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Chair: Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman



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• (1105)

[English]

The Chair (Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, CPC)): I'd like to call the meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number 118 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

Before we begin, I would like to ask all members and other in-person participants to consult the cards on the table for guidelines to prevent audio feedback incidents.

Please take note of the following preventative measures in place to protect the health and safety of all participants, including the interpreters.

Only use a black, approved earpiece. The former, grey earpieces must no longer be used. Please keep your earpiece away from the microphone at all times. When you're not using your earpiece, place it face down on the sticker placed on the table for this purpose.

I thank you in advance for your co-operation.

For all members in the room and online, please wait until I recognize you by name prior to speaking. Additionally, for members in the room, if you wish to speak, please raise your hand. For members on Zoom, please use the "raise hand" function. The clerk and I will be managing the speaking order as best we can, and we appreciate your understanding in this regard.

Lastly, as a reminder, all comments should be addressed through the chair and not to each other.

I would also like to make a few comments for the benefit of our witnesses. Before speaking, please wait until I recognize you by name. For those participating by video conference....

I will note that we're just waiting to add our third witness via Zoom. We're having a few technical difficulties, so we're going to proceed with the two witnesses we have in the room. We're working in the background to try to get our third witness up and running.

For those of you in the room, your mic will be controlled by the proceedings and verification officer, so you don't need to click on it yourselves. It will be controlled.

You may speak in the official language of your choice. Interpretation services are available. You have the choice of floor, English or French for your earpiece. If the interpretation is lost, please let me know right away.

At this point, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee is meeting to hear testimony related to the committee's core mandate. More specifically, we're hearing about the impacts of violent crimes against women.

Before we welcome our witnesses, I would like to acknowledge and provide this trigger warning. We will be discussing experiences related to violence against women. This may be triggering to viewers with similar experiences. If at any point you feel distressed or need help, please advise the clerk.

For all of the witnesses and for all members of Parliament, it is very important to recognize that these are very difficult discussions. Let's continue to try to be as compassionate as we can.

Now I would like to welcome our witnesses.

As an individual, we have Cait Alexander, the founder of End Violence Everywhere. We also have Megan Walker in the room. She is an advocate for ending male violence against women. From Peel Regional Police, we have Nick Milinovich, deputy chief of police, joining us by video conference.

You will each have five minutes for opening remarks, which will be followed by rounds of questions.

At this point, I will give the floor to Ms. Alexander to start.

You have five minutes.

Ms. Cait Alexander (End Violence Everywhere, As an Individual): I'm fortunate to be here today. I'm supposed to be dead. On July 31, 2021, exactly three years ago today, I sent the two-word WhatsApp message "please help" to a friend who, thankfully, believed me. My ex was beating me—all six feet, three inches and approximately 250 pounds of him—because he couldn't find his car keys. For four hours with his fists, his feet, a wooden rolling pin and door wells, he split my head open in three places, gouged my eyes out with his thumbs, kicked my ribs and tortured me in ways I can feel but can't fully describe. I do not know how my body survived it.

My ex enjoyed what he did to me. He threatened to kill my family. The police were going to leave me for dead, but my former neighbour intervened.

After all that, guess what your criminal injustice system gave me? A peace bond. All eight charges, five in the provincial and three in the federal, were stayed against my ex. I can't say his name, because it will forever be known as "alleged" abuse. I ask of you exactly what I asked Justice Himel, who had tears in her eyes on March 26, 2024, when I received the peace bond: Why does he abuse, and why is he allowed to get away with it? He abuses because he is publicly and personally rewarded for it. He is allowed to get away with it because you, the Government of Canada, let him.

Abuse is a choice, a moral failing, and it is also inexcusable. Even three years later my ex is still abusing me. I am suing him as the only form of legal justice I have left. He has put in a meritless counterclaim as a continuation of abuse against me. He states that I was self-injurious and that I stole his Rolex after. He is lying under oath.

You will listen to me because I am Caucasian, educated and a member of an industry that holds space in the public eye, but these issues have been plaguing people everywhere across the nation for so long in the dark corners.

Now we are in the light. We will shine until there is retribution. We will break the stigmas down into the nothingness they are. There are no stereotypical victims. There are only stereotypical abusers. IPV and SA happen in all cultures and in all socio-economic statuses, races, ages and genders, but so predominantly with women and children. Today is not about me. Today is about us and about what this means going forward. You have granted me the honour of speaking on behalf of all men, women, non-binary and children survivors of violence. I want to state from a survivor's perspective that Trudeau doesn't care, Ford doesn't care, Arif doesn't care and the government doesn't care.

The government doesn't care about Courtney Gaudreau, who faced potential charges and jail time for speaking the name of her convicted abuser when a publication ban was implemented without her consent.

The government doesn't care about Brian and Suzanne Sweeney, whose daughter Angie was shot to death along with three innocent children; or about Brett and Jessica Broadfoot, whose daughter was stabbed to death two weeks ago at age 17, leaving behind her absolutely incredible 15-year-old brother Lucas.

The government doesn't care about Melanie Hatton, who fled B.C. to Ontario after nearly being murdered by her ex-partner. She suffers long-term traumatic brain injury, still lives in fear daily with her two children and now owes \$300,000 to the CRA because her ex bankrupted her.

The government doesn't care about Tanya Couch, who was sexually assaulted by her former commanding officer in cadets, but the military police failed to investigate it properly. The case was finally reopened, leading to three sexual assault charges ultimately being stayed after the defence used section 278 of the Criminal Code to subpoena seven years of Tanya's personal counselling records.

The government doesn't care about Alexa Barkley, who has suffered multiple SAs throughout her life, with only one of her abusers receiving a mere six months of house arrest for child sexual assault; or about Daniela Halmos, whose ex has been arrested six times and

faces 27 charges but is still allowed to go free and, despite her children not wanting it, is allowed to be around them.

The government doesn't care about Sandy Proudfoot, 86 years old, who just finally escaped the abuser who tried to bankrupt her while the police lost her victim statement and nothing proceeded.

The government doesn't care about Cindy, whose infant daughter was so brutally sexually assaulted she had children's toys put up her private parts. Her abuser is not incarcerated.

The government doesn't care about Marlee, who, after three years of going through the courts, felt dehumanized by the process every single step of the way and ended up fighting for restorative justice because the justice system doesn't provide justice; or about Britt Hess, who suffered from the same perpetrator and has experienced multiple assaults, harassment and times of confinement wherein he was charged but then breached his bail. All charges were stayed under his charter right.

- (1110)

The government doesn't care about Julie Macfarlane, who—

The Chair: Cait, I'll kindly ask you to slow down a wee bit.

Ms. Cait Alexander: Sure. I'm just trying to get it all in in the five minutes.

The Chair: The interpreters have mentioned to me that they are having trouble translating, so we'll give you a bit of liberty with the time because of the translation.

Ms. Cait Alexander: Sure. Thank you.

The government doesn't care about Julie Macfarlane, who has had NDAs used against her to sue her after she was harassed; or Cassandra, who was nearly murdered through non-state torture, and absolutely no charges were laid; or Sirin, who faced a menacing abuser who now has 35 charges and keeps breaching his bail order. Sirin's life is in danger, but her ex was just granted visiting rights with their child.

There's Fartumo Kusow, whose daughter disappeared after 18 years of abuse and ultimately was murdered by an American who shouldn't have even been allowed to cross the border because of DUIs.

There's Katie Meyer, who suffered 17 counts of physical assault only to have her harrowing experience explained away. Her child will have to testify.

There's Sarah Barber, who has worked tirelessly to shield her children from three and a half years of post-separation legal abuse in the family court system, after experiencing terrifying, relentless violence from a well-known serial woman abuser.

There's Corey Lynn, who has had a lifetime of sexual assaults, starting in childhood, conditioning her to intimate partner violence relationships and lengthy court family battles to protect her children.

There's Travis, who faces bias from the system because of his sexual orientation.

There's Heather Matriarch, whose name has been changed because she's an indigenous woman who still lives—

• (1115)

The Chair: *Please suspend the meeting.*

• (1115)

_____ (Pause) _____

• (1120)

The Chair: I'd like to resume. Thank you for your patience.

At this time, I would like to take the liberty of allowing Cait Alexander a minute or less to wrap up due to the disruption. Thank you.

Go ahead, Cait.

Ms. Cait Alexander: Thank you. I hope she's okay.

There's Monica, whose 16-year-old daughter nearly committed suicide after her sexual assault; or Lucy, who was publicly shamed with unethical tactics used against her to bully her for years after testifying versus Jian Ghomeshi, who sexually assaulted her and choked her; or Dan Jennings, whose daughter Caitlin was beaten to death with a hammer in London last year.

With the permission from each of these survivors, I have struggled to condense these stories to fit into this speech. In all of these cases, there have been multiple police interventions and there have been attempts to leave, negotiate, plead, pray and run, only to be trapped and further abused by the system and in some cases murdered. We as Canadians have charter rights that are essentially a “get out of jail free” card for criminals, but what about survivors' rights? Why are our charter rights never accounted for?

Most survivors try to leave, but that's when it becomes the most dangerous. Seventy-five per cent of murders happen after the victim leaves. When we're not murdered, we are left in the dark in a life that we no longer understand, with the most debilitating implications of physical, emotional, financial, mental and spiritual turmoil. These are not insular struggles. They affect every system of government and every nuance of life—economic, health care, child care, education, housing and so on. Canada spends an under-representative and dated figure of \$8 billion annually on the aftermath of IPV alone. This does not account for the violence of human trafficking, sexual assault and the under-reported cases, which are the majority.

The science behind the effects of trauma is endless. Trauma changes the chemistry of your brain. You are not the same person.

There is no “getting over it”. Healing happens in community only with proper medical and therapeutic intervention. We know the state of the country as far as health care is concerned right now. Very few have access to these absolutely necessary remedies in a quantifiable way. Sometimes the effects of trauma are permanent. Could you also imagine having a pre-existing disability? A staggering 40% of disabled people have been abused.

If you haven't met a survivor and victim's family, well, now you have. Those are my parents back there.

This is my passport, and I'm damned embarrassed. I can't live in Canada anymore, because it's not safe for me. I have founded an organization here and in the U.S. called End Violence Everywhere, or EVE, a now registered non-profit. We will put survivors first, reform this justice system and better the community. We need to work together, because you cannot leave it up to the abusers. They do not self-rehabilitate. They do not get better. They do not stop. In fact, they are empowered every time they get away with it, and they increase their violence.

We are too late for tens of thousands of people, but we can prevent further atrocities. Canada needs to stop hiding under the guise of the nice country where nothing bad happens. It's bad, and it's happening right now.

Here we present some solutions. Declare IPV and SA a national state of emergency—

• (1125)

The Chair: Ms. Alexander.

Ms. Cait Alexander: Yes.

The Chair: Perhaps you could try to incorporate what's remaining in your comments into some members' times or your response to questions.

Ms. Cait Alexander: Certainly.

The Chair: Thank you very much for your testimony, Ms. Alexander.

For those of you online, I would like to acknowledge that there was a small suspension in the meeting due to a medical emergency in the room, which has been sorted out.

I would now like to give the floor to Ms. Walker.

You have five minutes, Ms. Walker.

Ms. Megan Walker (Advocate to End Male Violence Against Women, As an Individual): Thank you so much.

As you have just heard, the situation for women and girls in Canada is dire. Women and girls have been erased by government policies. Terms like “gender-based violence”, “intimate partner violence” and “domestic violence” fail to differentiate between victim and offender. According to the UN, male violence against women and girls is the most pervasive human rights abuse in the world, yet the language used by many governments, including Canada's, fails to name it as male violence against women and girls.

Tiffany Gates was found dead in her boyfriend's apartment on September 7, 2023. She was a victim of femicide-suicide. Their names and the nature of their relationship only became public after friends and family posted on social media. Police have not released information, citing privacy rules. Tiffany's mother, Linda Davidson, has continued to tell police that without releasing information, it is unclear to the public who killed whom.

On July 16, as you just heard, 17-year-old Breanna Broadfoot was stabbed multiple times by a man she was trying to end a relationship with. She died two days later. The man who killed her had been charged on March 15, 2024, with offences consistent with torture, including assault with choking and suffocation or strangulation activity. She was hospitalized after the assault. He was released with an undertaking not to contact her, a promise to appear and an order to stay at least 50 metres away from her workplace, home and school. He was prohibited from possessing firearms, crossbows and any restricted ammunition, devices or weapons. He breached his conditions and was due back in court on July 31. He was killed by police on the 16th.

On June 22, 2024, 62-year-old Cheryl Sheldon was killed by a man she was trying to leave. He has since been charged with second-degree murder. Cheryl reached out for help from at least three London agencies. The first two referred her on. The third offered her a bed for the night. Cheryl never arrived. She was killed in the hours after she contacted agencies for help.

In 2019, 136 women were killed. In 2020, 160 women were killed. In 2021, 173 women and girls were killed. In 2022, 184 women and girls were killed. In 2023, 187 women and girls were victims of femicide. The total number of femicides in Canada between 2019 and 2023 is 840. That's 840 dead women.

The year-after-year increase is significant, yet here we are, and the government hasn't called it a crisis or an epidemic. The government, in fact, hasn't addressed it at all.

Current government strategies to end femicide, whatever they are, are not working. If they were, we would see a decrease in femicide rates. I'm hard pressed to know what those strategies are, or even if there are strategies. Male violence against women and femicide are preventable, and immediate action has to be taken to end this crisis now.

I offer the following recommendations.

Legislate and define the term "femicide" in the current Criminal Code. The term generally refers to "the killing of females by males because they are female."

Canada signed a global treaty in 2018 committing to investigate and eliminate femicide. Canada has not followed through. Why not?

On September 15, 2022, the London Police Service Board, of which I am vice-chair, invited the Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister, the former minister of justice and the Minister of Women and Gender Equality to attend a meeting to discuss the urgent need for a Criminal Code definition of femicide. It's been two years, and there's still been no meeting.

Humanize the names of women and girls. They are victims of femicide.

Acknowledge that every 48 hours, a woman or girl is killed. Follow Ontario municipalities, including London, by declaring femicide an epidemic.

Name victims and offenders publicly. Femicide is not a private issue.

Restraining orders, undertakings and peace bonds offer women and girls a false sense of security and place them at an increased risk of femicide.

● (1130)

Per the examples above, they aren't worth the paper they're written on. The judicial system continues to fail women and girls and needs to be updated.

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

At this point, I would like to give the floor to Mr. Milinovich.

You have five minutes.

Deputy Chief Nick Milinovich (Deputy Chief of Police, Peel Regional Police): Good afternoon. Thank you for the opportunity to be here. My name is Nick Milinovich. I am the deputy chief of Peel Regional Police emergency services command at our police service. I'd like to start by thanking the chair and members of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women for inviting us to participate in this important discussion.

The police-reported crime statistics released by Statistics Canada are nothing short of concerning. We are seeing similar trends across our country. The Peel region is one of the most diverse and vibrant communities in Canada. It also contains one of North America's busiest airports.

In 2023 our officers responded to over 9,500 incidents of family and intimate partner violence, resulting in approximately 26 incidents every single day. We laid over 9,050 charges.

The top five charges are uttering threats, failure to comply with a release order, assault with a weapon and choking or suffocating. Our data shows that a woman is strangled every single day in the region of Peel. Of the 14 homicides we've had in Peel region, almost 20% have been femicides. These are just the incidents that are reported and the statistics that make them up. I would also like to share the stories behind those statistics.

I would talk about Darian Henderson-Bellman. She was a 25-year-old woman with a bright future ahead of her who was shot and killed in Brampton by somebody she had been in a romantic relationship with. That individual was on release at the time of her murder and had been charged with multiple firearms-related offences, along with a failure to comply and a variety of other breach of release orders. He was also charged with two previous IPV-related incidents prior to killing Henderson-Bellman.

Pawanpreet Kaur, a 21-year-old woman, was shot and killed while at her job. Prior to her murder, she was in a relationship with an individual who had been charged with multiple intimate partner violence-related offences in relation to her. He had been released on bail. He had threatened her, her family and her friends in order to have her drop those charges. We are alleging that he's responsible for her homicide.

As early as two weeks ago, we arrested Jagmohanjit Jheety in connection with a variety of intimate partner violence-related offences. This investigation started in May 2024, when the accused was charged with criminal harassment and failed to comply with a release order. Along with a variety of conditions that were placed on him, he was released on bail. In July 2024 the accused is alleged to have followed the victim and fled upon our arrival. At the time, firearms were located in his vehicle along with a variety of other weapons. We identified that he had placed GPS tracking devices on the victim's vehicle. Again, the accused was on a form of release at the time of the offences. Ultimately we located, arrested and charged the accused with attempted murder and with firearm and a variety of other related offences.

The reason I wanted to highlight these three scenarios is that, one, they are the anecdotal, the real stories behind the statistics, but they also demonstrate some of the issues that we are experiencing as a police service in protecting our community and that our community is experiencing in terms of some of the anxiety they feel about feeling safe within their communities. It's representative of the vulnerabilities we are seeing in our current system and its lack of prioritization for our victims and our survivors. There's also a variety of other factors, such as access to illegal firearms and the release of repeat violent offenders.

On concerns and considerations to victims and survivors, while the bail system and access to illegal firearms create barriers to addressing IPV, they also affect us in other spaces. They create barriers in our ability to respond to community needs, to such things as carjackings, home invasions, extortions, shootings—all things that are incredibly important to our community here in Peel.

I would offer that last week we arrested 18 men for carjackings and home invasions in Peel. Of those 18 people, we held 15 of them for bail hearings. Of the 15 that we held for bail hearings, by the time we made the press conference announcement, nine of them had already been released.

• (1135)

From January until July 18 of this year we have had 87 carjackings, which is a 58% increase from 2023. We've had 54 violent home invasions. That is a 350% increase from last year, and very similar to some of the issues we're experiencing with our ability to prevent intimate partner violence, and I will say, gender violence, is

we continue to see some of these issues as barriers to our ability to address that.

We know through the public record that in 2022 there were 256 people charged with homicide while on some form of release, including those who were on house arrest or parole. In total, there were 874 homicides in Canada in 2022. The 256 people charged while on release would equate to 29% of all the homicides across our country. This is, again, a trend that we are seeing here locally. Too often we are seeing violent and tragic incidents that are being committed by high-risk repeat offenders who have a blatant disregard for their release conditions and, more importantly, the safety of others or the preservation of life.

The prevalence of firearms in our region is a huge concern, and we are allocating every possible resource to seize illegal firearms within our community. In fact, this past weekend, we laid numerous firearms related charges against a variety of people. We are seeing kids as young as 14 and 15 years old possessing these firearms. In Peel alone, we are seizing an illegal firearm every 24 hours. These are the firearms that are used to commit a variety of offences, inclusive of offences against some of our more vulnerable or priority populations specific to intimate partner violence.

We continue to advocate for Criminal Code changes that would expand reverse onus offences towards violent and repeat offenders, especially those charged with our most violent offences and firearms related offences. It includes intimate partner violence and prior offences committed to intimidate, threaten or cause fear to an intimate partner regardless of the use of violence.

Violent offenders pose a risk to community safety. We are consistently advocating for stronger measures to protect women, children and everyone in our community from all types of violence, including gender-based violence, and access to illegal firearms and a higher threshold for bail and other release for violent offenders are important parts of that equation.

With that, I'm happy to take any questions.

Thank you.

• (1140)

The Chair: Excellent. Thank you all very much for your opening remarks.

At this point going to move to rounds of questions from members.

I would also like to remind all of those in the room and all of the members posing questions that we are here about intimate partner violence against women, so let's try and keep our focus there.

I would like to welcome Michelle to take the floor for six minutes.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

Thank you to our witnesses. It's extremely powerful testimony. To call this a crisis is an understatement, and the connection between each of your testimonies is profound.

Cait, I know you wanted to say a few more things. To me, what jumped off the page of what you said, above all of the horrific things, like calling it "alleged" when you have all of those photos of your assault, was that "he is publicly and personally rewarded for it." Those are your words about your attacker. Can you expand on what you mean by that legally in Canada?

Ms. Cait Alexander: Abusers don't think in the same way the average person does, which is why they are able to commit the offences that you or I wouldn't commit. Abusers get off on the reward of being allowed to commit these offences. I have video taken of my ex and his enjoyment of what he did to me and knowing that the government said, "Well, this isn't a big deal." I will quote the Crown attorney, who said, "We don't have time for this."

He is publicly rewarded because he feels like he is above the law. He is personally rewarded because he is six feet, three inches and 250 pounds. He can push me around, no matter if I had a black belt or otherwise. He has a son who is in his care, and this was overlooked. There is an open case with CPS, and nothing was done. The federal ombudsperson has called on our behalf. Nothing was done.

His rewards are that he gets to operate however he chooses to. There are no consequences for his actions, and I guarantee that if he is not stopped, he will be a part of the homicide statistics. He will kill someone. He came damn close to it with me on this day.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: The irony of it being on this day, and then your testimony today.... I know you flew a long way to testify here today. I know your parents are also here. I think one of the things we don't address is the impact on families and children as well. The deputy chief talked about this.

I guess what I'm trying to get at, at the heart of this meeting, is this: What changes do we have to do? You were poignant in saying that you have a Canadian passport but you don't feel safe in this country. You know, we have a letter from the premiers, all premiers across this country, asking for bail reform, and you're saying you don't feel safe. It's a publication ban without consent.

To the deputy chief's point, you have a blatant disregard...so you can see the connection between Cait's testimony and the deputy chief's testimony.

Perhaps I would go to the deputy chief and ask what needs to be done federally. To Ms. Walker's point, if the money was being spent the way it's said it's being spent, we wouldn't see an increase, we would see a decrease. Yet we have the worst numbers we've ever seen.

Deputy Chief, could I get you to say on record what needs to be done? Do you agree with this bail reform letter that the premiers have signed? How much of this can be reversed in policy federally?

D/Chief Nick Milinovich: Let me first say that I really appreciate the question. I also want to commend everybody who has come here for this meeting, particularly survivors who are sharing their stories.

I do agree with the need to create some change. The question was very direct: What can be done? The answer will also be very direct and very simple. What we need to begin doing is to reprioritize the consideration for victims and survivors in a way that allows them to feel safe in their communities, at its most basic.

We've heard testimony today and I've spoken with survivors myself. I've had multiple conversations with people who unfortunately have been targeted or who have experienced similar scenarios. The reality is that they don't feel safe and they don't feel supported by our current system. When a person does build up the courage to notify police, who are supposed to protect them, we go and we arrest that person. We charge them. The idea is that this results in the person no longer being a threat. The reality is that, from the statistics we've seen and are currently experiencing, it's quite probable that the person will continue to be a threat to the survivor or the person who's built up the courage to engage police.

At its basic level, that is what needs to change.

● (1145)

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Thank you.

I have such limited time, and this is such a big topic, but I think we have to get to the nuts and bolts of it. We have two bills, Bill C-5 and Bill C-75.

I would ask for a yes-or-no answer from you, Deputy Chief. Are these bills...? Cait said it beautifully, that nobody seems to care, but if these policies were changed tomorrow, would this give you more freedom to be able to keep people from hurting more people?

D/Chief Nick Milinovich: You know, definitely, it is.... We will continue to take advantage of every opportunity and every change we made. I want to be clear that this is not me advocating.... Well, of course, I'm here, and I'm wearing a police uniform and I'm representing Peel police, but I am really representing my community, who are not feeling as though the current system is supporting them and considering their interests in the way they feel and the victimization, so contemporarily, it's not working for our community.

We need to make change. We need to begin looking at such issues as bail and the prevalence of illegal firearms and at the prioritization of issues for our community, gender-based violence, human trafficking and those types of things.

The Chair: Excellent. Thank you very much.

At this point, Anita, you have six minutes.

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

I want to thank the witnesses for coming here and for their incredible testimony.

I want to reassure both of you, but especially you, Cait, because you said that you don't believe any of us care, that all of us on this committee care very deeply. That's why we've done so many studies on intimate partner violence. We've had testimony like yours that is very difficult to hear but has been very important to put forward recommendations. We believe you, and we believe others like you.

Our government has put in many measures to try to make sure that the things that happened to you don't happen to others. There are numerous bills: Bill C-51 is on amending sexual assault laws. Bill C-75 is on bail reforms. Bill C-48 targets repeat offenders of intimate partner violence. Bill C-28 is on intoxication not being used as a defence. Bill C-63 is on online harms.

We also have a national action plan on gender-based violence that has been signed by all the provinces. We put \$539 million in budget 2022 behind that, something that the Conservatives actually voted against.

I want to start by saying that if anyone tries to say there's anyone in this room who doesn't care about this issue, I think they are playing partisan games. People in this room have spent their lives fighting on this issue and listening to that kind of testimony. I just want to reassure you of that.

I also do, with respect, want to talk a little bit about how this meeting came about.

We have had studies that we've all agreed on to talk about these issues. In fact, we're in the middle of a study right now on coercive control for which we have put forth a number of witnesses we'd like to hear from as a committee.

We know that the Leader of the Opposition has asked Conservative-chaired committees to hold as many meetings as possible during the summer to take us away from the important work we're doing by listening to our constituents. We also know that, in this case, it was a few days' notice. None of the members, except the Conservatives, were given the opportunity to put forth witness names,

which is something that every committee does out of basic fairness and respect.

I personally had a number of names of witnesses I would have loved to hear from. In fact, there were witness names added an hour before the meeting, so members didn't even have a chance to plan or prepare the kinds of questions they might want to ask.

I know that, for this committee, this is something we've never done. We do not use victims' and survivors' trauma to try to score political points in this committee. This is cruel. I think it's cruel to have people relive the trauma they've endured just to be able to have a meeting so that if it's not agreed to, there are all kinds of social media posts that Liberals or others don't care about this issue, which, as we all know, we do very deeply.

I know that under the previous chair, this committee worked with great respect for one another. We made sure that we.... The vice-chairs weren't even consulted about having this meeting. Yes, it's an emergency. I would have loved to have an emergency meeting in June so that we could have gotten our red dress alert study done before the end of the session.

Honestly, we saw yesterday that Karen Vecchio, our former chair, announced that she's not running again, which I think is very sad, because I believe that this committee has important work to do. We have done it with great—

● (1150)

Ms. Cait Alexander: I never got—

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: I have the floor, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Anita currently has the floor.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: Madam Chair, I would like to move a motion.

The reason I'm moving a motion is that in this committee, we've respected each other. There are very important issues on which we have adjourned debate—

Ms. Megan Walker: Violence against women is the most important issue that we can address.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: —and I would like to resume debate.

I'm hoping that the committee could vote quickly on this motion, hopefully unanimously, so that we can go back to the study and the witnesses we have today. If we vote right away, it will only take five minutes. I would like to resume debate on the motion on which we adjourned debate on May 13, 2022.

The motion reads as follows:

That the Standing Committee on the Status of Women report to the House that (a) access and availability to reproduction health services no matter where one lives in Canada, including safe and legal abortion, is a Charter right, and is ensured under the Canada Health Act, and (b) the decision to have an abortion made by women, transgender, and non-binary individuals for any reason, is their freedom of choice and theirs alone.

Madam Chair, we have refrained from putting forward motions like this because of collegiality, but at this moment, we're not... I hope we can do a vote immediately on this motion and then get back to our witnesses right away. We'd only lose five minutes in this meeting.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: This is a dilatory motion; hence, we need to explore it and have the vote.

There will be no debate. It's a dilatory motion.

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Chair, I have my hand up.

The Chair: At this point, we've called the vote.

[*Translation*]

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

[*English*]

The Chair: We are in the middle of the vote, Andréanne.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: Ms. Vandenberg read the motion very quickly, and I'm a bit shocked by how this is going.

Can we have the motion in writing, please?

[*English*]

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: It's resuming debate on a motion that we've started already.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: Yes, Ms. Vandenberg, but we are in committee right now, and we were debating something else—

[*English*]

The Chair: Speak through the chair.

Is there a written copy of the motion?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: When you move a motion, I would like to have it in writing. That's my right.

[*English*]

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: Yes. It's right here.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: I would like to receive it by email, Ms. Vandenberg, please. If it's not possible now, we'll come back to it at another time.

• (1155)

[*English*]

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: It's resuming debate on a motion that was already on the floor.

The Chair: Madam Larouche, we need to continue with the vote.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 6; nays 4)

The Chair: At this point, we'll resume debate on the motion.

Michelle.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Madam Chair, I'd like to speak to the motion.

The Chair: I'll add your name to the speaking list.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Madam Chair, what people are watching at home right now is... We have a debate on the floor. We called an emergency meeting because Stats Canada released shocking statistics. We've seen an increase of 75% in sexual assaults since 2015, and total sexual violations against children are up 119%—

Ms. Sonia Sidhu (Brampton South, Lib.): I have a point of order, Madam Chair. Can I speak?

The Chair: Yes.

Ms. Sonia Sidhu: Ms. Gazan had her hand up and wanted to speak first. She indicated earlier that she wanted to speak, and the chance was not given to her.

Can she speak first?

The Chair: I've given the floor to MP Ferreri.

I've noticed that MP Gazan has her hand up, and I acknowledge that she'll have the floor next.

Thank you.

Ms. Leah Gazan: On a point of order, Chair, I had my hand up before.

The history of this committee is that we have done things in fairness. I am devastated by the way this meeting is being handled today. I would like us to be collegial. I had my hand up. I would like that to be recognized. This is a very harmful meeting for everybody.

I would like my hand to be recognized, with all due respect, Chair.

Thank you.

The Chair: In absolute fairness, I did not see your hand. I now have, once it was acknowledged, and you'll have the floor as soon as Michelle is finished.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Madam Chair, I had my hand up. In all due fairness, on a point of order, I had my hand up. I was told that I had to wait until after the vote. It was acknowledged by you. Everybody in the committee saw it.

I would like my turn to speak now, Madam Chair, with all due respect.

Thank you.

The Chair: I did acknowledge your hand during the vote with reference to this debate. I did acknowledge Michelle first, and you will speak second.

Thank you.

Ms. Sonia Sidhu: I have a point of order, Madam Chair.

We all saw that Ms. Gazan had her hand up before the vote and after the vote. Everyone saw that. Please be fair with her.

The Chair: Indeed, I am being fair. I saw and acknowledged her hand up during the vote. I needn't explain myself.

What will happen is Michelle will speak, and then as soon as she is finished, Madam Gazan will happily have the floor.

Ms. Leah Gazan: I have a point of order, Chair.

As somebody who has spent her life fighting about issues around violence against women, I find it deeply troubling that my hand was up but it is not being acknowledged. We are talking about a committee where we are supposed to behave in a democratic manner. Certainly, the Canadian public expects us to behave in a democratic manner.

I would like my turn to speak, with all due respect, Chair, and for us to follow rules as has always happened in this committee, and certainly under our former chair, who has indicated she will not be running. I would like my opportunity to speak.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

• (1200)

The Chair: Thank you, MP Gazan. I own and I acknowledge that I saw your hand during the vote. At that point, once the debate started, I did pass the floor to MP Ferreri.

As soon as she is done, the floor will return to you.

Ms. Leah Gazan: I have a point of order, Madam Chair.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: I would like to speak to the same point of order.

Ms. Leah Gazan: The fact that there's not even an indigenous person on the panel today, when we are experiencing the highest rates of violence, when we did not get a chance to put in witnesses and when we just convicted a serial killer in my community for killing four women, is deeply troubling to me.

The fact that my voice is being silenced in the committee after not having an opportunity to put in witnesses is deeply offensive, deeply violent and deeply troubling. I had my hand up. I would like an opportunity to interject, Madam Chair, with all due respect.

Thank you.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: Madam Chair, I would just like to say that I'm in the room, and I saw Leah's hand go up before Michelle indicated that she wanted to speak.

The Chair: With all due respect, had we just continued on, we would have had both of you speak by now in the time we've allowed for this conversation. I do understand completely your frustration, Leah, and my sense of fairness is not being tested here. I saw your hand.

At this point, Ms. Ferreri has the floor.

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, Lib.): I have a point of order.

The Chair: Yes, go ahead.

Mrs. Jenica Atwin: I'd like to challenge your ruling. I see you've made your ruling, but I disagree with it, so I'd like to challenge the ruling of the chair at this time.

The Chair: At this point, there is a challenge to the chair, so we will go to a vote to direct how we would like to proceed.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: Is it to sustain the chair's ruling or to oppose?

The Chair: It is to sustain the chair's ruling.

Thank you.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: It is to sustain the ruling of the chair, so we know if we don't want to sustain....

The Chair: We will now vote.

(Ruling of the chair overturned: nays 6; yeas 3)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Richard Lehoux (Beauce, CPC): Madam Chair, I would like to ask a question.

[*English*]

The Chair: Yes, Richard.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Richard Lehoux: Madam Clerk, why wasn't I asked to vote?

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Madeleine Martin): I'm sorry, Mr. Lehoux. Mrs. Gray is replacing Ms. Vien, so I have her on the list right now. If you become a replacement, I will ask you to vote.

[*English*]

The Chair: At this point, Leah, you have the floor.

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

I'm really sad about a committee that has worked together to put together transformational studies being used politically today. I'm to speak to the motion, so I will do that, but before I do that, I have to share how devastated I am. I can tell you that as an indigenous woman in this place who decided to run because of this particular issue, because I live in ground zero for murdered and missing indigenous women and girls, because I live in and represent a community where we just had to convict a serial killer and because indigenous women are disposable. No indigenous women were asked to speak today, nobody from the LGBTQ community was asked to speak today and nobody from the trans community was asked to speak today about violence when we are the ones who are on the front lines of being disappeared and murdered.

I find it really hurtful the fact that we didn't even—

• (1205)

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: On a point of order, are we talking about the motion? Sorry. Are we debating the motion?

Ms. Leah Gazan: Okay, sorry. I'll get to the motion, then. I'll tell you why it's really important. It's that I have never in my time, since being elected, seen greater efforts to perpetrate state control on women's bodies. I'll give you a few examples in terms of abortion specifically.

MPs Viersen, Wagantall, Falk, Lewis, Motz and Kurek put forward identical petitions, presented in 2022 by members listed above, calling upon members of Parliament “to do everything in their power to prevent”—

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andr anne Larouche: Madam Chair, I have a point of order.

[*English*]

Ms. Leah Gazan: —“block, organize against, and vote against any effort by the government to revoke the charitable status of pro-life organizations”.

The Chair: Leah, we have a point of order.

Andr anne.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andr anne Larouche: It's just been brought to my attention that the sound online is problematic. Since I'm in the room, I can't hear it, but I've just been told that there is a problem with the volume of interpretation from English to French.

Can we check on that, please?

[*English*]

The Chair: Leah, we'll suspend for 20 seconds or so just to ensure that we have good sound being communicated from Zoom into the room.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Sure. No problem, Madam Chair. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll resume the meeting.

Leah, please feel free to continue.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Just before I start, I'm glad we were able to resolve this, because collegiality has been something that, as you know, I have bragged about in committee—

Mrs. Anna Roberts (King—Vaughan, CPC): I have a point of order.

The Chair: We have a point of order, Leah.

Anna, what's your point of order?

Mrs. Anna Roberts: I'm really disgusted in this whole day.

I want to apologize to the two witnesses for coming all this distance to help us solve a problem, that women in this country are being killed, and the other parties don't care. I'm disgusted. We need to be talking about this issue so that we can stop.

• (1210)

The Chair: This is not an active point of order.

At this point, Leah, you can continue.

Ms. Leah Gazan: I'm disgusted because I wasn't given a chance to put forward witnesses when I'm representing ground zero of murdered and missing indigenous women and girls. I could have called the families who just lost their loved ones to serial killers in my riding, down the street from where I live. Not one indigenous woman, not one trans woman, was asked. It was not done in a thoughtful way. It's a way of silencing voices. I do not accept that.

Getting back to the motion on abortion, if you want to talk about the state control of bodies, indigenous women have had it the worst, including the forced sterilization of our women, that continues today.

Let me continue about being disgusted. When I have been at the forefront, since being elected, of fighting against violence and getting bills passed, I will not make apologies to Conservatives who told me and all my sisters during the national inquiry that murdered and missing indigenous women and girls were not on their radar, that pushed against affirming that what was happening to indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQIA+ was an ongoing genocide and minimized the fact that it was thousands of indigenous women. I don't want to hear about that.

I've never gotten upset in this meeting, ever. I've worked to work with everybody here. Let me go on about the state control of women's bodies, something that has never happened to men. Name one law where men's bodies are being threatened by state control. Shame. Shame. Shameful.

There's the fact that a piece of backdoor legislation was opposed by every single women's organization across the country working to end violence. It's another example of using, once again, the crisis of violence against women for political points to push forward backdoor legislation threatening abortion. It says, "Canada is failing its pregnant women and their preborn children", something that's already protected under the Criminal Code. It was very aggressively opposed by all women's organizations across the country who are dealing with domestic violence, minus two pro-choice organizations.

There's the fact that in 2020, the current Conservative leader, Pierre Poilievre, claimed that Conservative MPs under his leadership would be allowed to vote their conscience on anti-choice legislation. There is no requirement in the Conservative Party to be pro-choice. This is in contrast, certainly, to the NDP. This was reported in the Toronto Star. Yet the entire Conservative Party, including the leader, even though it was opposed by all women's organizations that are dealing with violence, voted in favour of Bill C-311. This includes MPs who had previously claimed to be pro-choice. Following that vote, the Abortion Rights Coalition of Canada now lists all Conservative MPs as anti-choice.

It's not surprising to me that every Conservative member on the committee today voted against the motion. It's not surprising. This is about women's control over decisions. This is about the safety of women. This is about protecting women and diverse-gendered folks from state control over our bodies.

This is about protecting women from violence that is perpetrated by male Conservative members, including MP Jamil Jivani, who's best friends with Trump's running mate, J.D. Vance, from Yale Law School. Jivani was previously dismissed by Bell Media for misgendering a public figure, among other reasons. Jivani's best friend, Vance, has been quoted as saying that women should stay in abusive marriages and that getting a divorce is—

• (1215)

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: I have a point of order.

Ms. Leah Gazan: —too easy, and that career-oriented women are more—

The Chair: We have a point of order on the table.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: What's the relevance to the motion?

Ms. Leah Gazan: Absolutely, it is relevant to the motion. It is about—

Ms. Megan Walker: I have never experienced this level of disrespect in all of my years—

Ms. Leah Gazan: —a constant attack on women.

Ms. Megan Walker: —of advocating for women.

We are leaving. We will not ever [*Inaudible—Editor*].

The Chair: Your mic is not on. At this point, we don't have space to acknowledge that right now.

Ms. Leah Gazan: I want to acknowledge the witnesses, Madam Chair, because I'm the one—

Mrs. Anna Roberts: They've left.

The Chair: The witnesses are no longer in the room.

Leah, you still have the floor.

Ms. Leah Gazan: This is about collegiality. This is about using your political agenda.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: On a point of order, Madam Chair, collegiality is—

The Chair: Leah, we have a point of order.

Ms. Leah Gazan: This is disappointing.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: The witnesses have left the status of women committee. If we are collegial and if we are focusing on women here to resume.... They've actually turned their backs and left. They were here to represent all women, which is what this committee is for.

There are the staggering statistics that were recently released. That is what has happened, and we need to get back to this. We need to get back to this testimony if we're going to help women in this country.

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld: Let's vote. We'll get back to it.

Mrs. Anna Roberts: On a point of order, Madam Chair, I think what we've done today is revictimize these poor young women who came here to speak, not just on their behalf. She named multiple victims in her testimony. It's not about just one victim; it's about multiple victims—

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: —and they were indigenous.

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld: That's not a point order.

Mrs. Anna Roberts: It should be.

Mrs. Jenica Atwin: It's not a point of order.

The Chair: That was Mrs. Atwin, I believe.

Mrs. Jenica Atwin: I'm just saying it wasn't a point of order, Madam Chair. There have been a lot of points of order that were not actual points of order.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Tracy, is your hand up for a point of order?

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Originally, it was to speak, so if I can, I'll stay on the speaking order for later on, but I will make a point of order, because what has just occurred here with the witnesses who came here to testify is they have been completely shut out—

Ms. Sonia Sidhu: Madam Chair, that's not a point of order.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Madam Chair, the committee members here from the opposite parties, the Liberals and the NDP, have completely shut out these witnesses from testifying. It's absolutely brutal what has happened here. They are being revictimized.

Ms. Leah Gazan: I have a point of order.

The Chair: The floor is yours, Leah.

Ms. Leah Gazan: I'm stating facts. In 2019, Andrew Scheer, in response to the National Inquiry into Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls, said it shouldn't be labelled as a genocide. It's in a CBC article.

I have spent my whole life fighting for these issues, and I wasn't even given a chance to put witnesses forward. I am being taken out of my community, which is in a constant state of grieving, and prevented from door knocking and checking in on my neighbours. We cannot allow this committee to be dragged down the Conservative pole of taking over.

This is the only place where we, as women, have been able to sit, be collegial and bring forward witnesses. It's the only place. This is the place where we pushed for the red dress alert. This is the place where we put forward a study that gave a clear correlation between violence against women and resource extraction—something that a Conservative member during the study called disgusting in the news.

This is why I'm here in this committee. Everybody around the table, outside of members who are not regular committee members, knows I have always worked across party lines to make sure that this committee functions. To use women who are victims of violence, without proper, trauma-informed care—including, for me, by the way, as a survivor of violence—is really troubling.

I am devastated by what has happened here today. I'm devastated. I'm so devastated, Chair, that it's hard for me to hold back tears, because this was the one place in this place where women could sit in safety, and it's no longer safe.

What does that mean? It means that all of the work we are doing to fight for women is now in jeopardy because we're playing games, and we can't play games on the backs of women and gender-diverse people. Their lives are on the line, and what we do matters.

That's why I feel the way I do today.

● (1220)

We could have done this properly, Chair, because it is an epidemic of violence. Cities across the country have declared this an epidemic. There's no question about that.

We need to do better. We need to represent our constituents. We need to fight for people who don't have a voice, including the large number of women in my riding who are suffering violence.

I hope we can do better. Lives are on the line. This isn't a game. We can't play games in this committee. This is a life-and-death committee. I don't want to play games, because I respect our committee too much, and I respect the people whom we're fighting for, because when we don't, lives are on the line.

The Chair: Thank you, Leah.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Thank you, Chair.

The Chair: I would just like to acknowledge that this meeting was struck to hear testimony from survivors and law enforcement officials. It was my understanding that it is extremely important that we provide the opportunity and the space for police forces and victims to enlighten and share with the community as a whole, given our current mandate, so that we can try to do what we can to stop this epidemic.

At this point, Michelle, you have the floor.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Thanks, Madam Chair.

The status of women committee reconvened in the summer because Stats Canada released even more shocking statistics. We know this. We sit on the status of women committee.

The rate of domestic violence is at epic proportions. In Ontario alone, 95 municipalities have declared this a crisis. In his testimony today, the deputy chief from Peel said that a woman is strangled every single day just in his community.

We had a woman fly here from California to tell us, on the anniversary of her near-death experience with her abuser, that she doesn't feel safe to use her Canadian passport, because her attacker is personally rewarded for being an abuser under our federal Canadian laws. Her mom is standing here right now watching this.

The witnesses have left in tears. Megan Walker, who has worked with London police, said—

Mrs. Jenica Atwin: I have a point of order.

The Chair: Michelle, we have a point of order.

Mrs. Jenica Atwin: Madam Chair, what's the relevance to the motion, please?

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Thank you. I'm getting there.

Cait's mom is standing here.

We talked about this. This is the status of women committee. Women are the whole heartbeat of society. This wasn't a game.

The Liberal MP across the way says we said nobody cares. That was victim testimony. The victim's testimony said Trudeau doesn't care. It wasn't us.

The NDP colleague from Winnipeg has epic proportions of domestic violence, homicides and murders in her riding. There were plenty of references to indigenous folks. Cait, who was presenting here today, represented the voices of dozens of victims. So did Megan Walker, who has dedicated her life to empowering women. So did the deputy police chief.

What happened? The Liberal MP put forward a motion on abortion in the middle of testimony, when they were asking for legitimate change.

Do you know what this committee is supposed to do? It's supposed to say, "Listen. What are we doing differently?"

● (1225)

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: On a point of order, what's the relevance?

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: We're talking about your motion. That's what we're talking about, Liberal MP across the way. Nobody here brought up abortion. You did.

We brought these women and the police chief here today because we have bills sitting in the House of Commons that are actually making things worse right now. Please.

If you don't know this story, this is happening right now. This woman's body could be found at any time. Hopefully, she is found alive, but we have the headline, "Man charged with kidnapping as search for Markham woman continues". Right now, this is happening. If there's a member of this committee who doesn't think this is happening....

To my colleague from Winnipeg, 100%, but what is collegiality and what is compassion if you are not using this damn committee to change the legislation to save lives?

Ms. Leah Gazan: On a point of order, collegiality is giving people time to put forward witnesses, because we all care about the issue.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Okay. Perfect.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Collegiality is about making sure we do things properly so that we can deal with things and make change. That's what collegiality is.

To my friend across the way, who I've worked with very closely in committee in a collegial way—we work very respectfully—as somebody on the committee has been a known advocate on the front lines of this issue, I would have at least expected the opportunity to put forward witnesses. I would have respected that, and I would have acted collegially because I care about this committee.

That's what collegiality means to me.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Thank you.

That's not a point of order.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Just as a clarification, because it was pointed at me, indigenous women have their own voices. We can speak for ourselves. That's why it's important to have indigenous women here.

The Chair: Thank you. That was your point of order.

Michelle, it's back to you.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Thank you.

I think you are 100% right. That is why we need to extend these meetings. I'm going to put forward a motion.

On behalf of the entire committee—again, I will reiterate this to Cait's mom, who's standing here and had to witness her daughter leave in tears—I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

A voice: Sorry isn't good enough.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: I agree.

A voice: We've heard "sorry" a lot.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: I agree.

I would like to put forward a motion. This has to go further than the status of women committee, but I'm going to put forward this motion today. I move, given the testimony heard today, that the Standing Committee on the Status of Women hold four more meet-

ings on the impacts of violent crime against women and report to the House.

That is what I would suggest. It is merely to hear more from victims. In the spirit of my colleague's notes, let's do this.

Obviously, this is heated. Obviously, this is a serious issue, but to put forward a motion in the middle of victim testimony about abortion....

Mrs. Anna Roberts: It doesn't make sense.

The Chair: Okay. There is currently a motion on the floor—it's the original one—so we can't pass a second motion until the original motion is dealt with.

We'll have to resume, because there is still a speaking order on the original motion. We have to speak to that, and then we'll entertain your motion, MP Ferreri.

Tracy, you're next.

• (1230)

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

If we look at why we're here today, it was really prompted by new information that came from Stats Canada, which showed the increases in violence and the increases in crime. That's the whole reason for prompting this. I know there were some members, in particular the Liberal member who gave a five-minute partisan speech on how this wasn't important to be here today...but that's the whole reason we're here.

Sometimes issues emerge that are very important and very time-sensitive. I appreciate the fact that my colleagues put this together. This issue of violence against women, with the increases in crime and violence against women, is not something that can just sit until the House resumes in the fall. I appreciate that my colleagues worked on this.

Based on some of the comments made by Ms. Gazan at this committee, that this is an important topic that needs to be discussed more and that we need to hear from more witnesses, I do agree with that, and I think my colleagues agree with that. This is just a starting point for that. I think we do need to talk about this a lot more. Every day that passes.... When I heard the statistics the deputy chief gave of the violence that's occurring against women every day, it was very, very impactful. I thank him for being here today as well to give his experience on this.

Based on that, I would like to adjourn debate on the current motion so that we can move into the other motion that Ms. Ferreri would like to bring so that we can continue the discussion that seems to be very important to everyone who's at the committee today.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: I have a point of order, Madam Chair.

[*English*]

The Chair: Andréanne, we do have a dilatory motion on the table. I'll entertain your thoughts quickly.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: Everyone has spoken so far. So I will exercise my right to raise this point of order to denounce what happened at the Standing Committee on the Status of Women today.

I recently criticized, in a newspaper article, the fact that the party in power and the opposition are slinging mud at each other. I told journalists that I have seen various committees become political instead of advancing the causes they should be supporting.

I replaced someone on the Standing Committee on Health; that committee has become political. I replaced someone on the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security; that committee has become political. I replaced someone on the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development; that committee has become political. In the name of partisanship, we are no longer moving forward. Today, the Standing Committee on the Status of Women has done the same thing.

You have all fallen into the trap of politicizing the issue of violence against women. It's absolutely disappointing. Witnesses have left here crying. I've been here since I was elected in 2019, and I've never seen this before.

The Standing Committee on the Status of Women called an urgent meeting in 2020 to study the disproportionate effects of the pandemic on women. I came to work. I participated in those emergency meetings in 2020. I came back in 2022, in the middle of the summer, as the committee was meeting to study the situation of women in sport. Despite those hot issues, we managed to make progress.

I travelled to Ottawa today, and witnesses were crying as they left. I've never seen that, and I've never seen the committee operate in this way either.

I am extremely disappointed. The Standing Committee on the Status of Women used to boast that it was productive and that it did not play the partisan game or engage in mud-slinging. Until recently, I kept my fingers crossed and believed that my committee didn't do that.

Women must not be used as political pawns. But that is what is happening. So I wanted to denounce that and express myself, since everyone has done so. That's my point of order. I must denounce what happened today. There will be no winners today. Unfortunately, the big losers are all women who are victims of violence.

• (1235)

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Andréanne.

Indeed, I was gracious with the point of order.

We do have a dilatory motion on the table from Madam Gray to adjourn debate on that motion. At this point, we need to vote on the dilatory motion.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: Madam Chair, could we be reminded of which motion we're speaking to, please?

The Clerk: The vote is on Mrs. Gray's dilatory motion, which is to adjourn debate on the motion moved by Ms. Vandenberg.

[*English*]

(Motion negatived: nays 6; yeas 4)

The Chair: We will continue debate on that motion.

Anna, please go ahead.

Mrs. Anna Roberts: I would like to get agreement to adjourn this meeting, because I don't think we're getting anywhere.

The Chair: Is this a motion to adjourn?

Mrs. Anna Roberts: Yes.

The Chair: Is there consensus in the room or do we need a vote?

• (1240)

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: Yes, we'll adjourn.

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: The meeting is adjourned.

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