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Chair

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc

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● (0845)

[*Translation*]

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

According to my BlackBerry, it is exactly 8:45 a.m., daylight savings time or Eastern standard time. I would like to welcome you to the 41st meeting of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women. This is the committee's last meeting of 2014, which makes it a very special one. We are continuing our study on promising practices to prevent violence against women.

Today, we have the pleasure of welcoming Marion Little, an assistant professor at the University of Victoria's School of Public Administration.

We also have with us Tracy O'Hearn, who is the executive director of the Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada.

Joining us by video conference is Bonnie Johnston and Jenny Ofrim, from the Sheldon Kennedy Child Advocacy Centre, and Fay Faraday, who is a lawyer and visiting professor at Osgoode Hall Law School.

Each group of witnesses will have 10 minutes to make a presentation, which will be followed by a question period.

I would like to start with Ms. Little. You have 10 minutes.

[*English*]

Ms. Marion Little (As an Individual): Thank you, Madam Chair and members of the committee. Thank you so much for your invitation.

Please permit me to open and close with poems that invoke some of the voices of the many women and girls I've been privileged to serve over the years.

The first is from Jamie Jardine.

> *Wounds*
> I stand naked
> Looking in the mirror
> What do I see?
> Not the flawless woman I so yearn to be
> But a damaged girl permanently scared,
> Scarred from unwanted abuse that will not fade,
> No matter what I do.
> Every time I look, I'm reminded of where,
> And from whom they came.
> I've stopped trying to change,
> To cover or erase these scars.
> I've stopped explaining these dark wounds.
> These are my tattoos.

There are so many issues I would love to speak about with you today. Drawing on my experience, I will focus exclusively on the marginalized women who are many times more likely to be targeted by violence than anyone else. My primary point is that marginalized women require sustainably funded, tailored, responsive, unconditional peer-to-peer programs informed directly by their needs and the context in which they live.

I'm so nervous; I can hear my voice shaking. Pardon me.

This core best practice is recognized as the most accessible, effective, and cost-efficient way to increase wellness while decreasing marginalization and experiences of violence. Marginalized women are more likely to participate in peer-to-peer programs than in mainstream programs. Disclosure is more likely in trusted peer settings, making them critical for response, liaison with police, trauma recovery, and violence prevention.

My secondary point is that the best practice in policy development and drafting new law related to marginalized women requires that these peer groups be comprehensively consulted, alongside the national academic research consensus on the issues.

In the B.C. missing women inquiry report "Forsaken," the Honourable Wally Oppal defines marginalization as "the social process by which individuals and groups are relegated to the fringe of society" and "systematically blocked from rights, opportunities and resources that are normally available in a society".

It is related to the "endangerment and vulnerability to predation" of marginalized people, "creating the climate in which the missing and murdered women were forsaken".

He says the following:

> Three overarching social and economic trends contribute to the women's marginalization: retrenchment of social assistance programs, the ongoing effects of colonialism, and the criminal regulation of prostitution and related law enforcement strategies.

According to the Ending Violence Association of BC, most women and children killed or seriously injured by domestic or sexual violence in recent years were members of marginalized groups. Please see endingviolence.org. They identified gaps regarding specialized, domestic, and sexual violence services for marginalized women, in particular aboriginal women; immigrant women, including refugees and migrant workers; women with disabilities; women with mental health or addictions issues; women in rural areas; impoverished women; lesbians and transsexual women; and sex workers. And I would add the service gap for youth who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

According to Statistics Canada, women aged 15 to 24 are most commonly targeted by all forms of violence. This, combined with marginalization, makes it difficult to grasp the enormity of the issue, particularly since marginalized women are often reluctant to call police and more likely to access informal supports.

As you know, aboriginal women—first nations, Métis, and Inuit women—experience higher levels of violence and are disproportionately represented in the number of missing and murdered women across Canada. They have a heightened vulnerability to violence simply because they live in what the Honourable Wally Oppal calls "a society that poses a risk to their safety". The report also said, "In British Columbia and around the world, vulnerable and marginalized women are exposed to a higher risk of violence including sexual assault, murder and serial predation."

The B.C. Missing Women Commission of Inquiry says that it's imperative we realize the broader forces of marginalization and societal dismissal and abandonment that contributed to the vulnerability of the women. That dismissal and abandonment also shaped police response. While aboriginal and sex worker groups have identified valid concerns about the B.C. inquiry, it also contains very thoughtful recommendations. I commend it for your consideration.

● (0850)

Please review the executive summary of the Honourable Wally Oppal's report, "Forsaken", via the website of the Attorney General of B.C. I also invite you to review the October 1, 2014, letter to Parliament from the Secretary General of Amnesty International, which is available on their website.

The Supreme Court has recognized street-based sex workers as some of the most marginalized members of society. The first nationwide research on sex work is emerging just now from the University of Victoria Centre for Addictions Research. It offers new—and what some may find surprising—findings. Understanding the reality of sex work here is central to developing laws, policies, practices, and supports that will actually prevent violence and increase safety for all of us. Please see their website at understandingsexwork.com.

Peer-to-peer supports are a core best practice for marginalized groups. For example, PEERS Victoria and sister agencies across Canada provide rare, unconditional, and trusted peer-to-peer supports for current and past sex workers when they are distressed, experience violence, or seek help. Sadly, all are grossly underfunded.

The respectful relationship between PEERS Victoria, the sex workers they serve, and the Victoria police special victims unit routinely leads to the arrest and jailing of violent offenders, increasing public safety. Support for marginalized groups positively impacts the whole community.

Unfortunately, it takes only a few unethical officers to destroy that trust and the related benefits. Sex workers and research tell us that police are among their clients, and that there are unethical officers who are violent or abuse their power to coerce sex. It is a common enough experience for sex workers in Canada, such that they tend to distrust police as a group. The reality of unethical officers harming or exploiting sex workers poses a certain dilemma under Bill C-36, where those same officers now hold increased power over sex workers and an increased reason to silence them.

Education across the justice system about marginalized women is necessary to increase reporting, ensure effective responses, protect the vulnerable, and prevent violence. Ongoing abuse prevention training and strong policies to address abuse of power within government institutions, such as health, justice, and social services, are also necessary, because marginalized women tend to distrust them due to routine experiences that range from discourtesy and dismissal to exploitation and violence.

Sexual exploitation of minors is not sex work. It's child abuse. It and trafficking are separate issues and direct acts of violence with specific laws. However, laws are not enough to prevent these atrocities. As a primary prevention, we must provide stable housing, food security, and nurturing supports for the over 65,000 youth in Canada who are currently homeless or at risk of homelessness—see raisingtheroof.org.

Violence against marginalized women and girls is directly linked to our child poverty rates and our housing crisis—our home crisis, actually. If we're serious about violence prevention, we will mitigate the factors that increase marginalization at individual, relational, community, and societal levels. This requires accessible stable housing, legal aid, food security, and clean water. It requires enough affordable child care spaces, addiction treatment beds, and transitional shelters, as well as programs—particularly peer-to-peer programs—that support trauma recovery, skill development, and community building. We must invest in increased resilience and empowerment.

If we tolerate violence against marginalized women, sex workers and aboriginal women being the starkest examples, then we allow that to stand as a threat to all women, a graphic threat that violence is tolerated against any of us, depending only on circumstance and social whim, and that neither our laws nor our rights and freedoms as Canadians will protect us from it. Socially condoned or ignored violence against marginalized women is an open attack on every woman, an open attack on the justice system, and an open attack on the rights and freedoms of Canadian citizens.

I will close with one final, very brief poem from a poet at PEERS, who uses the metaphor of a maze full of dead ends contrasted against a labyrinth that is one circling contemplative path:

Puzzle
My life is a maze.
I'm always running into a dead end
No matter which way I turn,
Even when I take the next right step.
I strive for my life to be a labyrinth;
To go in, and no matter which way I go,
It's the right path to that place
Where I am always centred.

Thank you.

● (0855)

[*Translation*]

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

Ms. O'Hearn, you have 10 minutes.

[*English*]

Ms. Tracy O'Hearn (Executive Director, Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada):

[*Translation*]

Good morning.

Ullakut.

Thank you for your invitation. I don't speak much French.

[*English*]

I would like to bring greetings and best wishes from Rebecca Kudloo, who's our president. She lives in Baker Lake, Nunavut, and is not able to be here today. She very much appreciates this opportunity.

For those of you who may not be familiar with Pauktuutit, it just celebrated its 30th anniversary as the national representative organization of all Inuit women in Canada. It has a broad mandate, but our work is focused in three main areas: health is certainly one; violence and abuse prevention has been one of the biggest priorities for 30 years now; and socio-economic development broadly.

I'm happy to answer any further questions you may have about that.

We've been asked today to talk about best or promising practices in education, the social programs that can help prevent violence against women.

For Inuit women, violence prevention policies and programs must be based in Inuit culture, values, practices, geography, and language broadly. This is standard practice in our work. We produce a broad range of resources for people to use in the communities, whether individuals, service providers, or other organizations. Our work is always produced in plain language English and at least one dialect of Inuktitut. Inuktitut is one of the three indigenous languages in Canada expected to survive, and it is still used on a daily basis.

We try to learn as we go and improve our ways of communicating. The Internet is rapidly spreading across the north—we now have a Facebook page—but things like radio are still very effective. Everyone goes home at lunchtime and listens to the radio, so it's a challenge. Probably one of our biggest challenges is communicating across one-third of Canada's land mass, but we try to learn and improve.

Unfortunately, Pauktuutit has been working on this issue for 30 years, and not only has the situation not improved, it's become significantly worse. I won't reiterate all the statistics and rates of crime. They're very well known. I would like to note that a recent report by Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, which is the Inuit land claims body in Nunavut, recently released its most recent report on the state of Inuit society and culture, with a focus, in part, on violence against women. It says that Nunavut is the most dangerous jurisdiction in Canada in which to be a woman or child, and that's absolutely true.

With regard to violence against women, it also has to be addressed as a significant mental and physical health issue. There's the whole range of responses: emergency, interventions, medevac, surgeries, rehabilitation, time away from their families, and employment. I'm sure we're all quite familiar with a lot of those impacts.

I would like to just draw your attention to the fact that there were four regional health surveys done. There are four primary Inuit regions in Canada.

In Nunavik, in the study conducted in 2004, they found that half of the women who participated in the Inuit house survey reported they had been victims of sexual assault or attempted sexual assault when they were minors. One-quarter had encountered the same problem as adults. For men, 16% of men, who participated in that regional survey, indicated the same problem as children, and 13% as adults. In Nunavut, one in two Inuit women have experienced severe sexual abuse during childhood and these injuries go far beyond broken bones. They can damage a soul and ruin a life, potentially, without support and specialized services. Those are by and large not present in Inuit communities.

We know in our hearts, but cannot yet prove through evidence, that many victims of child sexual abuse are choosing to end their pain by ending their lives. We know.

● (0900)

I'd like to talk briefly about a project that we're just concluding with Status of Women Canada. This has given us the first opportunity to conduct a survey of knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours among Inuit women and men, different age groups, about the knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours that support these crisis levels of violence. We're actually gathering results as we speak. The project will end at the end of March. We hope we'll learn a great deal from the results of that survey.

Part of what we're doing is developing a tool kit of resources. Our project is to engage men and boys in reducing violence. Again, it's the first opportunity we've had to take this approach. We're also developing a tool kit for individuals, men's groups, and others to use in the communities to encourage men to come and talk about their challenges, their difficulties, and try to heal.

With regard to recommendations about best practices, we participate in every opportunity we're given to bring forward the voices of Inuit women. At the end of October we attended the 4th National Aboriginal Women's Summit in Membertou, Nova Scotia. As members of the national planning committee, we're now trying to prepare a report from NAWS. When we were in Membertou, our task was to look at the recommendations from the first three NAW summits with a view to what has been done, what needs to be done now, and what needs to be done next. The major theme in the recommendations that came forward from 2007 was the need for coordinated, multi-year sustained funding. This work has to be tailored to meet the unique needs, priorities, and circumstances of first nations, Inuit, and Métis women, and it must be done in equal partnership with representative organizations. Unfortunately, that has not yet been done.

I'm going to speak just briefly about the national action plan to address violence against aboriginal women that was announced in September. I know some organizations responded quite quickly. We didn't, because we needed to understand what was in there, what might be new, what might already exist. We actually just issued a press release last week to the extent that we could, based on the information that we have received, primarily from Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada. Of the $7 million annually that's available for family violence prevention and protection through Aboriginal Affairs every year, Inuit women across Canada are at this time in receipt of $75,000, which is 1% of the $7 million. Inuit communities continue to be specifically excluded from federal funding that's available for shelters on reserve. We've tried to bring that up at the policy level with the department for about 20 years—as long as I've worked with the organization.

Taking a look at the $20 million that was available this year to aboriginal representative organizations, which included a theme around family violence prevention, of that $20 million, we received $80,000 this year to work on economic development. When you look at this $20 million plus the $7 million, of $27 million this year that is specifically for aboriginal peoples, women—and I would interpret that as Inuit women—through Pauktuutit, are receiving one half of 1% of the annual funding made available through Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development. I felt I had to bring that to your attention.

I would also say that with regard to best practices or promising practices, there haven't been enough Inuit-specific violence prevention initiatives that have been evaluated over time to really even offer promising practices. We are supported in our work. Our work is directed closely by women in the community, service providers, Inuit experts, and other experts. We're confident that we're on the right path, but it has to be broader, sustained, and evaluated over time.

Again, I'm very grateful for your time this morning. Thank you very much.

● (0905)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

We will now hear from Bonnie Johnston. We will speak to her by video conference, and she has 10 minutes.

[*English*]

Ms. Bonnie Johnston (Chief Executive Officer, Sheldon Kennedy Child Advocacy Centre): Thank you.

Thank you for the opportunity to present to the status of women committee this morning. We're especially honoured to be a part of the discussions during the 16 days of activism against gender violence.

I'm Bonnie Johnston, CEO of the Sheldon Kennedy Child Advocacy Centre in Calgary, and with me is Jenny Ofrim, our evaluation coordinator.

Today we are going to talk about the critical connections between child abuse and violence against women, and to offer recommendations for promising practices to address and prevent these crimes.

The Chair: Madam Johnston, I would like to ask you to slow down a bit so the interpretation can be done. I know you are very enthusiastic and dynamic when talking about the project, but if you can slow the pace down a bit that would be much appreciated. We'll allow for more time anyway.

Thank you.

Ms. Bonnie Johnston: It's a little different here in videoland trying to connect with your audience. We do appreciate that. Thank you so much. It's seven o'clock here in Calgary and I don't think we've had our coffee yet, Jen, have we? We will slow down.

Canada is very fortunate to have federal and provincial governments that recognize the importance of healthy child development. We also have key assets, including a number of Child Advocacy Centres in Canada that are leaders in supporting victims of child abuse.

Today we have three key messages for you.

Number one, children who experience abuse are more likely to commit violent acts against their partners and their own children in the future, and to be revictimized as adolescents and adults.

Number two, witnessing domestic violence is a form of child abuse that often happens with other forms of abuse in the home. These are not isolated issues, and solutions must focus on all forms of violence.

Number three, girls and women are disproportionately affected by abuse especially sexual abuse. To prevent or decrease violence against women and girls in the future we must focus on preventing abuse and intervening early with children and youth who have been abused, and with families who are at risk of abuse. This will result in better quality of life for our children and families, as well as result in valuable returns on these investments that will be seen in generations to come.

The Sheldon Kennedy Child Advocacy Centre is a not-for-profit organization working in partnership with six government organizations—Calgary Police Service, Calgary and Area Child and Family Services, Alberta Health Services, Alberta Justice, RCMP, and Alberta Education—to better serve children and families impacted by child abuse. We are extremely proud of this model that has come together. The centre became fully operational with all partners, including close to 100 staff on site, in April of 2013.

The primary objective of our centre is to minimize trauma through multidisciplinary teams that specialize in treating, investigating, and supporting children and families who have been impacted by abuse. This includes all child sexual abuse cases being dealt with by the police and the most serious, severe, and complex cases of physical abuse and neglect reported within our partner organizations. It is truly a system of integration and collaboration that wraps around children and families.

In our first 16 months of operations the centre assessed almost 2,000 infants, children, and youth.

● (0910)

Ms. Jenny Ofrim (Evaluation Coordinator, Sheldon Kennedy Child Advocacy Centre): Over the course of our first 16 months of operations two-thirds of the 2,000 children and youth assessed at the centre were girls. Of these 2,000 cases seven out of ten were for reports of sexual abuse, and two out of ten were for severe physical abuse or neglect. Ninety-three per cent of the children and youth seen at the centre were offended against by a trusted person such as a caregiver or parents.

The centre has also had the opportunity to collect information on the impact of this abuse. Although we have only been gathering this information since April 2014, data is already demonstrating that, at the time of initial assessments at the centre, one out of three infants, children, and youth struggle with suicidal thoughts, substance abuse, self-harm, mental health, aggressive behaviour, or sexualized behaviours. When we isolate youth aged 12 to 17, one in two struggle with these issues. After hearing from several experts on violence against women it is no surprise that the prevalence of this crime and the issues related to it are staggering.

The impact of child abuse on rates of re-victimization and future violent offending behaviour needs to be taken into consideration to find solutions to prevent violence against women.

One of the largest studies to date, conducted as part of the adverse childhood experiences research in the States, has demonstrated that being physically abused or sexually abused or growing up in a home in which there is domestic violence doubles the risk of perpetration or victimization of domestic violence as an adult. For children who experience all three types of abuse, the risk is increased by three and a half times for women and even more for men.

Children who have been abused grow up to have children of their own. When this trauma is left unaddressed, these children can be impacted in many ways by their parents' historical abuse. If we do not address these issues early, research indicates that these girls are four times more likely to report self-harm and suicidal ideation, 30% less likely to graduate from high school, 1.5 times more likely to use illicit drugs as an adult, and three times more likely to have an early unplanned pregnancy.

The term “cycle of abuse” is used often, and it is a reality for many of the children we see at the centre. We need to recognize that child abuse is a national public health issue. We need to put concerted effort into preventing abuse from happening to children. If it does happen, we need to ensure that the best services are wrapped around them as early as possible so they can move forward with healthy and productive lives, free of violence.

● (0915)

Ms. Bonnie Johnston: Based on our experience and the insights of others who have been working vigorously in the fields of child abuse and violence against women, we appreciate the opportunity to make the following recommendations.

Recommendation number one is that the federal government demonstrate global leadership by committing to predictable and stable funding to address child abuse issues. This should include increased funding to support the further development and operations of child advocacy centres across Canada. The child advocacy centre model is an innovative way of addressing child abuse. In recognition that child abuse is an issue that reaches across sectors, this model brings together law enforcement, child protection, the crown, education, and therapeutic and medical services. Together, these sectors create a business model that works more effectively and efficiently. Bringing these sectors together provides an opportunity to wrap services around a family as opposed to a family having to navigate separate systems on their own during a traumatic time.

Recommendation number two is that the federal government engage its research organizations such as the Canadian Institutes of Health Research to focus on child abuse issues, including the social and economic impact of collaborative models of service delivery. To date, research in the area of child abuse has been limited by disclosure and reporting rates. As multiple sectors continue to work together, a more sophisticated understanding of the issues and impact of child abuse and domestic violence is emerging.

Recommendation number three is that the federal government commit to mitigating the impact of child abuse through early intervention that includes access for children and families to intensive, evidence-based therapies. This includes swift access to youth who demonstrate sexualized behaviours that are intrusive or offending in nature.

Recommendation number four is the encouragement of provincial cross-ministry policy and practices that support the sharing of relevant and critical information. From a practice perspective, the information shared among the centre's multidisciplinary teams has proven to be instrumental in providing timely and tailored responses to families in need. Quite simply, we are doing in hours and days what was taking weeks and months to do before we could adequately respond to these families. This allows each member of the team to make conscious decisions about progressing with each case that is in the best interest of the child and their family.

Recommendation number five is that specialized and timely interventions be provided to pregnant women and parents of infants who are living in high-risk environments. Low-cost and safe child care needs to be provided to women who have limited options. The focus on maternal and infant health needs to continue to be a priority for the Public Health Agency of Canada. Our centre also offers a prenatal outreach support team that provides outreach to highly vulnerable pregnant women and connects them to prenatal services that meet their needs. We started with 30 referrals in year one. We are over 240 referrals in this region right now for these women in high-risk situations. This program has had excellent outcomes reducing risk and decreasing the number of babies coming into care of child protection.

Recommendation number six is that standardized and specialized training be provided to professionals in education, health, the justice system, and social services to assess for abuse, sexual re-victimization, and domestic violence as part of their interventions with children and youth, ensuring professionals such as teachers have the skills, training, and tools to recognize child abuse, understand their responsibilities, and respond in supportive and compassionate ways, and ensuring that professionals who work in the field of child abuse have access to specialized training and support.

We are beginning to understand the issues of child abuse and their links to violence against women in far more sophisticated ways. We are building innovative, collaborative models. When we come together as government, communities, and organizations, we will be successful in making a difference for our children and ultimately building resilience for generations to come.

As a community, we have a moral and ethical call to action to protect our children in making child abuse and violence against women national priorities.

We thank you for your time and support for these very critical issues.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Johnston and Ms. Ofrim.

Ms. Faraday, you have 10 minutes.

[*English*]

Ms. Fay Faraday (Lawyer, Visiting Professor, Osgoode Hall Law School, As an Individual): Thank you for the invitation to speak to the committee.

As you were told in the introduction, I am a labour and human rights lawyer here in Toronto and a visiting professor at Osgoode Hall Law School. For the last 25 years I have been working with low-wage migrant workers across all the different streams of temporary labour migration: the seasonal agricultural worker program, the live-in caregiver program, and the temporary foreign worker program.

What I want to speak about today is the structural problems that make women migrants particularly vulnerable as targets of sexual violence. The two themes I want to address are the need to remove those structural terms and conditions built into the temporary labour migration programs that make women vulnerable targets for sexual violence and to think about ways to build practices that build security.

The things that make migrant workers vulnerable to abuse, and particularly women to sexual violence, are conditions of dependence, isolation, precarious immigration status in Canada, and the lack of effective routes to raise complaints about their treatment. Those are the four things I want to look at.

What I'd like to do is also connect this with an example coming out of the Presteve Foods fish processing plant in Wheatley, Ontario. It's an example in which 42 Mexican and Thai women migrant workers came forward with complaints of not just employment violations, but sexual violence in the workplace. The employer was charged with 23 counts of sexual assault and 5 counts of common assault. In the end he pleaded guilty to common assault, but the allegations with respect to the sexual violence went forward in a human rights complaint before the Human Rights Tribunal in Ontario. What's remarkable about the Presteve case is not so much the vulnerability and the abuse that the women faced, but the fact that they were able to come forward and file legal complaints. What's remarkable about their situation is that they were unionized. They were able to bring those complaints forward with the backing of their union and community organizations in southern Ontario, but most women don't have that support. As you'll see, even with those supports, it was not sufficient for them.

The primary condition that makes women such vulnerable targets to sexual violence when they are migrants is the dependence that is created through the tied work permits. Under the temporary labour migration programs for low-wage workers, workers come here on permits that tie them exclusively to the single employer named on the permit, to the specific job named on the permit, in the location that's identified in the permit, and for the time period on that temporary permit. That single condition creates an enormous imbalance of power that makes it virtually impossible for workers to resist the abuse that they are subject to.

For many workers, the temporary migration programs also either require as an element of a program that their housing is tied to the employer, or in practice it has been and is in fact provided by the employer. That again creates another link that makes them even more vulnerable.

The third factor I want to draw your attention to is the fact that most migrant workers who are coming into these low-wage jobs are paying predatory, extortionate recruitment fees to come here. I did a study published in April that showed that two-thirds of live-in caregivers who are coming into Canada are paying recruitment fees of between $3,500 to $5,000. The fees go up from there: $7,000 to $9,000 or $12,000 for an individual worker coming in.

For the workers in the other sectors, in food processing, in restaurants, in other low-wage jobs, there are similar rates of paying these illegal recruitment fees. That ties them even more closely to the employer because they're unable to resist unfair treatment and sexual abuse on the job because they have to repay those recruitment loans.

What happened in Presteve is that these workers from Mexico and Thailand had come to Canada. They were tied to that employer. They had paid up to $10,000 in recruitment fees. When they arrived they were living in a bunkhouse on the employer's property, so were completely isolated from the local community, and were subject to extensive practices of sexual violence and harassment on the job.

● (0920)

The inability to complain about that is very real because they can't quit and get another job; they are tied to that employer. They can't quit because they have to pay back the recruitment fees. They are isolated by language. They are isolated physically. They are unable to access settlement services, which is another real concern. The federal organizations that provide settlement services to workers are only available to people with permanent status, not to those with temporary status. There's a real lack of protection for workers when they do come forward with claims of sexual violence.

In this case, the events of violence happened in 2007 and 2008, and the legal proceedings are still ongoing. There were 13 separate procedural motions before the Human Rights Tribunal. The final decision on the merits has still not come out. But in the course of that, these workers are on permits that are for only two years. The legal processes grind slowly. Many of the workers who were subject to the abuse have had to leave the country. There is no process in place to ensure protection for women when they do come forward. There's no access to open work permits or other forms of security that would allow them to remain in Canada, to earn a living while they're pursuing their legal claims, or to establish security so that they can pay off the fees that they had to pay to get to Canada.

What is important to recognize is that there are ways to change this. These recommendations have been made in the past. One of the key changes that needs to be made is to eliminate these tied work permits. There have been recommendations made repeatedly in the past for province-wide permits or sectoral permits that would allow workers to be able to move, or to change employers, when they are facing abuse. What's needed is very strong legislative protection and enforcement to eradicate the practice of predatory recruitment fees. Workers need access to settlement services to overcome the isolation. They need access to unionization and community networks. They need access to information about what their rights are when they arrive in Canada, and about who can help them, so that when these situations of abuse arise, they have someone to go to. They need effective remedies to ensure that their rights are rectified, so that they're not subject to a legal process that will drag on far longer than they can stay in the country. But ultimately, the bottom line is that they need access to routes to permanent status, because it is a matter of being trapped in a situation of temporariness, where all their entitlements to be in Canada and to have any rights in the country are dependent on ties to their employer.

The changes that have been made, both to the temporary foreign worker program, in June, and to the live-in caregiver program, have not in any way addressed the structural vulnerabilities that are created by those tied permits and temporariness.

I'd be happy to answer any other questions you have about this.

● (0925)

[*Translation*]

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

We will now move on to the question period.

Mrs. Truppe, you have seven minutes.

[*English*]

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

I'd like to welcome and thank everyone for your testimony today. It's always very helpful to hear from the different organizations on what great work everyone is doing, and to receive your feedback on what needs to be done.

Tracy, you had mentioned a couple of things here. I want to get your feedback on some of the projects that you're doing. When you were talking about the action plan, the $25 million that we had announced for investments includes not only the first nations, but Métis and Inuit as well. Of the other initiatives in the action plan, we've announced $200 million. Of that $200 million, $158 million is going to be for shelters and family violence prevention activities, which I think will be very helpful for a lot of the different organizations.

Can I ask you first, what is the Inuit population?

Ms. Tracy O'Hearn: The Inuit population is approximately 60,000.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Sixty thousand across Canada....

Ms. Tracy O'Hearn: Across Canada...and it is the fastest growing population in Canada.

● (0930)

Mrs. Susan Truppe: It's the fastest growing?

Ms. Tracy O'Hearn: Yes, it is.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Okay.

You received funding, 2013-14, for $1 million in core and project funding from Aboriginal Affairs. What was that project? What was that used for?

Ms. Tracy O'Hearn: That would represent a number of things. The organization receives $396,000 a year in core funding, but that supports a portion of the board expenses, board meetings, a portion of rent, audits, and those sorts of operating costs.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: A lot of administrative...?

Ms. Tracy O'Hearn: Yes. There's a great deal of reporting on all of our projects, so of that $1 million there would be a certain amount of core funding and the rest is through annual projects or primarily annual proposal-based projects.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: The remainder, so between that $400,000 say, just to round it off, to the million is just for....

Ms. Tracy O'Hearn: That's right and that could represent one project that's $75,000 or a two- or a three-year project at a total of $300,000.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Right. Okay.

You did mention a one-year project from Status of Women, called Working Together: Engaging communities to end violence against women and girls, with the theme of engaging men and boys in ending violence against women and girls, which is great because—

Ms. Tracy O'Hearn: Yes.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: —Status of Women is starting to do a lot of different initiatives with engaging men and boys, because if we don't engage them nothing is going to change. I'm glad to see that you did that.

That was, I think, for $300,000 and then you also received $228,000 for another project, Opening Doors: Economic opportunities for women, with the theme of advancing women in non-traditional occupations. With those two projects that you have here, can you tell me some of the best practices that you found out from doing these programs?

It sounds like you've done several different initiatives. We're looking for best practices, something great, especially with engaging men and boys. Is there something that came out of there that you'd like to share that might help perhaps another organization?

Ms. Tracy O'Hearn: It may be a little premature to share the findings of the Status of Women project because we're in the second year of a two-year project.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: That's the engaging men and boys one?

Ms. Tracy O'Hearn: That's right. It will be completed at the end of this fiscal year.

I would say really the best practice, certainly in working with Inuit women or of course first nations, Inuit, and Métis women, is to work in partnership because we have very close working relations. We work in a cultural framework that's relevant. People can see themselves in the resources and the work that we do.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Right. Partnerships are key in, I think, anything. I agree. You can't do it by yourself anymore. Partners are key to anything.

What about your other project? Is that one finished yet, like enough to maybe have something, a best practice or something great, that came about at the Opening Doors project?

Ms. Tracy O'Hearn: We've done several economic development projects with Aboriginal Affairs.

Again, one project exceeded my hopes and dreams in terms of success. We developed an Inuit women's business network. And again, it's on our website and we're very proud.

It was developed directly based on the needs as identified by Inuit business women in Iqaluit and that was actually at a meeting with then minister Ambrose. She wanted to talk with business women. I was there with our president. I heard what was said. There happened to be an opportunity with the federal government and it just worked beautifully.

Again, based on needs identified by those it is intended to help, and in our case it has to be relevant to the north....

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Yes. Sure.

Ms. Tracy O'Hearn: Even geography in relation to economic development...how do you access markets? Women told us they wanted more financial literacy information.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: That's a huge help.

Ms. Tracy O'Hearn: What's a business plan? What might one's responsibilities be as an employer? Those sorts of things.... Key to that was building a network and as was mentioned earlier that peer-to-peer support, role models. On our website we have a number of Inuit business women role models.

Unfortunately, with regard to sustainability, that was a two-year project. It was very successful. The funding ended. We have a web presence. We do not have the capacity to continue to expand the network.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Right. Or to hold meetings and things like that....

Ms. Tracy O'Hearn: That's right.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: It was a great initiative.

Ms. Tracy O'Hearn: That's right, and even to develop new content for our website.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: That was a great initiative, and certainly would be good for other individuals too, as a best practice.

The Chair:*Vous avez 30 secondes.*

Mrs. Susan Truppe: I can't believe that the time is almost up. I may as well stick with you, Tracy, since I only have 30 seconds left.

You also mentioned, and maybe this is one of the two projects I mentioned, about the tool kit that was developed for men's groups to use in communities. That sounded like a really good best practice.

Can you quickly give me something that came from that, or how that's going to help?

● (0935)

Ms. Tracy O'Hearn: One of my colleagues is in Rankin Inlet today, meeting with a men's group to go over the content of the tool kit. It's something that we will have completed by the end of March.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Good for you. That's great.

Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: I will now give the floor to Ms. Nash for seven minutes.

[*English*]

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

I want to ask you all questions, but I'm going to start with Ms. Faraday and the temporary foreign workers program, specifically live-in caregivers.

I did hear you discuss the Presteve Foods situation, which I remember because I'm a Toronto MP. I remember that terrible situation and that it did only come to light because those women had access to their union and to support from the community.

You talked about the temporary nature of the status of live-in caregivers. Now with these recent changes, even fewer of the live-in caregivers are going to be able to transition to permanent residency, and because of their temporary nature, they do not have access to health and safety protections, or WSIB. We remember the case in the GTA of Jocelyn Dulnuan, who was murdered in her employer's home. There was a woman recently in Toronto, who fell in her employer's home and she died from a head injury.

Can you describe in more detail the vulnerability that the temporary status and lack of access to permanent residency creates for women caregivers in this situation, and describe what's needed for women to have safety and security in these very important jobs that they are performing?

Ms. Fay Faraday: The temporary status that these workers face is the driver of their insecurity, in addition to the tied permits. That's a very important piece that goes with it.

The changes that were just introduced with the caps have really undone the nature of the bargain that had been at the core of the live-in caregiver program, which was that if workers completed two years of work as live-in caregivers, they would earn their right to permanent residency. That is no longer there. There is a possibility to apply for permanent residence, but there's no guarantee of that. That makes the women even more vulnerable. They don't know at the end of the day whether they are on a route to permanence or on this merry-go-round of continuing temporariness.

With regard to other changes that have been implemented, the division between the child care stream and the high medical needs stream also creates additional vulnerability. Women used to be able to accumulate work in both of those areas toward the 24 months that they needed. Now they are locked into one stream or the other. They can't move between those streams; they're not accumulative.

That's a real impediment, and the real uncertainty of whether there is a route to permanence at the end of the day. What the workers really need is a right to permanence from the beginning, the right to status on arrival. What's disturbing about some of the changes is that under the high medical needs stream, a series of female-dominated jobs where workers used to be able to apply directly for permanent status under the federal high-skilled program are being shifted into temporariness. Registered nurses, licensed psychiatric nurses, licensed practical nurses, who used to be able to apply directly, are now being looped into this temporariness, with a requirement to do work, and a possibility but not a guarantee of permanence at the end of it.

The more vulnerabilities and uncertainty that are created, the more a worker is compelled to put up with whatever treatment they receive on the job in the hope of potentially having some security at the end of the day. The further that promise gets from them, the more dangerous it is for them on the ground.

● (0940)

Ms. Peggy Nash: You are talking about a group of women, mainly, who are already in a very vulnerable position, because they are here alone, they are far away from their home country, and they are in an isolated situation. Usually, they are working alone in a family, so their situation has become even more precarious because of their temporary status. It was a welcome change when the government decided that the caregiver no longer had to live in the employer's home. However, they are still tied to one employer. Can you describe that other piece, and how that increases their vulnerability because they are tied to that one employer? As you said, they may owe fees that they have to pay off, because they have paid a fee to come to Canada.

Ms. Fay Faraday: They are much more likely than not to have paid fees. The fees that they have paid are typically the equivalent of two years' full-time earnings in their home country, so they are in serious debt to moneylenders in order to come here. As for the tie to their employer, everything depends on maintaining that good relationship with the employer. Whether it's a live-in caregiver program or one of the other temporary foreign worker programs, there is a complete and utter dependence on the employer, who has ultimate control. Their right to be in the country, their right to earn a living, is entirely connected to that relationship. They cannot change employers without having to go through the entire process of getting a new labour market opinion and a new work permit.

When workers do raise complaints, what typically happens is that they are fired and become homeless. If you are fired and homeless and you owe recruitment fees, that is a huge risk to take. For workers who do try to get new work permits, there is a significant lag. It can be five to six months, during which time they are not allowed to work. What you see is women being forced in and out of status, having to work with undocumented status in order to feed themselves and pay back the recruitment fees. Employers take advantage of that.

Ms. Peggy Nash: Is there—

The Chair: Your time is up, Peggy, sorry. Just finish your train of thought, Ms. Faraday.

Ms. Fay Faraday: What I was going to say was that you see employers taking advantage in that situation by knowing that those workers are even more vulnerable when they are undocumented, subject to even more violence, but also forced to pay the fees for the processing of the labour market opinions, pay the lawyer's fees to get a new work permit, and pay the price of a new work permit. It is just another opportunity to grind more vulnerability.

The Chair: Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. O'Neill Gordon, you have seven minutes.

[*English*]

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon (Miramichi, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair, and I want to thank our witnesses here today.

As we all know, this is a very important study for us, and we appreciate the information you have all contributed today in your presentations. It gives us a lot of food for thought and we appreciate all of it.

My first question is for Tracy O'Hearn. You mentioned in your presentation $20 million that was received from the federal government. What did that $20 million go towards? Do you have an idea? You said $80,000 went to the women's study.

Ms. Tracy O'Hearn: I'm sorry, I don't know. I learned from a colleague last week at the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami that all of that funding has now been allocated, but I have no idea....

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon: When it comes to your community, is it assigned to some projects, or does your association have a means of deciding where to put it?

Ms. Tracy O'Hearn: That was a proposal-based process, so AANDC announced this funding, and there were six themes that it would accept proposals under. There were some that we simply were not eligible for. They were either on-reserve or first nations-specific. Because we have a very small staff, we were able to complete only two proposals in the timeline between the announcement and the deadline. They were both successful; however, they were both funded at less than a quarter of what we had submitted for a one-year national project. As I said, of that $7 million.... It's less than clear to me, the $7 million for family violence prevention and protection, and the $20 million for aboriginal representative organizations, because the $20 million also had a family violence prevention theme. I don't know.... It's less than clear, but, yes, they were proposal-based activities based on needs and priorities that we are already aware of.

I hope I've answered your question.

Of the $27 million in total, we've been funded for two projects, for a total of $155,000.

● (0945)

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon: You mentioned that you received $80,000. What theme did that come under?

Ms. Tracy O'Hearn: That was economic development for Inuit women.

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon: That would be a good program.

You also mentioned—and my colleague mentioned it as well—about putting forth the new program or idea called Toolkit. Do you want to explain more, since your time was running out? Would you like to elaborate a bit more as to how successful this is? It's a program for men and boys, I understand.

Ms. Tracy O'Hearn: We did a bit of a literature review looking at better or promising practices in indigenous populations and communities, broadly with the objective of working with men to reduce violence. We narrowed it down to about 10 practices we thought were promising. One was the I Am A Kind Man program that's run by the Ontario friendship centre association.

We always work with an advisory committee that's regionally representative. We're working specifically with two Inuit men's groups: one in Nunavik, northern Quebec; and one in Nunavut. There aren't a lot of organized Inuit men's groups. We discussed with our advisory committee some of the elements of each of the programs that they thought would work, what needed to be changed to be Inuit-specific, and then we started drafting materials for dealing with past abuse. There's a great need for healing for men. As I mentioned earlier, men have also been victims of violence and abuse as children. We won't go into residential schools and all of that, but we know. Literally, we're writing drafts. For example, if a men's group in a community wanted to have a program over six weeks, what might the modules of that program be? How could it be broken up?

A lot of people find activities on the the land very effective: being out of town, going hunting, and returning to more traditional practices that are being lost somewhat with the wage economy and very rapid cultural shifts. Those are the things we have tried to develop, based on our other work.

We keep taking it back to our advisory committee, the men's groups, and as I say, my colleague is in Rankin Inlet today, going through what we hope will become a final draft, so there'll be tools, resources, exercises, and techniques for men to work with men, primarily on their own healing but with the broader objective of reducing violence.

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon: It's very important that we include the men and keep them involved as well, as we all know.

Ms. Tracy O'Hearn: It is.

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon: Do you know how much money has gone into that program?

Ms. Tracy O'Hearn: I believe it is approximately $300,000 over two years.

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon: Okay. Thank you.

My next question is for Marion Little.

What is the one aspect of your presentation that you would like our committee to pay particular attention to?

Ms. Marion Little: I know there has been new funding recently announced for various initiatives across Canada addressing violence against women issues. I think it's important for us to remember that's happening in the context of over 10 years of cuts that have really decimated our previous capacity to respond. Historically, over 69 really important agencies have been cut across Canada, including agencies like the National Association of Women and the Law, health resources, first nations resources, settlement resources, and resources for newcomers—women like that.

The peer-to-peer agencies that I spoke about are historically very underfunded. Because my most recent background is as executive director of a peer-to-peer agency serving sex workers, I happen to be aware that PEERS Victoria and its sister agencies across the country are literally hanging on by a thread to do work that is very specialized because the people doing the work have overcome their own whatever it is that they have lived with, gained education and experience, and are now providing supports in the community. You can't buy that experience. Without funding, these agencies are disappearing and it costs us all more.

● (0950)

The Chair: Thank you very much. That's all the time we have for now, but maybe there will be other questions where you can complete your answer.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Duncan, you have seven minutes.

[*English*]

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

I'd like to thank all of you for coming today, and for your time and effort and the work you do each and every day.

I do have questions for everybody, but I'll start with Ms. O'Hearn.

With respect to the government's action plan to address family violence and violent crimes against aboriginal women and girls, was your organization consulted?

Ms. Tracy O'Hearn: No.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Thank you.

You talked about crisis levels of violence. With the numbers you presented, we should all be outraged; it's horrific. And that Nunavut is the most dangerous region for women and children....

If there are three recommendations—your top three—that you want to see in this report, what are they, please?

Ms. Tracy O'Hearn: That's a big question.

There must be more equitable access to support services in the communities, and that would include victims services. Most communities are served only by a health centre. You know, we appeared recently before the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights. I would say that would be one of the biggest ones, access to supports and specialized services. There are no psychiatric services, very few psychological.... We need psychology support in the communities, perhaps on a rotating basis.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: How many psychiatrists and psychologists are there for the north? Do you know?

Ms. Tracy O'Hearn: I think there are zero.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: There are zero psychiatrists for all the north.

Ms. Tracy O'Hearn: I'm not aware of any psychiatry resident in the north. These services in Nunavik, I think, are available through telehealth—virtually. That would be one.

I would say that the second overarching recommendation would be the need for investments to address the immediate crisis. There are 53 Inuit communities across Inuit Nunangat, as it's called. Some 70% of those do not have a safe shelter for women and children trying to flee violence. I know personally and first-hand that that situation has directly resulted in the death of women and children. More than 70% do not have a safe shelter. It's not even a band-aid, but there has to be much better access for women to leave their homes, their communities. Their communities are fly-in.

I heard one story not long ago, when Helena Guergis was the minister responsible for the Status of Women. She attended our annual meeting. There was a woman who had virtually begged a social worker in western Nunavut to get her on a plane out of her community to escape violence. That request was denied, and she was murdered.

So I know first-hand. I don't know how you rank such urgent priorities, but that would be the second—better access to safety for women and children.

The third, I would say, would be sustained efforts, not one annual project based on predetermined criteria and that maybe does or doesn't fit Inuit needs and priorities. It has to be sustained. And to me, part of that is a whole-of-government response. Let's all work together with their regional Inuit women's organizations. We need to be able to work together. They have virtually no capacity. I think all Inuit stakeholders, the federal government, provinces, and territories—we have a round table coming in February with the provinces and territories—need to get together, identify Inuit priorities and what role each entity has to play and how we can move those forward in a meaningful and sustained way.

Thank you.

● (0955)

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Thank you, Ms. O'Hearn.

I'm going to touch on sustainable core funding. You talked of $27 million. Was it a half of a half per cent?

Ms. Tracy O'Hearn: It was half of one per cent—$155,000 of $27 million this year.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Thank you.

Ms. Little, could you comment on how Bill C-36 will impact on the safety of women?

Ms. Marion Little: Certainly research in Canada and around the world and sex worker advocacy agencies across Canada are expressing considerable concerns about how the bill is likely to drive sex work underground.

I spoke about how just one very small factor, which is the few unethical police officers in every region, can undermine the capacity to even implement such a bill because they themselves are undermining the relationship between sex workers and police.

The confusion around what the restrictions are on sex workers is huge, so for people who are engaged in that kind of work to support themselves, I think we've created a very complex situation for them to try to navigate.

Certainly when we look at a country like New Zealand we see that when there is consultation with the marginalized women affected by a certain law, the law that is created then tends to decrease violence against that group. In over 10 years in New Zealand we've seen how that kind of consultation with peer-to-peer groups, as well as with business and government, has exponentially decreased violence there and increased reporting of things like exploitation, human trafficking, exploitation of youth, and that kind of thing.

Here, with the law in place, people are going to be more reluctant to go to police, which means that when sex workers witness human trafficking or exploitation of youth, where they were already reluctant to go to police under the previous law, they're going to be even more reluctant because they will be uncertain about what the implications are for themselves. So I think that's certainly a concern.

I know it was well intentioned.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Ambler, you now have the floor for five minutes.

[*English*]

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

May I continue with you, Professor Little, talking about the peer-to-peer programs? Those are the ones that I found you obviously highlighted the effectiveness of in your presentation, and you've since talked a little about why they're so effective. Can you tell us, is it because mentoring is involved?

You did mention that often when someone has been through something and they've come out the other end they're a shining light, but that seems so simple. There must be more to why these programs work. Can you tell us how they work?

Ms. Marion Little: I think mentoring is an important part of peer-to-peer programs. I think the most important part, particularly with marginalized groups who feel isolated within community—and marginalized as Wally Oppal defines marginalization—is there are very few resources in the community for the groups of marginalized women I named in my presentation to reliably access resources and trust that they will be received not only with courtesy, but with meaningful response and resources.

When I was the executive director at PEERS, and we were serving the most distressed portion of sex workers, which is about 20% of that population, and serving people who were maybe more stable, but then going through a crisis, they would come into our centre and they would often only access our centres. The point with marginalized people is that often they will not access other centres.

When we lost funding at PEERS last year, due to changes in provincial funding and had to temporarily close several of our services, our colleague agencies around town told us that the people we were serving were not appearing at their door. They were disappearing into the community.

● (1000)

Mrs. Stella Ambler: Do you think that's because when they go elsewhere they don't feel they're understood?

Ms. Marion Little: It's about understanding; more critically, it's about trust and dignity, and having a safe sanctuary. Those peer-to-peer agencies serve as threshold agencies in accessing the entire scope of other agencies across the social service spectrum—from housing, to food, to legal support, to court—and particularly to policing, which I think is of interest to this committee.

Mrs. Stella Ambler: Yes, most definitely. In fact, you're starting to describe the child advocacy centre model. It's very similar.

Ms. Marion Little: I really liked what they said and I think it's important—particularly around aboriginal women, first nations, Métis, and Inuit—that focused, marginalized peer-to-peer programs and national action are nested within a larger national action plan for dealing with violence against women generally. It exactly requires that early education and family education that my colleagues at the Sheldon Kennedy Foundation were talking about.

Mrs. Stella Ambler: Let me ask you, Ms. Johnston and Ms. Ofrim, about the centre. First of all, let me thank you for your focus on talking about prevention. I appreciated that.

I was particularly intrigued, I guess, by your first point, which is that children who are victims are more likely to become victims of abuse as adults and to become abusers themselves.

Why do you think that is and what we can do to prevent that?

Ms. Jenny Ofrim: The point you mentioned is clear within all the literature we look at, but we also see it evidenced through our data at the centre. I'm not completely sure why that exactly happens. I think there are a few factors. One is that violence is a learned behaviour. When you see violence, it becomes ingrained in your own way of interacting with other people.

The other thing we need to look at is brain trauma and attachments at a very early age. Those things impact all of your relationships moving forward. If they are not created in a secure manner as a child, they need to be addressed, or else you will see impacts of insecure attachments and then violence in the future.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sellah, you have five minutes.

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

Ladies, I would like to thank you for your testimony this morning.

I will begin with a comment on your answers.

As mentioned, nothing has been done and nothing is being done to prevent violence against women. I knew that you hadn't been consulted about the national plan to counter violence against women.

Unlike my colleagues opposite, I think that, regardless of the number of women, in Nunavut for example, the amount allocated should be the same. Instead, it should be a matter of quality.

You said that women and children in Nunavut—in Canada—are in danger, and that scares me. We need to invest more in order to intervene in urgent cases, to protect the safety of these women and children, rather than invest only based on population.

There is another problem. The court has recognized that sex workers are the most vulnerable women, yet nothing has been done so far to protect them appropriately.

How do you explain that nothing has been done to protect sex workers and women and children in Nunavut from violence?

● (1005)

[*English*]

Ms. Marion Little: I think that one of the critically important pieces is that when any policy or law affects marginalized women, whether they're sex workers, aboriginal women, Inuit, first nations, Métis, women who have recently immigrated, refugees, or those with temporary status—whichever group it is—that group has to be consulted, particularly through peer-to-peer points of contact with that group. Then, the national research consensus on best practices and on the implications of various policy applications have to be very seriously considered. When we neglect both of those pieces, we end up with the kind of example, the very small example, that I gave about what happens when, among the very excellent police officers we have across Canada, one or two in each region are unethical. Those one or two literally decimate the possibility of sex workers or first nations women or whoever engaging with that particular authority. The same situation happens within the health system and within social services: one or two unethical people in positions of power and authority in each region decimate the capacity for marginalized women to access resources in an equitable way, which the rest of us assume everybody can access, without having to deal with exploitation.

So those consultations are important, and funding for the agencies is, of course, critically important. Basing law on research and information is important, and then, of course, we need prevention training for abuse prevention generally to shift the culture of violence. In Canada, we're looking at embedded issues around racism and classism and things like that, which are affecting people in ways that most of us don't imagine.

I'm not sure what to say. The pieces about doing those kinds of things are in front of us. I think these issues don't need to be divisive. In the case of Bill C-36, for example, had consultations involving women's agencies across Canada been more comprehensive, those conversations at the ground level would have led to more consensus at the table, in Parliament. We need to look at these issues as health issues. When H1N1 infected 10% of the population, we created the Public Health Agency; we created an office; we created a contingency fund. This is sustainable. It's ongoing. Violence against women is a threat involving 50% of the population. It's a far greater health and justice threat than any health epidemic that we've faced has been. We need to look at implementing the kinds of best practices we already know exist through having responded to epidemics within the health system.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Crockett, you have five minutes.

● (1010)

[*English*]

Ms. Joan Crockatt (Calgary Centre, CPC): Thank you very much.

I really appreciate the testimony we've heard so far today. I feel as though we are getting to best practices, which is really what this study is intended to do. I think we heard at the outset—and it sounds very ominous—that we've been doing a lot of these things for 30 years, and yet in some areas like the area of violence against women, we haven't seen much change.

I want to turn, therefore, to the Sheldon Kennedy Child Advocacy Centre, because I really feel that it represents a new wave of change in how we deal with these issues, and it has some great innovation that we can learn from today.

I'm hoping, ladies, that you can help us expound on that and really learn from what you've learned.

I want to talk about how we know. One of the great challenges with pouring money into a field that we all feel deeply needs our attention is to actually know what is working and how to measure that as you go along.

Can you talk about that, please, Bonnie?

Ms. Bonnie Johnston: Yes, thank you very much for the question. We really appreciate that.

You know, we've been operational just under two years, and the impact that we see happening with these systems coming together is quite exceptional. I've been in this business for a number of years, and we've all tried to figure out how we can do better by our kids and families. Again, the leadership that came together in Alberta around this has helped move us forward here. The whole measurement piece that we're looking at—and that's why Jenny sitting next to me is an evaluator—is the creation of five strategic directions in that centre. Behind each of those comes in a whole ops plan. We run this as a business organization, and behind those ops plans comes in what we're trying to identify right now as key performance indicators. We've been very blessed with KPMG coming in with us, and they're donating a considerable amount of time and energy with us to look at these outcomes.

Within the centre, as well, we created a practice framework early on to figure out that this wasn't about 100 professionals coming in and getting to sit next to each other. This was about truly creating a different culture with different outcomes and different expectations under a practice framework, so we created this early on. Back about six months ago—and this was quite unprecedented—the police opened their files, child and family services opened their files, and Alberta Health opened their files. We were able to go in and look at those files and that sharing of information and figure out how far we had already come in terms of our practice, what was working, what wasn't working, what we needed to continue to push, and what barriers we saw preventing really helping these kids and families. We bring this to the table every two to three weeks. We're sitting with all those systems. We're talking about what's working, what isn't working, and what could work differently. There's certainly a transparency. There's an openness there to continually push the bar around what we can do better. We continue with all of our evaluation, working with KPMG and outlining the key performance indicators. We're now creating a whole evaluation framework that will steer us in those directions as well.

Ms. Joan Crockatt: Our time's really short so I'm kind of hoping that you can sort of consolidate what other people and organizations might take forward. What are you measuring, and how are you measuring it, so that we know that you're achieving phenomenal success with this integrated model?

Ms. Bonnie Johnston: Well go ahead, Jenny, with some of the indicators we've got. You're poring over all of that, really quickly.

Ms. Jenny Ofrim: What we're looking at right now is just a lot of descriptive data around the children and families we're seeing. We're also looking at evidence of collaboration, so how many cases, or representative cases, are actually showing evidence of joint investigation, joint assessment, consultation during treatments, and even further down the road into the court process. What we're also seeing is expediency of these processes. Like Bonnie said earlier, what used to take weeks or months is now taking hours or days. We're also noticing more qualitative data such as different professionals being on the same page; they're able to speak the same language more closely than they ever have before. They're better able to understand the perspectives of one another and then make joint decisions on how to move forward with a case.

Ms. Joan Crockatt: May I just ask you how this actually helps the victims of sexual abuse and how it helps in prevention?

● (1015)

The Chair: Very briefly, thank you.

Ms. Bonnie Johnston: Well, very briefly, we are able to respond really quickly. There's a wraparound service that goes in. Those kids can come in really quickly and, within a day to two days, all those services are wrapping around them, so you've got a more expedited and timely response to move these kids forward.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Ms. Young, you have five minutes.

[*English*]

Ms. Wai Young (Vancouver South, CPC): Again, I'd like to thank all of you for your excellent information.

Going back to Calgary and the wraparound services, I want to talk a little bit about your perspectives on the need for more transition houses. We've implemented Bill S-2 in this country, which means that women on reserves get to stay in their homes, and it's the perpetrator who gets removed. Which would you say is a better model? Is it a better model for the women and children to remain in their homes where violence existed and the perpetrator is removed, or is it a better model for the women to be removed?

Ms. Bonnie Johnston: Our experience—and this would go back to my days in child and family services—is that more and more it would be better for the perpetrator to be removed. Keep those children and their families in their homes; otherwise, you are segregating, moving kids out. You're moving them from their communities and from their schools, and that's causing increased instability for these families.

Ms. Wai Young: When you are saying that you're providing these wraparound services etc., can you tell us operationally what actually happens then in reported cases?

Ms. Bonnie Johnston: We work with the police, and the child and family services. All the referrals still come through them. They are the legislative body that handles these referrals.

Every morning at the centre we have a triage team from health and child and family services and police. They look at all of the referrals that have come in from the day before across our region. They make a decision on a professional basis on which cases will come to the centre; these are usually the more extreme cases of sexual abuse and severe physical abuse and neglect. They are making those decisions on who will benefit from that wraparound specialized service delivery.

Ms. Wai Young: Do you think that there are laws in place currently that will protect our women and children where the perpetrator can be removed and is removed or do you think we need to strengthen these laws?

Ms. Bonnie Johnston: Well, my knowledge base at this point would say that they probably have to be strengthened to protect these children. You know, for a long time this whole area of child abuse has been one that has been very difficult for society to get their heads around.

Society actually does this to these kids: 93% of our kids are abused by people they know and trust. These are difficult situations for these kids to be in. The more we can strengthen that to protect them, the better.

Ms. Wai Young: Thank you.

And now to Ms. O'Hearn. In regards to the north and given that housing is such a big issue and the lack thereof of course, and my heart goes out to the communities there, would you say that it's a better model for the perpetrator to be removed or for the women and children to be removed from their homes?

Ms. Tracy O'Hearn: What I've heard directly from many women is that women and children need to be able to stay in their home, but it's very complex. It's very complex because there often is no option. There is no other place to go for safety and homelessness is not viable in the Arctic.

Ms. Wai Young: But would you say that it's easier that the women and the children...? We know that's the majority of the people being abused, that it's usually a single perpetrator who is doing the abuse. Obviously it's not happening, but is that a better model? I think you did say that. You said that it's a better model for the women and children to stay in the homes.

Ms. Tracy O'Hearn: I've heard very clearly from many Inuit women that yes, the offender should be removed.

Ms. Wai Young: They would prefer to stay.

Do you think that the laws and the systems are in place then for the perpetrator to be removed? Is there more that can be done to assist with that?

Ms. Tracy O'Hearn: The situation in the north is even further complicated by things like the circuit court system, so there may be long delays.

Certainly, we've been having a national dialogue in this country recently about the many reasons that prevent women from going to police. For a woman in Clyde River—I'll pick Clyde River—every one of her relatives' homes may be crowded so that in itself can force her to stay there and put up and shut up. And from other studies in the south we know it can take 35 assaults before a woman first goes to police.

There aren't the supports. I remember appearing with Sheldon Kennedy a few weeks ago and I told the committee that we can only dream of that wraparound service. These are children who have already been assaulted. It's not preventative. It's a response. There are so many things.

Many people live in social housing and so there are tenant agreements...we've heard a lot about that from women, that they may have no choice but to leave because the rented accommodation.... And, private home ownership is the minority. Mostly it's rented accommodation, so there could be legal leasing arrangements that may allow the perpetrator to stay.

Then we have to consider all the issues of power and control and lack of options. It's a very broad question that you ask. The other thing I would really emphasize is the impact of the circuit court system and lack of access to victim supports as I've mentioned before. But I've heard women and their children need to be able to stay in their home.

There are overcrowded prisons in the north as well. The Baffin Correctional Centre has been under heavy criticism by the correctional investigator and so forth, so there may not be anywhere to remove an offender to.

● (1020)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I would also like to thank you for giving us an overview of life in the north. In the south, we often have no idea of the distances, isolation and lack of services. Thank you for providing us with an overview of life in the north.

Ms. Duncan, you have five minutes.

[*English*]

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Ms. Faraday, on the problems you've raised, what are your thoughts on the government's changes to the temporary foreign worker program? Has enough been done? What needs to be done? Have you very specific recommendations you'd like to see in the report?

Ms. Fay Faraday: In terms of what has not been done in the changes, none of the changes that were implemented in June addressed any of the structural conditions that I've talked about that actually drive vulnerability to exploitation and violence, so the removal of the tied work permits is absolutely critical.

Some of the dangers that have been created with the changes are that the term of the work permits is shorter now. Instead of having two-year permits, they are now one-year permits, which puts even greater stress on workers to comply with employers' demands because they are even more vulnerable. It's easier to cycle them out more quickly. There is less security with regard to their ability to stay for a period of time that will allow them to pay off their recruitment fees, to figure out what their rights are in Canada, and how to enforce that.

What we have seen is this acceleration of the revolving door, of spinning workers in and out more quickly without an ability to enforce their rights. The focus of the changes has not been to address any of the elements of that system that drive worker vulnerability.

That was also accompanied with a framing that contributes to a discourse in which migrant workers are seen as a threat. They are the others who are seen as problematic. It was framed in the discourse of putting Canadians first and setting up a divisiveness between people who are Canadians and migrants who have been living and working here for a long time.

That needs to be very directly addressed to recognize that these are workers who are doing core jobs in the economy that our families depend on, our economies depend on. They are members of our communities, so it is important to provide recognition of that and enable them to actually regularize their status as permanent members of our communities. They should be able to bring their families with them. The isolation of being here on their own without their families makes them even more vulnerable. It drives even greater marginalization and greater opportunity for employer control over every aspect of their lives.

Those are some really key issues that need to be addressed and the issue around recruitment has not been addressed at all.

● (1025)

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: The issue around recruitment has not been addressed.

Before I ask my last question, I want to make this point today, so that today's recommendations do appear in the report. We can't even get to best practices unless we have sustainable funding.

With that, I'll ask my last question. It will be for the Sheldon Kennedy Child Advocacy Centre. You discussed the importance of a multidisciplinary approach.

What pieces would you like to see in that multidisciplinary approach?

Ms. Bonnie Johnston: At this point, we have all of the pieces from justice, law enforcement, social services. Health is in there. The crown is in there. The RCMP has come in as well as education. The big piece that we need more of, certainly, is the mental health piece. That's huge in terms of trying to get more of that support for these kids, who are in acute trauma, and to stabilize them as they are coming in. As we continue to move forward, it certainly is around that mental health piece.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: What's needed particularly on the mental health side? Is there a very specific recommendation?

Ms. Bonnie Johnston: Similar to what's going on with the Inuit population, although we are in Calgary we are servicing southern Alberta first nations. We need to make sure that we have those services going out in rural Alberta and into the first nations.

So it would be around timely access to support for therapeutic services for kids sitting in more remote areas. Every kid deserves the same opportunity.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Barlow, you have seven minutes.

[*English*]

Mr. John Barlow (Macleod, CPC): Thank you very much.

I want to thank everybody for coming out today. It's great to hear your passion and some of your great ideas. I think this is an important opportunity for all of us to get together, consolidate some of these great ideas, and get your feedback on what is working but also what is not working and how we can address some of those solutions.

I also want to quickly mention that temporary foreign workers is a very significant issue for us in Alberta, but there are lots of options out there—the express entry on January 1, the open work permit, and we've quadrupled the staff who will be investigating reports of abuse. I'd be interested in having Mrs. Faraday keep in touch with us to let us know how those programs are working.

To Bonnie and Jenny in Calgary, it's good to see you both again. I had an opportunity to tour the centre a couple of times over the years.

Bonnie, you touched a little bit on the fact that you're able to do there in days and hours what would have taken weeks and months previously. I'd like to get you to perhaps expand on that a little bit. I think what we want to make sure is clear is that you have all of these services housed together. For lack of a better term, it's a one-stop shop. That seems to be making a world of difference.

First, can you tell us what difference that has made by having all of these groups together? Second, you mentioned the prenatal support team. I hadn't heard of that program before. Can you expand on that a little bit and let us know how that works and what's involved with that?

Ms. Bonnie Johnston: Absolutely.

First, as to why this is working so effectively, as I was just saying to Jenny, we are so new in our operations that we're working really hard to get some of that data that will really show some of the effectiveness. That's why we're working with evaluators right now.

In terms of what would happen before, John, first, child and family services has to be able to make that call. Then you're waiting for that police officer to get back to you, right? That could take a couple of days. You're waiting for that physician to let you know if this was intentional harm before you can actually apprehend or the police can charge.

Right now, with everything in one house basically, they're meeting constantly and they're doing their case plans together. They're sitting down together. A child and family services worker is five feet from those police officers. They're integrating their planning, their responses. They work as a team continually. The physician is sitting at triage. They're able to teach and learn and support each other in that environment.

Does that answer the question in terms of the culture we have?

● (1030)

Mr. John Barlow: Yes. I think the whole focus here is how we stop the cycle of abuse. That's what we're all here talking about today. I think it's very important that we get that intervention at an early age.

Another thing you talked about earlier was that children will only have to tell their story once rather than having to go to all these different buildings that could be miles away. They're able to sit down with these caregivers and just tell their story once.

Could you talk about that? Once a child is brought to the facility, what is the process they go through at that point?

Ms. Bonnie Johnston: As soon as it's determined that they're coming into the facility and an investigation has to be done, they will meet with a police officer or the RCMP, who are now on site as well. That child will go to an interview room with all the supports, in terms of a child-focused environment, that are there for their family. It is one interview, as you say. Child and family services can be monitoring at the same time. At that point in time, the story is told. At that point in time, it's caught on the video or the camera if it needs to proceed to court. The high quality is there for that case to move forward so that the child does not have to be re-victimized, telling their story a separate time.

All of those facilities are in place in the centre so that the child can walk through and tell their story. In one case, for example, everything was done in a day. They received support from the therapist and they had a medical examination at the centre all in the same day.

Mr. John Barlow: Perfect.

Perhaps you could just explain a little about the prenatal support team and how that came about. I guess we can't intervene any earlier than that. How does that work, and how was that developed?

Ms. Bonnie Johnston: It's been developed over a number of years. We were experiencing in Calgary, and probably in other cities as well, that even from the time of birth hospital nurses were reluctant to discharge these babies, because they saw in the hospital the evidence of domestic violence. We created a team with public health nurses, police, and child and family services to help these families with these little ones from birth to three months. It was protecting them, but it was also about creating an increased capacity for these families to look after their babies; to provide supports, if women were marginalized; to help them with the parenting; and to help them with instrumental skills that they needed to be successful parents.

There was an interest to move this back even further. We were seeing a number of referrals coming in from city policemen of women who were on the street, were pregnant, and were in high-risk situations. Again, it was moving to intervene earlier so that these women could be connected to prenatal supports and, as importantly, so that their babies could be born safe and with the types of supports they needed.

We were absolutely astounded. As I mentioned, we started with 30 referrals a year ago, and it's up to more than 240 referrals coming in of high-risk pregnant women on the street; sometimes it takes six and seven contacts to find these women. It's an astounding problem, and this is an essential service, which we need to look at more closely in our communities, for these women who have been marginalized and need help during this period of time.

Mr. John Barlow: Bonnie, are they brought in to the child advocacy centre, then, once they've been referred to you?

Ms. Bonnie Johnston: Much of our work is done in the community, so public health nurses move out into the community. They work with police. They're doing most of their work in the community.

We are also connecting with a number of agencies in the city to make sure that these women are brought in to these supports, and we work across the continuum of care in the community.

I mentioned Calgary. I want to mention that we're now developing that model to go into southern Alberta, whereby we at the centre can provide supports and capacity to rural communities as well, with resources and expertise.

Mr. John Barlow: Thank you, Bonnie.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

I will now give the floor to Ms. Nash for seven minutes.

Ms. Peggy Nash: Thank you, Madam Chair.

[*English*]

I would like to start with Ms. O'Hearn.

You described Nunavut as the most dangerous place in Canada to be a woman. That was very powerful, and the statistics you presented were very powerful.

Can you state precisely how much of the money from the federal government for on-reserve shelters is going to women in Nunavut?

Ms. Tracy O'Hearn: It's zero.

● (1035)

Ms. Peggy Nash: There is no money?

Ms. Tracy O'Hearn: To the best of my understanding, through AANDC they provide $4 million a year for shelters on reserve only. None of that money is available to Inuit communities. They are specifically excluded.

Ms. Peggy Nash: You may have addressed this earlier, but refresh my memory. Can you tell me what kind of consultation you were able to give for the development of the federal government's action plan?

Ms. Tracy O'Hearn: We had none. We were not consulted or asked for advice or priorities at all.

Ms. Peggy Nash: So in the most dangerous place in Canada to be a woman you have not been able to use your voice in advising the government about what the needs are for women in your area.

Can you describe what meaningful consultation by the federal government would look like? I know the UN has guidelines on meaningful consultation. How would you like to be able to involve Inuit women and their voices in advising the federal government?

Ms. Tracy O'Hearn: I appreciate that question, and it's something we have given a lot of thought to. There's quite a problem in lack of capacity and lack of civil society, if you will, in Inuit communities. Iqaluit is probably the biggest one. It's the only city. Again, it's only really two generations since Inuit have lived in communities and settlements, so it's a speed of light cultural change. In some areas, we still have 70% of Inuit kids not finishing high school. There are a number of challenges: unemployment, poverty, overcrowded housing.

I don't want to overstate it, but when you're just trying to navigate each day and survive, maybe feed your children or not, it can be very difficult to have the ability, the time, the knowledge, the skills to develop that civil society capacity. There are no incorporated women's groups or other groups as we take for granted in the south.

We work with two regional Inuit women's organizations, to the extent we each have the respective capacity. We would like to have a formal engagement with those women on the priorities in their regions.

There are a number of entities. Qulliit Nunavut Status of Women Council would have a role to play. We have a board. Frankly, in preparing with the provinces and territories for the round table in February, we will be there, I hope, having to have a bake sale. Again, I don't want to overstate it.

We have zero resources to solicit views on priorities, so we've created a new email address, and I'm hoping that women will email us with their priorities. There have to be resources for equitable participation, as was brought up earlier—not per capita but equitable—with a view to equitable outcomes. Using a substantive equality approach, what is required to achieve an equitable outcome, whatever it may be?

Ms. Peggy Nash: Thank you very much.

It seems that, due to the major barriers to women in a variety of ways, to Inuit women and to the Inuit generally just because of geography and culture, special outreach needs to take place.

Ms. Little, we had a terrible situation recently in Toronto, one of the many instances of violence against women and their kids, when a woman was murdered along with her two boys. In the news reports it seems that this woman had been in a shelter, fleeing violence from her husband. She was there for some time, but afterwards, because she was working as a nurse, she did not qualify for transition housing and therefore had to go out on the market. According to news reports, she couldn't afford the rents, went back to her husband, and subsequently she and her sons were killed. The husband is now dead.

Can you describe the limitations for working women who perhaps may not qualify for the subsidies available to the lowest-income women, and the particular challenges and barriers that places for women fleeing violence?

● (1040)

Ms. Marion Little: I think there are considerable barriers and challenges, not just to working women, but I would say students in our universities. These people are fairly privileged and have access to a lot of resources. The women at École Polytechnique were targeted because they had access to resources and education.

The important piece is to look at this as a comprehensive issue within which we want to nest tailored responses to marginalized groups, but it must be addressed comprehensively to make sure that the access to resources is available to anybody who needs it whenever they need it.

I think a big part of this is comprehensive policy development, so I would encourage you to consult the UN Women virtual resource centre to end violence against women and girls, or endvawnow.org.

Ms. Peggy Nash: Thanks very much.

I have one quick question for Ms. Faraday. Is there a role to play by the federal government in the elimination of recruitment fees for live-in caregivers and temporary foreign workers generally?

Ms. Fay Faraday: Yes, I think it is possible.

Typically, that is something that is handled at the provincial level. The federal government can play a role in establishing standards that must be met before employers can apply to get labour market impact assessments and authorization to hire.

A really good working example is that in Manitoba, the provincial government has passed very strong legislation requiring that all recruiters be licensed and put up security deposits before they can be licensed and that all employers who hire migrant workers must register. For any employer in Manitoba who wants to hire a migrant worker, the federal government will not process their labour market impact assessment applications until they are fully registered under the provincial system and it's clear that they're using a licensed recruiter. That's a way in which the two systems can operate together to build security.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Ladies, in Calgary, Toronto, and here, in Ottawa, thank you very much for enriching our study.

I want to wish you all the best for a safe and pleasant holiday season and a very good year. Keep up the good work.

To all the members, remember that we don't have a meeting next Thursday. I want to convey my best wishes for the holiday. I hope you have a safe and restful holiday and come back full of renewed energy for our committee, which will reconvene in the new year.

[*Translation*]

I would also like to thank all the support staff. Our work on the committee is supported in a very professional way.

I wish each and every one of you a very happy holiday.

The meeting is adjourned.

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