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Chair: Mrs. Karen Vecchio



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• (1540)

[*English*]

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

I'd like to welcome you to meeting number 11 of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

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.

[*Translation*]

Given the ongoing pandemic situation and in accordance with the recommendations from public health authorities and the directive of the Board of Internal Economy on October 19, 2021, to remain healthy and safe, anyone attending the meeting in person must not have symptoms, must maintain two metres of physical distancing, and must wear a non-medical mask when circulating in the room. It is recommended in the strongest possible terms that you wear your mask at all times, including when seated. Everyone must also maintain proper hand hygiene by using the hand sanitizer at the room entrance.

[*English*]

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 is available for this meeting. You have the choice at the bottom of your screen of either the floor, English or French. If interpretation is lost, please inform me immediately and we'll ensure that 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 yourself. For those in the room, your mike will be controlled as normal by the proceedings and verification officer. When speaking, please speak slowly and clearly. When you're not speaking, your mike should be on mute.

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 now want to welcome our witnesses for our first panel.

As an individual today, we have Simon Lapierre. From Sakeenah Homes, we have Mashooda-Lubna Syed, government and community relations. From the Women's Centre for Social Justice, we have Nneka MacGregor, the executive director.

Each of you will be provided five minutes for your opening statements. When you see me start to rotate my pen, that means let's start wrapping it up; we're getting past five minutes.

I'm now going to pass the floor to our first presenter.

Simon, you have the floor for the next five minutes.

[*Translation*]

Prof. Simon Lapierre (Full Professor, University of Ottawa, As an Individual): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you for the invitation.

To begin, I would like to say that we have seen a lot of progress in recent years when it comes to violence against women and spousal violence. In the circumstances of the pandemic, in particular, some of our work has shown that feminist organizations, especially, have been very innovative in making sure that the needs of women and children experiencing spousal violence are met.

We have also seen that in Quebec, following publication of the report entitled "Rebâtir la confiance", a bundle of measures was put in place to provide better support for victims of spousal violence and sexual assault.

Nonetheless, our work shows that there are still gaps in how spousal violence is being addressed. Some of those gaps can be seen in the inconsistent treatment of spousal violence in various fields—that is, criminal law, family law and youth protection. This situation creates numerous difficulties and barriers for families, who must often navigate these various fields simultaneously.

I would like to draw your attention to one particular persistent gap in how spousal violence is handled, that becomes apparent especially when spouses or parents are separated: the confusion that often arises between spousal violence and separation-related disputes. Our various studies have shown that in the various fields I referred to, situations involving spousal violence are unfortunately often interpreted as severe separation-related disputes. That presents a problem in that when a spousal violence situation is interpreted as a separation-related dispute, an appropriate assessment of the violence and the consequences of the violence is not done. There is also a risk that the dangerousness of violent individuals and the risks of homicide will not be properly assessed.

As well, a report recently published by the committee examining deaths related to spousal violence in Quebec shows that some situations in which children were killed in a spousal violence situation were unfortunately misinterpreted as being severe separation-related disputes, with the result that the various actors underestimated the risks associated with the homicides. In situations of that nature, the individuals who had committed spousal violence were not dealt with properly and were not referred to the right resources that would have enabled them to acknowledge their responsibility for their violent behaviour. What is also extremely problematic in situations of this nature is that when women victims of spousal violence do everything they can to try to keep their children safe, they are often perceived as hostile individuals who are fuelling the conflict or even causing parental alienation.

I really want to stress the fact that in recent years, through our work, we have observed growing use of the concept of parental alienation against women victims of spousal violence. This use of pseudoscience poses a serious problem in that it punishes women and children and often puts them in a situation where they are unable to report violent behaviour on the part of the spouse or father.

When it comes to the possible solutions I would like to propose, I think, first, that it is important to have a comprehensive strategy or action plan that would ensure greater consistency between the various systems or fields I referred to earlier.

It is also important to strengthen the concept of coercive control. It has already been adopted in the Divorce Act, but it should be incorporated into the Criminal Code too. This would mean criminalizing coercive control, as other countries have done. In addition, there should be a consistent understanding of spousal violence, in particular when it comes to youth protection services, across Canada.

On the question of coercive control, it is also important to understand clearly that this form of violence generally continues after separation and that special risks arise in that situation. It is also important to clearly recognize children as co-victims of spousal violence and coercive control.

Obviously, it is important that legislation and policy recognize this form of violence, but that is not sufficient. The concept of coercive control absolutely must be accompanied by training programs for all actors in the various fields, including social workers, lawyers, and all judges involved in these situations. In my opinion, the training should deal with spousal violence and coercive control, but it would also be beneficial to provide better training for all of

the actors on the subject of children's rights, including their right to protection, but also their right to participate in decision-making processes.

• (1545)

I also think it is important to have mechanisms available for co-operation or specialization. Quebec has recently instituted specialized courts for spousal violence and sexual assault cases. That is a promising avenue, and we really need to have mechanisms like that.

As a final point, there should also be high quality, accredited programs for violent spouses, but, and most importantly, we must absolutely support the feminist movement and feminist organizations, because research has shown that they are the ones who bring about change when it comes to violence against women and spousal violence.

Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you so much.

For the next five minutes, I will pass it over to Sakeenah Homes and Mashooda-Lubna Syed.

Mashooda-Lubna, you have the floor for five minutes.

Ms. Mashooda-Lubna Syed (Government and Community Relations, Sakeenah Homes): Thank you so much, Chair.

Good afternoon, everyone.

First of all, thank you so much for inviting Sakeenah Homes to come and participate in the status of women committee.

My name is Mashooda-Lubna Syed, and I am here today representing Sakeenah Homes.

Just to give you a bit of background, Sakeenah Homes was established in 2018. We are a registered charity in accordance with the CRA regulations. Sakeenah Homes provides essential support and services to those facing violence, homelessness or poverty. We empower them to become healthy, independent and thriving members of our society. All our work is based on cultural, racial and religious sensitivity. Our primary clientele is mainly Muslim women and children, but we do take in non-Muslims as well if we have the space.

Since our inception in 2018, we have served 30 cities across Canada and we have helped 9,230 clients. Since the pandemic, the need for our services has tripled. We actually have five locations currently and three more opening this summer. Last year alone, we served 1,326 clients in house and 469 remotely—that's close to 2,000 people. Since 2018, we have helped 723 clients who were facing domestic violence cases, and the number has risen in the last year. We provide shelter, food and essentials, legal aid, mental health, education and life skills, employment and reconciliation.

We found that women coming into Sakeenah Homes have unique needs as compared to other communities since a lot of them live in extended family style and therefore they feel that they are controlled not only by their spouses, but also by their in-laws. They face different types of abuse. Due to social and religious constraints, they are scared to report any type of abuse. They are scared of being isolated by the families or the community. They also think they will be deported if they report these cases.

They face spousal dependency, as most of them have either low or no literacy at all. Most of them have low or no life skills at all, no knowledge of budgeting, and so on. We found that a lot of them were forced into marriages where their parents hoped their child would have a better life and that's why they were married off. Language barriers are another problem they face, as well as fear of deportation. They usually have access to no funds at all when they arrive at Sakeenah Homes, so we help them with that as well.

I would like to tell you a real story to help you better understand how we help women. I will be using a different name in order to protect our client.

Our client is Maha. She was a very young 26-year-old who was married off in Afghanistan to a young man who went from Canada to marry her, so she came here. She was in a very devastated state when we first received a call from a distant relative of hers who desperately wanted to help her. She came to Sakeenah Homes in tears and was very emotional. We hugged her and tried to comfort her as much as we could. After a few days, once she felt comfortable in Sakeenah Homes, she started to open up about how she was tortured by her husband, and because of her culture, she could not say a single word to anyone, not even to her parents.

Maha was a graduate of an Afghani university. Her parents had her married in hopes that she would have a better life in Canada. Little did they know that she would become a prisoner in her own home. She was not allowed to go anywhere at all or talk to anyone. Her husband kept all her IDs—her passport, SIN number and health card. Everything was with him. He would take her out once a week just to pick up groceries. If she asked for anything, she would be physically abused. She spoke to her parents always in front of her husband. She had no access to any telephone.

● (1550)

One day, a relative decided to visit the new couple and noticed that Maha looked quite weak and distraught. This relative sensed that something was not right, so he started visiting them regularly. Soon, her husband was quite comfortable with this couple visiting them.

Maha opened up. She was very scared. They made a plan and, finally, her friend came with the police one day and helped her leave. That's how she ended up. Now, today, she's going to school. She's working full time in a restaurant. We're very happy for her. We're very proud of her.

I would like to recommend that shelters like Sakeenah Homes are needed to help women. We need more funding for these types of centres.

I would like to end with a quote from Malala Yousafzai:

I raise up my voice—not so that I can shout, but so that those without a voice can be heard. We cannot all succeed when half of us are held back.

Thank you.

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Alexie Labelle): Thank you.

Ms. Vecchio appears to be gone.

Would a vice-chair like to step in?

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

Ms. MacGregor, you can go next.

Ms. Nneka MacGregor (Executive Director, Women's Centre for Social Justice): Thank you so very much. Thank you for inviting me today.

I want to start by acknowledging that I'm coming to you from Tkaronto, from stolen lands belonging to the indigenous peoples of this nation including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Haudenosaunee, the Anishinabe, the Chippewa and the Wendat peoples, and which have been home for many first nations.

My call here, as I stand in solidarity with indigenous women and with the Native Women's Association of Canada, is to call on the governments to implement the 231 calls for justice from the missing and murdered indigenous women and girls national inquiry and to end the ongoing genocide against first peoples.

My name is Nneka MacGregor. I'm the co-founder and executive director of the Women's Centre for Social Justice. We're better known as WomenattheCentre.

In preparing for my submission today, I consulted with several members of my organization, which, as you may know, is a very unique non-profit developed by and for women, trans and gender diverse survivors of all forms of gender-based violence. We have over 6,000 members globally, the majority of whom are in Canada.

Most of us in the membership have experienced violence in the context of an intimate partner relationship. We all engage in social justice, advocacy and activism as a way to create meaning from our trauma. We use our lived experience to conduct research, raise awareness, facilitate training, and develop strategies, policies and programs that are all aimed at preventing future violence against others and at creating better outcomes for those who are currently navigating it.

I also relied on the feedback reports that we provided to the Department for Women and Gender Equality last year as part of our input on the national action plan to end gender-based violence in Canada. From all my consultations, one clear message was echoed over and over, and that's the message that I'm bringing to the standing committee today.

That message is simple. It is that tinkering with the current system thinking that it will lead to the kinds of transformative outcomes we all seek is a futile exercise. The time for tinkering is over. Now is the time for the kinds of bold and courageous actions we, as an organization, have been taking on this issue for almost two decades. Our members have, therefore, tasked me to invite you in to join us on this courageous journey.

I am a survivor of attempted intimate partner femicide. I cannot stress enough the urgency to get this right and to get it right, right now. As we sit here today, I can guarantee you that somewhere in this country in a neighbourhood near you, a woman is in real danger of having her life, her joy and her future taken away from her, leaving behind grieving children, siblings, parents, friends, colleagues and a community to mourn and ask why. How could this happen? What did we not do? What can we do to make sure it doesn't happen again?

In my role as a member of the Ontario Domestic Violence Death Review Committee as well as an expert panel member of the Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability, I get to see that end of the spectrum where intimate partner violence has not been disrupted and has led to tragic and preventable outcomes.

In my everyday role as executive director, I see the other stages on the violence continuum from survivors' experiences in physical violence, coercive control and harassment—not just from an abusive partner, but from abusive systems. These are systems that we are led to believe are there as mechanisms for accountability and justice, but which in reality are as skilled and abusive as the abusive partners that we have left behind.

The question that I have taken to asking participants in all my public speaking, training and presentations is a simple one and I'm asking all of you here today: If you had the power to create a system of prevention, intervention, support, healing, accountability and safety, would you replicate the current systems that we have or would you do things differently? What does different look like? What is the cost of doing it differently, both financially and personally?

This is something I call disrupting and reconstructing the status quo.

The systems we are currently working under are thoroughly ill-equipped to address intimate partner violence. We know this based on staggering examples that we have gathered from coast to coast to coast across this country of everyday experiences from everyday women who have experienced diverse experiences of gender-based violence and intimate partner violence. These systems are not sites of healing, justice, change or safety, but instead are there to suppress and oppress.

We are calling for alternative models of justice and engagement that are based on transformative accountability. They are based not on white supremacy, misogyny and misogynoir, but disrupt this and find ways that are transformative to counter the culture of violence against women and against children. They rely on the types of work that we have done, including our court watch and our work on strangulation and traumatic brain injury.

• (1555)

I'm asking all of you today to support us and to support survivors as we work to end gender-based violence and intimate partner violence.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I would like to apologize to the committee for my absence.

Thank you Sonia, for stepping in as chair.

We're now going to go on to our first round of questions. We will be providing six minutes to each party.

To begin, we will start with Dominique Vien. You have six minutes.

• (1600)

[*Translation*]

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

I would like to thank the witnesses for sharing their thoughts with us this afternoon.

Hello, Mr. Lapierre. Welcome to our committee.

After I heard your testimony, several questions came to mind.

First, I would like to talk about an article that appeared yesterday in *La Presse*, which I sent to my colleagues. It talks precisely about the confusion there may be between spousal violence and separation-related disputes. According to that article, this concept is becoming increasingly well defined. More and more, judges are becoming better able to recognize this concept. Tell me if I am mistaken, Mr. Lapierre, but the article suggests that we are seeing more interest being taken in this subject and greater recognition that spousal violence can be part of the resolution in divorce cases.

The committee's current study addresses the barriers that prevent women from leaving violent situations. It says here that judges are considering the facts that have happened, recognizing situations where there is violence, believing women's testimony, and awarding them additional financial support, which may be a determining factor in a woman's decision to leave a violent situation. This all seems to be a new development. I would like you to offer some further explanation of this aspect, which is extremely interesting.

First, am I right in this? Did I read it correctly? Have I understood you correctly? Are judges being trained properly? I would like to know where the situation stands.

Prof. Simon Lapierre: Thank you for the question.

In fact, I have been working on the subject of spousal violence for several years, and, in my opinion, if there is one important issue at this time in how spousal violence is addressed, it is the confusion that exists between spousal violence and separation-related disputes, when the couple or parents are separated.

Have we seen progress? There may have been some progress, but it has been very timid, in my opinion. Certainly, the recent amendments to the Divorce Act do offer some interesting avenues to explore. Under the Divorce Act, the judges who apply it should ordinarily give greater consideration to spousal violence, but that remains to be seen. We don't have a very good idea of how it is actually being applied on the ground. Nonetheless, the Divorce Act does now contain a duty to do this.

However, we are very well aware that there is still a lot of confusion in various fields. Within the criminal justice system, for example, there is still data that shows a degree of confusion when police are involved in spousal violence situations, particularly if there has been no crime or assault. Often, they will interpret situations like these as arguments between a couple, and they close the file and that is where their involvement ends. This may be attributable to the fact that the police do not have the statutory tools at present to go any further. But still, there is confusion and poor comprehension of spousal violence. We have to make sure that the various actors in the criminal justice system have a better understanding and that we give them the tools to be able to do their job better.

As well, there are still a lot of gaps in the fields of family law and youth protection. That confusion is still an extremely important problem, in applying the Civil Code, in Quebec, or when youth protection services are involved.

This problem is still important, and I would say there are several reasons for it, in particular because we still have an understanding of spousal violence that is largely based on incidents. Spousal violence is often seen as associated only with physical violence.

Mrs. Dominique Vien: With violence that is visible.

Prof. Simon Lapierre: Exactly.

The subject of coercive control, or controlling and coercive conduct, is an interesting avenue for gaining a better understanding of all the complexity and diversity of the dynamics of spousal violence. However, that concept has to go beyond the Divorce Act and be applied uniformly in all the various fields. It must go hand in hand with more training, because, at present, the various actors are unfortunately not sufficiently well trained.

Mrs. Dominique Vien: Mr. Lapierre, I'm sure I don't have much time left, but I would have liked to hear your comments on the entire subject of violence between young partners, as well. I'm talking about adolescents. I don't know whether you have looked into that subject, but it is one that is of concern to our committee. Violence starts somewhere. Young persons and children see violence around them, often they experience it, and that will have repercussions on their relationships. These behaviours are repeated and lead to more violence.

Have you looked into that subject, involving young people?

• (1605)

Prof. Simon Lapierre: I have looked into it a little. What we know is that yes, violence is present in couple relationships and intimate relationships in adolescence, so it is important to work at earlier points. We have to work on prevention, even with the youngest ones.

However, what we know about violence in romantic relationships among young people is that often, that violence does not correspond to the traditional model of spousal violence where we see a man or a boy who is physically violent against a female partner who is relatively passive and will have physical marks. The violence takes different forms. There may be younger victims who react more and resist. Again, that may adversely affect the way some people understand these situations, because the aggressor and the victim will not necessarily correspond to the picture they have of spousal violence.

We have to ensure better understanding and offer training so that people understand the dynamics of spousal violence when it is expressed more by control and deprivation of freedom than by assault or physical violence. That could provide better tools for the actors who are called on to intervene with this population.

Mrs. Dominique Vien: Mr. Lapierre, you spoke about feminist groups who are doing useful work, and that is sure and certain...

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much. I'm afraid I have to cut you off. I'm sorry about that, but maybe we'll get another chance.

I'm going to now pass it over for the next six minutes to Jenna Sudds.

Mrs. Jenna Sudds (Kanata—Carleton, Lib.): Thank you so much to all of the witnesses for being with us today and the great testimony you have provided so far.

I will start with Ms. MacGregor.

It's great to see you again. We were at the Invest Ottawa power event yesterday, and you did a fabulous job in your presentation there, as well.

One of your comments struck me, and that was with respect to taking bold and courageous action and disrupting the status quo if we'd like to see transformative change. I know you have some very impactful programs under way through your organization, and one of them in particular, Fresh Breath, has caught my attention.

I would love for you to share some of the discoveries you've made through that program and that work.

Ms. Nneka MacGregor: The Fresh Breath research that we conducted in 2012 and 2013 is still the only Canadian-context work examining the experiences of women-identified survivors of non-fatal strangulation in the context of an intimate partner relationship. That work focuses on how dangerous the physical violence associated with being strangled is, and the short, medium, and long-term health impacts of such violence. From that work, we partnered with researchers from the University of Toronto, Angela Colantonio and Lin Haag. Lin was also at yesterday's panels.

We are now looking at traumatic brain injury in the context of intimate partner violence. Again, something we know is that the numbers of women who have experienced hits to the head, face, and neck that lead to possible traumatic brain injuries are equivalent to the numbers of women, in the Canadian context, who have breast cancer.

The amount of research and the amount of public awareness and education provided on that type of strangulation and head trauma are inconsequential, whereas the impacts on the women who have experienced it are life altering. It impacts their ability to work and function, and it also adversely impacts their ability to navigate the system we're talking about, especially in the context of family court and trying to fight for custody of their children. The way they are seen is that they are somehow unfit, not recognizing the fact that the health impacts are caused by the physical assault from the partner.

Mrs. Jenna Sudds: That's incredible.

Building on this research and the program on the survivors being able to conceptualize or contextualize what they've been through and the impact on their lives moving forward, I imagine is quite impactful.

Can you speak to what you're seeing there?

• (1610)

Ms. Nneka MacGregor: It is devastatingly impactful, because survivors oftentimes don't even recognize they are suffering from a traumatic brain injury, so they blame themselves, number one. They can't connect why they used to function in a usual manner and, all of a sudden, they are not.

One of the most significant risks is that strangulation and traumatic brain injury are cumulative. We found that the women are not strangled once, but multiple times. We know that the more you are strangled, the more harmful the resulting impact.

Women are living in a sort of a daze, not recognizing the dangers they face at the hands of their partners—oftentimes these injuries are literally inflicted by the hands—these men who are abusing them, who literally have the women's lives in their hands when they're being strangled.

The women are unaware of the consequences, so not having an opportunity to train and to raise awareness, not having funding to continue to do the research and again, to raise awareness, is one of the reasons we believe so strongly that there needs to be a lot more light shone on the impacts of traumatic brain injury from strangulation, not just to educate women survivors themselves, but to educate frontline service providers, judges, lawyers, politicians and everybody about the short, mid and long-term impacts of this form of violence.

Mrs. Jenna Sudds: Tell me, how do you do that? Through your research, obviously, you're gathering data. How is that being leveraged or how can it be leveraged to amplify this issue?

Ms. Nneka MacGregor: First of all, we are sort of constrained by lack of funding for the research, but what we have been able to do is to capitalize—I hate the word—on our community networks and share the findings amongst our networks so that they can then go and share those amongst their own particular networks, so it's sort of a report effect.

I think, when you ask how it can be done, it's through education, it's through funding and raising awareness and providing research and education that then informs the whole community.

The Chair: Thank you so much.

We're now going to pass it over to Andréanne Larouche.

Andréanne, you have six minutes.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to thank Mr. Lapierre, Ms. Syed and Ms. MacGregor for testifying before the committee today on the important subject of intimate partner violence.

My first question is for Mr. Lapierre.

Several times during your presentation, you stressed the importance of considering children living in these situations and recognizing the harm caused to them by coercive and controlling conduct, even when they are not direct victims. This is a point that you also emphasize in your work.

Can you tell us more about the repercussions of controlling and coercive conduct on children, even when they are not direct victims?

Prof. Simon Lapierre: Thank you for the question.

In the last few years, research concerning children who live in a spousal violence situation has evolved considerably, whereas not so long ago, we thought that this violence only affected the adults. Then we talked about child witnesses.

At present, the research and work on coercive control tend to show that spousal violence is not an act that lasts an instant, or a series of acts that last an instant; rather, it is a dynamic of control and deprivation of freedom that is used on an everyday basis applying varying violent and non-violent strategies. Once we have that understanding of spousal violence, it is easy to understand that in a situation where varying non-violent and violent strategies are used on an everyday basis to control their mother or deprive her of freedom, children live in an atmosphere of tension, fear and terror every day.

There is a phenomenon that we are increasingly seeing on the part of violent men who use varying control and domination strategies against women and impose rules that the others must obey, on an everyday basis: often, these men will demand the same things of the children and take the same attitude toward them. As a result, children who are living in a spousal violence situation are very often targets or direct victims of the husband's controlling and violent behaviours.

As well, we are increasingly recognizing that a child living in a spousal violence situation, whether or not the child is present during violent incidents, and whether or not the child is a direct victim of the violence, is living in an atmosphere of tension in which meeting the child's needs is not a priority. Generally, the father's violence and control strategies, and the repercussions of those behaviours for the mother and for the functioning of the whole family, cause a decline in meeting the child's needs.

We really need a better understanding of these children's lives and we have to take that into account in our laws and our policies.

• (1615)

Ms. Andr anne Larouche: Ultimately, the consequences for the children that were thought to be indirect are, in fact, direct consequences. It is really the entire family environment that is toxic.

You have opened the door to the subject of legislation. I would like to hear your thoughts on the need to criminalize coercive control.

You can even answer by drawing on what is being done elsewhere. I know you are interested in what is being done outside Canada and the results of criminalization in the countries that have enacted that legislation.

Prof. Simon Lapierre: At this point, when we try to make rules or criminalize certain incidents that occur in spousal violence situations, the children are relatively invisible. Getting a better understanding of spousal violence and criminalizing coercive control would make it possible to protect women better, but also to see children more clearly as co-victims of this violence, and implement measures that will protect them better.

For example, Scotland recently made coercive control a crime, and the courts there must take the presence of children into consideration from the outset. In a coercive control situation, it is immediately recognized as an aggravating factor.

I think we could even go further and recognize children as victims or co-victims of that violence. It is really important not to forget them. Children must not be some kind of invisible victims in this whole system. They have to be recognized as victims who are entitled to protection, just as their mother is.

Ms. Andr anne Larouche: Apart from Scotland, is there another model elsewhere that we could draw from in our work? Going to see what is happening elsewhere is also included in the objective of our study.

Prof. Simon Lapierre: In my opinion, the Scottish model, first, and then England and Wales, second, are the two models that show the most potential when it comes to coercive control. Scotland has gone a bit further when it comes to children, so its model shows a bit more potential in terms of the victimization of children in this context.

Ms. Andr anne Larouche: Excellent.

I am going to move on to another aspect of the subject, that we could talk more about in my second round. In your work and your writing, you mention the importance of coercive control even after separation, that is, when the aggressor continues to exercise control over the woman after they separate.

Could you tell us more about that? If you don't have enough time, we can come back to it later.

Prof. Simon Lapierre: When we look at coercive control as a behavioural pattern in which various violent and non-violent strategies are used to deprive the victim of her freedom, the research increasingly shows us that when a man adopts this pattern of behaviour when he is in a couple relationship with a woman, it is generally not going to stop when they separate. This behavioural pattern will sometimes change or be expressed differently, but it will generally continue during the separation process and after the separation.

Not only will it not stop when they separate, but we are well aware that the period surrounding the separation and the period following the separation present particular problems. In fact, that is the period when women and children are at highest risk of being victims of serious violence or even of being killed by a spouse whose behaviour is violent and controlling. Spousal violence absolutely has to be understood in this context.

Second, policy has to be based on this. As I said earlier, there are inconsistencies among the systems. For example, a man may be convicted in criminal court of assault or forcible confinement, but after the separation, when the woman has to deal with custody or access issues, or with a report to youth protection, the situation will be perceived at the outset as a severe separation-related dispute. The people involved, the lawyers and judges, will say that given that the parents are separated, we should no longer be talking about spousal violence.

We really have to understand spousal violence in a longitudinal context and understand that it continues after separation.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you so much.

We're now going to pass it over to Leah Gazan.

Leah, you have six minutes.

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Thank you so much to all of the witnesses for presenting today.

My first questions are for Madam MacGregor.

I want to start by thanking you for your story. It's hard to share stories and, as you know, stories are powerful.

I also want to thank you for your solidarity with indigenous women, particularly around murdered and missing indigenous women and girls. I share your urgency.

I share your urgency and frustration. I share your urgency because we have known about this for a long time. We had a national inquiry in 2015 and we're still waiting on real action.

I wanted to ask you how this approach to incremental justice continues to cost lives. For example, in my riding and in many ridings across the country we have seen rates of violence go up 400% in some areas, and we still don't see action. People continue to go missing and to be murdered.

You shared your own stories. I want you to share about the dangers of incremental justice for women and 2SLGBTQIA and about constantly having to be thankful for crumbs when our lives are on the line.

Thank you.

• (1620)

Ms. Nneka MacGregor: I'm so glad you raised this and that my anger and my frustration are coming through even though I'm not with you in person. My anger and my frustration, as I said, are borne out of my lived experience. On Mother's Day 2003, I thought I was going to die. I thought I was going to die in front of my three children. I talk about the negotiations, the promises I was making to the goddesses that if my life were saved, I would do everything I could to make it different. I have two daughters and a son, and I don't want the future they live to be a reflection of our past. The whole nonsense, the whole notion that we can make these changes piece by piece, is what is costing lives, and it is as dangerous as the violence of these violent men. The system is so lackadaisical and so complacent and it is playing with the lives of other people. The reality is that as lawmakers, police officers and individuals are sitting by and thinking that it won't impact them, we know that this violence will hit anybody, everybody. No woman is safe.

We have to understand Dr. Kimberlé Crenshaw's intersectionality that whilst no woman is safe, some women are less safe than others. Black women, indigenous women, racialized women, trans women—these communities are suffering and are dying at a high rate whilst other people look on. When the murders happen, I am tired of the “What should we have done? What could we have done?” “There is so much that could be done. There is so much.

Ms. Leah Gazan: I'm sorry. We have limited time and I want to hone in on a point you are making. When you do choose to leave, there is nowhere to go. It's so hard to leave. How does that impact and cost lives? You've share a very powerful story. It's really hit me. How does that cost lives when it takes everything in your spirit to leave and there's nowhere to go?

Ms. Nneka MacGregor: That's what I mean when I say that the systems we have in place are woefully inadequate, because we tell women to leave, but where are they going to go in the dead of night with young children in tow? Housing is not available. Affordable housing is not available. Domestic violence pushes women into poverty. Domestic violence is a health risk. We cannot think about tinkering. We cannot think about doing things piecemeal. We cannot think about putting a bandaid over a cancerous sore. It won't work. We need to be bold. We need to be courageous, and we need to remove ourselves from these current systems that were not created for us, or by us. They were created by men.

I talk about white supremacy. It was created to benefit white men and, by extension, white women. Black women and indigenous women—we are on the margins. We are the ones who are dying at unacceptable rates. If people are not outraged, they're not paying attention. If people are not ready to do something differently they will suffer the consequences because this violence will hit home. It will touch them. The time for tinkering is over. We need to be courageous and we need to do things differently.

• (1625)

Ms. Leah Gazan: I have only a couple of seconds left.

The Chair: Literally you're at zero.

Ms. Leah Gazan: I could go on for hours.

Thank you so much.

Thank you for your powerful testimony.

The Chair: You'll get a couple of seconds coming up. We're going to start with our second round. We'll be reducing some time.

Shelby and Emmanuella, you have four minutes.

Andréanne and Leah, you have two minutes.

We're going to start our first four minutes with Shelby.

Shelby, go ahead, please.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Thank you.

My first question is for Nneka MacGregor, executive director.

Ms. Nneka MacGregor: That's me.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: No, I mean Ms. Mashooda.

First of all maybe I'll just backtrack a little bit. All of the presentations today were quite disturbing, real and raw, and I'm so grateful that you shared the story of the young woman. I was raised a little bit differently and haven't been exposed to a lot of this. This is a huge eye-opener for me and all the more reason that we can't sit back. With regard to the comment earlier from another witness about tinkering, we need to stop just being okay with how it is, and we need to move forward.

My first question is with regard to shelters. How many people are not able to access shelters? Do you have an equal number of shelters for men as for women?

Ms. Mashooda-Lubna Syed: Can you hear me?

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: I sure can.

Ms. Mashooda-Lubna Syed: I live in Ottawa, and I think there is an equal amount. There are lots of shelters available. The problem is that they're all full, even our shelters. I'll give you an example. In the Ottawa one, we house 20 women and children. We always have a wait list. We've been full since we opened about a year and a half ago.

We need more places and maybe we need more funding. Like somebody was saying earlier, if the woman decides she's going to leave now, where does she go? She has no place to go. All of the shelters are full.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: Do we have survivors who are brave enough to speak potentially to people who are seeking...?

Ms. Mashooda-Lubna Syed: Yes.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: And for younger people, how do they feel comfortable or how do they know that it's time to leave when there's so much fear there? That's the question.

Ms. Mashooda-Lubna Syed: Exactly.

A lot of the young girls we get they face a different type of abuse. They say they not only face domestic violence, but a lot of them face financial abuse as well. They're being forced to work and provide for their family, and that's the reason they chose to leave.

What we started doing is working with clients remotely because there are so many people who need help and all the shelters are full. What we do is this. The city will place the client in a hotel or motel and then we can provide them with all of the same services remotely.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: Thank you.

My last question is for Simon, and I'm going to try it in French.

[Translation]

You said that feminist groups were very important when it comes to improving the situation. What can you say about groups that deal with violent men? Are there enough of them?

Prof. Simon Lapierre: That's a good question.

When you compare the different countries, you see that feminist groups are definitely the most important element. The countries that have made the most progress in solving the problem of violence against women and spousal violence are the ones where feminist groups are the most vibrant and the strongest. So this is very important.

In my testimony, I alluded briefly to groups for men. At present, this is very uneven across Canada. It would be a good idea to have more, but the important thing is to make sure that the groups working with men offer high quality programs that are consistent everywhere in Canada and are aligned with the values of the feminist movement.

As well, it would be a good idea to adopt a process for accrediting these groups, so that when a man is referred to one of these groups, we know for sure that he will have access to a high quality program that focuses on taking responsibility.

• (1630)

[English]

The Chair: Thank you so much.

We're now going to move for next four minutes to Emmanuella.

Emmanuella, you have the floor.

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

I'd like to begin by thanking all of our witnesses for their amazing testimony. I had to shut off my camera so that you wouldn't see my face because it was not pretty when I was listening to some of the testimony. This is not easy for any of us, I'm sure, but sometimes a lot of these conversations hit home.

Ms. MacGregor and Monsieur Lapierre, my main questions will be for you. I'm going to ask one question because I only have a couple of minutes.

You both speak about what is lacking in the system currently for supporting women.

[Translation]

Because of these gaps, women have trouble finding the help they need. As well, the system runs counter to the interests of young children who find themselves in a family violence situation.

[English]

Ms. MacGregor, you speak about needing a bold shift, a bold change. I'd like to hear from you specifically what you're referring to when you say this. I know that organizations and funding organizations are really trying to do their best to do that part because we know that's where everybody goes to get that first help.

What else needs to shift? What laws need to be strengthened? What needs to be admissible in court, for example, in order to change the situation so that women are empowered, and not the opposite?

[Translation]

Mr. Lapierre, you can answer first, if you like.

Prof. Simon Lapierre: Personally, I think we have to prioritize both things.

First, action needs to be taken on coercive control. I'm talking about criminalizing coercive control, but we also need a clear definition of coercive control, one that could really be integrated into the various fields I referred to.

Second, I come back to the importance of supporting the feminist movement properly. The worthwhile innovations we have seen in recent years are the ones that came out of the women's movement, the ones made by and for women. The government has a role to play by continuing and increasing its support for an autonomous feminist movement that is able to innovate, taking into account local circumstances as well as national circumstances.

I have personally worked for two years with the Fédération des maisons d'hébergement pour femmes in Quebec. We have seen shelters saying enough is enough. Youth protection workers have to be better trained. In that regard, an intervention model has been designed that is currently being implemented in various regions.

What we see is that the worthwhile initiatives often come from the base—from feminist organizations. We have to not just continue supporting them, but provide even more support for them and recognize their expertise and leadership in this field.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Thank you very much, Mr. Lapierre.

[English]

Ms. MacGregor, you don't have much time, but in one minute, what are the big bold changes that you would suggest?

Ms. Nneka MacGregor: Thank you so much.

I just want to say that whilst I respect Monsieur Lapierre's comments on coercive control, I fundamentally and radically disagree with him. I don't believe that coercive control should be criminalized. I think that if the system is not nuanced enough to even understand physical violence—it can see broken arms and broken limbs—how can it understand the nuances of coercive control?

I think the criminalization of this process of violence is only going to harm certain communities, and I'm talking again about how women are going to be the ones who are going to be criminalized. Women are going to be the ones who are going to be arrested. Women, especially black and indigenous women, are going to be the ones at the receiving end of the criminal legal system's "one size fits all".

For me, the one bold thing that can be done is to adopt transformative justice—transformative accountability, which is about community accountability. That form of transformative justice actually supports both the individuals who have caused harm and the individuals who have been harmed and does it in a way that does not penalize, does not shame and does not throw people away. It is a way of showing love and bringing people back into their humanity and leading with empathy. That's one shift that I would suggest. It's to move away from the criminal penalization and into transformative justice and accountability.

• (1635)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We're now going to move it over to Andréanne for two minutes.

Andréanne, you have the floor.

[Translation]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: I would like to thank the witnesses again for their sometimes very poignant testimony.

For the two minutes I have, I would like to address Mr. Lapierre.

Mr. Lapierre, you opened the door on the subject of the distinctive nature of Quebec and the initiatives recently taken by the government of Quebec to help combat spousal violence, including the creation of a committee and publication of a report. As well, tracking bracelets have started to be used and specialized sexual violence and spousal violence courts have been established.

Do you think these legislative and judicial measures are effective and necessary? Should the federal government follow Quebec's lead and move in this direction? If so, could you suggest a few options?

Prof. Simon Lapierre: What we have seen happen in Quebec in recent years is extremely interesting. I was on the committee whose work led to the "Rebâtir la confiance" report, and I am personally quite impressed to see the extent to which the government has implemented many of the recommendations that came out of that report.

I think that the specialized courts are particularly worth looking at. Having the judicial system better aligned with psychosocial services seems to me to be very important. Above all, we have to understand that even if a lot of measures are put in place, many of them will unfortunately not achieve their full potential if they are

not accompanied by adequate training for all actors in the system, including social workers, police, lawyers and judges. Training is extremely important and should be extended across Canada.

I would therefore really emphasize training, but also other measures such as specialized courts, along with access to information and legal advice for victims free of charge. Many measures worth considering have been put in place in Quebec. They still need to be evaluated, but they are certainly very promising.

[English]

The Chair: Excellent. Thank you so much.

Finally, for our last round of questions, I'm going to pass it over to Leah Gazan.

Leah, you have two minutes.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Thank you so much. I just want to go back to Madame MacGregor.

You mentioned that when you finally leave, you have nowhere to go, and then when you find a place to go to, that place is totally ineffective for Black, indigenous, people of colour, with systems that were built by Caucasian males and not for the benefit for BIPOC, women and people with diverse genders.

How is perpetuating that system another form of targeted violence towards Black, indigenous and people of colour who are going into those systems? How is it another form of violence?

Ms. Nneka MacGregor: It's not a matter of, how is it? It is, why is it? It is the fact that it is, right? It is by design.

That's why we are constantly at the receiving end, because not only does anti-Black and anti-indigenous racism play a part, it's embedded in these systems. Because it's embedded in these systems, the solutions that are currently—and I use the word "solutions" lightly—manifest are designed not to benefit....

Whilst again, I respect frontline workers, my work is founded on the lived experiences of survivors who are fleeing and looking for safety.

What we know is that the systems that are in place, specialized domestic violence courts, are not specialized at all. They don't work. We've been conducting court watches of these specialized courts in Ontario for the past twelve years, and we have found that these specialized domestic violence courts don't work.

Shelters that are created are not the solution. I understand that it's in the short term and the immediate.... What is needed is proper safe housing, affordable housing, for people to go to when they leave. What is needed is child care. What is needed are the wages that women earn to be increased.

These are systemic changes that need to be made, because everything else—and I keep talking about it—is tinkering on the surface, and the people who are suffering are Black women, indigenous women, transwomen and BIPOC people, as you said.

• (1640)

The Chair: Thank you so much.

Thank you to everybody for the testimony today. As Emmanuella mentioned, it was very strong testimony. Thank you so much for coming out.

[*Translation*]

I'm going to suspend the meeting for a few minutes.

[*English*]

I will ask the witnesses to leave the meeting.

Our clerk will be welcoming our new set of panellists, so we'll suspend for just a few seconds.

Thank you to all.

• (1640) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1640)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: We'll resume the meeting.

[*English*]

Thank you so much to all the panellists for joining us.

[*Translation*]

I want to welcome them.

[*English*]

For our second panel, I would like to welcome, from the Ojjiita Pimatiswin Kinamatawin, Mr. Bourbonniere. Mitch is the outreach worker. From the YWCA of Peterborough Haliburton, we have Kim Dolan, the executive director. As an individual today, we have Lisa Crawford, the chief executive officer for Crawford Master Stylists. From Fort Saskatchewan Families First Society, we have Jodi Heidinger, the coordinator of the family violence prevention program.

We'll be providing each panellist with five minutes.

Lisa and Jodi, you will be combining your five minutes.

At about one minute, I'll give you a sign to let you know that you have about one minute left, and then I'll start asking you to wrap it up with about 10 seconds left to go.

Mitch, I'm going to pass the floor over to you first. You have five minutes.

Mr. Mitch Bourbonniere (Outreach Worker, Ojjiita Pimatiswin Kinamatawin): Thank you very much.

It is a great honour to be on this panel. I was able to view the earlier testimony and I'm very moved and emotional.

I'm an outreach worker for Ojjiita Pimatiswin Kinamatawin, or OPK Manitoba.

OPK works with and provides wraparound support for indigenous men primarily, but also those who identify as male from any background. Many of the men I work with have spent a considerable amount of time on the street and/or in prison. Both environments exhibit an intense culture of toxic masculinity. This includes presenting as physically dominant, using power and control, and

getting your own needs met at the expense of others. This comes from the historical background in our society where boys are taught not to cry, not to show their emotions or ask for help or tell others how they feel, and certainly not to express love for others.

Most of the men I work with were raised as little boys in homes that were fraught with domestic violence. As little boys they were horrified when their mothers were traumatized. They wanted to protect their mother, but felt too small and powerless and were frozen in fear. Unfortunately, as they witnessed this again and again over the years, it became normal. As they reached the teenage years, they began to display the same behaviours as the men they were exposed to.

Men come to me in desperation when they have lost everything. We teach our men they are not to blame for having been taught this toxic masculinity, but are definitely 100% responsible for changing their behaviours. We tell them, you are not responsible for what happened to you, but you are totally responsible for doing something about it.

We run welcoming, open-ended men's groups, where men gather together without judgment. We share a meal, indigenous ceremonies and profound talking circles. We talk about being better fathers, sons, partners, nephews, uncles, etc. We talk about past traumas, substance use and relationships.

These groups welcome everyone, judge no one and often benefit someone. Sessions are extremely organic and natural. We do not subscribe to timelines, PowerPoint, Workbooks or modules or any of that kind of thing. Ultimately, the men heal by being vulnerable and learning from one another. We learn to express ourselves. We learn to ask for help. We learn to show emotions. We learn to cry. We learn to tell others we love them.

Eventually the men embark on giving back to the community in a show of lateral kindness rather than lateral violence. We do safety patrols in neighbourhoods. We help women and children get out of dangerous situations, and we support events that promote the safety and acknowledgement of women, two-spirit and trans people.

On several occasions we've been called upon to sit with an abusive male partner while he watches his family pack up their belongings and leave. We turn to this fellow and tell him, "There's a consequence to your behaviour, and this is it." We let him know that if there's ever a chance for him to get this family back, he will need to make changes. We invite him to our groups. We tell him, we will work with him.

Meegwetch.

• (1645)

The Chair: Thank you so much, Mitch. That's from the....

Mitch, you will have to pronounce this name for me.

Mr. Mitch Bourbonniere: It's Ojjiita. That's the warrior spirit. The warrior spirit in men and women and trans.

The Chair: Thank you so much. I really appreciate your teaching me that today.

I'm now going to move it over to the YWCA and Kim Dolan.

Kim, you have five minutes.

Ms. Kim Dolan (Executive Director, YWCA Peterborough Haliburton): Thank you so much.

I am joining you today from Nogojiwanong, the "place at the end of the rapids" on Treaty 20 Michi Saagig territory.

We are all familiar with the terms "domestic violence", "abusive relationships", "violence against women", "partner abuse" and "intimate violence", and we know the acronyms DV, VAW and IPV. There's power in language. The choices we make to describe a person, an event, a crisis, a disease or a catastrophe anchor images in our individual and collective psyches, and the stories we tell become the foundation of the things we believe.

Thank you for this opportunity to contribute to the work of the standing committee. You have now received more than 58 briefs. You've heard from over 52 witnesses. You have access to StatsCan data. There's a report card on Canada's actions on UN sustainable development goal number five, which is gender equality. There are public resources on federal websites that explain gender-based violence and offer to help those who experience violence.

I can say that I'm a survivor of violence, but what does that tell you about me? I was seven when a strange man exposed himself to me and my cousin, and 10 when roadwork crews began wolf-whistling and calling out sexual invitations. I was 17 when I was surrounded by five drunk, young men on my way home one evening. I was 22 when I married a man who used abusive tactics to control me. I was 30 when I started working in the women's anti-violence sector. I was 38 when I changed my life, and 60 when a man with power slammed a table between us at a public meeting. Throughout my life, I, like many other women in Canada, have been subjected to daily reminders of my fragile safety on the street, in the news, at meetings and in the movies.

Descriptions of physical, sexual, emotional and psychological violence experienced by women—let me rephrase that. Descriptions of violence imposed on women by men, focus on the women, and our response thus far has been to get women away to safety. That's important. We know lots about the victims and not so much about the antagonists and that guy—those guys, who have more physical, financial, and decision-making power. We all know it. We see it in movies, in our families, in our institutions, in corporations and in public office. The continuum of harmful behaviours is long and the harm caused is deep.

Here's what I suggest. I have five or six things. UN sustainable development goal number five, gender equality, is an important stand-alone goal, but it can't function alone. All 17 goals have to work together to ensure that Canada's work is informed by an intersectional gender equity lens if we hope to achieve our goals by 2030.

Words matter. Let's describe the behaviour and the person responsible for causing harm, inflicting gender-based violence or reinforcing gendered assumptions. Stop hiding the protagonist from view. The term "partner", for instance, implies respect, trust and shared goals. I don't use "partner violence", because a partner isn't violent.

We need to achieve optimal health and participation. Canada's work developing and promoting the social determinants of health provides 12 determinants that we can use as a lens or a checklist when developing new policies, programs and data collection. Intersectionality—I know you've heard it before—is a lens that was described by legal scholar, Kimberlé Crenshaw back in 1989. That can be used to surface the systems of oppression that overlap to create distinct barriers for people with multiple identity categories.

We need stronger community-based responses and data collection. The brief that was submitted to the committee in February of this year references two primary data sources for measuring intimate partner violence. Please fund women's organizations to support robust data collection and describe the impact of programs. The Women Speak project is a good example.

We are accustomed to seeing solutions to move women out of violence and to move women away from their homes, but that isn't the answer.

• (1650)

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

I'm now going to pass it over for the next presentation. We have both Lisa and Jodi, so I'll let you share your time.

You have five minutes.

Ms. Lisa Crawford (Chief Executive Officer, Crawford Master Stylists, As an Individual): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Before we get started, I'd like to take the opportunity to acknowledge that we are on Treaty 6 territory, the home of the many first nations people who were here before us.

Thank you so much for inviting me here today; it means the world to me.

I created the SADA fund in 2018. SADA stands for salons against domestic abuse. This fund was created after a client had come in to my establishment to get their hair done, and when I went to remove the cape, I saw physical signs of violence around her throat and impact on the back of her neck. This situation changed my life forever.

I spoke to the Fort Saskatchewan Families First Society about this incident, and they told me that one of the largest barriers is financial support, because I asked how I could help. My salon and two other local salons started a fundraiser through the Fort Saskatchewan Families First violence prevention program. These funds are available to those who are fleeing abuse.

This is very useful, and it works. It's another option for victims who cannot get access to any other source of income or can't get Alberta Works. It is so beneficial also because it is very quick and flexible. The feedback from victims who have received SADA funds is beyond positive and beyond moving. It's paramount.

We need to collectively find a way to grow SADA or something like it and get it all across Canada. The SADA fund survives from donations from members of our community and from donations from my company. With increasing incidents of family violence and IPV from the COVID pandemic, this fund will not be sustained because too many are affected by the shadow pandemic.

This topic has a lot of layers to it, and there are many ways we can help, but I have seen and heard how SADA has given people a second chance. A direct quote from a recipient is, "I went from barely existing to existing again. Thank you."

Once again, we need to find a way to get SADA across Canada.

We're also focusing on our Cut it Out theory, the program that we deliver to salon and spa professionals. This education is crucial for the salon industry to recognize indicators of family violence and know how to deal with their disclosures without putting these victims into further danger.

Everyone agrees that family violence and IPV is a massive issue today. It does not matter what your political party is, what you support or what you do for a career. Everyone agrees that this is a human issue, and it is severe. Unfortunately, we cannot stop it, but we can work together to find some resolution. SADA is a fantastic option, often referred to as a magic wand that many non-profits do not have. Anyone who hears about SADA knows how quickly it has grown, because it truly is rare. Everyone wants to be a part of something amazing, and I believe this is why it has done so well.

• (1655)

Mrs. Jodi Heidinger (Coordinator, Family Violence Prevention Program, Fort Saskatchewan Families First Society): Hello, everyone. Thank you for the invitation to share with you today.

My name is Jodi Heidinger, and I am the coordinator for the family violence prevention program here with Families First in Fort Saskatchewan. We support a small suburban and rural area here in Alberta at Fort Saskatchewan in the Sturgeon County region, and our primary funding comes from the City of Fort Saskatchewan, along with supplementary funding from the United Way. This funding allows us to provide long-term supports that assist individuals with removing the barriers that have been keeping them from transitioning into a life free from abuse. This support includes threat assessment and safety planning, needs assessment, education and outreach, advocacy, court support and referrals.

As a former RCMP officer and now in my current position, I have been working for the last 20 years on the ground with victims and survivors of abuse and collaboratively with community partners to address family violence. I know you all know that family violence is a very complex issue.

Individuals who are looking to leave their abusive relationships face many barriers in doing so. Being trauma informed and walking with clients have given us an opportunity to see just where the chal-

lenges lie. When clients finally feel ready to leave their abusive relationships, they consistently see the barriers that keep them from doing so: access to transitional safe housing, practical and sustainable income, legal supports and long-term mental health supports that are inclusive.

Supports that currently exist and help clients are not always easy to access in a timely manner, and if they do qualify for such supports, there are usually parameters in place on how the funds can be used.

We are extremely grateful for our partnership with SADA. It has improved the way we've been able to support families impacted by violence. It's a tool that we use in parallel with other program supports, and funds are immediate and flexible. This gives us the capacity to provide timely, safe transition for clients in need. That SADA fund allows us to effectively respond to situations requiring our immediate intervention with hope for more time to focus on critical prevention, like working with men and boys in our community to challenge deeply rooted belief systems and our society's acceptance of toxic masculinity. This is the ultimate goal we need if we are to move towards our collective goal of eliminating violence in our communities.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you so much, and also to everyone else for your opening statements.

We're going to our first round of questioning. There will be six minutes for each of our speakers.

I'm going to pass the floor over now to Michelle Ferreri.

Michelle, you have six minutes.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Thank you so much to these witnesses and to all my colleagues today. What a day of intense testimony. Thank you to everybody on the first panel as well.

I want to start with Lisa Crawford.

Lisa, I'm really impressed with the work you've done. I'm fortunate to know you and to be able to know what you've done. It's amazing work.

I'm curious about your thoughts on the prevention end of things. As a federal government, what can we instill to help these women before they have those marks on their neck, before they're sitting in your chair, before they're victims?

• (1700)

Ms. Lisa Crawford: Hi, Michelle. Thank you so much.

It's such a complex issue. Yes, funding helps, but I find that getting Cut it Out education, which is the education that we provide.... It actually came from the United States, in Alabama. Then it got to Western University, and then it came to Alberta.

Jodi and I are certified to train salon professionals in it. The salon industry is a really unique industry. We are touching people. We are in very close contact. I think we all know the situation where somebody tells their barber or their hairstylist everything about their life. We have such a unique position, but we really need to get this Cut it Out education put into our cosmetology curriculum, because, as far as I'm concerned, this is about health and safety.

Through the Cut it Out education, we're also taught that by giving incorrect advice, which is fairly common to us day-to-day citizens in what we think is just a normal conversation, could actually put people in a grave amount of danger. I think that's where we need to start. We need to really focus on education, but then funding. Definitely secondary housing is obviously crucial.

To answer your question, Michelle, before the bruises start, we need education.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: A great answer. I couldn't agree with you more, Lisa. Thank you so much.

I'm going to jump over to Kim.

Kim, thank you so much. I'm proud to have you here today from my riding.

I'm curious, Kim. We saw this week some pretty shocking violence come out of mainstream media at the Oscars. When you look at toxic masculinity and trying to help men recognize signs of poor self-regulation, or how to regulate their emotions, how big of a play do you think that is? Should the federal government be looking into our role in investing in young men?

Ms. Kim Dolan: That's a great question, Michelle.

Isn't that really the crux of the issues that we're talking about? The episode at the Oscars was certainly shocking. The public debate that's opened up is also very interesting.

I think the need for prevention and education can't be underestimated. We know that we need more supports for women; we know that more women are experiencing gender-based violence. When I started this work in 1988, we believed we were going to end violence against women and child abuse. It's pretty simple: Just don't do it. Apparently it's not that simple.

I think we need to double up on systems of prevention and education while we are still helping women who are experiencing violence. I think that's a big investment.

I believe that we could change in one generation how our boys and our girls imagine themselves. I think we do our kids an incredible injustice. We rob our boys, our girls, our gender-diverse children of innate humanity and empathy, and their joy, with systematized, imposed gender roles and permission for toxic masculinity to continue. It's tough.

Mitch, I was listening to you talk about your program. It's really tough to first have those conversations with men. There is a lot of

risk in that, because it makes a lot of guys feel really uncomfortable.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Thank you, Kim.

I don't want to downplay what Mitch is doing. You're amazing, but these two ladies were from my riding, and I only have so much time.

If you want to add to that, Mitch, I think it is important that we really look at the root of the issue. I've always said that we often want to raise our girls to be in defensive mode, but what can we do to raise our boys to recognize proper behaviour and to understand what is consent, and focusing more on that? What are your thoughts on that?

Mr. Mitch Bourbonniere: I totally agree with that. We need to teach our boys at a very early age to be able to express themselves, to honour their emotions, to have deep respect for the life-givers—their sisters, their moms, their aunts—and that has to start at a very early age through education for sure.

I agree with everyone.

• (1705)

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Thank you.

If I have 10 seconds left, I would love Lisa to share a story of something she didn't know but learned as a result of the Cut it Out program education.

The Chair: Lisa, you have 15 seconds.

Ms. Lisa Crawford: I learned that a lot of things we say, like “Just leave him; just go”, actually puts them in so much more danger and then they're never going to speak to us. They're never going to trust us enough to communicate with us when we could be their only person.

The Chair: That's good. Thank you so much.

I'm going to pass the floor over to Anita Vandenberg.

Anita, you have the floor for six minutes.

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

Thank you to all our witnesses. I have questions for all of you, but I'm going to start with Ms. Dolan.

You mentioned, of course, that along with having an intersectional lens, we cannot do anything policy-wise unless we can measure it. You emphasized data.

Could you talk a little more about what is absent in the data and what would be ways that we as parliamentarians, as government, could ensure that we are getting that intersectional data so that we can actually take action?

Ms. Kim Dolan: Thanks so much. It's a great question.

Having that data would be really helpful so that we would know how many sexual assaults there are and we could estimate how many women experience domestic violence. Stats Canada collects a lot of really great information. However, if we want to make real change, we need to establish markers, possibly through the social determinants of health. I think it's a great framework, because this is a health issue for everyone. Then we need to establish guideposts along the way, not targets.

I'm pretty specific about my language. Canada's report card mentions "targets", which is interesting.

Once we establish those guideposts, we'll be able to measure whether we are actually turning the dial on things. We cannot in women's services do this alone. This is an intersectional issue that requires all of us, at micro, macro and meso levels, throughout our entire country to take ownership, to step forward and have tough conversations with folks who are afraid of talking about violence and that vulnerability. It's tough to imagine a new script if you haven't seen one modelled.

The data that we need is how are we actually making change and how do we track that?

For instance, in Ontario, at our organization, we received provincial funding to establish a court support program. It was before I arrived there two years ago. What we were asked to measure, or to track and report on, was how many women we provided support to. That's very interesting, but we also know that the court support program was doing a lot of work that would prevent women from asking a lot of questions of the court office, which wasn't in a position, as Lisa mentioned, to respond necessarily to those questions. They needed better go-to persons.

We don't have any data that shows us what's the return on investment when we have good court support workers who can connect women across the community to services they need. It's lost data for well over a decade. It's those kinds of really tangible things we need in order to make change and track it, and then make some decisions about how to do a better job, learn from our big mistakes and be willing to take huge risks.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: That's very hopeful. Thank you.

My next question is for Mr. Bourbonniere. First of all, thank you for the testimony today, because it is absolutely vitally important that we are including men in this conversation. I have often said that stereotypes, socialization and gendered norms of behaviour impact men as much as they impact women. Young boys are just as stifled as young girls when they are expected to fit into certain normalized moulds.

Could you comment a bit on how we start at a young age to make sure that we are not creating those kinds of gender norms that result ultimately in toxic masculinity?

Mr. Mitch Bourbonniere: Thank you for the question.

I think it's just using our education system to teach all our children about diversity, diverse gender roles, diverse sexuality, respect, kindness, love and all of those good things. We need to train our educators to be able to speak to our children about that.

We also need to train up and support our parents to be able to have those conversations with their children.

As a government, as policy-makers and as helpers in this field, we need to support those who are closest to the children, which are the parents and the educators.

• (1710)

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: Thank you, and thank you very much for the work you do.

I have only one minute and my last question is for Ms. Heidinger and Ms. Crawford.

I admire tremendously that you've taken a very unique space in hair salons, where you're really frontline when it comes to potential safety access for many of the victims and survivors.

You mentioned something about the curriculum and making sure there is training to ensure that people know how to respond and intervene properly. This goes along a little with the kinds of things we've heard on bystander training and I know this is something you're doing in a private manner.

What could we do in terms of legislation to that effect?

The Chair: You have about 20 seconds to respond.

Ms. Lisa Crawford: I'll be totally honest here that this is not really my area of expertise. We need to somehow get it put into the curriculum when we're educating in cosmetology school. I don't really know where that would lie.

Jodie, maybe you could weigh in here.

There's a need. I've talked to the Alberta government about it, but federally is where it needs to be.

The Chair: I'm going to just take this opportunity and actually pass it over. We can come back to Jodie in a moment, but I'm just going to pass the next six minutes over to Andréanne Larouche.

Andréanne, you have the floor for six minutes.

[Translation]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I would like to thank the witnesses, Ms. Crawford, Ms. Heidinger, Mr. Bourbonniere and Ms. Dolan, for their involvement in society and their dedication to this cause.

My first question is for Ms. Dolan.

We have learned on the committee that organizations everywhere in Canada that operate shelters for women victims of spousal violence are not able to meet the demand, because of the rise in spousal violence cases. That phenomenon has been exacerbated by the pandemic. In the summer of 2020, when our committee met urgently to study the impacts of COVID-19 on women, we were already seeing disproportionate effects.

What is the situation with the services delivered by your organization? Do you have to decline to help victims because of the rise in cases of violence?

[English]

Ms. Kim Dolan: Thank you for that question.

COVID presented so many challenges for many of us. For a while we were required to reduce the number of shelter beds that were available to women in our community. Our area has a small urban and a large rural area. In the northern parts of our region, the population density is two or three people per square kilometre, which means they don't have access to travel or services that are readily available. The challenges were such that we needed to get creative. The pandemic invited us to be creative about many things that we were doing.

The heartbreak and some of our realities were that if our shelter was busy, in non-COVID times, we were able to contact other shelters and ask them if they had room. We would be able to provide transportation for women to go to other communities and bring them back when we had more shelter beds available. That also wasn't possible.

Those things were combined with the rural realities for many women at a time of tremendous uncertainty. I often asked myself and our staff how a woman experiencing the uncertainty of gender-based violence can imagine leaving when the outside community is going through such uncertainty itself. I think many women stayed because it was just too much, so they had to amp up their coping strategies.

• (1715)

[Translation]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: The impacts have been different in urban and rural areas during the pandemic. We have also heard a lot about that on this committee. The pandemic has exacerbated the situation for women in rural areas. It is somewhat this that you are telling us.

What could the federal government do to support you more in what you are calling for? How could the federal level help you, more specifically, to address the problem you seem to be facing: the difficulty of being a woman victim of spousal violence in a rural area?

[English]

Ms. Kim Dolan: Some of the actions that the federal government employed fairly quickly in the pandemic helped in making more money available to shelters so that we could implement new ways of connecting with women. We are learning a lot.

I will be in touch with Lisa about the Cut It Out Canada program. I've always thought that hair salons and massage therapists were safe places for women to go, especially if people don't want to talk about things, but what we also learned was that we needed to go virtual. We needed to update our technology, because we didn't have the technology to have safe, secure meetings online.

We learned a lot about safety planning, and we also came up against the reality that many people across Canada don't have access to reliable Internet technology. I think one of the sustainable development goals of the UN is to have the entire world connected by 2030.

Canada, there's your challenge: Get us connected.

[Translation]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: Yes.

You gave a nod to Ms. Crawford and the services she offers. In fact, I would like to address her and make a comparison.

In Quebec, we have something equivalent. People in certain occupations are raising their awareness so they are better able to recognize signs of elder abuse, for example, or signs that a person is thinking about suicide. Those people are, in a way, an advance guard.

Ms. Crawford, isn't it that same model that you are applying with employees of spas or hair salons, to help them identify the signs? It's exactly that, isn't it?

[English]

Ms. Lisa Crawford: Hi there. Thank you so much for your question.

Yes, that's exactly right.

Another thing I'd like to address here quickly is about Cut It Out. When Jodi and I went to get trained to teach others about this, there were about 20 of us in the room. There were only three hairstylists in the room. The rest were police officers. I know that this is catered towards a salon, but any industry can use this. If it's against elders—which just breaks my heart—yes, this definitely could be utilized.

The Chair: You have 20 seconds left.

[Translation]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: In rural areas, however, the challenges are different. I imagine you also find that there are differences between urban and rural areas, Ms. Crawford.

[English]

Ms. Lisa Crawford: Yes, we do, definitely. That's why for Cut It Out we offer it online. One of us who is certified to teach it can definitely go online and can teach it, but yes, the numbers definitely are different in rural regions, for sure, and there's a lot less access to the education. That's why we want to offer it online also, so then it really is accessible for everyone—

The Chair: I'm sorry. We're going to now move on to our next six minutes. I'm going to pass the floor over to Leah Gazan.

Leah, you have the floor.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Thank you so much, Chair.

Thanks to all the witnesses for being here today.

Mitch, you're a superhero in Winnipeg. You've won two Governor General's awards for your work. What you are doing is working. I've had the privilege of going on walks with you and some of the men you work with, who are just outstanding, kind, gentle human beings—not always, as you've shared.

Can you explain what action-based therapy is? Because that's what you're doing: action-based therapy with men, young boys or diverse genders.

Mr. Mitch Bourbonniere: Thank you for the question.

It's based on a wraparound approach. When a man comes to us asking for and wanting and needing help, we establish a relationship. We do it in as non-judgmental way as we can in terms of the person. We certainly judge behaviour, though, because those are two different things. We let folks know early on our stance on the treatment of women and girls. That wraparound is based on relationships. It's based on accessibility. The men have access to us on a 24-hour basis. In rotating shifts we respond to men.

What we don't have is physical space. There's no shelter for men in Winnipeg in terms of domestic violence. Whether the man is the perpetrator of that violence or is receiving that violence, there's no place for men to go physically. We are on call. We are able to meet men where they're at physically, on their own time. We do land-based activities. In terms of using an indigenous lens, we use ceremony. We use lateral empathy and kindness, giving back to the community.

We support women in their endeavours to bring justice to this issue. One great example of that is the Mama Bear Clan. The Mama Bear Clan was created by the women of North Point Douglas Women's Centre in north Winnipeg. They have a grandmothers council and they have a women's warrior circle. They ask the men to come and support them in protecting women. This is a non-criminal, non-policing way of dealing with the community.

In earlier testimony, Ms. MacGregor really encouraged this type of thing. I was glad to hear that from her.

● (1720)

Ms. Leah Gazan: I want to build on that. We've heard a lot about how to deal with individuals who perpetrate violence. I'm of the thought that punishing people who've already experienced significant trauma and violence in their own life—as little boys, as you mentioned—is not the way forward.

You talked about lateral empathy and lateral kindness. It sounds very simple, but it's actually not. Why is that a more effective intervention than punishment?

Mr. Mitch Bourbonniere: I think there's a sense of responsibility and accountability. When you've wronged someone, it's a way of making amends, making something as right as possible, and playing a part in that. That's what I described. We men who have done the healing work have been asked by women in the community to come and help them—help protect them, help them deal with their abuser—and we do that. Then we really, really encourage that man to come and be with us, learn from us, work with us and embark on their healing journey.

The model with the Mama Bear Clan is led by the women and supported by the men. That is an indigenous governance model. That's what we employ.

Ms. Leah Gazan: I know that you had an opportunity to speak with Minister Ien. One of the examples when we met with her... You were talking about a situation where a man was being violent,

and you sat with that man, encouraged his help and talked about consequences for behaviour in a non-judgmental way.

We don't have a lot of time, but can you share a little bit about this story?

Mr. Mitch Bourbonniere: Yes. I did allude to this in my earlier presentation.

In this particular instance, in this particular example, we were called to the home. Women helped this mom and spouse pack up all her things with her children while we sat on each side of this fellow on the couch in the home. He knew not to move. We were there to bring safety to that process.

In that moment, he did feel shame. He did feel regret in that moment. Once his family had packed up and left, we were able to turn to him. Through his tears, he committed to come to work with us, and he has.

● (1725)

The Chair: Mitch, thanks very much for that testimony.

For the next round of questions, we're going to do three minutes for both...and I don't know if it's going to be Shelby or Dominique. It will be three minutes for Sonia, and a minute and a half for both Adréanne and Leah.

I'm going to pass it over, and I see Shelby there.

Shelby, you have the floor for three minutes.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: Thank you, Chair.

I'd like to address my questions to Mr. Bourbonniere.

I'll start by suggesting that boys and men who survive sexual violence can experience serious psychological and emotional fallout. This is not news to anyone, but I think it's much more common than what we think. My question is on how we are supposed to teach boys that it's okay.... Boys are taught to be strong and tough and sexually dominate, and not so much sensitive and real; whereas girls are taught to be attractive and submissive, according to many studies.

We're hearing that empowering girls is very important, but how do we continue to have boys be the focus as well? I see that's a focus with you. My mindset is that we can't solve the problem of violence against women and girls without addressing the violence against men and boys, because I think it's cyclical.

Could you comment on that, please?

Mr. Mitch Bourbonniere: Sure. I'm not an expert on many things, but I'm an expert on myself. I am a survivor of sexual violence by men, as a little boy. I'm also a survivor, in the 1960s, of very physically harsh punishment in my home.

I was able to find a way through others to heal, by being in the service of others. I'm very proud to say that as an adult, I have never laid hands on a woman in anger. I've never touched a woman in anger, or hurt a woman or a child. It is possible to grow up in a toxic environment and change, and to be part of the change rather than the problem. It is possible, and it's happening. We're doing it.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: Excellent. Thank you.

Mr. Mitch Bourbonniere: I also want to make some space, because we haven't heard from Jodi—

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Mitch Bourbonniere: I'm cognizant of the fact that I am a male and I would like to put her forth ahead of me.

The Chair: Jodi, you have 30 seconds, if you want to go ahead.

Mrs. Jodi Heidinger: Thank you very much. I appreciate the opportunity to share from our experience.

We are a family resource network. I believe we are engaging parents at a very early stage in their parenting to encourage that early attentive caregiving and emotional attachment piece. Dads need to be just as much a part of the nurturing that happens in the home so that they have the capacity to model those behaviours early on for their children.

We know from that core brain story, you can't undue the impacts of trauma. One thing you can do is to create opportunity for resilience by attaching those young little minds to as many healthy adults as possible who are not in a parenting role, outside of the home. Whether that's extended family, friends, community groups, support groups through school, or early education, from our experience, it's making sure that dads are a part of that plan moving forward, and giving them opportunities to step up and play that nurturing role in the lives of the little ones.

The Chair: Awesome. Thank you so much.

I'm now going to move it over to Sonia for three minutes.

Sonia, you have the floor.

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

Thank you to all the witnesses for sharing their powerful testimony, and thank you for the work you are doing.

Mr. Bourbonniere, when you are teaching that men should be respectful, do you think about what age it needs to be started?

Mr. Mitch Bourbonniere: It needs to start as young as possible, right from infancy, toddlerhood and into the early years of school.

I'll give you a really quick example.

Part of what we do in Winnipeg is that we help people in poverty. We help people move. We help people get furniture. We try to help out with the physical needs of young families.

We might have a crew of men and boys moving furniture out of a house. There are a lot of us outside, maybe on the sidewalk, and we'll see a woman walking down the sidewalk towards us. I've been able to teach the men and boys who work with us very nuanced

things, like we're all going to step off and away from the sidewalk so that this woman doesn't have to pass through this group of men.

It's little things like that. It's being aware of nuance and subtleties. That's what we're teaching our boys and young men. That's just an example.

● (1730)

Ms. Sonia Sidhu: Thank you.

My next question is for Ms. Dolan or Ms. Heidinger, if you want to answer that, too. Why do you think racialized women or victims are often unwilling to access the support system?

Mrs. Jodi Heidinger: In my experience, the big challenge with some of the victims that we've supported is fear when it comes to accessing formal supports. It's fear of retaliation, fear of their partners getting in trouble and being removed from their homes, especially if they're a primary breadwinner, and children being removed from the home. The majority of people who are accessing supports do so through informal avenues, like Lisa in her salon.

I think we have to understand that people don't always want their partners to get into trouble. They don't always want to leave their abusive partner, but they need to know safe options if they're to remain in the home. It's how can we work with them from that point until we can get them to a place where there's a safer option or safer alternative for them to leave.

Ms. Sonia Sidhu: Ms. Dolan talked about the fragile safety for women. How can we secure that safety for them?

The Chair: Can you give a really short answer?

Mrs. Jodi Heidinger: Yes.

I mentioned some of the biggest barriers that I'm seeing, particularly sustainable housing. I'm not saying there isn't a place for emergency housing, I think it is a great tool to have when there's a physical safety need, but healing doesn't happen in 21 days at a shelter. We need to give people the opportunity to have access to that second stage where they can really focus on that healing and get involved in programming that really interrupts that whole cycle of abuse to begin with.

The Chair: Perfect. Thank you so much.

We're going to go now to Andréanne.

You have 90 seconds.

[Translation]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to thank the witnesses again for being here.

My last question is for Ms. Dolan.

We know that during the pandemic, the federal government made large payments to organizations that assist women victims of spousal violence. However, those payments are not recurring.

Could stable, recurring funding by the government help a resource like yours? Would that lighten the bureaucratic workload associated with finding funding? Would greater financial stability enable you to offer more services and help more victims?

[English]

Ms. Kim Dolan: Yes, we need more stable funding. I understand that governments purchase service from organizations on behalf of their constituents. This is a compelling issue. Yes, we need more funding. Yes, we need more stable funding.

In many ways non-profits are penalized because we are really smart with funding. We can stretch a dollar. We learn a lot from business and business could learn a lot from us. But when we're really smart with the money and things change, we end up getting penalized for that. That doesn't bode well for any of us.

I think we need funding for stability and for data collection, so we can really start to demonstrate return on investment. We need to move the dial collectively and collaboratively.

The Chair: Thank you so much.

Thanks, Kim, you must have heard my buzzer. Thank you so much.

I'm now going to pass over the last 90 seconds to Leah.

Leah, you have the floor.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Thank you so much, Chair.

My questions are for Mr. Bourbonniere.

You talked about the importance of mindfulness in your last testimony. You also spoke about the importance of relationship, and that just sounds so simple, but it's critical. I think it's one of the reasons you're such a hero—you're my hero—in the city of Winnipeg

in seeing long-term sustainable change with people who are working through their trauma and their own harmful behaviours. Why are relationships and mindfulness so critical to what you do with others?

• (1735)

Mr. Mitch Bourbonniere: I think there's a power in a kinship type of relationship. I'm in a position where I become an uncle, and that is an indigenous lens. In a good way I can scold my nephews when they are behaving poorly.

We had a men's group last night and it was very powerful. One of the men who came is now 37 years old. I started with him when he was nine years old. I've been with him on and off for 28 years. He pays it back. It's generational what we're doing. At this point we have grandfathers, and we have dads, uncles and nephews who we're working with.

The Chair: Your time's up. I'm sorry about that, Leah.

We could go on for two more hours just with this panel.

On behalf of all of us on the status of women committee, I would really like to thank Mitch, Lisa, Jodi and Kim. Thank you so much for bringing this incredible testimony to us today.

I'm going to remind everybody that our next meeting will be on Friday. We will have the honourable Marci Ien appearing with a few members of her staff. For our second panel, we will be welcoming the Immigrant Women Services Ottawa.

Thank you, everybody, for a fantastic meeting today.

Do I have agreement to end the meeting today? Can we adjourn? I don't see any problems.

The meeting is adjourned.

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