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Chair: Mrs. Karen Vecchio



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• (1300)

[English]

The Chair (Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC)): I call this meeting to order.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted on Tuesday, February 4, the committee will resume its study of intimate partner and domestic violence in Canada.

Given the ongoing pandemic situation and in light of the recommendations from public health authorities, as well as the directive of the Board of Internal Economy of October 19, 2021, to remain healthy and safe, the following is recommended for all those attending the meeting in person.

Anyone with symptoms should participate by Zoom and not attend the meeting in person. Everyone must maintain two metres of physical distance, whether seated or standing. Everyone must wear a non-medical mask when circulating in the room. It is recommended in the strongest possible terms that members wear their mask at all times, including when seated. Non-medical masks, which provide better clarity over cloth masks, are available in the room. Everyone present must maintain proper hand hygiene by using the hand sanitizer at the room entrance. Committee rooms are cleaned before and after each meeting. To maintain this, everyone is encouraged to clean surfaces such as the desk, chair and microphone with the provided disinfectant wipes when vacating or taking a seat.

For those participating virtually, I would like to outline a few rules to follow.

You may speak in the official language of your choice. Interpretation services are available for this meeting. You have a choice, at the bottom of your screen, of floor, English or French. If interpretation is lost, please inform me immediately and we will ensure interpretation is properly restored before resuming the proceedings.

Before speaking, please wait until I recognize you by name. If you are on the video conference, please click on the microphone icon to unmute your microphone. For those in the room, your mike will be controlled as normal by the proceedings and verification officer.

I remind everyone that all comments should be addressed through the chair. When speaking, please speak slowly and clearly. When you're not speaking, your mike should be muted.

Before we welcome our witnesses, I would like to provide this trigger warning. We will be discussing experiences related to violence and assault. This may be triggering to viewers with similar

experiences. If you feel distressed or if you need help, please advise the clerk.

I would now like to welcome our first panel of witnesses for today's meeting.

For the first panel, we have a witness who has chosen to remain anonymous. She will be referred to as "Witness 1". I kindly ask that members refer to her as such. She has also indicated she is from the organization grouping sexual assault help centres in Quebec.

I would also like to welcome, from the DisAbleD Women's Network of Canada, the executive director, Bonnie Brayton. Thank you so much for joining us, Bonnie.

From the Shield of Athena Family Services, we have Melpa Kamateros, who is the executive director. Melpa, I hope you can help me with my pronunciation.

All of our panellists will begin with five minutes of opening remarks. At four minutes, I will provide you with this beautiful little sign for one minute just to let you know, and then we'll be going on to our members for our first round of six minutes.

I would like to begin today's meeting with Bonnie Brayton.

Bonnie, you have the floor.

• (1305)

Ms. Bonnie Brayton (National Executive Director, DisAbleD Women's Network of Canada, DAWN Canada): Thank you, Karen.

I want to thank the committee.

I'm joining you today from the unceded territory of the Kanienkehaka in Montreal.

I'd like to move quickly, because we have limited time.

I'll remind the panel and the committee today that the rate of disability for women, according to Statistics Canada, is 24%. Of course, that rate for Black and indigenous women is above 30%.

In terms of some of the important data that we need to look at today, I'll remind the panel again, in terms of some of those statistics, that 39% of women with disabilities have experienced spousal violence, and 46% have been physically injured because of violence. There are a number of other statistics, including that women with cognitive disabilities are more likely to be victims of violence from a common-law partner.

Where violence and abuse are concerned, with respect to disability, there are interrelated elements at play, including violence as both the cause of disability and disability as a factor in increasing the risk of victimization. Towards this point, one of the important statistics I want to share with you today is that it has been estimated that each year as many as 276,000 women in Canada will experience a traumatic brain injury as a result of intimate partner violence. Please think about this number. Also, 71% of women with disabilities report contacting or using formal support services due to intimate partner violence. Women with disabilities face more barriers in leaving abusive situations, as both disability-related services and services for victims of abuse are often not able to respond to their needs.

Gender-based violence remains a critical issue for women and girls with disabilities, as the research above highlights. The other research we will share in our brief, which I urge you to read next week, with all the important data and facts, confirms this. As the research highlights, this issue is pressing and reflects the need for us to collectively address the realities of gender-based violence over the life course for women and girls with disabilities.

In terms of what I've seen, a number of your witnesses, of course, are from the shelter community, so I want to speak directly to that and to the idea that, while we understand that, there is an important distinction between accessibility and accessing shelters in terms of the kind of language and reflections we need today. DAWN Canada and our partners at Women's Shelters Canada, and the vast majority of shelters themselves, recognize that there are gaps. This continues to be compounded by COVID-19, because women with disabilities are now faced with policies that bring them into even greater contact with the sites and people associated with their disproportionately high rates of abuse. Shelters, however, are already overwhelmed and under-resourced because of this pandemic.

What all this information is telling us now for the national action plan and next steps is that systemic discrimination, including ableism, sexism and racism, pervades our research, our policies, our programs and our responses. The reflex to focus on the current resources is strong, but it will not result in the kind of systemic change that is required to rid our society of gender-based violence.

On the key recommendations, I'll go to the topics first, and then with the time I have I hope to cover them all.

To make it more inclusive, update and revise the definition of "intimate partner violence" to "interpersonal violence" to better reflect that for women with disabilities, for example, the perpetrator can also be a family member, a friend, a health care provider or an attendant.

Second, and so important to DAWN's work and such a reflection of what we really need to hear today, is peer support. While the issue of gender-based violence against women with disabilities clearly establishes that women with disabilities require unique supports, as previously noted, systemic and attitudinal barriers continue to prevent access. There are women-serving and disability-service organizations that have been built for and by the people they serve, and reflect the power of peer support when shared oppressions and shared resilience are organized into solutions. These are the folks whose results need to be examined first and then replicated, and not in separate silos but together.

Another is instruments of hope. Systemic change is only possible by taking the long view and staying the course. The national housing strategy, the national action plan to end gender-based violence and the national early learning and child care plan are just some of the examples of federal initiatives that could be coordinated and should be coordinated. There are funding mechanisms at ESDC, at WAGE and other departments that work well now, or could, if we could see the results in pilot communities in each of the regions. I'm telling you all to think about the fact that you have in front of you the possibility of effecting change by really thinking about these instruments of hope and what they could do if we start to think across government. The silent approach has not worked for women and girls with disabilities.

● (1310)

I know I'm nearly out of time here, but I will talk about addressing childhood sexual abuse. Just today, statistics were released that confirmed childhood sexual victimization has increased by 95% in the last five years.

Root resilience, root change, root justice.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Bonnie.

Thank you for that last segment. I think that's a very important matter for all of us to discuss as well.

I'm going to pass it over to the organization grouping sexual assault help centres in Quebec.

You have five minutes.

[*Translation*]

Witness 1 (Organization grouping sexual assault help centres in Quebec): Madam Chair, ladies and gentlemen of the committee, thank you for this invitation to provide you with our testimony.

Before I begin my presentation, I would like to acknowledge that the territory I am on is traditional, unceded First Nations territory. I am grateful for that.

The organization I am representing today brings together 26 sexual assault help centres. These centres are located in every corner of the province of Quebec. Our organization was founded in 1979. For 43 years, therefore, our centres have been providing the province with expertise in responding to and preventing sexual violence and in standing up for the rights of women.

To start my presentation, I would like to remind you that 86.3% of victims know their abusers and that 70% of sexual assaults take place in a private residence. The depictions often shown in movies and the media, in which sexual assaults take place when a woman is attacked by a stranger when she is walking alone outdoors, are not at all the norm.

In fact, in most cases, sexual violence takes place in a family unit, in romantic relationships, or with former intimate partners. It is therefore essential, if we want to tackle the problem of sexual violence, to consider the gender-specific nature of this violence. We know that 94% of the perpetrators are men. We also know that the violence happens primarily within a family or within intimate relationships.

For victory over that violence, in our view, it is important to emphasize prevention with the students and staff in high schools, and to combat the obstacles to reporting sexual violence.

Our expertise in prevention has shown us that one of the most effective strategies is to work with young people. Since 2014, when we joined forces with some researchers, we have been offering a series of workshops in high schools, for students, their parents and the school staff.

We already provide classroom workshops for students to address matters like the importance of free and informed consent. We provide training to both teaching staff and non-teaching staff to address myths and false assumptions, such as that rape is the only type of sexual assault. We also provide online videos for parents. We feel that both parents and school staff must know how to identify these kinds of situations and, above all, how to intervene in situations where they suspect or witness assault of a sexual nature.

According to our observations, the second problem that absolutely must be tackled involves the obstacles to reporting sexual violence. Let's talk about that. The most common obstacle is that victim is afraid. If she reports her abuser, it becomes her word against his. She is afraid that no one will believe her and that making the report will change nothing. In fact, it is important for the entire country to receive the clear message that victims will be believed and that they can trust their governments if they decide to break their silence.

It is a myth that it is very probable and very frequent for a woman to accuse her abuser falsely. Our estimate is that victims actually make false accusations in only 2% of the cases. The risk of situations of that kind is greatly overestimated and should not guide or determine each victim's path through the Canadian legal system.

Another obstacle to reporting affects the victims whose immigration status is uncertain. They are afraid that, if they file a complaint, the police will check their status and report them to the border authorities, with the result that they will then be expelled from Canada. That is the case for migrant women, but it is also the case for women who have been sponsored by their spouse and who are therefore afraid of being expelled from Canada if they report the violence they suffer in their home.

In Quebec at least, we are seeing some weakness in the measure that prohibits police from inquiring into the immigration status of victims who come to report the violence they have suffered. All women should have the right of protection against sexual violence in Canada, regardless of their immigration status, their past, their age or their sexual orientation.

That ends my presentation. Thank you.

• (1315)

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

We're going to pass it over to Melpa Kamateros from Shield of Athena Family Services. You have five minutes.

You're on mute.

Madam Clerk, did we check to see if she has the right microphone on?

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Alexie Labelle): Yes, it worked previously.

The Chair: It was showing green before.

Not that I'm a technological genius, but if you could go down to your button where it shows "mute", there is an arrow pointing up. That provides you with an option to select a microphone. Ensure that it's on the headset microphone. If it's on that, it should be okay.

Madam Clerk, I'm going to pass this to you.

The Clerk: Ms. Kamateros, can you disconnect your microphone from your computer and reconnect it?

The Chair: Ms. Kamateros, we can now hear you.

You have five minutes.

Ms. Melpa Kamateros (Executive Director, Shield of Athena Family Services): After all that drama, I represent an organization that has been in existence for over 30 years. We presently have three points of service in Quebec, which are an emergency shelter and two external centres. We also have a community outreach department where we go out actively and raise awareness on family violence.

We are also building a second-stage resource that will be our fourth point of service. We are members of the alliance of second-step shelters in Quebec.

I'm here today to speak about certain situations that we have seen from the trenches. We think that talking today about what we've seen will possibly benefit victims of violence, affect public policy, enact legislation and, hopefully, change societal perceptions on such violence.

I'm not going to go into it too lengthily, but we all know the effects of the global pandemic on women victims of violence and on women in general. They were the most affected. Certain issues, however, such as unequal access to services, lack of spaces in shelters, ineffective laws, not enough prevention programs or awareness of the issue of conjugal violence, as well as the minimization or normalization of conjugal violence all existed prior to the global COVID pandemic.

For immigrant women and women coming from ethnic cultural communities—which presents linguistic barriers—and for those with many children, the situation of attaining basic information, never mind services, became even more difficult. Their isolation was even more pronounced.

The increase in gender-based violence worldwide was not caused solely by the pandemic, but by the underlying factors that were already there, which have not been resolved. We would like therefore to propose a more global perspective on dealing with conjugal violence.

What do we mean? We mean that we want pertinent legislation that encompasses a broader definition of what conjugal violence is and that stresses the illegality of this violence. We do not want to go to the Criminal Code of Canada and extrapolate certain articles that refer to sexual and physical violence, because conjugal violence is a much deeper subject. It has traumatic effects for women and children, so we want the legislation.

We also feel that the prevention programs should be more analyzed. The statistics show that women going into shelters are younger and younger. This means that there are younger and younger perpetrators of this type of abuse, which means that societal perceptions regarding normalization of violence have not changed at all.

Finally, we want integrated services providing for more continuity for the victim, for the children exposed to the violence and for the abusers.

We would also like greater access to housing at all levels of the victims' timeline. There is a timeline to abuse, in terms of housing. It doesn't stop with the initial call to 911. First, there's the entry to the shelter. There's a huge problem there. I remember testifying before this committee a couple of years ago. Then, we had the issue of the second-step housing. It is a big issue. Thousands of women and children in Quebec are leaving emergency shelters. There are 500 spaces in the second-step housing. If we compare the situation to what we had, it took us 12 years to go into our second step that is presently being built.

We need a greater access to housing at the emergency and at the second step, as well as the social housing after. Two weeks ago, one of our clients came and she was very happy. She was happy because after four years she finally got her social housing unit with

three children in tow. Obviously, there is a situation where this is lacking.

The other thing we want to propose is the granting of a certain status for women who are victims of conjugal violence. What do we mean by special status? The issue of financial dependency is a huge issue in conjugal violence cases. On the issue of autonomy, we're supposed to be guiding women towards autonomy and non-dependence. That's a huge issue as well. Giving the woman an allowance and a recognition of her status as a vulnerable woman who is a victim of conjugal violence.... Need I say that for immigrant women who can't speak the language, don't have a social network and don't have any means of support, this really is a necessity?

We would like to propose that this financial stipend be given to women who are victims of conjugal violence. It can tide them over the worse parts of the abuse, so that they can eventually become autonomous. This type of financial assistance should be given to all victims of conjugal violence, be they single women or single mothers with their children.

• (1320)

Finally, I would like the committee to believe me—please believe me because we work with the victims—that there's a huge potential for victims to go back to an abusive partner or to become homeless if they are left with no recourse, little money and no accessible housing to go to.

We thank the committee for hearing us. Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

I should point out that I can answer questions in French.

I spoke only English because I was nervous and because my time was limited.

[*English*]

The Chair: That's just fine. Thank you very much.

I'm sure you will be receiving some questions in French too.

We're going to start off with our first round, for six minutes each. Once again, I will be giving you the reminder of your last minute, so I just want everybody to recognize that the last minute is for the question to be asked and the answer to be answered.

The first six minutes go to Laila.

Laila, you have the floor.

Mrs. Laila Goodridge (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I just want to say a big thank you to all of today's witnesses for giving such impactful testimony here today. I can't speak on behalf of all committee members, but we believe you, so thank you. Thanks for the work that you do in your communities and across Canada.

Just to start out, Ms. Brayton, you touched on the ideas around accessibility and accessing supports. I was just wondering if you could expand a little bit on that, because I think it's critically important for our committee to hear that piece of it.

• (1325)

Ms. Bonnie Brayton: Thank you very much for asking.

I want to explain that more, because I think it's very important. As I said, I've noted that lot of the witnesses you're going to hear from, of course, are people who are doing direct service, including the shelter community. While it certainly is clear and true that there's a problem with accessibility of shelters, that's not the problem that we need to look at right now.

The national action plan is a 10-year plan that allows us to look at these from a more structural place, and that's where we need to begin. I want to remind everybody that shelters and transition houses, just like the ones described by my colleagues—my good colleague from Quebec, in terms of the work of Athena, and other incredible organizations across the country—were built in communities by women with whatever they had—whatever old building, whatever old structure, any old thing they could get—because they were trying to meet the needs that weren't being met anywhere else. Women are the reason we have a shelter network. Women are the reason we have second-stage housing. Women in communities are the reasons we have that.

DAWN Canada is not sitting here with the idea that that's what we need to point to. What we need to address is the fact that for women from diverse communities, including women with disabilities, Black women, indigenous women and women from all kinds of marginalized communities, these solutions haven't worked. It's not a reflection of the shelters. It's a reflection of needing to start again, using the instruments of hope, thinking over the long term and beginning to rethink how we provide those services.

Accessibility is.... Again, I spoke about peer support. A number of different things have to be done in a stepped way for these solutions to have an impact on women and girls with disabilities, because it isn't about building ramps. This is something we said 25 years ago.

Mrs. Laila Goodridge: Thank you for that.

You touched on the definitions regarding gender-based violence. Because I have such a limited amount of time, I was wondering if you could possibly submit your suggestions in writing to the committee for our consideration on how you think that definition should be updated or changed, because I think that would be very useful.

Ms. Bonnie Brayton: Thank you.

It has an impact on funding, and I think that's the key point for the committee to hear from me now. If you don't understand the difference between intimate partner violence and interpersonal vio-

lence in a funding space, then the people who don't fit that don't get funded.

Mrs. Laila Goodridge: I really do appreciate that. If you could provide that in writing, that would be great.

[*Translation*]

I am now going to turn to Witness 1, who was actually the second witness to appear.

You touched on many things, but I have a question about the challenges you face.

Are you familiar with Clare's Law, which is in effect in Alberta and Saskatchewan?

Witness 1: No, I am not familiar with it at all.

Mrs. Laila Goodridge: Okay, thank you.

So I will turn to Ms. Kamateros.

[*English*]

I was just wondering if you have heard of or have any information on Clare's Law, or any other legislative solutions?

Ms. Melpa Kamateros: Of course.

In Quebec, we recently produced a report, and I was in the group of 21 experts. The whole purpose of the report—it was called “Rebuild the Confidence”—was rebuilding the confidence of victims of sexual assault and victims of conjugal violence.

We were looking over the solutions that were being proposed, and one of them was Clare's Law, which allows for information to be given to a woman regarding the violent antecedents of her partner, spouse, boyfriend or whatever. It was developed from the law in the United Kingdom, where a woman by the name of Clare was killed for exactly that reason; she didn't know of the violent past of her partner.

We think it's a good thing. It's been passed in several provinces here in Canada. Along with issuing ankle bracelets, it was looked upon as a possible reinforcing measure for victims of conjugal violence. I have no problem with it, and I don't think people elsewhere have an issue with it, either. However, having said that, we would have to see it in an integrated fashion with laws and services as well.

Mrs. Laila Goodridge: In addition to having it in an integrated fashion with laws and services, do you have any recommendations on how we could possibly strengthen Clare's Law? Do you think that one of the recommendations coming out of the committee should be to look at ways of having Clare's Law brought forward across the country?

• (1330)

Ms. Melpa Kamateros: Anything that reinforces the rights of the victim.... I see this as potentially reinforcing the rights of the victim and the responsibility of the abuser, because it goes two ways. On the one hand, you're protecting the victim, but on the other hand, you're giving a sense of responsibility to the perpetrator. That's a good thing and we're all for it.

You should read the report—it's called “Rebâtir la confiance”—and you will get an idea of how it's being pursued here in Quebec.

[Translation]

Mrs. Laila Goodridge: Thank you very much.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you so much.

We're going to move to our next six minutes, with Anita Vandenberg.

Anita, you have the floor.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Thank you very much.

I also want to thank all of the witnesses for bringing us their expertise on these issues.

I'd like to start with Ms. Brayton. You said something that is very key when it comes to people with disabilities and intimate partner violence. You talked about brain injury, but you also talked about the cycle.

We think of people who were perhaps born with disabilities or who had a disability when they entered the relationship, but we have also seen that it could be the violence itself that then creates the disability, particularly violence that leads to brain injury, head trauma and other injuries. How do we break that cycle?

Also, considering that when it comes to brain injury, it is something that is often very much misunderstood, misdiagnosed and stigmatized, how do we make sure that we can prevent it from happening and creating that cycle?

Ms. Bonnie Brayton: Thank you so much for the question, Anita, and for putting a focus on this because it is very important for the committee. It is part of the newer and emerging research, but it is something that DAWN Canada has been saying for decades. Women becoming disabled through violence is a fact.

The other point I'll make, since we're in this space, is that the rates of disability among indigenous and Black women being higher points to the fact that there are all kinds of reasons that women become disabled through violence, and how these things link up.

To speak specifically to the brain injury piece, this is the hidden tsunami that we must speak about, because this new data, the numbers I was talking about, with fully over a quarter of a million women, in terms of brain injury by itself...and understanding that studies in Canada show that upwards of 50% of women who are going into a shelter or a transition house today have a brain injury.

It doesn't get screened; it doesn't get diagnosed. She goes back out there, and what happens? Well, I can share statistics on the number of women in the homeless population who had a pre-existing brain injury before they became homeless, or the number of imprisoned women who had a pre-existing brain injury before they landed in prison. These connections have to be made when we start to talk about the long view and policy, and improving the supports for women who sustain traumatic and acquired brain injuries because of abuse, because both are true. Acquired brain injury is from

long-term abuse and isn't necessarily from a blow to the head; it can be from sustained abuse.

These kinds of things are really critical right now as we start to build out the national action plan. Shelters and all frontline services need to understand how big this is. The disability community and rights holders need to understand how big it is, because we are talking about a tsunami in terms of the size and scope of brain injury and its connections to gender-based violence.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: I certainly appreciate your shedding light on that, and I think it will be an important part of our committee's work.

I have a second question, and I know that both Ms. Brayton and Ms. Kamateros mentioned it, but if Witness 1 wants to add, please do. It is around accessible shelters, around housing.

I know that in my riding there's a shelter called Nelson House. One of you mentioned... Originally, it was in an old house where the bedrooms were under the roof, and they were completely inaccessible. We were able to get funding to create a fully accessible, modular, modern shelter, but I know that's not something that is very common. Of course, what happens when the accessibility of rental housing that is affordable, especially for somebody on ODSP... This is something that I think is a gap.

I was wondering if any of you wanted to comment on that and what potential solutions you may have.

• (1335)

Ms. Bonnie Brayton: You can go first if you would like.

I'm happy to speak to it later, because I do want to answer the question as well.

Ms. Melpa Kamateros: In terms of housing, I can take the example of the organization Shield of Athena. We began with external services, and the house was developed in 2004. Obviously, the house was developed for a reason, which is that it's the only confidential and secure area a woman can flee to when there is an imminent danger for herself and for her children. It took us a long time. Generally, building shelters takes a long time.

At the external, we service thousands of women. At the shelter, we're limited to 100, but it's 24-7 and it's a different type of intervention that is used. We speak and we dispense services in up to 20 languages now at the organization. Those are coordinated largely through the external services, but there's a lot of acrobatics in providing them to the women in the shelter as well.

Ms. Bonnie Brayton: What I would like to say about the accessibility piece in terms of shelters and transition houses is that, obviously from what we've heard from my colleague, we need to put a lot more resources into that, but we can't put the responsibility of finding the resources and making these plans on these organizations, which already have a full range of services to provide. We have to think about this in a much more holistic way.

As I said, to be very clear, the access issue is deeper than just access to a built environment. It's really much more complex than that. Hearing what you've already heard about brain injury and understanding that, for many women, it's about how you do outreach, how you find them and how you connect with them.... That's why disability organizations and frontline services that serve women and disability organizations need to be looked at in terms of the way they do peer support in frontline services, and we need to bring them together.

The Chair: Thank you so much.

We're now going to move over to Louise.

Louise, you have six minutes.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Good afternoon, everyone.

My sincere thanks to the witnesses for being here.

We are familiar with some things, of course, but the realities on the front line and the examples that you are bringing to us are so valuable for the work we will be doing.

I am going to turn to Witness 1.

I will not say that I am really familiar with the work that the Centres d'aide et de lutte contre les agressions à caractère sexuel, the CALACS, are doing in Quebec. But I am somewhat familiar with some of that work and I congratulate you on it. You are playing an indispensable role and providing possible solutions.

I would like to talk to you about girls in particular. We know about all the prevention work that is being done in our school system. Nevertheless, we are told that violence in these forms is increasing among students. Is that correct?

Do you believe that girls are reluctant to think like that? Are they as sensitive to the generation behind them and to the problems that feminism has identified? Do they take some progress for granted? Are you going to have to make extra efforts when it comes to prevention?

Witness 1: Thank you for the question.

One of our greatest obstacles in terms of prevention is when school principals refuse to offer our prevention programs in the classroom. It happens a lot. So we have encountered structural obstacles to doing prevention in school settings.

Then, another major obstacle is with the myths and the lack of understanding of what violence can be. We see it with spousal violence where, often, the psychological aspect of the violence, the gaslighting, is ignored. It is not perceived as a form of violence.

It's exactly the same with girls and sexual violence. Often, girls don't see procuring as sexual exploitation. They do not realize what it really is. Even their girlfriends often see their work for a pimp as a job without realizing its true nature. So it is even more important to make school staff and those around them more aware, so that they are equipped to identify that form of violence, to understand it

and, above all, to establish a relationship of trust with the girls, in which they feel that they can confide in an adult without feeling judged.

This is so important and it's something we do not have at the moment.

Ms. Louise Chabot: If I understand you correctly, when we hold awareness campaigns with young students, we need a very specific approach when we talk to them about prevention, rather than an approach that is traditional—which may not be the right word.

You mentioned different forms of violence. We know that coercive control is often the precursor to physical violence and even to the murder of women. In Quebec, unfortunately, we can count several. I am sure you know that, in Quebec, a specialized court will be established to handle those matters, especially by using tracking bracelets.

In your opinion, should there be a legal consistency with federal legislation? We talked about Clare's Law just now, but do you feel that it is important that we avoid everyone doing their own thing and instead broaden the access and strengthen the legal process somewhat?

• (1340)

Witness 1: Certainly. It is really important for the Government of Canada to be sending a consistent message across the country, a message of zero tolerance for all forms of violence.

One of our greatest obstacles is that, while we hear a lot of talk about specialized courts in the media and a lot of time and money has been spent on them, we must not forget that most women who are victims of sexual assault choose not to file complaints. So, while we must clearly enhance the range of services available to the women who do choose to file complaints—which we are doing with the specialized courts—we must not forget all the women who choose to put their lives back together in ways other than filing complaints. We must not forget to provide them with services too. So, all over Quebec and all over Canada, it is important to provide services tailored to the women who choose different paths and different ways of getting back on their feet.

Ms. Louise Chabot: You mentioned the difficulties that victims have in being believed as one of the obstacles to reporting sexual violence. There are specialized courts, some penalties have been increased, public funds—

Witness 1: If I may, I would like to add that, when it comes to dealing with victims and handling complaints, many police officers, prosecutors and even judges have their biases. That is why we really have to provide training for everyone involved, because bias is everywhere.

Ms. Louise Chabot: Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Louise, you have 10 more seconds.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot: I have a question for Ms. Brayton but I will wait until my next turn.

[English]

The Chair: Excellent. Thank you, Louise.

Welcome to our committee today, Niki.

We're going to pass the floor over to you for six minutes.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Thank you so much.

It's a pleasure to be part of this committee, a committee that I was on for many years.

It's such a thrill to see such incredible leaders. It's great to see you, Bonnie. It's been a while. Even on Zoom, it's really great.

I want to thank all of our witnesses for presenting today.

Obviously, I know all of you have reflected on the barriers that women face, including economic insecurity. I am here replacing my colleague, Leah Gazan, who has been a champion for a guaranteed livable income and has put forward legislation in the House now twice. I'm wondering if you could speak to how important it would be to move forward with a basic guaranteed livable income in support of women, including many women who have been severely set back during this crisis and also are rendered more vulnerable when they don't have income or some sort of economic security.

I'd love to hear from all of the witnesses. Perhaps I'll go to you first, Bonnie, and then perhaps to Ms. Witness 1 and Ms. Kamateros.

Ms. Bonnie Brayton: Thank you, Niki.

Of course it's important to tie economic policies to social policies. That's the only way we're really going to be able to address these issues. Certainly, bringing up the issue of a national disability benefit and/or a national guaranteed income is something that's been on the table and has really become urgent during the pandemic.

It was quite clear—of course many people on this parliamentary committee will be familiar with the fact—that there is no national disability benefit now, and that, in fact, women and girls with disabilities were and continue to be the poorest. The lowest incomes in this country belong to women and girls with disabilities. Single mothers with disabilities and older women with disabilities are the poorest people in our country. Again, these are also the same people who are experiencing the highest rates of gender-based violence and all forms of violence. The majority of human rights complaints in this country have been disability-related for more than a decade. There's absolutely nothing left except to start to do the work at this point.

I'm so glad you brought forward, Niki, the issue of financial resources. We've heard already from the other witnesses about how important it is for women who are fleeing violence to have basic income security. In cases of women with disabilities, often part of the reason they can't flee is that they don't have the means to flee; they're dependent on the other person or the other person is controlling their finances. This is a really important thing to build into the national action plan and into anything we're going to do going forward.

I want to leave time, of course, for the other witnesses. Thank you.

• (1345)

[Translation]

Witness 1: If I may, I am going to add some specifics to Ms. Brayton's comments.

Violence, whether sexual or domestic, often results in serious psychological consequences for women. In some cases, they need a moment of respite in order to fully understand what they have just gone through. The state therefore must not minimize the impact of violence on the professional lives of these women, because, in many cases, they find themselves unable to work, at least for some time.

In Quebec, we have a crime victims compensation plan, which we know as IVAC, and the Crime Victims Compensation Act. There are still some shortcomings in Quebec, but also across the entire country. Those benefits should be increased to ensure that they cover all forms of violence of which women can be victims, because violence often has psychological consequences. So the fight must be against all forms of violence, even those that leave no physical traces, no bruises. The fight must be against all the forms of violence we can think of, not simply traditional forms of violence. All violence must be stopped.

[English]

Ms. Melpa Kamateros: There's a lot of fear for women surrounding the issue of conjugal violence, a lot of fear and a lot of shame. Only 30% of the cases of violence are reported. This is a Stats Canada fact. We're just wondering where the other 70% are. Why didn't they come forward? Why didn't they try to get any assistance?

That's because of all the taboos that are still surrounding the issue of conjugal violence, the normalization of the situation and the minimization for the women. We feel very strongly—and I said that in my presentation—that a woman victim of conjugal violence should have a specific status of vulnerability that allows her to get a stipend, a financial allowance, that will help her move towards autonomy and help break the cycle.

Women are sometimes single moms. Sometimes they're single women. When they come as a package with their children, they also have responsibility to their children to break free of the cycle. This is all very, very difficult to do if you don't have the funds.

I think that's what I want to say.

Ms. Niki Ashton: Absolutely. Thank you very much.

I should say that, as a Greek Canadian, I also want to applaud the work that you do, Ms. Kamateros, at the Shield of Athena.

[Translation]

Thank you for your testimony.

[English]

I want to thank everybody for what you've shared about the need for economic security as support in our struggle to end violence against women.

Thank you.

The Chair: We are getting close to the end of this panel. What I'll do is provide two minutes to the CPC, two minutes to the Liberals, one minute to the Bloc and one minute to the NDP. I know sometimes your questions can be longer or shorter.

I'm going to pass the floor over to Dominique.

Dominique, you have two minutes.

[Translation]

Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

My thanks to all the witnesses. I could ask them thousands of questions, but my time is limited.

My first question is for Ms. Brayton.

Ms. Brayton, are the women with disabilities who report the violence done to them taken seriously?

• (1350)

Ms. Bonnie Brayton: You are hitting a nerve, because one of the big problems is that it is a reality that society denies. Most cases of violence against women are to women and girls with disabilities. The term used is “systemic ableism”, and it is very widespread. Women with disabilities are neither believed nor listened to. The perception is often that there must be another explanation for those women's problems or even that they are not telling the truth.

So the answer to your question is no. Unfortunately, women with disabilities who report the violence done to them are not taken seriously.

Mrs. Dominique Vien: Witness 1, you have hit a nerve too. You were talking about your prevention program in high schools. Unless I misunderstood, you said that you have difficulty in convincing principals to provide your program. How is that possible?

That is unacceptable!

Witness 1: Yes, it is unacceptable, but it really happens. Principals have a lot of freedom. Because the program does not come from the Department of Education, principals have all kinds of freedom and can do what they like. Sometimes, given that our program needs at least six sessions, they say that it would take too long. They prefer the program to be one hour, but we can't change mindsets in one hour.

Mrs. Dominique Vien: Let's make a note of that.

Ms. Kamateros—

[English]

The Chair: I'm sorry, Dominique. I'm just so strict. I'm terrible.

Jenna, we're going to pass it over to you for two minutes.

[Translation]

Mrs. Dominique Vien: It's good that you are strict, Madam Chair.

[English]

Mrs. Jenna Sudds (Kanata—Carleton, Lib.): Thank you very much, and thanks to all the witnesses for being here.

I'll try to be brief.

Ms. Kamateros, near the end of your talk you mentioned the challenges for immigrant women. I wonder if you can elaborate on the barriers specifically to immigrant women refugees and indigenous women, and how that experience differs.

Ms. Melpa Kamateros: First of all, if language blocks are present, then the door of entry to any information, to any choice of action, to any option is automatically barred. That is automatic. She can't get into the CLSC. She can't go to the police station to make a report. She can't call a helpline. She cannot access a shelter, so what is the potential for the woman to access basic information and services? There's a huge inequality there. That overshadows and overlays the inequality we are talking about, gender-based violence that exists because of sex.

In terms of immigrant women who have no status, they have a hard time trying to get welfare. They have a hard time trying to subsist. The law of immigration takes precedence over laws pertaining to conjugal violence, and this is why we're referring to the need for a basic law and a more global vision on how we can deal with conjugal violence.

In a nutshell, that's what it is, and there is very often not too much support at the community level or at the family level. This is why we, as an organization, deal with the victims but we deal with the communities as well, because it's very important for the victims to take a stance and to go back to their communities, and for their communities to support them.

That is the issue for immigrant women. There is a situation of gross inequality, and they feel that in Canada they are strangers in a strange land.

The Chair: Thank you so much. We're now going to move over to Louise.

Louise, you have one minute.

[Translation]

Ms. Louise Chabot: Thank you, Madam Chair. I understand.

My question is for Ms. Brayton.

Ms. Brayton, I was struck by a number of things in your testimony. I believe you when you say that racialized people, immigrants, and those with disabilities, but particularly those with disabilities, experience these things more intensely because of the situation they are in. You talked about the difference between “accessibility” and “access”. What do you understand by “real access” for those people?

• (1355)

Ms. Bonnie Brayton: That is a complex question and it is difficult to answer it quickly—I see the Chair with her pen—but I will try to make a start.

Ms. Chabot, it is important to understand that the first thing to do is to strengthen the options for action that are open to women with disabilities. You can see today that I am the only person here to represent women with disabilities, yet we represent 24% of the female population and we are the group most affected. There has to be a Canada-wide presence of women with disabilities, as activists, experts and researchers. We need a place at the table.

Thank you very much for the question.

Ms. Louise Chabot: My pleasure.

[English]

The Chair: Thanks so much, Bonnie.

We're now going to move back to Niki.

Niki, you have one minute.

Ms. Niki Ashton: Ms. Brayton, I have a quick question around housing.

How urgently do we need the federal government to invest in housing for people living with disabilities, affordable housing, and social housing? I'd love to hear your thoughts.

Ms. Bonnie Brayton: I appreciate the question, Niki, and I know you trust me enough to let me pivot a bit here, because I'm going to do that.

I was trying to make the point earlier about the instruments of hope that everybody who is part of this committee and the entire Parliament have before them. These are the housing strategy, coupled with the national action plan and the child care plan.

It's important to take a step back and ask, "Treasury Board and cabinet, can we carve off some money and start to look at demonstration communities that actually use the money collectively?" We keep siloing everything off, and we're not building real solutions. We're not going to build them off the backs of these women's organizations and shelters. We have to take social responsibility across it and not download it onto women's shelters and transition houses. It's time for us to take a step back and do the big-picture thing.

As I said, the instruments of hope are in front of us. It's time for us to get serious.

Thank you.

The Chair: Awesome.

Thank you so much to our panellists. I hate cutting it short, because all of you are bringing so much information.

On behalf of our group, I would really like to thank Bonnie, the organization grouping sexual assault help centres in Quebec, as well as Melpa, for joining us today. It was wonderful to have you.

We are going to take a bit of a break, so that we can get the second panel on and get their mikes checked. I would ask everybody to return for 1:59 p.m.

Thank you.

• (1355)

(Pause)

• (1400)

The Chair: I would like to resume today's committee meeting.

Welcome to all of our panellists.

We are resuming our study regarding intimate partner and domestic violence.

Joining us for our second panel we have, as an individual, Sherilyn Bell, psychologist. From the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women, we have Jane Stinson, research associate. From the Canadian Women's Foundation, we have Karen Campbell, director of community initiatives and policy.

To start today's meeting, we'll be providing each of you with five minutes to provide your opening remarks, and then we'll be going on to our round of questions from our MPs.

I will pass the floor over to Sherilyn.

Sherilyn, you have five minutes.

Mrs. Sherilyn Bell (Psychologist, As an Individual): Good afternoon, Madam Chair and committee.

My name is Sherilyn Bell and I am serving as a witness today in my capacity as a retired high school guidance counsellor with 30 years of experience both in the private and public sectors, and currently as a psychologist in private practice in Montreal. My remarks today are based on my professional experience of working with teens between the ages of 12 and 17.

Today I will speak about the more subtle but no less damaging areas of teen relationship violence, which involves control, manipulation, coercion and intimidation, which can take place in both in-person relationships and online relationships.

In my experience, while most teens, including young teens of 12 to 14 years of age, are easily able to identify what constitutes a physically or sexually abusive intimate relationship, there are still challenges to be overcome for many teens, and especially young teens, to easily identify the components of unhealthy intimate relationships that involve manipulation, control and intimidation, especially when they, themselves, find themselves in such a relationship. It is not uncommon for some young teens to misinterpret manipulation and control as care and love, which can then result in the non-recognition of a dysfunctional relationship.

In terms of online violence in teen relationships, with the rapid advancements in technology in the past several decades, the Internet has provided easy access for some teens to insult, denigrate, manipulate and coerce their relationship partners in a public, explicit and scathing fashion. In addition, many of the perpetrating teens will attempt to veil their identity by creating accounts under different names or by accessing and using other teens' social media accounts. Due to the layer of perceived anonymity that using a fake account provides, the language, comments and images that get posted are often much more severe than any comments that would be delivered in an in-person scenario. In terms of the victims, the results of such an online attack can be devastating. Embarrassment, humiliation and shame are common emotions expressed by victims, often resulting in a significant decrease in victims' personal, social and academic functioning.

While controlling and manipulative in-person teen relationships can sometimes be directly observed by parents, which then allows the parents the opportunity to address and perhaps intervene in the situation with their child, it is important to note that parents are often completely unaware if their teen is either a perpetrator or a victim of online violence. Out of fear of the potential consequences, teens will often try to hide this information from authority figures, and it is often only brought to the attention of an adult when the victim or friends of the victim perceive the victim as needing help and/or protection.

According to an online article authored by Deinera Exner-Cortens, an assistant professor at the University of Calgary, and Wendy Craig, a professor at Queen's University, published on October 19, 2021, one in three Canadian adolescents between the ages of 11 and 18 experienced dating violence in 2021. This statistic indicates that there is still much work to be done to address the problem of dating violence in teens. Within this same article, the authors remind us that teen dating violence is both a Canadian public health problem and a children's rights issue.

There are existing Canadian resources available that provide information on this issue, such as the Canadian Centre for Child Protection. In fact, the Canadian Centre for Child Protection has an excellent online resource booklet entitled "Self/Peer Exploitation—It's Not OK: A Resource Guide for Families", which provides detailed information on this issue for parents and teens, along with suggestions to prevent and/or deal with an incident after it has occurred. I would be curious to know how widely aware most parents and teens are of this resource.

● (1405)

Based on the remarks that I have presented to you today, my recommendations to the committee are, first, that more resources subsidized by the Canadian government be developed to address and provide information and support for teens concerning healthy versus unhealthy intimate partner relationships; second, that more funding be provided by the Canadian government to existing organizations that address the issues of control, manipulation and coercion in young teen intimate partner relationships; third, that awareness campaigns on this issue be expanded for both parents and teens; lastly, that further information, awareness and prevention programs be developed for preteens, as well as for the parents of preteens, so that children and parents are more adequately educated

on the topic of teen intimate partner violence before their children enter the teenage years.

The Chair: Thank you so much, Sherilyn.

Now we're going to pass it over to the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women.

Jane, you have the floor for five minutes. Thank you.

Ms. Jane Stinson (Research Associate, Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women): Thank you very much.

Good afternoon. Thanks for the opportunity to appear here before you. I am a research associate with the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women.

I'd like to begin by paying respect to the Algonquin people, who are the traditional guardians of the unceded and beautiful territory on which I live.

Last year I worked with women from over 40 organizations to develop the national action plan on violence against women and gender-based violence. I think you heard about it earlier this week from Lise Martin, the executive director of Women's Shelters Canada.

Today, my comments draw on the research we did for that national action plan, and they're informed by a feminist intersectional lens that focuses on those who are most marginalized and in greatest need.

I want to focus on the importance of a national public transportation system to prevent, respond to and mitigate intimate partner and domestic violence in Canada. Transportation systems help prevent domestic violence by providing women access to jobs and the incomes they provide. They give women and gender-diverse people a means to escape intimate partner domestic violence. Finally, they help mitigate the experience of domestic violence by providing access to support services, which may be in another community.

Recommendation 20E of the national action plan final report calls for the federal, provincial, territorial and municipal levels of government to create a system of transportation across Canada that prevents and mitigates gender-based violence.

I want to thank this committee for its 2019 report on systems of shelters and transition homes, where you recommended government action to fund transportation for women fleeing violence who have no access to shelter services in their communities. It was important and we need you to recommend further action on transportation now.

The situation has gotten much worse since that 2019 recommendation. COVID has contributed to higher rates of domestic violence, as you've already heard. Also, access to transportation systems has worsened, especially for those in rural, remote and northern communities.

For example, victims of domestic violence were hurt by Saskatchewan's decision to cut its Crown corporation bus service, the STC, which had provided vital transportation between communities in the province. A study there found that 37% of survivors of sexual violence in Saskatchewan identified the lack of transportation as a barrier to access those services and supports after STC was cut. It was a good model and something that should be replicated elsewhere.

On top of that, Greyhound ended its private bus service—in some parts of the country earlier, but other parts in 2021. That made a bad situation far worse throughout the country, especially for indigenous people in remote communities.

As you know, Canada's north has vast distances between communities. Women are often forced to hitchhike or use taxis, ride sharing, Uber, or private vehicles to get out of town or between towns. All those options present risks of gender-based violence.

The report on murdered and missing indigenous women and girls called attention to how the absence of safe and affordable transportation systems contributes to the violence and murder of indigenous women. They also recommended that all governments ensure that adequate plans and funding be put in place for safe, affordable transit and transportation systems.

Women need transportation systems within their community, between communities and between provinces. It doesn't exist now. The federal government needs to provide leadership to both invest in transportation infrastructure and create the incentives for other levels of government to do so. I really hope that this committee will call for more government action.

I've outlined three recommendations for you to consider.

The first recommendation is the long-term, 10-year goal of the national action plan, which is to build a pan-Canadian safe, accessible and affordable transportation system.

The second recommendation is a shorter-term one to get there. It's to establish a federal task force to tackle gender-based violence in transportation and transit, and to provide direction for a system that's needed.

The third recommendation is to encourage the funding of women's groups that are addressing gender-based violence related to transportation, to provide that grassroots push, identification of the problem and identification of solutions, and to amplify the work of this committee and WAGE in addressing the problem.

• (1410)

The Chair: Thank you so much, Ms. Stinson.

We're now going to move over to the Canadian Women's Foundation and Karen Campbell, director of community initiatives and policy.

Karen, you have five minutes.

Ms. Karen Campbell (Director, Community Initiatives and Policy, Canadian Women's Foundation): Thank you, and good afternoon. I'm Karen Campbell from the Canadian Women's Foundation, joining you today from London, Ontario, on the traditional

territories of the Attawandaron, Anishinabe and Haudenosaunee peoples.

The Canadian Women's Foundation is Canada's only national public foundation for women and girls, and one of the 10 largest women's foundations in the world. In partnership with the Department of Women and Gender Equality, we have provided the women's sector with \$45 million in pandemic emergency funds as of September 2021, and we're in the process of distributing the next allotment.

Thank you for the invitation to speak to this urgent question.

In 2018, StatsCan reported that every six days a woman is killed by her intimate partner. We know from the excellent work of the Canadian Femicide Observatory that femicide is on the rise, with 160 femicides in 2020, or an average of one woman or girl killed every 2.3 days. They also note that 92 women and girls were killed in the first six months of 2021, 14 more killings than in the same period in 2020, or close to a 20% increase.

This trend is unsurprising to those working with survivors. Whenever communities are under stress, whether from climate-induced disasters, economic downturns or public health crises, GBV rates increase. In our context, this increase has been recognized globally and named "a shadow pandemic".

Inattention in emergency planning to the predictable increase of GBV has had disastrous consequences, particularly for women and gender-diverse people who are further marginalized by race, indigeneity, sexuality, disability, immigration status or geographic location. The pandemic shines a light on the systemic root causes of all forms of GBV, including intimate partner violence, IPV.

IPV is more than a private or household issue. It is a product of gender inequality, colonization, systemic racism, enableism and the ongoing oppression of marginalized communities in Canada. Indigenous women experience the highest rates of IPV and are killed at nearly seven times the rate of non-indigenous women. Women with a disability are three times more likely to experience violent victimization than those who do not live with a disability. Statistics on these and other populations can be found in our full brief.

There is a significant lack of data on IPV as experienced by Black and racialized women and gender-diverse people, and on how IPV affects women living at the confluence of several groups, such as Black trans women or racialized women with disabilities, presenting important challenges in understanding levels of violence across populations. However, the numbers we do have reveal that IPV and GBV are deeply connected to the systemic violence that confronts women and gender-diverse people every day.

To improve protections for those living in unsafe homes, we must acknowledge the gendered nature of the mental health impacts of the pandemic and its associated restrictions. We need to better understand how job loss, food insecurity, fears of contracting the virus, and social isolation have contributed to the rise of GBV.

Youth-serving organizations report youth spending more time online, where the risk of tech-facilitated violence is a concern. They're witnessing increased suicidality and substance use and the challenges young people face in forming healthy relationships grounded in consent culture in this context.

To eliminate barriers to leaving unsafe environments, we must focus on those bearing the brunt of the economic and social effects of the pandemic: women, trans and non-binary people who are marginalized by race, immigration status, age, ability and socio-economic status. To escape violence, women need an adequate and equitable income, access to housing, affordable child care, and safe and reliable transportation services.

Chronic underfunding of the GBV sector has left survivors at risk. These underfunded and oversubscribed services have seen increased demand and staff burnout. The pandemic shows us that the sector has no surge capacity to deal with crisis impacts and that significant gaps persist in services for the most marginalized. Service providers report that clients are coming to their doors with more complex needs, disclosing more extreme forms of physical and sexual violence. The complexity of cases, combined with barriers to in-person access, is yet another drain on an overtaxed and women-dominated workforce.

To prevent IPV, we need to work on the ground. In addition to the GBV sector's needs, support is required for grassroots groups that are doing the important work of building consent culture and challenging gender norms. Much of this work happens with young people, racialized people, elders, and even men and boys. Many of these groups are ineligible to receive charitable donations under CRA guidelines. Reforming the rules governing the charitable sector to ensure that these groups are resourced is an important step towards ending all forms of GBV.

Importantly, public policy needs to target root causes. Overemphasis on criminal justice responses only scratches the surface and ultimately criminalizes those most in need of relief from the systemic injustices they already face. GBA+ must be embedded in all policy instruments, and they must be grounded in the lived realities of the most marginalized women, trans and non-binary people.

Thank you for your time.

● (1415)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Panellists, we'll now go to the six-minute question and answer period. I will put up a reminder at the one-minute mark.

Michelle Ferreri, you have the floor for six minutes.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Thank you so much. I hope everyone can hear me okay.

I want to take the opportunity to thank the first panel of witnesses as well. They were so passionate and amazing. Everybody's doing great work.

I am going to direct a lot of my questions to our first witness, Sherilyn.

I loved what you had to say. I wish I could spend six hours with you, if I'm honest. It's really important work...and your lived experience of what you've done as well in working with these teens. I couldn't agree more with all your calls to action. As a mom, I'm very interested in this as well. I've experienced a lot of what you talked about.

I would like to talk about what you would recommend. You talked about educating teens. We've talked a lot about this in this committee. If your benchmark of an unhealthy relationship is unhealthy, you don't know any different. They don't know that difference. When they finally start to maybe see it, what methods of education can we use to educate preteens and teens that they will trust? We know they're not going to listen to a teacher who stands at the front. It's a peer.... What do you recommend to help educate these kids?

Mrs. Sherilyn Bell: Well, I do think that prevention is key. I think you're absolutely right when you say that their benchmark depends on what they know or their perception of what normal is. If not their teachers, then maybe, I don't know, bring speakers into the classroom to just discuss in more detail the subtleties of what makes a relationship unhealthy.

I mentioned how some teens can confuse care with manipulation. I certainly have seen that. It is subtle at times. If they say, "My partner is texting me and wants to know what I'm doing every minute", that's a red flag for a professional. The teen might say, "Oh, isn't it nice that they care so much about me that they want to know what I'm doing every minute?" So—

• (1420)

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: I'm sorry. I hate interrupting you, but I have such a short time and I want to get everything in.

I think there is a catch-22, because when we talk about social media and what you brought up, it's so critical. We know that it could be a double-edged sword. Could we use that same tool that they're so addicted to in order to help educate them about what a healthy relationship is?

Mrs. Sherilyn Bell: I'm sure we could.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: That would be one thing I would ask, or look into, but the other question is on the parents aspect. This is a really important point that you brought up. Again, I've been on the receiving end of this. Your child could be part of being a perpetrator or being a recipient of this, and you are completely oblivious to it.

What would you recommend in terms of educating parents so they're not nagging that child but building trust? How do we help parents recognize these signs?

Mrs. Sherilyn Bell: If the child doesn't tell you directly that something is going on, sometimes you notice it in their functioning. You can see that they're a little bit off. They're maybe a little bit more withdrawn or seem a little bit more anxious. Any kind of subtle change in their behaviour could be an indicator that there's something going on.

I think a lot of the parents are just not aware of a lot of the stuff that's going on. They don't even have the basic education. In a lot of cases, the kids know more than the parents do. Even the 12- and 13-year-olds know way more than the parents do.

Again, I think an awareness campaign for the parents about all of the subtleties and what's going on in this age group... For kids starting high school and getting their phone for the first time, I think parents need to really be made aware of some of the paths their children can go down, sometimes unwittingly.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: You have had access to tools that work, simple things that happen in a family that contribute to positive communication and having both doors open for a parent to talk to a child and for a child to talk to a parent. What are your biggest recommendations in terms of those tools?

Mrs. Sherilyn Bell: Well, I think trust is key, and it's built from a very young age. I think parents really have to be willing to take all of their own emotions, feelings and thoughts, kind of put them on the side a bit when dealing with their children and really try to stay calm and open and understand—or try to understand—what their children are saying, from their perspective, and really just sort of support—

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Would you say things like family dinners are important, where people are putting down their phones and actively listening to each other?

Mrs. Sherilyn Bell: Absolutely, yes. That's good old-fashioned stuff.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: That's great—and bedtime stories.

Thank you so much.

Mrs. Sherilyn Bell: You're welcome.

The Chair: Okay. We're going to pass it on.

Emmanuella, you have six minutes.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos (Saint-Laurent, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I would like to thank all of the witnesses for their great testimony today and for being here to answer our questions.

My questions are going to be a little all over the place. I've been thinking about the root causes of this type of violence, and I really want to get to the bottom of why and to the different types of dynamics that play a role here.

Is anyone able to answer the question of whether cultural communities—and I'm not talking about indigenous women per se, but cultural communities or immigrant communities—face higher levels of violence than white communities or communities that aren't necessarily from immigrant backgrounds? I don't know if anyone has a stat on that.

No? Okay.

The reason I was going there is that some of our panellists earlier, and Ms. Bell now, mentioned that more younger women are getting into relationships where they face violence. One in three young girls between the ages of 12 and 14 is in a relationship where she may experience violence. Also, Melpa Kamateros, in previous testimony, said that younger people are the ones seeking help in shelters right now.

Coming from a cultural community myself, I know that dating in our teens is frowned upon, so it's not necessarily allowed. Based also on my experience as a teacher, I feel that a lot of young people I knew who were from cultural backgrounds weren't necessarily the ones who were dating.

Ms. Bell, in your experience, what would be the reason...? If younger and younger people are coming out with these types of issues, and we're trying to tackle it from the root and not allow this type of violence to continue later on, what are some of the things that you think people can do?

First of all, what are the signs to look out for? Obviously, you mentioned three of them. Also, what types of programs can the federal government put into place? We obviously don't deal much with education, but what types of programs can we put into place that would fund these types of initiatives to help end those signs, let's say, early on?

• (1425)

Mrs. Sherilyn Bell: Those are good questions. Let me think about it.

I mentioned in my talk that booklet from the Canadian Centre for Child Protection, the resource booklet for the families, and I did read through it. It's about 35 pages long, and it's really excellent. As I mentioned before, I was doing a bit of research to talk to you today, and in all my years of practice I never really knew that this resource was there. If I hadn't gone looking for it....

That's why I mentioned as one of the recommendations that there are some really good tools out there, but more awareness is needed, I think, about what already exists. That's something to think about. In terms of what the federal government can do, you have some Canadian tools out there, and maybe you can think of ways of getting people to be more aware.

What else did you ask?

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Actually, I see that Ms. Campbell has her hand up as well, and I want to give her an opportunity.

Ms. Karen Campbell: Thank you.

I'm sorry. I was trying to find my way to my mute button to answer your question on populations and statistics.

I can look for some statistics for you, but we do know that immigrant women may be more vulnerable to intimate partner violence, for a lot of the reasons Ms. Kamateros spoke to in the previous panel: economic dependence on their partner or relatives, language barriers, a lack of knowledge about community resources, and immigration and refugee system rules related to spousal partnerships. These can make people afraid to come forward. As well, when it comes to that second generation, as you've identified, there are challenges young people have in talking to their parents about these things.

To the point Mrs. Bell is raising about what resources there are, and to your question about what the federal government might be doing, the Public Health Agency of Canada has partnered with the Canadian Women's Foundation in the past on teen healthy relationships programs, and worked to build the field of teen healthy relationships as a violence prevention mechanism.

We have an ongoing project to try to bring those best practices together, while looking at marginalized communities to make sure everybody is represented in those. There is a good pool of resources out there, and it would be nice to see that kind of thing continue.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: I was going to ask about intersectionality, but you just answered that question. That's what we're going to be looking at in the next budget, as well.

I have less than a minute left, so I just want to take the time to thank you all for the important work you do. Mrs. Bell, I actually had the chance to witness the work you did for a decade of my life. You personally impacted the life of a family member of mine, so thank you very much.

Mrs. Sherilyn Bell: You're very welcome. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Thank you for adding that, Emmanuella. It's great knowing that those persons in the community are out there helping our families and everybody else. So thank you so much.

I'm now going to move over to Louise Chabot.

Louise, you have six minutes.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you for your testimony, ladies. It is all the more troubling because it is now 2022.

Feminists have been fighting to get rid of this for many years. In my opinion, we have to recognize that we still have major problems to solve.

I would like to talk about the forms of coercive control.

Mrs. Bell, you talked about teens. In Quebec, we currently have a major advertising campaign that illustrated the controlling behaviour that a dominant male exercises over his wife. It can be through psychological violence, verbal violence and motions that are just short of physical violence, without actually going that far. The goal of the campaign is to show that the problem exists. Women often have difficulty reporting that kind of violent situation because they don't have bruises or marks on their face.

We are told that the root causes of the problem must be tackled, and exercising coercive control is part of that.

How can we come to grips with that, so that this kind of situation does not end up in physical violence, sexual violence, or women being murdered?

With teens, we could work along the same lines. Perhaps they have seen their parents display behaviour like that, which they then reproduce or normalize.

My question goes to all three of you. How can Canada and the provinces act in concert?

• (1430)

[*English*]

Mrs. Sherilyn Bell: I could start, perhaps.

I know that education is governed provincially. I am glad to hear that something exists in French about the coercive control and manipulation. I am wondering more about what that program is. I'm also wondering if it's available in English for the English sector.

I think that it's fantastic. I think the prevention lies in educating the students in the upper-elementary years and the parents about these more subtle aspects before they have the electronic devices in their hands and they're on these accounts. It is really about education and building awareness of what is out there, what is appropriate use and where it sort of starts to slide into inappropriate use. It's really to try to make sure that the students have a clearer idea of what inappropriate versus appropriate use is.

In terms of relationships and what is healthy and unhealthy, I think you really hit the nail on the head when you said that sometimes they're seeing what's going on at home. Often what they're seeing is their normal. It can perpetuate in their own relationships as they start to develop them.

A key area is to start to get the kids thinking about what's appropriate, even if it might be something different from what they're living.

Ms. Jane Stinson: If I could jump in, I'll be brief.

I think it's really important to think about the opportunities that people have to leave relationships where there is coercive control going on. I will go back to things like the importance of stable employment as a foundational thing. The federal government plays an important role there, in terms of both its direct job creation as the largest employer in the country and the example it can set for others. I think addressing things like precarious employment is important.

I'll stop to give my colleague a chance.

Ms. Karen Campbell: Thanks.

I would just add, Ms. Chabot, that you are correct. People have been talking about this for decades. We've been advocating for years for what we need to see. The sector knows what it needs and has told the government what it needs a lot of times in different formats.

The national action plan to end gender-based violence is there. It needs to be implemented urgently. It needs to be funded to the highest levels to get these things in place.

The same goes for the national action plan to address our national crisis of missing and murdered indigenous women. The road map is there. We just need to follow it.

• (1435)

The Chair: You have about 20 seconds.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I agree that everyone must leave a relationship where coercive control is being exercised, but I feel that we also all agree that we have to give them the means to do so.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you so much.

I'm now going to pass it over to Niki.

Niki, you have six minutes.

Ms. Niki Ashton: Thank you very much.

Thank you so much, everybody, for your powerful testimony.

I'm very pleased to be here replacing my colleague Leah Gazan for today's session—as the committee is quite familiar, given the work I was able to do a number of years ago in terms of the status of women—and seeing familiar faces like yours, Jane, and others earlier today. Thank you so much for being here.

Ms. Stinson, I want to go to you. You highlighted some very key findings around access to transportation and access to employment. I want to highlight just how critical that is. I represent a northern riding; I live in a northern riding. In western Canada, we were the first to lose Greyhound services. While there have been some initiatives, nothing has fully replaced what we lost, and that's a big problem. It is probably best documented through the Highway of Tears, the vulnerability that northern and indigenous women face when they don't have access to safe transportation. I really appreciate your raising that. It's not a reality that's understood in the same way by anyone living in an urban centre, that's for sure. I appreciate that you raised those two areas.

I also want to highlight another key theme that many of you have raised, the need to access housing. We have a housing crisis in our country. It is particularly acute in first nations and in northern communities, but it truly is a full-blown crisis across the country, both in terms of supply but also in terms of access. Increasingly, access to safe housing is out of reach for so many Canadian women, even many who are working, given the reality, as you pointed out, Jane, of precarious work, etc.

I'm wondering, Ms. Stinson, if you could talk a bit about how urgent it is for the federal government to move on housing and invest in housing, all kinds of housing. I'd love to hear your thoughts.

Ms. Jane Stinson: Yes, it's extremely important. Housing takes up such a big proportion of a person's income. It's supposed to be one-third, but I think for many people it's half if not more. It's out of reach for lots of people. It's the lack of housing and the instability that exists that also contribute to violence. If you're, say, couch surfing, if you're relying on staying at friends' homes, if you're in a precarious housing situation, you're more vulnerable to violence, or if you're in a rooming house and things of that nature. Yes, inadequate housing is extremely related to gender-based and intimate partner violence.

As with transportation, the federal government plays a key role. We saw it with child care. I think child care is an amazing example of seeing the leadership of the federal government creating conditions. In that case, it should be not-for-profit, which is extremely important for a lot of services, especially for child care. The federal government plays that key leadership role of saying, "There's money here. You meet certain conditions. Let's work together to develop a system."

Ms. Niki Ashton: I also want to give Ms. Campbell the opportunity to share any thoughts on housing and Mrs. Bell, as well, if she has anything to add.

Ms. Karen Campbell: We've been talking with our colleagues in the sector since the beginning of the pandemic. When you ask them, "What do women and gender-diverse people need right now?", housing is right at the top of the list. Housing and access to an adequate income are really, really significant. Access to child care and access to transportation really come together to have an impact on whether or not someone is safe.

I guess it's really very much about considering what the social determinants of health are and making sure those things are all in place. They're necessary for women to be safe.

Absolutely, a leadership role on the part of the federal government on the national housing strategy is required.

• (1440)

Mrs. Sherilyn Bell: I would agree with what the other two speakers have said. I don't work directly with the adult population, but I certainly would support what they're saying on this issue.

Ms. Niki Ashton: Thank you very much.

Chair, how much time do I have left?

The Chair: You have one minute.

Ms. Niki Ashton: Quickly, income security was raised as well. My colleague Leah Gazan has been a champion of a guaranteed livable income.

I'm wondering, Ms. Stinson and Ms. Campbell, if you have any thoughts to share on how that could be a support for women who face violence and want to flee violence.

Ms. Jane Stinson: The women who are working on the national action plan actually had a session on guaranteed annual income, and a big question about it. It was a bit of a debate. There is desire to have a minimum income, absolutely, but the concern is, will services get stripped away? Will it become a market-based system where people are given money and expected to buy services for cash on the market? That's what's really important, ensuring that it doesn't result in that.

We need the infrastructure. We need the support and public services, in addition to a guaranteed income. People shouldn't be living in poverty.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We're now going to move on to round two. We actually have enough time to do the entire round. We're going to start with Dominique.

Dominique, you will have five minutes; Sonia, you will have five minutes; Louise, two and a half minutes; and Niki, two and a half minutes.

I'm going to pass the floor over to Dominique for five minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Dominique Vien: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

My questions are primarily for you, Mrs. Bell. Could I ask you for fairly concise answers because I have a number of them.

As a psychologist and a responder with a lot of experience, would you say that a young victim is automatically going to become an adult victim?

[*English*]

Mrs. Sherilyn Bell: Yes, I do think so.

The statistic is that one out of three adolescents is affected by teen violence. For the one out of three, often it does continue. Even

though you work with the victims, sometimes, unknowingly, they just tend to end up in similar situations.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot: Madam Chair, I can't hear the interpretation anymore.

Mrs. Dominique Vien: That's right, Madam Chair, we don't have the interpretation anymore.

[*English*]

The Chair: Is the translation working?

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Dominique Vien: Yes, Madam Chair, the interpretation is working now.

Ms. Louise Chabot: Thank you, Madam Chair.

[*English*]

Mrs. Sherilyn Bell: Should I repeat what I said or continue?

The Chair: Please repeat what you said.

Mrs. Sherilyn Bell: I do agree that young teenagers who are involved in a situation, perhaps victims of online violence or in-person violence, often go on to have repeated incidences, where they become victims of ongoing relationship violence even with different partners.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Dominique Vien: I am sorry, Mrs. Bell, but I'm going to have to interrupt you. I know it's very impolite of me and I don't like doing it. But I don't have a lot of time and I have the gist of your answer.

In the examples I am about to give you, which, in your opinion, would be the clearest cause, unless it is well understood that they are all part of the cause?

What drives young people to violence? Is it the social media? Is it the Internet, family violence, are they predisposed? Is it all of the above? What can you tell us? What have you heard in your practice?

• (1445)

[*English*]

Mrs. Sherilyn Bell: It's a combination. I don't think it's any one thing.

There can be predisposing factors based on things going on in the family, or even just perception of the young persons themselves of situations that can be a bit skewed, which then affects their view of things and their decision-making.

You can't just pinpoint one thing. It is a combination, and I guess that's what makes it such a difficult situation to deal with.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Dominique Vien: Okay.

I am the mom of a young man who will soon be 26. As parents, we also have a responsibility for the way in which we raise our boys.

What should parents be telling the boys?

[English]

Mrs. Sherilyn Bell: I don't know how much empathy training is taught in the elementary curriculum, but it's really important that our kids are taught from a young age how to view things from other people's perspectives and how to put themselves in somebody else's shoes.

It's also important to talk with kids about decision-making, how a parent makes a decision. Maybe talk through the steps with the kids, how a parent thinks critically about a situation, so that the child has something concrete to go on and it's not just an interpretation of the situation that they're going with.

[Translation]

Mrs. Dominique Vien: I have one minute left.

Finally, Mrs. Bell, we are familiar with shelters and help centres for women. Some organizations also provide help for men. Are there enough resources to help our adolescents who are violent or who are victims of violence? We have a few resources in Quebec, including Tel-jeunes, but are there enough?

[English]

Mrs. Sherilyn Bell: I don't think so. Certainly I know that when I was working as a guidance counsellor, in terms of the demand in the schools—and speaking with colleagues, too, not just in the schools I worked in, but in other schools, public and private—there were never enough counsellors to go around. Even in private practice, I know the demand for psychologists and therapists is extremely high.

So I would say there need to be more resources.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We're now going to pass it over to Sonia.

Sonia, you have the floor for five minutes.

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

Thank you to all the witnesses for their great testimony.

My question is for Ms. Stinson.

Ms. Stinson, part of this study includes how coercive and manipulative behaviour is also a form of abuse. We heard about the language barrier, the lack of community resources. What steps do you think are more effective in tackling this particular form of violence?

Ms. Jane Stinson: I just want to make sure I understood your question. Which type of violence are you referring to?

Ms. Sonia Sidhu: Which steps to control this type of violence are more effective?

Ms. Jane Stinson: My emphasis has been on transportation. That's what my job was within the national action plan. I would emphasize these things about the importance of transportation systems; the absence of them allows or forces people to stay in violent relationships. For me, it's about trying to look at what systems need to be in place to enable people to leave violent relationships, whether it's the transportation system that lets them get out of town or get to a transition home, or, again, employment and housing.

I appreciate Mrs. Bell's approach as a psychologist—she deals with individuals, and that's extremely important—but I tend to think more in terms of systems. What are the areas and systems the federal government has some influence or control over? Those are the ones I encourage you to focus on.

Ms. Sonia Sidhu: Thank you.

Ms. Campbell, what sorts of programs are offered to the girls that would teach them to recognize the early signs of an abusive relationship and empower them to respond safely and give them the confidence to pursue a healthier one?

Both Mrs. Bell and Ms. Campbell can comment on that.

• (1450)

Ms. Karen Campbell: I'm happy to chime in on this.

There is a range of programs that are available, happening in schools and in community centres across the country, that focus on the empowerment of girls, particularly looking at them in their own cultural settings. We fund many of those programs. We also fund teen healthy relationships programs across the country that really look at supporting young people in identifying and understanding not just what a healthy relationship is, in terms of a sexual relationship or a dating relationship, but also what a healthy peer relationship is or what a healthy relationship is with your parent or your teacher. These are all skills that are really important to emphasize and to build in our young people.

I would just say, broadly speaking, that we need to have a strong and thriving women and gender justice sector in order to make sure these programs can happen. Right now that sector is really struggling and suffering in the context of the pandemic, so we need to really be putting our attention there to shore up resources for those groups.

Ms. Sonia Sidhu: Thank you.

We know that social media can be a platform for intimate partner violence. There are horror stories of teenage girls who have been bullied. I'm wondering what role, in your view, the tech and cybersecurity sector have in reducing violence among teens.

The question is for Mrs. Bell.

Mrs. Sherilyn Bell: I'd like to think they do have a social responsibility to try to do something, whether it's identifying violent content or inappropriate content, and somehow taking it down. My limited understanding is that some of these social media platforms do try to do that, but there's just such a vast amount that sometimes it doesn't happen quickly enough. I think that's an area, certainly, to be explored in more detail.

Ms. Sonia Sidhu: Any kind of awareness campaign...we heard that, especially because mental health is also impacted. Any witness can see the mental health aspect. How effectively can we put the resources...? Can you share your views about how the government can help with any strategy?

The Chair: Actually, Sonia, we're going to use that as more of a comment, and perhaps they can use that, just because we're getting down to the last few minutes of our meeting. We're now going to pass it over to Louise.

Louise, you have two and a half minutes.

[Translation]

Ms. Louise Chabot: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Ms. Campbell, if the federal government were to enact legislation to try to preempt spousal violence, specifically by criminalizing coercive control, would that be a good thing, a potential solution, in your opinion?

[English]

Ms. Karen Campbell: I think understanding the root causes of coercive control is extremely important, and I think those root causes are very similar to the root causes of all the other kinds of gender-based violence and intimate partner violence that we see.

I think that any sort of direction the federal government takes would need to be very specifically grounded in evidence and research. Looking at Clare's Law and other legislative mechanisms that are out there on coercive control, it would be important to see the impacts of those and to conduct a really strong gender-based analysis to understand the differing impacts on different communities.

It's really about addressing the systemic root causes, more than taking a criminalizing approach, in my view.

[Translation]

Ms. Louise Chabot: Let me ask you another question, Ms. Campbell.

I'm very sensitive to the situation of those with disabilities. We can see that they suffer a disproportionate amount of violence.

What would be your approach to including them more in the solutions that we are proposing?

• (1455)

[English]

Ms. Karen Campbell: Thank you very much for that question. I'll just flag that the interpretation is very quiet and difficult to hear on my side, but I think I caught the gist of the question around access and support for women with disabilities.

Again, I think that a systems approach is really necessary. Understanding systemic ableism is important. I think that Ms. Brayton, in the previous panel, spoke very well about not downloading the resourcing and responsibilities to individual organizations that are struggling and suffering with burnout and staff turnover, but looking for systemic approaches to dealing with access.

The Chair: Thank you so much, Karen.

I could see that smile because she saw my green pen starting to rotate. We're going to pass it over to Niki for the last two and a half minutes.

Niki, you have the floor.

Ms. Niki Ashton: I want to go back to Ms. Stinson around the broader state of affairs when it comes to violence against women. There is some very disturbing research out in the recent months around the connection between misogyny, violent misogyny and the rise in hate and extreme—particularly right, fascist—politics. There's often talk of how we need to detect that these signs are very much tied to the explicit misogyny and violent misogyny that we see displayed by men, particularly young men online.

Ms. Stinson, Ms. Campbell, Mrs. Bell, I don't have much time, but is this something that we need to take seriously? Do we need the federal government to take on what is seen online and the potential for it to escalate into something that is violent both against women and against other people as well?

Ms. Jane Stinson: Yes. I could start.

CRIAW has recently put out a fact sheet on the connection between the far right, the hate movements, and their abuse of women—a sort of anti-feminist approach. I think it's extremely important.

Increasingly, we're seeing these connections. Living in Ottawa, we really see how nasty this new right hate movement is. They're bullies. They're bullies towards everyone, especially women and people of colour. We're hearing stories about how they've been treated on the street and things like that.

I do think it's extremely important. It might be a particularly new angle for this committee to be looking at and exploring that connection. I'll let others speak.

Mrs. Sherilyn Bell: Maybe I'll jump in next.

I completely agree. I think it's really important that as much be done as possible. I like what Ms. Stinson was just saying about what's going on and the division of groups of people. We see this even in teenagers. Unfortunately, they often don't have the critical thinking skills to make good decisions about what is something to be perpetuated or not. They just see something, and if it's something a little bit different, they jump on it and they themselves will do the same thing. Then it's just a disaster in so many cases.

It does tie into what I said about education of the children, but piggy-backed onto Ms. Stinson's comment.

The Chair: We are coming to the end of the meeting. This has been an absolutely fantastic discussion. I would really like to thank the three of you for coming and bringing all of this information. If you have additional information that you would like to bring to the committee, just as a reminder, you can submit a brief on this. I'm sure you all have something to add.

I remind all of our committee members that meeting number six will be taking place on Tuesday, February 15, once again from 3:30 to 5:30 in the Wellington Building. We will have Lana Wells, associate professor at the University of Calgary; and Katreena Scott, professor and director of the Centre for Research and Education on Violence Against Women and Children. We will also have Statistics Canada, as well as the Battered Women's Support Services. I'm sure over the next few days we will be receiving more information from Alexie as well.

I would like to thank everybody for coming today. I'd like to really thank once again the panellists for a great discussion. You guys were amazing.

We will see everybody once again on Tuesday.

Do I have consent from everybody to adjourn?

I see consent. Fantastic. Have a wonderful weekend, everybody, and stay safe.

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