful content.²⁴⁷ Informed and responsible digital citizens can act like an "online Neighbourhood Watch program" and signal to social media and ICT companies when their platforms are being used for acts of abuse or violence.²⁴⁸ Tessa Hill, Co-founder of We Give Consent, told the Committee: "It is easy to get overwhelmed

238 [Evidence](#), 3 October 2016, 1635 (Nancy Beth Guptill); [Evidence](#), 26 September 2016, 1555 (Shanly Dixon); [Evidence](#), 21 September 2016, 1620 (Valerie Steeves).

239 [Evidence](#), 26 September 2016, 1540 (Shanly Dixon).

240 [Evidence](#), 16 June 2016, 1550 (Shaheen Shariff).

241 [Evidence](#), 5 October 2016, 1635 (Soraya Chemaly); [Evidence](#), 28 September 2016, 1545 (Raine Liliefeldt); [Evidence](#), 12 April 2016, 1540 (Linda Savoie).

242 [Evidence](#), 16 June 2016, 1640 (Matthew Johnson).

243 [Evidence](#), 16 June 2016, 1605 (Lara Karaian); [Evidence](#), 28 September 2016, 1620 (Ann Decter); [Evidence](#), 28 September 2016, 1545 (Raine Liliefeldt).

244 [Evidence](#), 21 September 2016, 1550 (Valerie Steeves); [Evidence](#), 21 September 2016, 1605 (Rena Bivens); [Evidence](#), 21 September 2016, 1655 (Dee Dooley).

245 [Evidence](#), 16 June 2016, 1540 (Matthew Johnson); [Evidence](#), 7 December 2016, 1535 (Malika Saada Saar).

246 Amanda Todd Legacy Society – Carol Todd, "[Brief for the Standing Committee for Gender Based Violence of Girls and Young Women \(Cyberviolence\)](#)," *Submitted Brief*, October 2016; Alexander Wayne MacKay, "[Revenge Porn: When Sexualized Violence, Freedom of Expression, & Cyber Bullies Collide](#)," *Submitted Brief*, 26 July 2016.

247 [Evidence](#), 5 December 2016, 1550 (Matthew Johnson).

248 [Evidence](#), 7 December 2016, 1535 (Malika Saada Saar).

with the trolls and comments, but for the most part, I felt an amazing sense of support from people online.”²⁴⁹

(ii) Digital Sexual Expression of Young Women and Girls

The Committee heard that youth and children should have access to age-appropriate sexually explicit material, to provide information on sexual health, sexual activity and “for developmentally appropriate sexual curiosity and self-definition.”²⁵⁰ Furthermore, empowering young women and girls online should include the promotion of women’s sexual pleasure and autonomy.²⁵¹ Ms. Karaian, Associate Professor at the Institute of Criminology and Criminal Justice at Carleton University, explained:

For me it's been extremely important to speak to young people about how they understand sexting, how they understand sexual representation in the digital age and their own sexuality. I think many of us here have found that for young people today, there are lots of panics around hypersexualization and the sexualization of young people, lots of fears about exploitation of young women, that don't take into consideration how sexual expression by young women is in fact an integral part of their self-development, their ... self-understanding as individuals with autonomy, who are not only sexual objects but also sexual subjects.²⁵²

Witnesses explained that online culture delivers conflicting messages to young women and girls; on one hand, sexual violence (online and offline) and even sexual expression can be used to humiliate, embarrass and ruin reputations, while on the other hand, societal and media messages tell young women and girls that they should develop a hypersexualized online identity.²⁵³

The Committee heard that perpetrators of cyberviolence against young women and girls often depend on the power of patriarchal norms and gender-based stereotypes that shame, humiliate and penalize women for sexual behaviour.²⁵⁴ The psychological and emotional distress experienced by girls whose sexual images are distributed non-consensually reflects in large part society’s expectations of girls as “guardians of their sexual innocence” and as being responsible for any consequences of sexual activity.²⁵⁵ These young women and girls may be “slut shamed,” a form of cyberviolence designed to judge and regulate their sexual behaviour online.²⁵⁶

249 [Evidence](#), 16 November 2016, 1540 (Tessa Hill).

250 [Evidence](#), 5 December 2016, 1625 (Jane Bailey).

251 [Evidence](#), 16 June 2016, 1605 (Lara Karaian); [Evidence](#), 28 September 2016, 1620 (Ann Decter); [Evidence](#), 28 September 2016, 1545 (Raine Liliefeldt).

252 [Evidence](#), 16 June 2016, 1610 (Lara Karaian).

253 [Evidence](#), 16 June 2016, 1650 (Jane Bailey); [Evidence](#), 21 September 2016, 1610 (Valerie Steeves).

254 [Evidence](#), 5 October 2016, 1640 (Soraya Chemaly); [Evidence](#), 16 June 2016, 1710 (Jane Bailey); [Evidence](#), 16 June 2016, 1600 (Lara Karaian).

255 [Evidence](#), 16 June 2016, 1645 (Matthew Johnson); [Evidence](#), 16 June 2016, 1605 (Lara Karaian); [Evidence](#), 16 June 2016, 1650 (Jane Bailey).

256 [Evidence](#), 7 December 2016, 1600 (Malika Saada Saar).

Young women and girls who experience cyberviolence may be the targets of victim blaming or may blame themselves because of societal and cultural norms and stereotypes about women’s sexuality.²⁵⁷ For example, in cases where sexts are forwarded without permission, victims may be told that they are responsible because they never should have sent the sexual images in the first place. In other situations, where survivors seek assistance following instances of cyberviolence, law enforcement and other authorities may advise them to “stay offline,” perpetuating the idea that their behaviour is to blame for a perpetrator’s actions.²⁵⁸ According to witnesses, responses to cyberviolence should include the promotion of women’s sexual pleasure and autonomy.²⁵⁹

(iii) The Role of Programming and Algorithms

Witnesses told the Committee that technological programs and products are not gender-neutral; rather, their design and utilization can have varying impacts on different groups of men and women.²⁶⁰ In particular, the Committee heard about the impact of algorithms, which can be described as “a series of computational steps or procedures that are carried out on information as an input to produce a particular output.”²⁶¹ Algorithms operate in a “complex network of digital devices, people, and processes constantly at work”²⁶² and “are only as smart as as the people who train them and the data that's fed into them.”²⁶³ It was suggested that a contributing factor for this phenomenon is that social media platforms – and the coding and algorithms that go with them – are dominated by men.²⁶⁴ Mr. Johnson stated that “Algorithms can also present problems in terms of how they deliver content, because they embody their creator's conscious or unconscious biases and prejudices.”²⁶⁵

The Committee heard that algorithms may “end up reproducing and amplifying biases” that exist in society²⁶⁶ as they curate the aggregate bias and discrimination and feed it back to users in ways that have “disparate impacts on members of marginalized communities, impacts that are not felt by members of the majority.”²⁶⁷

257 [Evidence](#), 21 September 2016, 1715 (Dee Dooley).

258 Facebook Inc. – Kevin Chan, “[Submission to the Parliamentary Committee on the Status of Women](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 2016; [Evidence](#), 26 September 2016, 1630 (Leah Parsons); [Evidence](#), 5 October 2016, 1605 (Jeffery Adam); [Evidence](#), 3 October 2016, 1720 (Alicia Raimundo).

259 [Evidence](#), 16 June 2016, 1605 (Lara Karaian); [Evidence](#), 28 September 2016, 1620 (Ann Decter); [Evidence](#), 28 September 2016, 1545 (Raine Lilliefeldt).

260 [Evidence](#), 21 September 2016, 1545 (Rena Bivens); [Evidence](#), 21 September 2016, 1555 (Valerie Steeves).

261 [Evidence](#), 5 December 2016, 1630 (Sandra Robinson, Instructor, Carleton University, As an individual).

262 *Ibid.*, 1630.

263 *Ibid.*, 1700.

264 [Evidence](#), 28 September 2016, 1555 (Steph Guthrie); [Evidence](#), 5 December 2016, 1720 (Sandra Robinson).

265 [Evidence](#), 5 December 2016, 1535 (Matthew Johnson).

266 [Evidence](#), 5 October 2016, 1720 (Soraya Chemaly).

267 [Evidence](#), 5 December 2016, 1620 (Jane Bailey).

In addition, algorithms can isolate individuals from “opposing ideas and broader world views.”²⁶⁸ Furthermore, given the widespread presence of pornography and sexualized messages online, these messages are incorporated into how algorithms assess language, which in turn can normalize language (such as gendered slurs) that shames young women and girls.²⁶⁹

Ms. Bailey, Professor at the Faculty of Law at the University of Ottawa, shared the impact of algorithms on youth, including young women and girls:

[The concern is the] constraint that [an algorithmic output] imposes on people's equal capacity to participate and to grow. In the context of young people, our concern is around whether young people will be influenced in ways such that they internalize the stereotypes that are wallpapering their online spaces, how internalization of that stereotype may affect their self-presentation, their self-understanding, and their understanding of their possibilities for future growth and participation, and in what ways this may set youth up for conflict with one another and set youth up to judge each other according to the stereotype's marketed standards that are part of the algorithmic sort in an online environment.²⁷⁰

Witnesses were also concerned with the lack of transparency with respect to algorithmic programming and the lack of understanding among the general population of how these algorithms affect their daily lives online.²⁷¹ Sandra Robinson, instructor at Carleton University, explained:

[Algorithms are] often mysterious and non-transparent ... a black box that governs our information landscape, persistently at work to shape information flows, determining what information we see and in what order we see it, and then nudging us towards certain actions by organizing our choices.²⁷²

Witnesses discussed the risks and benefits of using algorithms to detect abusive language or patterns of abusive behaviours.²⁷³ Patricia Cartes, Head of Global Safety at Twitter Inc., stated that “algorithms are a very smart way to let the system alert you to specific situations that might be happening that you might not know unless somebody has reported it to you.”²⁷⁴ However, at the same time, she warned “if you rely on just the algorithms to provide support to users, you can have a lot of collateral damage. You may have certain accounts and certain activities that are flagged by the algorithm that are not abusive and that you need to manually review.”²⁷⁵ The Committee heard that social media companies can be overwhelmed with the number of reported cases of abuse appearing on

268 [Evidence](#), 26 September 2016, 1545 (Shanly Dixon).

269 [Evidence](#), 5 October 2016, 1700 (Soraya Chemaly).

270 [Evidence](#), 5 December 2016, 1530 (Jane Bailey).

271 *Ibid.*

272 [Evidence](#), 5 December 2016, 1630 (Sandra Robinson).

273 [Evidence](#), 21 November 2016, 1550 (Patricia Cartes).

274 *Ibid.*

275 *Ibid.*

their platforms, and they hope sophisticated algorithms can help them detect such abuse more efficiently in the future.²⁷⁶

The Committee heard that social media and ICT companies should be required to be more transparent regarding their practices and programming, although it was acknowledged that those platforms – and the relevant algorithms – are likely proprietary for competitive reasons.²⁷⁷ Therefore, providing digital literacy initiatives to all Canadians, including young women and girls, is an effective way to raise awareness of the impact of algorithms and computer programming, as outlined in the section below “Awareness and Digital Literacy Efforts.”

3. Possible Responses to Cyberviolence

The Committee heard that technological changes present serious challenges to survivors of violence, their families, law enforcement agencies, the justice system, governments and the general public in seeking redress for acts of violence and preventing future acts of violence. The Committee was informed that technologically facilitated violence against women and girls should be recognized as “an equality-based human rights issue” and the root causes should be addressed, rather than focusing on solely a criminal law response.²⁷⁸ The Committee heard that holding perpetrators of cyberviolence legally accountable for their actions can serve to: denounce the behaviour; spread awareness and educate the public on the issue; remedy harms with monetary damages, injunctions and criminal convictions; and deter potential future perpetrators by showing the harm of such an act.²⁷⁹

Jeffery Adam, Chief Superintendent and Director General, E-Crimes at the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, explained that cyberviolence catches many Canadians by surprise because the new digital environment has evolved quickly, without accompanying education. Additionally, the online environment does not provide the same sensory “threat cues” of dangerous physical environments since the Internet is often accessed from the comfort of home.²⁸⁰

(i) The Role of Law Enforcement Agencies and the Justice System

In Canada, depending on the circumstances, instances of cyberviolence can be addressed under criminal or civil law, although witnesses noted that the majority of cases of cyberviolence are not reported to police.²⁸¹ Law enforcement agencies face serious challenges in addressing cyberviolence because cases are often cross-jurisdictional

276 Ibid.

277 [Evidence](#), 5 December 2016, 1710 (Sandra Robinson).

278 [Evidence](#), 16 June 2016, 1655 (Jane Bailey).

279 [Evidence](#), 5 October 2016, 1545 (Jeffery Adam); [Evidence](#), 19 October 2016, 1640 (Nicolette Little).

280 [Evidence](#), 5 October 2016, 1545 (Jeffery Adam).

281 Ibid., 1610.

(crossing provincial and international borders)²⁸²; many cases involve anonymous perpetrators; and there is a need for improved digital literacy among law enforcement officers.²⁸³ Furthermore, a lack of understanding, will to investigate or shortage of resources in the law enforcement and justice sectors can limit legal remedies for cyberviolence.²⁸⁴

A number of witnesses spoke of the need to educate law enforcement and justice officials on cyberviolence.²⁸⁵ Steph Guthrie, Social Justice Advocate, told the Committee about her experience in the justice system:

Regardless of which side they took on the verdict in my case, many observers commented on how the judge's decision revealed what was, on his part, a very limited grasp of how the Internet works, and Twitter in particular, which is where the harassment occurred. Let me be clear that the judge in my case did work very hard to understand how Twitter works by asking many follow-up questions. He was very thorough. However, you don't learn what it's like to use Twitter by asking questions. You learn what it's like to use Twitter by using it...

But how do you explain to someone who has never used Twitter what it's like to be someone who uses Twitter as your primary means of sharing your voice with the world? How do you explain to that person who never uses Twitter just how much it impacted your life to no longer be able to use it freely, and to feel fear every time you sign in that your harasser is going to be there to greet you? The answer is that you can't, but that person who doesn't use the Internet will have the power to determine the official public narrative of what happened to you on the Internet.²⁸⁶

The Committee heard that police services need training on the *Protecting Canadians from Online Crime Act* (enacted in 2014). Ms. Parsons of the Rehtaeh Parsons Society explained that there was an uneven application of the law: “[The application of the law is] in pockets; it's not uniform. Everyone doesn't know, even within police agencies.”²⁸⁷

The Committee was told that police in Canada require better legal avenues to pursue justice for cyberviolence,²⁸⁸ and that police had recently lost one route to investigate online crimes that was deemed unconstitutional. Police forces used to submit a law enforcement request letter to obtain Internet subscriber and address information, when there was not enough information to obtain a warrant. However, following the 2014 Supreme Court ruling in the *R. v. Spencer* decision, police must now seek a warrant to

282 [Evidence](#), 5 October 2016, 1645 (Soraya Chemaly); [Evidence](#), 5 October 2016, 1620 (Jeffery Adam); [Evidence](#), 26 September 2016, 1620 (Peter Payne); Paulysha Veronica De Gannes, “[Brief to the Status of Women Committee for its Study on Violence against Young Women and Girls in Canada](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 19 September 2016.

283 [Evidence](#), 28 September 2016, 1555 (Steph Guthrie); [Evidence](#), 28 September 2016, 1545 (Raine Lilliefeldt); [Evidence](#), 7 December 2016, 1600 (Malika Saada Saar).

284 [Evidence](#), 5 October 2016, 1545 (Jeffery Adam); [Evidence](#), 28 September 2016, 1655 (Lianna McDonald).

285 [Evidence](#), 21 November 2016, 1555 (Patricia Cartes).

286 [Evidence](#), 28 September 2016, 1535 (Steph Guthrie).

287 [Evidence](#), 26 September 2016, 1655 (Leah Parsons).

288 [Evidence](#), 5 October 2016, 1625 (Jeffery Adam).

obtain Internet subscriber and address information (except in exigent circumstances) and the practice of telecom service providers and Internet service providers voluntarily providing this information has come to an end.²⁸⁹

Developing appropriate legislation for online crimes has proven to be challenging. Senior counsel at the Department of Justice told the Committee that to address issues of cyberbullying, the *Protecting Canadians from Online Crime Act* was enacted in 2014. It created a new *Criminal Code* offence of non-consensual distribution of intimate images committed by means of telecommunications and authorizes the removal of such images from the Internet.²⁹⁰ The Committee heard that the new Act provides police with a more appropriate legislative tool in cases where intimate images are shared among youth, as the only option before this legislation was to charge these individuals with child pornography offences.²⁹¹ However, witnesses raised several concerns regarding the new legislation. Firstly, police forces across the country do not appear to be equally aware of this new legislative power, and thus it is not being enforced equally across the country.²⁹² As well, there are privacy concerns with the broad law enforcement provisions and expansion of police powers created by the Act²⁹³ and concerns that the law will not effectively reduce the targeted behaviours.²⁹⁴

Witnesses spoke positively of *An Act respecting the mandatory reporting of Internet child pornography by persons who provide an Internet service*, enacted in 2011. The Act requires Internet service providers to notify law enforcement if they are aware of an Internet address from which child pornography may be available to the public or is being used to commit a child pornography offence.²⁹⁵

It was recommended that the federal government consider the implementation of legislation that creates an “Opt-In” model, such as that in place in the United Kingdom. In this model, legislation requires that access to pornography be blocked by internet providers, unless an individual user (above the age of 18) opts-in to see such content.²⁹⁶

289 [Evidence](#), 28 September 2016, 1645 (Lianna McDonald); [Evidence](#), 5 October 2016, 1625 (Jeffery Adam); Supreme Court of Canada, [Supreme Court Judgments – R. v. Spencer](#), 2014.

290 [Evidence](#), 19 April 2016, 1555 (Gillian Blackell, Senior Counsel and Acting Director, Policy Centre for Victim Issues, Policy Sector, Department of Justice).

291 [Evidence](#), 19 April 2016, 1635 (Nathalie Levman, Counsel, Criminal Law Policy Section, Policy Sector, Department of Justice).

292 [Evidence](#), 26 September 2016, 1630 and 1655 (Leah Parsons);

293 West Coast LEAF, [#CyberMisogyny: Using and strengthening Canadian legal responses to gendered hate and harassment online](#), June 2014; Jane Bailey and Valerie Steeves, [“Submission to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women Relating to Violence against Young Women and Girls in Canada,” Submitted Brief](#), 22 September 2016.

294 [Evidence](#), 16 June 2016, 1555 (Shaheen Shariff).

295 [Evidence](#), 26 September 2016, 1620 (Peter Payne); [Evidence](#), 28 September 2016, 1645 (Lianna McDonald).

296 [Evidence](#), 14 November 2016, 1630 and 1705 (Lucille Harper); Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, [“Submission to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women – Internet Pornography and Violence against Young Women and Girls in Canada,” Submitted Brief](#), 2016; Be The Peace Institute – Sue Bookchin, [“Violence Against Young Women and Girls in Canada,” Submitted Brief](#), September 2016; Antigonish Women's Resource Centre and Sexual Assault Services, [“Submission to House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women: Violence against Girls and Young Women,” Submitted Brief](#), November 2016.

Ms. Harper, Executive Director of the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre and Sexual Assault Services, stated: "That's a really interesting model... [Kids] are smart and they will figure out a way around it at some point, but they don't have that pop-up stuff... It's not perfect, but it works really well to keep it out of the hands of young children."²⁹⁷

In a written brief, the Canadian Centre for Child Protection recommended that the federal government establish legislation that "targets communications and recordings that advocate harm to children" – this includes the depictions of violent physical abuse by adults against children and the sexual commodification of children – because this content normalizes "distorted sexual views of children."²⁹⁸

The Committee also heard that provinces and territories are examining legal responses to cyberviolence and cyberbullying to address such acts when they fall short of the criminal threshold.²⁹⁹ Nova Scotia's *Cyber-Safety Act*, aimed at cyberbullying, was struck down in December 2015 by the Supreme Court of Nova Scotia, which ruled that the law infringed on the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* in part because it included too many forms of expression in the definition of cyberbullying.³⁰⁰

The Committee was reminded that legislative responses to cyberviolence are important, but are not enough to address such violence. Ms. Parsons explained that: "Enacting new laws and responding in a fast, efficient manner are just some of the ways we combat cyber-violence, but we cannot ignore the fact that there are underlying deep-rooted ideologies that will take a very long time to undo."³⁰¹ In a brief submitted jointly by Ms. Bailey, Professor at the University of Ottawa, and Valerie Steeves, Associate Professor at the University of Ottawa, the professors stated that the government should:

Recognize cyberviolence against women and girls as an equality-based human rights issue and proactively address root causes, rather than focusing solely on criminal law responses. While individual perpetrators should be held responsible for their actions and the criminal justice system should be equitably accessible, meaningfully addressing girls' and young women's disproportionate targeting by sexualized cyberviolence requires broader social transformation to address misogyny, racism, homophobia and other intersecting oppressions long used as tools to silence equality-seeking groups.³⁰²

(ii) Services to Address Cyberviolence

The Committee heard that programs and initiatives designed to tackle cyberviolence must encourage youth to seek help and must describe the options for

297 [Evidence](#), 14 November 2016, 1705 (Lucille Harper).

298 Canadian Centre for Child Protection, "[Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation Perpetrated Against Girls](#)," *Submitted Brief*, 23 September 2016.

299 [Evidence](#), 19 April 2016, 1555 (Gillian Blackell).

300 [Evidence](#), 5 October 2016, 1610 (Kendra Milne, Director, Law Reform, West Coast LEAF); [Evidence](#), 21 September 2016, 1705 (Dee Dooley); [Evidence](#), 26 September 2016, 1635 (Leah Parsons).

301 [Evidence](#), 26 September 2016, 1635 (Leah Parsons).

302 Jane Bailey and Valerie Steeves, "[Submission to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women Relating to Violence against Young Women and Girls in Canada](#)," *Submitted Brief*, 22 September 2016.

assistance after experiencing online violence. Some of the reasons that youth will not report cases of cyberviolence include: being fearful of retaliation; feeling guilty or embarrassed; not being aware of options for justice; or being scared of being judged by their peers, school authorities or police.³⁰³

Witnesses suggested that there are insufficient services and support systems provided by community organizations for youth who are dealing with situations of cyberviolence.³⁰⁴ According to a written brief by East Prince Women's Information Centre, in a recent study they conducted, "90% of youth who participated in this study feel that there are not enough services available to victims of cyberviolence..."³⁰⁵

The Committee was interested in the services provided by the Canadian Centre for Child Protection (CCCP), "a national charity dedicated to the personal safety of children."³⁰⁶ The CCCP is the agency designated by the Government of Canada to receive reports of online child exploitation, as outlined in the 2011 *An Act respecting the mandatory reporting of Internet child pornography by persons who provide an Internet service*. In this role, the CCCP delivers Cybertip.ca, Canada's tip line for reporting the online sexual exploitation of children.³⁰⁷ According to the CCCP, during its 14 years of operation, Cybertip.ca has processed over 200,000 reports from the public, with 90% of those reports on the subject of child sexual abuse images/videos.³⁰⁸

The Committee heard that the CCCP also offers a new website and resource, called NeedHelpNow, which: "allows any young person who has been negatively affected by a sexual picture or action to come in and understand what they can do, what safe adults are available, and how they can get the content down."³⁰⁹ Ms. Arnason, Director of Cybertip.ca at the CCCP, told the Committee that this resource is important for two reasons: 1) teenagers who want to remove sexual or harmful online content of themselves often do not want to involve the police; instead "their first request is 'Oh, my God, help me get the content down and let me move on with my life';" and 2) child exploitation law enforcement units across Canada "have a huge caseload dealing with people committing hands-on offences against very young children" and face a challenging situation when asked to "reprioritize teens sharing sexual images over those cases."³¹⁰ Representatives

303 East Prince Women's Information Centre, "[Cyberviolence Needs Assessment for Prince Edward Island](#)," *Submitted Brief*, October 2016; Amanda Todd Legacy Society – Carol Todd, "[Brief for the Standing Committee for Gender Based Violence of Girls and Young Women \(Cyberviolence\)](#)," *Submitted Brief*, October 2016.

304 Jane Bailey and Valerie Steeves, "[Submission to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women Relating to Violence against Young Women and Girls in Canada](#)," *Submitted Brief*, 22 September 2016.

305 East Prince Women's Information Centre, "[Cyberviolence Needs Assessment for Prince Edward Island](#)," *Submitted Brief*, October 2016.

306 [Evidence](#), 28 September 2016, 1630 (Signy Arnason).

307 Ibid.

308 Canadian Centre for Child Protection, "[Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation Perpetrated Against Girls](#)," *Submitted Brief*, 23 September 2016.

309 [Evidence](#), 28 September 2016, 1655 (Lianna McDonald).

310 [Evidence](#), 28 September 2016, 1715 (Signy Arnason).

of the CCCP highlighted the need to increase awareness of the resources available to youth, such as NeedHelpNow.³¹¹

(iii) Awareness and Digital Literacy Efforts

Witnesses told the Committee that there needs to be greater awareness and education among Canadians – including young women and girls – of the dangers of cyberviolence. The goal of such awareness and education would be to help individuals identify at-risk situations online, limit individuals' exposure to cyberviolence, mitigate damage after situations of cyberviolence, and take action to change online culture to make cyberviolence unacceptable.³¹²

The Committee heard that greater awareness of cyberviolence must be accompanied by research on the subject, of which there is a shortage. Witnesses shared information on some promising research initiatives on the subject:

- Project Shift, a national multi-year project led by YWCA Canada and funded by Status of Women Canada to create a safer digital world for young women;³¹³
- The eGirls Project, which examines girls' and women's experiences with online social media; and³¹⁴
- The Young Canadians in a Wired World research project, conducted by MediaSmarts, which analyzes Canadian students' experiences with technology.³¹⁵

The Committee was informed that digital literacy efforts are an important element of educational and awareness campaigns.³¹⁶ Digital literacy efforts should:

- begin at a young age, as soon as children are interested in technology;³¹⁷
- teach youth critical thinking and decision-making skills;³¹⁸

311 [Evidence](#), 28 September 2016, 1720 (Signy Amason); [Evidence](#), 28 September 2016, 1720 (Lianna McDonald).

312 [Evidence](#), 5 October 2016, 1545 (Jeffery Adam); [Evidence](#), 26 September 2016, 1630 (Leah Parsons); [Evidence](#), 28 September 2016, 1530 (Steph Guthrie); [Evidence](#), 26 September 2016, 1710 (Carol Todd); [Evidence](#), 21 September 2016, 1650 (Dee Dooley).

313 [Evidence](#), 28 September 2016, 1545 (Raine Liliefeldt).

314 [Evidence](#), 16 June 2016, 1650 (Jane Bailey).

315 [Evidence](#), 16 June 2016, 1640 (Matthew Johnson).

316 Facebook Inc. – Kevin Chan, "[Submission to the Parliamentary Committee on the Status of Women](#)," *Submitted Brief*, 2016; [Evidence](#), 5 December 2016, 1710 (Sandra Robinson).

317 [Evidence](#), 28 September 2016, 1720 (Signy Amason); [Evidence](#), 26 September 2016, 1705 (Leah Parsons); [Evidence](#), 26 September 2016, 1705 (Carol Todd).

318 [Evidence](#), 16 June 2016, 1645 (Matthew Johnson).

- teach concepts of digital civility and being a “good cyber-citizen”;³¹⁹
- make distinctions between acceptable behaviour, unacceptable behaviour, and criminal behaviour online;³²⁰ for example, the difference between sexting and forwarding a sext without consent;³²¹
- inform youth how to recognize false and biased information because youth get most of their information from social media but are unlikely to take steps to authenticate it;³²²
- provide information targeted at parents and teachers, enabling them to have regular conversations with children about the online realm, cyberviolence and cyber-safety;³²³ and
- teach youth how the online world functions, including information on online privacy, how to code, and how algorithms operate.³²⁴

A number of witnesses spoke of the excellent digital literacy work being conducted by MediaSmarts, a not-for-profit organization for digital and media literacy established in 1996.³²⁵

(iv) The Role of Social Media and ICT Companies

Some social media platforms have more “citizens” than some countries, and these companies are making significant decisions, such as categories of identity and what constitutes online safety and violence.³²⁶ For instance, Facebook has “over 22 million Canadians – 1.71 billion people globally – using Facebook each month.”³²⁷ Twitter told the

319 [Evidence](#), 21 April 2016, 1645 (Lori MacDonald); [Evidence](#), 3 October 2016, 1655 (Nancy Beth Guptill); [Evidence](#), 16 June 2016, 1645 (Matthew Johnson).

320 [Evidence](#), 5 October 2016, 1650 (Soraya Chemaly); [Evidence](#), 26 September 2016, 1540 and 1545 (Shanly Dixon).

321 [Evidence](#), 5 October 2016, 1650 (Soraya Chemaly).

322 [Evidence](#), 5 December 2016, 1535 (Matthew Johnson).

323 [Evidence](#), 3 October 2016, 1725 (Nancy Beth Guptill); Be The Peace Institute – Sue Bookchin, “[Violence Against Young Women and Girls in Canada](#),” *Submitted Brief*, September 2016; [Evidence](#), 14 November 2016, 1640 (Mélanie Sarroino); [Evidence](#), 5 October 2016, 1705 (Soraya Chemaly); [Evidence](#), 26 September 2016, 1705 (Carol Todd); [Evidence](#), 16 June 2016, 1710 (Matthew Johnson); [Evidence](#), 16 June 2016, 1630 (Shaheen Shariff).

324 [Evidence](#), 26 September 2016, 1545 (Shanly Dixon); [Evidence](#), 28 September 2016, 1555 (Raine Liliefeldt); [Evidence](#), 7 December 2016, 1605 (Malika Saada Saar).

325 [Evidence](#), 26 September 2016, 1605 (Shanly Dixon); [Evidence](#), 28 September 2016, 1555 (Raine Liliefeldt); [Evidence](#), 21 November 2016, 1610 (Patricia Cartes); [Evidence](#), 7 December 2016, 1540 (Lauren Skelly, Senior Policy Analyst, Google Canada).

326 [Evidence](#), 5 October 2016, 1640 (Soraya Chemaly); [Evidence](#), 21 September 2016, 1545 (Rena Bivens).

327 Facebook Inc. – Kevin Chan, “[Submission to the Parliamentary Committee on the Status of Women](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 2016.

Committee it had 313 million users, and that it currently sees “500 million tweets on a single-day basis.”³²⁸

The Committee heard that social media platforms, app and game developers, and service providers take responsibility and actively respond to incidents of cyberviolence.³²⁹ The Committee heard that social media and ICT companies should be held accountable for the impact of their products.³³⁰ Some witnesses suggested that the federal government should regulate and legislate companies in order to combat cyberviolence.³³¹ However, Corinne Charette, Senior Assistant Deputy Minister at Spectrum, Information Technologies and Telecommunications in the Department of Industry, stated:

Regulation is a two-edged sword. The reality is that regulation is very hard to craft in an equitable way and comes at a cost to both government and business. To work out that fine balance is not easy. Also, compliance requires an effort. Given that no effort is free or without cost, I think that with the capacity we have and the resources available to us, there are probably more fruitful investments that would improve [digital] literacy, more than regulation would keep back [harmful content]. It's a constant balance.³³²

Ms. Bailey of the University of Ottawa suggested empowering the Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada to examine issues related to technological privacy and data collection, such as algorithmic curation. She recommended that the federal government strengthen the powers and jurisdiction of the Office of the Privacy Commissioner through legislative changes to the *Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act*.³³³ The Committee heard that MediaSmarts is working with support from the Office of the Privacy Commissioner to develop resources for youth about online privacy.³³⁴ Some witnesses suggested that social media companies should be required to have standardized reporting practices in cases of cyberviolence³³⁵ or that ICT companies should be required to provide cyberviolence awareness information with the purchase of products.³³⁶

The Committee heard from representatives of Twitter and Google and received a written brief from Facebook. Meeting with these companies highlighted the significant difference between each social media platform, including how they respond to cases of cyberviolence.

328 [Evidence](#), 21 November 2016, 1530 (Patricia Cartes).

329 [Evidence](#), 5 December 2016, 1720 (Sandra Robinson).

330 [Evidence](#), 5 October 2016, 1720 (Soraya Chemaly); [Evidence](#), 21 September 2016, 1555 (Valerie Steeves).

331 [Evidence](#), 5 October 2016, 1645 (Soraya Chemaly); [Evidence](#), 5 October 2016, 1620 (Kendra Milne); [Evidence](#), 28 September 2016, 1625 (Raine Liliefeldt); [Evidence](#), 26 September 2016, 1725 (Carol Todd); [Evidence](#), 21 September 2016, 1555 (Valerie Steeves); [Evidence](#), 21 September 2016, 1650 (Dee Dooley).

332 [Evidence](#), 5 December 2016, 1720 (Corinne Charette, Senior Assistant Deputy Minister, Spectrum, Information Technologies and Telecommunications, Department of Industry).

333 [Evidence](#), 5 December 2016, 1610 (Jane Bailey).

334 [Evidence](#), 5 December 2016, 1535 (Matthew Johnson).

335 [Evidence](#), 5 October 2016, 1600 (Kendra Milne).

336 [Evidence](#), 28 September 2016, 1625 (Raine Liliefeldt).

Social media organizations told the Committee that they are committed to the safety of their members and take a “safety-by-design approach” to the development of products, implementing rules and tools in their platforms to protect users.³³⁷ In a written brief, Facebook stated that “keeping our community safe is our top priority.”³³⁸ Lauren Skelly, Senior Policy Analyst at Google Canada, told the Committee: “There are obviously areas in which [tech companies] compete, but this is not one of them. We all have a best interest in keeping our children and families safe online. I think a more coordinated effort on our part is something that we can probably do a bit better on.”³³⁹

Social media organizations shared their initiatives designed to keep their platforms safe. For example, Twitter has a mechanism that allows the user to download a written report in cases of cyberviolence; it contains the specific tweet, the URL of the tweet, the time stamp, the URL and name of the user who shared it, and a link to the law enforcement guideline in your jurisdiction.³⁴⁰

A number of witnesses noted that if there were greater diversity in the technology sector, it would likely lead to technological programs being developed with greater inclusivity and safety in mind. Witnesses stated that the employees in the technology sector are still primarily men, and as such, they are unlikely to understand the intersectional abuse suffered by women, or by other marginalized people.³⁴¹ According to Ms. Skelly:

Google was one of the first companies to publicly publish their diversity numbers, because in technology we have a huge diversity problem with regard to women, people of colour, and immigrants.... The engineer who leads up our search personalization team is a woman, which is great, but there's obviously more that we can do. I think that the impetus for investing in diversity is that we need to have our team reflect the users of our products.³⁴²

The Committee heard that there should be greater efforts and investments in getting young women and girls interested in careers in the science, technology, engineering and mathematics sectors, which would in turn likely increase the number of women working for social media and ICT companies.³⁴³ Google Canada has partnered with Actua to develop a program, called Codemakers, “which is a coding program that we've delivered to over 100,000 Canadians, a majority of them being girls.”³⁴⁴

337 Facebook Inc. – Kevin Chan, “[Submission to the Parliamentary Committee on the Status of Women](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 2016; [Evidence](#), 21 November 2016, 1535 (Patricia Cartes).

338 Facebook Inc. – Kevin Chan, “[Submission to the Parliamentary Committee on the Status of Women](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 2016.

339 [Evidence](#), 7 December 2016, 1545 (Lauren Skelly).

340 [Evidence](#), 21 November 2016, 1555 (Patricia Cartes).

341 [Evidence](#), 5 October 2016, 1640 (Soraya Chemaly); [Evidence](#), 28 September 2016, 1555 and 1615 (Steph Guthrie); [Evidence](#), 21 September 2016, 1545 (Rena Bivens).

342 [Evidence](#), 7 December 2016, 1545 (Lauren Skelly).

343 [Evidence](#), 5 December 2016, 1715 (Corinne Charette); [Evidence](#), 5 December 2016, 1720 (Sandra Robinson).

344 [Evidence](#), 7 December 2016, 1545 (Lauren Skelly).

Other witnesses suggested providing federal funding and supporting the collaboration that has already begun among the not-for-profit sector – anti-violence organizations and digital literacy groups – and social media and ICT companies.³⁴⁵ The Committee was impressed by the work of the Canadian Coalition Against Internet Child Exploitation (CCAICE), a voluntary group of private and public sector entities that look at ways to address child sexual exploitation online.³⁴⁶ CCAICE developed Cleanfeed, whereby Internet service providers, who participate voluntarily in the initiative, prevent Canadian customers from accessing websites that contain child abuse images – of which a total of 30,000 URLs have been blocked since 2006.³⁴⁷ Another example is YWCA Canada which has convened, through its Project Shift, an ICT Roundtable, “where sector leaders work to create safer digital world for young women.”³⁴⁸

(v) Using Social Media and ICTs to Prevent, Recognize and Address Violence

Witnesses told the Committee that while social media and communications technologies can put individuals at risk of cyberviolence, these tools can also be used to help prevent, recognize and address violence.³⁴⁹ For instance, BullyText, a program launched by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), provides educational scenarios delivered via text messages to youth featuring various bullying scenarios, in order to teach youth about acceptable behaviour online.³⁵⁰ Another example is YWCA Canada’s Safety Siren smart phone app:

[It is] an innovative tool to add to young women's safety. It's a free, downloadable application for iPhones, BlackBerry, and Androids that sends an emergency email to a pre-set contact with appropriate geolocation coordinates and places an emergency outgoing call to a pre-programmed number. It geolocates the user to nearby sexual assault centres, emergency hotlines, health centres, and clinics and offers a wide range of facts and information on women's health and wellness as well as women's health resources.³⁵¹

The Committee heard that social media and ICTs can be used to enable and empower “counter-narratives” to harmful online content, include sexist and misogynistic

345 [Evidence](#), 28 September 2016, 1645 (Lianna McDonald); Facebook Inc. – Kevin Chan, “[Submission to the Parliamentary Committee on the Status of Women](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 2016; [Evidence](#), 28 September 2016, 1545 (Raine Liliefeldt); Amanda Todd Legacy Society – Carol Todd, “[Brief for the Standing Committee for Gender Based Violence of Girls and Young Women \(Cyberviolence\)](#),” *Submitted Brief*, October 2016.

346 [Evidence](#), 28 September 2016, 1640 (Lianna McDonald).

347 [Evidence](#), 28 September 2016, 1640-1645 (Lianna McDonald); [Evidence](#), 28 September 2016, 1715 (Signy Arnason).

348 YWCA Canada, “[Safety for Girls and Young Women Starts with Leadership](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 23 September 2016.

349 [Evidence](#), 21 September 2016, 1650 (Dee Dooley); [Evidence](#), 5 October 2016, 1655 (Soraya Chemaly); [Evidence](#), 28 September 2016, 1540 (Ann Decter); Y des femmes de Montréal, “[Brief to the Standing Committee on the Status of Women: Violence Against Young Women and Girls](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 2016; [Evidence](#), 16 November 2016, 1540 (Tessa Hill).

350 [Evidence](#), 21 April 2016, 1555 (Shirley Cuillierier).

351 [Evidence](#), 28 September 2016, 1540 (Ann Decter).

messages.³⁵² Individuals can be encouraged to use their online voices to confront hate and harassment, as part of being good digital citizens.³⁵³ Organizations can also be encouraged – and even funded – to spread valuable messages promoting equality and diversity, human rights, empathy and justice.³⁵⁴ For example, Google has established a program, entitled YouTube Creators for Change, to fund creators who are highly influential and able to effectively spread positive messages.³⁵⁵

Representatives from Google told the Committee that Jigsaw, Google's think tank, is working on a set of tools called Conversation AI, “which is designed to use machine learning to automatically spot the language of abuse and the language of harassment far more accurately than other keyword filters and far faster than any team of human moderators.”³⁵⁶

Ms. Bailey warned that using algorithms or other technological tools to block certain harmful content is not always the appropriate response:

In some cases, people who look at this may say, well, that's an advantage, because if I don't want to see hate speech, I don't have to see hate speech. But let's take Twitter's mute button as an example. I can mute somebody so that I don't see that they are attacking me online, but the fact of the matter is that they are attacking me online and I don't know about that. The way our worlds are being curated is that in some instances we might say that at least it relieves my pain in the initial moment. But in the long term, in terms of what violence is being done, what harassment is happening, and what issues we really need to be engaging in, it's a problem if we are closing ourselves off.³⁵⁷

(vi) International Promising Practices

The Committee heard of a number of promising practices being used to combat cyberviolence in other countries globally. Ms. Bailey spoke positively of the approach to digital safety and privacy in the European Union:

That approach has been very much to say that they have a set of values, and that they are not against development and innovation, obviously, but they have a set of values, and they have directives and legislation that you're required to comply with. You can tell them that it's expensive and complicated, and that you don't like it, but at the end of the day, that is where the buck stops.³⁵⁸

Ms. Cartes, Head of Global Safety at Twitter Inc., stated that a promising practice in fighting cyberviolence was Australia's creation of an eSafety Commissioner. According to Ms. Cartes:

352 [Evidence](#), 21 November 2016, 1540 (Patricia Cartes).

353 [Evidence](#), 5 December 2016, 1535 (Matthew Johnson).

354 [Evidence](#), 7 December 2016, 1605 (Malika Saada Saar).

355 [Evidence](#), 7 December 2016, 1550 (Lauren Skelly).

356 [Evidence](#), 7 December 2016, 1535 (Malika Saada Saar).

357 [Evidence](#), 5 December 2016, 1545 (Jane Bailey).

358 *Ibid.*, 1605.

The eSafety commissioner's office was initially going to look at abuse reports and have a very specific time frame for companies to respond to those abuse cases. I think they very quickly realized that they could be really overwhelmed by the number of reports, just like we feel on a daily basis. What they do now is they provide a public hotline. You can report abuse to them, and then they will work with the platform. We have a specific mechanism for the eSafety commissioner in Australia to bring abuse to our attention. We take action on the cases, but also on an ongoing basis we look at the creation of documentation to educate, based on the issues we see Australian society has experienced.³⁵⁹

In force since 1 July 2016, Australia's *Enhancing Online Safety for Children Act 2015* created the Office of the Children's eSafety Commissioner.³⁶⁰ The 2015 legislation "establishes the office of the Children's e-Safety Commissioner as an independent statutory office within the Australian Communications and Media Authority and grants powers to that office."³⁶¹

The Office "provides online safety education for Australian children and young people [and] a complaints service for young Australians who experience serious cyberbullying."³⁶² Furthermore, the Office has a cyberReport team which investigates complaints about offensive and illegal content from the Australian public and law enforcement agencies.³⁶³ The Office prioritizes investigations into online child sexual abuse material and collaborate with law enforcement and the global network INHOPE – a network of 51 hotlines in 45 countries (including Canada) dealing with illegal content and child sexual abuse content online – to remove the content where it is hosted.³⁶⁴ The Office also provides information for women on how to protect themselves online through eSafetyWomen.³⁶⁵

Ms. Cartes also spoke positively about the SPOC (single point of contact) system in the United Kingdom, whereby every law enforcement agency has a single point of contact in digital crime cases. The SPOC knows how to request data from a tech company and will follow that request through the system; any officer who is reviewing a case of cyberviolence can turn to the agency's SPOC for this assistance.³⁶⁶

359 [Evidence](#), 21 November 2016, 1615 (Patricia Cartes).

360 Australian Government – Federal Register of Legislation, [Enhancing Online Safety for Children Act 2015](#), No. 24, 2015.

361 Ministers for the Department of Communications and the Arts, "[Leading online safety expert Alastair MacGibbon appointed Children's e-Safety Commissioner](#)," *News Release*, 19 March 2015.

362 Office of the Children's eSafety Commissioner, [Role of the office – Our mission](#).

363 Office of the Children's eSafety Commissioner, [Offensive and illegal content complaints](#).

364 INHOPE, [Who we Are – At a Glance](#).

365 Office of the Children's eSafety Commissioner, [eSafety Women](#).

366 [Evidence](#), 21 November 2016, 1555 (Patricia Cartes).

Recommendation 11

That the Government of Canada, through Status of Women Canada, implement an awareness campaign or education program, developed in consultation with young people, and that the initiative be both age-appropriate and culturally sensitive, that it include information on consent and respect in sexual relationships, that it provide information on legal resources for survivors of gender-based violence, and that it raise awareness of support services for survivors of gender-based violence.

Recommendation 12

That the Government of Canada consult with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and other federally regulated police services to determine what additional reporting mechanisms and tools, that are both simple and effective, are required for combating sexual violence, including in cases that involve the non-consensual distribution of sexual recordings and images, and that officers of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and other federally-regulated police services have extensive digital and sensitivity training with a survivor-centric approach.

Recommendation 13

That the Government of Canada, through Public Safety Canada, partner with Canadian not-for-profit organizations for digital and media literacy to conduct research examining the potentially harmful effects of algorithms on young Canadians, and how to mitigate those potentially harmful effects including how algorithms might be employed to mitigate harmful content and ideas.

Recommendation 14

That the Government of Canada, through the Department of Justice, examine the legal definition and threshold for criminal harassment in Section 264 of the *Criminal Code* in order to explicitly include cyberviolence and harassment that occurs in online spaces, without violating the right to free expression as defined in the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

Recommendation 15

That the Government of Canada, through the Minister of Justice urge all jurisdictions to create a National Cybercrime Coordination Centre, which would provide a coordinated Canadian law enforcement response to address cybercrime and cyberviolence.

Recommendation 16

That the Government of Canada consider establishing an e-Safety Commissioner reporting to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness and modelled after the e-Safety Commissioner in Australia, whereby the office of the Commissioner provides online safety education for children and young people and receives complaints from individuals related to cyberviolence.

Recommendation 17

That the Government of Canada, in collaboration with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and other federally regulated law enforcement, develop national training in digital literacy and standardized responses to acts of cyberviolence for law enforcement professionals and share best practices with other jurisdictions.

Recommendation 18

That the Government of Canada introduce legislation to restore Section 13 of the *Canadian Human Rights Act* which permitted rights complaints to the federal Canadian Human Rights Commission for the communication of hate messages by telephone or on the Internet.

Observation 2

The Committee observed the need for digital industry leaders – including social media platforms, app and game developers, and internet service providers – to work with the federal government and with digital literacy organizations to promote greater digital and media literacy, particularly amongst young people; foster greater social responsibility for acts of violence that occur on their platforms; and actively respond to reported incidents of cyberviolence in a manner that is survivor-centric and trauma-informed.

YOUNG WOMEN AND GIRLS WITH PARTICULAR VULNERABILITIES TO VIOLENCE

While violence affects young women and girls of all social, economic and cultural groups in Canada, data and research indicate that certain groups of young women and girls are at greater risk of victimization.³⁶⁷ These groups include – as outlined below – Indigenous young women and girls; young women and girls identifying as lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer and 2-Spirited; young women and girls who are immigrants or refugees; young women and girls with disabilities; young women and girls who are homeless; and young women and girls in rural and remote communities. Witnesses reminded the Committee that these intersectional identities must be taken into consideration during the development of anti-violence initiatives.³⁶⁸

A. Indigenous Young Women and Girls

The Committee was informed that Indigenous young women and girls in Canada are at a considerably higher risk of being targets of violence than non-Indigenous young women and girls.³⁶⁹ For example, representatives of Statistics Canada told the Committee that rates of sexual assault experienced by Indigenous women are more than three times those of non-Indigenous women.³⁷⁰ There is also a crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls in Canada, as documented by the Native Women's Association of Canada.³⁷¹

Witnesses noted that such violence occurs both on and off reserve and is perpetrated by Indigenous and non-Indigenous men. Racial stereotypes of highly sexualized Indigenous women and girls, perpetuated by the media, lead to the harmful belief among the general population in the myth that Indigenous women are “sexually available.”³⁷²

367 [Evidence](#), 31 October 2016, 1635 (Manon Bergeron); [Evidence](#), 24 October 2016, 1540 (Paloma Ponti); [Evidence](#), 19 October 2016, 1550 (Bilan Arte); Centre d'aide et de lutte contre les agressions à caractère sexuelle Châteauguay, “[Violence against Young Women and Girls in Canada: A Sexual Violence Perspective](#),” *Submitted Brief*, September 2016; [Evidence](#), 12 April 2016, 1550 (Yvan Clermont); [Evidence](#), 16 June 2016, 1650 (Jane Bailey); [Evidence](#), 16 June 2016, 1715 (Matthew Johnson); [Evidence](#), 14 November 2016, 1645 (Mélanie Sarroino).

368 University of Alberta Sexual Assault Centre – Meagan Simon and Meg Anderson, “[Written Brief Submitted to the Status of Women Committee for its Study on Violence against Young Women and Girls in Canada](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 2016; [Evidence](#), 5 October 2016, 1640 (Soraya Chemaly); [Evidence](#), 16 June 2016, 1600 and 1630 (Lara Karaian); [Evidence](#), 16 June 2016, 1625 (Shaheen Shariff).

369 [Evidence](#), 19 October 2016, 1550 (Bilan Arte); [Evidence](#), 12 April 2016, 1550 (Yvan Clermont).

370 [Evidence](#), 12 April 2016, 1550 (Yvan Clermont).

371 [Evidence](#), 21 November 2016, 1635 (Francyne Joe).

372 Young Indigenous Women from Atlantic Canada, “[Networks for Change and Wellbeing – Addressing sexual violence: Eskasoni – Stuck in the middle: The role of media in the sexual victimisation of women](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 2016.

Witnesses explained that violence in Indigenous communities stems in part from the colonization of Indigenous peoples. Colonization reduced the stability of Indigenous communities as it led to the imposition of patriarchal beliefs, the devaluation of traditional ways of justice and practice of spirituality, and a loss of the right to self-determination.³⁷³ Furthermore, it led to a loss of identity for many Indigenous people as their communities were displaced from the land or they lost their nomadic lifestyle.³⁷⁴ This loss of identity led to serious disruptions in gender roles, establishing power imbalances where there had traditionally been equality between the sexes.³⁷⁵ Francyne Joe, President of the Native Women's Association of Canada, explained how a lack of respect for women in Indigenous communities can impact women and girls' self-worth:

If our men can't value their own sisters, their own aunts, their own wives, and their own daughters sometimes, then these women fall into depression and despair, and they allow others to treat them without the respect that every indigenous women, every woman across this country, fully deserves.³⁷⁶

The Committee was told that many Indigenous individuals who grew up in residential schools and faced the "60s scoop" experienced physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, and sexual violence, and as a result lack the parenting skills to raise healthy families, free of abuse.³⁷⁷ Sylvia Maracle, Executive Director of the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres, said that Indigenous children, including young women and girls, may not be taught appropriate boundaries and acceptable behaviours that protect them from sexual violence.³⁷⁸

The Committee heard that residential schools and the 60s scoop, where families were broken apart by government authorities, created an intergenerational "code of silence," whereby families will not provide information to social services or law enforcement agencies for fear of losing their children.³⁷⁹ This fear is exacerbated by the current high rate of Indigenous children in the care of social services.³⁸⁰ Many Indigenous young women and girls live in foster care and group homes, making them even more vulnerable to abuse, particularly as they become old enough to leave care, often without

373 [Evidence](#), 26 October 2016, 1550 (Tracy O'Hearn, Executive Director, Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada); Young Indigenous Women from Atlantic Canada, "[Networks for Change and Wellbeing – Addressing sexual violence: Eskasoni – Being fear-less in the face of sexual violence](#)," *Submitted Brief*, 2016; [Evidence](#), 21 November 2016, 1635 (Francyne Joe); Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres, "[Kizhaay Anishinaabe Niin: I am a Kind Man Program - Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres](#)," *Submitted Brief*, 2 November 2016.

374 [Evidence](#), 14 November 2016, 1610 (Sylvia Maracle); [Evidence](#), 26 October 2016, 1620 (Tracy O'Hearn).

375 [Evidence](#), 26 October 2016, 1620 (Tracy O'Hearn); [Evidence](#), 21 November 2016, 1715 (Francyne Joe).

376 [Evidence](#), 21 November 2016, 1715 (Francyne Joe).

377 [Evidence](#), 14 November 2016, 1555 (Sylvia Maracle); [Evidence](#), 12 April 2016, 1550 (Yvan Clermont); [Evidence](#), 21 November 2016, 1635 and 1640 (Francyne Joe).

378 [Evidence](#), 14 November 2016, 1620 (Sylvia Maracle).

379 Young Indigenous Women from Atlantic Canada, "[Networks for Change and Wellbeing – Addressing sexual violence: Eskasoni – Being fear-less in the face of sexual violence](#)," *Submitted Brief*, 2016.

380 [Evidence](#), 14 November 2016, 1610 (Sylvia Maracle); [Evidence](#), 21 November 2016, 1635 (Francyne Joe).

appropriate supports.³⁸¹ Witnesses explained that past and current government policies have created intergenerational trauma among individuals in Indigenous communities, which has led to high rates of mental health problems, substance abuse, suicides, and domestic and sexual violence in Indigenous communities.³⁸²

The Committee heard that in these communities, the vulnerability of Indigenous young women and girls is exacerbated by housing crises, some of which have lasted for decades.³⁸³ In addition, there is a shortage of shelters for women escaping situations of violence. For instance, among the 52 Inuit communities across Inuit Nunangat, Nunavut, Arctic Quebec, and Nunatsiavut, there are only 15 safe shelters; more than 70% of Inuit communities do not have a safe shelter for women.³⁸⁴

Witnesses stated that Indigenous women do not seek the assistance of law enforcement agencies because they do not trust police and judicial authorities.³⁸⁵ Indigenous women may encounter overt racism or culturally inappropriate responses when seeking assistance. They may also avoid the law enforcement and judicial systems because of a historically-based lack of trust in government authorities, founded in harmful past government policies and legislation.³⁸⁶

As well, the Committee heard that services for survivors of violence in some Indigenous communities are not always available, are completely absent, or can lack cultural sensitivity. When services do not meet the needs of a community, individuals are reluctant to intervene and disclose incidences of violence without supports in place.³⁸⁷ Another challenge for survivors in many Indigenous communities, particularly in remote or rural areas, is that the perpetrators of such violence often remain in the communities.³⁸⁸ As such, survivors may leave communities in order to ensure their safety, or they must face their perpetrators on a regular basis.³⁸⁹ Representatives from the government of

381 [Evidence](#), 28 September 2016, 1540 (Ann Decter).

382 [Evidence](#), 26 October 2016, 1550 (Tracy O'Hearn); Young Indigenous Women from Atlantic Canada, "[Networks for Change and Wellbeing – Addressing sexual violence: Eskasoni – Being fear-less in the face of sexual violence](#)," *Submitted Brief*, 2016.

383 [Evidence](#), 26 October 2016, 1535 and 1540 (Tracy O'Hearn); [Evidence](#), 19 April 2016, 1720 (Paula Isaak, Assistant Deputy Minister, Education and Social Development Programs and Partnerships, Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development).

384 [Evidence](#), 26 October 2016, 1540 (Tracy O'Hearn).

385 [Evidence](#), 5 October 2016, 1555 (Kendra Milne); Young Indigenous Women from Atlantic Canada, "[Networks for Change and Wellbeing – Addressing sexual violence: Eskasoni – Being fear-less in the face of sexual violence](#)," *Submitted Brief*, 2016; [Evidence](#), 12 April 2016, 1610 (Justine Akman, Director General, Policy and External Relations Directorate, Status of Women Canada).

386 [Evidence](#), 5 October 2016, 1555 (Kendra Milne); Young Indigenous Women from Atlantic Canada, "[Networks for Change and Wellbeing – Addressing sexual violence: Eskasoni – Being fear-less in the face of sexual violence](#)," *Submitted Brief*, 2016.

387 [Evidence](#), 26 October 2016, 1605 (Tracy O'Hearn); Young Indigenous Women from Atlantic Canada, "[Networks for Change and Wellbeing – Addressing sexual violence: Eskasoni – Being fear-less in the face of sexual violence](#)," *Submitted Brief*, 2016.

388 Young Indigenous Women from Atlantic Canada, "[Networks for Change and Wellbeing – Addressing sexual violence: Eskasoni – Being fear-less in the face of sexual violence](#)," *Submitted Brief*, 2016.

389 *Ibid.*

New Brunswick spoke about the establishment of a pilot project site in the Miramichi region to “focus on establishing culturally appropriate outreach services for aboriginal women who are victims of violence”.³⁹⁰

Indigenous young women and girls are particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation or trafficking.³⁹¹ Tracy O’Hearn, Executive Director of Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, explained that hypersexualized messages impact Indigenous young women and girls so that they “may see sex as a commodity to be exchanged in return for a secure place to stay, and food.”³⁹² Some witnesses suggested that the demand for sexual services in some Indigenous communities is linked to the presence of male-dominated transient workforces in nearby mining companies.³⁹³

The Committee heard that Indigenous women, including young women and girls, must be included as meaningful partners in efforts to prevent and address violence against them.³⁹⁴ Ms. Joe spoke of the need for “Indigenous- and gender-specific perspectives in the development of policies, legislation, public safety, prevention strategies, and social campaigns.”³⁹⁵ The Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres recommended amending the *Indian Act* to remove all instances of discrimination on the basis of sex.³⁹⁶

Furthermore, the Committee was told that awareness campaigns to address violence must challenge the “attitudes which devalue Indigenous women and girls.”³⁹⁷ The Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres recommended the development of “mandatory Indigenous cultural competency training and anti-racism training programs for federal public servants” so that they understand the harm perpetuated by historic policies and laws.³⁹⁸

The Committee was also informed that investments should be made in programs that promote education, skills and development and employment readiness so that Indigenous women have increased opportunities to participate in the economy and be economically independent, which limits their vulnerability to violence.³⁹⁹ Improving the

390 [Evidence](#), 30 November 2016, 1635 (Jocelyne Mills).

391 Antigonish Women’s Resource Centre and Sexual Assault Services, “[Submission to House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women: Violence against Girls and Young Women](#),” *Submitted Brief*, November 2016.

392 [Evidence](#), 26 October 2016, 1535 (Tracy O’Hearn).

393 [Evidence](#), 26 October 2016, 1535 (Tracy O’Hearn); [Evidence](#), 21 April 2016, 1610 (Angela Connidis, Director General, Crime Prevention, Corrections and Criminal Justice Directorate, Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness).

394 [Evidence](#), 21 November 2016, 1635 (Francyne Joe).

395 *Ibid.*

396 Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres, “[Kizhaay Anishinaabe Niin: I am a Kind Man Program - Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 2 November 2016.

397 [Evidence](#), 21 November 2016, 1640 (Francyne Joe).

398 Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres, “[Kizhaay Anishinaabe Niin: I am a Kind Man Program - Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 2 November 2016.

399 [Evidence](#), 21 November 2016, 1640 (Francyne Joe).

social determinants of health for all Indigenous peoples was also a priority, and this includes ensuring appropriate access to “education and training opportunities, safe and affordable housing, early childhood development programs and services, and health care including mental health and addiction services.”⁴⁰⁰

Lastly, Ms. Joe requested that:

The meaningful consultation with Indigenous women needs to be done in compliance with and respect to the principles set out in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples [UNDRIP], first of all, article 18 and article 21(2) of UNDRIP, with respect to indigenous rights to participate in decision-making and the state's obligation to take account of particular rights of Indigenous women.⁴⁰¹

Recommendation 19

That the Government of Canada work with community-based service providers in Indigenous and northern communities to develop and deliver community-oriented and culturally-appropriate educational programs that teach the concepts of consent and respect in sexual relationships and that engage men and boys in ending violence against women.

B. Immigrant and Refugee Young Women and Girls

The Committee heard that certain recent immigrant and refugee young women and girls may be particularly vulnerable to certain forms of violence and face specific barriers when seeking help. “Adaptation stresses,” perceived and real changes in family roles and gender status in Canada, pre-migration violence, and cultural gender inequality may exacerbate violence against immigrant or refugee young women and girls.⁴⁰²

Furthermore, immigrant and refugee young women and girls who have fled oppression or conflict likely arrive in Canada with significant trauma.⁴⁰³ These young women and girls – as well as their family members – face mental health problems, such as depression, related to being displaced and experiencing violence in their homelands. Culturally appropriate mental health supports are required to help them heal and integrate successfully.⁴⁰⁴

Some immigrant and refugee young women and girls are particularly vulnerable in situations of family violence, as there may be particular social and economic barriers to their accessing services or seeking help. For example, these young women and girls may :

400 Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres, “[Kizhaay Anishinaabe Niin: I am a Kind Man Program - Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 2 November 2016.

401 [Evidence](#), 21 November 2016, 1640 (Francyne Joe).

402 Manitoba Association of Newcomer Serving Organizations, “[MANSO Brief to House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women – Violence against Young Women and Girls in Canada](#),” *Submitted Brief*, September 2016.

403 [Evidence](#), 24 October 2016, 1700 (Kripa Sekhar, Executive Director, South Asian Women's Centre).

404 *Ibid.*, 1650 and 1705.

- lack knowledge of Canadian rights and laws;⁴⁰⁵
- face communication difficulties because of language barriers;⁴⁰⁶
- be in situations of extreme isolation and dependence on their husbands or families, particularly if they were married at a young age;⁴⁰⁷
- not have access to culturally appropriate services;⁴⁰⁸ and
- have an attitude of tolerance towards domestic abuse or a desire to maintain family reputations at all costs.⁴⁰⁹

The Committee was told that some immigrant and refugee young women and girls may fear deportation by immigration authorities if they report acts of violence in Canada, which increases their vulnerability to violence.⁴¹⁰ In particular, some witnesses expressed concerns about the current requirement, established in 2012, that sponsored spouses cohabit with their spouses for two years following their arrival in Canada in order to maintain their permanent resident status.⁴¹¹ Despite the existence of an exception in the cases of abuse or neglect, the requirement increases the vulnerability of sponsored spouses to violence.⁴¹² In October 2016, the federal government announced proposed changes to these requirements, stating it will be repealing the condition that spouses cohabit with spouses for two years.⁴¹³ The Canadian Council for Refugees (CCR) recommended that the government publicly commit to ending the pursuit of loss of status

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- 405 Manitoba Association of Newcomer Serving Organizations, "[MANSO Brief to House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women – Violence against Young Women and Girls in Canada](#)," *Submitted Brief*, September 2016.
- 406 [Evidence](#), 24 October 2016, 1635 (Reena Tandon); [Evidence](#), 24 October 2016, 1640 (Marmitha Yogarajah, Project Coordinator, South Asian Women's Centre); Manitoba Association of Newcomer Serving Organizations, "[MANSO Brief to House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women – Violence against Young Women and Girls in Canada](#)," *Submitted Brief*, September 2016.
- 407 [Evidence](#), 24 October 2016, 1635 (Reena Tandon); [Evidence](#), 24 October 2016, 1640 (Marmitha Yogarajah); Manitoba Association of Newcomer Serving Organizations, "[MANSO Brief to House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women – Violence against Young Women and Girls in Canada](#)," *Submitted Brief*, September 2016.
- 408 Manitoba Association of Newcomer Serving Organizations, "[MANSO Brief to House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women – Violence against Young Women and Girls in Canada](#)," *Submitted Brief*, September 2016.
- 409 [Evidence](#), 24 October 2016, 1640 (Marmitha Yogarajah); [Evidence](#), 24 October 2016, 1650 (Reena Tandon).
- 410 Manitoba Association of Newcomer Serving Organizations, "[MANSO Brief to House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women – Violence against Young Women and Girls in Canada](#)," *Submitted Brief*, September 2016.
- 411 [Evidence](#), 21 November 2016, 1630 (Loly Rico, President, Canadian Council for Refugees); Antigonish Women's Resource Centre and Sexual Assault Services, "[Submission to House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women: Violence against Girls and Young Women](#)," *Submitted Brief*, November 2016
- 412 Canadian Council for Refugees, "[CCR concerns: Violence against Women](#)," *Submitted Brief*, November 2016.
- 413 Government of Canada, "[Notice – Proposed Regulatory Changes – Conditional Permanent Residence](#)," *News Release*, 28 October 2016.

based on non-compliance with the aforementioned condition in the months leading to the regulatory change.⁴¹⁴

Furthermore, the CCR expressed concerns related to the vulnerability of women during the long spousal sponsorship processes, as it currently takes “26 months to receive permanent residence from the spousal sponsorship.”⁴¹⁵ The CCR reported that “women stay in an abusive relationship in order to be able to obtain permanent residence and avoid deportation” or “spouses threaten to, or actually withdraw the sponsorship application as a form of intimidation and abuse.”⁴¹⁶ The Committee heard that the federal government’s Designated Country of Origin policy, a system designed to identify refugee claimants from pre-determined “safe” countries, should be ended. The Antigonish Women’s Resource Centre and Sexual Assault Services stated that women escaping gender-based violence may be negatively affected by a policy that lists their country as safe, despite the fact that violence against women may be endemic.⁴¹⁷

Marmitha Yogarajah, Project Coordinator at the South Asian Women’s Centre, explained that while the second generation of young women and girl immigrants are unlikely to experience language barriers, they may remain isolated and tied to potentially harmful family values.⁴¹⁸ As well, the Committee heard that some immigrant and refugee girls and women may face forms of violence that are more common in particular cultures, such as so-called honour-based violence.⁴¹⁹

Racism can increase levels of violence against immigrant and refugee young women and girls. For instance, anti-terrorist discourse has led to some young Muslim women and girls being harassed on the street, which limits their mobility and access to public places and normalizes violence in their lives.⁴²⁰

Recommendation 20

That the Government of Canada provide funding to community-based organizations that assist new immigrants and refugees who have experienced or are experiencing gender-based violence.

414 Canadian Council for Refugees, “[CCR concerns: Violence against Women](#),” *Submitted Brief*, November 2016.

415 [Evidence](#), 21 November 2016, 1650 (Loly Rico).

416 Canadian Council for Refugees, “[CCR concerns: Violence against Women](#),” *Submitted Brief*, November 2016.

417 Antigonish Women’s Resource Centre and Sexual Assault Services, “[Submission to House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women: Violence against Girls and Young Women](#),” *Submitted Brief*, November 2016.

418 [Evidence](#), 24 October 2016, 1655 (Marmitha Yogarajah).

419 Quebec Council on the Status of Women, “[Violence Against Young Women and Girls](#),” *Submitted Brief*, September 2016.

420 Manitoba Association of Newcomer Serving Organizations, “[MANSO Brief to House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women – Violence against Young Women and Girls in Canada](#),” *Submitted Brief*, September 2016.

Recommendation 21

That the Government of Canada request that the Minister of Justice, at the next meeting of Canada’s federal, provincial and territorial Ministers Responsible for Justice and Public Safety, urge all jurisdictions to discuss with the provinces and territories the accessibility to all Canadians, regardless of immigration status, of existing services and supports for survivors of sexual or gender-based violence.

C. Young Women and Girls Identifying as Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and 2-Spirited

The Committee heard that many young women and girls identifying as lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer and 2-Spirited (the LGBTQ2 community) experience stigma and discrimination, and are targets of sexual and physical assault, harassment and hate crimes. Often the violence is deeply misogynistic because it is focused on the fact that these young women and girls are defying rigid gender and sexuality norms.⁴²¹

The Committee was informed that young women and girls identifying as LGBTQ2 experience regular incidents of violence, including “microaggressions,” common verbal and behavioural acts, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate derogatory, negative or antagonistic insults towards marginalized groups. Awar Obob, member of the collective Babely Shades, shared some examples of the violence experienced by these young women and girls: “you overhear a conversation where someone says a homophobic slur ... or you get chased down and bashed by people, or you get dox[x]ed online.”⁴²²

Witnesses noted that youth from the LGBTQ2 community experienced disproportionately high rates of harassment and violence online.⁴²³ Shanly Dixon, Educator and Researcher for the Digital Literacy Project at the Atwater Library and Computer Centre, stated that “discrimination [online] against LGBT-plus and gender-nonconforming people [is seen] as normal, as entertainment, or even as humour [and that] makes those representations or beliefs seem mainstream, palatable, or even acceptable in off-line environments.”⁴²⁴

421 [Evidence](#), 17 October 2016, 1630 (Gabrielle Ross-Marquette); [Evidence](#), 5 October 2016, 1640 and 1700 (Soraya Chemaly); [Evidence](#), 28 September 2016, 1540 (Ann Decter); [Evidence](#), 21 November 2016, 1640 (Awar Obob, member, Babely Shades); Canadian Federation of Students, “[Written Submission to the Status of Women Committee’s study on Violence Against Young Women and Girls in Canada](#),” *Submitted Brief*, October 2016.

422 [Evidence](#), 21 November 2016, 1720 (Awar Obob).

423 [Evidence](#), 5 October 2016, 1545 (Kendra Milne); [Evidence](#), 5 October 2016, 1640 (Soraya Chemaly).

424 [Evidence](#), 26 September 2016, 1540 (Shanly Dixon).

D. Young Women and Girls Living with Disabilities

The Committee was told that young women and girls living with disabilities are at significantly greater risk of violent victimization than their counterparts without disabilities.⁴²⁵ According to the DisAbleD Women's Network Canada, one in five women in the country has a disability, which is a low estimate because of the stigma associated with identifying as disabled and because of undiagnosed disabilities.⁴²⁶ A number of factors contribute to the vulnerability of girls and women living with disabilities, including higher levels of poverty and unemployment, social isolation, dependence on caregivers, and a lack of services and programs.⁴²⁷ Some marginalized groups of women are at increased risk of disability, and as such, at greater risk of experiencing violence; for instance, Indigenous women and sex workers have higher rates of disability than other Canadian women.⁴²⁸

Physical injury from violence can lead to traumatic brain injury for girls and young women, a serious disability which often remains undiagnosed and untreated because of underreporting to medical staff of cases of violence and a lack of medical screening for brain injury when cases of violence are reported.⁴²⁹ Bonnie Brayton, National Executive Director of the DisAbleD Women's Network Canada, requested that the federal government support a more proactive approach to screening and treating all brain injuries (not just sports brain injuries). She stated that when women receive a brain injury because of a case of violence, they tend to develop mental health problems, financial challenges and addictions to cope with the injury and their vulnerability to abuse subsequently increases.⁴³⁰

The Committee heard that young women and girls living with disabilities are not getting the necessary services and support to lead independent, violent-free lives.⁴³¹ For instance, women with intellectual disabilities have told the DisAbleD Women's Network Canada that they need access to information about their sexual and reproductive rights and strategies to protect those rights.⁴³²

The Committee was informed that legislation and government policies must better reflect the realities of disabled women, including young women and girls. Ms. Brayton said that “[disabled women] are the most invisible population in this country”⁴³³ and that

425 [Evidence](#), 23 November 2016, 1540 (Bonnie Brayton, National Executive Director, DisAbleD Women's Network Canada).

426 *Ibid.*, 1610.

427 [Evidence](#), 31 October 2016, 1705 (Manon Bergeron); [Evidence](#), 23 November 2016, 1540 and 1545 (Bonnie Brayton).

428 [Evidence](#), 23 November 2016, 1540 and 1620 (Bonnie Brayton).

429 *Ibid.*, 1550.

430 *Ibid.*, 1545 and 1610.

431 *Ibid.*, 1540.

432 *Ibid.*, 1545.

433 *Ibid.*, 1610.

legislation specific to disability is not often put through a gender-based analysis, and that policies for disabled women have “no champions, no funding, and therefore no programs, no services ... and no results.”⁴³⁴

Recommendation 22

That the Government of Canada address the current gap in sexual violence awareness and services for women and girls living with disabilities by taking appropriate measures to prevent and address sexual violence against women and girls living with disabilities in Canada.

E. Young Women and Girls Experiencing Homelessness

The Committee heard that young women and girls who are homeless are more vulnerable to violence, sexual exploitation, addiction and criminalization than are other groups of young women and girls.⁴³⁵ Young women and girls become homeless for a number of reasons: “Most girls leave home due to sexual abuse and violence, others are escaping homophobia. First Nation, Métis and Inuit girls and young women may be leaving foster and group homes or aging out of care without supports.”⁴³⁶

Witnesses suggested that these young women and girls are in need of female-only safe housing and emergency shelters, with support services and transition programs for when they leave.⁴³⁷ The comprehensive services that are needed include “education, counselling, health care, employment assistance, job training, and aftercare.”⁴³⁸ For instance, Ms. Neubauer, Manager of Human Trafficking Services at Covenant House Toronto, informed the Committee that:

[I]n September, we were very proud to open the city's first transitional housing program for female survivors of sex trafficking. It's called the Rogers Home. It is an innovative program that will provide seven residents with stable housing for up to two years. We provide life skills training, community-based trauma counselling, and other wraparound services to support these young women on their road to recovery.⁴³⁹

Recommendation 23

That the Government of Canada provide greater access to shelters (including funding, number of spaces, and accessibility) and legal resources for young women and girls who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless and who are survivors of gender-based violence.

434 Ibid., 1540.

435 [Evidence](#), 28 September 2016, 1540 (Ann Decter); [Evidence](#), 12 April 2016, 1550 (Yvan Clermont).

436 YWCA Canada, “[Safety for Girls and Young Women Starts with Leadership](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 23 September 2016.

437 [Evidence](#), 28 September 2016, 1540 (Ann Decter); [Evidence](#), 24 October 2016, 1650 (Kripa Sekhar).

438 [Evidence](#), 23 November 2016, 1550 (Julie Neubauer).

439 Ibid.

F. Young Women and Girls in Rural and Remote Communities

Witnesses stated that young women and girls living in rural and remote communities have particular vulnerabilities to violence. Andy Lou Somers, Executive Director of the East Prince Women's Information Centre, said "I'm ... a mother of six children and a grandmother of nine. I've learned the hard way that living on a small island that is fairly removed from the hustle and bustle of urban areas does not mean that we are not vulnerable, especially when it comes to cyberviolence."⁴⁴⁰ RCMP detachments serve rural, remote and northern communities, and as such, it is essential RCMP officers develop a relationship based on respect and trust with the women and girls in these communities.⁴⁴¹

Young women and girls who are sexually assaulted in these communities face significant challenges in seeking justice and recovering from the crimes. For instance, Ms. Khan, Sexual Violence Support and Education Coordinator at Ryerson University, said: "I have survivors who are from northern and rural communities who have to travel for two days to get our sexual assault evidence kit administered. That means you can't change your clothes, and you can't have a shower."⁴⁴² Furthermore, if survivors of violence are seeking shelter, many remote communities are only able to provide a room in someone's house or a room at the local jail, and these survivors must be flown out to reach safety.⁴⁴³ Mental health services, if they are available, are not specialized to deliver sexual violence trauma work.⁴⁴⁴

Speaking on the subject of access to services on post-secondary campuses in rural or remote regions, Ms. Arte, National Chairperson of the Canadian Federation of Students, said:

Some local college campuses located in Labrador have no rape crisis centres. There are no hotlines. There are no opportunities for students to speak to anyone about their experiences on campus, never mind the limited resources even on this campus.... [At Memorial University] there is only one trained counsellor on this campus to deal with the issue of sexual violence, and the counsellor is often unavailable to meet the demands. I think that this disparity in access is very problematic. It means that students are going to have to make very harsh decisions about whether they continue their studies based on the availability of certain resources, particularly when they are survivors of issues around sexual and gender-based violence. This disparity exists from coast to coast.⁴⁴⁵

Ms. Decter, Director, Advocacy and Public Policy at YWCA Canada, recommended that there be federal leadership to develop national standards – that apply to survivors of violence in urban, rural and remote communities – for the provision of services and support.⁴⁴⁶

440 [Evidence](#), 3 October 2016, 1630 (Andy Lou Somers, Executive Director, East Prince Women's Information Centre).

441 [Evidence](#), 21 April 2016, 1640 (Shirley Cuillierri).

442 [Evidence](#), 24 October 2016, 1600 (Farrah Khan).

443 [Evidence](#), 28 September 2016, 1610 (Ann Decter).

444 [Evidence](#), 14 November 2016, 1720 (Lucille Harper).

445 [Evidence](#), 19 October 2016, 1610 (Bilan Arte).

446 [Evidence](#), 28 September 2016, 1610 (Ann Decter).

ESTABLISHING PUBLIC AWARENESS AND EDUCATIONAL EFFORTS

The Committee heard that cultural and societal changes are necessary to end violence against young women and girls and that, as part of this shift, it is essential to educate the public about gender-based violence, healthy sexuality, consent culture, media and digital literacy, and bystander intervention.⁴⁴⁷

Witnesses stated that it was important that these awareness and education efforts be culturally appropriate in order to reach the widest possible audience. For example, Ms. O’Hearn, Executive Director of Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, described the Nunavik Regional Board of Health and Social Services’ initiative to teach “good touch, bad touch” and delivered in schools by “traditional Inuit counsellors, elders, and respected role models.”⁴⁴⁸

A. Awareness of Gender-based Violence

Several witnesses spoke of the need for greater awareness of gender-based violence in order to empower individuals to speak openly about it.⁴⁴⁹ Witnesses suggested that the federal government develop and/or invest in a public awareness campaign to promote gender equality and improve the public’s understanding of the factors that contribute to gender-based violence.⁴⁵⁰ The Committee heard that the awareness campaign could also focus on the problems with the hypersexualization of women and the potential effects of violent pornography on healthy sexuality.⁴⁵¹

In a written brief, YWCA Canada stated that awareness campaigns on gender-based violence must create a societal shift in attitudes “similar to shifts in public acceptance of drinking and driving and smoking in public places.” It explained that:

447 [Evidence](#), 28 September 2016, 1540 (Ann Decter); Stephanie Chard, “[Brief Submitted by Stephanie Chard to the Status of Women Committee](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 2016; Children and Youth in Challenging Contexts Network and Dalhousie University, “[Violence against Young Women and Girls in Canada](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 2016; [Evidence](#), 14 November 2016, 1535 (Sylvia Maracle).

448 [Evidence](#), 26 October 2016, 1625 (Tracy O’Hearn).

449 [Evidence](#), 28 September 2016, 1540 (Ann Decter); [Evidence](#), 17 October 2016, 1645 (Maïra Martin); Stephanie Chard, “[Brief Submitted by Stephanie Chard to the Status of Women Committee](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 2016; Persons Against Non-State Torture – Jeanne Sarson and Linda MacDonald, “[Truth-Telling: Best Practices for Engaging Men and Boys in Addressing and Preventing Violence against Young Women and Girls](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 10 July 2016; [Evidence](#), 14 November 2016, 1535 (Sylvia Maracle).

450 [Evidence](#), 3 October 2016, 1640 (Nancy Beth Guptill); [Evidence](#), 14 November 2016, 1645 (Mélanie Sarroino); Y des femmes de Montréal, “[Brief to the Standing Committee on the Status of Women: Violence Against Young Women and Girls](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 2016; [Evidence](#), 19 October 2016, 1555 (Bilan Arte); Canadian Federation of Students, “[Written Submission to the Status of Women Committee’s study on Violence Against Young Women and Girls in Canada](#),” *Submitted Brief*, October 2016.

451 [Evidence](#), 14 November 2016, 1645 (Mélanie Sarroino).

Long term public awareness campaigns were essential to making those changes, and will be essential to preventing violence. These need to be combined with preventive program initiatives and supportive responses for young women and girls who have experienced violence. Addressing violence against young women and girls requires a commitment to reconciliation and inclusion, as well as specifically addressing both systemic and individual forms of violence against Indigenous young women and girls.⁴⁵²

B. Healthy Sexuality and Consent Culture

Witnesses explained that promoting healthy sexuality and a consent culture, whereby asking for consent to participate in sexual activities is normalized and respected, would lower rates of gender-based violence and provide support to survivors of violence.⁴⁵³

The *Criminal Code* of Canada defines consent for the purposes of the sexual assault provisions as the voluntary agreement of the complainant to engage in the sexual activity in question, and offers a list of circumstances in which consent is not obtained.⁴⁵⁴ Beyond the *Criminal Code* definition, the Committee was told that consent should include the “mutual, emotional, physical, and psychological understanding between people without the use of force of any kind.”⁴⁵⁵ In a written submission, the Canadian Federation of Students stated such a campaign must:

[E]ducate the public on what a culture of consent looks like. In a culture of consent, the fact that consent is mandatory is normalized, respected and valued in society. It is a culture in which all interactions and relationships are centred on freely given, active and enthusiastic mutual agreement for participation.⁴⁵⁶

The concept of healthy sexuality should also be incorporated, which is understood to be a state of physical and mental well-being in relation to sexuality. Healthy sexuality relies on positive ideas of appropriate sexual activity free of coercion and violence.⁴⁵⁷

The Committee also heard that education and awareness campaigns on healthy sexuality and consent culture should not be divided into two binary genders, and that boys and girls should be taught the same information in a combined setting.⁴⁵⁸

452 YWCA Canada, “[Safety for Girls and Young Women Starts with Leadership](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 23 September 2016.

453 [Evidence](#), 24 October 2016, 1545 (Paloma Ponti).

454 [Evidence](#), 19 April 2016, 1600 (Gillian Blackell).

455 [Evidence](#), 24 October 2016, 1545 (Kenya Rogers).

456 Canadian Federation of Students, “[Written Submission to the Status of Women Committee’s study on Violence Against Young Women and Girls in Canada](#),” *Submitted Brief*, October 2016.

457 [Evidence](#), 17 October 2016, 1555 (Anuradha Dugal); [Evidence](#), 28 September 2016, 1700 (Lianna McDonald).

458 [Evidence](#), 16 November 2016, 1540 (Tessa Hill).

1. Educating Youth about Healthy Sexuality and Consent Culture

The Committee heard that the concept of healthy sexuality must be taught – through schools and awareness campaigns – to both children and adolescents.⁴⁵⁹ Furthermore, it is important to teach young women and girls – not just young men and boys – that it is normal “to want to have sex and to be sexual.”⁴⁶⁰ At the same time, young men and boys must be taught “respect for the sexual autonomy of others.”⁴⁶¹ Sex education, provided through schools and awareness campaigns, should include age-appropriate ideas about consent, pleasure, communication, mutual appreciation, intimacy, respect, compassion, bodily autonomy, healthy body image and gender equality.⁴⁶²

The Committee heard that young women and girls must be empowered in order to demand healthy relationships and express healthy sexuality.⁴⁶³ Young women and girls must have access to “programs and spaces that foster leadership, empowerment, and self-affirmation.”⁴⁶⁴

A number of witnesses said it was important to teach age-appropriate concepts of healthy sexuality, healthy relationships, and consent starting from a young age to both girls and boys.⁴⁶⁵ Ms. Dugal, Director of Violence Prevention Programs at the Canadian Women’s Foundation, suggested that “the earlier children receive healthy relationships education, the more lasting the outcomes.”⁴⁶⁶ Some witnesses recommended that there should be training provided to parents so they could start teaching these subjects to their toddlers: for example, Ms. Kitschke, Executive Director of the SAFFRON Sexual Assault Centre, stated that:

Part of the problem is that a lot of parents don't know how to have these conversations, and they definitely don't think they need to have those conversations in the zero-to-five age range.... We spend so much time teaching our children how to walk and talk and to have all these other life skills, but we forget to teach them about sexuality.⁴⁶⁷

459 [Evidence](#), 28 September 2016, 1700 (Lianna McDonald); Quebec Council on the Status of Women, “[Violence Against Young Women and Girls](#),” *Submitted Brief*, September 2016; [Evidence](#), 14 November 2016, 1650 (Katie Kitschke).

460 [Evidence](#), 16 June 2016, 1710 (Jane Bailey).

461 Ibid.

462 [Evidence](#), 17 October 2016, 1615 (Dawn Moore); Coalition of Provincial and Territorial Advisory Councils on the Status of Women, “[Brief for the Standing Committee on the Status of Women study on Violence Against Young Women and Girls in Canada](#),” *Submitted Brief*, September 2016.

463 [Evidence](#), 16 June 2016, 1710 (Jane Bailey).

464 [Evidence](#), 28 September 2016, 1540 (Ann Decter).

465 [Evidence](#), 19 October 2016, 1710 (Lori Chambers); [Evidence](#), 31 October 2016, 1650 (Manon Bergeron); [Evidence](#), 17 October 2016, 1545 and 1610 (Anuradha Dugal); Persons Against Non-State Torture – Jeanne Sarson and Linda MacDonald, “[Truth-Telling: Best Practices for Engaging Men and Boys in Addressing and Preventing Violence against Young Women and Girls](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 10 July 2016.

466 [Evidence](#), 17 October 2016, 1540 (Anuradha Dugal).

467 [Evidence](#), 14 November 2016, 1650 (Katie Kitschke).

The Committee was told that toddlers can learn to ask permission to hug someone, which is an element of consent culture,⁴⁶⁸ and that children can be empowered to know how they deserve to be treated and what they should expect from a relationship.⁴⁶⁹ The Committee heard about different initiatives in that regard, such as the RCMP's #HealthyLove campaign and the "Healthy Living" curriculum in Nova Scotia.⁴⁷⁰

The Committee was told that age-appropriate sexual health education should be delivered in elementary and high schools in order to teach children about healthy sexuality and the meaning of consent.⁴⁷¹ A number of witnesses spoke in favour of the updated Ontario health and physical education curriculum, which includes discussions on gender, online safety and cyberviolence, healthy relationships and sexual consent.⁴⁷² Ms. Hill, Co-founder of We Give Consent, stated that: "Much of the sex education across Canada, and even in some classrooms now, is still very fear-based and abstinence-based education, whereas I think it should be the opposite. Comprehensive sex education should include terms that I use in my remarks, like 'body positive', 'queer positive', 'sex positive', and it should have a harm reduction approach."⁴⁷³

Teachers and staff in elementary and high schools should also be provided training on violence against women, specifically on how to handle disclosure of cases of violence against young women and girls.⁴⁷⁴ While education is under provincial jurisdiction, Ms. Charette, Senior Assistant Deputy Minister at Spectrum, Information Technologies and Telecommunications in the Department of Industry, suggested that "the federal government can be a champion by pointing out the national nature of this need and making sure that all the players across Canada do their part in helping to make a dent in

468 [Evidence](#), 17 October 2016, 1610 (Anuradha Dugal).

469 [Evidence](#), 28 September 2016, 1700 (Signy Arnason); [Evidence](#), 12 April 2016, 1600 (Linda Savoie).

470 Be The Peace Institute – Sue Bookchin, "[Violence Against Young Women and Girls in Canada](#)," *Submitted Brief*, September 2016; [Evidence](#), 26 September 2016, 1535 (Kimberly Taplin).

471 Coalition of Provincial and Territorial Advisory Councils on the Status of Women, "[Brief for the Standing Committee on the Status of Women study on Violence Against Young Women and Girls in Canada](#)," *Submitted Brief*, September 2016; [Evidence](#), 28 September 2016, 1600 (Ann Decter); [Evidence](#), 14 November 2016, 1650 (Katie Kitschke); [Evidence](#), 30 November 2016, 1655 (Tessa Hill); [Evidence](#), 31 October 2016, 1700 (Manon Bergeron); [Evidence](#), 5 October 2016, 1650 and 1655 (Soraya Chemaly); [Evidence](#), 14 November 2016, 1640 and 1645 and 1715 (Mélanie Sarroino); [Evidence](#), 26 September 2016, 1700 (Leah Parsons); Planned Parenthood Newfoundland and Labrador Sexual Health Centre, "[A written brief to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women on Violence against Young Women and Girls](#)," *Submitted Brief*, September 2016; Quebec Council on the Status of Women, "[Violence Against Young Women and Girls](#)," *Submitted Brief*, September 2016; Stephanie Chard, "[Brief Submitted by Stephanie Chard to the Status of Women Committee](#)," *Submitted Brief*, 2016.

472 [Evidence](#), 30 November 2016, 1700 (Tessa Hill); [Evidence](#), 23 November 2016, 1625 (Julie Neubauer); [Evidence](#), 30 November 2016, 1620 (Maureen Adamson).

473 [Evidence](#), 30 November 2016, 1635 (Tessa Hill).

474 [Evidence](#), 19 October 2016, 1650 (Lori Chambers); Be The Peace Institute – Sue Bookchin, "[Violence Against Young Women and Girls in Canada](#)," *Submitted Brief*, September 2016; Stephanie Chard, "[Brief Submitted by Stephanie Chard to the Status of Women Committee](#)," *Submitted Brief*, 2016.

this issue.”⁴⁷⁵ The Committee was told that “not every province has an updated and progressive health curriculum.”⁴⁷⁶

2. Educating Adults about Healthy Sexuality and Consent Culture

The Committee was informed that there must be a country-wide shifting of norms surrounding consent and sexuality through “consent education in public schools and post-secondary campuses as well as through mandatory training, leadership, and enforcement across police and court systems, up to and including removal of judges who fail to apply the law.”⁴⁷⁷ A written brief by the University of Alberta Sexual Assault Centre suggested the federal government should fund long-term educational programs that include community advocates who promote a consent culture at home, in workplaces, online and in the public sphere.⁴⁷⁸

The Committee heard that a key aspect of implementing a consent culture is changing the behaviour of men and boys, through awareness and education efforts targeted at all segments of the population, “from judges and defence attorneys to campus sports teams and police officers.”⁴⁷⁹ Many men have never been provided with information on what sexual consent entails, and instead society reinforces gender stereotypes, hyper-masculinization, and hypersexualization.⁴⁸⁰

Witnesses indicated that adults, including educators, parents, health care professionals and leaders in society, must be educated on how to provide messages about healthy sexuality and consent.⁴⁸¹ In particular, parents must also be provided with educational and awareness support so they can speak with their children about sex, beyond the simple concepts of condoms and how to prevent pregnancy.⁴⁸² Parents can

475 [Evidence](#), 5 December 2016, 1715 (Corinne Charette).

476 [Evidence](#), 16 November 2016, 1540 (Tessa Hill).

477 [Evidence](#), 28 September 2016, 1540 (Ann Decter); Coalition of Provincial and Territorial Advisory Councils on the Status of Women, “[Brief for the Standing Committee on the Status of Women study on Violence Against Young Women and Girls in Canada](#),” *Submitted Brief*, September 2016.

478 University of Alberta Sexual Assault Centre – Meagan Simon and Meg Anderson, “[Written Brief Submitted to the Status of Women Committee for its Study on Violence against Young Women and Girls in Canada](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 2016.

479 [Evidence](#), 28 September 2016, 1540 (Ann Decter).

480 [Evidence](#), 16 June 2016, 1710 (Jane Bailey); [Evidence](#), 28 September 2016, 1605 (Raine Liliefeldt); Coalition of Provincial and Territorial Advisory Councils on the Status of Women, “[Brief for the Standing Committee on the Status of Women study on Violence Against Young Women and Girls in Canada](#),” *Submitted Brief*, September 2016.

481 Quebec Council on the Status of Women, “[Violence Against Young Women and Girls](#),” *Submitted Brief*, September 2016; Coalition of Provincial and Territorial Advisory Councils on the Status of Women, “[Brief for the Standing Committee on the Status of Women study on Violence Against Young Women and Girls in Canada](#),” *Submitted Brief*, September 2016.

482 [Evidence](#), 24 October 2016, 1615 (Farrah Khan); Coalition of Provincial and Territorial Advisory Councils on the Status of Women, “[Brief for the Standing Committee on the Status of Women study on Violence Against Young Women and Girls in Canada](#),” *Submitted Brief*, September 2016; [Evidence](#), 14 November 2016, 1650 (Katie Kitschke).

also model healthy relationships and teach their children about appropriate boundaries, respect for bodily autonomy and gender stereotypes.⁴⁸³

A brief from the Canadian Federation of Students stated that “colleges and universities should be mandated to hold mandatory consent education programs for all staff, faculty and students within the first eight weeks of each new academic year.”⁴⁸⁴

C. Media and Digital Literacy

The Committee was told that while social media can promote harmful concepts related to sexuality, it can also be harnessed to “uproot rape culture and promote positive cultural change,” by engaging Canadians in critical and educational dialogues.⁴⁸⁵ Media literacy should be provided to all children; in particular, young women and girls must be taught how to critically examine the popular culture messages which tend to push for the hypersexualization of their bodies.⁴⁸⁶

In a written submission, Ms. Bailey and Ms. Steeves, both of the University of Ottawa, said that girls have requested educational measures that “address heterosexist stereotyping that privileges thin, white images of femininity and sexuality that were a prominent part of advertising they were targeted with in online social spaces.”⁴⁸⁷ It was recommended that the federal government should develop a public awareness campaign for the general public to explain the impact that sexist and sexual images of women and girls in the media and pornography can have on gender relations, gender equality and violence against women and girls.⁴⁸⁸

Witnesses suggested that the federal government should play a role in raising awareness of the harm caused by hypersexualized messages and images disseminated to youth, including young women and girls. For instance, the Regroupement québécois des Centres d'aide et de lutte contre les agressions à caractère sexuel recommended that:

[T]he Canad[ian] Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission’s [Advertising Standards Canada] Clearance Services include in their consultation services for the launch of new products and new advertising concepts a component concerning products, messages and images with sexual and sexist connotations and advocate that these

483 [Evidence](#), 14 November 2016, 1650 (Katie Kitschke); [Evidence](#), 28 September 2016, 1605 (Raine Liliefeldt).

484 Canadian Federation of Students, “[Written Submission to the Status of Women Committee’s study on Violence Against Young Women and Girls in Canada](#),” *Submitted Brief*, October 2016.

485 [Evidence](#), 16 June 2016, 1555 (Shaheen Shariff).

486 [Evidence](#), 26 September 2016, 1635 (Leah Parsons); [Evidence](#), 28 September 2016, 1540 (Ann Decter); [Evidence](#), 16 June 2016, 1645 (Matthew Johnson); [Evidence](#), 21 September 2016, 1635 (Angela Marie MacDougall).

487 Jane Bailey and Valerie Steeves, “[Submission to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women Relating to Violence against Young Women and Girls in Canada](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 22 September 2016.

488 Regroupement québécois des Centres d'aide et de lutte contre les agressions à caractère sexuel, “[Brief Submitted by the Regroupement québécois des CALACS To the Status of Women Committee](#),” *Submitted Brief*, November 2016.

should be avoided at all cost by explaining the negative impacts such products, messages and images have on youth and society as a whole.⁴⁸⁹

In addition, “the [Advertising Standards Canada] Children’s Clearance Committee [should] not approve the broadcast of sexist or sexual advertising during programming intended for young children.”⁴⁹⁰

D. The Bystander Approach

The Committee heard that using a bystander approach is a good way of engaging the public in ending violence against young women and girls. The bystander approach is centred on the idea that everyone has a role to play in challenging and interrupting violent behaviour and that in each peer culture, individuals should be upholding social norms that condemn violent behaviour. The goal of the approach is to teach participants how to react and intervene when they see incidents of violence because individuals often do not know how to intervene or may not know they are witnessing violence.⁴⁹¹ Children, youth and adults should be provided with age-appropriate information, through awareness and education campaigns, on their responsibilities as bystanders if they witness violence, and the safe steps they can take to address this violence or seek help.⁴⁹²

For instance, Maureen Adamson, Deputy Minister Responsible for Women's Issues at the Ontario Women's Directorate, Government of Ontario, informed the Committee that the province of Ontario is providing training to bartenders, servers and others in the hospitality sector “to identify and intervene in instances of sexual violence and harassment among employees and patrons.”⁴⁹³ The Committee also heard that Twitter had established “bystander reports,” which enable the online community to report instances of abuse to Twitter on behalf of the person who is being victimized on the platform.⁴⁹⁴ Ms. Nguyen, Managing Director of Parker P. Consulting at the White Ribbon Campaign, said that “anyone who has a touch point with the community,” for example nurses and librarians, should have training on how to respond to disclosure of violence, how to support survivors and how to safely intervene.⁴⁹⁵

489 Ibid.

490 Ibid.

491 [Evidence](#), 17 October 2016, 1655 (Julie Lalonde); [Evidence](#), 17 October 2016, 1700 (Maira Martin); Second Story Women’s Centre, “[Brief Regarding Violence against Young Women and Girls in Canada](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 2016.

492 [Evidence](#), 23 November 2016, 1730 (Alma Arguello, Executive Director, SAVIS of Halton).

493 [Evidence](#), 30 November 2016, 1620 (Maureen Adamson).

494 [Evidence](#), 21 November 2016, 1610 (Patricia Cartes).

495 [Evidence](#), 23 November 2016, 1725 (Chi Nguyen).

Recommendation 24

That the Government of Canada support digital literacy organizations whose work aims to educate young people and their families on the dangers of cyberviolence, the potential risks of sexting, and healthy forms of sexual expression and informed consent in the online realm.

Observation 3

The Committee observed the need for a standardized curriculum in public schools that addresses sex positivity, healthy relationships, healthy sexuality, positive masculinity, pleasure, communication, intimacy, respect, bodily autonomy and healthy body image, and queer, trans and non-conventional experiences; and the need for the curriculum to be implemented in an age-appropriate and culturally appropriate manner as early as junior kindergarten.

Observation 4

The Committee observed the need for the implementation of a standardized curriculum in public schools that teaches digital and media literacy and that this curriculum: 1) prioritize the development of students' critical thinking skills towards media so that they are equipped with adequate tools and resources to critically examine the media and images they consume; 2) that it teach concepts of digital civility and being a good digital citizen; and 3) that it make distinctions between acceptable online behaviour, unacceptable online behaviour, and criminal online behaviour. Furthermore, this curriculum needs to be implemented in an age-appropriate and culturally appropriate manner as early as junior kindergarten.

ENGAGING MEN AND BOYS IN ADDRESSING VIOLENCE AGAINST YOUNG WOMEN AND GIRLS

The Committee heard that educating and engaging men and boys is crucial to ending violence against women.⁴⁹⁶ Mr. Henry, Project Coordinator of the Male Ally Network at SAVIS of Halton, stated that “reducing and preventing violence against women requires the participation of men who can model non-violent behaviour and hold their male counterparts accountable.”⁴⁹⁷ Witnesses explained that while most violence against women is committed by men, most men are not perpetrators of violence and that it is therefore important to teach young men and boys how to intervene if they witness violence.⁴⁹⁸ Jamie Taras, Director of Community Relations at the British Columbia Lions Football Club, stated that: “All this wonderful [anti-violence] work was being done by women and women's organizations, but the voice of men was missing. This issue had been seen as a women's issue for so many years, when in fact it's a men's issue because men are committing the vast majority of this crime.”⁴⁹⁹

Several witnesses explained that young men and boys often do not understand what sexual consent means and what constitutes violence because no one has taught them about these issues.⁵⁰⁰ Ms. Parsons, mother of Rehtaeh Parsons and representative of the Rehtaeh Parsons Society, explained her daughter's situation:

I'd just like to say that as Rehtaeh was going into junior high, I was very well aware of what I needed to teach her as a female to be safe.... I felt that she had her head on straight and she was very cautious herself.... I had no idea that it didn't matter what I said; she was never safe. She was never safe when she was put in a room and left alone with four males because nobody taught them what sexual consent was. Even one of the males, after this all happened, reached out to me. He tried to explain to me that he didn't rape Rehtaeh. In his description, he described exactly how he raped Rehtaeh. He clearly was uninformed, and nobody ever taught him what sexual consent actually means.⁵⁰¹

Many witnesses stated that men and boys show an interest for engaging in conversations about these subjects and for being allies.⁵⁰² Ms. Savoie, Senior Director General of the Women's Program and Regional Operations Directorate at Status of

496 [Evidence](#), 14 November 2016, 1530 (Sylvia Maracle); [Evidence](#), 31 October 2016, 1530 (Cathy Grant); [Evidence](#), 3 October 2016, 1650 (Alicia Raimundo); Be The Peace Institute – Sue Bookchin, “[Violence Against Young Women and Girls in Canada](#),” *Submitted Brief*, September 2016; Quebec Council on the Status of Women, “[Violence Against Young Women and Girls](#),” *Submitted Brief*, September 2016; [Evidence](#), 14 November 2016, 1655 (Katie Kitschke); [Evidence](#), 26 September 2016, 1730 (Carol Todd); [Evidence](#), 23 November 2016, 1640 (Walter Henry); [Evidence](#), 23 November 2016, 1645 (Chi Nguyen).

497 [Evidence](#), 23 November 2016, 1635 (Walter Henry).

498 [Evidence](#), 14 November 2016, 1540 (Jamie Taras); [Evidence](#), 23 November 2016, 1635 (Walter Henry).

499 [Evidence](#), 14 November 2016, 1535 (Jamie Taras).

500 [Evidence](#), 26 September 2016, 1635 and 1730 (Leah Parsons).

501 *Ibid.*, 1730.

502 [Evidence](#), 26 September 2016, 1730 (Leah Parsons); [Evidence](#), 14 November 2016, 1545 (Jamie Taras); [Evidence](#), 12 April 2016, 1535 (Linda Savoie); [Evidence](#), 23 November 2016, 1645 et 1650 (Chi Nguyen).

Women Canada, explained that evidence from projects funded by the agency that are focused on engaging men and boys indicate that “there is an appetite by men and boys to be actively engaged in eliminating violence against women.”⁵⁰³

A. Best Practices to Engage Men and Boys

Witnesses shared examples of best practices to engage young men and boys in ending violence against young women and girls with the Committee. The Committee heard from representatives from several programs and initiatives, such as The White Ribbon Campaign, Be More Than a Bystander, the Male Ally Network (MAN) program, Kizhaay Anishinaabe Niin (I am a Kind Man), and Changing Male Conversations, that are focussed on educating young men and boys about consent, equality, gender stereotypes and healthy relationships.⁵⁰⁴ Planned Parenthood Newfoundland and the Labrador Sexual Health Centre suggested that the federal government create a public education campaign to engage men and boys in ending violence against women and to educate them about gender equality.⁵⁰⁵

Witnesses recommended that programs be held in spaces where men and boys spend time⁵⁰⁶ or focus on creating spaces where men and boys would want to visit and participate in such programs.⁵⁰⁷ Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes stressed the need for dialogue spaces for men and boys “to address issues such as masculinity, respect and violence.”⁵⁰⁸

The Committee also heard about the importance of engaging male role models, for example professional athletes, to speak publicly about the issue of violence against young women and girls in order to clarify that this behaviour is unacceptable.⁵⁰⁹ For example, the MAN Program “seek[s] to use men and boys as role models to start the conversation with their children, their peers, and within their everyday environment.”⁵¹⁰

Mr. Taras of the BC Lions Football Club, explained that the club’s program “Be More than a Bystander,” organized in collaboration with the Ending Violence Association of British Columbia, engages BC Lions players as role models for youth in order to address violence.

503 [Evidence](#), 12 April 2016, 1535 (Linda Savoie).

504 [Evidence](#), 12 April 2016, 1600 (Linda Savoie); [Evidence](#), 31 October 2016, 1535 (Harvey Bate); [Evidence](#), 24 October 2016, 1555 (Kenya Rogers); [Evidence](#), 14 November 2016, 1540 (Jamie Taras); [Evidence](#), 23 November 2016, 1635 (Walter Henry); [Evidence](#), 23 November 2016, 1640 (Chi Nguyen).

505 Planned Parenthood Newfoundland and Labrador Sexual Health Centre, “[A written brief to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women on Violence against Young Women and Girls](#),” *Submitted Brief*, September 2016.

506 [Evidence](#), 24 October 2016, 1555 (Kenya Rogers); [Evidence](#), 23 November 2016, 1635 and 1720 (Walter Henry).

507 [Evidence](#), 23 November 2016, 1705 (Walter Henry).

508 Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes – Maira Martin, “[Brief submitted by Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 2016.

509 Y des femmes de Montréal, “[Brief to the Standing Committee on the Status of Women: Violence Against Young Women and Girls](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 2016; [Evidence](#), 14 November 2016, 1540 (Jamie Taras).

510 [Evidence](#), 23 November 2016, 1640 (Walter Henry).

There are three elements to the program: BC Lions players give presentations in high schools about violence against women and what students can do to address and prevent such violence; BC Lions players deliver awareness-raising messages through advertising and promotion on television, radio, and in the stadium; and finally, a legacy film on the subject of violence was developed and can be distributed to high schools.⁵¹¹ Mr. Taras explained:

It's about entering into the conversation. No one was speaking about violence against women. This conversation wasn't happening. It's not something that men talk about. If you bring up the topic in a room, men will go completely silent.... Many of us ... have been witnesses to off-putting jokes or negative attitudes about women, or we may know someone, maybe a friend, who is struggling in their relationship, and we don't do anything about it, because we don't know how to. We don't want to get involved. We don't feel it's our place. That's the challenge. How can we get the vast majority of men, who are good men, kind men, to take action and get involved in the conversation, in the solution, rather than being part of the problem? By being silent, we're saying that what's happening is okay. We wanted to be more than a bystander. We wanted to break the silence on violence against women.⁵¹²

The Committee heard that it was essential that efforts to engage men and boys reflect the cultural diversity of Canadian communities.⁵¹³ For instance, Alma Arguello, Executive Director of SAVIS of Halton, explained that programs must have cultural relevancy:

That means teaching young men in that community, in that sphere, in their own safe environment, whether it's a mosque or a synagogue or a church or a temple, and talking to them about how being a male ally helps in their own community. Having that conversation sometimes in their own language—in Hebrew, in Spanish, in Arabic—is very important.⁵¹⁴

B. Engaging Indigenous Men and Boys

The Committee heard that engaging Indigenous men and boys in efforts to end violence against women requires a separate approach that addresses the specific needs and challenges of Indigenous communities. For example, many men in these communities feel devalued as they have been displaced from their traditional roles as hunters and providers.⁵¹⁵ According to Ms. Maracle, Executive Director of the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres, public education campaigns targeted to Indigenous men must be delivered in Indigenous languages and must be culturally relevant.⁵¹⁶ There must be acknowledgement of the intergenerational trauma in Indigenous communities tied to colonialism, residential schools, and child welfare.⁵¹⁷

511 [Evidence](#), 14 November 2016, 1540 and 1545 (Jamie Taras).

512 *Ibid.*, 1540 and 1545.

513 [Evidence](#), 23 November 2016, 1650 and 1720 (Alma Arguello); [Evidence](#), 23 November 2016, 1725 (Chi Nguyen);

514 [Evidence](#), 23 November 2016, 1720 (Alma Arguello).

515 [Evidence](#), 14 November 2016, 1530 (Sylvia Maracle); [Evidence](#), 26 October 2016, 1550 (Tracy O'Hearn).

516 [Evidence](#), 14 November 2016, 1535 (Sylvia Maracle).

517 *Ibid.*, 1530 and 1535.

The Committee heard about Kizhaay Anishinaabe Niin, a program focussed on ending violence against Indigenous women and girls that supports Indigenous men by providing education to men to address issues of abuse against women in their communities. The program addresses the normalization of violence in some families, focuses on re-establishing traditional teachings about gender equality, and asks men to help other men lead non-violent lives.⁵¹⁸

C. Engaging Perpetrators of Violence against Women

The Committee heard that it is also essential to engage with men who perpetrate violence, as this engagement will serve to address existing cases of violence against women and lead to real change.⁵¹⁹ There are a variety of programs for men who have perpetrated violence against women, such as the New Leaf Program, a program for men who have been abusive and have chosen to stop their violent behaviour.⁵²⁰ Cathy Grant, Director of the New Leaf Program, stated that men who have perpetrated violence must take responsibility for their actions and be held accountable, but that change can occur if they spend time in a supportive program.⁵²¹ Ms. Grant cautioned that men who are mandated to take part in the program for a short period of time in lieu of criminal sentencing do not see the same benefits as those who are self-motivated to take part in the program for longer periods of time.⁵²²

Ms. Grant explained the benefits of working with male perpetrators of violence in a group setting; it encourages men to share their experiences with others, which leads to critical thinking and honest discussions.⁵²³ Several witnesses said that perpetrators of violence need to hear directly from survivors of gender-based violence about the effects and consequences the violence had on their lives to understand the harm the perpetrators are causing.⁵²⁴

Recommendation 25

That the Government of Canada make investments in community-based organizations that promote public awareness and education for men and boys on the concepts of digital literacy, consent in sexual relationships, and hypersexualization.

518 Ibid.

519 [Evidence](#), 31 October 2016, 1545 (Harvey Bate).

520 Centre to End All Sexual Exploitation – Kathleen Quinn, “[Brief: Standing Committee on the Status of Women: Violence Against Young Women and Girls](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 2016; [Evidence](#), 31 October 2016, 1530 (Cathy Grant).

521 [Evidence](#), 31 October 2016, 1530 and 1535 (Cathy Grant).

522 Ibid., 1610.

523 Ibid., 1530 and 1550.

524 [Evidence](#), 3 October 2016, 1655 (Alicia Raimundo); [Evidence](#), 19 October 2016, 1640 (Nicolette Little).

Recommendation 26

That the Government of Canada, through Status of Women Canada, develop and invest in a nation-wide public awareness campaign, as part of the Federal Strategy on Gender-based Violence, to educate the public about consent, healthy sexuality, bystander intervention and the role of men and boys in ending gender-based violence and rape culture, and that community groups, men's ally networks and youth be consulted during the development of the awareness campaign.

IMPROVING LAW ENFORCEMENT AND JUSTICE SYSTEMS

Witnesses stated that law enforcement and justice systems have a critical role to play in responding to violence against young women and girls. While legislation delivers important moral messages and upholds Canada’s core values, this legislation must also be enforced and justice delivered.⁵²⁵ The Committee is aware that the responsibility for law enforcement, justice system and victim services is a multi-jurisdictional responsibility.

Many witnesses acknowledged the unique challenges for some members of certain groups of young women and girls – such as young women and girls in rural and remote communities, trafficked young women and girls, Indigenous and immigrant young women and girls – in seeking help from law enforcement agencies and the justice system.⁵²⁶

A. Barriers to Reporting and Pursuing Justice

The Committee heard that many survivors of gender-based violence, particularly sexual assault, do not have confidence that they will obtain justice: there is widespread underreporting of such crimes and the attrition rate (the “loss” for a variety of reasons) of cases of sexual assault once in the justice system is very high.⁵²⁷ Ms. Moore, Associate Professor of Law and Legal Studies at Carleton University, explained that with respect to sexual assaults, “somewhere between 5% and 10% go to prosecution; maybe 1% of those will result in a conviction and a guilty finding,” and that “once a guilty verdict is found, sentencing is usually very permissive.”⁵²⁸

The Committee heard that the first barrier to accessing justice for many young women and girls is at the reporting stage; many cases of violence, particularly sexual violence, are not brought to the authorities because of a culture of silence and stigma and survivors’ internalized shame and fear.⁵²⁹ Among Indigenous communities, this culture of silence is exacerbated because of a long-standing mistrust in authorities rooted in a history of colonization and family separation.⁵³⁰

Furthermore, the Committee was informed that young women and girls may not seek justice because of the financial cost of pursuing cases in the justice system; for example, university students often can afford only tuition and cost of living expenses, and cannot support additional financial pressures.⁵³¹ The Committee heard that women’s

525 [Evidence](#), 19 October 2016, 1635 (Alexander Wayne MacKay); [Evidence](#), 21 September 2016, 1700 (Angela Marie MacDougall).

526 [Evidence](#), 24 October 2016, 1535 (Farrah Khan); [Evidence](#), 14 November 2016, 1630 (Lucille Harper).

527 [Evidence](#), 19 April 2016, 1700 (Nathalie Levman).

528 [Evidence](#), 17 October 2016, 1550 (Dawn Moore).

529 [Evidence](#), 24 October 2016, 1530 (Farrah Khan).

530 [Evidence](#), 26 October 2016, 1615 (Tracy O’Hearn).

531 [Evidence](#), 24 October 2016, 1530 (Farrah Khan).

self-esteem is severely affected by experiences of sexual violence, and as such, they may not have the strength to report and navigate the law enforcement and justice systems.⁵³² Therefore, with limited access to support services in their communities or at their post-secondary institutions, many of these survivors may choose not to report the violence.⁵³³ In some cases, women fear retribution from perpetrators as survivors are not always protected by the system.⁵³⁴

As well, witnesses reported that seeking assistance can be exhausting and re-victimizing as the services are provided in different silos – police, counsellors, victim services, and the justice system. Each silo appears to operate independently of the other, and as such, survivors have difficulty navigating the system and must repeat their story again and again.⁵³⁵ The design of child advocacy centres, which are located across Canada and provide a coordinated approach to addressing the needs of young survivors of crime, is a promising example of efforts to reduce system-induced trauma.⁵³⁶

Witnesses voiced their concerns about the high “unfounded” rates in cases of sexual assault, as reported by police services. In these situations, women have sought the assistance of the police following an alleged sexual assault, and have been turned away without an investigation or attempt to prosecute.⁵³⁷ The Antigonish Women's Resource Centre and Sexual Assault Services explained that “[w]omen who do report to police, too often recount experiences of feeling blamed, judged, interrogated, and dismissed.”⁵³⁸ It was suggested that the Philadelphia model is a promising practice; it involves a violence against women advocate who reviews cases that police have named as unfounded to determine if they can indeed be pursued within the justice system.⁵³⁹

B. Navigating the Justice System

The Committee heard that the adversarial system of the criminal justice system can be especially damaging for the survivors in cases of sexual assault. In this system, the complainant is heavily scrutinized⁵⁴⁰ and if the accused is found not guilty, the

532 Concertation des luttes contre l'exploitation sexuelle, “[Porn and rape culture: the new modes of communication of male domination](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 2016.

533 [Evidence](#), 24 October 2016, 1530 (Farrah Khan); [Evidence](#), 21 April 2016, 1610 (Shirley Cuillierier).

534 Concertation des luttes contre l'exploitation sexuelle, “[Porn and rape culture: the new modes of communication of male domination](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 2016;

535 [Evidence](#), 26 September 2016, 1715 (Leah Parsons); [Evidence](#), 17 October 2016, 1535 (Dawn Moore).

536 [Evidence](#), 19 April 2016, 1630 (Gillian Blackell).

537 [Evidence](#), 17 October 2016, 1550 (Dawn Moore).

538 Antigonish Women's Resource Centre and Sexual Assault Services, “[Submission to House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women: Violence against Girls and Young Women](#),” *Submitted Brief*, November 2016.

539 [Evidence](#), 24 October 2016, 1620 (Farrah Khan).

540 [Evidence](#), 24 October 2016, 1530 (Hannah Kurchik); [Evidence](#), 17 October 2016, 1535 (Dawn Moore); [Evidence](#), 28 September 2016, 1535 (Steph Guthrie); Be The Peace Institute – Sue Bookchin, “[Violence Against Young Women and Girls in Canada](#),” *Submitted Brief*, September 2016.

complainant is deemed a liar.⁵⁴¹ Surpassing the threshold of reasonable doubt is very difficult in cases of sexual violence, because the majority of sexual assaults happen in private, with no witnesses.⁵⁴²

Witnesses stated that women, especially young women and girls, need advocates who will provide them with advice, guidance and assistance throughout the reporting and judicial process. In particular, it was suggested that an advocate be assigned to each woman who is going through the legal system in cases of gender-based violence.⁵⁴³ The Committee heard of efforts to make the judicial system more sensitive to the needs of survivors, including testimonial aids and protective tools; for example, allowing survivors to testify behind a screen or outside the courtroom by closed-circuit television.⁵⁴⁴

Witnesses demanded that sentences reflect the seriousness of these crimes as both a deterrent and an acknowledgment of the terrible impact of these crimes on the survivor.⁵⁴⁵ The Committee heard that Crown attorneys, legal aid lawyers, judges and correctional services workers quite often will make plea bargains for perpetrators of violence against women, including young women and girls; the perpetrators are not held accountable by the justice system.⁵⁴⁶

The Antigonish Women's Resource Centre and Sexual Assault Services explained:

Women tell us that they do not have faith in the criminal justice system, that they are not willing to endure reliving the trauma during the 18-24 months it takes for cases to go through the courts. They tell us the outcomes are simply "not worth" the pain and suffering caused by the criminal justice response, or lack thereof.⁵⁴⁷

The Committee was informed that survivors of gender-based violence should be provided with legal aid,⁵⁴⁸ counselling and community supports.⁵⁴⁹ Ms. Adamson of the Ontario Women's Directorate, Government of Ontario, shared that Ontario had started a pilot project in Ottawa, Toronto and Thunder Bay providing up to four hours of "free,

541 [Evidence](#), 24 October 2016, 1530 (Hannah Kurchik); [Evidence](#), 17 October 2016, 1535 (Dawn Moore); [Evidence](#), 28 September 2016, 1535 (Steph Guthrie).

542 [Evidence](#), 17 October 2016, 1535 (Dawn Moore).

543 [Evidence](#), 21 April 2016, 1550 (Shirley Cuillierrier); [Evidence](#), 24 October 2016, 1530 (Hannah Kurchik); [Evidence](#), 24 October 2016, 1620 (Farrah Khan); [Evidence](#), 17 October 2016, 1555 (Dawn Moore).

544 [Evidence](#), 19 April 2016, 1600 (Gillian Blackell).

545 [Evidence](#), 14 November 2016, 1630 (Lucille Harper); Be The Peace Institute – Sue Bookchin, "[Violence Against Young Women and Girls in Canada](#)," *Submitted Brief*, September 2016.

546 [Evidence](#), 31 October 2016, 1535 (Harvey Bate); [Evidence](#), 31 October 2016, 1615 (Cathy Grant); [Evidence](#), 14 November 2016, 1645 (Mélanie Sarroino).

547 Antigonish Women's Resource Centre and Sexual Assault Services, "[Submission to House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women: Violence against Girls and Young Women](#)," *Submitted Brief*, November 2016.

548 Be The Peace Institute – Sue Bookchin, "[Violence Against Young Women and Girls in Canada](#)," *Submitted Brief*, September 2016; [Evidence](#), 24 October 2016, 1535 (Farrah Khan).

549 Ibid.

independent legal advice to sexual assault survivors.⁵⁵⁰ Ms. Khan of Ryerson University recommended creating separate sexual violence courts, similar to separate courtrooms for domestic violence, in order to establish a system that responds to the particular challenges and needs of survivors of sexual assault.⁵⁵¹

C. Training for Law Enforcement and Judiciary

The Committee was informed that once young women and girls are involved in the justice system, the authority figures in the system are frequently not able to respond appropriately in cases of gender-based violence.⁵⁵² Law enforcement agencies and the judiciary remain male dominated, and these men do not “intimately understand the realities of being a young woman.”⁵⁵³ A number of witnesses stated that police officers, crown attorneys, and judges often believe in sexual assault myths and stereotypes that define “victim” and “offender”⁵⁵⁴ and engage in victim blaming.⁵⁵⁵ Ms. Kurchik of the Healing Justice Advisory Committee shared her story with the Committee:

I chose to report [my sexual assault] to the police, because I believed the system was there to support me. Initially I was provided a lot of care and support by the detective on my case. I felt heard. I was assured that justice would be won. This changed not long after I had a meeting with a crown attorney and attending detective. My experience was like night and day. The one supportive detective said, “I’ve seen a lot of creeps in my day, and your offender isn’t a creep.” All of a sudden, it was as if he who had harmed me was in need of more protection than me. The detective remarked that [my offender] was crying when he came in with his father. I was told that if my offender were found innocent, I would get written down as a liar, and if I were assaulted again, it would be on record that I’m a liar. Not only was this incredibly intimidating, and made me question moving forward with the court process, but it also made me feel very unsafe.⁵⁵⁶

Many witnesses asserted that law enforcement and legal authorities do not recognize or understand the seriousness of gender-based violence.⁵⁵⁷ Ms. Guthrie, Social Justice Advocate, explained that the criminal legal system may portray itself as objective, but that in many cases, this objectivity does not exist.⁵⁵⁸

Witnesses stated that law enforcement officers and members of the judiciary should receive trauma-informed training on gender-based violence, whereby they would be

550 [Evidence](#), 30 November 2016, 1620 (Maureen Adamson).

551 [Evidence](#), 24 October 2016, 1620 (Farrah Khan).

552 [Evidence](#), 21 September 2016, 1700 (Angela Marie MacDougall).

553 [Evidence](#), 5 October 2016, 1640 (Soraya Chemaly); [Evidence](#), 28 September 2016, 1535 (Steph Guthrie).

554 [Evidence](#), 24 October 2016, 1530 (Hannah Kurchik); University of Alberta Sexual Assault Centre – Meagan Simon and Meg Anderson, “[Written Brief Submitted to the Status of Women Committee for its Study on Violence against Young Women and Girls in Canada](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 2016; [Evidence](#), 14 November 2016, 1645 (Mélanie Sarroino).

555 [Evidence](#), 28 September 2016, 1535 (Steph Guthrie); [Evidence](#), 26 September 2016, 1630 (Leah Parsons).

556 [Evidence](#), 24 October 2016, 1530 (Hannah Kurchik).

557 [Evidence](#), 5 October 2016, 1605 (Kendra Milne).

558 [Evidence](#), 28 September 2016, 1535 (Steph Guthrie).

educated on understanding, recognizing and responding to the effects of different forms of violence.⁵⁵⁹ Using a trauma-informed approach would increase law enforcement officials' abilities to "conduct competent interviews and investigations, and increase the rate of successful prosecution."⁵⁶⁰ Moreover, the Committee heard that there should be specialized crown attorneys who are trained to work with women who have experienced violence and have an understanding of the trauma they have experienced.⁵⁶¹ Furthermore, law enforcement and judicial authorities should receive educational workshops focused on gender equality, in order to counter discriminatory attitudes and sexual stereotypes.⁵⁶² Witnesses asked that the work of law enforcement agencies and the judiciary be guided by empathy⁵⁶³ with the goal of reducing the re-traumatization of survivors.⁵⁶⁴ Ms. Decter of YWCA Canada proposed that judges who fail to understand and apply gender equality in their legal rulings should be removed.⁵⁶⁵

In cases of cyberviolence, witnesses suggested that law enforcement officers and members of the judiciary should receive digital literacy training, so they are aware of the complexities of this new crime.⁵⁶⁶ The specific challenges in seeking justice in cases of cyberviolence were outlined in an earlier section of this report.

D. Select Legislative Changes in the Area of Law Enforcement and Justice

Witnesses acknowledged that the *Criminal Code* of Canada has evolved in positive ways to address gender-based violence, in particular sexual assault.⁵⁶⁷ For example, the Committee heard that the *Criminal Code* directs judges to deliver harsher sentences to perpetrators when the crimes were "motivated by bias, prejudice, or hate, based upon age or sex, or when the offence involved the abuse of a spouse, a child, or a position of trust or authority."⁵⁶⁸

However, many witnesses stated there are opportunities for further improvements to the law. For example, the federal government should examine the legal definition and

559 [Evidence](#), 24 October 2016, 1530 (Hannah Kurchik).

560 Antigonish Women's Resource Centre and Sexual Assault Services, "[Submission to House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women: Violence against Girls and Young Women](#)," *Submitted Brief*, November 2016.

561 [Evidence](#), 23 November 2016, 1625 (Julie Neubauer).

562 [Evidence](#), 16 June 2016, 1605 (Lara Karaian); [Evidence](#), 19 October 2016, 1645 (Nicolette Little).

563 [Evidence](#), 26 September 2016, 1715 (Carol Todd).

564 [Evidence](#), 14 November 2016, 1630 (Lucille Harper); [Evidence](#), 24 October 2016, 1620 (Farrah Khan); [Evidence](#), 17 October 2016, 1555 (Dawn Moore).

565 [Evidence](#), 28 September 2016, 1540 (Ann Decter).

566 [Evidence](#), 28 September 2016, 1555 (Steph Guthrie); [Evidence](#), 28 September 2016, 1545 (Raine Lilliefeldt); [Evidence](#), 7 December 2016, 1600 (Malika Saada Saar).

567 [Evidence](#), 19 April 2016, 1600 (Gillian Blackell); [Evidence](#), 19 October 2016, 1630 (Alexander Wayne MacKay); [Evidence](#), 19 April 2016, 1655 (Nathalie Levman); University of Alberta Sexual Assault Centre – Meagan Simon and Meg Anderson, "[Written Brief Submitted to the Status of Women Committee for its Study on Violence against Young Women and Girls in Canada](#)," *Submitted Brief*, 2016.

568 [Evidence](#), 19 April 2016, 1600 (Gillian Blackell).

threshold for harassment under the *Criminal Code* in order to explicitly include cyberviolence.⁵⁶⁹ As discussed in an earlier section on cyberviolence, the Canadian Centre for Child Protection also recommended that legislation be established to target communications and recordings that advocate harm to children, beyond the existing child pornography legislation, in order to address the sexual commodification and marketing of children that normalizes sexual views of children.⁵⁷⁰

Furthermore, it was recommended that the criminal harassment offence provisions in the *Criminal Code* be strengthened by defining (in section 264) when a person has cause to “reasonably” fear for their safety, including when a person fears for their “psychological safety and integrity.”⁵⁷¹ Kendra Milne, Director of Law Reform at West Coast LEAF Association, explained that “what might be viewed as reasonably causing fear will be different based on gender, ethnicity, indigeneity, and ability.”⁵⁷² It is important that the judiciary, police and lawyers interpret what is “reasonable” in the same manner. Ms. Milne asked specifically that an amendment to section 264 include:

[A] non-exhaustive list of what might constitute a reasonable fear for safety, and it could use a definition that takes into account women's experiences of violence in particular. It could also include as an express direction that a reasonable fear for psychological safety will meet the threshold, to ensure that all points in the justice system understand that the psychological impacts of online harassment—the most common impacts—are captured.⁵⁷³

In addition, the Committee heard that, in too many situations, the perpetrators of violent crimes against young women and girls received sentences that were unreasonably short. Ms. Harper, of the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre and Sexual Assault Services, said that the criminal justice system must change to ensure “sentences reflect the seriousness of these crimes as a deterrent, but also to reflect the often lifetime impact of such crimes on their victims and the victims' families.”⁵⁷⁴ Ms. Grant of the New Leaf Program said “Men need to be held accountable. The probation orders seem to be getting reduced to six months again. That's what it was when I first joined 17 and a half years ago.”⁵⁷⁵

E. Restorative and Alternative Justice Options

A number of witnesses spoke in favour of the possible implementation of restorative or alternative justice options for women, including young women and girls, who experience

569 [Evidence](#), 28 September 2016, 1545 (Raine Liliefeldt).

570 [Evidence](#), 28 September 2016, 1650 (Lianna McDonald); Canadian Centre for Child Protection, “[Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation Perpetrated Against Girls](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 23 September 2016.

571 [Evidence](#), 5 October 2016, 1545 and 1550 (Kendra Milne).

572 *Ibid.*, 1545.

573 *Ibid.*, 1550.

574 [Evidence](#), 14 November 2016, 1630 (Lucille Harper).

575 [Evidence](#), 31 October 2016, 1610 (Cathy Grant);

gender-based violence.⁵⁷⁶ The Committee heard that the criminal legal system uses an adversarial approach, which discourages men who exhibit violent behaviour from admitting to the harm they have caused.⁵⁷⁷ Some witnesses stated that survivors should have access to different forms of justice, including the criminal justice system and restorative or alternative justice,⁵⁷⁸ and that some survivors may encounter better outcomes and feel more fulfilled through restorative or alternative justice.⁵⁷⁹ Witnesses shared their thoughts on the benefits of restorative or alternative justice: these approaches have been shown to reduce recidivism;⁵⁸⁰ provide a survivor-centred approach;⁵⁸¹ and prioritize acknowledging the harm caused rather than punishing the person who inflicted the harm.⁵⁸² Ms. Guthrie, Social Justice Advocate, suggested funding should be allocated to restorative or alternative justice approaches, accompanied by trauma-informed support services.⁵⁸³

However, other witnesses voiced concerns about restorative or alternative justice approaches, raising fears that men would not be held accountable for their violence and that power imbalances would not be properly mediated in the process.⁵⁸⁴ The Committee heard that the Canadian Human Rights Commission provides a meaningful justice alternative to women and that human rights protection should be broadened to increase access to this option.⁵⁸⁵

Ms. Milne of West Coast LEAF Association explained:

The human rights system offers an important remedy outside of the criminal system for women, because its purpose is not about penalizing the perpetrator. Instead, it is about making the victim whole. The process is also fully within the victim's control and doesn't depend on police and the crown to approve charges and pursue. Human rights legislation has a very powerful place in our legal system. It is considered to be quasi-constitutional, and it also plays an important role in Canada's obligations under both the charter and international human rights provisions that require Canada to take action to end discrimination.⁵⁸⁶

576 Coalition of Provincial and Territorial Advisory Councils on the Status of Women, "[Brief for the Standing Committee on the Status of Women study on Violence Against Young Women and Girls in Canada](#)," *Submitted Brief*, September 2016; [Evidence](#), 24 October 2016, 1620 (Farrah Khan).

577 [Evidence](#), 28 September 2016, 1540 (Steph Guthrie).

578 [Evidence](#), 5 October 2016, 1620 (Kendra Milne).

579 [Evidence](#), 24 October 2016, 1620 (Farrah Khan); [Evidence](#), 24 October 2016, 1625 (Kenya Rogers).

580 Coalition of Provincial and Territorial Advisory Councils on the Status of Women, "[Brief for the Standing Committee on the Status of Women study on Violence Against Young Women and Girls in Canada](#)," *Submitted Brief*, September 2016.

581 [Evidence](#), 24 October 2016, 1625 (Kenya Rogers).

582 [Evidence](#), 28 September 2016, 1530 (Steph Guthrie).

583 *Ibid.*, 1540.

584 [Evidence](#), 31 October 2016, 1610 (Cathy Grant); [Evidence](#), 16 June 2016, 1725 (Jane Bailey).

585 [Evidence](#), 5 October 2016, 1620 (Kendra Milne).

586 *Ibid.*, 1545.

Witnesses indicated that the federal government should reverse the 2013 repeal of section 13 of the *Canadian Human Rights Act*. Section 13 “mandated that communications, including telecommunications and online communications, that were likely to expose a person to hatred on the basis of a protected ground amounted to discrimination.”⁵⁸⁷ Ms. Bailey of the University of Ottawa explained that this allowed for a tribunal rather than a court to respond to online hate and harassment “as a human rights issue” and symbolically recognized that these attacks are based in discrimination and prejudice.⁵⁸⁸

Recommendation 27

That the Government of Canada, through the Department of Justice, ensure that the Legal Aid Program increase funding to survivor-centric legal resources that are readily available to survivors of gender-based violence in both civil and criminal law context.

Recommendation 28

That the Government of Canada, through the Department of Justice, and in collaboration with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, implement a mandatory educational curriculum on gender-based violence and sexual violence for all Royal Canadian Mounted Police, and other federally-regulated law enforcement officers, that is survivor-centric, respectful and trauma-informed.

Recommendation 29

That the Government of Canada provide funding to the National Judicial Institute for the express purpose of developing comprehensive training on gender-based violence and sexual assault for the judiciary and those seeking to become part of the judiciary, and that the Government of Canada encourage all judges to participate in this training.

Recommendation 30

That the Government of Canada make resources available to implement an educational curriculum on digital and media literacy and gender-based violence for crown prosecutors, staff and the judiciary.

587 Ibid.

588 [Evidence](#), 5 December 2016, 1555 (Jane Bailey).

Recommendation 31

That the Government of Canada, through the Department of Justice, in collaboration with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, establish sexual assault advocates within law enforcement and legal bodies, and that the role of the advocate be to: ensure that the complainant is cognisant of the full range of existing laws, services and options available to survivors of sexual assault as they move through the legal system, including options outside of the existing criminal justice system; and to ensure that there is a trauma-informed and survivor-centric approach throughout the legal process.

Recommendation 32

That the Government of Canada, through the Department of Justice, examine options for alternative, restorative or traditional (Indigenous) justice mechanisms as optional alternatives to the criminal court system in cases of sexual violence, and examine the impact of criminal standards of proof in cases of sexual assault.

Recommendation 33

That the Government of Canada strengthen the criminal harassment offence provisions in the *Criminal Code* by defining (in Section 264) when a person has cause to “reasonably” fear for their safety, including when a person fears for his or her “psychological safety and integrity.”

Recommendation 34

That the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness and the Minister of Justice work in partnership with the provinces, the territories and First Nations communities to develop strategies to deal with sexual assault cases and to ensure police and prosecutors use a common set of practices in dealing with survivors of sexual violence.

Recommendation 35

That the Government of Canada examine ways in which it can attract more women and persons of other marginalized identities to law enforcement and elsewhere in the criminal justice system in order to diversify perspectives in policing and in the criminal justice system.

Recommendation 36

That the Government of Canada, through the Department of Justice, make additional investments beyond the \$12 million already committed into the Victims Fund for projects supporting adult survivors of sexual assault and seek ways in which the benefits of this program could be extended to young women and girls who have experienced gender-based violence, including sexual assault.

Recommendation 37

That the Government of Canada, through the Department of Justice, lead national coordination of a review of the justice system to ensure equal access to protection and justice across the country for survivors of violence against women and girls.

Observation 5

The Committee observed the need for the implementation of a long-term, stable and mandatory educational curriculum for all provincially regulated law enforcement officers, crown prosecutors and staff, and members of the judiciary, that promotes consent culture and educates police and court officials on how to appropriately address reports of sexual violence; the need for the curriculum to teach an approach to dealing with sexual violence that is survivor-centric, respectful and trauma-informed; and the need for the curriculum to teach an approach to sexual violence cases that does not disproportionately criminalize perpetrators who are racialized, trans, queer or gender non-binary, indigenous or with mental health issues or disabilities.

Observation 6

The Committee observed the need for a long-term, stable and mandatory educational curriculum for all provincially regulated law enforcement officers, prosecutors and staff, and members of the judiciary that teaches digital and media literacy so that they can be fully cognizant of the complexities of crimes of sexual and gender-based violence that occur online.

INCREASING DATA COLLECTION, RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER

Witnesses spoke of the need to improve data collection and research, both quantitative and qualitative in nature, on the subject of gender-based violence across Canada.⁵⁸⁹ In particular, research on promising practices in preventing and addressing sexual violence would be valuable to governments and front-line organizations.⁵⁹⁰

The Committee heard that academia, community organizations, law enforcement agencies and the justice system, and all levels of government should collaborate on research.⁵⁹¹ In particular, witnesses recommended that research projects recognize the expertise of front-line organizations that deal directly with survivors of violence by consulting these organizations and analyzing the information provided by them.⁵⁹²

Additional research is needed, according to some witnesses, on specific subjects such as:

- rape culture,⁵⁹³ the role of social media in gender-based violence, hypersexualization, and the normalization of violence;⁵⁹⁴
- the impact of anti-violence awareness campaigns;⁵⁹⁵
- promising practices to address sexual violence on post-secondary campuses,⁵⁹⁶ and
- the impact of pornography on youth in Canada.⁵⁹⁷

589 [Evidence](#), 17 October 2016, 1605 (Dawn Moore); [Evidence](#), 31 October 2016, 1710 (Sandrine Ricci); [Evidence](#), 3 October 2016, 1715 (Lisa Lachance); [Evidence](#), 19 October 2016, 1655 (Lori Chambers); [Evidence](#), 23 November 2016, 1555 (Bonnie Brayton).

590 [Evidence](#), 19 October 2016, 1705 (Lori Chambers); [Evidence](#), 24 October 2016, 1550 (Farrah Khan).

591 [Evidence](#), 26 September 2016, 1540 (Shanly Dixon); [Evidence](#), 30 November 2016, 1620 (Maureen Adamson).

592 [Evidence](#), 24 October 2016, 1710 (Reena Tandon); [Evidence](#), 16 June 2016, 1655 (Jane Bailey).

593 [Evidence](#), 31 October 2016, 1710 (Sandrine Ricci).

594 [Evidence](#), 12 April 2016, 1540 (Linda Savoie); Regroupement québécois des Centres d'aide et de lutte contre les agressions à caractère sexuel, "[Brief Submitted by the Regroupement québécois des CALACS To the Status of Women Committee](#)," *Submitted Brief*, November 2016.

595 [Evidence](#), 12 April 2016, 1605 (Yvan Clermont).

596 [Evidence](#), 19 October 2016, 1715 (Alexander Wayne MacKay).

597 [Evidence](#), 17 October 2016, 1605 (Dawn Moore); Centre to End All Sexual Exploitation – Kathleen Quinn, "[Brief: Standing Committee on the Status of Women: Violence Against Young Women and Girls](#)," *Submitted Brief*, 2016.

Witnesses also recommended that research focus on groups with particularly vulnerabilities to violence.⁵⁹⁸ For example, there is a need for research on child sexual abuse in Inuit communities, as most of the information is anecdotal.⁵⁹⁹ As well, there is a shortage of research on the impact of digital technologies on immigrant and refugee youth in Canada.⁶⁰⁰ With respect to the paucity of data on violence against women with disabilities, Ms. Brayton of DisAbled Women’s Network Canada said that in many cases, the “disability lens” is not applied to research or that “the disability research is not extracted and not understood to be significant.”⁶⁰¹

The Committee was informed that the federal government has an important role to play in investing in data collection, research and knowledge transfer.⁶⁰² For example, Ms. Arte of the Canadian Federation of Students suggested that the federal government set standards for data collection on sexual violence.⁶⁰³ Witnesses requested that additional funding be provided for research at the federal level, chiefly for the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR).⁶⁰⁴ The Committee also heard that projects on gender-based violence face particular challenges in receiving funding from SSHRC, because they are interdisciplinary yet evaluated from the point of view of one discipline, and from CIHR, because violence is not seen as a health issue.⁶⁰⁵ Ms. Moore of Carleton University recommended establishing a special research grant at the federal level on the topic of gender-based violence.⁶⁰⁶

Witnesses demanded that the perspectives and experiences of female survivors of violence be incorporated in research and policy development at all levels of government.⁶⁰⁷ The Committee was also reminded of the importance of consulting with diverse groups of youth – boys and girls – as part of research and policy development on the subject of sexuality, gender equality, and gender-based violence, particularly with respect to sexual violence on campus and cyberviolence.⁶⁰⁸ Some witnesses shared

598 [Evidence](#), 19 October 2016, 1655 (Lori Chambers); [Evidence](#), 23 November 2016, 1540 (Bonnie Brayton).

599 [Evidence](#), 26 October 2016, 1605 (Tracy O’Hearn).

600 Manitoba Association of Newcomer Serving Organizations, “[MANSO Brief to House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women – Violence against Young Women and Girls in Canada](#),” *Submitted Brief*, September 2016.

601 [Evidence](#), 23 November 2016, 1610 (Bonnie Brayton).

602 [Evidence](#), 17 October 2016, 1605 (Anuradha Dugal); [Evidence](#), 23 November 2016, 1555 (Bonnie Brayton).

603 [Evidence](#), 19 October 2016, 1555 (Bilan Arte).

604 [Evidence](#), 19 October 2016, 1655 and 1705 (Lori Chambers).

605 *Ibid.*, 1705.

606 [Evidence](#), 17 October 2016, 1605 (Dawn Moore).

607 [Evidence](#), 26 September 2016, 1650 (Carol Todd); [Evidence](#), 21 September 2016, 1550 (Valerie Steeves).

608 Y des femmes de Montréal, “[Brief to the Standing Committee on the Status of Women: Violence Against Young Women and Girls](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 2016; [Evidence](#), 28 September 2016, 1725 (Lianna McDonald); Quebec Council on the Status of Women, “[Violence Against Young Women and Girls](#),” *Submitted Brief*, September 2016; [Evidence](#), 26 September 2016, 1650 (Carol Todd); [Evidence](#), 21 September 2016, 1655 (Dee Dooley); [Evidence](#), 26 September 2016, 1530 (Kimberly Taplin).

examples of existing consultation groups, such as the RCMP national youth advisory committee, which is composed of young people between the ages of 13 and 18 from across Canada and who provide insight to the RCMP on issues such as cyberviolence.⁶⁰⁹

The Committee heard that there are two primary sources of national data used by Statistics Canada to measure rates of violence. The first source is data provided by police services across the country on all *Criminal Code* offences that are reported to and substantiated by the police. The second source is self-reported data that are collected from Canadians aged 15 years and older through the General Social Survey (GSS) on Victimization.⁶¹⁰

Officials from Statistics Canada told the Committee that self-reported data serve to complement police-reported data as they offer information on victimization that is both reported and unreported to police. Self-reported data show that most victims of violence choose not to report incidents to police.⁶¹¹

Ms. McConnell, a Representative of the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations, requested that the federal government expand the GSS on Victimization in order to measure crime on campuses, including sexual violence, assault, and harassment incidents.⁶¹² Mélanie Sarroino, Liaison and Promotion Officer at Regroupement québécois des Centres d'aide et de lutte contre les agressions à caractère sexuel, requested the creation of a new national survey on violence against women, citing Statistics Canada's 1993 Violence against Women Survey (VAWS) as the last survey conducted by Statistics Canada that was dedicated to violence against women.⁶¹³ Statistics Canada officials stated that their agency does not recommend repeating the VAWS. They explained that the current GSS on Victimization stems from the VAWS and includes enhancements, thus making the re-establishment of the VAWS both "redundant" and an "unnecessary respondent burden."⁶¹⁴

Recommendation 38

That the Government of Canada request that the Minister for the Status of Women share the report, entitled *Taking Action to End Violence Against Young Women and Girls in Canada*, tabled by the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women, with her provincial and territorial counterparts.

609 [Evidence](#), 26 September 2016, 1535 (Kimberly Taplin).

610 [Evidence](#), 20 November 2014, 0845 (Cathy Connors).

611 [Evidence](#), 12 April 2016, 1540 (Yvan Clermont).

612 [Evidence](#), 19 October 2016, 1545 (Danika McConnell).

613 [Evidence](#), 14 November 2016, 1645 (Mélanie Sarroino).

614 Statistics Canada, "Violence Against Women Survey and the General Social Survey – Victimization," *Reference Document*, 2016.

Recommendation 39

That the Government of Canada conduct a thorough meta-analysis of existing research on violence against young women and girls, with particular focus on hypersexualization, street harassment, cyberviolence, violence on post-secondary campuses, sex trafficking, engaging men and boys to combat gender-based violence, and groups at higher risk of experiencing violence, with the goal of eliminating the duplication of work and determining where additional research and data collection is required.

Recommendation 40

That the Government of Canada, through Statistics Canada, allocate additional funding to research and data collection that focuses on intersectional violence against young women and girls in Canada, particularly in the areas of hypersexualization, violent and degrading sexually explicit material, sex trafficking, street harassment, cyberviolence, violence on post-secondary campuses, and men and boys' views of gender-based violence.

Recommendation 41

That the Government of Canada request that Statistics Canada reinstate its data collection through the Uniform Crime Reporting Survey of the national unfounded rate for sexual offences and provide appropriate training for the standardization and consistency of data collection from police services.

SUPPORTING FRONT-LINE SERVICES AND COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

The Committee heard that it is essential to provide support to front-line services and community organizations that address violence against women, including young women and girls.⁶¹⁵ In particular, additional support is required for young women and girls who have been victimized through cyberviolence and sexual assault.⁶¹⁶ As described earlier in the report, a great number of survivors of gender-based violence choose not to report the crime to law enforcement agencies; rather, survivors often seek the assistance of front-line services and community organizations in order to move forward with their lives.⁶¹⁷

A. Increasing Services for Survivors of Sexual Violence

The Committee was reminded that providing the necessary and appropriate support services to these survivors helps them to heal, rather than merely cope with their victimization; this in turn, significantly improves survivors' long-term mental health.⁶¹⁸ Ms. Moore of Carleton University requested that the federal government establish a basic standard of care for survivors of gender-based violence across the country,⁶¹⁹ while other witnesses suggested creating safe spaces where survivors of violence can talk about their experiences, such as online and telephone support services and support groups.⁶²⁰

Witnesses suggested that a wide range of support services are required:

- There needs to be a greater availability of sexual assault services across the country.⁶²¹ Witnesses explained that wait lists for assistance at sexual assault centres can last from months to a year, which is unacceptable.⁶²²

615 [Evidence](#), 16 June 2016, 1720 (Jane Bailey); [Evidence](#), 21 November 2016, 1610 (Patricia Cartes); [Evidence](#), 24 October 2016, 1650 (Kripa Sekhar).

616 [Evidence](#), 16 June 2016, 1655 (Jane Bailey); [Evidence](#), 26 September 2016, 1720 (Carol Todd); [Evidence](#), 26 October 2016, 1555 (Tracy O'Hearn).

617 [Evidence](#), 17 October 2016, 1535 (Dawn Moore); [Evidence](#), 5 October 2016, 1620 (Kendra Milne); [Evidence](#), 14 November 2016, 1645 (Mélanie Sarroino).

618 The Redwood, "[Submission to Status of Women Canada – Violence against Young Women and Girls in Canada – The Redwood: Domestic Violence and Unresolved Interpersonal Trauma](#)," *Submitted Brief*, 23 September 2016; [Evidence](#), 26 September 2016, 1720 (Carol Todd).

619 [Evidence](#), 17 October 2016, 1535 (Dawn Moore).

620 East Prince Women's Information Centre, "[Cyberviolence Needs Assessment for Prince Edward Island](#)," *Submitted Brief*, October 2016; Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes – Maïra Martin, "[Brief submitted by Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes](#)," *Submitted Brief*, 2016; [Evidence](#), 3 October 2016, 1715 (Alicia Raimundo, Youth Advisory Committee Co-Chair, Youth Advisory Committee, CYCC Network).

621 [Evidence](#), 17 October 2016, 1540 (Anuradha Dugal); [Evidence](#), 26 September 2016, 1720 (Carol Todd); SAFFRON Sexual Assault Centre, "[Government Priorities](#)," *Submitted Brief*, November 2016.

622 [Evidence](#), 14 November 2016, 1715 (Mélanie Sarroino); [Evidence](#), 31 October 2016, 1710 (Manon Bergeron).

- There is a shortage of shelters and a lack of space in existing shelters for women escaping violence.⁶²³ In a written brief, YWCA Canada explained that “for teenage girls, homelessness carries the risk of violence, sexual exploitation, addiction and criminalization.”⁶²⁴ Ms. O’Hearn of Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada demanded that Inuit communities receive federal funding for shelters that is equal to the funding already provided to other Indigenous on-reserve communities.⁶²⁵
- There is an urgent need for access to mental health services for women, including young women and girls, who have suffered gender-based violence.⁶²⁶ In a written brief, the Children and Youth in Challenging Contexts Network and Dalhousie University mentioned that “young adults in Canada have higher rates of mental health concerns compared to other age groups, and yet they have lower rates of accessing mental health services.”⁶²⁷ Publicly available mental health services are limited and have significant wait times,⁶²⁸ while private services are expensive.⁶²⁹

Witnesses stated that the services provided to young women and girls who have experienced violence must be trauma-informed, which requires additional training for all staff.⁶³⁰

The Committee heard that there needs to be an increase in front-line services for the most vulnerable young women and girls.⁶³¹ For example, Indigenous young women and girls have limited or no access to services to deal with gender-based violence.⁶³² The Committee heard that mainstream support services should be more inclusive by offering programming in multiple languages, by employing diverse staff, and including the religious/spiritual healing practices of participants.⁶³³

623 [Evidence](#), 24 October 2016, 1705 (Kripa Sekhar); [Evidence](#), 26 October 2016, 1540 (Tracy O’Hearn).

624 YWCA Canada, “[Safety for Girls and Young Women Starts with Leadership](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 23 September 2016.

625 [Evidence](#), 26 October 2016, 1540 (Tracy O’Hearn).

626 [Evidence](#), 3 October 2016, 1710 (Lisa Lachance); Children and Youth in Challenging Contexts Network and Dalhousie University, “[Violence against Young Women and Girls in Canada](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 2016; [Evidence](#), 26 September 2016, 1700 (Carol Todd).

627 Children and Youth in Challenging Contexts Network and Dalhousie University, “[Violence against Young Women and Girls in Canada](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 2016.

628 [Evidence](#), 26 September 2016, 1700 (Carol Todd); [Evidence](#), 3 October 2016, 1645 (Lisa Lachance).

629 [Evidence](#), 3 October 2016, 1645 (Lisa Lachance).

630 [Evidence](#), 14 November 2016, 1720 (Lucille Harper); SAFFRON Sexual Assault Centre, “[Government Priorities](#),” *Submitted Brief*, November 2016; East Prince Women’s Information Centre, “[Cyberviolence Needs Assessment for Prince Edward Island](#),” *Submitted Brief*, October 2016.

631 [Evidence](#), 3 October 2016, 1650 (Lisa Lachance).

632 [Evidence](#), 14 November 2016, 1715 (Mélanie Sarroino); [Evidence](#), 5 October 2016, 1625 (Kendra Milne); [Evidence](#), 26 October 2016, 1540 (Tracy O’Hearn).

633 Manitoba Association of Newcomer Serving Organizations, “[MANSO Brief to House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women – Violence against Young Women and Girls in Canada](#),” *Submitted Brief*, September 2016.

B. Supporting Community Organizations

Many community organizations were happy to report an increase in demands for education and awareness programs on violence against girls and women, particularly from high schools and post-secondary institutions.⁶³⁴ These organizations would like to meet the demands for such primary prevention programming, but do not have the additional resources to answer all the requests for such programming.⁶³⁵ Ms. Khan of Ryerson University noted that when awareness and education programs are effective, service providers need the necessary funding to respond to the subsequent increased demand for help.⁶³⁶

Many witnesses spoke of the “vibrant” network of community organizations working on the issue of gender-based violence, and encouraged the federal government to play a role in connecting these organizations to promote knowledge transfer, particularly the sharing of promising practices.⁶³⁷ For example, Raine Liliefeldt, Director of Member Services and Development at YWCA Canada, recommended the federal government fund a national cross-sectoral conference on online safety.⁶³⁸ Some witnesses suggested that when government departments or agencies ask to work collaboratively with community organizations, they should acknowledge the organizations’ limited capacity and provide accompanying funding and support.⁶³⁹

When asked directly, a number of witnesses stated that they do not receive enough operational funding.⁶⁴⁰ Several witnesses suggested that support services and community organizations need increased predictable, long-term and sustainable funding to tackle the problem of gender-based violence in Canada.⁶⁴¹ Ms. Kurchik of the Healing Justice Advisory Committee reminded the Committee that a significant amount of hard work in the anti-violence sector is done by committed volunteers.⁶⁴² Ms. Khan added that both volunteers and paid anti-violence employees are often survivors of sexual violence themselves and are often overextended.⁶⁴³

634 [Evidence](#), 14 November 2016, 1640 (Mélanie Sarroino).

635 [Evidence](#), 14 November 2016, 1715 (Mélanie Sarroino); [Evidence](#), 31 October 2016, 1540 (Harvey Bate).

636 [Evidence](#), 24 October 2016, 15360 (Farrah Khan).

637 [Evidence](#), 21 September 2016, 1710 (Angela Marie MacDougall); [Evidence](#), 14 November 2016, 1655 (Katie Kitschke).

638 [Evidence](#), 28 September 2016, 1545 (Raine Liliefeldt).

639 [Evidence](#), 17 October 2016, 1715 (Gabrielle Ross-Marquette); [Evidence](#), 17 October 2016, 1715 (Maira Martin).

640 [Evidence](#), 3 October 2016, 1705 (Andy Lou Somers); [Evidence](#), 21 November 2016, 1700 (Francyne Joe); [Evidence](#), 23 November 2016, 1600 (Bonnie Brayton).

641 [Evidence](#), 28 September 2016, 1645 (Lianna McDonald); [Evidence](#), 28 September 2016, 1545 (Raine Liliefeldt); [Evidence](#), 21 September 2016, 1655 (Dee Dooley); [Evidence](#), 16 June 2016, 1720 (Jane Bailey); [Evidence](#), 14 November 2016, 1645 (Mélanie Sarroino); [Evidence](#), 14 November 2016, 1705 (Katie Kitschke); [Evidence](#), 31 October 2016, 1535 and 1540 (Harvey Bate); [Evidence](#), 31 October 2016, 1555 (Cathy Grant); [Evidence](#), 26 October 2016, 1600 (Tracy O’Hearn); [Evidence](#), 24 October 2016, 1555 (Farrah Khan).

642 [Evidence](#), 24 October 2016, 1550 (Hannah Kurchik).

643 [Evidence](#), 24 October 2016, 1615 (Farrah Khan).

Too often, because there's a limitation on these supports, we see people in these positions run ragged in such a way that we're just holding faith. Every night I go to bed wondering what survivor is going to call me the next day and what I am going to miss—because we're missing things. We're missing things all the time because we can't keep up with the amount of work we have. It's unfair to violence-concerned workers, especially because most of us are survivors and most of us are women, that we have to uphold all these issues, when we're not fully funded the way we should be.⁶⁴⁴

Ms. Khan explained that she is one person providing counseling services to 40,000 students.⁶⁴⁵ The Committee heard that employees who work for these front-line services are overworked and face great emotional challenges, and that there should be better recognition in Canada of the hard work they do.⁶⁴⁶

Witnesses stated that services and programming provided by community organizations should be evidence-based, but that conducting these evaluations is time-consuming and expensive.⁶⁴⁷ The Committee was told that the federal government can play a role in encouraging and funding evaluations of practices across the country, to ensure the most effective services are delivered.⁶⁴⁸

Recommendation 42

That the Government of Canada prioritize funds for local sexual violence prevention services and sexual violence support services in order that these organizations may strengthen their supports, including mental health services, for survivors of gender-based violence.

Recommendation 43

That the Government of Canada work with front-line services and community organizations to help them ensure that their services and programs are accessible to all Canadians, and this includes: delivery of services and programs in languages other than English and French, including Indigenous languages, where needed; incorporating individuals living with disabilities, individuals with mental illness, individuals identifying as lesbian, bisexual and transgender, and individuals who are sex workers; and ensuring these services and programs are advertised extensively to the general public.

644 *Ibid.*, 1605.

645 *Ibid.*, 1600.

646 *Evidence*, 14 November 2016, 1645 (Mélanie Sarroino); *Evidence*, 14 November 2016, 1705 (Lucille Harper); SAFFRON Sexual Assault Centre, "[Government Priorities](#)," *Submitted Brief*, November 2016; *Evidence*, 24 October 2016, 1615 (Farrah Khan).

647 *Evidence*, 26 October 2016, 1540 (Tracy O'Hearn); *Evidence*, 31 October 2016, 1710 (Manon Bergeron); *Evidence*, 3 October 2016, 1700 (Lisa Lachance).

648 *Evidence*, 31 October 2016, 1710 (Manon Bergeron); *Evidence*, 16 June 2016, 1720 (Matthew Johnson).

Recommendation 44

That the Government of Canada instruct its departments and agencies to conduct evidence-based evaluations to ensure that its funding programs are working to identify and effectively serve the needs of front-line services, community organizations, and their employees in order to address violence against young women and girls.

Recommendation 45

That the Government of Canada instruct its departments and agencies to re-evaluate their methods of program advertising to ensure that existing violence against young women and girls Government of Canada programs, and those funded by the Government of Canada, are sufficiently and clearly publicized in order to ensure accessibility to all individuals and organizations in need of services.

COLLABORATING WITH THE PROVINCES AND TERRITORIES

A number of witnesses suggested that the federal government take an active role coordinating measures and efforts to address violence against young women and girls to ensure a uniform approach across Canada.⁶⁴⁹ The important role of federal-provincial-territorial forums was highlighted by a number of witnesses.⁶⁵⁰ The Committee encourages the federal government to collaborate, where possible, with provinces and territories on issues under provincial and territorial jurisdictions, including on the following issues:

- Witnesses recommended the federal government support the incorporation by the provinces and territories of age-appropriate sex education in the curriculum of elementary and high schools.⁶⁵¹ Furthermore, it was suggested the federal government be a champion of the implementation of digital literacy and cyberviolence education and prevention programs in schools.⁶⁵²
- Witnesses requested that the federal government take a leadership role in encouraging provinces and territories to establish post-secondary sexual violence support divisions⁶⁵³ and stand-alone sexual assault policies.⁶⁵⁴ Furthermore, it was recommended that the federal government work with the provinces and territories to establish a national

649 [Evidence](#), 31 October 2016, 1630 (Liette Roussel); [Evidence](#), 19 October 2016, 1545 (Danika McConnell); [Evidence](#), 19 October 2016, 1555 (Bilan Arte); [Evidence](#), 17 October 2016, 1535 (Dawn Moore); Centre to End All Sexual Exploitation – Kathleen Quinn, “[Brief: Standing Committee on the Status of Women: Violence Against Young Women and Girls](#),” *Submitted Brief*, 2016; [Evidence](#), 14 November 2016, 1535 (Sylvia Maracle); [Evidence](#), 14 November 2016, 1630 (Lucille Harper); [Evidence](#), 14 November 2016, 1655 (Katie Kitschke); [Evidence](#), 28 September 2016, 1610 (Ann Decter).

650 [Evidence](#), 12 April 2016, 1535 (Linda Savoie); [Evidence](#), 30 November 2016, 1640 (Jocelyne Mills); [Evidence](#), 30 November 2016, 1700 (Lisa Priest, Assistant Deputy Minister, Ontario Women’s Directorate, Government of Ontario).

651 Regroupement québécois des Centres d’aide et de lutte contre les agressions à caractère sexuel, “[Brief Submitted by the Regroupement québécois des CALACS To the Status of Women Committee](#),” *Submitted Brief*, November 2016.

652 East Prince Women’s Information Centre, “[Cyberviolence Needs Assessment for Prince Edward Island](#),” *Submitted Brief*, October 2016; [Evidence](#), 5 December 2016, 1555 (Matthew Johnson).

653 Canadian Federation of Students, “[Written Submission to the Status of Women Committee’s study on Violence Against Young Women and Girls in Canada](#),” *Submitted Brief*, October 2016.

654 [Evidence](#), 17 October 2016, 1550 (Anuradha Dugal); Quebec Council on the Status of Women, “[Violence Against Young Women and Girls](#),” *Submitted Brief*, September 2016; [Evidence](#), 19 October 2016, 1545 (Danika McConnell); [Evidence](#), 19 October 2016, 1650 (Lori Chambers); [Evidence](#), 19 October 2016, 1635 (Alexander Wayne MacKay); Canadian Federation of Students, “[Written Submission to the Status of Women Committee’s study on Violence Against Young Women and Girls in Canada](#),” *Submitted Brief*, October 2016.

strategy that addresses violence on post-secondary campuses⁶⁵⁵ and ensures uniform reporting and investigatory regimes.⁶⁵⁶

- The Committee heard that there is a need for provincial cyber safety laws and education acts that address cyberviolence; the federal government could support the provinces in making these legislative changes.⁶⁵⁷
- Witnesses stated that the federal government can support the compilation and dissemination of data and research on gender-based violence, and on promising practices to end this violence, from all levels of government.⁶⁵⁸
- Witnesses suggested that provincial law enforcement and justice officials need ongoing training on gender-based violence,⁶⁵⁹ the federal government could show leadership in this area by ensuring the implementation of such training at the federal level, within the RCMP and for federal justices.

The Committee acknowledges that the successful implementation of several recommendations in the report will require collaboration between the federal government and the provinces and territories. The Committee is hopeful that the provinces and territories will consider the following recommendations:

- Recommendation 4
- Recommendation 7
- Recommendation 8
- Recommendation 9
- Recommendation 15
- Recommendation 21
- Recommendation 33
- Recommendation 37
- Recommendation 38

655 [Evidence](#), 17 October 2016, 1535 (Dawn Moore).

656 Ibid.

657 East Prince Women's Information Centre, "[Cyberviolence Needs Assessment for Prince Edward Island](#)," *Submitted Brief*, October 2016; Amanda Todd Legacy Society – Carol Todd, "[Brief for the Standing Committee for Gender Based Violence of Girls and Young Women \(Cyberviolence\)](#)," *Submitted Brief*, October 2016

658 Centre to End All Sexual Exploitation – Kathleen Quinn, "[Brief: Standing Committee on the Status of Women: Violence Against Young Women and Girls](#)," *Submitted Brief*, 2016; [Evidence](#), 30 November 2016, 1620 (Maureen Adamson).

659 [Evidence](#), 5 October 2016, 1605 (Kendra Milne); [Evidence](#), 23 November 2016, 1725 (Chi Nguyen).

LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1

That the Government of Canada ensure that the Federal Strategy on Gender-based Violence include violence against young women and girls in Canada and that the strategy be survivor-centric, prevention-based, trauma-informed, and tailored to the unique needs of marginalized groups..... 7

Recommendation 2

That the Government of Canada ensure that the Federal Strategy on Gender-based Violence adopts an intersectional approach, addressing the higher rates of violence faced by some groups of women, including Indigenous women; immigrant and refugee women; visible minority women; women identifying as lesbian, bisexual and transgender; female sex workers; women living with disabilities; women with mental health issues; low-income women; women in Northern, rural and remote communities; and other marginalized sectors of the female population..... 8

Recommendation 3

That the Government of Canada ensure that the Federal Strategy on Gender-based Violence is revised to include the results, once available, of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, and address the specific needs of Indigenous women..... 8

Recommendation 4

That the Government of Canada request that the Minister for the Status of Women, starting at the next meeting of Canada’s Federal-Provincial-Territorial Status of Women Forum, urge coordination of federal, provincial, and territorial government responses to help end violence against women and girls..... 8

Recommendation 5

That the Government of Canada examine E-safety models or increased controls to prevent violent and degrading sexually explicit material from being accessed by youth under the age of majority and examine how violent and degrading sexually explicit material distorts young people’s ideas of consent, gender equality and healthy relationships..... 17

Recommendation 6

That the Government of Canada fund initiatives, including research, that address street harassment and sexual harassment in public spaces and its effects on women, and that the Government of Canada take action to create secure, confidential and anonymous reporting systems that have appropriate sensitivity and support mechanisms..... 22

Recommendation 7

That the Government of Canada request that the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, starting at the next meeting of Canada’s federal, provincial and territorial Ministers Responsible for Justice and Public Safety, take leadership and urge all jurisdictions to discuss mechanisms, including legislation, by which Canadian post-secondary institutions could be required to implement stand-alone sexual assault policies. These policies would be informed by evidence-based research, include anonymous, confidential and secure reporting mechanisms for survivors of sexual violence on campuses, and provide sexual violence intervention and sensitivity training for all employees of post-secondary administrations, campus police, students, faculty and other staff during orientation times. Furthermore, all university and college administrations should proactively disclose to the public, on a yearly basis, all statistics on sexual violence on their campuses..... 30

Recommendation 8

That the Government of Canada request that the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, at the next meeting of Canada’s federal, provincial and territorial Ministers Responsible for Justice and Public Safety, urge all jurisdictions to discuss mechanisms by which the provinces and territories could require all university and college administrations to establish sexual assault centres on campus, which would offer free and accessible counselling services for students and other members of the university community. 31

Recommendation 9

That the Government of Canada request that the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, at the next meeting of Canada’s federal, provincial and territorial Ministers Responsible for Justice and Public Safety, urge all jurisdictions to discuss mechanisms by which the provinces and territories could require all universities and colleges to make the Mental Health Commission of Canada’s mental health first aid course mandatory for faculty members, employees of university and college administrations, and campus police..... 31

Recommendation 10

That the Government of Canada, through Status of Women Canada, examine best practices for reporting, investigating and adjudicating cases of sexual violence on post-secondary campuses..... 31

Recommendation 11

That the Government of Canada, through Status of Women Canada, implement an awareness campaign or education program, developed in consultation with young people, and that the initiative be both age-appropriate and culturally sensitive, that it include information on consent and respect in sexual relationships, that it provide information on legal resources for survivors of gender-based violence, and that it raise awareness of support services for survivors of gender-based violence..... 56

Recommendation 12

That the Government of Canada consult with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and other federally regulated police services to determine what additional reporting mechanisms and tools, that are both simple and effective, are required for combating sexual violence, including in cases that involve the non-consensual distribution of sexual recordings and images, and that officers of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and other federally-regulated police services have extensive digital and sensitivity training with a survivor-centric approach..... 56

Recommendation 13

That the Government of Canada, through Public Safety Canada, partner with Canadian not-for-profit organizations for digital and media literacy to conduct research examining the potentially harmful effects of algorithms on young Canadians, and how to mitigate those potentially harmful effects including how algorithms might be employed to mitigate harmful content and ideas..... 56

Recommendation 14

That the Government of Canada, through the Department of Justice, examine the legal definition and threshold for criminal harassment in Section 264 of the *Criminal Code* in order to explicitly include cyberviolence and harassment that occurs in online spaces, without violating the right to free expression as defined in the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*..... 56

Recommendation 15

That the Government of Canada, through the Minister of Justice urge all jurisdictions to create a National Cybercrime Coordination Centre, which would provide a coordinated Canadian law enforcement response to address cybercrime and cyberviolence. 56

Recommendation 16

That the Government of Canada consider establishing an e-Safety Commissioner reporting to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness and modelled after the e-Safety Commissioner in Australia, whereby the office of the Commissioner provides online safety education for children and young people and receives complaints from individuals related to cyberviolence..... 57

Recommendation 17

That the Government of Canada, in collaboration with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and other federally regulated law enforcement, develop national training in digital literacy and standardized responses to acts of cyberviolence for law enforcement professionals and share best practices with other jurisdictions..... 57

Recommendation 18

That the Government of Canada introduce legislation to restore Section 13 of the *Canadian Human Rights Act* which permitted rights complaints to the federal Canadian Human Rights Commission for the communication of hate messages by telephone or on the Internet. 57

Recommendation 19

That the Government of Canada work with community-based service providers in Indigenous and northern communities to develop and deliver community-oriented and culturally-appropriate educational programs that teach the concepts of consent and respect in sexual relationships and that engage men and boys in ending violence against women. 63

Recommendation 20

That the Government of Canada provide funding to community-based organizations that assist new immigrants and refugees who have experienced or are experiencing gender-based violence..... 65

Recommendation 21

That the Government of Canada request that the Minister of Justice, at the next meeting of Canada’s federal, provincial and territorial Ministers Responsible for Justice and Public Safety, urge all jurisdictions to discuss with the provinces and territories the accessibility to all Canadians, regardless of immigration status, of existing services and supports for survivors of sexual or gender-based violence. 66

Recommendation 22

That the Government of Canada address the current gap in sexual violence awareness and services for women and girls living with disabilities by taking appropriate measures to prevent and address sexual violence against women and girls living with disabilities in Canada. 68

Recommendation 23

That the Government of Canada provide greater access to shelters (including funding, number of spaces, and accessibility) and legal resources for young women and girls who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless and who are survivors of gender-based violence..... 68

Recommendation 24

That the Government of Canada support digital literacy organizations whose work aims to educate young people and their families on the dangers of cyberviolence, the potential risks of sexting, and healthy forms of sexual expression and informed consent in the online realm..... 78

Recommendation 25

That the Government of Canada make investments in community-based organizations that promote public awareness and education for men and boys on the concepts of digital literacy, consent in sexual relationships, and hypersexualization..... 82

Recommendation 26

That the Government of Canada, through Status of Women Canada, develop and invest in a nation-wide public awareness campaign, as part of the Federal Strategy on Gender-based Violence, to educate the public about consent, healthy sexuality, bystander intervention and the role of men and boys in ending gender-based violence and rape culture, and that community groups, men’s ally networks and youth be consulted during the development of the awareness campaign..... 83

Recommendation 27

That the Government of Canada, through the Department of Justice, ensure that the Legal Aid Program increase funding to survivor-centric legal resources that are readily available to survivors of gender-based violence in both civil and criminal law context..... 92

Recommendation 28

That the Government of Canada, through the Department of Justice, and in collaboration with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, implement a mandatory educational curriculum on gender-based violence and sexual violence for all Royal Canadian Mounted Police, and other federally-regulated law enforcement officers, that is survivor-centric, respectful and trauma-informed. 92

Recommendation 29

That the Government of Canada provide funding to the National Judicial Institute for the express purpose of developing comprehensive training on gender-based violence and sexual assault for the judiciary and those seeking to become part of the judiciary, and that the Government of Canada encourage all judges to participate in this training..... 92

Recommendation 30

That the Government of Canada make resources available to implement an educational curriculum on digital and media literacy and gender-based violence for crown prosecutors, staff and the judiciary..... 92

Recommendation 31

That the Government of Canada, through the Department of Justice, in collaboration with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, establish sexual assault advocates within law enforcement and legal bodies, and that the role of the advocate be to: ensure that the complainant is cognisant of the full range of existing laws, services and options available to survivors of sexual assault as they move through the legal system, including options outside of the existing criminal justice system; and to ensure that there is a trauma-informed and survivor-centric approach throughout the legal process. 93

Recommendation 32

That the Government of Canada, through the Department of Justice, examine options for alternative, restorative or traditional (Indigenous) justice mechanisms as optional alternatives to the criminal court system in cases of sexual violence, and examine the impact of criminal standards of proof in cases of sexual assault. 93

Recommendation 33

That the Government of Canada strengthen the criminal harassment offence provisions in the *Criminal Code* by defining (in Section 264) when a person has cause to “reasonably” fear for their safety, including when a person fears for his or her “psychological safety and integrity.” 93

Recommendation 34

That the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness and the Minister of Justice work in partnership with the provinces, the territories and First Nations communities to develop strategies to deal with sexual assault cases and to ensure police and prosecutors use a common set of practices in dealing with survivors of sexual violence. 93

Recommendation 35

That the Government of Canada examine ways in which it can attract more women and persons of other marginalized identities to law enforcement and elsewhere in the criminal justice system in order to diversify perspectives in policing and in the criminal justice system..... 93

Recommendation 36

That the Government of Canada, through the Department of Justice, make additional investments beyond the \$12 million already committed into the Victims Fund for projects supporting adult survivors of sexual assault and seek ways in which the benefits of this program could be extended to young women and girls who have experienced gender-based violence, including sexual assault..... 94

Recommendation 37

That the Government of Canada, through the Department of Justice, lead national coordination of a review of the justice system to ensure equal access to protection and justice across the country for survivors of violence against women and girls. 94

Recommendation 38

That the Government of Canada request that the Minister for the Status of Women share the report, entitled *Taking Action to End Violence Against Young Women and Girls in Canada*, tabled by the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women, with her provincial and territorial counterparts..... 97

Recommendation 39

That the Government of Canada conduct a thorough meta-analysis of existing research on violence against young women and girls, with particular focus on hypersexualization, street harassment, cyberviolence, violence on post-secondary campuses, sex trafficking, engaging men and boys to combat gender-based violence, and groups at higher risk of experiencing violence, with the goal of eliminating the duplication of work and determining where additional research and data collection is required..... 98

Recommendation 40

That the Government of Canada, through Statistics Canada, allocate additional funding to research and data collection that focuses on intersectional violence against young women and girls in Canada, particularly in the areas of hypersexualization, violent and degrading sexually explicit material, sex trafficking, street harassment, cyberviolence, violence on post-secondary campuses, and men and boys' views of gender-based violence..... 98

Recommendation 41

That the Government of Canada request that Statistics Canada reinstate its data collection through the Uniform Crime Reporting Survey of the national unfounded rate for sexual offences and provide appropriate training for the standardization and consistency of data collection from police services..... 98

Recommendation 42

That the Government of Canada prioritize funds for local sexual violence prevention services and sexual violence support services in order that these organizations may strengthen their supports, including mental health services, for survivors of gender-based violence..... 102

Recommendation 43

That the Government of Canada work with front-line services and community organizations to help them ensure that their services and programs are accessible to all Canadians, and this includes: delivery of services and programs in languages other than English and French, including Indigenous languages, where needed; incorporating individuals living with disabilities, individuals with mental illness, individuals identifying as lesbian, bisexual and transgender, and individuals who are sex workers; and ensuring these services and programs are advertised extensively to the general public. 102

Recommendation 44

That the Government of Canada instruct its departments and agencies to conduct evidence-based evaluations to ensure that its funding programs are working to identify and effectively serve the needs of front-line services, community organizations, and their employees in order to address violence against young women and girls. 103

Recommendation 45

That the Government of Canada instruct its departments and agencies to re-evaluate their methods of program advertising to ensure that existing violence against young women and girls Government of Canada programs, and those funded by the Government of Canada, are sufficiently and clearly publicized in order to ensure accessibility to all individuals and organizations in need of services..... 103

LIST OF OBSERVATIONS

Observation 1

The Committee heard evidence regarding anti-sexual violence and anti-harassment policies and legislation that have been implemented in certain provinces and territories. The Committee encourages provinces and territories that currently do not have existing or sufficient legislation in this area to champion the implementation of standardized anti-sexual violence and anti-harassment policies across university and college campuses, and that these policies stand alone from other human rights policies or student codes of conduct. 31

Observation 2

The Committee observed the need for digital industry leaders – including social media platforms, app and game developers, and internet service providers – to work with the federal government and with digital literacy organizations to promote greater digital and media literacy, particularly amongst young people; foster greater social responsibility for acts of violence that occur on their platforms; and actively respond to reported incidents of cyberviolence in a manner that is survivor-centric and trauma-informed. 57

Observation 3

The Committee observed the need for a standardized curriculum in public schools that addresses sex positivity, healthy relationships, healthy sexuality, positive masculinity, pleasure, communication, intimacy, respect, bodily autonomy and healthy body image, and queer, trans and non-conventional experiences; and the need for the curriculum to be implemented in an age-appropriate and culturally appropriate manner as early as junior kindergarten. 78

Observation 4

The Committee observed the need for the implementation of a standardized curriculum in public schools that teaches digital and media literacy and that this curriculum: 1) prioritize the development of students' critical thinking skills towards media so that they are equipped with adequate tools and resources to critically examine the media and images they consume; 2) that it teach concepts of digital civility and being a good digital citizen; and 3) that it make distinctions between acceptable online behaviour, unacceptable online behaviour, and criminal online behaviour. Furthermore, this curriculum needs to be implemented in an age-appropriate and culturally appropriate manner as early as junior kindergarten. 78

Observation 5

The Committee observed the need for the implementation of a long-term, stable and mandatory educational curriculum for all provincially regulated law enforcement officers, crown prosecutors and staff, and members of the judiciary, that promotes consent culture and educates police and court officials on how to appropriately address reports of sexual violence; the need for the curriculum to teach an approach to dealing with sexual violence that is survivor-centric, respectful and trauma-informed; and the need for the curriculum to teach an approach to sexual violence cases that does not disproportionately criminalize perpetrators who are racialized, trans, queer or gender non-binary, indigenous or with mental health issues or disabilities..... 94

Observation 6

The Committee observed the need for a long-term, stable and mandatory educational curriculum for all provincially regulated law enforcement officers, prosecutors and staff, and members of the judiciary that teaches digital and media literacy so that they can be fully cognizant of the complexities of crimes of sexual and gender-based violence that occur online. 94

APPENDIX A LIST OF WITNESSES

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
<p>Statistics Canada</p> <p>Yvan Clermont, Director Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics</p> <p>Rebecca Kong, Chief Policing Services Program, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics</p> <p>Samuel Perreault, Analyst General Social Survey on Victimization, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics</p>	2016/04/12	7
<p>Status of Women Canada</p> <p>Justine Akman, Director General Policy and External Relations Directorate</p> <p>Linda Savoie, Senior Director General Women's Program and Regional Operations Directorate</p>		
<p>Department of Citizenship and Immigration</p> <p>Ümit Kiziltan, Director General Research and Evaluation</p> <p>Fraser Valentine, Director General Strategic Policy and Planning</p>	2016/04/19	9
<p>Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development</p> <p>Paula Isaak, Assistant Deputy Minister Education and Social Development Programs and Partnerships Sector</p>		
<p>Department of Justice</p> <p>Gillian Blackell, Senior Counsel and Acting Director Policy Centre for Victim Issues, Policy Sector</p> <p>Nathalie Levman, Counsel Criminal Law Policy Section, Policy Sector</p>		
<p>Public Health Agency of Canada</p> <p>Kimberly Elmslie, Assistant Deputy Minister Health Promotion and Chronic Disease Prevention Branch</p>		
<p>Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness</p> <p>Angela Connidis, Director General Crime Prevention, Corrections and Criminal Justice Directorate</p> <p>Lori MacDonald, Assistant Deputy Minister Emergency Management and Programs Branch</p>	2016/04/21	10

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
Royal Canadian Mounted Police Shirley Cuillierier, Director General National Aboriginal Policing and Crime Prevention Services	2016/04/21	10
As individuals Jane Bailey, Professor Faculty of Law, University of Ottawa Lara Karaian, Associate Professor Institute of Criminology and Criminal Justice, Carleton University Shaheen Shariff, Associate Professor Faculty of Education and Associate Member Law Faculty, McGill University	2016/06/16	20
MediaSmarts Matthew Johnson, Director of Education		
As individuals Rena Bivens, Assistant Professor School of Journalism and Communication, Carleton University Valerie Steeves, Associate Professor Department of Criminology, University of Ottawa	2016/09/21	21
Battered Women's Support Services Rona Amiri, Violence Prevention Coordinator Angela Marie MacDougall, Executive Director		
YWCA Halifax Dee Dooley, Youth Programs Coordinator		
Amanda Todd Legacy Society Carol Todd, Mother and Advocate	2016/09/26	22
As an individual Leah Parsons, Representative Rehtaeh Parsons Society		
Atwater Library and Computer Centre Shanly Dixon, Educator and Researcher Digital Literacy Project		
Centre for Youth Crime Prevention - RCMP Peter Payne, Officer in Charge National Child Exploitation Coordination Centre Kimberly Taplin, Director National Aboriginal Policing and Crime Prevention Services		
As an individual Steph Guthrie, Social Justice Advocate	2016/09/28	23

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
Canadian Centre for Child Protection Signy Arnason, Director Cybertip.ca Lianna McDonald, Executive Director	2016/09/28	23
YWCA Canada Ann Decter, Director Advocacy and Public Policy Raine Liliefeldt, Director of Member Services and Development		
CYCC Network Lisa Lachance, Executive Director Alicia Raimundo, Youth Advisory Committee Co-Chair Youth Advisory Committee	2016/10/03	24
East Prince Women's Information Centre Nancy Beth Guptill, Cyberviolence Expert Andy Lou Somers, Executive Director		
Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police Jeffery Adam, Chief Superintendent and Director General E-Crimes	2016/10/05	25
West Coast LEAF Kendra Milne, Director Law Reform		
Women's Media Center Soraya Chemaly, Director Women's Media Center Speech Project		
Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes Maïra Martin, General Director	2016/10/17	26
As an individual Dawn Moore, Associate Professor Law and Legal Studies, Carleton University		
Canadian Women's Foundation Anuradha Dugal, Director Violence Prevention Programs		
METRAC Action on Violence Gabrielle Ross-Marquette, Communications Coordinator		
Ottawa Hollaback! Julie Lalonde, Director		

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
As individuals	2016/10/19	27
Lori Chambers, Professor Lakehead University		
Daphne Gilbert, Associate Professor Faculty of Law, Common Law Section, University of Ottawa		
Nicolette Little, Professor, Sheridan College PhD Candidate, gender and media studies, York University		
Alexander Wayne MacKay, Professor of Law Dalhousie University, Schulich School of Law		
Elizabeth Sheehy, Professor Faculty of Law, Common Law Section, University of Ottawa		
Canadian Alliance of Student Associations		
Danika McConnell, Representative		
Canadian Federation of Students		
Bilan Arte, National Chairperson		
Anti-Violence Project	2016/10/24	28
Paloma Ponti, Volunteer Lead		
Kenya Rogers, Policy Analyst University of Victoria Student's Society		
As individuals		
Farrah Khan, Sexual Violence Support and Education Coordinator Ryerson University		
Hannah Kurchik, Student Advocate Healing Justice Advisory Committee		
South Asian Women's Centre		
Kripa Sekhar, Executive Director		
Reena Tandon, Board Chair		
Marmitha Yogarajah, Project Coordinator		
Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada	2016/10/26	29
Tracy O'Hearn, Executive Director		
As individuals	2016/10/31	30
Manon Bergeron, Professor Université du Québec à Montréal, Senior Researcher, Enquête ESSIMU		
Sandrine Ricci, Researcher Université du Québec à Montréal, Coresearcher, Enquête ESSIMU		

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
<p>Collectivité ingénieuse de la Péninsule acadienne Jenny Pinet, Executive Assistant Liette Roussel, Manager Consultant</p> <p>New Leaf Program Harvey Bate, Co-Chair of the Board of Directors Cathy Grant, Director</p>	2016/10/31	30
<p>Antigonish Women's Resource Centre and Sexual Assault Services Association Lucille Harper, Executive Director</p> <p>BC Lions Football Club Jamie Taras, Director of Community Relations</p> <p>Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres Sylvia Maracle, Executive Director Courtney Skye, Policy Analyst</p> <p>Regroupement québécois des Centres d'aide et de lutte contre les agressions à caractère sexuel Mélanie Sarroino, Liaison and Promotion Officer</p> <p>SAFFRON Centre LTD. Katie Kitschke, Executive Director</p>	2016/11/14	31
<p>Government of New Brunswick Jocelyne Mills, Assistant Deputy Minister Executive Council Office, Women's Equality Branch</p> <p>Government of Ontario Maureen Adamson, Deputy Minister Responsible for Women's Issues Ontario Women's Directorate Lisa Priest, Assistant Deputy Minister Ontario Women's Directorate</p> <p>We Give Consent Tessa Hill, Co-Founder</p>	2016/11/16	32
<p>Babely Shades Awar Obob, Member</p> <p>Canadian Council for Refugees Loly Rico, President</p>	2016/11/21	33

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
<p>Native Women's Association of Canada</p> <p>Lynne Groulx, Executive Director Francyne Joe, President Marilee Nowgesic, Special Advisor Liaison</p> <p>Twitter Inc.</p> <p>Patricia Cartes, Head Global Safety</p>	2016/11/21	33
<p>Covenant House Toronto</p> <p>Julie Neubauer, Manager of Human Trafficking Services</p> <p>DisAbled Women's Network Canada</p> <p>Bonnie Brayton, National Executive Director</p> <p>SAVIS of Halton</p> <p>Alma Arguello, Executive Director Walter Henry, Project Coordinator Male Ally Network</p> <p>White Ribbon Campaign</p> <p>Chi Nguyen, Managing Director Parker P. Consulting</p>	2016/11/23	34
<p>Government of New Brunswick</p> <p>Jocelyne Mills, Assistant Deputy Minister Executive Council Office, Women's Equality Branch</p> <p>Martine Stewart, Director Violence Prevention and Community Partnerships (Unit), Executive Council Office</p> <p>Government of Ontario</p> <p>Maureen Adamson, Deputy Minister Responsible for Women's Issues Ontario Women's Directorate</p> <p>Lisa Priest, Assistant Deputy Minister Ontario Women's Directorate</p> <p>We Give Consent</p> <p>Tessa Hill, Co-Founder</p>	2016/11/30	36
<p>As individuals</p> <p>Jane Bailey, Professor Faculty of Law, University of Ottawa</p> <p>Sandra Robinson, Instructor Carleton University</p>	2016/12/05	37

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
Department of Industry Corinne Charette, Senior Assistant Deputy Minister Spectrum, Information Technologies and Telecommunications	2016/12/05	37
MediaSmarts Matthew Johnson, Director of Education		
Google Malika Saada Saar, Senior Counsel Human and Civil Rights	2016/12/07	38
Google Canada Jason Kee, Counsel Public Policy and Government Relations Lauren Skelly, Senior Policy Analyst		

APPENDIX B LIST OF BRIEFS

Organizations and Individuals

Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes

Antigonish Women's Resource Centre and Sexual Assault Services Association

Bailey, Jane

Be The Peace Institute

Bergeron, Manon

Canadian Centre for Child Protection

Canadian Coalition for the Rights of Children

Canadian Council for Refugees

Canadian Federation of Students

Canadian Federation of University Women

Centre d'aide et de lutte contre les agressions à caractère sexuel Châteauguay

Centre to End All Sexual Exploitation

Chambers, Lori

Chard, Stephanie

Children and Youth in Challenging Contexts

Coalition of Provincial and Territorial Advisory Councils on the Status of Women

Collectivité ingénieuse de la Péninsule acadienne

Concertation des luttes contre l'exploitation sexuelle

Conseil du statut de la femme du Québec

De Gannes, Paulysha Veronica

Duhamel, Nathalie

East Prince Women's Information Centre

Organizations and Individuals

Evangelical Fellowship of Canada

Facebook Inc.

Gerrard, Glendyne

Glasenapp, Clea

Goyer, Marie-France

Hébert, Martine

Jones, Kendra

King, Kathy

Kurtzman, Lyne

MacKay, Alexander Wayne

Manitoba Association of Newcomer Serving Organizations

METRAC Action on Violence

Moore, Dawn

New Leaf Program

Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres

Persons Against Non-State Torture

Planned Parenthood Newfoundland and Labrador Sexual Health Centre

Regroupement québécois des Centres d'aide et de lutte contre les agressions à caractère sexuel

Ricci, Sandrine

SAFFRON Centre LTD.

Second Story Women's Centre

Steeves, Valerie

The Redwood

Organizations and Individuals

Todd, Carol

University of Alberta Sexual Assault Centre

Y des femmes de Montréal

Young Indigenous Women from Atlantic Canada

YWCA Canada

REQUEST FOR GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the Committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to this Report.

A copy of the relevant Minutes of Proceedings (Meetings Nos. [7](#), [9](#), [10](#), [20](#), [21](#), [22](#), [23](#), [24](#), [25](#), [26](#), [27](#), [28](#), [29](#), [30](#), [31](#), [32](#), [33](#), [34](#), [36](#), [37](#), [38](#), [40](#), [44](#), [45](#), [46](#), [47](#), [48](#), [51](#)) is tabled.

Respectfully submitted,

Marilyn Gladu
Chair

Supplementary Opinion of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition, The Conservative Party of Canada

Violence Against Women and Girls Study

From April 12, 2016 to March 9, 2017, the Standing Committee on the Status of Women (“the Committee”) conducted a study on the pervasive and extensive nature of violence against young women and girls, including a close examination of the root causes and underlying attitudes that drive such violence. While the Report tabled by the Committee encompasses most of the evidence that was heard during the study, the Official Opposition Members of the Committee believe that a number of key points brought up by witnesses were omitted. Specifically, testimony regarding the widespread availability of violent pornography and the damaging effect that it has on healthy sexual relationships was understated in the Report. The Conservative members of the committee believe there is definite value in identifying this issue by name, and without equivocation.

In addition, the Official Opposition Members have concerns regarding the lack of testimony used to inform Recommendation 16 and the portions of the report that suggest the creation of an Office of the E-Safety Commissioner similar to that which is employed by the Australian government. The Official Opposition also believes that Recommendations 15 and 16 limit the outcomes of specific consultations which are mandated in Recommendation 5 by determining a result prior to the full consideration of several different options.

Moreover, the Conservative Members of the Committee believe that specific testimony regarding sentence length and enforcement of strong sentencing laws for perpetrators of sexual assault were not given adequate consideration in the Report. Although the Committee heard testimony on a variety of alternative modes of justice, it is the position of the Official Opposition that these alternatives ought to be considered in light of a well-trained, sensitive judiciary, and strong, punitive sentencing laws.

1. The Effect of Violent Pornography on the Normalization of Violence

Although the Conservative Members of the Committee are grateful for the Government's willingness to explore the effect of “Hypersexualization and Violent and Degrading Sexually Explicit Material in Pornography and Other Media,” the Official Opposition is disappointed the Government decided to exclude expert witness testimony that demonstrated the extent to which mainstream pornography causes the degradation of consent culture and damages healthy sexual relationships.¹ Although the

¹ Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, “Submission to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women – Internet Pornography and Violence against Young Women and Girls in Canada,” *Submitted Brief*, 2016; Second Story Women's Centre, “Brief Regarding Violence against Young Women and Girls in Canada,” *Submitted Brief*, 2016; Centre d'aide et de lutte contre les agressions à caractère sexuelle Châteauguay, “Violence against Young Women and Girls in Canada: A Sexual Violence Perspective,” *Submitted Brief*, September 2016; Glendyne Gerrard – Defend Dignity, “Violence against Young Women and Girls – A Brief Prepared for the Status of Women Standing Committee,” *Submitted Brief*,

Conservative Members of the Committee are aware and understand that other hypersexualized media (e.g. photos, magazine ads, music videos, etc.) negatively impacts the views and behavior of young people in similar ways that viewing pornography does, Members of the Official Opposition believe the Government neglected to adequately evaluate the vast array of testimony and evidence that specifically denoted pornography as a unique driver of dangerous attitudes that lead to violence against young women and girls.

The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, Defend Dignity Canada, and Antigonish Women's Resource Center and Sexual Assault Services all noted that pornography objectifies women in ways that warp and blur the lines of consent.² This is particularly concerning in light of the great deal of testimony that illustrated the need to combat and overwrite the pervasive nature of "rape culture" which discards the importance of consent as an essential aspect of all healthy relationships.³

The Committee heard that 90 percent of top-selling pornography scenes depict acts of violence against women⁴ and was also made aware that young men and boys are increasingly turning to pornography as a source of sexual education.⁵ Exposure to these violent images at a young age has long-lasting, damaging effects on children's perception of healthy sexuality and consent.⁶ The Official Opposition therefore agrees

23 September 2016; *Evidence*, 19 October 2016, 1710 (Lori Chambers, Professor, Lakehead University, as an individual); *Evidence*, 30 November 2016, 1655 (Tessa Hill, Co-founder, We Give Consent).

² Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, "Submission to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women – Internet Pornography and Violence against Young Women and Girls in Canada," *Submitted Brief*, 2016; Glendyne Gerrard – Defend Dignity, "Violence against Young Women and Girls – A Brief Prepared for the Status of Women Standing Committee," *Submitted Brief*, 23 September 2016; Antigonish Women's Resource Centre and Sexual Assault Services, "Submission to House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women: Violence against Girls and Young Women," *Submitted Brief*, November 2016.

³ *Evidence*, 16 June 2016, 1550 (Shaheen Shariff, Associate Professor, Faculty of Education and Associate Member, Law Faculty, McGill University, As an Individual); *Evidence*, October 17, 2016, 1630 (Dawn Moore, Associate Professor, Law and Legal Studies, Carleton University, As an individual); *Evidence*, 17 October 2016, 1630 (Gabrielle Ross-Marquette, METRAC Action on Violence); *Evidence*, 19 October 2016, 1555 (Bilan Arte, National Chairperson, Canadian Federation of Students); *Evidence*, 24 October 2016, 1545 (Kenya Rogers, Policy Analyst, University of Victoria Student's Society, Anti Violence Project); *Evidence*, October 31, 2016, 1630 (Liette Roussel, Managing Consultant, Collectivité ingénieuse de la Péninsule acadienne); *Evidence*, 14 November 2016, 1630 (Lucille Harper, Antigonish Women's Resource Centre and Sexual Assault Services); *Evidence*, November 14, 2016, 1640 (Melanie Sarronino, Liason and Promotion Officer, Regroupment québécois des centres d'aides et de lutte contra les agressions a caractère sexuel); *Evidence*, November 16, 2016, 1540 (Tessa Hill)

⁴ Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, "Submission to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women – Internet Pornography and Violence against Young Women and Girls in Canada," *Submitted Brief*, 2016; Glendyne Gerrard – Defend Dignity, "Violence against Young Women and Girls – A Brief Prepared for the Status of Women Standing Committee," *Submitted Brief*, 23 September 2016.

⁵ *Evidence*, 28 September 2016, 1600 (Ann Decker, Director, Advocacy and Public Policy, YWCA Canada); *Evidence*, 19 October 2016, 1710 (Lori Chambers); *Evidence*, 5 October 2016, 1700 (Soraya Chemaly, Director, Women's Media Center Speech Project, Women's Media Center).

⁶ *Evidence*, October 5, 2016, 1745 (Soraya Chemaly); *Evidence*, 31 October, 2016, 1605 (Harvey Bate, Co-Chair of the Board of Directors, New Leaf Program); *Evidence*, 21 September 2016 1635 (Angela MacDougall, Executive

with the extensive witness testimony that clearly called for the education of children on proper sexual norms at a young age, especially due to the regular exposure of children to highly sexualized media and advertising.⁷

Many witnesses discussed the negative impact of pornography on the attitudes of young men and boys, and consequently, on the well-being of women and girls. Harvey Bate, a representative of the New Leaf Program noted that, “The impact [pornography] is having is that it’s sending a very bad message to young boys about what a normal relationship is, so they go into teen relationships expecting a whole lot of things that aren’t good for them or good for the young women.”⁸ Representatives from Battered Women Support Services made similar claims, stating, “When we’re seeing gender stereotypes and things in the media or when youth watching pornography see violence in pornography, these things become normalized.”⁹

Testimony that was particularly insightful to the Committee was provided by Tessa Hill, a high school student who is the co-founder of the organization We Give Consent. In regards to engagement with her peers on this issue, Ms. Hill said:

I think it's extremely relevant to talk about the consumption of violent images. It is very prevalent among my peers. It's so readily available that even if it's not something that we talk about a lot, it is there. I think that's the scary part of it... We want to have real conversations about things that we see every day, like violent pornography images that are readily available to us online. We need to then group that with these positive conversations about sex education. Since it's a such a part of our lives, it's not something that can be ignored.¹⁰

It is, therefore, the position of the Official Opposition that the issue of violent pornography, needs to be clearly defined and addressed by name, in order to give this cause of violence against young women and girls the full weight of consideration it deserves.

2. Models of E-Safety in Canada and Elsewhere

The Committee heard a great deal of testimony that spoke to the need for the Government to offer a precise response to the problem of cyberviolence. The Official Opposition recognizes that to adequately address such a complex issue, the Government needs to adopt a dynamic approach that considers many different responses, and consult experts in order to determine what the best practices for Canada would be. It is encouraging to know that many organizations and initiatives are

Director, Battered Women’s Support Services); *Evidence*, 14 November, 2017, 1620 (Sylvia Maracle, Executive Director, Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres)

⁷ *Evidence*, 16 June, 2016, 1645 (Matthew Johnson, Director of Education, MediaSmarts); *Evidence*, September 26, 2016, 1545 (Shanly Dixon, Educator and Researcher, Digital Literacy Project, Atwater Library and Computer Centre); *Evidence*, October 5, 2016, 1650 (Soraya Chemaly)

⁸ *Evidence*, 31 October, 2016, 1605 (Harvey Bate)

⁹ *Evidence*, 21 September 2016 1635 (Angela MacDougall)

¹⁰ *Evidence*. 30 November 2016, 1655 (Tessa Hill)

already working in Canada to mitigate the harms of cyberviolence through education and support tools such as MediaSmarts, the Canadian Center for Child Protection, Needhelpnow.ca and Cybertip.ca. However, in an era where technology is constantly evolving, the Government must take initiative to ensure the safety of Canadians online, and end the perpetration of online violence.

While the Government has committed to supporting some of these initiatives, it has prematurely singled out specific approaches to ending cyberviolence in Canada without the proper consultations. This is evidenced in Recommendations 15 and 16. While Recommendation 15's goal of urging multiple jurisdictions to work together for a unified and coordinated approach is a step in the right direction, the Government has limited the content of this discussion to a National Cybercrime Coordination Centre, and excluded already existing programs that could benefit from the federal government's attention.

Recommendation 16 similarly precludes the Government of Canada from examining useful international methods of combating cyberviolence by speaking only of the possibility of establishing an e-Safety Commissioner, similar to the Australian Office of the Children's eSafety Commissioner. In addition, the specification in Recommendation 16 is not supported by extensive witness testimony. Only one witness spoke to the positive effect that the Australian Government has had with this Office. Any additional information provided in the Report was included only at the request of Liberal members of the Committee.¹¹ Furthermore, the information provided in the Report contains only background information and does not discuss any further advantage of instituting such an Office in Canada that are not already offered by existing Canadian organizations. For these reasons, the Official Opposition disagrees with the specific notation of this unproven practice in the Report and the Recommendations.

3. Strong Sentencing for Perpetrators of Sexual Assault

Gender-based violence is never excusable. Should violence be enacted on a woman or girl, it should be condemned, whenever and wherever it occurs. Women and girls who have been subjected to gender-based violence deserve proper treatment within the justice system. This should include a strong understanding of what each victim personally requires in order to heal from her experience of violence. As reflected in the Report, the Committee did hear testimony that spoke to the help restorative justice practices can offer victims. However, the report does not adequately explore the call of many witnesses to improve and strengthen sentencing procedures for perpetrators of sexual assault.¹² These measures are especially important in areas wherein restorative justice practices do not meet the needs of the victim.

¹¹ *Evidence*, 21 November 2016, 1615 (Patricia Cartes, Head of Global Safety, Twitter Inc.)

¹² *Evidence*, 5 October, 2016, 1620 (Kendra Milne, Director, Law Reform, West Coast Leaf); *Evidence*, 14 November, 2016, 1630 (Lucille Harper); *Evidence*, 14 November, 2016, 1640 (Melanie Sarroino); *Evidence* 21 November, 2016, 1635 (Francyne Joe, President, Native Women's Association of Canada).

The Committee heard evidence that restorative justice practices carry specific difficulties for survivors of sexual assault, including the possibility of major power imbalances between the perpetrator and the victim. Kendra Milne from West Coast Leaf, who is an advocate of a human rights approach to healing for victims, gave testimony stating, “I don’t know of any [successful restorative justice] models, primarily because they tend to not always be the best models when we’re talking about violence, because of the power dynamics at play.”¹³ Instead, Ms. Milne advocated for a methodology that would solidify an understanding of what constitutes a “reasonable” fear for one’s safety, thereby empowering women to report instances of abuse to authorities.¹⁴

The Report failed to include the fact that many witnesses argued in favour of stricter sentencing standards for perpetrators of sexual assault. Lucille Harper from the Antigonish Women’s Resource Centre noted that the government needs to “ensure sentences reflect the seriousness of these crimes as a deterrent, but also to reflect the often lifetime impact of such crimes on their victims and on the victims’ families.”¹⁵ Other witnesses described current sentencing practices as “a slap on the wrist” that “will fall short of the crime committed.”¹⁶ This necessary change was also flagged by representatives from the Native Women’s Association of Canada who said that “Legislation must be reviewed so that the justice and conviction sentences are increased where violence has been committed”¹⁷ These concerns are only exacerbated by the current need for the provision of training to judicial officers to ensure that sentencing for victims is made by informed and knowledgeable individuals.¹⁸

Every woman who has been subject to sexual violence in any context, and in any setting, deserves adequate and just treatment under the law. While the Report does well to call for improved access to the legal system and the possibility of expanding beyond typical modes of justice distribution, the Conservative Members of the Committee feel that it did not thoroughly explore the breadth of evidence illustrating the need to strengthen current sentencing procedures.

4. Conclusion

While the Status of Women Committee’s Report on Violence Against Young Women and Girls is adequate in most respects, it merely scratches the surface of some of the underlying causes of violence against young women and girls. For the most part, the report and recommendations address the original terms of reference of the committee’s study and will serve as a good foundation for moving the Government closer to ending this issue that has plagued Canadians for far too long. However, given

¹³ *Evidence*, 5 October, 2016, 1620 (Kendra Milne, Director, Law Reform, West Coast Leaf)

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 1520

¹⁵ *Evidence*, 14 November, 2016, 1630 (Lucille Harper)

¹⁶ *Evidence*, 14 November, 2016, 1640 (Melanie Sarroino)

¹⁷ *Evidence* 21 November, 2016, 1635 (Francyne Joe, President, Native Women’s Association of Canada)

¹⁸ *Evidence*, 16 June, 2016, 1550-1600, (Shaheen Shariff)

the severity of this issue the Conservative Members of the Committee believe this supplementary report will aid in further exploration of measures to prevent violence against young women and girls in Canada by presenting testimony that was omitted from the report.

Respectfully Submitted,

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COMPREHENSIVE NATIONAL ACTION PLAN NEEDED IMMEDIATELY TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST YOUNG WOMEN AND GIRLS

*A Supplementary Report submitted by the
New Democratic Party of Canada
To the Government of Canada
March 20, 2017*

National leadership is long overdue, to coordinate responses to violence against young women and girls.

The Committee heard from many witnesses over the course of the study dedicated to ending Violence Against young Women and Girls (VAWG). We thank the witnesses for sharing their expertise with the Committee and we hope the witness and Committee recommendations will be implemented by the Government of Canada.

However, we believe the Committee's final recommendations do not fully reflect the suggestions from many expert witnesses that the federal government should take leadership and take concrete steps to end violence against young women and girls in Canada. We therefore outline our position and recommendations in this supplementary report.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE CRISIS FACED BY WOMEN

Women and girls continue to face crisis levels of violence in Canada. According to Statistics Canada, rates of violence against women remained largely unchanged over the past two decades.

- 1.4 M Canadians report having experienced forms of violence in the past 5 years
- Young women, aged 15-34 years, are at highest risk of experiencing violence
- More than 500 women and children are turned away from shelters on a typical day
- Sexual assault experienced by Indigenous women are more than three times those of non-Indigenous women
- Indigenous women are seven times more likely to be murdered than non-Indigenous women.
- Women living with disability experience violence two to three times more often than women living without disability
- Domestic and sexual violence costs our economy over \$12 billion a year.

Canada has fallen behind many countries¹ when it comes to prevention and protection of women and girls against gender violence. According to the Feminist Alliance for

¹ According to Oxfam Canada, many other countries have implemented national action plans to address violence against women and gender-based violence, with Australia's 12-year *National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children* considered the most comprehensive. Australia started their Third Action Plan in 2016 which include clear targets, deadline and specific actions. For more information : <http://womensrights.oxfam.ca/>

International Action: “In the past 20 years, Canadian women have gone backwards. In 1995, Canada was No. 1 on the United Nations Gender Equality Index. Today Canada ranks 25th²”.

For decades, front-line women’s organizations in Canada have led the way on concrete solutions to end violence against women and girls, while successive Liberal and Conservative governments have consistently failed to act. Over the last decade, the gender-violence faced by millions of Canadian was largely neglected by the Canadian government. Yet after more than a year in power, the Trudeau government has failed to translate its feminist rhetoric into real change.

Over the past months, front-line workers have decried the lack of action from the Liberal government to end violence against women. They are calling the government's progress to date a massive disappointment.³

BROKEN PROMISE TO UNITED NATION ON VAWG NATIONAL ACTION PLAN

While we are in agreement with the Committee’s report and many of its recommendations, we remain concerned that Canada is failing to fulfill its international commitments to end violence against women, its human rights obligations⁴ and its constitutional equality obligations⁵. The Committee’s report did not recommend the mechanism of a National Action Plan to end VAWG, which New Democrats and the global community see as a vital tool.

Since 1995, the United Nations have been calling on all countries to implement National Action Plans on Violence Against Women. In 2008, the United Nations attempted again to get countries without National Action Plans to adopt one before 2015. The federal government missed the 2015 deadline and have since said that they will not implement.

Last November, the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women evaluated Canada’s actions on VAWG. The UNCEDAW said that this government was failing to act on:

- “The continued high prevalence of gender-based violence against women, particularly against indigenous women and girls;

² Feminist Alliance for International Action. “Step up for women’s equality.” Accessed March 8, 2017. <http://fafia-afai.org/en/step-up/>

³ Kathleen Harris, “Massive disappointment’: Liberals urged to step up efforts to tackle sexual, domestic violence,” *CBC News*, January 24, 2017, accessed January 24, 2017, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/liberal-trudeau-sexual-violence-1.3948607>

⁴ The federal government has committed to implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, adopted in 1995. Canada is a signatory to the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, adopted at the UN in 1993, and the government supports the 2016 report of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

⁵ This government has a constitutional obligation to protect equality rights under Article 15. (1): Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the **equal protection** and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability.

- The lack of a national action plan, bearing in mind that the strategy will only apply at the federal level;
- The lack of shelters, support services and other protective measures for women victims of gender-based violence, which reportedly prevents them from leaving their violent partners”⁶

Against the advice of the United Nations, this government decided instead to develop a more narrow federal VAWG strategy, instead of the National VAWG strategy Canada had promised to the UN.

Although the government’s federal VAWG strategy hasn’t been released, its terms of reference indicate it will be limited to areas of federal responsibility, such as Statistics Canada.

Because a federal strategy was chosen instead of a National strategy, it will not be designed to improve health, educational and social services (for example, shelter operations, victim services), or the administration of civil and criminal justice, because these are provincial responsibilities. Federal strategies also exclude policing (except by the RCMP) and prosecuting criminal offences (except in the territories).

It is now clear that Canada did not embrace its international commitments to the UN, leaving Canadian women and girls without a national strategy to protect them.

NGO DISAPPOINTMENT OVER FAILURE TO ENACT A NATIONAL VAWG ACTION PLAN

This government’s decision to choose a federal instead of a National VAWG strategy is a disappointment to women’s organizations across the country.⁷ The absence of a National Action Plan is making responses largely fragmented, often inaccessible, and inconsistent across Canada.⁸

A recent Oxfam report card reflects this disappointment, echoing that a federal VAWG strategy will :

only apply to federal institutions and therefore lacks the depth and scope of a national action plan, which would have responded to the need for women

⁶ Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, “Concluding observations (2016) CEDAW/C/CAN/CO/8-9”, November 18 2016, http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolNo=CEDAW/C/CAN/CO/8-9&Lang=

⁷ Oxfam Canada “Feminist Scorecard 2017: Tracking government action to advance women’s rights and gender equality” March 6, 2017, Accessed March 6, 2017 <http://womensrights.oxfam.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/TIME-TO-TURN-FEMINIST-WORDS-INTO-ACTION.pdf>

⁸ Canadian Network of Women’s Shelters and Transition Houses, “A Blueprint for Canada’s National Action Plan on Violence Against Women and Girls” Accessed on April 20, 2016, <http://endvaw.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Blueprint-for-Canadas-NAP-on-VAW.pdf>

to have access to comparable levels of services and protection across the country.⁹

This government would have been aided by the *Blueprint for Canada's National Action Plan on Violence Against Women and Girls*, developed by a network of 23 Canadian experts, trade unions and non-governmental organizations and endorsed by 180 organizations. Committee witnesses repeatedly referenced or were contributors to the Blueprint.

We believe that this Blueprint should have been the foundation for federal leadership to tackle violence against women, and the Canadian government should have listened to front-line women's organizations. Angela MacDougall, executive director at the Battered Women's Support Services, testified:

"I think we need a national strategy [...] in order to continue leveraging these vibrant networks that exist already, and to create opportunities for us to share our promising practices and to share our approaches. The organizations we network with are doing all kinds of incredible change-making work, in training, service provision, and systemic and legal advocacy, and amazing things are happening.

We have the solutions, actually, operating right now. We just need to find ways to scale those up, which, at the end of the day, means trusting the women's organizations that have been doing the work for over 40 years.

We have the solutions. We are doing them in amazing ways already. We need the support to scale those".¹⁰

Because of compelling testimony like this, and because so many witnesses described specific sexual violence problems such as cyberbullying and campus rape that need nationally-coordinated responses, the Committee agreed to some recommendations on federal leadership, and made a number of Observations about matters under provincial and territorial jurisdiction. Yet its final recommendations did not accede to the testimony calling for the more ambitious National Action Plan.

Specifically, Recommendation 1, 2, 3 and 26 should have advocated a National Action plan instead of the weaker federal strategy being written by this government.

Recommendations 4, 7, 8, 9, 15, 21, 33, 35 and 36 and Observations 1, 3, 4, 5 and 6 specifically require collaboration between the federal government and the provinces and territories. Without a National Action Plan, in which collaboration, coordination and cooperation would be enshrined, the implementation of those recommendations and observations will be difficult to track. For example, Recommendation 4 urges "coordination of federal, provincial, and territorial government responses to help address violence against women and girls once a year at the Canada's Federal-Provincial-Territorial Status of Women Forum", but once a year is just not enough. New Democrats

⁹ *Ibid.*, Oxfam Canada.

¹⁰ FEWO, *Evidence*, September 21, 2016, 1635 (Angela Marie MacDougall).

believe that the federal should play a bigger role in making sure that women and girls, in every province and territory, in urban, rural or remote regions, including First Nations and Inuit territories have access to comparable services.

Therefore, the New Democratic Party recommends:

- **That the Government of Canada take leadership and coordinate federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal government responses to protect women and girls against violence, via a National Action Plan, to ensure equality of access to services across and within jurisdictions in policies, laws, and education and to prevent and address violence against women and girls.**

NATIONAL LEADERSHIP TO PREVENT CAMPUS RAPE

- *Many witnesses said there is a particular need for uniformity of policies, justice, and access to service for victims of campus rape, because students are especially likely to move from province to province, at a young age, and should have an expectation of equal safety.*

The Committee heard many witnesses recommend federal leadership to end campus rape¹¹. Witness Natasha Kornak¹² said: “I think we definitely need to legislate and create standards that have to be adhered to by post-secondary institutions to make sure they are consistently providing services to people on campus. That's something I think the federal government can definitely step in.”

Witness Alana Robert¹³ also strongly advocated for national leadership:

With your support, we can create a national policy mandating all post-secondary institutions of comprehensive consent education, response

¹¹ *Evidence*, October 17, 2016, 1540 (Anuradha Dugal, Director, Violence Prevention Programs, Canadian Women's Foundation); *Evidence*, October 19, 2016, 1535 (Elizabeth Sheehy, Professor, Faculty of Law, Common Law Section, University of Ottawa, As an individual); *Evidence*, October 31, 2016, 1715 (Liette Roussel); Antigonish Women's Resource Centre and Sexual Assault Services; *Evidence*, October 31, 2016, 1635 (Manon Bergeron, Professor, Université du Québec à Montréal, Senior Researcher, Enquête ESSIMU, As an individual); *Evidence*, October 24, 2016, 1545 (Kenya Rogers, Policy Analyst, University of Victoria Student's Society, Anti Violence Project); *Evidence*, October 19, 2016, 1635 (Alexander Wayne MacKay, Professor of Law, Dalhousie University, Schulich School of Law, As an individual); *Evidence*, October 19, 2016, 1555 (Bilan Arte, National Chairperson, Canadian Federation of Students); *Evidence*, October 19, 2016, 1545 (Danika McConnell, Representative, Canadian Alliance of Student Associations);

¹² Natasha Kornak, a delegate from the Daughters of the Vote initiative, is a second year student studying Life Science at Queen's University. On the executive board for the Queen's Female Leadership in Politics Conference and Queen's Native Students Association, Natasha is also the creator of Right2Know, a campaign pushing for consent-based sex education in Alberta.

¹³ Alana Robert, a delegate from the Daughters of the Vote initiative, is a first year student at Osgoode Hall Law School. Alana is the Founder and President of Justice For Women, a student group that advocates for gender equality. In this role, Alana has created Consent Culture Workshops, a 'Safe Spaces and Safe Socials' Policy, and a Self-Care Resource Centre – all of which serve to combat gender-based violence.

centres, and resources that are accessible to students, and we can support the establishment of full-service community centres, where women escaping violence can go to for legal assistance, counselling, financial planning and cultural activities all within the same space. This can reduce the retraumatization of women that occurs when they are forced to retell their stories over and over again. For indigenous women who are particularly targeted, this is especially important to ensuring their safety.¹⁴

Therefore, the New Democratic Party recommends that:

- **That the Government of Canada lead national coordination of policies to prevent campus rape.**

COORDINATE JUSTICE SYSTEM AND POLICING INNOVATIONS TO COMBAT VAWG

- *Witnesses said there is a need for consistency across and within jurisdictions in policies and laws that address VAWG.*
- *Witnesses said there's a need for better police training that is trauma-informed and includes digital-literacy.*
- *Witnesses recommended equality of access to services for young women and girls facing violence.*
- *Witnesses stressed the need for the federal government to take leadership and coordinate provincial, territorial and municipal justice responses to VAWG.*

In the process of seeking help or protection from the Canadian justice system, many witnesses told heart breaking stories of how victims were (1) not taken seriously, or victim-blamed, (2) revictimized, (3) not informed, or badly supported, (4) told their case was unfounded¹⁵ or that charges were dropped against the accused.

Those examples are in part responsible for the low reporting and conviction rates. The criminal legal system and policing failed so many women and girls in Canada.

Elisabeth Gendron¹⁶ said that it was essential that members from all parties turn their attention to the problem of judicial inequality in the area of family law – where women sometimes experience spousal violence and the law is not drafted well enough to

¹⁴ FEWO, *Evidence*, March 7, 2017 (Alana Robert).

¹⁵ Recently, The Globe and Mail also revealed alarming numbers and deep flaws at every step of the police investigation of sexual assault claims, including the fact that 1 out of 5 cases were declared unfounded and closed. For more information: Robyn Doolittle, Globe and Mail, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/investigations/unfounded-sexual-assault-canada-main/article33891309/>

¹⁶ Élisabeth Gendron, a delegate from the Daughters of the Vote initiative, is a third-year student in the University of Montreal's Faculty of Law. Élisabeth is a proofreader for her faculty's student newspaper and the National Observatory on Language Rights. A native of Trois-Rivières and civil law specialist, Élisabeth is currently interning with the Juripop legal clinic in order to improve access to justice for all citizens. She advocates for gender equality in the workplace.

protect them – so we can work together to resolve it and ensure that our justice system truly represents and reflects the interests of all Canadians, including women.¹⁷

The majority of women’s front line organizations said there should be equal treatment of sexual assault victims across the country, which is not the case now in Canada.

In the Committee report, despite a number of recommendations aimed at these problems, none are designed to coordinate the provinces, territories, municipalities and the federal government together to ensure uniform reporting and an investigative regime that is trauma-informed and supportive of survivors.

Therefore, the New Democratic Party recommends that:

- **That the federal government lead National coordination around policing and in the justice system to ensure equal access to protection and justice across the country for victims of VAWG, including access to consistent services, policies and laws across and within jurisdictions.**
- **That the federal government develop a national strategy to ensure consistent police standards for**
 - **a) training in digital literacy and**
 - **b) response to cyber violence.**

FEDERAL LEADERSHIP ON EDUCATION TO END VAWG

According to testimony at Committee, cyber violence education is failing. Access to digital literacy is limited and depends on what province you live in. Some schools are leading the way in putting a lot of emphasis on cyber violence, but it isn’t uniform. Multiple witnesses also called for national leadership and the need for country-wide coordination for the implementation of a comprehensive sex education curriculum, not based on fear or abstinence, but on the notion of consent, including Tessa Hill, a then grade 9, that successfully pushed for consent to be a topic in the new Ontario Health Curriculum and now wants it to be a national.¹⁸

Therefore, the New Democratic Party recommends that:

- **That the federal government lead National coordination and education campaign to include consent and digital literacy in the education system to end violence against women and girls.**

SUPPORTING FRONTLINE VAWG SERVICES AND COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

Canada is also failing its international commitments when it comes to adequate funding. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which Canada is part of require states to “Allocate adequate resources within the government budget and mobilize community

¹⁷ FEWO, *Evidence*, March 7, 2017 (Elisabeth Gendron).

¹⁸ *Evidence*, November 30, 2016, 1700 (Tessa Hill, Co-founder, We Give Consent).

resources for activities related to the elimination of violence against women, including resources for the implementation of plans of action at all appropriate levels¹⁹;

Status of Women's Women's Program only provides time-limited funding to organizations for projects aiming to address violence against women and girls.

The former Minister of Status of Women, the Honourable Patty Hajdu proved that allocation of resources is not adequate:

I can't tell you how many times since I've been elected that I've been asked by my own municipality if Shelter House will now get core federal funding. In fact, the answer is sadly no, because we're not in the business of providing operational funding to programs on the ground. [...]sustainable funding is always a challenge.²⁰

Women organizations have been suffering for decades from the lack of appropriate operating funding.²¹ According to Farrah Khan, "when we don't have adequate funding, what we're telling people is that violence doesn't matter, that our bodies don't matter. Right now, that's consistently how it feels. I know that's because of the past 10 years of our last government."²²

In post-secondary institutions that means that it is "much more difficult to ensure that students get the kinds of supports that they want when numerous shelters and services, rape crisis centres, have to close their doors. There's a huge federal role for that. Target money to fund community organizations that can assist universities."²³

The lack of operational shelter funding, lack of funds to hire new staff, and inadequate funding to create enough spaces can prevent women from leaving their abuser, according to Mélanie Sarroino:

"The woman had been waiting for months and it took all her courage just to pick up the phone and call. I'm trying to send her to one of my centres, and I know very well that when she calls the centre, she'll get a message on the answering machine saying that they will call her back, but presently they have a **six-month waiting list**. You can guarantee that woman will never call back and will live with whatever she is going through for a very long time. That's the first impact".²⁴

¹⁹United Nations, "The Beijing Platform for Action on Violence Against Women," September 1995, <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/violence.htm>.

²⁰ *Evidence*, March 10, 2016, 1600, (Hon. Patty Hajdu, Minister of Status of Women).

²¹ Many witnesses including Cathy Grant, Harvey Bate (New Leaf Program) and Mélanie Sarroino (Liaison and Promotion Officer from the Regroupement québécois des Centres d'aide et de lutte contre les agressions à caractère sexuel) said that their funding has been stagnant for years, in their case it has been in 29 and 10 years respectively.

²² *Evidence*, October 24, 2016, 1600 (Farrah Khan, Sexual Violence Support and Education Coordinator, Ryerson University, As an individual).

²³ *Evidence*, October 19, 2016, 1655 (Lori Chambers, Professor, Lakehead University, As an individual)

²⁴ *Evidence*, November 14, 2016, 1640 (Mélanie Sarroino, Liaison and Promotion Officer, Regroupement québécois des Centres d'aide et de lutte contre les agressions à caractère sexuel).

There was a consensus amongst witnesses:

- Funding is not adequate for the work that this country is asking women's, front-line organizations and shelters to play
 - Lack of access to long-term, predictable and operational funding is one of the biggest problem for organizations
- Recent domestic violence shelter funding announcements are highly inadequate for Indigenous women, and won't meet the long-standing need:
 - 70% of Inuit communities do not have access to a safe shelter: approximately 15 shelters now for the 53 Inuit communities across Inuit Nunangat
 - Only a network now of 41 shelters on reserve across Canada for 600 communities, yet new investment will only be for five new shelters over the next five years ²⁵
- Disabled women are not close to the funding they need, given they are suffering amongst the highest rate of violence. Yet funding has been reduced each year.
- Many community organizations don't even have that capacity to prepare grant applications or it is taking precious workers' time away that they could spend helping more victims and survivors of violence
- There aren't enough resources or support for victims of cyber violence.
 - Without stable operational funding, and it's difficult to fund online hate responses

We have seen a consensus from witnesses that ending violence against women is limited by lack of federal funding. Long-term, stable operational funding would mean frontline organizations can:

- hire desperately needed staff
- overcome shortage of shelter spaces
- improve intervention capacity and service delivery
- shorten waiting lists

To accomplish those goals, the New Democratic Party recommends:

- **That the federal government provide consistent operational funding for front-line community organizations working to protect victims and end violence against women and girls.**

CONCLUSION

The New Democratic Party believes, as Ann Decter of YWCA Canada says, that "There's always room for federal leadership on violence against women, and I think it goes a long way to setting a national standard and an attitude. It sets a standard for governments to meet across the country."²⁶

²⁵ According to Oxfam, a number far too low to serve the needs of over 600 First Nation communities. For more information : <http://womensrights.oxfam.ca/>

²⁶ *Evidence*, September 28, 2016, 1600 (Ann Decter, Director, Advocacy and Public Policy, YWCA Canada).

The federal government needs to get back into the business of supporting community organizations that are working for social justice.

It would be a national shame for the federal government to not to deliver on its promise to make the country safer for women and girls.

We urge the Canadian government to demonstrate leadership, by walking the talk, and dedicating the political and financial support, resources and funding to meet Canada's longstanding international and constitutional commitments to make a safer country, where women and girls live free of violence. It's beyond time to put words into action.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the New Democratic Party, March 20, 2017