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Chair

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc

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• (0845)

[Translation]

The Chair (Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP)):
Good morning, everyone.

I always go by the BlackBerry time because our clock is a few minutes slow. As we have many guests today, I would like to start on time, especially to commend and thank those who are punctual.

Welcome to the 37th meeting of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women. The committee is continuing its consideration of promising practices to prevent violence against women. This is our second meeting on this study.

We are very pleased to welcome Justine Akman, Director, Immigration Branch, Department of Citizenship and Immigration. We are also hearing from Susan MacPhee, Acting Director General, Immigration Branch.

Joining us from the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development are Andrew Beynon, Director General, Community Opportunities Branch, Lands and Economic Development, and Marla Israel, Director General, Social Policy and Programs Branch, Education and Social Development Programs and Partnerships Sector.

From Public Safety Canada, we have Angela Connidis, Director General, Crime Prevention, Corrections and Criminal Justice Directorate. Joining her is Kimberly Lavoie, Director.

From the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, we are hearing from Tyler Bates, Director, National Aboriginal Policing and Crime Prevention Services.

I am pleased to welcome everyone.

We will begin. Each of the four groups will have 10 minutes to make a presentation. Afterwards, committee members will ask question.

I would like to start with Susan MacPhee, who has 10 minutes for her presentation

Ms. MacPhee, go ahead.

Ms. Susan MacPhee (Acting Director General, Immigration Branch, Department of Citizenship and Immigration): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

As you mentioned, my name is Susan MacPhee, and I am the Acting Director General of the Immigration Branch, in the Strategic

Policy and Programs Sector of Citizenship and Immigration Canada, or CIC.

[English]

I am pleased to appear before you on the topic of promising practices to prevent violence against women.

From our perspective at CIC, we have observed that immigrant women may be vulnerable to violence in particular ways. I can assure you that CIC takes the prevention of violence against women very seriously. To this end the department has taken several measures—regulatory, administrative, and other—to address violence against women, and family violence in general, in the context of immigration.

Regulatory amendments have made it more difficult for people convicted of crimes, bodily harm against members of their family or other violent crimes, to sponsor any family-class member to come to Canada.

CIC also brought in new measures in recent years to deter foreign nationals from entering into marriages of convenience to gain permanent resident status in Canada, including two-year conditional permanent resident status for certain sponsors' spouses, common-law and conjugal partners.

CIC is aware of concerns that conditional status in Canada could increase the vulnerability of sponsored immigrant spouses and partners who are in abusive relationships. With this in mind an exception to this requirement has been put in place to respond to instances where there is evidence of abuse whether the abuse is physical, sexual, psychological, or financial in nature. The exception for abuse would also cover forced marriage cases where there is evidence to demonstrate that abuse was present during the two-year period. The exception also applies in situations where there's evidence of neglect, such as failure to provide the necessities of life.

In consultation with several groups, including women's organizations, CIC developed a process to allow newly sponsored spouses and partners, who are affected by the conditional permanent resident measure and who are victims of abuse or neglect, to come forward without having to worry about their status in Canada being at risk.

●(0850)

[Translation]

CIC also publishes a brochure with important information for sponsored spouses or partners. That document explains what conditional permanent residence means for them, and where they can turn to for help if they are being abused or neglected by their sponsor or their family.

The brochure states in no uncertain terms that abuse is not tolerated in Canada, that sponsored spouses don't have to remain in an abusive situation, that getting help is not shameful and that confidential help is available by phone, in person and online.

[English]

As you are aware, in the October 2013 Speech from the Throne the government committed to ensuring that early and forced marriages and other harmful practices do not occur on Canadian soil. CIC has been working on improving its operational guidance to visa officers to detect and manage forced marriage cases, taking particular care not to put victims at risk in the process.

In addition, the government has recently introduced Bill S-7, the zero tolerance for barbaric cultural practices act. This legislation would help provide more protection and support for vulnerable immigrants, particularly women and girls. One of the bill's proposals is to render all temporary and permanent residents inadmissible if they practise polygamy in Canada. The bill would also strengthen marriage laws and further protect victims of early or forced marriage by criminalizing certain conduct related to these practices.

Additionally, private members' motion, M-505, sponsored by member of Parliament Stella Ambler, calls on the government to take action on forced and non-consensual marriage by banning proxy, telephone, and fax marriages for immigration purposes. The motion was recently debated in the House of Commons and was supported by the government.

Immigration is a powerful force for women, empowering them to succeed through access to educational, employment, and economic opportunities in Canada, opportunities that could have been limited or non-existent in their countries of origin.

[Translation]

CIC officers are trained to assess the legitimacy of relationships at the visa application stage. Despite our best efforts and intentions, the reality is that some immigrant women can and do face violence or abuse after they arrive, just as Canadian-born women do.

[English]

This can happen whether women come to Canada under the spousal sponsorship program, as economic immigrants, or as refugee claimants.

Under our settlement program, CIC provides funding to a variety of organizations that offer programs and services that respond to the specific needs of permanent residents, including immigrant women and their families who may find themselves in vulnerable situations. In 2012-13 more than 200,000 people used CIC's settlement services. Women made up approximately 60% of that number and

close to 70% of those accessing CIC-funded language training classes.

Service-providing organizations often represent newcomers' first contact after arrival and provide culturally sensitive support and links to community and social services. CIC settlement services are flexible and designed to meet the diverse needs of newcomers, including women, who may be facing multiple barriers such as low literacy skills, lack of child-minding, or limited transportation.

Overseas, newcomers can access programs, as well, that help them understand their rights and responsibilities in Canada and provide detailed labour market information so they can make informed decisions upon their arrival. Once in Canada, women also have access to a range of employment-related supports that help them build their skills to enter the workforce and/or advance their careers.

CIC recently completed a call for proposals for expanded pre-arrival services, which included the prevention of family and gender-based violence as a funding priority. Following consultations with the settlement sector, CIC is in the process of producing a departmental publication that will be available in multiple languages and formats, and will provide victims of violence and abuse the resources and information necessary to get help.

CIC-funded organizations provide a targeted program for women. For example, women's-only language classes for immigrant and refugee women cover issues such as family violence, spousal abuse, women's rights, legal rights and responsibilities, and health care, and include bridging or referral to other available services in their communities.

Support services also exist in the area of crisis counselling, in which organizations assist women through short-term non-clinical counselling and refer them to a variety of local resources, including police, shelters, and clinical counsellors, in addition to providing immediate assistance to individuals in violent situations.

Finally, in line with the "Discover Canada" citizenship study guide, the latest version of the "Welcome to Canada" guide states that female genital mutilation, honour-based crimes, and forced marriages will not be tolerated in this country.

●(0855)

[Translation]

Madam Chair, while CIC has taken a number of measures in recent years, we are open to exploring other ways to address family violence and protect the rights of vulnerable immigrant women.

[English]

We look forward to receiving the findings of this committee's study, which will further inform our efforts in this area.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak to you today. We'd be happy to answer any questions that you may have.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you.

I now yield the floor to Ms. Israel for 10 minutes.

Ms. Marla Israel (Director General, Social Policy and Programs Branch, Education and Social Development Programs and Partnerships Sector, Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Thank you, Madam Chair.

[English]

Honourable members, I wish to thank you for inviting Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada to appear before this committee.

I also want to introduce my colleague, Andrew Beynon, director general, community opportunities branch, who's here to answer any questions you may have regarding legislation on matrimonial real property.

I'm so pleased to be here on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women to provide you with information on Aboriginal Affairs' efforts to address violence against aboriginal women and girls, and of course, I'm pleased to answer questions you may have regarding our programs following this presentation.

As you are no doubt aware, family violence is an issue with very serious and far-reaching consequences impacting women, children, families, and communities. The causes of family violence and remedies to prevent it are exceedingly complex and require partnerships and the active involvement of professionals, communities, and governments.

Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada provides a range of programming to address issues associated with family violence. First and foremost, our investments are directed toward protecting women and children from violence.

[Translation]

The department's Family Violence Prevention Program funds the operation of a network of 41 shelters serving women, children and families living on reserve. Core shelter services include a safe and respectful residential environment, the provision of nutritious meals, crisis intervention, individual case planning and referral to other social supports.

In 2012-13, approximately 4,465 women and 2,700 children accessed services in the 41 shelters. In areas where there are no shelters on reserve, first nations can access provincial shelters in order to find a safe haven from situations of violence.

Shelter expenditures have been gradually increasing year after year. Five new shelters have been built since 2007. In addition, the department has been providing the 41-shelter network with a top-up of \$500,000 annually to address issues related to cost of living increases.

• (0900)

[English]

The department also invests in prevention efforts by providing funding for projects aimed at providing information on the impact of

violence, raising awareness about violence prevention efforts in communities, and offering training supports. Prevention, of course, is a multi-layered, shared responsibility and involves multiple partnerships with the RCMP, public safety, public health, health services, and other partners, each responsible for an important section of those prevention efforts.

Our prevention projects are proposal driven and community based. They aim to promote community awareness about the impact of violence and help reduce the incidence of family violence in order to support a more secure environment for families living on reserve. Examples of community prevention projects include public outreach and awareness campaigns, conferences and workshops, stress and anger management seminars, and community-needs assessments. In 2012-13, a total of 249 proposal-based prevention projects were funded by the program and delivered by first nations to respond to community needs.

[Translation]

In recent years, the department has been working on approaches to distribute prevention funds more strategically by encouraging and leveraging partnerships in the communities and strengthening linkages to ensure that prevention projects reach a broader audience.

I would like to share an example of a successful prevention initiative that the department recently funded.

[English]

In Newfoundland and Labrador, the Miawpukek first nations community family and youth support program provided theme-based sessions to children and youth to raise awareness of family violence. This program involved a family violence support worker, a mental health social worker, and a special needs coordinator at the community school.

One component of the program, healthy relationships school, taught youth between grades 7 and 12 how to deal with unhealthy relationships in their lives. The program also had anti-bullying workshop sessions for children ranging from pre-kindergarten through grade 6, delivered by mental health social workers and members of the RCMP.

We see this example as a best practice as it is inclusive of professionals, community based, and aimed at the vulnerable segments of the population. More importantly these types of projects continue to raise awareness as children progress into their teenage and young adult years, which is an important factor in changing attitudes towards violence.

In 2013-14, in order to enhance linkages between protection and prevention services, on-reserve shelters were added as eligible recipients for prevention dollars under the program. This allows shelters to offer prevention activities tailored to the needs of women seeking shelter services. The department is also undertaking shelter visits to assess capacity, address challenges, and develop plans where needed. In addition, under the first nations child and family services program, the department supports the delivery of culturally appropriate prevention and protection services for first nations children and families.

In 2007 the first nations child and family services program began shifting to an enhanced prevention-focused approach geared to working with families in at-risk situations to address issues in the family before there's an escalation and shelter services could become necessary. Measures include working to improve prevention and parental supports, working with extended families to stabilize the situation, and working with social workers to ensure other services and supports can become available.

Another key element that works to solidify rights for women living on reserve was the introduction of the Family Homes on Reserves and Matrimonial Interests or Rights Act, which came into force on December 16, 2013. This act provides basic rights and protections to individuals on reserve regarding the family home or other matrimonial interests or rights in the event of a relationship breakdown or the death of a spouse or common-law partner. The act sets out provisions for the enactment of first nation laws respecting on-reserve matrimonial real property.

The act also provides for provisional federal rules that will come into force December 16, 2014 to fill the legislative gap in the absence of a first nation's own laws. It will also provide protection for individuals living on reserve in situations of family violence.

Moving forward, it will be important to continue improving the coordination of violence prevention and protection efforts by working in partnership across federal organizations, with provinces and territories, and through the leadership of aboriginal communities and organizations. We understand the important task that is at hand and are committed to working collaboratively and seamlessly with our partners to address violence within communities.

I hope and trust that the information I provided will help inform this important task you are undertaking. I thank you so much for your time.

• (0905)

[Translation]

The Chair: Ms. Israel, thank you very much for your presentation.

I now yield the floor to Mrs. Connidis for 10 minutes.

Ms. Angela Connidis (Director General, Crime Prevention, Corrections and Criminal Justice Directorate, Public Safety Canada): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Members of the committee, good morning.

Kimberly Lavoie and I are very pleased to be here today to talk about the programs and initiatives that Public Safety Canada has developed to build safer communities and improve the lives of women and girls.

I will briefly outline the department's initiatives and will then give you more information on a promising practice implemented through the Action Plan to Address Family Violence and Violent Crimes Against Aboriginal Women and Girls.

[English]

Women and girls live in families and communities and our work at the Department of Public Safety focuses on increasing community safety and ensuring that these are safe environments for them. These

initiatives fall into four main areas: crime prevention; supporting victims of crime; combatting human trafficking, sexual exploitation and abuse; and developing aboriginal community safety plans.

With respect to crime prevention, Public Safety's public national crime prevention strategy provides time-limited funding to communities and organizations to implement and evaluate crime prevention interventions that have proven successful in other jurisdictions. They are focused on four main priority areas: first, children, youth, and young adults who are at risk of becoming involved in the criminal justice system; second, communities that are experiencing high-priority crime issues such as drugs, gangs, weapon-related crime, hate crime and bullying; third, high-risk offenders reintegrating into communities; and finally, aboriginal communities.

In fiscal year 2013-14, the national crime prevention strategy funded 101 projects through a number of different funds. An example of a successful crime prevention intervention supported by Public Safety is the program Strengthening the Spirit: Building a comprehensive response to family violence in aboriginal communities. The program targeted aboriginal families at high risk of violent behaviour from three first nation communities surrounding the city of Calgary. Its objective was to reduce the incidence of domestic violence in families, reduce the risk of violence for children, and support the healing and wellness of families. A total of 34 treatment groups were held and a majority of participants were women. Among the 47% of participants who fully completed the program, there was a 6% self-reported rate of reoffending whereas the rate for those who did not complete the program was 34%. The total cost to implement the program was approximately \$700,000 and 71% of that was funded by the national crime prevention strategy. This program continues to run in all of the sites in which it was piloted.

With respect to supporting victims, Public Safety Canada houses the national office for victims, a central resource that offers information and referrals to victims who interact with the Correctional Service of Canada and the Parole Board of Canada. It also provides input on policy and legislative initiatives, education about victims' issues for members of the criminal justice system, and networking and support to victims in their interactions with the criminal justice system.

As well, the Minister of Public Safety co-sponsored with the Minister of Justice the Canadian victims bill of rights, which will enshrine the right of victims to information about the offender, protection from the offender, participation in the criminal justice process including during court and parole hearings, and restitution. It has also created the remedial process for breaches of these rights. This legislation is intended to assist all victims of crime and provide them with a more effective voice in the criminal justice system.

With respect to human trafficking, in June 2012, the Minister of Public Safety launched the national action plan to combat human trafficking. This action plan has a four pillar approach that consolidates efforts by focusing on the four Ps.

● (0910)

First is the prevention of trafficking by enhancing training of our police, border agents, and other front-line workers so that they recognize the signs of human trafficking, and by raising awareness among Canadians and then working with communities to identify people and places most at risk.

It also offers protection and assistance to victims of human trafficking by increasing financial support for victims' services and identifying and protecting domestic and foreign nationals in Canada who are vulnerable to trafficking, including females aged 15 to 21.

It helps in the prosecution of offenders by strengthening the laws within our criminal justice system, providing specialized training and education for prosecutors and law enforcement, and improving intelligence collection and collaboration. To help achieve this, the government launched a law enforcement team to conduct human trafficking investigations.

Finally, it works in partnership with stakeholders to build on existing policies and tools, to ensure a comprehensive and coordinated approach, and to promote strong research and better information sharing to improve our methods of collecting, tracking, and reporting on data related to human trafficking. The Government of Canada is investing more than \$25 million over four years to implement this plan.

I'd like to turn to our work on community safety plans in aboriginal communities. This is something I'm very excited about. As part of the government's action plan to address family violence and violent crimes against aboriginal women and girls, Public Safety will expand its successful initiative of working with aboriginal communities both on and off reserve across Canada to develop community safety plans. The action plan, as you know, is built on three pillars: preventing violence, supporting victims, and protecting aboriginal women and girls. Community safety plans support the first pillar, preventing violence.

The driver for Public Safety's approach is that many aboriginal communities do not have the capacity to work collectively to identify and address their safety needs. This leads either to no effort to improve safety or to crime prevention investments that do not target the real problems. The objective of this program is to support communities in developing community safety plans that define the risks that lead to crime and victimization, build on existing strengths, and identify gaps in responding to those risks.

The community safety plans serve as a blueprint to address the root causes of victimization and help communities determine what resources are available within the community and to more effectively target external resources, such as federal or provincial programming. Funding is not given to the community itself but is directed to providing training and capacity building to mobilize the community to find solutions to their safety issues. Public Safety reaches out to communities to determine their interest. These will include communities in regions the RCMP's analysis has identified as

having a high incidence of violent crime perpetrated against women and girls.

Once the community's leadership has agreed to participate in this process and created a community core group to promote positive change, a trained aboriginal facilitator delivers a series of workshops to build skill sets and identify gaps and solutions. Ultimately, they will develop a safety plan that outlines an integrated response to addressing the causes of victimization and responds to community safety issues.

This builds on an initiative that was first funded by the Government of Canada in 2010. Since then, 53 communities, including three urban centres, have participated in mobilization workshops where community members discuss needs and resources. Ten of these communities have developed targeted safety plans. Results suggest that this approach supports aboriginal communities to address issues in a more comprehensive way. It allows communities to take ownership of issues and potential solutions and fully participate in the government's response.

● (0915)

Many aboriginal women grow up in marginalized situations without support networks as a result of difficult circumstances at home and in their communities. In some communities violence has become normalized, creating a sense of hopelessness that often seems inescapable. While not specifically targeted at women and children, by working with these communities to build their capacity to develop safe communities, we will reduce the number of aboriginal women going missing, being murdered, or being victims of domestic violence.

We attribute the success to date to the fact that this process utilizes an integrated, comprehensive approach to move communities from fixing problems to building communities into civil and sustainable societies that build upon the strengths and gifts of the people in each unique community. It is not a one-size-fits-all approach, and the strength lies in the ability to allow communities to determine their own priorities and support them to find ways of moving forward using a strength-based approach.

Public Safety will continue to work with partners at all levels of government to continue to support the development of community safety plans: police, the justice system, and most importantly aboriginal families, communities and organizations.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you.

I now yield the floor to Superintendent Bates for 10 minutes.

Superintendent Tyler Bates (Director, National Aboriginal Policing and Crime Prevention Services, Royal Canadian Mounted Police): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I also want to thank the honourable members of the committee.

[English]

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in your study on promising practices to prevent violence against women.

As director of the RCMP's national aboriginal policing and crime prevention services, I'm pleased to discuss some of the initiatives under way both nationally and provincially to help address this important issue.

Much of the RCMP's efforts to prevent violence against women are guided by the recent operational overview of missing and murdered aboriginal women completed earlier this year. The review provided a wealth of information on cases of missing and murdered aboriginal women and revealed a number of vulnerability factors associated with violent victimization. We're now in phase 2 of this initiative, applying the information learned from the research to direct our prevention efforts. Using RCMP occurrence statistics, we've identified communities most vulnerable to violence against women, and we're focusing our initial efforts within these communities.

We know that the underlying factors associated with violent victimization of women fall within the mandate of multiple departments within several levels of government, and we're initiating phase 2 by bringing together these federal partners, detachment commanders from vulnerable communities, community leadership, RCMP crime prevention specialists from across the country, in a workshop in Prince Albert later this year—December, in fact. The objective of this initial meeting is to share the police perspective with federal partners, identify programming and service delivery gaps, and discuss new opportunities and best practices.

It's anticipated that subsequent meetings at the provincial and local level will follow this national meeting. Ultimately, the RCMP is asking detachment commanders in the most vulnerable communities to develop long-term action plans and partnership with their communities to help reduce levels of violence against women. Public safety's community mobilization, community safety planning process is being extended to the vulnerable communities to mobilize community support, develop capacity, and generate commitment to this planning process. This is an example of the integration of our federal approach in supporting the most vulnerable communities.

Beyond our focused efforts in the most vulnerable communities, RCMP initiatives to counter violence against women span a broad continuum, from education and awareness to focused intervention and crime reduction. At the national level the RCMP is working to increase awareness in a number of ways.

For example, recently in collaboration with the Native Women's Association of Canada and the Assembly of First Nations, we distributed posters focused specifically on the issue of relationship violence, urging those who are silent in those situations to speak to police and bring those situations forward, reminding them that there are support services and that there is assistance for those in crisis.

We're also finalizing a public service announcement encouraging women to speak out on the issue of intimate partner violence and to report incidents to the police. We're planning a second public service announcement targeting men and boys to engage them in changing societal attitudes and behaviours.

RCMP members are actively raising awareness within schools, sensitizing youth to issues of gender-based violence. The RCMP Centre for Youth Crime Prevention website provides numerous topic-based lesson plans, self-assessments, presentations, videos, and fact sheets that are accessible by front-line police officers, teachers, and others working with youth in the classroom.

Our innovative RCMP Talks series is an interactive video conference session that brings classrooms together from across the country to dialogue with experts and social service providers on issues that are of importance to them. To date, several RCMP Talks sessions have focused on the issue of cyberbullying and bullying, and we're currently refreshing the RCMP's national youth strategy to identify future topics for RCMP Talks, specifically working to integrate relationship violence into this series.

We know from research that much of the violence experienced by women is committed by somebody they know, frequently someone from a current or previous intimate relationship. RCMP efforts to address violence against women therefore include a significant focus on relationships and family violence. Under the federal family violence initiative, the RCMP administers a funding program to help develop community-based projects supported by our detachments to help address family violence. The \$450,000 envelope funds projects up to a value of \$25,000 apiece. In small communities this funding can have a significant impact.

An example is the Five Pillars of Freedom seminar in Saskatchewan. Funded under the family violence initiative, the workshop empowers victims of abuse to stop the cycle of violence towards themselves and their children.

● (0920)

In 2013 and 2014, six seminars were held across the province, including several in communities identified as the most vulnerable. Registration for all six seminars exceeded capacity, with more than 400 people participating, surpassing the projected number of 120. Post-event surveys indicate high levels of satisfaction and that transparency and trust have developed, creating a ripple effect within the affected communities that encourages open dialogue for all who have been touched by domestic violence.

Family violence initiative funding also helps support YWCA Canada in developing online resources for family violence support workers working in rural and remote communities, where access to criminal justice resources and programs is limited. The online resource includes modules in key areas of the law and highlights barriers to justice for women from remote communities. The Violence Against Women Legal Information Resource was launched May 29, 2014. YWCA Canada is active in monitoring traffic to the website and will promote and update the site as opportunities arise.

On the investigational side, the RCMP's resources and response to cases of family violence are governed by policy and differ from the responses to other violent crimes in several important ways. In family violence cases, investigations must be built around evidence that can stand on its own, as victims of violence will frequently recant their stories. If evidence exists to proceed with charges, charges must be pursued, regardless of whether or not the victim recants.

Secondly, the police priority is victim safety rather than offender accountability. Information on risk is gathered the moment a call is received. The use of standardized risk assessment tools is helping to bring consistency to the determination of risk levels. The information gathered in the risk assessment is used in a number of ways, such as making decisions whether to detain or release an accused and developing safety plans.

A victim safety plan is critical to the management of family violence files, identifying safe accommodations, available victim supports, relevant and enforceable release and bail conditions, and communication plans should conditions of release change. In high-risk cases, partners such as crown counsel, corrections, probation, child and family services, transition houses, and many others assist in safety planning, victim support, and offender accountability. Training and online resources available to RCMP officers at the national and divisional levels ensure that domestic violence investigators are current on best practices, legislation, policy, and provincial protocols for the coordination of high-risk cases.

Discussions on violence against women must also include the concept of family-based honour crime. To increase RCMP understanding and capacity to investigate such crimes, we're currently finalizing an online course specifically on honour-based violence and forced marriage. It's anticipated that this course will be available to police across the country in the coming months.

The issue of violence against women is receiving significant attention in the RCMP, but we face a number of challenges. Differing provincial and territorial approaches and civil measures can complicate cases crossing jurisdictional boundaries. Privacy legislation can restrict interagency partnerships and protocols for intervening with an offender and providing victim support. New immigrant communities represent additional challenges due to cultural differences and language barriers, and technology is bringing new forms of cyber-violence.

But we are confident that we are moving in the right direction with increased police training, focused and coordinated efforts to address the most vulnerable communities, and education and awareness initiatives to change societal attitudes and behaviours.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to your work by discussing some of our initiatives. I look forward to the results of your study. We would be pleased to respond to any questions that you have today.

Thank you.

● (0925)

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you very much, Superintendent Bates.

We will start the question round with Ms. Truppe for seven minutes.

[English]

Mrs. Susan Truppe (London North Centre, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you, everyone, for being here today. It's so nice to have such a large group. I'm sure we have many questions, and our time goes really quickly.

I'm going to start with CIC and immigration, with Susan MacPhee.

You mentioned that you had a call for proposals for expanded pre-arrival services. Has that expired, or can people still apply?

Ms. Susan MacPhee: I'd like to defer to my colleague, Justine Akman.

Ms. Justine Akman (Director, Immigration Branch, Department of Citizenship and Immigration): Thank you.

No, the deadline has passed.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Are there any current projects out there about which we could tell the organizations that help women in all the ridings across Canada, projects that are perhaps ongoing? Or is there one that was just called that would help?

Ms. Justine Akman: The settlement services that CIC provides are ongoing. It's a program that the government invests \$600 million in per year across the country.

The people who are eligible are generally permanent residents. Citizens are not eligible, but permanent residents and refugees are eligible for the program. There's a huge range of different projects, and many of them are focused on supports for immigrant women.

There are some courses given just to women and some of them are very focused specifically on violence against women. Most of these services are through grants and contributions funding, so most of them are provided through non-governmental organizations across the country. Some of them also provide economic supports for immigrant women so that they have more economic independence, which helps obviously with situations of violence as well.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Can organizations apply for the funding to help these individual people?

Ms. Justine Akman: Yes, exactly.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Right. Okay, and that's ongoing. Great. Thank you.

Then back to you again, Susan. You also mentioned that they can access programs and policies overseas before they come here, read about it, and see if that's for them basically.

What if they don't access that and they don't look it up and then they get here and maybe they don't go to settlement services, they just get here and go home? How are they made aware, or how can we make them aware of things that are not tolerated here in Canada if they haven't accessed those pre-services before they got here?

Ms. Susan MacPhee: That would be unfortunate, given all of the effort that's gone into reaching beyond our own shores to provide services before the people come to Canada, as you say, to give an understanding of what lies ahead, and then all of the investment that was made in settlement services, and so on. They would be missing out on something that obviously the vast majority of women are taking advantage of, over 200,000 persons included.

Justine, is there anything more that you'd like to add about that? Once they're here, what other services beyond our own settlement services might be available?

Ms. Justine Akman: I'll start by saying that in terms of pre-arrival services, the government is increasing the investment so that 50% of economic applicants will have access to those services, and 75% of refugees. So that will capture a lot of people.

When they get here, yes, there are settlement services, but there are also publications available, like the "Welcome to Canada" guide. Then, if they apply for citizenship, there's the "Discover Canada" citizenship guide that mentions all of these different issues.

If they come through the family class, there's specific information on violence against women as well as that information. We are reaching out to them in a number of ways through our own departments.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: You're doing your best.

Ms. Justine Akman: And supporting obviously what other federal government departments do in this area.

• (0930)

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Thank you.

Just very quickly, sort of a yes or no, are there projects that engage men and boys specifically with immigration, like when they get here, or is it just..?

Ms. Justine Akman: Specifically for them?

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Yes, because a lot of times that's the initial problem. Maybe that doesn't even fall in your department; we'll ask the other ones too. I was just curious.

Ms. Justine Akman: I'd have to look into the details. There's a vast array of projects out there.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: If there is, maybe just send it off to us.

Ms. Justine Akman: Yes.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Thank you.

My next question is for Superintendent Bates. You mentioned that a high amount of violence is from someone they know. I think I also read that in the report that you produced, and again it was a high percentage. I'm wondering if you remember the percentage, but it was a high percentage of family members, I think, family members or people who they knew who were committing a lot of the crimes. I don't even know if it was over 80%. Do you remember the stat on that?

Supt Tyler Bates: Yes. When we look specifically at female homicidal violence, over 90%—in fact 92% for the non-aboriginal women, and 93% for aboriginal women—experienced violence from an intimate partner or spouse, family members, or acquaintances. In the overall totality of family violence, only 8% of the homicides were stranger-perpetrated acts.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: I don't know if I missed it, but is there a program or an initiative that you have that addresses men and boys?

Supt Tyler Bates: Certainly we have specific family violence initiatives that address men and boys. To give an example, one of the family violence initiatives that was funded for this coming year is a proposed camp, the Carrier Sekani Family Services warrior camp that will immerse, educate, and speak about cultural issues and the issue of violence against women and children. It will provide a cultural reminder to young men, as well as women, as to the inconsistency with cultural roots and this ongoing issue of women being victimized. This particular program is being delivered in one of the most vulnerable communities.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: If I can—

Supt Tyler Bates: Certainly, there are a number of others that speak to that and we are looking forward to some public service announcements as well that specifically target men and boys. That is something that is yet to come to fruition, but we're making efforts in that regard.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Good, that needs to be done.

Thank you.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Truppe. You always manage to ask your questions within the allotted seven minutes. That's good.

We will go to Mrs. Sellah, for seven minutes.

Mrs. Djaouida Sellah (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I also want to thank the witnesses who are here today. Your timing is perfect, as today is the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. We know that one in three women experiences violence in their lifetime.

Since Thursday, we have been considering various aspects of violence against women.

Forced marriage is a problem in Canada. According to the studies I have read, that problem affects more Canadian citizens than immigrants or refugees. The South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario is an organization that has been dealing with the issue of forced marriage for years. It identifies such marriages, supports its case with facts and defends victims. That organization recently carried out a study whose findings clearly indicate that the vast majority of victims of forced marriages are Canadian citizens. Those victims are likely from all cultural backgrounds, and not only from those discredited by the government's legislative measures, such as Bill S-7.

My colleague, Stella Ambler, moved a motion that seemingly addresses forced marriage. However, in reality, the motion would amend regulations on immigration and refugees to ban the use of proxy marriages as a means to spousal sponsorship. We are trying to understand why this bill uses a form of violence against women by making spousal sponsorship more difficult.

Deepa Mattoo of the South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario said that this motion was not based on any facts or statistics indicating a significant correlation between marriage by proxy and forced marriages.

● (0935)

The Chair: Mrs. Sellah, please ask your question.

Mrs. Djaouida Sellah: I would like to hear from the immigration representatives.

What do you have to say about Ms. Mattoo's statement?

Ms. Justine Akman: Thank you for the question.

[*English*]

As you are aware, the Government of Canada did support the motion of MP Ambler. At the moment, the government is in the process of examining how to implement the spirit of the motion. I'm not able to discuss the details of how it will actually be implemented.

The immigration system, in terms of the sponsorship of spouses, already has many methods of determining whether or not a relationship is bona fide or genuine. It is in that spirit that we're looking at the motion and what it will mean for the immigration system and the regulations.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: You have some time left, Mrs. Sellah.

Mrs. Djaouida Sellah: Okay.

I would like to draw your attention to an immigration holding centre in Laval, Quebec, that is no more than a prison where men, women and children are detained. For years, we have been hearing about human rights violations when children are detained in conditions that violate all international human rights standards.

Today, the passing of Bill C-31 would legalize the detention of children for a maximum period of one year without giving them access to health care, legal assistance or the protection of rights related to their status.

Can you tell the committee about the health status and well-being of women and children detained in federal immigration holding centres?

This question is for everyone. Can someone give us more information on the detention of children with their parents in institutions that lack services related to children's health and rights, as I just noted?

These seem to be difficult questions, don't they, Madam Chair?

The Chair: Yes.

Ms. MacPhee, go ahead.

Ms. Susan MacPhee: We can find some information for you.

The Chair: Great.

Ms. Susan MacPhee: The federal system is our concern. We can seek out information to provide you with an answer to your question.

The Chair: That would be greatly appreciated. You can send the response to the clerk, who will pass it on to the committee members.

The invitation has been extended. Following testimony, you can always send us further clarifications in response to questions asked by committee members.

Ms. Susan MacPhee: Thank you.

The Chair: Since there are a few seconds left, and I think Mrs. Sellah is finished, I will use the time to ask a question.

Last week, we heard from a number of representatives from various governments. We saw that many initiatives are very promising. There is a growing trend—either at Status of Women Canada or in other departments like yours—to fund projects instead of programs. Organizations often have to comply with project conditions.

Do you find that the funding is not always recurrent? Do you think this is a good way to proceed? In your opinion, is investment in a long-term program in excess of five years more beneficial in terms of promising methods for preventing violence against women?

This question is for anyone who wants to answer it.

Ms. Israel, go ahead.

● (0940)

Ms. Marla Israel: I will begin. That is an excellent question.

I think there should be a balance between the two. It is essential to provide programs for women and make those programs available. For instance, in my department, it is of key importance for programs to provide services to aboriginal women on reserve who need protection. That is essential.

I also think it is very important that funding be available for projects. Professional organizations and experts in the field should be involved. Those organizations could provide assistance and propose new methods and ways of thinking to prevent violence.

Even now, there is research out there that has given rise to completely new solutions, but those solutions must be tested to see what the results will be.

It is also important for us to share information amongst ourselves.

That is my opinion.

The Chair: Thank you very much. This will help us continue our deliberations. I rarely get involved in the discussion, so I appreciate your understanding.

Ms. O'Neill Gordon, this has not cut into your time. You still have seven minutes.

[*English*]

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon (Miramichi, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to thank you all for being here and for offering us such great advice and words of wisdom. Our committee is working very hard to accomplish our many focuses and objectives.

Prior to being elected to the Hill, I worked as a teacher with students on a reserve. I worked one on one with special needs children. I certainly congratulate you for the many programs you've put in place. I certainly see the need for these programs, as does anybody who works on a reserve or in any school.

Another thing I wanted to point out to you is something that you probably already know. I personally saw the work of the teachers and the RCMP and any of the adults who came into these schools and offered extra help and extra time. We need all of these services for the children.

One thing I would note is that students at an early age certainly look up to these people. They admire the RCMP. They admire any of us who are there for them, because they need this. They certainly do consider your words of advice as being very important. I think the young boys do, especially. We sometimes need to focus on young boys and try to get them on the right track so that they're not following in the same footsteps in terms of what's going on in their homes.

My first question is to the RCMP. As we all know, and we're very happy to see, the RCMP administers national crime prevention services. I'm wondering if you could please clarify for the committee what these services are, the ones you're the happiest with because of their success, the ones that seem to really benefit the children, and where you have seen these ones work as the best for their community.

Any of you can really answer that, but I was going to focus first on the RCMP.

• (0945)

Supt Tyler Bates: Thank you for your question.

Certainly there are myriad crime prevention services and supports to the front lines that are noteworthy. With respect to the work that's ongoing, I think I'll focus on what we're trying to achieve with respect to the work in what's been identified as the most vulnerable communities, the communities that have the highest levels of violence against women. Our efforts with respect to that will involve a multidisciplinary approach, clearly from numerous federal contributors.

But when I look at the police realm and specifically ways in which we can work to address violence and better the situation for youth who are affected by violence in those families, one specific program would be intervention and diversion strategies. Across the realm of policing there are a number of best practices relative to being responsive to youth at risk. Oftentimes youth who are caught up in familial violence and who experience that end up having encounters with the police and end up being youth who are in crisis and at risk. In terms of intervention and diversion models—the hub model, for example, and the START model in Manitoba—a number of them are recognized best practices. What they undertake, what they seek to do, is to identify what those risk factors are and try, from a collective community standpoint, to respond to what that youth needs when he's in that crisis.

If it's a specific issue surrounding familial violence, then it's making sure that as a community we respond to the risks at play. If there's a substance abuse issue, then it's diverting that youth to the appropriate resources that can support that youth and get him on the right track. I think historically this is a proper way to deal with things, a holistic way to assist youth who are in crisis. It doesn't serve a youth well to simply lay a criminal charge and not give consideration to the risk factors that are causing him to act out.

That's what we're trying to do. We're trying to back up our efforts on the prevention scale. In the meeting that's taking place in December in Prince Albert with the detachment commanders working in those most vulnerable communities, we will have subject matter experts represented from a variety of youth intervention and diversion programs who will speak about the merits of those programs and will assist them should they seek to implement those programs locally within their own communities. We're looking to expand on some of these recognized best practices that assist youth in crisis and gather that community round table to deal with those youth at risk in a manner that's responsive to their needs at that time.

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon: Thank you and I want to reiterate words of congratulations for the work that you are doing, as well as to say that these children need to feel that you are their friend from way back in the early ages so that they're not afraid to go to you with questions. That's what I like about seeing you in the schools, especially in the younger ages where they don't have all this negative attitude against you already. They have a very positive attitude and this can carry on with the idea that you're in the classroom.

My next question is for Marla Israel. Can you think of a best practice for education programs, social programs, or policies that can prevent violence against women in the work that you do as well?

Ms. Marla Israel: Thank you so much for the question.

I think, just generally speaking, my first observation is that from the standpoint of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, we're very mindful of initiatives that work from a prevention angle to early intervention. What does that mean for first nations, either living on or off reserve? I think the reason we place so much emphasis on that is the cultural components. One of the things that I've been most impressed about is work that takes place, let's say, from a broad-based perspective.

I can use the example of Three Eagle Wellness Society in Alberta, which is an initiative that's provided with funding from our department. It works to be able to offer life skills. It looks at experiences of violence from a trauma-based perspective. It works to involve individuals and families. We try to support, through our terms and conditions, any initiatives that are community-based, culturally appropriate, and that have the active involvement of women. Those are the types of initiatives that we see as best practices.

• (0950)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you. Your questions and answers are so interesting that I am losing track of time.

I now yield the floor to Ms. Duncan for seven minutes.

[English]

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to all for coming.

Most recently, I was in a correctional facility this summer and it was heartbreaking. The majority of women were aboriginal and they had suffered abuse. I'm going to ask, how many psychologists are on staff in the correctional institutions across Canada?

Ms. Angela Connidis: I will have to get the exact figure for you and I will provide it to the committee.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Have there been any cuts in the numbers of psychologists in the correctional institutions?

Ms. Angela Connidis: I can't confirm that. I don't think so. Mental health in corrections is a key priority right now, but I will have to confirm that and provide you with the figures.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: You'll table the numbers with the committee. Thank you.

Have there been any cuts in the number of hours in terms of psychologists in mental health counselling?

Ms. Angela Connidis: Once again, I will confirm that with you.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Thank you.

Continuing in that vein, what data do we have on the use of isolation in women's correctional institutions?

Ms. Angela Connidis: I will get back to you with the numbers on that as well.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: The Minister of Status of Women has a new family violence plan. Was your department consulted during the drafting of that plan?

Ms. Angela Connidis: Yes, we were.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Thank you.

Could you table with the committee what you submitted to the minister?

Ms. Angela Connidis: I will check and get back to you on that for sure.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Thank you so much.

I'm now going to move to Citizenship and Immigration.

You talked about the number of contacts in giving women the opportunity to come forward, which is so important. My concern is that there have been real cuts to CIC totalling \$53 million. I'm from the GTA and 10 GTA services were lost and 35 across Ontario had significant cuts.

Do we have contact data before and after the cuts?

Ms. Justine Akman: We can't answer the specific question. We could likely follow up with that. However, since 2002-03, settlement funding has in fact increased a great deal.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: The contact numbers that we're talking about, violence against women, it's the number of women we are coming in contact—

Ms. Justine Akman: It's those who we're actually serving through the settlement services, the difference in the number of people we've been serving. I'll try to get the answer.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: I'd like to see the data before and after, please.

Do we have data on how this has affected women coming forward?

Ms. Justine Akman: I don't believe we do have that sort of data in terms of the impacts of any changes to our funding model or amount. But we might be able to get the information on the numbers served through our settlement services.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: How many women have come forward to talk about violence?

Ms. Justine Akman: I don't believe we have access to that data. I don't believe we track it in that sense. We have access to data on how many permanent residents and refugee women are served through our settlement services.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: But we don't track how many are coming forward.

Ms. Justine Akman: How many are coming forward with specific cases of violence? No. We have excellent descriptions of the programming that's made available through the non-government organizations funded through CIC, many of which are focused on violence against women. We have plenty of best practices in that area, but not the numbers. We wouldn't track that sort of thing. There might be privacy issues there as well.

• (0955)

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: You talked about CIC. There's a process to allow newly sponsored spouses and partners to come forward without having their status affected, and that's really important. How are you getting that information out to the communities? You talked about a brochure. How many languages is the brochure published in?

Ms. Justine Akman: A brochure right now for sponsored spouses is available in French and English, but settlement services are available in other languages as well. "Welcome to Canada" is in two languages, but the other brochure focused on the exemption for conditional permanent residence is in eight languages.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: What are those eight languages?

Ms. Justine Akman: I don't have the full list with me, but I'll try to get that. Oh, it's right here. Okay, I'm sorry; my colleague preempted that question.

It's in English, French, Spanish, Tagalog, Hindi, traditional Chinese, Mandarin, and Urdu.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: I think there are some gaps there. I know the communities I serve; that's not going to reach all of them.

I'll turn to Ms. Israel, please. You said five new shelters were built in 2007, but the funding has stayed stable. I guess my concern is that we have 1,200 missing and murdered aboriginal women and girls, and the fact that five new shelters needed to be built would suggest there's a need. How have we managed to keep the funding stable?

Ms. Marla Israel: We keep the funding stable in terms of operational funding. This is operational funds that go towards the maintenance costs of the shelters themselves. As I indicated, there has been \$500,000 allocated on a yearly basis to address any cost of living increases to those shelters. In addition, one of the things that the department is exploring is visits to those shelters to see what more can be done with respect to supporting the operational needs of the shelters and to ensure that any gaps are addressed.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[Translation]

We now go to Ms. Ambler for five minutes.

[English]

Mrs. Stella Ambler (Mississauga South, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to all of you for being here today and for your very informative and rich presentations.

I'd like to thank you, Ms. MacPhee, for mentioning my private members' motion.

Madam Sellah, we'll need to have a few more discussions it seems, but I think you may want to come around to supporting my private members' motion eventually.

I wanted to thank you for mentioning it. I know there's only so much that you can talk about other than that you know the government is supporting it. Do you see the value in closing a loophole for a practice that's accepted in other countries—proxy fax, internet, and telephone marriages, which are allowed in some countries, for example in Pakistan, India, Qatar, and some other Middle East countries?

This practice is not allowed in Canada. The reason it's believed to facilitate forced marriage is that common sense would tell us that when two people aren't in the same room when they get married the chances are fairly good, or at least moderate, there is some element of either fraud or force involved. For this reason Canada does not want to perpetuate this practice and be the kind of country that allows this to be used for spousal immigration applications.

What that does is it sends the signal to those who are doing this, who are forcing these marriages on their children or their nieces and nephews, that this is okay because the result is a good one, that being the ability to come to Canada as an immigrant and as a new Canadian.

Do you see this as part of the government's commitment to ending barbaric practices through violence against women initiatives? Do you think that this is all part of the package in terms of what the government is doing to help not only women but young men who are also victims of these kinds of marriages?

• (1000)

The Chair: Ms. Ambler, I think that we have to remember that these are officials and officials are not the government or members of Parliament. Try to phrase your question more generally so you don't put these fine people into an embarrassing situation.

Please ask your question and we'll leave a minute to answer.

Mrs. Stella Ambler: Yes. I'm not asking for your opinion, but do you think this is part of the government's overall package to help prevent violence against women?

The Chair: Talk about promising practices to prevent violence against women.

Ms. Susan MacPhee: Promising practices bring us back to the core of our policy objectives. It's part of the existing policy suite and the existing regulations that in all ways these are meant to be authentic relationships that people entered into willingly. That's the core of the work that our visa officers have been doing for decades.

As I mentioned in the opening remarks we've taken measures to strengthen over time everything that we can do to make sure that these are actual relationships that people entered into willingly. You raised a point about the changing technology and the many ways that things have evolved over time. For us it comes back to the policy suite and the work that we do every day to ensure we have authentic relationships.

The Chair: You have thirty seconds to maybe say thank you.

Mrs. Stella Ambler: To clarify, the regulation change is not to give visa officers any more powers. They would no longer have to prove that the relationship wasn't bona fide. They would immediately be able to proceed from knowing that the marriage took place by Skype, let's say, to being able to say it does not qualify any longer. Is that correct?

The Chair: Thank you so much, Ms. Ambler. You have made your point.

Ms. Nash, go ahead for five minutes.

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Thank you very much, Chair.

Welcome, witnesses.

I just want to echo that it is very appropriate that we are having this panel discussion today on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women.

Superintendent Bates, let me begin with you. Thank you for your testimony. We know that indigenous women are far more likely to suffer abuse and violent crimes than non-indigenous women are, and we appreciate the report from the RCMP last May that put a number on the missing and murdered indigenous women. It's a terrible, tragic, shocking number—1,200—but it is good to have that data.

We know there have been multiple reports from victims and also from international human rights NGOs such as Human Rights Watch, which published a wonderful report in February, 2013 entitled "Those Who Take Us Away: Abusive Policing and Failures in Protection of Indigenous Women and Girls in Northern British Columbia". We know there have of course been many cases of victimization of indigenous women by police including the RCMP. I appreciate the study that the RCMP has undertaken of itself and all of the programs that you are instituting, but I'm wondering if, in light of the systemic nature of this epidemic of violence against indigenous women, the RCMP can support a national inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women.

• (1005)

Supt Tyler Bates: We don't call inquiries and we don't call for inquiries. Our focus is on resolving outstanding cases, on criminality, and what the overview informed us of is that nationally we have 225 cases that remain unsolved—120 homicides and 105 indigenous women who are missing through suspicious circumstances or whose whereabouts are just unknown and there isn't enough information to classify their disappearance as accidental or otherwise. We're seeking closure for families in terms of resolving those outstanding cases.

Our most recent efforts surround a review of those remaining files by our criminal operations units, our divisional commanding officers, to ensure that all investigational avenues that can be pursued are being pursued and that families are communicated with on an ongoing basis.

Ms. Peggy Nash: Thank you very much. I wasn't asking you to call an inquiry but rather to support the call for an inquiry.

I just want to read a quote from one of your former colleagues, who is now the victims ombudsman, who testified at last year's special committee to study violence against indigenous women. This is a quote from Ms. Susan O'Sullivan:

The first item I would like to discuss is the potential for a national commission of inquiry into missing and murdered aboriginal women in Canada and the subsequent or concurrent development of a related action plan. I support the call for the creation of this commission and action plan.

How do you respond to what your colleague has said to the committee?

Supt Tyler Bates: Again I think that a national inquiry is not a matter for police to weigh into. I think that is a political consideration and outside of the focus on resolving those outstanding cases.

We are very much engaged on the prevention front with our federal partners and communities, and we are doing our utmost to prevent a reoccurrence of the tragic numbers that we see. That's our focus.

Ms. Peggy Nash: Thank you.

Ms. Connidis, I'd like to ask you about incarcerated women and pick up a bit on what my colleague Ms. Duncan began. We know that the prison population in Canada is skyrocketing. A constituent of mine, Andrew Gregg, made a documentary called *State of Incarceration* really documenting some of the terrible conditions in our prison system with double-bunking and overcrowding.

The Chair: You have thirty seconds.

Ms. Peggy Nash: My concern is that for women who have been victims of violence, which overwhelmingly women in prison are, this overcrowding is unacceptable. Will the government consider creating a collaborative national action plan to address violence against women, which so many women's organizations are calling for, including dealing with this overcrowding in prisons?

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Nash.

Perhaps you can address the question very briefly.

Ms. Angela Connidis: If there were a political decision to move forward we would support that.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Connidis.

Merci beaucoup, Ms. Nash.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Young, go ahead for five minutes.

[*English*]

Ms. Wai Young (Vancouver South, CPC): Thank you very much, and thank you to all the witnesses for your very interesting presentations.

I want to start with Ms. Akman, because you were cut off when you were speaking about the funding for settlement services, particularly for this range of programs and services to newcomers and immigrants to Canada between 2004-2006 and now. You were talking about the increase in funding and the increase in programs and the increase in programs specifically in this area.

Ms. Justine Akman: Your question is: what has the increase been?

Ms. Wai Young: Yes, because there was an implication that there was a cut in programming. You alluded to it, so can you be more precise?

Ms. Justine Akman: There is a funding formula for settlement programming that's based on the intake of immigrants to each province, so that shifts from time to time. But overall, settlement funding has increased and is currently at \$600 million per year.

Ms. Wai Young: That has increased from...?

Ms. Justine Akman: I believe it was \$200 million in 2003.

Ms. Wai Young: So that is \$200 million to \$600 million.

• (1010)

Ms. Justine Akman: Yes.

Ms. Wai Young: That was a threefold increase.

Ms. Justine Akman: Yes, it has increased.

Ms. Wai Young: That's quite substantive, would you say?

Ms. Justine Akman: Yes, it is substantive.

Ms. Wai Young: I'm aware that in Vancouver, anyway, which is where I'm from, there is an organization called the Vancouver violence against women project. They've been in place for a long time and have done precisely this kind of programming. They have said that their program funds have increased as well.

Would you say there has been a greater emphasis from the department's perspective on ensuring that these kinds of programs specifically are more stable in terms of their funding, and/or that the funding within this area of looking at violence against women or supporting work against this has increased, within the overall \$600 million?

Ms. Justine Akman: There has been an increased focus on the issue of violence against women and practices that are dangerous to women's health and well-being within the settlement funding and within the various documents that support the settlement programs, such as "Welcome to Canada". So there has been more of a focus on ensuring that women get the support they need should they be in vulnerable situations.

Ms. Wai Young: Would you say that these kinds of programs have expanded beyond the typical immigrant settlement agencies that provide programming, for example, to more mainstream agencies like the YWCA, etc.? Has your funding for these programs expanded beyond the traditional base?

Ms. Justine Akman: We have a very large range of non-governmental organizations that are funded through the settlement programming, including, yes, organizations like the YMCAs or YWCAs.

To respond to an earlier question, organizations can come back for renewed funding whenever a new call for proposals is launched.

Ms. Wai Young: Therefore, in addition to expanding program funds by a tremendous amount we've expanded the access points for women who are experiencing violence to be able to access programs and services. Would you say that's correct?

Ms. Justine Akman: Yes, I believe so.

Ms. Wai Young: Ms. Israel, would you say that would be similar to where you're coming from in terms of programs and services?

Ms. Marla Israel: In what respect, if I could ask for clarification?

Ms. Wai Young: With regard to access to your programs and services for women who are experiencing violence, or—

Ms. Marla Israel: As I said earlier, I think there is an evolution in lessons learned, and always ensuring that we apply those lessons learned to the terms and conditions of our programming.

If we take prevention projects that are serving first nations on reserve, one of the things we'd like to ensure is that either individuals or communities are accessing partnerships, for example. I think it is something that becomes vital, moving forward.

Ms. Wai Young: You did talk about the fact that there were more shelters, and there was an increase in funding of \$500,000, etc. Can you be more specific, please?

Ms. Marla Israel: Yes, there have been increases both in the amount and in the direction of that funding. Some of the increases are supporting the operation of shelters on reserve—

Ms. Wai Young: In your presentation you noted that there were 249 proposal-based prevention projects that were funded by the program. That's quite substantive, would you say, 249 projects specifically for prevention projects? That's what you say here.

Ms. Marla Israel: Yes.

Right now, currently, the department, just with respect to prevention, to the family violence prevention program, has invested \$7 million.

Ms. Wai Young: Could we have a list of the amounts then and the projects, please, submitted to our committee? Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

If it is possible, please forward that to the clerk.

[*Translation*]

She will then pass the information on to the committee members.

Thank you, Ms. Young.

I now yield the floor to Ms. Crockatt for five minutes.

Hold on a moment, Ms. Crockatt. I'm stopping the clock.

Ms. Peggy Nash: I apologize for interrupting the discussion, Madam Chair, but I see the light indicating that a vote is being held. Is there a vote? I did not receive an email informing me of this.

[*English*]

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Yes, I was just asking that question too.

The Chair: Yes, sometimes....

[*Translation*]

I have still not received a notice of vote. We will wait until we have received it. Thank you for pointing this out.

There is usually no ringing of bells, but the light flashes when the meeting is called to order.

• (1015)

Ms. Peggy Nash: That's true. It's the beginning of the meeting.

The Chair: I don't know what is happening. It is 10:10 a.m. and the light is blinking, although it should not be.

Ms. Crockatt, you still have your five minutes. Go ahead.

[*English*]

Ms. Joan Crockatt (Calgary Centre, CPC): Thank you to all of our witnesses.

There is some good information that's coming out here, and I appreciate the contributions that all of you are making in your various areas.

I want to talk to Andrew Beynon for a minute.

It was said that you could address the matrimonial property rights act. I'm wondering if you can tell us how, in your view, Bill S-2 will make a substantial contribution to ending violence against women.

Mr. Andrew Beynon (Director General, Community Opportunities Branch, Lands and Economic Development, Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Thank you for the question.

The matrimonial rural property legislation was enacted relatively recently, in 2013, but a lot of steps have been going forward in terms of its implementation. There will be provisional federal rules that will begin on December 16, 2014. A national centre of excellence for matrimonial rural property has been established and is up and running. This is a new area solving a legislative gap that has existed in the past, so we're very hopeful that this will actually make a very real difference in the lives of aboriginal women in the communities.

Maybe I can tie my answer a little bit back to an earlier question, which was: are there initiatives that we feel can very much contribute to moving these issues forward? What I would offer on that front is the example of what has been done in terms of implementation.

There's federal funding of \$4.8 million over five years to invest in the centre of excellence that is intended to provide support to first nations members. That centre of excellence was established in partnership with an existing first nations and Inuit institution, the National Aboriginal Lands Managers Association.

It's an interesting example because, rather than deal with brand new legislation that goes into a new area and creates an institution from the ground up, we partnered with an existing institution that already had an operational presence, websites, and so on. I think we're very pleased with the fact that this has been put in place so fast. I would like to subsequently share with the clerk the website link for the centre of excellence because the presence and information that's available to first nations and first nations members is already quite impressive, I think.

More broadly speaking, I'll just say in closing, where you as committee members are looking at implementing change, new legislation, and so on, I think it's an interesting lesson learned to partner with an existing institution to get the implementation off the ground quickly. That is something that's been very successful on the first nations front.

Ms. Joan Crockatt: Wonderful.

Now could you just drill down a little bit and just tell us how you think it will impact for the better the lives of women who are in violent situations on reserves?

Mr. Andrew Beynon: As some specific examples, the legislation provides for law-making authority of first nations. They can choose, for the first time, to make their own laws specifically targeting matrimonial real property. Also, the legislation provides for default provisions if first nations choose not to do that. There will be a solution to the regulatory gap that has existed so far.

Ms. Joan Crockatt: A little bit more about exactly what would happen if a woman is in a violent situation, I think, would be helpful.

Mr. Andrew Beynon: The provisional rules, the provisions that will come in on the federal side will provide for rules on the breakdown of marriage, but also provide for a mechanism where individuals can seek emergency protection orders and go to court to apply for a remedy, but in a very simple way, including by telephone application.

Individuals can turn to police authorities and request their assistance in seeking an emergency protection order. This is a concrete example of what can help address family violence situations.

In the past, before the legislation, the challenge was that in trying to use provincial laws on reserve, individuals were facing a risk that the courts would say that provincial rules that apply to all other women in Canada on a breakdown of marriage don't apply on reserve, and you're left without a remedy.

That's the concrete benefit.

Ms. Joan Crockatt: I want to ask a question if I could with regard to immigrant women and the cultural programs that are available for men.

I know that the Calgary Immigrant Women's Association has a program for men, a family violence program. It might be something that you might want to look into and report to the committee. Apparently, it's very successful. One of the things I've heard is that some of these men come and say they didn't know that it wasn't okay to beat their wives in Canada and they didn't know that they couldn't give their daughters away to someone else.

I was fascinated to hear, Susan, that you have programs to actually educate men before they come to Canada. What are the programs? Is this a best practice you want to see expanded? Could you talk a bit about that?

• (1020)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Ms. MacPhee, if you could provide the information....

[*Translation*]

It seems that a vote will be held at 10:45 a.m. You may be saved by the bell, but we will miss out on good testimony and good answers.

Thank you so much for making yourselves available, for your testimony and, especially, for answering our questions courteously. I have to suspend the meeting.

Ms. Nash, did you have a question?

Ms. Peggy Nash: Madam Chair, before we suspend the meeting, can we give you written questions for the witnesses, since the discussion has been cut by 25 minutes?

[*English*]

Ms. Joan Crockatt: Can we bring them back?

[*Translation*]

The Chair: No because the meeting is ending at 10:45 a.m.

[*English*]

Ms. Peggy Nash: Can we submit written questions?

The Chair: Certainly, I think that's a great proposal. I'm just making sure that there are—

Ms. Peggy Nash: A small number of questions.

The Chair: Yes, a very small number.

Ms. Peggy Nash: Because we're losing our time.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: As long as the questions relate to best practices, we'll agree with them. If they don't, there's no point in asking.

The Chair: That's correct. Yes, best practices and what the federal government can do to encourage best practices. The meeting is adjourned.

[*Translation*]

Thank you once again.

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