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Standing Committee on the Status of Women

EVIDENCE

Wednesday, December 7, 2016

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Chair

Ms. Marilyn Gladu

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● (1530)

[*English*]

The Chair (Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC)): I call the meeting to order.

We are very fortunate this afternoon to have representatives from Google and Google Canada with us.

By video conference, we have Malika Saada Saar. Here in the room we have Lauren Skelly, who is a senior policy analyst, and Jason Kee, who is counsel for public policy and government relations.

We're going to allow them to open up with their remarks; then we'll go to our round of questions.

We'll begin with you, Lauren.

Ms. Lauren Skelly (Senior Policy Analyst, Google Canada): Thank you very much.

Members of the committee, thank you for inviting Google to contribute to this very important study.

My name is Lauren Skelly. I am the senior policy analyst for Google Canada.

I'm joined today by two colleagues: Jason Kee, public policy counsel for Google Canada, and Malika Saada Saar who, thanks to technology, is able to join us today from Washington, D.C., via video conference.

Malika is Google's senior counsel on civil and human rights. Before joining Google, Malika was co-founder and executive director of the human rights project for girls Rights4Girls, a human rights organization focused on gender-based violence against young women and girls in the United States. Today, at Google, Malika provides strategic leadership on critical civil and human rights issues that may impact the company, its users, and the digital world in which we operate.

With that, I will ask Malika to take the lead on Google's remarks to the committee. We look forward to your questions.

Ms. Malika Saada Saar (Senior Counsel, Human and Civil Rights, Google): Thank you, Lauren.

Thank you, Madam Chair, for the invitation to appear today.

I want to commend your committee for tackling this issue and for the work it is doing with respect to this study, especially your interest in the digital world and how it relates to human rights and gender-based violence.

It is important for me to begin with a personal story that really informs so much of my work here at Google.

From 2012 to 2014, I was cyberstalked by a former colleague. This individual aggressively stalked me online, created false websites against me, and sent shaming emails to former colleagues at the Department of Justice, at the White House, and to my funders. He invented false identities through which he further harassed me.

After many rejections by law enforcement to request for help in my situation, I finally found a detective who did, but here's the thing. At one point during my conversation with that detective, an intern of mine overheard me. The intern approached me afterward and disclosed to me that she, a first-year law student, had been revenge-porned. Those revenge-porn images were essentially her only digital footprint. As a result, no firm would hire her for the summer.

I realized that while the cyberviolence done to me had real emotional consequences, I already had a digital footprint that balanced all of the wreckage done to me, but this young woman did not. As with all forms of gender-based violence, there are emotional as well as economic consequences of the violence against us as women and girls.

Google was founded on the principle that the free flow of information is crucial and must be preserved and protected culturally, socially, and economically. The free flow of information is essential to creativity and innovation, and leads to economic growth for countries and companies alike. However, there are legitimate limits we must look at, even where laws strongly protect free expression and we have clear processes for removals if content violates local laws.

Beyond what is legally required, we want our products to enable positive community interaction, so we have policies about what content we do and do not allow on our platforms. Assessing controversial content can require hard judgements, and there isn't always one clear answer, but we do our best to balance free expression with safety.

I know algorithms have been of particular interest to the committee. For a typical search query, there are thousands if not millions of web pages with helpful information. Algorithms are computer processes and formulas that take your questions and turn them into answers. Google search algorithms rely on more than 200 unique signals or clues that make it possible to guess what you might really be looking for.

Our philosophy is that a search should reflect the whole web, so while we comply with laws and remove content from search results in response to valid legal requests, we only go beyond that for a few narrow categories. For example, if a user searches for child sexual abuse imagery, or what we call child porn, we block the content. We also remove nude or sexually explicit images of individuals shared publicly without their consent—for example, revenge porn—by reviewing requests from people to remove images shared without their consent from search, and by demoting websites dedicated to revenge porn.

● (1535)

We prohibit revenge porn on all Google-hosted platforms, including YouTube, Blogger, G+, and Play.

But remember, removing controversial content from Google Search does not necessarily remove this content from the Internet. Even if Google deletes particular URLs from search results pages, the web page hosting the content in question still exists.

We provide resources so that users understand that webmasters control individual sites and the content on them. We help users contact webmasters in order to seek removal of content from the source. This is the only way to actually get the content removed from the web. We think of Google Search like your public library. Taking the index card out of the card catalogue doesn't remove the book from the library. Removing the search won't eliminate the source material.

We also rely on our community to send us signals when content violates our guidelines, much like an online Neighbourhood Watch program. On YouTube, for example, people can use the flagging feature located beneath every video and comment to help report content they believe violates our community guidelines. In 2015 alone, we removed 92 million videos for violation of our policies through a mix of user flagging and our spam detection technology.

We are always looking to new technologies to help counter hate speech online. Jigsaw, Google's think tank, is working on a set of tools called Conversation AI, which is designed to use machine learning to automatically spot the language of abuse and the language of harassment far more accurately than other keyword filters and far faster than any team of human moderators.

Creating a positive, safe online experience for kids and families is an absolute priority for us, and we do this in a number of ways.

First, we want to ensure parents and children have the tools and knowledge they need to make smart and responsible choices online. We are committed to building an informed and responsible generation of digital citizens. We have several programs that train kids and teachers in the basics of privacy, security, and conscientious behaviour online.

We deeply believe that companies like Google have a responsibility to ensure all the products and services we provide to families offer safe and secure experiences for them online. We build features into our products that put families in the driver's seat, such as safety settings on Search and YouTube, so that users have a way to filter out more explicit content. We've also built products with families in mind, such as YouTube Kids, our stand-alone app that makes it safer and easier for children to find videos on topics they want to explore, but in a safe and age-appropriate way.

There has been a huge amount of progress made, and the technologies developed and shared by our industry are making a real difference in keeping women and girls safe online, but there is still so much more work that needs to be done.

We look forward to continuing to work with industry, non-profits, and governments to protect all people from harm while keeping the Internet free and open for everyone.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments to the committee. I look forward to answering questions.

● (1540)

The Chair: Excellent.

We'll start our first round of questioning with Ms. Damoff.

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Thank you so much for appearing here today.

You mentioned algorithms. After our last meeting, one of my colleagues said, "Watch what happens when you type this in", so we typed in "are blacks". The second response that came up was "dumber". That's not what I was looking for, but that's obviously an algorithm, right?

How do you combat that? Obviously someone has moved that up in the search engine for their own reasons. How do you deal with these kinds of things?

Ms. Malika Saada Saar: I want my colleagues to respond as well.

I think it is an ongoing challenge to create algorithms that are corrective and that do not reproduce attitudes and language and behaviours of bias. That is an ongoing issue. It is certainly an issue that we are tackling around Conversation AI to make sure that the algorithms that are being created are not algorithms that are reproducing bias and that are not algorithms that aren't corrective.

Ms. Pam Damoff: We heard at the last meeting about something called..."brigading", I think, was the term, whereby actions by groups can move things up or down on a Google search. Are you familiar with that?

Ms. Malika Saada Saar: We are starting to become familiar with it. Again, this is why it's so important for this conversation to happen with the public. We rely on the community to flag these issues so that we are able to respond to make a corrective measure in the way the search is done.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Okay.

Something else we've heard a lot about is the need for more digital literacy. I was quite pleased to hear you talk about how you're already doing some of that. Can you expand on the programs that you run and to whom they are available?

Ms. Malika Saada Saar: I can talk about what we do in the U.S. and I would love my colleagues to talk about what we are doing in Canada as well.

In the U.S. we have a program called Applejacks. We go into the schools and do this type of hands-on digital literacy with students as well as with teachers, because those of us who are parents know that sometimes our children are quicker and more intuitive around online behaviours and interactions. It's important to also work with teachers in helping to promote digital literacy and responsibility in how we use online products.

Ms. Pam Damoff: I'd love to know what we're doing in Canada.

Ms. Lauren Skelly: In Canada we support many organizations that you have already heard from, such as MediaSmarts, the Canadian Centre for Child Protection, and the Missing Children Society of Canada. We also believe in empowering youth and students to become digital creators and citizens themselves by encouraging them to learn digital skills beyond just safety and privacy, such as how to code, or programming. We're supporting organizations such as Ladies Learning Code and Actua so that they understand how to use the Internet for good and how to empower themselves.

Ms. Pam Damoff: When you talk about supporting them, do you mean you're giving them financial support?

●(1545)

Ms. Lauren Skelly: There are a number of things. Yes, we provide funding to MediaSmarts and the Missing Children Society of Canada. We provide foundational support.

Colin McKay, who is the head of government relations, is on the board of MediaSmarts. With Actua we have developed a program called Codemakers, which is a coding program that we've delivered to over 100,000 Canadians, a majority of them being girls.

Ms. Pam Damoff: That's great.

We had a witness who talked about the creation of an e-safety commissioner, something they have in Australia right now. It would be someone within government who would be responsible for responding to complaints and basically being the coordinator for e-safety.

Are you familiar with that in Australia? What are your thoughts on it?

Ms. Lauren Skelly: I'm not familiar with an e-safety commissioner in Australia.

I think any work that the government can do to promote education amongst children, because I think that's probably the biggest key here, and having someone to coordinate with industry, would be welcome.

Malika, do you have any thoughts there?

Ms. Malika Saada Saar: Yes, I agree. It is absolutely important to create these spaces where we are having ongoing conversation, dialogue, and action around safety, because as you all have seen, this is a dynamic space, so it is important to be in constant communication and action around what we see cropping up with online issues and our children and safety.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Going back to your programming just for a moment, MediaSmarts was one of our best witnesses in terms of what they're doing and the information they could provide to us. Certainly, ongoing funding is an issue for a group like that.

I think any assistance that companies such as yours can provide to step it up.... I'm not asking for a commitment, but government can't provide all the funding for that. They were talking about the fact that it's a multi-billion-dollar industry in terms of algorithms.

Do you have any other suggestions on who could provide funding for groups such as MediaSmarts, besides Google?

Ms. Lauren Skelly: I think that tech companies writ large have to step up to these things together. There are obviously areas in which we compete, but this is not one of them. We all have a best interest in keeping our children and families safe online. I think a more coordinated effort on our part is something that we can probably do a bit better on. I think that MediaSmarts is doing tremendous work in this country, and it deserves more support.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Okay.

This is probably my last question, because I didn't start my time right away. Someone else, one or our witnesses—and it was to do with Twitter, but it would apply to your algorithms as well—suggested having more women involved in the process of developing the algorithms. I'm wondering how many women Google has doing that, and if you do see the need for having more diversity in the people who are developing and monitoring the algorithms online.

Ms. Lauren Skelly: Yes. Google was one of the first companies to publicly publish their diversity numbers, because in technology we have a huge diversity problem with regard to women, people of colour, and immigrants. This is why we invest in organizations like Ladies Learning Code, Actua, and a number of organizations in the States.

The engineer who leads up our search personalization team is a woman, which is great, but there's obviously more that we can do. I think that the impetus for investing in diversity is that we need to have our team reflect the users of our products. We need to understand what they're looking for and searching for, so we're in agreement there, but there's still a lot of work to do.

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

We're going to go now to Ms. Harder for seven minutes.

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): Thank you very much.

I'm wondering if you can comment a little further on the economic impact that sexual violence has on women. Can you elaborate on that just a wee bit?

Ms. Malika Saada Saar: The reality is that our online lives are as real and relevant and meaningful as our physical lives, so as women and girls, our ability to feel our full participation and voice online is absolutely imperative. It is imperative economically as well.

That's why I was so stunned by the example around understanding that revenge porn has not only an emotional cost on a woman or girl. We've heard this from women journalists who have been attacked online and have been trolled on Twitter. It makes them feel that they don't want to be online. Shutting down an online voice for them has real implications for their careers.

A young woman who simply wants to be able to be hired by a law firm and who wants to appear in the full recognition of the hard work that she's done in law school is not allowed to have that because her digital footprint is one of sexual images without her consent. There is that real economic consequence, and she's not alone in that. We heard that from so many women and girls at the beginning of their careers when they had that as their digital footprint.

I think, in general, when we hear about how women and girls are disproportionately cyberstalked and cyberharassed, we have to understand that it's not just emotionally wrong and dangerous but also understand what it means for women's and girls' voices online.

● (1550)

Ms. Rachael Harder: Thank you.

I'm wondering if those who are listening at the table here can comment on whether algorithms could be used in a positive way to help mitigate the risk of underage children accessing pornography.

Ms. Lauren Skelly: We do not service pornography, unless you're explicitly searching for it. There are obviously some terms where there is some overlap, for example, like "cougar". We make sure to demote the pornographic sites on that term so that you don't stumble upon it without having intended to do so.

With child sexual abuse imagery online, we've partnered with a number of non-profits to develop a pretty robust database that allows us to identify those images or those pieces of content with something called "hashes". That's a partnership with Facebook, Microsoft, and Nik Mic in the States. We don't service that content at all, globally.

With underage people accessing pornography, we do have settings in our products that you can use so that it will never surface. There's something called SafeSearch; no pornography will surface when it is turned on. When that is turned on, it automatically turns on safety mode in YouTube as well.

There are controls that you can access. As a parent, having more of those choices is better.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Right.

You said that they won't automatically be taken to a pornographic website, let's say, but what about even pornographic images? It's really not that hard to cause a pop-up to come up on my screen, so is there a way that algorithms can be used to prevent that?

Ms. Lauren Skelly: Yes, but it has to be very narrowly based, because if you think about content, say, like breastfeeding, if you just take down all images with breasts, we're going to miss out on all of those educational resources. It's like a race to the bottom; it's a very slippery slope.

With the knowledge of those tools existing, I think that parents can implement enough of what we have in place that they're not going to surface, but it's almost inevitable in some ways. If someone really wants to find it, they'll be able to find it. Even if we take it off Google Search, the website still exists.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Okay.

Is there a way that algorithms can be used specifically to mitigate or thwart violence, like violent acts, violent words, or any sort of violence that takes place against women? Is there a way of using algorithms for that, and is there a way that you're currently doing that right now?

Ms. Lauren Skelly: On YouTube specifically, we do not allow violence on the platform whatsoever. Those are against our community guidelines, and they are taken down. That is done by user flagging. If someone flags the video as inappropriate, we have a team that reviews them 24/7.

Malika, do you know of any other instances?

Ms. Malika Saada Saar: I think Conversation AI will be another opportunity to be able to regulate and monitor for hate speech in comments.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Is there a way that algorithms can possibly be used to help redirect the narrative in terms of the way that women are perceived?

● (1555)

Ms. Malika Saada Saar: I think that's part of the work with Conversation AI, and I think that's part of the question we have before us. We in the States have been doing a lot of work with women's rights groups around this issue. How do we make sure that the algorithms don't reproduce misogyny, and how do we use algorithms in a way to help forge a new language of respect?

I think this is emerging, and for us what's been very important is to bring in those different women's rights organizations to think through how we use this new technology in a way that is thoughtful.

Ms. Lauren Skelly: One other way that I think we can counterbalance this is with the use of counterspeech. It's by encouraging these organizations to flood these places with counter-speech to hate and violence.

We've done some things with our YouTube creators called Creators for Change. We created a fund for them to create counterspeech content with creators who are highly influential, with tons of followers and stuff like that, and I think that's a very effective way of beating them at their own game.

The Chair: Excellent.

We have Ms. Malcolmson for seven minutes.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Thank you.

Thank you to the witnesses, and I'm looking forward to learning more from you.

I want to start with this question. We're hearing a lot of thanks from all of the corporate witnesses we've had and an indication of how reliant you are on some of the NGOs that are doing cyberviolence and digital literacy, and what good work they're doing. We heard from them, when they came to testify, that they have way more work than they can do well, and that operational funding is a real barrier for them.

I can also imagine that if they're funded by Google or Twitter, the optics of that may not look great from an arm's-length perspective.

I wonder, either on the international side or the Canadian side, if you have any perspectives on what we can do as a federal government to make sure that those independent NGOs have the capacity to do the work that we as a society are relying on them for.

Ms. Lauren Skelly: Malika, maybe you can speak, since you were in one of these organizations until recently, and I can talk to the Canadian context.

Ms. Malika Saada Saar: When I was on the NGO side, the lion's share of my work was around child sex trafficking, and we worked with Google on a campaign we launched called No Such Thing—that there is no such thing as a child prostitute, only victims and survivors of child rape.

What was powerful about having Google as a funder was that it signalled to other funders that we were a legitimate, strong, viable organization. There was no question that the support from Google led to support from other foundations as well as other corporations. I think that's part of the importance of a Google, a Facebook, a Twitter supporting these types of NGOs. It's because it signals to other funders and individual donors that these are important organizations to be supported.

Ms. Lauren Skelly: I completely agree with what Malika said, and we've heard that from our partners here as well. There comes some weight with brands like Google, Twitter, and Facebook that I think give viability to a lot of these organizations. Obviously the funding is very, very important, but we can offer areas of expertise that these organizations might not have.

For example, I know we second a lot of our engineers to the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children in the U.S.. We lend them our engineering expertise to help them build out their databases and their technical expertise. I think there's always more we can do in this area. We will never be doing enough.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: I have another question on the regulatory side, because we're looking at what we can actually change on the ground from the federal legislative side. Are there protections for young women and girls that you're surprised Canada doesn't have? That's as a comparison, because you're an international company. Are there any best practices or best models around what we can do, insofar as legislation goes, when things go sideways?

Ms. Lauren Skelly: I'm not familiar with this part of the law in depth, and I don't really feel that I'd be comfortable in making a comparison.

Malika, do you have any insight into the Canadian law?

● (1600)

Ms. Malika Saada Saar: What I would say, from part of what we've learned here and from my own lived experience, is that it's very important for law enforcement to be trained around these forms of cyberviolence, for law enforcement to understand that being cyberharassed is the same as being physically harassed and warrants consideration and response.

I went to a number of different police departments begging them to help me. The first place I went to I was laughed at. It was only because of my own persistence and good fortune that I was able to find a detective who did understand that this is a form of violence against women and girls.

I think it's absolutely critical that in the U.S. and in Canada, we really invest in training law enforcement to be able to understand this and be responsive. I see it as how we did the work around domestic violence. We named domestic violence as a form of violence against women. We also had to do the hard work of training law enforcement to understand that and to have thoughtful, responsive protocols. We have to do the same thing around this issue.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: A recommendation that I can imagine coming out of this work, because we have in Canada a real patchwork of municipal, regional, first nations, provincial, and territorial police forces, is that it could be a role for the federal government to encourage all of those jurisdictional partners to have that standard of training, so that a victim of cyberviolence, wherever it is that they report it in the country, should have some expectation of a similar level of education. Police work should be trauma-informed and digitally literate.

Ms. Malika Saada Saar: That's exactly right. I would also say that it is good to be linked to the schools as well.

Part of what we saw play out and continue to see play out in the U.S. is that when girls are cyberbullied, it's often called slut shaming. It's not even contemplated as a form of cyberviolence, right? It's instead about regulating and judging the girls' behaviour. It's so critical for schools to be able to recognize that when girls are cyberbullied, often in a very sexualized manner, it is a form of violence done to her and not about judging or regulating her sexual behaviour.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: That's very helpful and very consistent with testimony we've had from front-line NGOs, from victims, and from survivors, so thank you all for your work and your time.

The Chair: Excellent.

Now we'll go to Mr. Fraser for seven minutes.

Mr. Sean Fraser (Central Nova, Lib.): Thank you very much, everyone, for being here. I really appreciate your testimony.

First, I hope we can cover this one quickly so I can move on. I think it was Ms. Saada Saar who mentioned that there were tools to remove offensive content from the search results, but of course Google can't remove content from someone else's site. When you do identify controversial or abusive content, is that shared with law enforcement or somebody who could potentially have the content removed from another host?

Ms. Malika Saada Saar: Conversation AI is in the process of being created and is not a finished product, but here's an example of this issue around removing content that I've been able to witness up front. When we have child sexual abuse imagery—and we scrub for that on all our platforms—we then reach out to NCMEC, the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, and we red-flag that content with them. If it is child sexual abuse imagery, that content is removed.

Mr. Sean Fraser: Is there any reason we couldn't do a similar thing with explicit content that is shared without the consent of the subject of that content?

Ms. Malika Saada Saar: That's revenge porn.

Ms. Lauren Skelly: With regard to revenge porn, once we get a flag from a user that says their image has been shared without their consent, we take it down, but we also provide them instructions on how to contact a webmaster to get it taken off the Internet.

Mr. Sean Fraser: Okay. Thank you very much.

Shifting gears a bit, obviously the work that you guys are doing and that's ongoing on the Internet these days is incredibly innovative. There are huge economic and social benefits to having well-organized information online. I fear sometimes that when we get into the business of regulating the Internet one way or another, we're going to have unintended negative consequences from what we try to do, no matter how well-intentioned it might be.

Are there certain things we should be avoiding when we're piecing together recommendations for the government, whether it's increased surveillance or it's prescribing certain kinds of content filters or whatever it might be?

● (1605)

Ms. Lauren Skelly: I think that the most important thing is to be as specific as possible, because when you come out with.... Using the example of no nudity on the Internet, the examples that I just gave you about health education or artistic nudity or something like that, we would be limiting ourselves to all of that content.

In developing those regulations, I think it's important to be as specific as possible.

Mr. Sean Fraser: Okay.

Do you have any other suggestions, Malika?

Ms. Malika Saada Saar: I affirm what Lauren has said, that it is important, as you will see that in the way we've developed our policies, to be very narrowly tailored so we have that thoughtful balance between innovation, free expression, and safety.

Mr. Sean Fraser: That's excellent.

We spent a bit of time talking about digital literacy, and I think it was you, Ms. Skelly, who put it in terms of building a more informed digital citizen, or something to that effect, which sounds great.

We heard similar testimony from other groups, such as MediaSmarts. I think this is going to be an essential piece of our study. I hope it is.

I'm curious, though. What's in it for Google? What interest do you have, other than being good people who care in promoting an informed digital community?

Ms. Lauren Skelly: I think in developing digital skills, we have a talent angle to this as well. We need to hire a lot of people to do the work we do. Currently there is a talent shortage of people with these skills. That would be our self-interested perspective, but I will say that we have a strong priority in keeping everybody safe online and working with all our partners to do so.

Ms. Malika Saada Saar: It's also our commitment to democracy. We want the ideals of democracy and inclusion and diversity to be part of how individuals engage online. This is also about how we build our civil society and about how individuals, our digital citizens, inform what kind of civil society we are.

Mr. Sean Fraser: In terms of what we might recommend instead of what we should avoid, how can we best make recommendations to the government through this study to encourage digital literacy among the general public, and specifically digital literacy that will help protect young women and girls from cyberviolence or harassment of any kind?

Ms. Lauren Skelly: I think it starts in the schools. Organizations like MediaSmarts, people who are doing things on the coding and programming skills side, are wonderful organizations and very important, but it does have to start in the classroom. I think it starts with curriculum. I understand obviously that curriculum is not your jurisdiction, but anything you can do to promote that at a very early age I think is very important.

Ms. Malika Saada Saar: I think it's important to talk about it also from the place of power. In the U.S. we have Black Girls Code and Girls Who Code. That's important, because it's also about making sure that our girls have not just the literacy but the actual skills to not only download but also to be able to upload apps. We want them to be a part of how we design our products and our online lives. It's literacy, but it's also about making sure that we're thoughtful of how we are ensuring that girls and girls of colour are part of being the architects and not just the recipients.

Mr. Sean Fraser: In your view, knowing that the federal government has limited ability to interfere with provincial jurisdiction on education, is supporting community organizations that are getting into the schools or doing community work the best way to go? Will that ensure that we're targeting groups that potentially help women who are facing intersecting grounds of discrimination to become engaged with the content creation process and, as users, learn more about how to protect themselves?

Ms. Malika Saada Saar: Absolutely.

Mr. Sean Fraser: I only have 30 seconds left. I think it would be hard to accomplish much more, so I'll just say thank you very much. That was very informative.

The Chair: Excellent.

We will now go to Ms. Vecchio for five minutes.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Thank you very much for coming out today. I have a couple of questions.

One of the things you mentioned during your presentation was Applejacks digital literacy. Can you give me some more information on that, looking at things like the take-up? Where is this currently being done? What age group are you targeting? Does it start at kindergarten? Can you give me more information? I assume it's in the United States, but do we have it happening here in Canada? What states are currently taking part in it?

● (1610)

Ms. Malika Saada Saar: I will take responsibility for making sure that the folks who run Applejacks in our office are connected to you and can give you a more detailed explanation of the work they do.

I understand that we are in middle schools, and I understand that it is about being able to be expansive in how we are interacting with both the students and the teachers. I do not run that program, but I'm more than happy to make sure that a more exhaustive description of that program is provided to you.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Do you have any comments, Ms. Skelly?

Ms. Lauren Skelly: Yes, there are a lot of self-directed portions of Applejacks that we have made open source. They are in our Google Safety Center, if you google it. I think it has a 45-minute click-through that you can do as a parent with your child.

Applejacks is something we would obviously love to bring to Canada. We haven't had the scale yet to do so, but we have been looking into it.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Excellent.

You talked about law, and law enforcement has come up a lot. When you're taking crimes like this to the law enforcement agencies, of course, there isn't an understanding of it.

What would you recommend for programming? Is there an initiative that you could see Google taking up, or are we looking at developing a program and originating it from, once again, a variety of different subusers?

Ms. Malika Saada Saar: In the U.S. we have partnered with the National Network to End Domestic Violence. They have been the lead in doing a lot of this work in outreach to women around how to protect themselves online and in training law enforcement in understanding this as a new form of violence against women and girls.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Finally, I want to talk about profiles.

Some computers will have multiple profiles, while some will just have a family profile. In my family, we use "Vecchios". In a situation like this, if you have singular profiles, is it going to be the computer itself that sends you into those algorithms, or is it going to be the profiler's use that will send you into those algorithms? For instance, if I'm using the computer and I'm doing research, will the research I have come up when my 13-year-old asks the same questions? Will he be able to get basically the same line if we put in the same codes, because of the different use that we have?

What would you say on the profiles?

Ms. Lauren Skelly: I can speak to that.

On a Chrome browser, we have something called "managed users". You can basically create a different user for each member of your family and create settings based on that person's age. You can choose level of appropriateness. You can turn on safety settings for them and block certain sites. You can tailor content. However, if you're just using the Vecchio profile, then it assumes that you're one person.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Okay. That's not a problem.

Finally, when we're looking at other governments and countries, have you seen any laws or regulations that would be good for us to look at, that might help us make more informed choices for what we should do here in Canada?

Ms. Malika Saada Saar: I'll give you the example of what played out in my personal situation.

I was fortunate to be cyberstalked in D.C. as opposed to Virginia, because at the time Virginia did not contemplate cyberstalking as a form of stalking, whereas D.C. did. I think the legal recognition of cyberviolence, cyberstalking, cyberharassment as forms of stalking and harassing is legally important.

The Chair: We have time for one last question, about a minute and a half. Ms. Ludwig, go ahead.

Ms. Karen Ludwig (New Brunswick Southwest, Lib.): Thank you, all, for your presentations.

This is to Malika.

The future First Lady, Melania Trump, stated, "It is never okay when a 12-year-old girl or boy is mocked, bullied, or attacked. It is terrible when that happens on the playground, and it is absolutely unacceptable when it's done by someone with no name hiding on the Internet."

I have two questions.

When celebrities take on an issue as a key platform, how might this impact the awareness and ultimately the policy and issues such as cyberbullying? Second, if you were a member of Mrs. Trump's committee, what would you hope she would highlight?

● (1615)

Ms. Malika Saada Saar: To your first question, I think we've seen with a number of different issues that when celebrities give voice to an issue, it allows the issue to be in the popular culture, in the public square, and that's valuable. We have certainly seen, in the U.S. and in Canada, that girls have committed suicide because of the extent to which they were cyberbullied. The shared narrative in those girls' experiences is unbelievable isolation. They were hurt, and the violence done to them was never named.

I do think there is power in a celebrity voice to be able to name it and to allow that girl who feels so isolated and unheard to be validated in some way because of the celebrity presence. It also allows us to have a conversation about this in the public circle, in the public square, which I think is absolutely critical.

Again, this is very similar to domestic violence. Part of the work here is naming this as violence. To the extent to which we can have these conversations in multiple ways and in a pervasive manner, I think we are better for it.

The Chair: Excellent.

We are out of time. I'm sorry.

I want to thank all of our witnesses today for the information and for the work that they do.

If you have things that you think the committee would be interested to hear about, please direct those comments to the clerk, and we would be happy to read them.

We are going to suspend briefly while we go in camera for our drafting instructions.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]