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Chair

Ms. Marilyn Gladu

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● (1530)

[*Translation*]

The Chair (Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC)): Good afternoon and welcome, ladies and gentlemen.

[*English*]

I call the meeting to order.

We are continuing our study of violence against young women and girls in Canada. We're moving along to focus on some of the things that are happening on campuses.

We're fortunate to have with us today Dawn Moore, who is an associate professor in law and legal studies at Carleton University, and we also have Anuradha Dugal, who is director of violence prevention programs in Montreal. Welcome to you.

We're going to have our normal 10-minute introductions from each of our guests, and then we'll begin our questioning.

We'll start with you, Ms. Moore, and you will have 10 minutes.

Professor Dawn Moore (Associate Professor, Law and Legal Studies, Carleton University, As an Individual): Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.

[*Translation*]

Thank you for inviting me to speak to you this afternoon.

Sexual assault in Canada is an issue of great concern to me. I hope that our government will take this opportunity to improve the lives of women.

[*English*]

You've received my brief, so I will get directly to the point: what I see as the core problem of responses to sexual violence, both on and off campus, because campus is a mirror of the broader society. I have a few other ideas to share on how these problems might be addressed.

The core problem is acknowledging sexual violence as a social fact. At the core of my research on both sexual and domestic violence—which routinely overlap, even on campuses—sits the disavowal of sexual violence as anything more than a few rotten apples, rather than a cultural phenomenon.

Some may elect to call this “rape culture”. I'm agnostic on this term. We can refer to it as such if that makes sense and if it's helpful, but I also recognize that this term has come to carry a great deal of political weight and has constituted its own battleground, so I am electing to talk about sexual violence as a social fact, with the proviso that what we call it is far less important than recognizing that it exists.

Recognizing sexual violence as a social fact does not mean that all men are rapists. I can't state that emphatically enough. Such a recognition acknowledges instead that we live in society that shames, blames, and dismisses survivors' experiences of sexual violence on one hand, while on the other hand tacitly or explicitly permitting and, in some cases, encouraging sexual violence.

To acknowledge that we live in a culture saturated with sexual violence today is no different from past recognitions of other social ills such as racism and homophobia. Today we can own the fact that both systemic and overt racism and homophobia have been and continue to be unfortunate features of our society, and in that admission, in naming these problems head-on, we have been and continue to be able to take steps legislatively, socially, and systematically to address these problems. However, until we own that the problem exists, there's very little we can do to address it and to meaningfully make things better for the lives of women and girls.

Sexual violence is a reality on campus. It is embedded in frosh week activities, fraternity and varsity initiations, and, sadly, sometimes even in public statements made by university leaders. Survivors of sexual violence on campus, and indeed women in general, feel the brunt of a culture of sexual violence. They have difficulty accessing services, they are disbelieved or dismissed when they speak up, and almost invariably the outcomes of formal reporting mechanisms leave them feeling unprotected and silenced.

Much of this is driven by a strong ethic of institutional risk management on the part of universities. The university, any university, does not benefit from keeping accurate records of incidences of sexual violence, from encouraging survivors to report, or—as I would argue is the most important task at hand—from implementing an aggressive sexual violence prevention strategy. To do any or all of these things is to have the institution admit that sexual violence is a reality on its campus and in its community. University leaders are loath to admit that their campuses are so-called “rape campuses”, and I use this in scare quotes because this is a term that is embraced by the student movement to express the gravity of the problems they are encountering on their campuses. The risk of liability is most easily mitigated when the problem does not exist, so it comes as no surprise that, in our research, universities routinely denied that there was a problem with sexual violence on their campuses, even as students and survivors told us exactly the opposite.

Okay, that's the problem, so what do we do? Let's say that in my perfect world, we're able to admit to sexual violence as a cultural aspect of our society that manifests on campuses. We've named the problem, so what can we do about it? How do we fix it?

Of course there's no magic bullet, but since I have the attention of some of the top decision-makers in this land, at least for the next six minutes or so, let me build on some of the work that this committee has already done and make a few suggestions. I'm particularly interested in this committee's attention to a national action plan focusing on prevention, continuity of care, and safe reporting mechanisms.

Sexual violence, as you are all aware, is not just a criminal issue. It impacts access to education and health, and at its core, it's about human rights. In terms of sexual violence, this means gender equality.

● (1535)

Sexual violence impinges on the human rights of women in Canada. If Canada is to become a truly gender-equal society, we need to act now to address gender-based violence.

The federal government could take leadership and work in coalition with the provinces to develop a national strategy for colleges and universities that would ensure impactful prevention initiatives, largely in the form of ongoing education. This is the key to addressing sexual violence. This is what we did with racism and homophobia. People learned that these things were not okay. Canada is a different, and, I would assert, better country because of it—a world leader, in fact.

After an incident of sexual violence, survivors need care. I know governments and institutions are focused on the numbers and insist on developing frameworks around accurate reporting. I understand that need, but coming from a survivor-centric perspective, survivors often are uninterested in reporting and instead want services. They need health care, academic accommodation, safety on campus, and, most of all, to be believed. Again the federal government could play a pivotal role here, not just in funding but by ensuring that there is a basic standard of care for survivors across the country.

If we want survivors to report, we have to make reporting safe and survivor-friendly. Policing and prosecutorial services routinely deny survivors even the opportunity for adjudication, much less, given the current tests in law, any real chance of securing a conviction. Survivors who do come forward must tell their stories over and over again. Their believability is called into question. They are called liars or sluts. Their characters and previous behaviours are interrogated, including their sexuality, and all to reach the very unattainable goal of securing a finding of guilt. The threshold of reasonable doubt is very difficult to cross in the case of sexual violence, because almost all sexual assaults happen in private, with no witnesses. This is even more difficult in what we now call the “post-Ghomeshi era”, in which you will be hard pressed to find any survivor who is willing to put herself through a criminal process.

The same can also be said for internal university and college reporting processes. These are piecemeal and typically involve gag orders that direct survivors not to discuss their cases with anyone except on the vaguely defined need-to-know basis. This is a clause that many survivors read as a threat against them for seeking support, advice, or counselling, alongside advocacy.

Alongside law reform, which is under the purview of the federal government, a national action strategy could also include bringing the provinces together to ensure they have a uniform reporting and investigatory regime that is supportive of survivors. This does not mean an erasure of due process, but it does mean that we can implement protocols for reporting and investigating that are more friendly for survivors. Gender-based violence should be, needs to be, and must be a top issue for the Minister of Justice, the Attorney General , and the Minister of Health.

Finally, none of this is of any use without oversight and transparency. Circling back to my earlier assertions regarding university risk management, universities and colleges ought to have oversight bodies that are charged with reviewing not only reported cases but also service provision and prevention strategies on campuses. Here again the federal government could take the lead in order to offer a uniform oversight mechanism that would hold universities accountable if they fall short of national standards. I think they could set the bar very high.

The United Nations' safe cities strategy might be a good place start. Could this government implement the spirit of the UN's initiatives but think in terms of safe campuses? It could start with pilot projects on specific campuses that target innovative safety initiatives, such as anonymous reporting and mandatory and ongoing rape culture education. There could be policies that put the onus on the respondents to rearrange their work and study lives in order to make campuses safer for women, instead of on survivors, who, in my research, told how they had to move out of dorms, drop classes, miss out on employment opportunities, and even leave the university altogether in order to ensure their safety.

I realize this is the beginning of what I hope will be a thoughtful and ongoing conversation about how Canada can embody the principles of gender equality by addressing its main barrier, which is gender violence.

● (1540)

Naturally, as an academic, I have many more things to say on the issue, as well as the issue of the policing of domestic violence. I could go on for hours, but, as I said, I think we need to have a conversation. In order to begin that, I will now stop talking and welcome any and all questions.

[*Translation*]

Thank you all for your attention.

The Chair: Thank you.

[*English*]

Now we'll go to Ms. Dugal. You have 10 minutes.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anuradha Dugal (Director, Violence Prevention Programs, Canadian Women's Foundation): Thank you, Madam Chair. Good afternoon, everyone.

[*English*]

Thank you, Madam Chair and the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, for this opportunity to address the question of violence against women and young girls in Canada, in particular in relation to campus violence.

We commend the committee's focus on this timely and critical issue. The current discourse, especially over the past week, speaks to the urgency to act on this matter and the need to counteract the misogynistic and sexist behaviour and attitudes that harm girls and women in their abilities to lead fulfilling and meaningful lives. This is an opportunity that we really cannot miss.

As a bit of context, Canadian Women's Foundation is Canada's national public foundation dedicated to improving the lives of women and girls. We focus on three core areas: stopping violence, ending poverty, and empowering women and girls. We advocate at the national level for strategies and policies that contribute to gender equality across Canada.

For 25 years we've invested in 1,400 communities, helping 250,000 people. These programs focus on violence prevention, healthy relationships among teens, empowerment to women and girls, mentoring, work experience, poverty elimination, and capacity-building.

Our vision is for all women in Canada to live free from violence. We help women in Canada move out of violence by funding emergency shelters and through prevention programs. We also invest in co-educational school-based violence prevention programs that teach girls and boys and all genders to stop the violence. We understand how the ripple effects of investing in such programs improve women's well-being, their economic prospects, and social conditions, while conversely, we understand the personal, social, and economic costs of allowing this to persist, in particular with respect to violence.

Here are just a few facts about violence against women in Canada.

One-half of all women in Canada have experienced at least one incident of physical or sexual violence. Sixty-seven per cent of all Canadians know someone who has experienced physical or sexual violence. Sexual assault is a gender-based crime. Of reported adult victims, 93% are female, and 97% percent of the accused are men. Women aged 18 to 24 experience the highest rates of sexual violence.

The vast majority of sex assault still goes unreported to police. In one poll, the most common reason women gave for not reporting sexual assault was feeling young and powerless. Of the respondents, 40% said they remained silent because of feeling shame, and 29% blamed themselves.

Of survivors who did report sexual assault to police, in the same poll, 71% said the experience was negative. We have noted that sexual assault is the only violent crime in Canada not declining, with women's risk of violent victimization 20% higher than men's as of 2014.

It is instructive to point out where declining rates of police-reported domestic violence have been found, and we can attribute it to some mitigating factors: increasing social equality; financial freedom, enabling women to leave relationships that are abusive in earlier stages; and sustained efforts by women's organizations at the grassroots to end domestic violence.

If we compare sexual violence and domestic violence, we see there are also far more services in response to domestic violence, whether it's in the police and court sector, the coordination of community services, availability of shelters, etc., than there are for sexual violence in Canada.

These indicators demonstrate that we have a far greater need for coordination at the community level to effect change in attitudes, behaviour, and the institutional responses to sexual violence.

We know that patterns of abuse are learned early. Research suggests that the earlier children receive healthy relationships education, the more lasting the outcomes. Over the past 15 years, the foundation has focused resources on co-educational teen healthy relationships programs. Educators see the value in teen healthy relationships programming, preparing 11-, 12-, and 13-year-olds for intimate relationships before they typically start dating.

Through these projects, teens are taught skills, warning signs of unhealthy relationships, foundational behaviours for healthy ones, and where to get help. These are delivered in classroom work as ongoing programs through discussion role-playing and ongoing workbooks that they work at during out-of-school hours, facilitated by teachers, community members, and youth.

● (1545)

The involvement of youth and peers contributes greatly to their success. Research also illustrates that meaningful youth participation in program design contributes to the development of more relevant and effective services and provides youth with the opportunities to gain skills, as well as empowerment and leadership opportunities. It also helps them make healthy connections.

This program is also designed to include boys as leaders and to engage them in conversations and activities that deconstruct power dynamics, such as race, class, gender, and privilege, in general. It does not engage in blaming men and boys for the violence. The participant surveys show that 90% of students said the programs helped let them keep their relationships healthy even years after leaving school, and more than 60% said that the programs influenced their choice of partners and helped them decide how to leave an unhealthy relationship.

We believe that the teen healthy relationships program should be incorporated in high schools across Canada and that it would be instructive in the development of campus prevention programs. Early intervention underscores the importance of talking and learning about healthy, equal relationships before heading to college and university, and it can be a way of preventing campus violence.

Campus violence, as we know, occurs against a backdrop of prevailing myths of victim blaming about sexual assault, cultural normalization of sexist attitudes, institutional behaviours, ignorance about the laws of consent, poor institutional prevention programs, and a lack of mechanisms to respond to sexual assault.

Over the past few years, media attention has highlighted the vacuum in consistent proactive approaches. The foundation, in a cursory scan in 2014 of seven universities across Canada, found a patchwork of procedures for dealing with sexual violence.

We know through some of the work we've done that four out of five university undergraduate students on Canadian campuses have been victims of violence in a dating relationship. There are two stats that are used quite consistently, but they're very worrying: one-fifth of male students agreed that forced sex is acceptable if someone spends money on a date, is stoned or drunk, or has been dating somebody for a long time, and one other survey showed that 60% of Canadian college-aged males indicated they would commit sexual assault if they were certain they couldn't get caught.

We also did polls at Canadian Women's Foundation ourselves. We wanted to see how women who had experienced sexual assault might be seen in the wider community, so we asked questions about whether people believed that victims brought sexual assault on themselves. Our survey showed that 19% of respondents believe that women may provoke or encourage sexual assault when they are drunk, and when you take it down to the age group of 18- to 34-year-olds, it's nearly 25% who believe that same finding.

A more recent survey about consent revealed that although 96% agreed that sexual activity between partners should be consensual, two-thirds of Canadians did not understand that this meant it had to be ongoing, positive, and enthusiastic.

The survey also revealed that many young Canadians have a blurred understanding of consent when technology is involved. Almost one in five, 21%, aged 18 to 34, believe that if a woman sends an explicit sexual text, then it means that she is inviting the recipient to engage in off-line sexual activity.

We know, as both these surveys show us, there is a need to create and integrate campus-based programs targeted at young people to empower them, learn their rights, and above all develop a culture and climate of consent. Therefore, there must be a clear understanding of sexual consent and of sexual violence according to the Criminal Code of Canada.

We know that one way to address sexual assault on campus is to encourage stand-alone sexual assault policies. Out of 100 universities and colleges across Canada, approximately 24 now have stand-alone policies. These recognize that sexual assault is different from other forms of misconduct, and they set out specific procedures for handling complaints.

The passage of Bill 132 in Ontario included a proviso that all publicly assisted colleges, universities, and private career colleges are required to have stand-alone sexual violence policies by January 2017. This act also requires them to review their policies every three years and to do so with student involvement. Manitoba, Nova Scotia, and British Columbia are also looking at this, but policies are not enough.

● (1550)

As my colleague stated previously in her brief, we know that we need much more responsive programs, programs that deal directly with what victims need and provide victim-centred responses, with victims themselves being included in the creation of policies and protocols that come out of the stand-alone protocols, so it's not only the youth—

The Chair: I'm sorry; that's your time. Thanks very much.

You'll get some more chance to elaborate, I think, when we start the questions.

I want to welcome to our committee today Mark Gerretsen, Wayne Long, Garnett Genuis, and Brigitte Sansoucy. We have gender parity again today on our committee, and that always makes for improved discussion.

We're going to start our questioning with Ms. Nassif for seven minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Eva Nassif (Vimy, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I would also like to thank both witnesses for their presentations.

My first question is for Ms. Moore.

In your research in sexual violence on post-secondary campuses in Ontario, have you looked at how the incidents of sexual violence were report on campuses across Canada and how the subsequent investigations were conducted?

[*English*]

Prof. Dawn Moore: Yes, and that is specifically in Ontario.

[*Translation*]

I'm sorry, but I'm going to answer your question in English; my French isn't up to snuff.

[*English*]

We know that policing services in Ontario specifically have what we call “unfounded” rates that are alarming. We're in Ottawa right now; the Ottawa police have an unfounded rate of 40%. That means that 40% of the women who come to Ottawa police with a claim of having been sexually victimized are turned away at the door, so the police refuse to even investigate, let alone go forward with a prosecution. After that we can follow through with attrition, which means that for those 60% who do engage in a police investigation, there's a high attrition rate again at the prosecutorial level, as crown prosecutors make a decision about whether or not a case is worthy of taking to trial.

We end up with somewhere between 5% and 10% in the province of Ontario—and I would argue that it's comparable across the country—that do go to trial, and then there are the convictions that we see as a result. Of 100% of of sexual assaults, somewhere between 5% and 10% go to prosecution; maybe 1% of those will result in a conviction and a guilty finding, so you can see why victims themselves have very little faith in attaining any kind of justice from the system, because their chances of finding a guilty verdict are slim. Then once a guilty verdict is found, sentencing is usually very permissive.

I'm not an advocate of heavy-handed sentencing, because as I said in my presentation, I think we really need to be putting our energies into preventing sexual assaults in the first place. When we're dealing with reporting and investigation, we're closing the barn door after the horse has run. What we want to see in this country is not.... As my colleague said, anywhere from one in five to one in six women have experienced sexual assault before turning 25; that's unacceptable. We need to prevent that from happening in the first place, before they even need to go to police or any other reporting mechanism.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Eva Nassif: You say that prevention is the best thing, but who do you think should conduct these investigations and how could we improve the responses when incidents like this are reported?

You just said that the current approach isn't effective and that prevention is the best approach, but how do you think the system could be improved?

● (1555)

[*English*]

Prof. Dawn Moore: I think police need to be better educated about the circumstances of women who have experienced sexual violence. There are some very basic things: being given a comfortable room, a private space, in which to give statements; being able to choose the gender of the investigator; being able to develop a rapport with that investigator before actually having to delve into the minutiae of what happened during a sexual assault; preventing sexual assault victims from having to testify in the presence of their assailants; offering them adequate protection, knowing that if they come forward with a complaint that a restraining order will actually be enforced; and having what I flippantly call a sexual assault midwife, somebody who will guide sexual assault survivors through the criminal process. The Province of Quebec does this particularly well in terms of having a centre that sexual assault survivors can go to once they have reported, and they are actually assigned a counsellor who will take them through every step of the process and will keep them apprised of where their case is at.

The other thing is timing. If you make a report of sexual assault to the police, it can be six months to a year before you see any response to that report. That's a long time for a survivor to wait to have to tell and retell her story.

There are a lot of basic things we can do to make the system more approachable for survivors, but we also have to keep in mind that the judiciary needs to be educated as well. We now have two extreme examples in Canada of the judiciary making it very clear that survivors are unwelcome and will not be treated respectfully in a court of law, those being the Ghomeshi decision and the case in the Prairies. Judicial education is also key here in terms of respectful engagement with survivors.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Eva Nassif: Thank you.

My next question is for Ms. Dugal.

According to the Canadian Women's Foundation website, research shows that adolescence is the best time to address violence prevention with kids because violent behaviour is often integrated very early in life.

Could you give us some examples of promising practices that teach adolescents about healthy relationships, and the difference between a healthy relationship and an abusive one?

Ms. Anuradha Dugal: Thank you very much for the question.

I will also answer in English because I'm more used to talking about these issues in that language, but I will be happy to practise my French later.

[*English*]

The Chair: Ladies, that's your time. You'll have to hold your answer for another time on the next round.

We'll go to Ms. Harder for seven minutes.

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): Thank you so much to each of you for coming and spending today with us. We certainly appreciate your viewpoints on this issue.

I'll start with a question for Ms. Dugal.

Ms. Dugal, I'm hoping you can help me understand. You talked about the perspective that young men hold with respect to women and you expressed some things that concern me in terms of the liberties many of them feel they can take. With that, I'm wondering if you can comment on whether you believe pornography has an impact, and if so, to what degree.

Ms. Anuradha Dugal: That's a very interesting question.

We know that young men at a very early age can develop attitudes that mean they regard women in a more sexually objectified way and are maybe not so concerned about developing healthy and egalitarian relationships with women. We know that many young men do, from a very early age, have media smarts—we have specific data on this—and do engage in using online pornography, starting as young as age 11. Some of them may have had a certain number of views. I believe it's close to 50% who may use online pornography two or three times a week, and that might be increasing as they get older.

We don't know that there is a direct connection. I do not believe that a direct connection between the use of online pornography and unhealthy relationships has been made. However, there are certain indications that the ways in which young men see objectification of women from a very early age could create those attitudes that then become pervasive, as we see in media.

However, to be honest, it's not just pornography. I would posit that you see similar attitudes about women in music videos. You see it in online video games. You see it in very many movies. The types of media images that young men see do tend to objectify women, and they're the same media images that young women are seeing, so it's not wholly the education of young men that we're concerned about here: it's also that young women are beginning to see themselves as sexual objects and therefore will play that out in their relationships.

There's a question as to whether young women are even able, at the very beginning of their activities, particularly their sexual activities, to think about what pleases them, or whether they are more concerned about what will please their partner. That's something that is brought up in some of the healthy relationship programs we support. Healthy sexuality is part of that, and that includes things like talking about sexual pleasure, talking about being positive in the ways that you look at sex and that intimate part of a relationship.

● (1600)

Ms. Rachael Harder: Thank you very much.

Ms. Moore, I'll ask you the same question. Could you comment on some of your reflections with regard to the impact that pornography might be having on sexual assault against women?

Prof. Dawn Moore: Our study didn't really focus on pornography, so I'm not sure that I'm really well positioned to comment. I think the point that my colleague has made about objectification more generally is very well taken, but I don't think that pornography is the single thing we can point to.

One example I can give you from our research was that one of the survivors I interviewed told me about a fraternity-sorority party called a “stop light party”. I don't know if anybody's heard of these or not. Essentially, you wear red, yellow, or green. Green means “Go ahead; do whatever you want to me”, as if consent is not required. Yellow means “I require consent”, which to me is just a completely unintelligible way of presenting consent on campus. Red means “I'm not willing to engage in sexual activity”. To me, that example has always come back as a really clear way of capturing the way consent is understood, particularly among first- and second-year students on university campuses. This is something that you can just willy-nilly throw out, and if people are wearing green they don't need to provide consent; it's just expected that they'll put out whatever's requested of them.

She was also clear to me that the women who were wearing yellow were seen as prudish, whereas certainly the women who were wearing red were just, like, forget it. Only the women who were wearing green were seen as attractive at these fraternity and sorority parties. I find that to be a very sort of jarring, but also very accurate, depiction of the way this kind of objectification works in the cultures on campus.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Thank you.

For my next question I'll start with you, Ms. Moore.

Around this table you have a group of individuals who have been elected to the House of Commons. It is our chief objective to put legislation in place. We can talk about the various measures that are needed to help stagnate or thwart the degree to which sexual assault is taking place, but at the end of the day—and I have a great appreciation for those mechanisms—around this table we are very interested in the potential legislation that could be put in place.

With that in mind, what would your recommendations be for this table?

Prof. Dawn Moore: I've laid out some recommendations in the brief that has circulated. I'm not sure if you've had an opportunity to review it.

It's difficult, because you're crossing legislative boundaries between provinces and the federal government. As for what falls under the purview of the federal government, I do think there are reforms that could be entertained with criminal law. We were able to do this with battered women's syndrome. We were able to recognize that there are particular gender circumstances in the case of domestic violence that would not hold a woman accountable to the same standards as any other person in the case of self-defence. This is the Lavallee decision...it doesn't matter; I won't give you a law lecture on it. The point is that the Supreme Court was able to make a provision within the Criminal Code to allow for gender disparity in experiences of violence.

I think we have a thoughtful Supreme Court, I think we have a thoughtful legislature, and I think it is possible to entertain legislative changes that might understand sexual violence as being a crime that is different from the other kinds of crimes that we find in the Criminal Code. This is not a crime of property—

● (1605)

The Chair: Thank you. No problem.

[*Translation*]

We'll start with you, Ms. Sansoucy. You have seven minutes.

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'll pick up where my colleague left off and talk about promising practices.

More specifically, Ms. Dugal, do you think it is important to share these promising practices with everyone working in the field of violence against women—including the federal government, of course—to create a strategy that takes into account all the existing strategies of both the provinces and the community organizations?

Ms. Anuradha Dugal: Is the question for me?

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy: You can start, and if Ms. Moore has something to add, she can.

You have the floor.

Ms. Anuradha Dugal: Okay.

[*English*]

Yes, I think what's important is that the federal government take a leadership role and that the provinces understand that there is an expectation that universities and colleges have to have policies and procedures in place. I understand that education is provincially mandated, but there are many ways in which the federal government can take action. As Ms. Moore explained, a national action plan on gender-based violence or violence against women would be a good place to start.

I think it's also important to note that the federal government has a role to play in establishing policy and investing in potential knowledge transfer on this issue. As an example, I'll give you the funding that we have received as part of a partnership grant with McGill University on a partnership about preventing rape culture within universities through evidence-based research, as it could inform the curriculum and policy change. That is a national project that includes 10 universities across Canada and will include more and more as we go forward. It's looking at policy and it's looking at the role of arts and popular culture and at news and social media, and it will go as far as changing college curricula to include information on sexual assault within dentistry, within journalism, within law, and within the education curricula that already exist.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy: Thank you.

Ms. Moore, I don't know if you have anything to add to that. If not, I have another question for you.

Some of your recommendations relate to research. Could you tell us how important it is to support research in order to have a better understanding of the profound causes of violence against women and to adapt to new forms of violence?

[*English*]

Prof. Dawn Moore: As I said in my brief, the study we did was the first study to be done in 10 years. It's the only study to actually qualitatively take information from...it was only three campuses, so it's a small start to addressing a much bigger problem, but what we need to do is accurately capture the situation of sexual violence across the country—not just the numbers, but people's experiences with what's happening on their campuses.

Of course, the federal government has a federal funding body, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. It would be wonderful if one of their areas of concentration was on gender-based violence and special grants were made available to researchers, because there are crucial questions that remain unanswered—for example, the pornography question that was asked earlier.

We didn't have an opportunity to interview university men about their views, but what my colleague has said about boys in high school indicates that we need to know what the mentality is out there, and where they're getting those ideas. You can't get that strictly from surveys. You need to get that from across-the-country research. It takes time to clear ethics boards, but it also takes time to build trust in particular communities.

The other population that was wildly under-represented in our research was indigenous people, and that's because there's a huge trust-building exercise that needs to go on before you can do research with indigenous populations. We know there's a massive problem with sexual and gender-based violence in indigenous communities and among indigenous peoples and we know it comes from a culture of colonialization and the effects of colonialization, but we don't know how that's manifesting for indigenous students on university campuses. If I were to pick my top area, that would be the one place where I would want to go directly, to find a way to chronicle the experiences and the needs of indigenous students on campus.

● (1610)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy: You spoke in your presentation about the need to adopt a national action plan. How important is it to have a national strategy that would, of course, include education and training?

The goal would be to inform people about sexual violence and to change behaviours in that regard. Healthy relationships, consent, encouraging self-esteem and working with men and boys to change attitudes and behaviours could be addressed. I won't talk about “rape culture” since you said that you don't like that expression.

How important is it to have a real strategy to address all these issues?

[*English*]

Prof. Dawn Moore: I'll just backtrack and clarify. It's not that I dislike the term "rape culture"; I just feel that it has become a distraction right now. That's why I say I'm agnostic about it. We can use it if it's useful, but I don't want that term to become the debate. I want the debate to stay on what we can do to prevent gender-based violence.

To answer your question with regard to education, I'd refer back to the educational initiatives that we have undertaken as a nation around racism and around homophobia. Most of those were led by the federal government in terms of educating the Canadian public about what it means to live in a cultural mosaic, about educating the Canadian public about the importance of human rights for all. Canada was the first country in the world to allow gay marriage, and that didn't just come from the courts: it also came from a Canadian public that was ready to embrace diversity within our population.

If we look at the history of this country, we see that education—changing the sensibilities of the day-to-day Canadian, the average Canadian—is vital to effecting the widespread change that we need in order to prevent and stop gender-based violence. I share the vision of my colleague in Montreal of having—

The Chair: I'm sorry; that's your time.

We'll go now to Mr. Serré for seven minutes.

Mr. Marc Serré (Nickel Belt, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair. I'll be sharing my time with Mr. Fraser and Ms. Dhillon.

My first question is for both witnesses. In your opinion, how is violence online different from physical violence?

Also, as you are answering that, Ms. Dugal, on your website you indicate that a lot of the research is focusing on teens, but we've also heard from some other witnesses that possibly we should be starting earlier. I want to get your comments on that.

Ms. Anuradha Dugal: To answer your question about focusing earlier, I completely agree. We know that the organizations we work with have told us that they have been invited into grade 6 classes. Those are young people 10 and 11 years old. We know there are some programs, in Montreal in particular, that are about communication strategies for young people that start in *maternelle*, in kindergarten. I think that the question of how you have a healthy relationship with anybody needs to start as soon as young people are in school.

On the consent question, as soon as we have young people gathered in a small space, we've seen that even three- and four-year-olds are able to learn to ask if they can hug you. It sounds like something very small and insignificant, but learning to ask permission for physical intimacy is a key part in teaching a culture of consent if we want to create a climate like that to go all the way through to universities and beyond. That's the question about how early you could start.

On your first question about the place for education...sorry, I'm needing a bit of precision.

● (1615)

Mr. Marc Serré: It was to comment on the difference between physical violence and online violence.

Ms. Anuradha Dugal: It was about online violence. For us, the definition of "violence" is psychological, physical, online, financial, sexual. It encompasses everything. The violence that I think is critically difficult for young women to deal with right now is online stalking and harassment. It is different because it seems to be very much more personalized. It's directed against women who specifically take a position on wanting to look for equality rights or wanting to present a more.... I know you're going to be speaking to Julie Lalonde. We know that she's experienced a lot of harassment of that kind, but almost any woman who talks on the Internet about equality experiences violence and aggression.

I don't know if my colleague would like to add more.

Prof. Dawn Moore: I could add something more apropos physical threats and death threats online for public positions I've taken on sexual violence. That is absolutely accurate.

To speak quickly to how early we can start, it's from birth. My children are in the CPE system in Quebec, and they are taught not only to ask permission to touch others but also that they are allowed to say no when somebody touches their own bodies. The notion has been very much inculcated in them that their bodies are their own and that other than when they have to go to the doctor or I have to take their temperature, they have veto power over their bodies. I see that reflected in the way my kids comport themselves now. They are much more respectful of their friends' bodies and theirs and mine. They will now ask if they can hug me. They've learned to do that because I am also a rape survivor, so that's been important in establishing boundaries in our household.

Children are capable of understanding consent. They're capable of understanding their own bodily autonomy. There's nothing wrong with teaching them to be respectful and to seek consent from the get-go.

The Chair: Go ahead, Ms. Dhillon.

Ms. Anju Dhillon (Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle, Lib.): You mentioned before that universities are not very open to disclosing how much sexual assault or rape or harassment occurs on campus. Could you please tell us why you think so, and who puts up those roadblocks? You also said it discourages complainants from coming forward. What can the government do to encourage these complainants? What are the best practices we can establish?

Prof. Dawn Moore: In terms of evidence, the three universities we studied all told us that there was no problem with sexual violence on their campuses. Carleton, my own university, told me that there hadn't been a sexual assault since the quite infamous sexual assault in 2007, which is patently wrong. I was told that by the head of university safety. There is certainly a sticking-your-head-in-the-sand response from universities. Across the board, they don't want to acknowledge that the problem exists.

What was the second part of your question?

Ms. Anju Dhillon: The second part was about how to encourage people to report, and whether the university will help them or not. What are best practices? What can the government do to encourage this?

Prof. Dawn Moore: One thing that I would really like to see us test out in Canada, which has been tried on campuses in the United States, is anonymous reporting mechanisms.

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

It's very simple, but I think it would go a long way to giving us a much better ability to capture the prevalence of sexual violence on campuses.

● (1620)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We will go now to Garnett Genuis for five minutes.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Thank you very much. I really appreciated hearing both of your testimonies.

Ms. Moore, I'll start with a comment, and I'm curious about your response to it.

I'm 29 and I was on a university campus not that long ago. Maybe things have gotten better or maybe they've gotten worse, but I know that from my perspective, stop light parties were something that happened and weren't just fraternity or sorority things. When I was a student, our resident association organized a stop light party. This is an organization to which students paid mandatory dues that were collected by the administration and distributed. It floored me, but many other people thought that this was normal fun or whatever.

You also mentioned specifically the issue of frosh week activities and the hypersexualization of the university environment that's often associated with frosh week. This is very important to me, because you have students coming for the first time and they're learning what university life is all about, and this is immediately what they're greeted with. It's not some kind of erudite academic experience. It's something completely different.

In some cases there are issues of culture, but these issues that I've mentioned reflect in some cases things that student unions are organizing as officially sanctioned social activities. That's especially true of frosh week. It's not to say that student unions are always the problem. Sometimes they're part of the solution as well in terms of emphasizing education around this issue.

What is the appropriate response from university administrations? I am asking because it seems to me that in some of these cases there needs to be a greater degree of control by the administration in terms of saying to student unions that there are limits to the kinds of activities students unions can organize if they go outside the kind of culture we want to create on our campuses.

Prof. Dawn Moore: I really appreciate that question. I think universities have two choices. One is to be reactive, and that is what most universities do now. Most of you are familiar with what happened on Carleton's campus a couple of years ago. I'm not sure if I'm allowed to swear in this room or not—okay, no. I will just say that frosh facilitators were seen walking adjacent to campus wearing T-shirts that said, “Eff safe space” or “Eff me”. This created a debacle on campus. It took a long time for university administration to condemn these acts, but those students were never actually punished, even though their actions clearly were infractions against the student code of conduct.

I don't think that kind of a reactive approach is particularly useful. We saw the same thing at Saint Mary's. We saw it at U of O. We saw it at Brock. If we just keep responding, then we're not actually getting ahead of the problem. To my mind, we need to have ongoing education that begins with frosh week but then continues, so that those people who are educating the frosh about what consent means have had four years of education about what consent means and are in a position to model for them what consent means and what healthy sexual relationships mean.

What we see now at universities is that the frosh facilitators do an online course that takes them half an hour, and that's their consent training, which they then bring down to the frosh. It's not sufficient, and it's not sufficient for that to only happen once in your university career. It should be an ongoing project of universities to be continuously educating people, and not just students. Everybody on the university campus needs to be engaged with continuous education around safe, healthy, consensual sexuality.

● (1625)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: If that isn't going to happen from the student union side, it needs to be managed from the administration, because administration ultimately has the responsibility for the safety of the spaces they manage. Would you agree?

Prof. Dawn Moore: What I would hope for is collaboration among students, labour unions, and administration. I just came from a meeting on Carleton's campus about our own sexual violence policy, and it's certainly something we're advocating on our campus. I think the will is there at a lot of other campuses, but we need national direction in order to set a standard that we can all achieve.

Right now, as I said in my brief, we're all functioning in silos. We're all functioning completely blind to what is happening at other institutions, and that's not helpful. My colleague talked about knowledge dissemination and knowledge sharing. We desperately need that.

The Chair: All right. That's your time, unfortunately.

Ladies, your input has been very valuable to the committee. I want to thank you for appearing before us. If you have other things you'd like to send us based on the questions you heard, feel free to forward all of that to the clerk. We would love to have your input. Thank you again for coming.

We're going to suspend the meeting for two minutes to set up for our next witnesses.

● (1625)

(Pause)

● (1630)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Order, please.

We are continuing the meeting.

[*English*]

We have with us today several witnesses.

First of all, we have Maïra Martin, from Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes. Then we have, from Ottawa Hollaback!, Julie Lalonde, who's the director. By video conference, we have Gabrielle Ross-Marquette, who is the communications coordinator for METRAC Action on Violence.

Ladies, welcome. We're glad to have you as our witnesses today.

We're going to start with Gabrielle. Each of you will have 10 minutes to make your remarks. I will cut you off savagely at the end of your 10 minutes, because we have to stay on time. Then we'll start the rounds of questions.

We'll start with you, Gabrielle, and then we'll go to Maïra. You have 10 minutes.

Ms. Gabrielle Ross-Marquette (Communications Coordinator, METRAC Action on Violence): Thank you, everyone, for inviting METRAC to speak on issues of campus safety. We know that post-secondary education campuses across the country are profoundly unsafe spaces for women of all backgrounds and gender-non-conforming folks.

North American research suggests that between 15% and 25% of college- and university-aged women will experience some form of sexual assault during their academic career. METRAC Action on Violence has more than three decades of experience in working with campus communities to foster safer institutions for everyone, with specific attention to individuals and groups at higher risk of experiencing violence.

Today I will summarize METRAC's brief, which was submitted on September 23, by focusing on three issues: rape culture, poverty on Canadian campuses, and the rise in human trafficking on campuses.

I'll be happy to answer any questions following the presentation.

Rape culture results from the prevalence of sexual violence on campus, coupled with the normalization of this violence. Because of statistics, we know sexual violence is prevalent on Canadian campuses. For example, we've all heard the sobering statistic that four out of five undergraduate students report experiencing dating violence. The acceptance of this sexual violence is what we call “rape culture”, which describes shared social and community beliefs, ideas, structures, and practices that can, when added together, make high rates of sexual violence seem normal, unavoidable, and acceptable; make us prone to blame, disbelieve, and silence those who experience victimization; feed into sexist gender stereotypes and rape myths about men being naturally violent and women being at fault for provoking them; and feed into sexualized stereotypes about certain groups, such as indigenous people, racialized communities, and trans and gender diverse communities, and reinforce a belief that they are somehow more likely to commit abuse or to be immune to victimization. Rape culture can also make us think it's okay that our policies, practices, law enforcement, and courts do not respond well to the problem, and rape culture keeps us ill-equipped and unaware of how to support victims or survivors.

Rape culture is found everywhere, from individual beliefs to large social structures. It's grounded in historical patterns and power arrangements between people; we can think of colonialism or sexism. Even as laws against sexual violence and stereotypes improve, these legacies are embedded in our culture and linked with ongoing forms of oppression such as racism, homophobia, and ableism. As a result, rape culture has led to greater risks for vulnerable groups that have been pushed to the margins of society—for example, young women, indigenous women, and trans individuals—while there are still not appropriate services and supports for marginalized people when they face abuse.

Egale Canada's national education survey in 2011 notes that about two-thirds of queer and trans students reported feeling unsafe at school. In 2009, 74% of student-reported hate crimes on campuses were linked to a student's sexual orientation, while more than one-third of students experienced sexual harassment. These forms of violence are directly related to race, religion, gender identity, and sexual orientation. Therefore, it's crucial to consider the intersections of sexual violence when developing a strategy to address this violence. The strategy cannot be separated from an approach that seeks to challenge all forms of oppression.

However, developing any strategy to address sexual violence on Canadian campuses is challenging. The climate of economic uncertainties creates unsafe campuses where developing a culture of consent proves difficult.

Here's what I mean by economic uncertainties: the rising cost of tuition fees, record levels of student debt, the high cost of housing, the high cost of food, and the nature of work on campus, which is precarious or unpaid through many internships.

There are many statistics that support these claims, but I will highlight just two of them. One is that the Ontario Association of Food Banks reported that an increasing number of post-secondary education students now regularly use food banks, with 8% of users being students and senior citizens, and that there is not one college or university campus that does not have a food bank or hunger relief program on site. The second is that international students on Canadian campuses may face even more economic barriers as their tuition fees are often three times the Canadian average, and they may find it even harder to obtain paid work because of negative stereotypes, racism, and xenophobia.

● (1635)

We are then in a climate where students are forced to look outside of traditional means to survive. The serious reality of poverty on campuses increases the risk of exploitation of vulnerable and marginalized students. Universities and colleges, with their high proportion of young women on isolated campuses, are particular areas of concern for human trafficking. The Internet adds to that problem, and online human trafficking of young women and girls is a growing, serious issue in our communities.

Just last week, a story in Ottawa made the headlines when a manager for the University of Ottawa's football team was arrested for posing as a talent agent online to lure girls into the sex trade. In Canada, this is a particular concern for indigenous women, because the majority of women who are trafficked are indigenous women and girls.

Sex trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation of women and children, especially girls, is a significant crime and human rights issue currently facing urban centres. Ontario is considered one of the major centres for sex trafficking of indigenous women and children. Ontario is also home to the majority of international trafficking victims recognized by Citizenship and Immigration Canada, and it is the province where the most human trafficking prosecutions in Canada have occurred. There have been some cases of international students being internationally trafficked in Ontario.

The combined factors of increasing poverty among students, large numbers of women-identified students, and border town locations of campuses require the attention of the government. We must attend to understanding and managing the associated risks for sex trafficking in areas surrounding campuses.

We would like to take this opportunity to share some effective strategies for challenging rape culture and sexual violence on campus.

Effective strategies to combat sexual violence must involve the campus community. The people who study, work, live, and use a campus are the safety experts in that space, with the greatest understanding of their safety concerns. Students can both guide and help implement the process for change, which should focus on equity, diversity, and inclusion to ensure everyone on campus is safe from sexual violence.

Some promising practices are METRAC's campus safety audits. These safety audits explore physical factors, sexual violence, discriminatory behaviour, access, practices, and policies. They require partnership among students, administration, faculty, employees, and the broader community in order to be effective in addressing the safety needs and assets of diverse campus constituencies. Audits review policies and practices, evaluate local needs and assets, assess safety, and provide a detailed report to the different campuses, along with recommendations for implementation.

There is also inclusive education. Here we are talking about educating all members of campus communities—students, staff, and faculty—on rape culture, sexual violence, and fostering a culture of consent through face-to-face workshops led by peers trained by external community partners.

Finally, there is METRAC's online student training. METRAC is offering a new online course entitled “Campus Consent Culture: Preventing Sexual Violence E-Course for Students”. This online course, coupled with inclusive education, allows students to learn these concepts in a self-directed, interactive way.

METRAC commends this committee for dedicating time and resources to exploring the issue of campus safety for women and girls, and we thank you so much for offering us the opportunity to share our knowledge with you today.

● (1640)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Martin, you have the floor for 10 minutes.

Ms. Maïra Martin (General Director, Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

[*English*]

I am going to speak in French, and I used to speak very fast in French, so please let me know if you get lost in translation.

[*Translation*]

Thank you very much for inviting Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes to make a presentation today.

Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes is a provincial women's rights collective of safe houses, sexual assault centres, or CALACS, and programs on violence against women. They provide services in French to women experiencing violence in Ontario. The mandate of Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes is to develop resources in French on violence against women, to provide training and to coordinate awareness campaigns.

The purpose of your study is extremely specific. Therefore, I will limit my presentation to the sexual violence experienced by young women and girls, particularly on campuses. I will especially stress awareness about this form of violence by speaking about the “Draw the Line” campaign.

There are relatively few statistics on incidents of sexual violence on campuses, but studies in the United States have shown that approximately one female student in eight has been the victim of sexual assault during her post-secondary studies, which is nonetheless significant. As Ms. Ross-Marquette said, all these sexual assaults are encouraged by a culture that is present in our society and on campuses that we generally call rape culture. This culture, which is sexist, chauvinistic and based on many stereotypes, makes sexual assault survivors responsible for their assault and blames them for it. Moreover, it tends to completely remove responsibility from the attackers and to minimize the sexual assaults.

In recent years, this rape culture has surfaced many times on North American campuses. For example, some colleges and universities have very strongly discouraged survivors from speaking out about their assaults. I suspect that you will remember many cases in which extremely sexist activities were organized on campuses, particularly during frosh week.

One fairly easy way to combat the rape culture and sexual assaults in society and on campuses, in particular, is first to speak out about this culture and to raise awareness. The Draw the Line campaign were created in Ontario by Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes and by the Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres. Ms. Lalonde, who is here today, was also involved in this campaign, which was created in 2012.

One of the first benefits of this campaign, which is extremely important to me, is that it is fully bilingual and was created in French and English simultaneously. So it also meets the needs of francophones. In addition, this awareness campaign takes a feminist approach, meaning that we are seeing sexual violence as a form of violence against women, gender-based violence. We analyze sexual violence in a much broader context, as a social problem that affects everyone and is caused by the inequality between men and women.

The Draw the Line campaign is for family and friends. We chose to address the public, both men and women as friends and family, rather than women as victims and men as attackers. It is extremely important that we use this approach. In fact, if we address women as potential victims, we easily risk blaming them or giving them advice on how to avoid a sexual assault by refraining from alcohol, going out in a group, refraining from sexting and so on.

● (1645)

All this advice would strengthen the myth that women could avoid a sexual assault when it isn't true. No matter what a woman does or doesn't do, she will not avoid a sexual assault.

We also decided not to address men as potential attackers because it has been shown to be ineffective, that it had no effect on the attackers and, in particular, did not encourage men to get involved as potential allies and as people who can foster change. In fact, we are addressing men and women as friends and family who can step in effectively to put an end to a sexually violent situation, effectively and empathically support a survivor or hold an attacker responsible.

To create socially profound changes, the public needs to feel concerned and know how to recognize the various forms of sexual violence because, for most people, sexual violence means only rape, while we know that it is much more than that. Not only do we need to recognize sexual violence, but we also especially need to know how to intervene safely and effectively to put an end to it. If we don't equip family members and friends with the tools for intervening properly, it won't be effective and we won't get to the bottom of this matter.

With the Draw the Line campaign, we decided to create different scenarios that cover the spectrum of sexual violence. For example, we prepared scenarios on alcohol and attacks, cyber sexual violence, spousal rape, sexual exploitation and violence in sports culture and in society. These scenarios enable the friends and family to be exposed to a real or possible situation of sexual assault, to think about the situation and, above all, to see what they could do in specific situations.

As I said earlier, intervention is extremely important. In fact, we also give a few examples of possible interventions for each of the scenarios to start to guide thinking.

On advantage of the campaign is that it can be implemented in several ways. It can be done on social media or individually with the campaign material. I have brought you a few examples of this. So it can be an individual reflection or an informal group reflection among friends or with family.

However, I think the most effective awareness method is organizing workshops in schools or on campuses, led by people who work at the CALACS. It is important that the people who give the workshops are trained because when training is given on violence against women and on sexual violence, in particular, it is important to be prepared for conversations that are sometimes a little difficult. If facilitators aren't ready to receive negative comments and reactions, it may be difficult for them.

The Draw the Line campaign is run on any given day by the various CALACS in the English-speaking and French-speaking provinces on campuses and in secondary schools. We note that there are many dialogues and that the workshops foster conversation. That is what is most effective for creating profound changes. Posters or television ads aren't enough to bring about changes in attitudes and mentalities. The most important thing is to talk about it, and have the expertise of someone who is able to debunk the myths and talk about the reality of sexual violence.

Thank you.

● (1650)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[*English*]

We are fortunate now to have Julie Lalonde, the director of Ottawa Hollaback!, to address us for 10 minutes.

Ms. Julie Lalonde (Director, Ottawa Hollaback!): I'm going to speak in English. I also speak really fast in all languages, so I'm going to try to be really slow and articulate and keep my eye on the wonderful translators.

Thank you so much for inviting us. We're the first Hollaback! chapter in Canada. We launched in 2010. It's pretty remarkable for us that street harassment is on the radar of the federal government. That excites us very much.

I'm going to talk a bit about our work and who we are, but Maïra has already covered a lot, so I'm going to echo what she said in terms of effective strategies.

For folks who aren't familiar with Hollaback!, first of all, we have nothing to do with the Gwen Stefani song.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Ms. Julie Lalonde: People always think it's a reference to Gwen Stefani. It's not—no disrespect to Gwen Stefani.

We were launched around 2005 in New York. If you remember, back then cellphone cameras were a brand new technology. It was very exciting. It was terrible and pixilated, but very exciting.

A young woman on a subway in New York was on her way to work when someone started publicly masturbating in front of her. This had happened to her before, but she realized that in her pocket she had this brand new phone with a camera. She thought that if she took the guy's picture, she then would have evidence and the police might actually do something about it. She took a picture of him. He posed for the photo; that's how flagrant he was in what he did. It clearly was not his first time. She brought the photo to the NYPD and asked them to please try to get the guy. They said that millions of people live in New York and asked how they were supposed to find this guy.

This was prior to social media in the way that we currently understand it. She posted it to Flickr, which is—as hopefully you know—a sort of photo-sharing site, one of the first social media sites, and it went viral. It ended up on the cover of the New York *Daily News*. He was eventually apprehended. Interestingly enough, he was released and has been apprehended just recently, in the past year, for doing it again to someone else.

What was important about this story is that when a young woman used what she had at her disposal to start a conversation, it sparked a massive conversation within the city of New York, where you had men saying, “As if this happens to women...”, and you had women saying, “As if you didn't know this is the reality of what it means to walk down the street in New York and to take public transit.”

A group of women and men in New York thought that maybe this new mobile technology stuff was the answer, because you had a way of capturing this problem in the moment. Initially, the site was started just for people in the city of New York to capture this in real time, but that quickly morphed. They heard from people around the world who were saying that this was not a problem unique to New York and that they had it in India, Europe, and Latin America. It was happening all over the place, and they asked if they could participate as well.

Now our current format is that anybody around the world can start a chapter. We are now in 60 cities on five continents around the world—I just counted them this morning—powered by over 300 activists, overwhelmingly through unpaid volunteer labour. Over half of the people who run a Hollaback! site are considered youths, so they're under the age of 30 or 25. Young people are running this movement.

As for how it works, we have an app that you can download for free. We have a chapter here in Ottawa. You can submit your story, such as how you were walking down Rideau Street and a guy drove by and yelled at you from his car or a guy followed you for three blocks asking you for your number and it really pissed you off. You submit your story to us, we approve it, and not only does it get put on the site, but a little dot goes onto a map, and we can actually start tracking where street harassment happens in the city. This is giving us real data in real time about what's going on in our community.

That has given us data to take to places. For example, when we had our municipal election a few years ago, we went to them with the kinds of things that we were seeing and experiencing. We were able to contact everyone running for council to say that this was what was going on in their ward and to ask them what they were going to do about it.

Here's what's important for me. When we first launched, people asked us about being afraid that we were going to get sued by the guy whose picture we took for being a creep. That was their assumption. It was around libel. Also, they asked what the power was of telling someone's story. They said, “A girl just vented on your website, but what difference does that make?” Well, by creating a space for people to tell their stories, we're getting data that we've never had before.

We were around for about two years and then decided to look at the themes we saw coming up over and over again in Ottawa. What we saw overwhelmingly was about public transit. That's what I want to talk about with you very briefly, because most people, most students, are taking public transit. We live in a city where you have a U-Pass. This is common on campuses across the country; there's an assumption that you're going to take transit.

Transit in Ottawa, I can say, remains very unsafe for women and young folks, queer folks, people with disabilities, and elders. Specifically, what we found was that the overwhelming number of stories we got were about being harassed on the bus, while waiting for the bus, or on the way off the bus and heading home.

● (1655)

We took that information and approached OC Transpo, which is the public transit authority here in Ottawa, and they were more than a little dismissive. They were actually outraged that we dared to say on our website that there were high levels of harassment on transit, because they were not getting reports. In their defence, here you have a crop of privileged people who don't take transit. Most of them were men who were, like, “We don't get reports of this stuff, so how do we know you're not just making this up?”

We held a town hall. We got people to start sharing their stories. It just exploded in the city. Women were coming forward and saying that they didn't know of a single woman who didn't have at least one story of a guy who was leering at them for the whole 40 minutes they were on the bus—minimum.

We continued to push them, both by using the media and by meeting with them monthly. What we wanted was a bystander intervention campaign. We wanted ads telling people that if they saw somebody harassing someone, they had a role to play. We had to concede to a campaign.... For those of you who know transit at all, you might have seen ads that say “if you feel harassed” or “if you feel threatened”. That's a result of the work that we did with them for three years, pushing them to talk about the fact that if they would acknowledge that this happens, people would talk about it.

We also wanted an anonymous reporting mechanism. We knew that the vast majority of people did not report because they were concerned about stigma, about victim blaming, about all the stuff that my colleagues have mentioned already. In fact, we were correct. Ottawa has the first anonymous reporting mechanism in the country. Apparently, it might be the first for all of North America, which is very exciting. Lo and behold, most of the things that are getting reported to them are things that they had never had reported previously, including high levels of people being leered at and of people being groped.

It actually led to the apprehension of a serial sexual assault predator who had been going up to women and kissing young girls waiting for the bus for school. Multiple women reported it through the anonymous reporting mechanism. They went to the cameras and, sure enough, they caught him and he was apprehended.

Once again, you create a space for people to tell their stories, and young women want to tell their stories, but we need to do something with that information.

I want to leave you with some stats as well. Hollaback! HQ is in New York. They got some funding. It's the only chapter in the world that is actually funded to do its work. They worked with Cornell University to gather global statistics on street harassment, which was really important.

What they found was that 88% of Canadians had been harassed before the age of 18, which means that 88% of women in Canada had been harassed at least once before they were even legally an adult. Fifty per cent of the respondents had been groped or fondled at least once in the past year, which is pretty tremendous. Forty per cent said that a result of street harassment was that it made them late to school. It made them late for class because they either had to do a detour or they had to collect themselves before they could go to their lecture or classroom.

Locally, we had our own research, which was not funded by the wonderful folks at Cornell but was still pretty sound. What we found, which was important and builds off what Maïra said, was that only 6% of people who had been harassed had someone intervene on their behalf. That's really important when you consider that the nature of street harassment is being in a public space. If you're on a bus, there's at least you, the perpetrator, and the driver. If you're waiting for a bus, there's probably someone else around.

We have very low levels of intervention because people are not recognizing it as a form of violence. They don't get that street harassment is on a continuum. They're afraid of escalation. They think that only crazy people harass women at the bus stop and that if they intervene, the crazy person is going to come after them. It's a sort of self-preservation.

We also found that people just don't know what to do, so we have a program, and our response is not criminalization. We're actually opposed to the criminalization of street harassment, because most of the things we're experiencing are already against the law, so that's not the issue. The issue is getting people to intervene, whether that involves reporting or whatnot.

I want to end by telling you about our program. It's called “I've Got Your Back”. We teach the four Ds of intervention: direct, delegate, distract, and delay.

To give you an example, if I see Maïra being harassed and it's considered fairly low level—if he's just chatting with her and I feel safe enough—I can go up to him and say, “She doesn't know you. She's not interested, so let it go”, or I can go up to her and say, “Do you know him or do you need me to call somebody?” I can intervene directly if it's safe.

You can delegate if it's not safe. Maybe you're tiny and not a tall person like I am, whose job it is to yell at people about the patriarchy —

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Ms. Julie Lalonde: —so maybe you're not as comfortable about intervening. You can delegate. You can tell the driver; you can very discreetly go up to the front and say that a woman looks really uncomfortable and you think something's happening. Or if you're on a construction site, we encourage you to find the guy with the white hat and say that his staff is harassing someone. If you're at the mall, tell mall security. You can delegate.

You can create a distraction, which is also very non-confrontational. Let's say that I see Maïra being harassed. I go up to her and say, “Hey, I have to get off at the Rideau stop, so do you know where to go?” You're creating a distraction and also letting that person know that there's a witness to what's happening.

Or you can delay, which is also really important. It sounds like it's not effective, but you can wait until the moment has passed, then go up to the person and say that you saw what just happened to them. You can ask them if they're okay, say that it was really gross, and ask them if they need you to call someone for them or need you to walk them to where they need to go.

● (1700)

That's what we do. That's what we teach. We teach bystander intervention, but we need access to those avenues to go into those spaces. That's what campuses want us to do, and that's what we're doing with youth.

Once again, thank you so much for having street harassment on your radar. It's so very important to us.

The Chair: Awesome. Thank you so much.

We'll begin our first round of questioning. We'll start with you, Mr. Fraser, for seven minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sean Fraser (Central Nova, Lib.): Thank you for your compelling and interesting presentation.

Ms. Martin, if you don't mind, I will ask my questions in English.

[*English*]

Perfect.

This is awesome. I found it almost empowering to sit here and listen to you guys. One thing I can draw on from my own experience comes from the educational side. I too am not too far removed from a university campus. I was a student leader who helped organize education seminars on sexual violence, among other things. At the time, I found we did have a focus of almost telling young men and boys in particular not to be an assailant and what consent means. That was important, but I very much felt that the people who bought into the message probably knew already what the message would be. The people who needed to hear it didn't show up, even though it was supposed to be mandatory.

How can we engage people who need to hear this message? Is it by focusing on the fact that we need to be educating people to become intervenors?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Maïra Martin: I will answer in French.

In fact, the best way is to speak to people, both men and women, who are bystanders, meaning friends and family who are witnesses. This way, the men feel less confronted. For example, I don't know if you are familiar with the awareness campaign that uses the message "Don't be that guy". It's a campaign that ran in Alberta. Personally, I showed it to several of my friends and to my husband, and they all said that they already weren't that kind of guy. They didn't think it really spoke to them because they didn't considered themselves attackers.

This type of campaign shows little. These are a few examples of sexual assault. It actually does not show the full spectrum. This also needs to be shown because some people don't know how to recognize a sexual assault. So the first thing is to explain to them what a sexual assault is. Then, they need to be told that it isn't normal, that we need to do something so that everyone can feel safe on the street, on campus and elsewhere. We need to show people that they can be agents of change, that they can intervene and change things.

The best way to do this is to equip people. As I said, sometimes this involves simple advice. These are not necessarily very complicated things. Exactly as Julie explained, we can simply go and see the person to stop these actions, to create a distraction.

Does that answer your question?

[*English*]

Mr. Sean Fraser: Yes. Thank you very much, Ms. Martin.

Perhaps I can address a follow-up question to both you and Ms. Ross-Marquette.

Ms. Ross-Marquette, you discussed the need to have inclusive strategies on university campuses that bring into the fold everybody who actually knows the campus community. How can we, as a federal government, help build in this kind of strategy that Ms. Martin discussed to help empower people to intervene when they see sexual harassment taking place in the campus context?

Ms. Gabrielle Ross-Marquette: I'm not sure what the federal government's jurisdiction is, but I think it comes when we work with communities. It starts from the local level and then it fans out. Students and activists and also community groups are already doing some of that work. How can the work that is happening be supported by the federal government? Sometimes that's just investing more money into those strategies so that there can be more staff hired to continue those initiatives.

I think conversations need to be brought into classrooms more. That's a hurdle we've heard students talk about. Incorporating some of this subject matter in curriculum is something that's proving to be a bit difficult. It has to pass through a lot of different bodies, like a senate, to make sure it happens. That's something worth looking into.

It would also be creating those discussions at the classroom level, where students are. Oftentimes we see in the greater Toronto area, for instance, campuses that are commuter campuses. Students come in for their classes, and then they leave. They don't get engaged or involved in the process. It would be about having those dual strategies of having the conversations with everyone—having community actors present on campus and doing that type of work, but also having the conversations in classrooms. That would be a good place to start.

● (1705)

Mr. Sean Fraser: With the very different perspectives—from a commuter campus to what we mostly have out on the east coast, where students live within two blocks of the campus community at all times for four years—do you think it's more important to defer the local, specific decision-making on the programming to community organizations or to the campus community by saying, "Look, we'll perhaps fund what you're going to do, but you do what works on the ground rather than take our advice from the centre"?

Ms. Gabrielle Ross-Marquette: That's what I would suggest. As Maïra and Julie have said, there are experts. There are people who have been doing this violence against women work for many years. They are wells of knowledge that need to be supported, that need to be funded, and they want to do that work with the students and the campuses.

Mr. Sean Fraser: Excellent.

Ms. Lalonde, I want to get to you before I wrap up. I probably have about a minute or so left by my account.

What you're doing is amazing. What can the federal government do? What's your best advice to this committee? What can we recommend to the government to expand the kind of work that you're doing in the different communities across Canada? How can we better give access to these public spaces that you referred to?

Ms. Julie Lalonde: That's a great question that I will answer very quickly for you.

First, having street harassment on your radar sounds hokey, but it's so important. It's on the continuum of sexual violence. In Ontario, there's a lot of conversation on sexual harassment and sexual violence. When you list forms of violence in terms of a call for proposals, for example, or as a focus, mentioning street harassment is really important. It is also important to find ways to fund the groups that are doing this work, knowing that a lot of those groups can't apply for federal funding because they don't have non-profit status. I think this feels like a separate conversation, but it's actually closely related, because groups like ours can't afford the money that we need to apply for funding.

Here we are doing this incredible work—we're challenging local transit authorities; we've developed this app; we've developed this mechanism that is nowhere else in North America—all off the side of our desks, so I think there's a gap. In my case, I do draw the line at work.

If you want to have access to the folks doing that work, you have to find a way to fund groups like Hollaback!. Continuously talking about street harassment as something that's on the government's radar will then incite other violence against women organizations to include it as well.

The Chair: Excellent.

Now we're going to go to Ms. Harder, who is splitting her time with Mr. Genuis.

You have seven minutes.

Ms. Rachael Harder: All right. Thank you so much, and thank you to each and every one of you for being here today and sharing your expertise with us. We certainly appreciate it.

My first question today will go to Gabrielle. I'm just wondering if you could comment on the campaign called “We Believe You”. Are you familiar with that campaign?

Ms. Gabrielle Ross-Marquette: I am familiar, but it's not led by METRAC.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Right, okay. Could you comment on its effectiveness at all?

Ms. Gabrielle Ross-Marquette: From what we've been able to see on campuses, especially around the time of the Jian Ghomeshi trial, which was when that campaign picked up, it is very important because it is very survivor-centric and survivor-driven.

It is a group of people who have experienced sexual violence standing up for their fellow women or people who have experienced sexual violence who may not feel comfortable coming forward, or those who have been living with that secret for a long time. They are creating a community to ensure that everybody has a place and a voice.

I would say that it is very effective because it is led by survivors of sexual violence, and it centres on a very important concept that is not victim blaming. It's the opposite. It's believing them and being there for them.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Okay. Thank you.

My next question will go to Ms. Lalonde.

I guess I'm going on the premise of the “We Believe You” campaign. Clearly it has helped generate support from the general public through different initiatives on campus, and in society as a whole in terms of taking a person's story at face value and giving it merit and giving it weight.

Around this table we have people who are passionate about the topic of violence against women and who want to make a difference. What can we as legislators do that would mimic, let's say, this “We Believe You” campaign? In other words, what could we do in order to make sure that our police forces, our legislative system, and our judges also believe the stories that come before them?

● (1710)

Ms. Julie Lalonde: That's a great question. Thank you. I love that question. It gets me so excited.

This sounds sort of silly, but as a public educator, I could do a two-hour workshop, and especially men will write in the evaluation form that what they took away the most was me reminding them that people are as likely to set their house on fire for insurance purposes as they are to make false claims of sexual assault, but you wouldn't know that from watching the news.

People need to know that statistically the rates of people making up false claims are the same as or lower than they are other crimes. That narrative is not out there. People think I have some sort of ulterior motive and say that it benefits me to make that statement, but that's the reality.

If you have a police force...in Ottawa, where we had very high rates of sexual assaults that were being dismissed, that became its own news story. We all knew that was in no way accurate.

I think when you are making legislation, when you're having conversations about the law and sexual assault, which sounds like that's really the question, it's around reminding people that we don't treat other crimes with the same level of doubt as we do with sexual assault. That's not a coincidence; that's purposeful.

Those who benefit from lies around sexual violence are perpetrators, and most perpetrators are repeat offenders. Why? It's because women don't come forward. Why? It's because we blame them. However, it starts from the premise of why we treat it as though everyone who comes forward around sexual assault is lying, when the statistics are the same as, or lower than, they are for other crimes.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Genuis is next.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you all very much.

Are you active in other Canadian cities, and do you have insights to share from other Canadian cities? Obviously, there is the use of transit or not, and the dynamics may be different in other places.

Ms. Julie Lalonde: We were the first chapter in Canada. The folks in Halifax, Peterborough, Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver, and Alberta are the other chapters. Some are more active than others, because we're all volunteer-based, but what is great about the model for Hollaback! is that people can work with the biggest problem in their community, the biggest need.

In our community, it was transit. For anyone who's been following the news, Vancouver transit is a serious issue as well, with all that's been happening with the SkyTrain. We're seeing that transit is a major issue. Even in communities like Peterborough, they found that a lot of the stories submitted are around transit. Some communities have more of a campus problem, so they focus more on that, but I would say that transit is an issue across the board. I'm from Sudbury, which is getting its Hollaback! chapter, and the transit there is horrible. The service is horrible, but even there they have issues with harassment. I don't know of a community in Canada that's not struggling with that problem.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you.

You talked about working with OC Transpo and you also talked about the issue of criminalization.

Are you able to work collaboratively with the police in terms of enforcement? I understand the point that there is a lot more work that needs to be done rather than just looking at it through a criminal justice lens, but obviously that's a part of the picture as well, right? What kind of co-operation have you had from police?

Ms. Julie Lalonde: We couldn't develop our anonymous supporting mechanism without Ottawa police support, because there is a lot of stuff around privacy legislation, for example. Now there is an MOU between the police and OC Transpo security. They have to share information that they get with each other, and share intelligence on anything related to transit, which is a big win.

For those who have lived in Ottawa for a while, last year or the year before, we had a serial perpetrator who was on the loose for 18 months who sexually assaulted a number of women. The Ottawa police's response was very much the archaic stuff that Maïra talked about: travel in pairs, don't go outside at night.

We, as an organization that doesn't get funding, could speak politically. We came out very strongly and said, “You're telling Canadian women that they need a curfew and a chaperone, and that's not appropriate.” They, in turn, had a meeting with us and changed the way in which they report on sexual violence, the way they issue press releases, and the way they communicate. They did what we told them, which was that if they got his description out there, they were more likely to find him, and in fact that's what happened.

That was based on a relationship that we've had and continue to maintain with Ottawa police, OC Transpo, and us, as three organizations.

● (1715)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Do I have 30 seconds left? No?

The Chair: If you can ask a question in 30 seconds and get an answer, go ahead.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: On education in primary and secondary schools as well as in universities, do you have any thoughts on whether that's a place we need to start, since maybe some of these behaviours are developed or not developed before university?

Ms. Julie Lalonde: We do that work. We like to do that work.

It's extremely difficult to get into schools, in the province of Ontario in particular. However, we are big believers in it, particularly if you're doing work on street harassment with young people, 12-year-old or 13-year-old girls. It's important to do that work with them.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you.

The Chair: Very good.

All right,

[*Translation*]

Ms. Sansoucy, you have the floor.

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I would like to thank the three witnesses for their presentations.

Ms. Lalonde, thank you for telling us about these truly promising practices.

Ontario adopted the Sexual Violence and Harassment Action Plan Act, 2016. Under this new act, it would be easier for a woman to leave an apartment when her safety is threatened. Do you think policies like this should be available to all woman across Canada, no matter which province they live in?

More broadly, I put the same question a little earlier to the other panel that appeared before us. Is it important to have mechanisms to share the various promising practices that exist currently and to share them among everyone working in the field of violence against women? As far as the federal government goes, is it important that we be able to distribute them through a policy and to create a strategy that would make it possible to share these provincial strategies or strategies supported by community organizations?

Ms. Julie Lalonde: To the first part of your question, my answer is yes.

I'm one of the people who spoke to the media after Ontario passed the Sexual Violence and Harassment Action Plan Act. I spoke about my experience. I was a victim of domestic violence. I was trapped in a contract with my abuser because I left before the end of our contract. I can't even describe how the new act would have saved my life 13 years ago if I had been able to leave my house with a 28 days' notice. I think this practice could be easily applied across the country and would help survivors of violence a great deal.

To answer the second part of your question, I think women's organizations in Canada have been a sad sight in the past ten years. They have been competing with each other because they each had to find funding. They were not working together. Actually, people don't always want to share their ideas or problems because they are afraid of losing their funding. It's as if I said that I only have a small piece of the pie and that I don't want to share it with Maïra Martin, from Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes. We have to be realistic in this respect. The tendency to suspect that the other organizations are trying to take our funding still exists and is still preventing us from working together.

Have I answered your question?

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy: Yes, absolutely.

Furthermore, all three of you raised the issue of funding.

Can you explain how important it is for non-profit organizations to receive predictable, stable and multi-year funding? How would this funding enable you to assist vulnerable women more directly?

Please answer in any order.

Ms. Gabrielle Ross-Marquette: Things would change if the funding became stable and predictable. Actually, if the office staff didn't have to spend two or three months a year completing funding applications, they could spend more time on the ground.

The other point is that various programs, including the Sexual Violence and Harassment Action Plan recently adopted by the Government of Ontario, often ask non-profit organizations and women's organizations to include people from immigrant communities, but there is no additional funding for that service.

Community organizations are often asked to take part in policy-making and in committees, to visit campuses or schools, with no additional funding. This work must be done with the core funding granted to us. We would benefit a great deal from having predictable funding that would enable us to hire staff, to improve our intervention capacity and to communicate with other non-profit organizations.

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy: Ms. Martin, would you like to add anything to that?

Ms. Maïra Martin: To give you an idea, most of the francophone sexual assault centres (CALACS) in Ontario can only set aside one day a week for speakers to raise awareness about sexual violence, which is not enough. If we really want to fight against this type of violence, we clearly have to support survivors, but also focus on education and awareness.

To be able to focus more on outreach, our centres need to have access to more funding, which is really very important and necessary. As the general director, I have to prepare both the grant applications and reports. That's often a headache and it takes a lot of time and energy. Many community organizations don't always have that capacity.

The CALACS employees are social workers first and foremost, not administrators. They don't necessarily choose the right words to fill out the funding applications. Unlike in other organizations where the staff are more familiar with the words used in government bureaucracy and who obtain funding more easily, our CALACS workers have the skills to help victims of sexual violence, but their skills in completing effective funding applications are limited.

So it's important to keep that in mind when you issue tenders. To the extent possible, it's important to try to make them as simple as possible to complete and to access so that those who have the skills in their field, but not so much in writing, can also obtain funding for their organizations.

Something else that we are seeing locally and that worries us a little is the fact that a lot of funding is now given to organizations that are not necessarily familiar with sexual violence issues. It worries us to see that a portion of the funding goes to organizations that don't necessarily have the expertise in the field. It is extremely important for you to ensure that the organizations you are funding are familiar with the reality of violence against women. Our organization has 30 or 40 years of experience.

Together, we will be able to do an effective job.

● (1720)

The Chair: Great.

Thank you.

[*English*]

The last 30 seconds will go to Ms. Vandenbeld.

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Thank you.

Very quickly, Ms. Lalonde, as a local MP from Ottawa who took OC Transpo exclusively for over a decade, I applaud the work that you're doing. I know some of the issues first-hand.

The one thing we've heard over and over again is the lack of data. You have a tremendous amount of data. Is that publicly accessible? Would that be accessible to us as legislators, or to the federal government?

Ms. Julie Lalonde: The Cornell study that I mentioned is available. I can send it to you. They have it on the Hollaback! website, so you can also compare it with other nations and see where that's at. They are in the process of wanting to do another follow-up survey to see if things have gotten better or worse in the past two or three years.

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld: Fantastic. Thank you.

The Chair: Excellent.

I want to say thank you to all of our witnesses for their time today. If you think of anything afterwards, after hearing the questions, that you want to send to the committee, I invite you to send that through the clerk.

We invite you to leave whenever you like.

We have two items of committee business to attend to at this point. We want to go in camera for this, so I'll suspend briefly.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]