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Chair

Mrs. Karen Vecchio

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• (1530)

[English]

The Chair (Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC)): Good afternoon, everyone.

Welcome to the 114th meeting of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

Today we will commence our study on the system of shelters and transition houses serving women and children affected by violence against women and intimate partner violence.

For this, I am pleased to welcome today's panellists. From the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, we will have Margaret Buist. I note that she is not here at the moment, so we may have to delay questions for her as well as her speech.

From the Department of Employment and Social Development, we have Catherine Scott, director general; and Janet Gwilliam, manager, both of the community development and homelessness partnerships directorate.

From Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation we have Charles MacArthur, senior vice-president of assisted housing; and from the Office of the Co-ordinator of Status of Women, we'd like to welcome back Justine Akman, director general, policy and external relations, as well as Tammy Tremblay, director, gender-based violence knowledge centre.

We're going to begin. We're going to hold off on Margaret and we're going to move forward with the Department of Employment and Social Development.

You have seven minutes.

Ms. Catherine Scott (Director General, Community Development and Homelessness Partnerships Directorate, Department of Employment and Social Development): Thank you for the invitation to appear before the committee today.

I'd like to start by providing you with some statistical information about women's homelessness. Results from ESDC's 2016 national shelter study showed that 137,000 Canadians used an emergency shelter in 2014, which is our most recent statistic. Between 2005 and 2014, 27% of shelter users were women, a number that remained consistent over that decade.

Nearly 90% of families using emergency shelters are headed by single females, and family shelter use is increasing in both length

and occupancy. Typical stay lengths more than doubled between 2005 and 2014 to 22 days.

Thirty per cent of emergency shelter users in 2014 identified themselves as indigenous. The 2016 shelter study also showed that between 2005 and 2014, indigenous people were 10 times more likely to use a shelter than were non-indigenous people. Additionally, there was a higher rate of homelessness among indigenous women compared to non-indigenous, as 32% of indigenous shelter users are women compared to 23.5% of non-indigenous shelter users.

It's important to place the statistics from the 2016 shelter study in context and to acknowledge that it examines emergency shelters and does not capture transitional housing, temporary shelters and violence-against-women shelters.

We have data-sharing agreements with shelters across the country, which make up approximately 60% of the total beds associated with emergency, transitional, corrections, immigrant/refugee and violence-against-women shelters in Canada.

Violence-against-women shelters are, however, currently under-represented in our database, as very few of these facilities have data-sharing agreements with our program. In addition, shelter data does not capture the homeless situation of the many women who experience hidden homelessness and who do not engage with the shelter system. That being the case, shelter data likely under-estimates the extent of women's homelessness.

However, combining shelter data with additional resources, such as our coordinated point-in-time count, helps to fill in some of the gaps. Results of the 2016 count, which happened across the country in 32 communities, showed that close to 40% of homeless respondents were women. Furthermore, as you know, there is strong evidence linking domestic violence with homelessness for women and children. Of those surveyed during the 2016 count, nearly one-quarter cited domestic abuse as the factor leading to their most recent housing loss.

We anticipate that an updated national shelter study and results from the 2018 coordinated point-in-time count will be released in early 2019.

[Translation]

Currently, the federal homelessness program, the Homelessness Partnering Strategy or HPS, provides direct funding to 61 designated communities, as well as off-reserve indigenous and rural and remote communities across Canada.

The HPS is delivered through a unique community-based approach that gives communities the flexibility and tools to identify and address their own community's distinct homelessness needs and priorities.

Following a comprehensive community planning process, communities determine their own needs/priorities and develop appropriate projects.

[*English*]

The Government of Canada is one partner among many when it comes to tackling homelessness. Provinces and territories, municipalities and other stakeholders also contribute to the prevention and reduction of homelessness.

Large capital investments are limited under the HPS, which focuses instead on providing funding for longer-term supports such as the Housing First approach.

[*Translation*]

Since 2014, the HPS has been focused on the Housing First approach.

• (1535)

Housing First is a program originally designed to get more individuals experiencing long-term homelessness into permanent housing and then providing them with wrap-around supports as quickly as possible.

While the Housing First approach was initially tested among homeless individuals who are single and living with mental health and/or addiction issues, the approach has been used successfully with a variety of demographic groups, including women and families.

[*English*]

Between April 1, 2014, and October 2018, the HPS has provided \$40.4 million for just over 225 projects that exclusively support women. About one-third of these projects exclusively target women fleeing domestic violence.

To strengthen the work of communities in their efforts to help homeless Canadians find stable housing, budget 2017 proposed historic investments in federal homelessness programming of \$2.1 billion over 10 years, to expand and extend the funding for homelessness beyond 2019. By 2021, this will nearly double the investments made in homelessness as compared to those for 2015-16.

[*Translation*]

Throughout 2017 and early 2018, the Government of Canada consulted with community stakeholders, all provinces and territories, and indigenous partners on how to modernize programming to better prevent and reduce homelessness across Canada.

These consultations were guided by the work of an advisory committee of experts and stakeholders in the field of homelessness, chaired by parliamentary secretary Adam Vaughan.

Two of the advisory committee members have worked in the women's shelter sector.

That committee heard that organizations would like to innovate and adapt the Housing First model to better meet the needs of indigenous peoples, youth, women and others who need different approaches or types and levels of support.

[*English*]

Federal homelessness programming is in the midst of a transformation toward a more coordinated and outcomes-based approach. In June 2018, Minister Jean-Yves Duclos announced Reaching Home, Canada's homelessness strategy, which will replace the HPS on April 1, 2019. Reaching Home will support the goals of the national housing strategy, in particular to support the most vulnerable Canadians in maintaining safe, stable and affordable housing and to reduce chronic homelessness nationally by 50% by 2027-28. The redesigned program, Reaching Home, will maintain the community-based approach of the HPS and expand the program to reach new communities.

The Chair: I'm just going to interrupt for a second. We usually allow seven minutes for each panellist, but because we do have a little bit more time, is the committee okay if we allow them to go up to nine minutes?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Good.

Continue, and do the full thing.

Ms. Catherine Scott: I've almost finished.

Reaching Home will introduce greater flexibility for communities on how funding may be used, making investments to achieve community-level outcomes and publicly reporting on results. For instance, while housing first is a proven approach, endorsed by the Government of Canada, Reaching Home will give communities greater flexibility to address local priorities and invest in homelessness prevention and programming designed to meet the needs of different vulnerable populations, including women and children fleeing violence.

A key component of Reaching Home is the introduction of a coordinated access system, which will help communities ensure fairness, prioritize people most in need of assistance, and match individuals and families to appropriate housing and services in a more streamlined and coordinated way. The government will increase dedicated funding for indigenous-led homelessness initiatives to support the availability of culturally appropriate services for indigenous peoples off reserve living in vulnerable conditions, including indigenous women, youth and mothers with children.

[*Translation*]

In conclusion, we know that the challenges faced by women fleeing violence and experiencing homelessness are significant.

Although there is much work to be done over the next year to implement Reaching Home, it is through working collaboratively with our community partners that we will have a stronger response to homelessness across Canada.

Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: That's excellent.

I'm now going to move over to CMHC, with Charles MacArthur, for up to nine minutes.

Mr. Charles MacArthur (Senior Vice-President, Assisted Housing, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation): Thank you, Madam Chair.

[Translation]

It's a pleasure to appear before the committee today on behalf of the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, or CMHC.

• (1540)

[English]

CMHC's mission is to help Canadians meet their housing needs. We do this through our mortgage loan insurance activities, market analysis and research, and by supporting and delivering affordable housing programs. These programs support the entire continuum of housing, from emergency shelters and transitional housing to community housing and home ownership.

As senior vice-president of assisted housing, I'm honoured to be leading the team that delivers these programs.

A home is more than just a roof over one's head. It's a refuge that gives us the stability to find and keep a job, care for our family, and belong to a community. Unfortunately, for too many Canadians, a decent home is simply not within their reach. Some 1.7 million Canadian households are in what we call core housing need. This means they're spending more than 30% of their income on housing, leaving little for groceries, utilities and other expenses. Or they may be living in a house that is overcrowded, has a leaky roof, or has a mouldy basement. In the worst cases, unaffordable housing creates impossible choices. No one should be forced to choose between healthy food and a home that's safe. New Canadians deserve a place to make a fresh start, and those who have suffered misfortune or a poor start in life deserve a second chance. No one should have to stay with an abusive partner because they have nowhere to go.

We know that affordable housing improves the lives of Canadians, and it builds stronger, more inclusive communities. That's why CMHC has scaled up its policy, program and research activities, in large part by delivering on the federal government's national housing strategy.

As you may know, the national housing strategy is a 10-year, \$40 billion plan to give more Canadians a place to call home, focusing first and foremost on the most vulnerable populations. Of particular interest to this committee, the national housing strategy will aim for 33% of all investments to support projects that specifically target women, girls and their families, recognizing the unique vulnerabilities they face.

This is not a set-it-and-forget-it program. We continue to listen to the housing needs of women through the annual pan-Canadian voice for women's housing symposium, which brings together women from diverse backgrounds, including those with lived experience of housing needs, shelter workers, and representatives of non-governmental organizations to talk about women's housing. The symposium

allows women to voice and identify the key issues they face in accessing housing. We look forward to taking part in the 2018 symposium later this month in Vancouver.

CMHC has funded shelters and transitional housing for many years, but with the national housing strategy, we have an opportunity to make a lasting difference, with new programs with ambitious targets. For example, one of the signature pillars of the strategy is the \$13.2-billion national housing co-investment fund. This fund will create 60,000 new affordable homes, and repair and renovate up to 240,000 existing ones. At least 4,000 of these homes will be earmarked for survivors of domestic violence.

The fund encourages private and non-profit developers to work together with all orders of government to make the most of the funding, so that as many Canadians as possible can benefit. For close to 40 years, CHMC has offered non-profit social housing and affordable housing programs such as the section 95 on-reserve non-profit housing rental program, and the residential rehabilitation assistance programs to first nations communities to help build new homes and renovate existing houses.

These programs address the needs of vulnerable population groups, including women and girls, as the rate of housing need on reserve is higher than the national rate, and overcrowding and the lack of housing can lead to negative socio-economic outcomes and higher rates of conflict, including domestic violence.

Since 1988, CMHC has also assisted with the construction or renovation, in first nations communities, of more than 40 shelters, which provide over 500 beds for victims of domestic violence, through programs such as project haven, next step and the current day shelter enhancement program.

Most recently, budget 2016 has enabled us to work with five first nation communities to invest \$10.4 million into the construction of five new shelters on reserve. These shelters are located in British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario and Quebec and are expected to provide 40 additional beds for individuals and families.

These five projects consist of emergency as well as second-stage longer-term accommodation shelters. Each new shelter will be managed and operated by a local organization within those regions. We have also worked closely with our colleagues at Indigenous Services Canada, which provides operating funds for the ongoing day-to-day operations of the shelters that serve people fleeing domestic violence in first nations communities.

Numbers can't convey the full impact of the program, so let me share a couple of stories about shelters that have received funding under CMHC programs and the women whose lives were changed as a result. Fifty-six-year-old Tamara is a transgender person living in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. She was once homeless, using drugs, and suffering from chronic depression and suicidal thoughts. An outreach worker found her and convinced her to go to a shelter run by Atira Women's Resource Society. She found acceptance there; her health improved; and more importantly, she found safe and stable housing. She finally became eligible for long-awaited gender reassignment surgery. She recently got her own apartment, which is run by Atira, and she has gone back to school to get her master's degree.

Another example is the shelter on Wiikwemkoong unceded territory on Manitoulin Island in Ontario. It has developed a gender-inclusive and culturally appropriate approach. It uses first nations philosophies and ceremonies to provide a safe, supportive environment for survivors of domestic violence, so that they can begin to rebuild their lives.

As these stories show, decent, affordable housing provides a launch pad to a better future, but making housing more affordable in Canada is not a quick or an easy fix. That's why CMHC is leading the work on behalf of the Government of Canada to consult and develop new legislation to support the national housing strategy and the human rights-based approach to housing at its core. The legislation will require future governments to continue to prioritize the housing needs of the most vulnerable over the long term.

This approach will also include mechanisms that tackle barriers to housing that many Canadians face. Initiatives like the creation of a federal housing advocate and a National Housing Council will ensure that people from all walks of life have a voice, wherever housing policy decisions are being made.

Finally, we know the housing need is great and that new, more, and better housing information is the key to overcoming housing challenges. That's why, as part of the national housing strategy, CMHC is making research an even greater priority. We are identifying data gaps and working to fill them, so that we can continue to provide informed policy advice and sustainable solutions that give Canadians the housing options they need to thrive and prosper.

Everyone at CMHC is deeply aware of the responsibility and honour we have to deliver the national housing strategy. We're working hard, with partners across government and in the private and non-profit sector, to make the most of this once-in-a-generation opportunity. This means ensuring that more women and children who need shelters can access them when they need them. It also means ensuring that shelters are a bridge to more stable, long-term housing and a better life.

Thank you, Madam Chair and everyone on the committee, for your attention. I would be happy to answer your questions.

• (1545)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We're now going to move over to Justine Akman from the Office of the Status of Women.

Ms. Justine Akman (Director General, Policy and External Relations, Office of the Co-ordinator, Status of Women): Thank you, Madam Chair.

[*Translation*]

I'm pleased to be addressing you today as you undertake your study of the network of shelters and transition houses serving women and children affected by family violence.

This afternoon, I'll be sharing information with you on Canada's strategy to end and prevent gender-based violence, with a focus on the initiatives Status of Women Canada is leading, as well as a focus on barriers marginalized women face when accessing shelters.

Violence against women, intimate partner violence, family violence and other forms of gender-based violence are powerful barriers to the empowerment, equality and full participation of women and girls in Canadian society.

[*English*]

Women and girls may experience violence in many different ways: physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, verbal abuse, financial manipulation or control, spiritual abuse, criminal harassment or stalking. Violence may occur in the home, at work, at school or in the community.

According to a key stakeholder, Women's Shelters Canada, shelters and transition houses are much more than refuge from violence. They're where women rebuild their lives and plan ways to move forward in a life of safety and security. Unfortunately, space is limited. In 2014, on a snapshot day, more than 300 women and 200 of their children were turned away from a shelter—more than half, 56%, because shelters were full.

In 2016, the Minister of Status of Women was mandated to develop and implement a gender-based violence strategy. In 2017, the strategy was launched following budget 2017, which announced \$100.9 million over five years, and \$20.7 million per year ongoing, to establish the first federal strategy of its kind in Canada. "It's Time: Canada's Strategy to Prevent and Address Gender-Based Violence" is a whole-of-government approach to ending gender-based violence. The strategy focuses on preventing and addressing GBV, or gender-based violence, a term used to describe violence directed at individuals because of their gender, gender identity or perceived gender.

Since its launch, Status of Women Canada and federal partners have been working to implement actions under the strategy's three pillars: prevention, support for survivors and their families, and promotion of responsive justice systems.

This year, budget 2018 announced an additional \$86 million over five years, and \$20 million ongoing per year, to expand the strategy. The strategy is the first federal strategy to address all forms of violence through a gender and intersectional lens. It's informed by grassroots activism, feminist action and engagement with survivors, front-line workers, researchers and advocates. It builds on current federal efforts and seeks to align with provincial and territorial initiatives related to GBV. It will fill gaps in knowledge and provide support for diverse, under-represented and often marginalized populations.

It includes investments from Status of Women Canada, the Public Health Agency of Canada, Public Safety Canada, the Department of National Defence, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, and Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada.

Strategy investments will focus on preventing violence against children and teens; enhancing and developing preventative bullying and cyber bullying initiatives; equipping health professionals to provide appropriate care to victims; addressing online child exploitation; enhancing immigrant and refugee settlement programs; providing cultural competency training; and supporting sexual assault centres in close proximity to Canadian Forces bases, among other actions.

The strategy also includes initiatives from other departments and agencies beyond the six funded partners whose work is critical to ending GBV in Canada. These include work by Indigenous Services Canada and Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada as well as by StatsCan, CMHC, and ESDC—all of whom you'll hear from in this study—as well as other federal departments.

For our part, Status of Women is focusing our efforts on coordinating all federal actions related to GBV through a new knowledge centre on gender-based violence housed within Status of Women Canada, on delivering a program on gender-based violence, and on supporting gender-based violence research initiatives.

The knowledge centre, which we'll launch this fall, will be a focal point of the strategy, and be responsible for coordination, data and research, reporting and knowledge mobilization on GBV-related content. To ensure that interested individuals, organizations and communities are able to access timely information and evidence, the knowledge centre will combine resources and research into a single platform as well as provide a searchable online platform.

The strategy has also created a program that is population-specific, with the objective of supporting organizations working in the GBV sector in developing and implementing promising practices to address gaps in support for indigenous and underserved populations in Canada.

While important work has been done to advance knowledge on GBV, there remain major data gaps on topics such as patterns of intimate partner violence, experiences of diverse populations, issues such as female genital mutilation, technology-assisted violence and dating violence.

To fill these gaps, Status of Women is collaborating with Stats Canada on three national surveys that will result in much-needed data and information on sexual harassment and gender-based violence in public and private spaces, post-secondary environments

and workplaces. We also have a very robust qualitative research agenda to delve deeper into people's lived experiences and to explore partnerships with vulnerable communities.

In addition, through our women's program, we have provided funding to women's shelters and shelter networks for time-specific projects to address gender-based violence. For example, some of these projects support collaboration between local shelters to identify and pilot promising practices to improve women's access to support services. They improve first-responder screening and referral practices for women victims of domestic violence, and they address barriers to improving access to second-stage services for women.

For marginalized and victimized women, shelters, housing and safety from violence are inseparable; however, marginalized women face additional barriers when accessing shelters. We know that indigenous women and girls experience violent victimization at twice the rate of non-indigenous women, and spousal violence at three times the rate of non-indigenous women, yet there is a lack of shelter services in indigenous communities. The north has some of the highest rates of family and gendered violence in the country. Construction and maintenance costs lead to crowded living conditions, which are a risk factor for violence.

We do know that, despite efforts to date, more than 70% of the 53 Inuit communities spread across four geographic regions of the Canadian Arctic still don't have access to shelters, although the situation is improving. LGBTQ communities experience high rates of violence, but we still hear stories of people being turned away from women's shelters. Immigrant and refugee populations are at high risk of homelessness due to their higher rates of poverty, interpersonal dependency, child care responsibilities and interpersonal violence, and yet immigrant and refugee women overall may not have access to shelter systems for a number of reasons and are, therefore, more likely to experience homelessness and overcrowding.

Status of Women and other government departments are, of course, listening to concerns of stakeholders. For example, co-hosted by Status of Women, CMHC and ESDC, a group of more than 50 women from every province and territory took part in the first pan-Canadian voices for women in housing symposium. The symposium provided an opportunity to hear from women about their lived experiences.

Status of Women looks forward to hearing the testimonies of stakeholders who you will be hearing from. We thank you for this study.

• (1555)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Justine. That's an excellent segue to Margaret Buist, who is here with us. She is an assistant deputy minister with Indigenous Services Canada.

Margaret, you have up to nine minutes.

Ms. Margaret Buist (Acting Assistant Deputy Minister, Education and Social Development Programs and Partnerships Branch, Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Thank you very much, Madam Chair and honourable members of the committee, for inviting Indigenous Services Canada to appear before this committee for this very important topic. It's a pleasure to be here with you gathered today on traditional Algonquin territory.

Indigenous women and girls in Canada are disproportionately affected by all forms of violence. Canada takes this issue very seriously and is committed to ensuring the safety and security of all women and children in this country. At Indigenous Services we work in partnership with our indigenous partners and communities to try to address the violence against indigenous women and girls. Our violence prevention is built on the indigenous social determinants of health, which promote integrated and comprehensive planning.

The family violence prevention program at Indigenous Services provides access to family violence shelter services and funds prevention activities. There are two components to the program: the operational funding for an existing network of 41 shelters in first nations communities, Alberta and Yukon; and funding for proposal-based prevention projects. We invest \$37.8 million on an ongoing basis to support these 41 shelters and the prevention activities, which take place on and off reserve and complement some of the other programs and activities you've heard about here today from my colleagues.

Investments made in collaboration with the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation through budget 2016 have supported the construction of five new shelters, as you've heard, in five different provinces across the country, and all are anticipated to be completed by the end of this fiscal year. This will increase our shelter network to 46.

Between 2013 and 2017 the department invested about \$140 million in the family violence prevention program, which provided shelter services for approximately 8,300 children and over 10,000 women on reserve and funded more than 1,200 prevention and awareness projects. One of those projects is Ila'latl, a "healing families and community" project in Atlantic Canada. It encompasses the themes of trauma-informed care, mental wellness, family

violence prevention, empowerment, and engaging men and boys. The project collaborates with local RCMP, community and mental health services and partners. It is very common of the types of prevention activities that we have funded through the program.

We also fund the National Aboriginal Circle against Family Violence, which supports the network of shelters and their staff through training forums, prevention activities, research and partner collaboration. We know, as my colleague Ms. Akman said, that there is a need for shelters in the north. We have provided financial support to Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, which has commissioned a study on violence against women and shelter service needs across Inuit Nunangat. The study is anticipated to be completed this year, and it will give us a helpful picture of the needs of northern women and children.

I'd like to speak briefly now about the national inquiry, putting my hat on for supporting the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs, Minister Bennett, who is the lead for the Government of Canada's response to the national inquiry. It's an important step on the path to ending the unacceptable rates of violence against indigenous women and girls.

There was an initial fund of \$53.8 million dedicated to the inquiry, which has recently been extended to allow them to complete their work. Their final report will be submitted April 30, 2019. This has enabled the commission to hold further institutional and expert hearings, while balancing the needs of families who have waited years for answers.

I know that the inquiry has held some hearings with respect to housing and shelters on and off reserve, and there has been some expert testimony on that. This committee may wish to listen to those transcripts to help inform some of the work that you're doing.

Canada is not waiting for the outcome of the inquiry to take immediate action to prevent violence against indigenous women and girls, as you've heard here today. We responded to the commission's interim report from last November by providing nearly \$50 million in additional investments for a commemoration fund, health supports for the families and survivors who are participating in the inquiry, and support for the family information liaison units that are run out of provincial victim services offices and to assist the families and survivors, both participating in the inquiry and otherwise, who need to liaise with the police and criminal justice system.

•(1600)

The funding also supported the RCMP's office of investigative standards and practices to oversee high-risk investigations. In addition, Canada has been working with partners to reform first nations child and family services, through increased prevention funding for first nations child welfare agencies, as well as for communities. The \$1.4 billion from budget 2018 has provided funding for the reform of this program. We know that indigenous women are at far higher risk of violence than are non-indigenous women, and that these experiences of violence and abuse have an impact on their children, including increasing the rates of children being removed from their homes. Many women who testified or came before the national inquiry have spoken of having their children taken from them as a result of the violence they have experienced, which often has led these women to face all kinds of challenges, including living on the streets, suffering from addictions, and becoming more vulnerable to violence themselves.

The first nations child and family services funding also provides community well-being funding that goes directly to first nations communities to provide prevention care. For example, we have given \$2.5 million over three years to support the Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre in Manitoba, which has a really proven best practice of family group conferencing with children's aid societies, provincial workers, the courts and families, to try to keep children with their families.

Indigenous Services Canada is committed to ending the ongoing national tragedy of violence against indigenous women and girls, and we continue to collaborate with federal colleagues, provinces and territories, and with indigenous organizations to address this critical issue.

Thank you.

•(1605)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

As you'll note, Stats Canada is not with us today; we'll discuss that at committee business, but they will have information they'll be able to share with us later.

Today our meeting will end a few minutes prior to five. We're going to be doing our normal rounds of questions with our panel here today. We'll start off with seven minutes for Emmanuella.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos (Saint-Laurent, Lib.): Thank you for being here with us today to answer our questions.

We're dealing a lot with violence against women, and something that's come up in my office quite a bit is that women who have experienced domestic violence will tell me they're afraid of going to shelters, or they're going through the divorce process. They're no longer living with the people who abused them, but they're afraid of losing their children, and this is why they avoid going to shelters. Can you inform us about what protections exist for women who are fleeing violence with their children? What supports exist for them at this vulnerable time? How do shelters meet the needs of these women?

Ms. Margaret Buist: To answer that very briefly for my piece of it, which is the programming for indigenous women and children,

the shelters run all kinds of prevention programming themselves and they offer a safe space on reserve, the ones we fund for women and their children. I haven't heard about what you've spoken of, so maybe that's more in the off-reserve world than what we're experiencing in the on-reserve world, but the prevention programming does a lot for the women and children who are experiencing... and the prevention programming that we fund at Indigenous Services is both off and on reserve.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Thank you.

Can anyone speak for off-reserve women?

Ms. Catherine Scott: I can speak a little more broadly in terms of what the homelessness partnering strategy program supports. As I mentioned in my opening remarks, I think you're absolutely right in that there's a lot more hidden homelessness among women than what we see at the shelters. We fund those wraparound services: housing coordinators, case management, outreach workers, and a lot of measures to try to address preventive measures as well. A number of our programs have provided a holistic approach, looking at the woman and her family's needs in terms of whether they have income supports, what type of employment training the individual has had, and whether they need to think about going back to school.

Ms. Justine Akman: The women's program at Status of Women Canada has funded a number of projects over the past several years—and I think this information could probably be shared with the committee—related to various prevention services and support services for women who have experienced violence. Those might include actually improving community services, and getting the police to talk better to the community services, etc. That is the kind of thing the women's program funds, which is best practices and improving services that can then be shared across the country with similar organizations. I have quite a long list of them here in my package.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Thank you very much.

Justine, can you tell us a bit more about the gender-based violence knowledge centre and how it can result in better access to housing for some of these women's shelters?

Ms. Justine Akman: The knowledge centre is just getting up and running. It will be a vast resource of all kinds of academic and research materials, and also community-based materials related to gender-based violence. The idea is that organizations that are already running on really shoestring budgets will be able to access information much faster to help support services for victims of violence of various types.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Thank you very much.

Mr. MacArthur, I would like to ask you specifically for the national housing strategy. You mentioned that approximately 33% is going towards girls and women and their families, and that 4,000 units are specifically allocated for women who have experienced domestic violence. Can you inform us a bit more about how people can apply for this, or what types of organizations will be able and eligible to apply for this?

• (1610)

Mr. Charles MacArthur: There are a number of programs. We have staff out on the ground across the country, who are working with proponents, including those who are building shelters or transition housing. The idea is to ensure that the services are available for those who are in the housing and in the structure business. Those partnerships are recognized in this.

We've had our first two tranches of intake and we're going through the underwriting process at this time. We are seeing projects specifically targeted to women and girls coming through. We're working with folks on the ground to structure their deals, because oftentimes where we might have a seniors' project where there's an income flow.... These are projects that have limited income flows, so we have to work with partners on the ground to try to structure them so that what we bring to the table complements what others are bringing to the table—whether that's services or community groups that are able to provide assistance. We will work with the group to structure a deal that's sustainable, because we don't want to do something that's not going to be there over the long haul. We will work them, and with our provincial partners, our municipal partners and others to put a project together that has sustainability over the long term.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Is there anything out there for senior women with regard to the national housing strategy? Can you briefly let us know?

Mr. Charles MacArthur: Specifically with regard to building more seniors' housing, there's a target of 7,000 units. In the national housing strategy, affordable housing and sustaining affordable housing.... For example, continuing the subsidy that was due to end will ensure that 330,000 units continue to be affordable. Oftentimes it's women and senior women who are in those houses. The Canada housing benefit may provide benefit to senior women. Those are also eligible under the national co-investment fund. That's the target. However, we can expand upon that with the groups.

The Chair: Fantastic.

We're now going to move over to Ron Liepert for seven minutes.

Mr. Ron Liepert (Calgary Signal Hill, CPC): Thank you.

We've heard a lot today about what has been budgeted and what needs to be budgeted to meet the demand that all of you outlined.

So often in these situations, I try to see whether there's a way to lessen the demand or prevent the demand. As a bit of background, I did at one time operate a daycare in downtown Calgary, so I've had lots of experience with situations around abuse and women with children in daycare.

It's quite often the case that alcoholism, gambling and those sorts of things will lead to domestic violence. If we looked deeper into trying to deal with some of those issues and prevent domestic violence in the first place, maybe it would help us in the longer run to meet these kinds of needs that exist out there today.

I have a general question to any of you on the panel: Would you concur that we should possibly focus more effort on the prevention and less on the need after the domestic violence occurs? Do you have any thoughts on that?

Ms. Margaret Buist: Again, with respect to the programming for indigenous services, most of the project-based proposals we have are focused on prevention. Many of them engage men and boys in the dialogue around power imbalance in society, which goes to the core of the causes of violence against women and children, and in particular, indigenous women and children, but not exclusively.

That programming that we provide is specifically focused on prevention, and many of the services and activities provided within the ambit of the shelters on reserve are also prevention-focused, so we would agree that it's a really important focus.

• (1615)

Mr. Ron Liepert: Does anyone else want to respond?

Ms. Justine Akman: We know that the cost of various kinds of gender-based violence to Canadians is estimated to be in the realm of about \$7.4 billion per year. Certainly prevention is critical. That's why the gender-based violence strategy has prevention as one of the main pillars.

Speaking for Status of Women again, I will say that our projects have to do with support for survivors, but often people are survivors more than once. The current call for proposals is focused on survivors, but hopefully that will also contribute to a decrease in revictimization. Therefore, yes, I'm agreeing that prevention is critical, but you do have to look at a person's life at various stages.

Mr. Ron Liepert: Mr. MacArthur, I'm assuming that some of these women who move from shelters would hopefully, at some point in time, be in a position to become a homeowner. Are the new CMHC stress test rules a barrier? They certainly have proven to be a significant barrier for people on the margin in terms of entering the marketplace. At least that's what the real estate industry is telling us consistently. I'd like your views on the impact that is having on this particular situation.

Mr. Charles MacArthur: We work with folks along the continuum, whether that's in a shelter, whether that's for affordable housing, or whether that's somebody trying to enter home ownership. We underwrite a project. As I said before, we don't want to put somebody in a home that they are eventually going to lose. That would be a life-shattering event from which they might never recover.

With our stress testing, we need to ensure that there is stability in the marketplace and that if there is an unforeseen economic or financial stress, we're in a position to make sure that Canadians are well protected from that. We work with groups to do education in order to help people get into a reasonable financial position so that they're able to take advantage of home ownership or rental. We're there for all the options.

Mr. Ron Liepert: I'm not sure I heard an answer to my question.

Mr. Charles MacArthur: So, maybe you would...?

Mr. Ron Liepert: Would you concur that the new stress test is making it more difficult for people to move into home ownership?

Mr. Charles MacArthur: I would say that the new stress tests are making sure that CMHC is there in good times and bad times, and that the stress tests that we're doing are prudent tests at this point in time.

Mr. Ron Liepert: But it was a policy change by CMHC.

Mr. Charles MacArthur: It was a Department of Finance—

Mr. Ron Liepert: Right—and the government's policy test, and it has had a significant impact on the marketplace. So I am asking you this: is it having an impact on the ability of people to move out of shelters and into home ownership?

Mr. Charles MacArthur: Not being a market analyst, I can't give you the statistics. But I do know that there is a balance between ownership and supply of apartments, and we support the full spectrum of availability. What we want to do is make sure as we're working with folks that they are able to afford the housing they are entering.

The Chair: We'll switch over to Irene, for seven minutes.

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and thank you to everyone for being here.

I would like to start with the Status of Women. I need to say that certainly Canada's work at the UN has contributed very much to the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women and the creation or establishment of a UN special rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences. That rapporteur was in Canada in April of 2018, and at that point in time she said that there was a lack of specific federal law or model law on violence against women and domestic violence as well as a lack of a national action plan on violence against women and domestic violence. A year earlier, in June of 2017, she said of the government's announcement of a strategy to prevent gender-based violence that it lacked a holistic legal framework with clear explanations of prevention measures, integrated service delivery and the prosecution of perpetrators. She didn't believe that it was coordinated; nor was it guaranteed in all jurisdictions.

So, since that time, since 2017-2018, has Canada complied with the special rapporteur's recommendation to have a national action

plan that is fully and comprehensively implemented at the federal, provincial and territorial level in order to make sure that women in all areas of the country have access to comparable levels of service and protection in line with international human rights standards and those accepted by Canada?

• (1620)

Ms. Justine Akman: Of course, being Status of Women Canada, we were very excited when the UN special rapporteur visited Canada. We spent lots of time ensuring that she got the information she needed to do her report. The government very much welcomed her recommendations and insights into how Canada can continue to do better to address gender-based violence.

In terms of a national action plan specifically, with regard to the gender-based violence plan that I spoke about in my opening remarks, and that Status of Women has spoken to this committee about several times, the focus in the initial stage is to get the federal house in order. Before this strategy was announced, there really was no strategy even at a federal level, and there was no gender lens on any violence programming that the government was doing at the time; it was mostly focused on family violence. So the main focus has been to get the federal house in order.

However, that said, there is a very concerted effort being undertaken right now to work with the provinces and territories in recognition of the fact that this is fundamentally a national issue, and one that all levels of government and civil society have to be engaged in to see success. In fact, there's a federal-provincial-territorial meeting happening in Yukon as we speak—it starts right now—of ministers of the status of women. There are a number of different items on that agenda related to gender-based violence, starting with research as a baseline.

This is following the Australian national action plan. They took a couple of years when they launched their plan, which was a bit ahead of Canada. They were out of the gate a little before us, but they took time to make sure they truly understood the nature of gender-based violence across the country before they started launching into various initiatives.

Following that model, in the past few years, we have put an enormous amount of energy into data and research for gender-based violence. We are working with the provinces and territories to ensure they can benefit from those products we've discussed, especially those we're doing with Statistics Canada.

At the same time, this week they'll be discussing a results strategy. You can't have a national strategy unless you have agreed-upon results that you're all trying to achieve together. That will be another very, very important conversation.

Finally, efforts will be made to do joint programming. Rather than having small, fledgling non-governmental organizations trying desperately to figure out how they can patch together bits of funding, there are efforts being made between the federal and some provincial governments—it's a committee of the willing, to start with anyway—to see how we can join forces and help some of these organizations get stronger together.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: With regard to this meeting in Yukon, will that generate a concrete plan in terms of gender-based violence? Will there be a timeline in order to implement that? Have you determined a timeline? Will it be, for example, before the next election, or is there some issue with that timeline?

• (1625)

Ms. Justine Akman: I can't predetermine the results of the meeting.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Okay.

We would appreciate very much if you could get back to us with any information that is gleaned from that meeting. It seems to be an important step, and we'd like to know exactly how that goes.

Last month, Women's Shelters Canada released a report. It wasn't a particularly flattering report, inasmuch as it identified gaps in terms of domestic violence policies and gaps in legislation and services across the country. Their goal, obviously, is to see Canada have comparable levels of services and protection for women, no matter where women may live. Apparently, that's not the case.

A year and a half ago, this committee reported on violence against women and girls, and recommended to Minister Monsef that she urge coordination of federal, provincial and territorial government responses to help to end that violence.

Apart from this meeting in Yukon, can you tell us what concrete progress has been made to coordinate that government response? I know they're meeting, but I'm thinking in terms of something concrete that you can tell us about.

The Chair: You've already gone over the time, so if she can just answer that question, she has about 10 seconds.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Okay.

Ms. Justine Akman: I really think the Department of Justice—I don't know if you're actually seeing them, but they might be a better place to get answers to these questions.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We're now going to move over to Marc Serré for seven minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc Serré (Nickel Belt, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to thank the witnesses for being here and for their work in this area.

My first question is for Ms. Buist and pertains to the work done with indigenous communities.

Ms. Buist, we often hear that there are tremendous needs on reserves. I would like to know what role you play, together with the municipalities, in developing a strategy for indigenous persons and transition houses in urban settings. I would point out that many

indigenous persons live in cities, including the 60,000 indigenous persons who live in the Toronto area.

More specifically, what is your role in developing a national strategy for urban settings?

Ms. Margaret Buist: Under our program, the funding is for reserves only.

Mr. Marc Serré: Is there any funding to help women in municipalities?

Ms. Margaret Buist: No, the funding is exclusively for shelters on reserves. On the other hand, the funding for prevention initiatives goes to reserves as well as municipalities.

Mr. Marc Serré: So, where do indigenous women go?

Ms. Margaret Buist: They use the shelters in the cities. As I said, that is a problem in the north. In small communities, there are no places for women and children to go. They go to Iqaluit, but there is just one place there that can accommodate them.

Mr. Marc Serré: Do you have any data on the number of indigenous women in transition houses in cities, off reserve?

Ms. Margaret Buist: No, that is under provincial jurisdiction. I have figures for places on reserves, but not in the cities.

Mr. Marc Serré: Okay.

We heard that Ms. Akman carried out three surveys with Statistics Canada. Many thanks to her for adding to the data. We often hear that there is not enough data.

Ms. Scott, you mentioned not only the lack of data, but also that institutions do not provide the information, either because they are not legally authorized to do so or because of jurisdiction issues in institutions. Do you have any specific recommendations in this regard?

• (1630)

Ms. Catherine Scott: We currently have an information management system that is used in shelters across the country, so we are able to collect information for about 60% of shelters. With the renewal of the program, we will be able to focus more on data. Moreover, a bit more support will be provided to communities to implement this information management system. We hope the new investments will enable us to increase the effectiveness and quantity of the data we collect from across the country. That will not happen until 2019, however.

Mr. Marc Serré: There does not seem to be a strategy for indigenous women in cities, off reserve. Are there gaps in this area?

Ms. Catherine Scott: The program to fight homelessness provides funding specifically for homelessness among indigenous persons. They can go to any shelter, anywhere in Canada. We also fund programs and initiatives tailored to the needs of indigenous persons, in 37 municipalities across the country.

Mr. Marc Serré: Mr. MacArthur, you said that two funds had become available recently, and that they will be for cities as well as rural areas. Have you set targets or will it be first come, first served?

Mr. Charles MacArthur: The results are the key. They are available right across the country, from rural and urban regions and from the north, and we have analyzed them. We noted differences in rural regions.

Mr. Marc Serré: Do you have resources to work with rural organizations, or are the resources available in urban areas only?

Mr. Charles MacArthur: No, our work is in urban areas only. We have resources across the country to work with those groups. We also have small programs to help youth and to offer start-up funding to launch their initiatives.

Mr. Marc Serré: I just have a minute and a half left, unfortunately.

Ms. Buist, you talked about the imbalance in the field. My question is for you and Ms. Scott.

Do you have any particular mechanisms to include men and boys in the strategy? Clearly, there is tremendous need for funding for the services that transition houses provide to women and girls, but do you have funding earmarked for developing a strategy for men and boys, for indigenous persons and the general public, or do you need additional funding for that?

Ms. Margaret Buist: Many of our programs involve developing strategies to encourage women, men and families to engage in prevention in their community.

That is the case with our First Nations Child and Family Services program, which focuses specifically on violence prevention. For cities, we have funding for our urban programs for indigenous persons, and many of those initiatives include men in prevention activities.

[English]

The Chair: Excellent. Thank you very much.

We're now moving into our second round of questioning.

Martin Shields, you have the floor for five minutes.

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the panel being here today to deal with this subject.

It's interesting that a colleague brought up the stress test. In my community, there's a person who qualified. She is a single parent with children. She qualified five years ago. She no longer qualifies for her home. She will lose it. She has to move.

I understand what you mean about the stress test and possibly losing it, but it is a reality that the most vulnerable who did qualify are now at risk of losing their homes. That's happening. I can tell you who it is, if you want to know. But it is a problem.

Ms. Scott, you said that you had information on 60%. For forty percent, you didn't have information in the sense of sharing data. If you know the 60%, who is the 40%? Do you know what they have? You must share data, if you know.

•(1635)

Ms. Catherine Scott: Maybe I can explain this a bit more clearly. There are about 1,200 shelters across the country. Currently, about 60% of those beds, or 60% of the capacity of those shelters, are providing data to us. They use a data system called HIFIS, which is a federally developed information management system that allows shelters to manage their clientele. We also collect anonymous information about that.

I think the challenge has been the capacity of some of those shelters to implement that software system. As I said, as we renew the program, one of the main focuses will be on outcomes and a much more data-driven system. The new program will be providing more support for those communities to implement the HIFIS system and collect better data.

Mr. Martin Shields: You do know a lot about 100% of them.

Ms. Catherine Scott: I'm sorry. I'm not sure that I understand.

Mr. Martin Shields: You do know a lot about 100% of the shelters.

Ms. Catherine Scott: The data we collect and the analysis we are able to do is on a portion of those.

Mr. Martin Shields: Okay. You need to get that done and you will, because it's hard to go ahead if you're talking about 60% but you're missing 40% in stats. That gets to be a big hole.

Ms. Catherine Scott: I think that the trends we are able to observe, based on the data that we receive, are fairly reliable, in terms of what's happening across the country.

Mr. Martin Shields: Good.

Ms. Buist, you talked about 41 shelters. That's the number you used.

Ms. Margaret Buist: That's the number currently built.

Mr. Martin Shields: Right.

How many are on reserve, and how many are off?

Ms. Margaret Buist: All are on reserve.

Mr. Martin Shields: 100% are on reserve?

Ms. Margaret Buist: That's what we fund at Indigenous Services, the operation of the shelter. CMHC funds the building of the shelters on reserve.

Mr. Martin Shields: To you, sir, when she mentions 41, are those ones that you have funded on reserve?

Mr. Charles MacArthur: I don't know all 41. We've been at it for a number of...

Mr. Martin Shields: You fund ones off reserve as well?

Mr. Charles MacArthur: Yes, we fund both on and off reserve.

We spoke about the five that had been funded in the last two years. In the previous 10 years we've funded some renovation, and those are new construction. We've done some renovation and new construction in the previous number of years. We did about 317 units—beds—off reserve. Since 2011, under our normal programs up to June of 2018, we renovated or constructed about 4,800 units.

In terms of federal leveraging, we put about \$60 million in. That leveraged about \$38 million in provincial funding.

In budget 2016 we received about \$90 million to invest. That built or renovated another 5,800. That's about 10,600 since 2011 up until June of 2018, for a sum of federal investments of \$150 million.

Mr. Martin Shields: Who manages the on-reserve ones?

Ms. Margaret Buist: They have executive directors and staff who run them. We fund the operation of those.

Mr. Martin Shields: Does the band council manage them?

Ms. Margaret Buist: No, not necessarily.

Mr. Martin Shields: Who else would be managing them, if it isn't the band?

Ms. Margaret Buist: Staff are hired to run the shelter on reserve.

Mr. Martin Shields: Who's managing that staff?

Ms. Margaret Buist: It is an executive director, often.

Mr. Martin Shields: Is that a federal employee?

Ms. Margaret Buist: No, not usually. They're usually funded by the federal government for their salary, but they're run as a part of many services on a first nation, some through the band, some not. It varies.

Mr. Martin Shields: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We're now going to pass it over to Sonia Sidhu. You have five minutes.

Ms. Sonia Sidhu (Brampton South, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

Thank you to all of the panellists for being here.

My question is to the Department of Employment and Social Development.

Violence against women and girls is a national issue. There's a gender lens on the policies now, which is a great start. Still, a gap exists for women and children when you talk about outreach workers, women's and families' needs and employment training.

When women flee from the house, what kind of social and economic support is out there, and is there employment training? Most probably at that time, women are under emotional stress. What kind of first-hand support is given to them?

• (1640)

Ms. Catherine Scott: In terms of the program I manage, the homelessness partnering strategy, it really is a community-based approach. Our funding goes directly to 61 communities across the country. Those communities determine their priorities and where their funding will be directed.

Under the current programming, a lot of that goes to the housing-first approach, which is about taking an individual and finding appropriate housing and giving them the wraparound supports they need to stay housed.

I talked about the renewal of the program. It's going to be called "Reaching Home" as we move into 2019. That program will give a lot more flexibility to communities. They will decide on the outcomes they want to achieve, and they'll report against those. It really is a locally based decision-making process from that perspective.

Ms. Sonia Sidhu: If there is a language barrier? Some cultures are not.... There's a stigma out there.

What kind of education...? Where can they get it? Are we giving it at the work site?

If they cannot reach a social worker or community worker, are there any other sources? This is a big gap in communities.

Ms. Catherine Scott: I'm not sure I can speak to that specifically, except to say that through the HPS program, a number of initiatives funded at the local level have targeted new immigrants, and particularly immigrant women. A lot of it is around helping individuals get into appropriate housing and then looking to make sure their other needs are met by directing them towards the appropriate services.

Ms. Sonia Sidhu: Thank you.

My next question is for CMHC. Do you have accessible units for persons with special needs?

Mr. Charles MacArthur: Accessibility in the national housing strategy is a priority. It would be the community groups building or renovating the units who would decide what the community demand was. There would be no issue whatsoever with them renovating or building for accessibility. Those things would definitely be encouraged.

Ms. Sonia Sidhu: How can a person qualify for the shelter enhancement program?

Mr. Charles MacArthur: The shelter enhancement program is for on reserve. We have staff who work with first nations across the country. They're talking with the folks about whether or not they want to invest in the shelters at any given time. There's an annual application process as we receive our budgets.

Ms. Sonia Sidhu: Thank you.

My next question is to Status of Women. About the results strategy, you said there's something good from Australia. Do you know of any other country that has a great model for that issue?

Ms. Justine Akman: Other countries are doing a lot but not many have a federal or national strategy for gender-based violence and trying to achieve concrete, tangible results. Another country we normally cite when looking at this kind of work is Sweden, and Iceland is pretty far ahead. Then it's a bit spotty, but Spain is doing some very interesting work, as is Italy. Other countries are working on this, not necessarily with specific to robust results frameworks, but with research and data-collection projects.

At the moment, I would say Canada is looking pretty good. I participated in an OECD meeting just this spring, and everybody wanted to know what Canada was doing. We have somebody who just went to Mexico last week because they are very interested in our gender-based violence strategy and our data-collection tools in particular.

The Chair: Excellent. Thank you very much.

We're now going to move back to Martin Shields for five minutes.

• (1645)

Mr. Martin Shields: Thank you.

Ms. Scott, you referred to hidden homelessness. Would you like to expand on the definition of that, and an estimation of numbers and percentages?

Ms. Catherine Scott: In terms of homelessness, most of the data we have, as I explained, comes from shelters.

In 2016, we provided funding to communities across the country to participate in the first national census of homeless individuals. It was called a point-in-time count. About 32 communities participated with us. This was the first national attempt to understand the experience of homeless individuals outside of the shelter system, who may be couch surfing or living in tents or on the streets. That did provide the very first portrait of homelessness. We repeated that just recently, in spring 2018, and we hope to have those results available early in 2019. It definitely gives a broader picture of homelessness beyond just the shelter system.

Mr. Martin Shields: Do you have numbers or percentages?

Ms. Catherine Scott: We can provide those to you. I don't have numbers with me today, but it definitely shows higher numbers.

Mr. Martin Shields: Mr. MacArthur, when you talked about housing to deal with indigenous.... I have some experience with the second-largest reserve in Canada, which is in my riding, and I've met with members and toured their new buildings. The decision about who gets to live in that housing is made by a local band-council.

Mr. Charles MacArthur: Absolutely.

Mr. Martin Shields: How do you then implement what you believe that money should be used for if they make the decision on who lives there?

Mr. Charles MacArthur: We work with the bands to ensure that housing is built to part 9 of the building code or a similar code, depending on where the reserve is. We do ongoing inspections, so that when we're finished our part of construction it is up to the building code. The local housing authorities make the decision as to who goes into the housing, depending on the need in the community and local circumstances.

Mr. Martin Shields: When you talk about that \$40 billion, you designate it for something specific, but the indigenous decide who lives in those houses.

Mr. Charles MacArthur: It would be similar to a seniors' housing project that would be built in Ottawa. The group would determine who goes into that building. In the national housing strategy, indigenous communities are a priority group. If a group built on reserve, we would work with them. If they built a seniors' complex, which seniors would get into the housing would be a local decision. Local groups, co-ops and community housing make those choices.

Mr. Martin Shields: I want to make sure they are still the ones making the decision.

Mr. Charles MacArthur: Yes, absolutely.

Mr. Martin Shields: Thank you.

Ms. Scott, people have crossed the border into Quebec in the last year. We have been hearing rumours about their ending up in our shelter system, and they are full of those people. Are you getting information on this situation?

Ms. Catherine Scott: We don't have specific information on numbers. I think we've certainly heard that in some of the larger centres, that is putting pressure on them and increasing the number of individuals who are staying in the shelter system. As I mentioned at the outset, our program funding is being increased. It was increased under budget 2016. In particular, there was a 25% increase for some of the large centres across the country, and that funding will be increasing with the implementation of the new program in 2019. More specifically, the migrant situation, I think, is a question my colleagues at IRCC would probably be in a better place to answer by providing more details.

The Chair: You have 20 seconds.

We'll move over to Bob Bratina. You have five minutes.

Mr. Bob Bratina (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Lib.): Thank you very much.

During the war, in the neighbourhood where I grew up, a lot of kids lived in a wartime house. Between 1941 and 1947, some 46,000 wartime houses were built. Subsequently, CMHC inherited the whole notion. Why don't we just get the old wartime housing booklet out and see how they did it? It was quite a remarkable chapter. I've always been curious about that.

Are you familiar enough with that project to speak to it?

• (1650)

Mr. Charles MacArthur: Yes. It was just after I was born. Absolutely, I think CMHC has adapted according to the policies of the country at any given time, and we're always ready to work on new things should the government decide we need to work on them. For example, the national housing strategy has chosen community housing. We're working on community housing to build another 60,000 units.

We are working with groups. We're working with Habitat for Humanity to try to figure out how we can effectively use the national housing strategy to look at some home ownership models in a modern way. We used to be in the construction business many years ago; that's not something we do, so we have to find the partners who are doing that and we're working with groups like that to build housing.

Our expectations of first-time housing have changed as well, and that's all great and good. I think the wartime houses were modest and I think expectations are a little higher, but it's worth thinking about.

Mr. Bob Bratina: That could be. I just wondered if the whole thing accelerated because a lot of big, tough guys who had been in the army were now demanding it.

Mr. Charles MacArthur: I do know the history. Whenever a group of people come home from war, you need to do something to house them.

I think we need to produce more supply across the spectrum, because different people make different choices. My family is moving out, and I don't know if my children will ever want to own a home. They want to be able to move across the country and do whatever it is. But affordable supply is definitely something.

Mr. Bob Bratina: We're all eager to see the results.

Ms. Buist, is there programming that involves indigenous men to a great extent? In terms of resolving the issues of gender-based violence and so on, could you outline how men can play or may now be playing a role in that?

Ms. Margaret Buist: Our program is proposal-based, and we've really seen an increase in the proposals that are coming in to engage men and indigenous men and boys in ending violence. I know, for example, one of the things that's happening this Thursday—and I see some of the members of Parliament wearing their moose hide—is the Moose Hide Campaign. This Thursday is a day of fasting and recognition. That's a really important national campaign. It's now funded through Status of Women, but earlier on INAC did some funding for that program in its infancy. That's a national one.

At the local level, some examples of the programming are connecting men and boys with elders to talk about the impacts of intergenerational trauma that they have experienced that have led them to express themselves violently towards their partners, and ways in which they can take responsibility for changing their behaviour and get the help they need to do that. There's been a huge increase in that kind of prevention programming in our small budget.

Mr. Bob Bratina: It goes to Mr. Liepert's point about there being a benefit that would come from prevention in terms of the costs that we're talking about here and the need for it.

Are we almost out of time, Chair?

The Chair: You have 20 seconds.

Mr. Bob Bratina: I'll just finish by saying thank you all for working on a very difficult but important project for Canadians. The whole country has transitioned in the way we think and the way we approach things. Those people in those big office buildings are doing a lot of the work. We're talking about it, raising questions and so on, but you're kind of on the front line. I want to thank you for that and thank you for being here.

● (1655)

The Chair: Excellent. We're going to wrap it up with the final three minutes to Irene Mathysen.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'll go to you, Mr. MacArthur, in terms of the national housing strategy. We know there's a chronic and desperate need for affordable housing. That strategy has indicated that at least 25% of the investment will go for projects for women and girls and their families. It's very important and it's a target that we hope we can meet. I just wonder if you can give us an indication of how you will enforce this target and how you will ensure that there are linkages with the women's organizations on the ground that are working directly with those women who are seeking shelter.

Mr. Charles MacArthur: In the intake process, there are the different priority clientele groups that need to be identified, and if you identify yourself as serving one of those priority groups, it moves you up in the prioritization, given that we're serving the most vulnerable populations. We're able to identify in each intake process how many of the folks are identifying as serving women and girls. We have a process to measure that.

We've worked for a number of years with groups on the ground. Our folks are out there helping them develop their proposals if they need that or helping guide them if they're more sophisticated groups. Some are very sophisticated and need just a little bit of assistance. Some need more assistance, so we're there for them.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Thank you.

We've heard that there are going to be five more shelters built, 37 more beds. Sadly, we're looking at more than 600 indigenous communities. It seems that's rather few in terms of the need.

I wonder if you can give us an indication of the progress of construction. When will these shelters be available and accessible to women fleeing violence in Calgary?

Mr. Charles MacArthur: All of the construction is due to be completed by March 31 of next year, so within the fiscal year. My understanding is that construction is going quite well on those projects.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Thank you.

I have one last question and it has to do with the fact that the funding for on-reserve shelters is less. They're underfunded when you compare them to other shelters. This has been acknowledged by the Assembly of First Nations. They've asked the federal government to address that shortfall with regard to the amount that on-reserve shelters would receive.

Is there any indication that the government will be able to comply with the request of the Assembly of First Nations?

The Chair: That is a very smart question. Can we have a short answer?

Mr. Charles MacArthur: In the context of the distinction-based strategies being worked on, I think that's a question that would be entertained within that, as the government works with indigenous communities to develop the overall housing strategies.

The Chair: Excellent.

I would like to thank everybody. I'd like to thank Tammy, Justine, Janet, Catherine, Margaret and Charles for coming today and providing us this insight as we begin our study on shelters.

Our next meeting will be this Wednesday, 3:30, October 17, in this room or in the vicinity, but we'll be sending that information out. At this moment, we have one hour of panels with some committee business to follow.

The meeting is adjourned.

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