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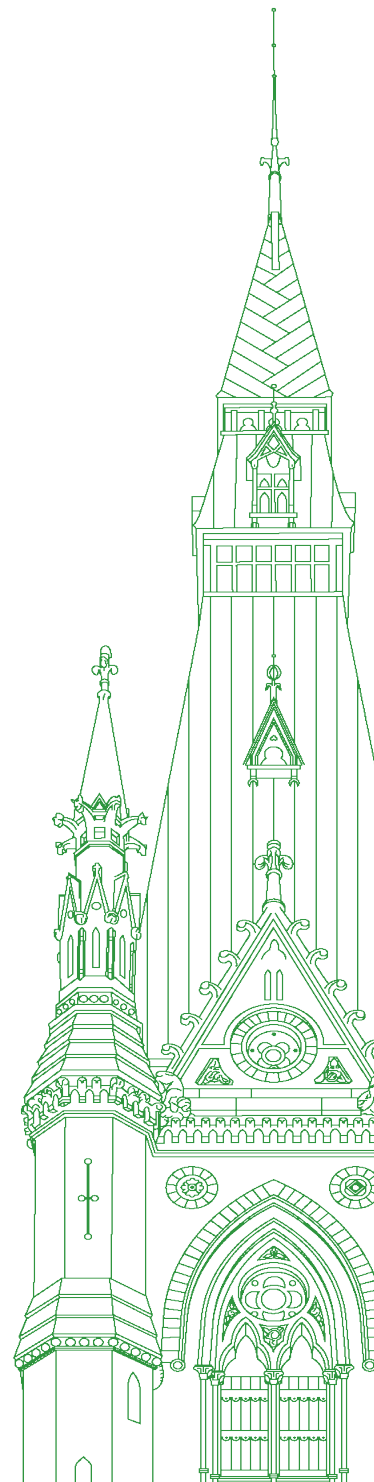
Standing Committee on the Status of Women

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Friday, April 1, 2022

Chair: Mrs. Karen Vecchio



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• (1300)

[English]

The Chair (Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC)): Good afternoon, everyone. Welcome to meeting number 12 of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women. I call this meeting to order.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted on Tuesday, February 1, the committee will resume its study on intimate partner and domestic violence in Canada.

Per the directive of the Board of Internal Economy on March 10, 2022, all those attending the meeting in person must wear a mask except for members who are at their place during proceedings.

[Translation]

To ensure that the meeting runs smoothly, I would like to pass on some instructions to the witnesses and members.

Before you speak, please wait for me to name you. If you are participating in the meeting via video conference, click on the microphone icon to activate your microphone. When not speaking, please mute your microphone.

Interpretation services are available to you. Those participating in the meeting by video conference have the choice of English, French, or the floor. These choices are offered at the bottom of the screen. Those in the room can use the headphones or choose the desired channel.

I remind you that all comments from members and witnesses should be directed to the chair.

[English]

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

I would like to welcome our witnesses and our guests today.

I am honoured to welcome the Minister for Women and Gender Equality, the Honourable Marci Ien. Joining her today from the Department of Women for Gender Equality are Alia Butt, who is the assistant deputy minister for strategic policy, and Lisa Smylie, who is the director general of the research, results and delivery branch.

We will begin with five minutes for the opening statement from the minister, and then we'll go to our round.

Minister, you have the floor for five minutes.

Hon. Marci Ien (Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Youth): Madam Chair, thank you so very much for the opportunity to appear before the status of women committee on the matter of intimate partner violence in Canada.

I applaud you and FEWO committee members for undertaking this important study of this form of gender-based violence, as any form of gender-based violence is a horrific human rights violation that can take a physical, psychological, emotional and financial toll on victims and survivors as well as their families.

There is absolutely no doubt that you have been appalled by statistics showing that more than 6.2 million women in Canada aged 15 and over have experienced violence from an intimate partner, someone they expect love and support from, someone they trust. It is also extremely disturbing that, between 2014 and 2020, 458 women were killed by a current or former intimate partner in Canada. To put that figure into context for everyone, that was one woman every six days. More recently, the Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability reports that 173 women and girls were violently killed in 2021, amounting to one death every two days.

Behind these abhorrent stats are stories of the shattered lives of millions of individuals, predominantly women and girls, whose pain and suffering is absolutely unthinkable.

[Translation]

In fact, gender-based violence has risen sharply. This phenomenon is often referred to as the COVID-19 phantom pandemic.

[English]

When our government saw this happening, we moved quickly to ensure that those experiencing GBV continued to have a safe place to turn to. Since April 2020, approximately \$300 million in emergency COVID funding has been committed to organizations supporting those experiencing GBV. This includes more than \$122 million that has already been provided to 1,300 women's shelters, sexual assault centres and other organizations providing critical supports and services. Because of this funding, more than 1.3 million individuals experiencing GBV had a place to go.

One of those places was the Saskatoon Interval House, which was facing financial difficulties due to the pandemic. With the federal emergency funding, they were able to continue helping those in need, providing families with hotel rooms while organizations helped to find them safe and affordable places to call home. They were also able to purchase equipment and programming to support clients online.

Madam Chair, this is one of many stories, and our government knows that there is so much more work to do. It's why budget 2021 announced more than \$3 billion over five years to prevent and address GBV, with \$601.3 million earmarked for the national action plan to end gender-based violence, which Women and Gender Equality Canada is leading. The national action plan will be guided by the needs of Canadians from every province and territory, taking into very careful account the intersections of sex, gender, gender expression, gender identity and perceived gender. It sends a clear message that gender-based violence will not be tolerated in our country and that our government will always stand alongside victims and survivors of violence no matter where they live.

In January 2021, at the 38th annual meeting of my provincial and territorial ministerial counterparts responsible for the status of women, we endorsed the joint declaration for a Canada free of gender-based violence, including a shared vision, principles and goals for the national action plan to eliminate GBV and advance gender equality for all Canadians.

As we move forward, it is critical to acknowledge that indigenous, Black and racialized women and girls, and LGBTQ2 and gender-diverse people continue to face higher rates of intimate partner violence. To address the pressing needs of indigenous peoples, budget 2021 announced \$2.2 billion over five years and \$160.9 million ongoing to build a safer, stronger and more inclusive response to the ongoing tragedy of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls.

Budget 2021 also invested \$236 million over five years to expand work to eliminate sexual misconduct and gender-based violence in the military and to support victims and survivors.

Of course, money alone will absolutely not put an end to GBV. We must continue to work with frontline organizations and better educate boys and men to be agents of change, because we all must step up to end GBV and build a stronger and safer Canada.

• (1305)

Madam Chair, our government is determined to prevent and end gender-based violence by working with provincial and territorial governments, and I sincerely hope that the committee's valuable study will encourage us to move faster.

[Translation]

Thank you very much.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much, Minister.

We'll be starting our first round with six minutes for each of the questioners. Today, we'll have time for both the second and the third rounds as well.

We're going to begin our first six minutes with Dominique Vien.

Dominique, you have the floor for six minutes.

[Translation]

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

Madam Minister, thank you for making yourself available to come and meet with us.

We are conducting a very serious study to which we are all very committed.

I have a few quick questions for you.

Of course, we could wage numbers wars. We have heard from organizations, from women and men. We need to hear from more men, and I'll come back to that. However, almost all the organizations and women who came to speak to us said that there was not enough money and that the needs were very great. You say that over the past two years, you have provided \$300 million through emergency funds to help the various groups. However, what we are told is that there is not enough money.

Last week, the director of an organization in the Ottawa area, whose name I can't remember, told us that she had to turn away 500 women. These are many women who have not had access to services in times of crisis and who have not been able to take refuge in times of violence. What is your response to that?

[English]

Hon. Marci Ien: Thank you so much for this very important question.

We are working on sustainability. The sustainability of vital women's and equality-seeking organizations is essential, and I hear you with respect to the organizations, but I will tell you that there are places that I have visited, and I'm thinking of one in Halifax in particular, that frankly could not have kept their doors open if not for federal funding.

We know there have been changes in recent years. We've enhanced our support to organizations focusing on supporting longer-term, higher-value funding to organizations, including capacity funding. We recognize that applications for funding could be an obstacle for some organizations, so we've streamlined the process if they are applying and do not have the bandwidth to set aside time to apply. We heard this. We streamlined it and made it simpler and more straightforward.

There are more than 250 projects under the capacity-building plan that have been supported in this way.

• (1310)

[Translation]

Mrs. Dominique Vien: Thank you.

The Minister of Finance will table her budget on April 7.

Have you met with her? Have you made any requests to her, such as increasing mission funding or core funding for organizations that welcome women in difficulty and women who need to leave a violent environment?

[English]

Hon. Marci Ien: I will always stand up and be there for the organizations, for the women and for the youth whom I serve.

I have indeed put forward requests. We will see what happens come April 7, but I believe that our government, as has been the case since the strategy was tabled in 2017, has stood beside women and has stood beside organizations on the ground that are undergoing challenges, especially now. As we know, this pandemic is not over. We continue to provide supports.

I'm going to turn to Lisa now, who can provide some numbers. You did allude to numbers and maybe a war of numbers, and she can provide some numbers that would help.

[Translation]

Mrs. Dominique Vien: Thank you very much.

I would be very grateful if she sent these figures to the committee. I don't have much time.

Madam Minister, there are men who experience hardship and men who are violent. Violence can start very young. There is also interest in intimate partner violence among teenagers.

What are you doing for men's groups at the moment? How do you address them? What do you say to them?

They have to be part of the solution too.

[English]

Hon. Marci Ien: Absolutely. I want to talk about something personal here, because this is something that I have advocated for for a long time. It's this whole idea of calling in boys, calling in men and being there to support men.

I met with an indigenous leader from Iqaluit some months ago, and she said something that I have long remembered. It's an adage that I am living by and trying to lead my ministry by. She said, "Marci, an eagle cannot fly with one wing", meaning that, when it comes to gender-based violence, if we are addressing only women and not engaging and addressing men and boys, then we will not get to the bottom of this.

WAGE leads several activities to engage men and boys as allies in advancing gender equality and ending gender-based violence. For example, in 2018, WAGE held a series of round tables right across the country on how to engage boys and advance this. It led to a report called "What We Heard", which really has informed WAGE's work to date.

Since 2015, WAGE has provided \$16.3 million to 40 different organizations that are on the ground engaging men and boys and hearing from those boys, because it's important.

The Chair: You have 30 seconds.

Hon. Marci Ien: We know that this is cyclical. If boys experience violence at a young age or they see something in the home, by and large they will repeat that, so engaging boys at an early age is important to us and important to me.

[Translation]

Mrs. Dominique Vien: What kind of support do you give to homes and organizations that help abusive men at the moment?

[English]

Hon. Marci Ien: I'm going to go back to the elder in Iqaluit, who was a social worker and a leader. Right now, she is undergoing a process where she is calling in the men in her community who have victimized or who have displayed abusive behaviour, and she is understanding why—by talking to them, learning about their experiences and understanding why they do what they do.

The Chair: Thank you.

Hon. Marci Ien: We can provide more information, though.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Minister.

We're now going to move over for the next six minutes to Jenna Sudds.

Jenna, you have the floor.

Mrs. Jenna Sudds (Kanata—Carleton, Lib.): Thank you so much.

Thank you, Minister, for being here today and contributing to this study. It's been, I think, eight weeks now and there have been some fantastic testimony and learnings.

What I'd like to ask you about this afternoon is this. I know that in 2017 our government brought forward the federal strategy to end gender-based violence. Building on that momentum this year, the government is set to release a 10-year national action plan.

I would love for you to explain to us the difference between these plans and also how they're related.

• (1315)

Hon. Marci Ien: How about I start with the similarities? In terms of similarities, both the strategy and the NAP link together all of the GBV-related efforts of all of the federal departments, because this is a very inclusive approach. The departments and the agencies form a kind of whole-of-Government of Canada approach to GBV in Canada.

The federal strategy was to make sure that there was federal co-ordination to eliminate GBV altogether and create a runway for the national action plan, hence the 10 years, whereas the national action plan is to coordinate the federal government with jurisdictions across Canada at every level.

Mrs. Jenna Sudds: Thank you so much.

Maybe building on that, can you share with us the progress that's been made with respect to the national action plan, and perhaps share a few key points from that?

Hon. Marci Ien: Absolutely. Our government is committed to ending GBV in all of its forms, and budget 2021 reaffirmed that with \$3 billion.

In talking to my provincial and territorial counterparts, I have found that there is not one approach that works for every single province. This is very much what I call an all-of-governments approach when I refer to my provincial and territorial counterparts, in saying that what is good for Quebec may not be good for Saskatchewan, what's good for Ontario might not be the priority in Manitoba, and so forth.

It's listening to the leaders in each province and territory, understanding that they are in touch with the grassroots organizations—those that are on the ground and that are serving—and hearing and listening to all of that and putting forward all of that information. That has led to the beginning of a framework that we agreed to in January—something quite significant—and I'm looking forward, as my mandate states, to providing a framework by fall.

Mrs. Jenna Sudds: Fantastic. Thank you so much, Minister.

With that, I will pass it over to Sonia.

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

Thank you, Minister, for the work you and your team are doing and for being with us today.

Minister, we know that women, especially racialized women, have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic, both at work and in the home. Looking forward, what can you tell us about the government's plans to make sure that our economic recovery is feminist and intersectional, and sets women up for success?

Hon. Marci Ien: Sonia, thanks for the question.

It really is pivotal and it is at the forefront of everything. Under the federal GBV strategy and our plan, the priority is to increase support for the most vulnerable populations. I would like to point out here that when we say “women”, women are not a homogeneous group.

We know, as you mentioned, Sonia, that racialized indigenous women have seen more violence during this pandemic and have had more trauma. We have to recognize that, and this plan recognizes that—so it's women, girls, indigenous women and girls, LGBTQ2 and gender-diverse individuals. I want to include here as well women living in the north, and women in rural and remote communities.

I was speaking to someone just the other day who said that when you're dealing with a rural community and you're experiencing intimate partner violence, everybody in town knows your business. If you go and seek help, there's usually one place to seek it and everybody will know. That sometimes stops people from coming forward, and that's something to consider. How do we help women like that, who are feeling isolated and who are isolated, so that they can seek help when they need it? It's women with disabilities and girls with disabilities, as well.

I'll give you an example, Sonia. There's a project, Eagle Vision. It's an excellent example of prioritizing culturally competent programming. They've developed a series of podcasts, which really is the way to go, and I'm not just saying this as a former journalist. A lot of people tune in. A lot of people take note of podcasts these days. It's called *Taken: The Podcast Series*, and it shares the stories of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls to help solve cases and raise awareness of the issue. What I want to tell you here, though, is that these podcasts are reaching more than 600,000 Canadians, who listened to the podcast more than 1.4 million times.

The Chair: You have 30 seconds.

Hon. Marci Ien: It's available in English and Cree as well.

Ms. Sonia Sidhu: Thank you, Minister.

Madam Chair, do I have more time?

• (1320)

The Chair: You have 18 seconds.

Ms. Sonia Sidhu: I'll pass it on.

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

We're now going to pass the floor to Andréanne Larouche.

Andréanne, you have the floor for six minutes.

[Translation]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Thank you very much, Madam Minister, for being with us today. Your presence is timely, in the middle of our study on violence against women and domestic violence. In fact, our study is coming to an end, but all the work remains to be done.

Madam Minister, in Quebec, we have been following the issue of violence against women closely. In fact, one of the last femicides in Quebec took place very close to my home, in Dunham, where another woman was killed in a violent context. It's always a tragedy, and I hope we'll have recommendations.

My first recommendation is about funding. You talked about the importance of funding for a number of organizations, including shelters for women who are victims of domestic violence, who came to testify before the committee. However, they mentioned the importance of stable and recurrent funding from the government, so I want to come back to that.

As part of your action plan to end gender-based violence, do you plan to establish stable, recurrent funding for frontline agencies that support women victims?

[English]

Hon. Marci Ien: Thank you so much, Andréanne, for the question.

[Translation]

The elimination of gender-based violence in Canada will not be possible without coordination among all levels of government.

[English]

During this pandemic, Andréanne, when shelters reached out to us for assistance, as I said before, WAGE distributed \$100 million to more than 1,300 shelters, sexual assault centres and other organizations providing critical supports for GBV. This funding was distributed through partners such as Women's Shelters Canada and the Canadian Women's Foundation, but also through the Government of Quebec. Quebec received approximately \$17 million of this funding.

Budget 2021 announced \$200 million to support shelters and organizations, which is already flowing to service providers. Of that, Quebec is specifically allocated \$44 million over two years.

[Translation]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: These are interesting sums of money, Madam Minister, but I spoke to someone who worked at the Quebec Ministry of Public Security last year, and he was lamenting the fact that this funding sometimes came with conditions. The Quebec government asks that transfers, whether for health or for shelters, be made without conditions. Last year, in the midst of the pandemic, it took the federal government another six months to reach an agreement with Quebec on the transfer of the money it was requesting for shelters, because the federal government was trying to attach conditions. Obviously, as you say, reaching an agreement with Quebec and with each province is different.

Do you recognize that? Will you commit to ensuring that the upcoming negotiations with Quebec on transfers do not take longer, to listen to its demands on the matter and to try to speed up the process?

[English]

Hon. Marci Ien: Andréanne, I won't commit to anything until I see forthright exactly what conditions we're talking about. Please, if you will, forward to my office those conditions and the agency or organization that you're talking about. I would be pleased to look at it.

[Translation]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: One of my colleagues also spoke about the budget, which will be tabled next week. We look forward to seeing it and we hope you have spoken to the Minister of Finance.

Domestic violence is an intersectional issue. It concerns many people. For example, in Quebec, the report "Rebâtir la confiance" [Rebuilding trust] was tabled, which is non-partisan and involves several departments. Indeed, it affects justice, public security and the status of women.

I hope we do the same thing in Ottawa. Talking about money and coming to an agreement with the Minister of Finance is one thing, but there are other departments involved. For example, the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, as part of its study to explore solutions to end gender-based violence, tabled a report entitled "The Shadow Pandemic: stopping coercive and controlling be-

haviour in intimate relationships". I was talking about it to my colleague, the member for Rivière-du-Nord.

Since some of the recommendations, such as the creation of a specialized court, concern the Department of Justice, have you had any discussions with your colleague the Minister of Justice?

[English]

Hon. Marci Ien: You're absolutely right, Andréanne. This is in all ministries, plural. It is an all-of-government approach. I like to call our ministry the glue, because it really does touch every single department in government.

The answer to your question is yes. I am in constant collaboration with the Minister of Justice, the Minister of Public Safety, the Minister of Defence and the Minister of Housing—all of the ministries—because all of them interact with and impact women and gender equality.

• (1325)

[Translation]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: There is also the issue of tracking bracelets. Since sentences of more than two years are served in federal institutions, the Quebec government cannot intervene with serious offenders, and therefore it is asking that the federal government follow suit with regard to tracking bracelets.

Ms. Ien, as Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Youth, could you ask your colleague the Minister of Justice to have your government respond positively to this request from Quebec? Quebec is asking the federal government to follow suit, and this request to the Department of Justice could help resolve cases of violence.

[English]

Hon. Marci Ien: Yes. As I said, Andréanne, I am in constant communication with David Lametti and others, and I continue to support. When it comes to matters that are clearly in his purview, he will ultimately make those decisions, but please know that I am supporting and that we are in constant communication about these matters.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We're now going to pass the floor over to Jenny Kwan.

Jenny, at five minutes I will let you know that you have only a minute left.

Please go ahead for six minutes.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Thank you, Minister, for coming to the committee today.

I'm subbing in for MP Leah Gazan.

I would like to first ask the minister about core funding. The Women's Legal Education and Action Fund, in collaboration with 26 gender equality organizations across the country, called for your government to commit \$25 million per year over 10 years for sustained core funding for women and gender equity organizations so that they are able to continue advocating for and providing frontline services and support to those in need and those who are fleeing violence.

This promise was included in the minister's mandate letter. As we know, the rates of violence are increasing, and really for many of the women who are faced with domestic violence and violence in our community, action is slow, so there's no time to wait.

When can we expect funds to be released to ensure that organizations on the front lines are able to respond to this violence [*Technical difficulty—Editor*]?

The Chair: Before the minister responds, I will ask you, Jenny, to check your microphone and ensure that you also have the microphone checked on your computer.

With that, I'm going to pass the floor over to Marci.

Marci, you have the floor.

Hon. Marci Ien: Thank you so much, Madam Chair, and thank you for the question. It is clearly an important one.

I will say that since April 2020, WAGE has distributed more than \$122 million, and that money has gone to more than 1,300 shelters, sexual assault centres and other organizations that are providing pivotal supports for those experiencing GBV. Because of this funding, 1.3 million individuals experiencing violence had somewhere to go, had a place to turn to and had supports that they needed.

Digging into this a little deeper, 448 organizations were able to hire new staff, and nearly 500 organizations were able to hire additional staff or extend shifts, which was so important during this time and which continues to be important, to respond to the increased demands for supports and services that we have heard about today and that you have heard about in this committee; 560 organizations were able to expand programs and services to respond to increases in GBV during this pandemic; 230 organizations were able to acquire new rental housing units or shelter beds; and 96 organizations were able to support child care, as well as services in support of children, because we know that when women are fleeing intimate partner violence, many have children with them and they need special supports to make sure they are okay.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Thank you, Minister.

I hope the sound is better. We did test it earlier and it was fine, so I don't know what happened.

Can you hear me now?

The Chair: We can hear you. It's all good.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Okay. Thank you.

Minister, I appreciate the funding that has been allocated. However, what the organizations are asking for is sustained, ongoing core funding, and that is not what is being made available. I am

aware of the funding that has been allocated during the pandemic period, but that is not sustained core funding.

My question is about core funding. Will there be a specific allocation for core funding?

Hon. Marci Ien: Yes. We have had changes. We have seen changes in recent years, Jenny, and we have enhanced our support to organizations.

If you look at what we have done, you can see that we are supporting organizations on the ground with longer-term, higher-value funding. We understand that this is working, including for capacity funding. That has meant that more than 200 projects under the capacity-building fund have been supported in this way, and it focuses on strategic planning.

• (1330)

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Thank you, Minister.

I have limited time, so I'll ask you and your department to table with the committee the core funding allocation to the organizations throughout the country, so we're aware which organizations received core funding from the government, for how long, and how much. If I could receive that for all the organizations across the country, I would appreciate it.

I'd like to move on to another question. The issue is, of course, as the minister indicated, the concerns around the missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, yet communities have been waiting for the government to act with a real plan, a real rollout, and real markers in terms of progress on this file.

We haven't seen very much, quite frankly. The Coalition on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, in my riding of Vancouver East, meets regularly. We are absolutely desperate for leadership from the federal government on this file. So many family members continue to look for their loved ones on their own, without support from the government. Women and girls continue to go missing. They continue to be murdered, to the present day.

Will the minister allocate resources to families, as they engage in this work to look for their loved ones without any help from any government?

Hon. Marci Ien: The Government of Canada is continuing its efforts to end this tragedy. In my mind, if we don't get this right, then we don't get anything right. This is absolutely pivotal.

I want to turn my attention—because you asked what we were doing for the communities—to the call for proposals made by WAGE. This call for proposals was meant to bolster the capacity of indigenous organizations and 2SLGBTQIA+ organizations to provide gender-based violence prevention programming that would focus on addressing the root causes of violence against indigenous people. That call for proposals was \$55 million, and we've had an excellent response to it. We have had responses that go right across the country.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

We're going to start our second round. We'll be doing five minutes for both the CPC and the Liberals, and two and a half minutes for the NDP and the Bloc.

I will begin with Shelby.

Shelby, you have five minutes.

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

Thank you, Minister, for being here today.

You mentioned earlier in your comments that you're not throwing millions of dollars at programs and expecting that to fix everything, but I'm not confident that's working.

What I'm going to speak about today.... Through the gender-based violence strategy, funding was allocated to Women and Gender Equality and the Public Health Agency of Canada to address three different things: developing and testing innovative practices in youth/teen dating violence prevention, preventing bullying and cyberbullying, and developing a framework to address gender-based violence in post-secondary institutions.

I'm not seeing a tremendous amount of progress, as much as we would like. It's a really concerning issue, for several different reasons.

What results do you think have come out of those particular frameworks? Considering the funding is set to expire soon—and I recognize you can't anticipate and share what's forthcoming in the budget—where are you at with this?

Hon. Marci Ien: It's such an important question.

I am very much a research-based person, Shelby, so numbers matter to me. We've spent \$30 million just to equip our department to do research and get disaggregated data to address a lot of what you've just talked about.

I'm going to turn to Lisa, who has those numbers and can amplify them for you.

Dr. Lisa Smylie (Director General, Research, Results and Delivery Branch, Department for Women and Gender Equality): Through the federal strategy, as the minister said, we've spent over \$30 million in research since 2017, and that has given us three new national surveys, including an ability to better understand intimate partner violence. Through that strategy, since 2015, we've also invested \$213 million in 557 projects that have reached nearly 1.3 million women. That's 1.3 million women who have had programs and supports related to gender-based violence, because of this federal framework.

As the minister has already said, during the pandemic, we have invested over \$122 million in over 1,300 shelters, sexual assault centres, and other gender-based violence organizations, which have reached more than 1.3 million women.

• (1335)

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: Thank you so much. I appreciate that. Any further documentation you could provide to the committee would be helpful.

I guess it's concerning, just because we often talk about how many millions and how many thousands of dollars are being spent on something—and I appreciate that there is work being done and I can respect that—but after listening to several different witnesses over the course of the last several weeks, it just seems as though every time we turn around.... Of course, they're asking for more funding, but how do we use that funding so that we no longer have 500 people being turned away at shelters?

My next question, then, would be.... Yes, you've committed to additional funding for shelters in 2021—in fact, over \$300 million—so what is the progress of this funding and how is it being allocated to shelters across the country? How many women's shelters and how many men's shelters?

Again, this is not going away. It was intended to be fixed years ago. We heard from one particular witness that 20 years ago they had an endgame of 10 years and were hoping to have this situation solved, but today, again.... You're insinuating that you're not going to stop until it's solved. What is it going to take? How can we best use these millions of dollars that are being poured into these programs? Money doesn't solve everything. We need action and actual programs.

The Chair: You have 55 seconds.

Hon. Marci Ien: Oh boy.

Absolutely, it's the bane of my existence, Shelby. It's the reason we're here, but I'll give you a couple of examples.

From 2017 to 2020, for example, WAGE provided the Newfoundland Aboriginal Women's Network nearly \$300,000 to increase women's reporting of domestic violence. That's on-the-ground, tangible stuff. As a result of this funding, more than 1,200 indigenous women who experienced violence now have access to culturally relevant supports. That is really important. You wanted an on-the-ground example. In Halifax, I visited a friendship centre, and while reports of GBV weren't up exponentially in the provincial numbers, they were at that centre.

The fact that women fleeing violence, indigenous women, could meet with therapists and people who looked like them, who could understand their experiences, was so important. The executive director at that shelter said, "Our numbers are up. The province's may not be, but ours are up because cultural relevance is important."

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you so much, Minister.

We're now going to pass it over to Anita Vandenberg.

Anita, you have the floor for five minutes.

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

I want to thank you, Minister, for being here today.

One of the things we've heard throughout this study is that there is a link between gender-based violence or intimate partner violence and poverty. Despite progress, there is still a persistent wage gap in our country. There are many reasons for this.

We know that women working in jobs with the same education level and same skill set as their male counterparts are making less. We know that women primarily have more responsibility in terms of caregiving. We know that women have less access to capital. This persists throughout their lives, and when they retire, because they're not paying as much into pensions, we see more poverty among senior women. This makes women vulnerable throughout their lifetime.

I was wondering if you could tell us a bit about what we are doing and what you are doing to address the gender wage gap in Canada.

Hon. Marci Ien: This is such an important question to raise. Again, this is an example of an all-of-government approach. You mentioned housing and you mentioned a lot of things there. Again, I'm liaising with all my ministerial counterparts to make sure that we address this properly. Our government recognizes that making sure women are financially independent gives them the mobility to leave; if they're in an unsafe situation, they can leave. That is not the case for so many women, and we know that.

For example, in collaboration with Minister Hussen, the minister responsible for housing.... If you look at the housing strategy, 25% of the 10-year rapid housing plan is dedicated specifically to women and children. This is a \$70-billion plan. I've seen the results of this in my own riding of Toronto Centre. I've seen it take hold and make a difference. What that means is that at least 7,000 spaces will be created or repaired for survivors of family violence, and that's a huge thing.

The women entrepreneurship fund, which facilitates access and capacity for women to start their own businesses, is very important to attain that independence, Anita, that you talk about. Minister Ng, who put this forward, is really seeing the impact of women being supported and starting their own businesses, because when women thrive, communities thrive. Now, our entire country, thank goodness, has affordable child care, and we know what that means. Women were making the decision of either having to stay home or, in a lot of cases, work and pursue their goals in their professions.

All of these things make it easier for women to leave an unsafe environment.

• (1340)

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: Thank you.

I'm passing my time to Ms. Lambropoulos.

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

Thank you, Minister Ien, for being here with us to answer some of our questions today. I really appreciate your taking the time.

I only have a little bit of time left, and I know that you have already touched on some of the questions I had in mind, so I'll try to

focus a bit more on something that hasn't necessarily been answered.

We heard from a lot of witnesses about the number of young people who go through gender-based violence and the number of young women who are affected. This is the biggest group that is affected. We also know that no matter how much funding we put into it, it's still an issue, and it's more of an issue now because of the pandemic than it has ever been in the past.

Nipping it in the bud seems to be the best way to go about it. What are your thoughts on teaching women what healthy relationships are like and what boundaries to set? How much importance are you placing on that in this mandate?

Hon. Marci Ien: It has so much importance, Emmanuella.

At present, WAGE is funding projects that contribute to the promotion of healthy relationships, because that's where things start among youth in Canada. We're developing a youth campaign on gender-based violence. We're going as young as 14 up to 24 years of age. It includes things like resources for youth and information on sexual violence, consent—which is so important—and healthy relationships.

WAGE is also funding White Ribbon with \$1.65 million to support the development, implementation and evaluation of a social marketing campaign. We're going to them where they are, to inspire men and young men across the country to change their attitudes and behaviours, to seek help when they need it, to embrace their role as allies and to embrace their role as change-makers.

The Chair: You have 15 seconds left.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Thank you very much.

I appreciate the work you're doing on this file.

The Chair: Thank you.

Now we're going to pass it over for two and a half minutes to Andréanne.

You have the floor.

[Translation]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Madam Minister, the importance of investing in housing is a cross-departmental issue. You can't get a woman out of violence without getting her out of the cycle of poverty, without finding her housing so she can be in a safe place.

It's also important to have this discussion with the minister responsible for entrepreneurship programs, because it's even more difficult for women to get into entrepreneurship and to access programs that provide funding.

I would like to come back to your collaboration with the Department of Justice. Several experts in the field of intimate partner and spousal violence testified before the committee during this study. They called on the federal government to criminalize coercive control.

This has been done elsewhere in the world. Scotland is a model for this. These experts have demonstrated the importance of broadening the definition of this violence, because domestic violence is not just physical; hitting is not always involved, but it always hurts.

Considering that 60% to 80% of women who seek help for domestic violence have experienced coercive control, do you not see the urgency and importance of criminalizing coercive control through legislation?

Do you think your government could learn from Scotland?

[English]

Hon. Marci Ien: Andréanne, you are absolutely right that everybody has the right to live free from violence.

I know we've all probably seen Elizabeth Renzetti's excellent pieces in The Globe and Mail on coercive control. It is front of mind. When we talk about GBV, coercive and controlling behaviours are a big part of that.

It's time. Canada's strategy to prevent and address gender-based violence, which was launched in 2017, brings together the efforts of all federal partners related to gender-based violence, including Justice Canada, to form a whole-of-government approach to end GBV in this country. My colleague, the Honourable David Lametti, Minister of Justice, leads Canada's important work to address coercive and controlling behaviour, and he has my support to do that.

• (1345)

[Translation]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: Have you and the minister thought about domestic violence training for judges and all judicial actors, including training on coercive control, as many experts request that more training be provided to stakeholders on the subject?

[English]

The Chair: You have 30 seconds.

Hon. Marci Ien: As I said, I will work alongside the Honourable David Lametti to that end, and I would be pleased to provide any information I can to you, Andréanne, or to your office.

The Chair: Thank you so much.

We're now going to move it over to Jenny Kwan for two and a half minutes.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Thank you.

I want to touch back on the issue of the missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. I just want to note that the national action plan must outline timelines, responsibilities, milestones, indicators, resources and indigenous leadership for each and every call for justice, as well as regional and sector-specific reports and recommendations. I hope that there will be action taken in this regard and that it would be outlined in the upcoming budget.

The minister touched on the issue of poverty, and we know from research that raising living standards and lifting individuals out of poverty are one of the key ways to address intimate partner violence.

MP Leah Gazan has put forward a bill for a guaranteed livable basic income, to ensure that individuals and families doing unpaid care work can have economic autonomy and opportunities to leave harmful living situations.

I'd like to ask the minister if she would agree that this is a fundamental step for the government to take to lift individuals out of poverty. Will she support that private member's bill?

Hon. Marci Ien: Jenny, thank you for the question.

Of course, everything is on the table. Poverty, as you know, is a huge part of the reason why women don't leave intimate partner violence. As I have addressed with my previous colleague, we are providing and putting things in place, including a child care program that will help women across this country, with \$10-a-day child care by 2025 and cutting child care costs in half by the end of this year, which will help women.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Minister, if you can just answer my question.... When you say everything is on the table, will you support the bill?

Hon. Marci Ien: Everything is under consideration, Jenny. That's what I'll say at this time.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Are there discussions with respect to this, in terms of the government taking action on a guaranteed livable basic income?

Hon. Marci Ien: We are considering all approaches, Jenny, and that's what I will say at this time.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: All right. I urge you, Minister, to take significant action on this. Talking about it is actually of no help for the people. What we need is for the government to implement the bill.

I would urge the minister to take that action and to be a real champion for women, especially women who are fleeing violence.

The Chair: You have 10 seconds to reply, Minister, just quickly.

Hon. Marci Ien: I was just going to say that the government and I, as minister, have demonstrated leadership.

As I said, this is the bane of my existence. I want to serve in this capacity well, as does my team, and we take all of this very seriously. Any kind of comment to the contrary is absolutely not true.

The Chair: Thank you so much.

We are now going into our third round. It will be five minutes for both Shelby and Pam.

Oh, golly gee, I'm sorry. Michelle Ferreri, how about you get on there?

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

The Chair: It's Friday afternoon at 1:50, sorry.

Michelle, you have the floor for five minutes.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Thank you.

Minister, it's a pleasure to finally meet you. I wish we were meeting in different circumstances. I think we have some mutual friends, and I have a lot of respect for what you're doing and for a lot of what you said. I wish we had two hours, to be honest with you, because this really is a non-partisan issue in so many regards, and I can see your effort. I can see your passion, and I can see your authenticity. I really value that, and I appreciate it today.

I want to talk a little about two things, if I can. We've seen a real shift. I loved your comment that the eagle can't fly with one wing. I'm very interested in what we're doing for our young boys and men, and how we're changing that. We've seen some incredible growth with women and opportunities, like yourself being a female minister of colour. It's amazing.

We see women who are now having these opportunities, but our men have not had an opportunity to transition with that. We had clearly defined gender-based roles for years, for decades. We look at the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s models of pink jobs versus blue jobs, and now we have men who sometimes don't know where they fit as a result of a strong, powerful woman, and that can often translate into perhaps coercive control or an unhealthy relationship.

What do you think would be an effective strategy to teach our youth about knowing what your place is? It really comes down to men maybe not feeling like they have a place if the woman is now providing the money, if the woman is now doing these things. What can we do in terms of policy and culture to help men know that they are still very important as we all evolve?

• (1350)

Hon. Marci Ien: Michelle, thanks so much for the question, and it's great to see you, albeit virtually.

This is really important. "The eagle can't fly with one wing" is just that, and it gets to the heart of it. We have to call men and boys in and make sure that they are at the table and that we are engaging in conversation and listening and understanding.

I'm going to point again to my indigenous friend in Iqaluit, who said that this is where she's centring her work, because so many women have been abused. So many are fleeing intimate partner violence. She wants to get to the root of it, and that means peeling back the layers of men themselves who are perpetuating this violence but who have gone through violent situations themselves. They've gone through horrendous things, whether they are residential school survivors who themselves have families and perpetuate violence because they saw violence.... It's all of these things. Violence begets violence, so it's about calling the men and boys in. It's listening. It's not just speaking to them and talking at them. It's listening to them.

Since 2015, WAGE has provided \$16 million to over 40 organizations that do just that. They engage men. They engage boys, and they look at gender-based violence protection.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: That's great, and I loved your comment that money isn't the only thing. I was so glad to hear you say that, because it is such a mosaic. I know with your background, we cannot.... You talked about social media and influence. I think it's going to be really critical that we change culture and thinking so that roles aren't defined.

I want to go to a very important topic right now, ex-defence chief Jonathan Vance, a very big issue we've come across. Sabrina Maddeaux published an article, and she's saying that this can't even be described as a slap on the wrist, because he "was allowed to walk away from his sole criminal charge" because he was a man of good character. I want to go to the point where it said, "not because of a lack of evidence, but because Vance was literally too powerful to be held accountable".

How do we shift that, not just in the military, but in politics and in all facets? What can we do in terms of policy to make sure this doesn't ever happen again?

Hon. Marci Ien: You're talk about changing an entire system.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Yes.

Hon. Marci Ien: An entire system isn't going to change overnight, as you know, Michelle, but there are most certainly things we can do.

As directed in my mandate that came out in December 2021, I continue to work very closely with the Minister of National Defence to end discrimination and sexual misconduct in all forms of gender-based violence in the military.

Specifically, though, General Vance's guilty plea and subsequent sentencing are part of an individual criminal case about an individual defendant. Our responsibility and commitment as a government is to continue to build an institution where everyone can work with the respect and protections they need to do their jobs. We want more women stepping up and wanting to serve, and we want them to be able to do that in a safe environment and feel confident that they can go to work without being harassed in any way.

That is our most basic responsibility, and I can tell you that it's Minister Anand's utmost priority. She works to end any kind of discrimination—

The Chair: Minister, we're way over time.

Hon. Marci Ien: I'm so sorry. I'm such a talker.

The Chair: It's you versus me. I think we got this.

Hon. Marci Ien: Michelle, it's a great question, and I would love to engage further on this. We can maybe set a time outside of committee to talk more about this.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Thank you so much.

The Chair: Thank you so much.

For our final round, we're going to pass it over to Pam Damoff.

Pam, you have five minutes.

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Thank you so much, Chair, and to everyone here.

Minister Ien, thank you for being here and for the work you're doing.

I have long said that firearm violence should be treated as a public health issue. We need to consider the burden of injury from firearm deaths. This includes guns and gangs, which get all the press, but it also includes suicides, which make up over 75% of firearm deaths, and domestic violence.

In 2016, the Ontario coroner's death review panel said that 26% of deaths in Ontario that related to intimate partner violence involved a firearm. I've spoken to them and that number is higher today. A peer-reviewed study was done in rural New Brunswick and P.E.I., and it found that two-thirds of the women whose homes had firearms said that knowing firearms were present made them fearful for their safety and well-being, and 70% said that it affected their decisions regarding whether to tell others or seek help for the abuse they received.

I wonder, Minister, if you could comment on what we need to do when it comes to firearms, because I think it's an aspect that often gets overlooked in conversations about this.

• (1355)

Hon. Marci Ien: You're absolutely right, Pam. It's about collaborating with my colleagues on this very important question, as well—and I do, with the public safety minister, the honourable Marco Mendicino. We talk often about this.

I represent Toronto Centre. I see a lot of firearms issues. I see a lot of gun violence. A lot of that gun violence is perpetuated against women and, sadly, girls more than I would like or am ever comfortable with.

Shootings are regularly the most commonly reported means of killing women and girls in Canada. It is as simple as that. From the Canadian Femicide Observatory's annual report, we know that for every victim of femicide, there are many more who have physically survived, but who are struggling mentally. They have gone through such trauma, layered trauma, that is still with them. It stays with them and it will impact them for life.

As the minister responsible for the development of the 10-year national action plan to end gender-based violence, I know that coercive control is a big part of this, too, and we see this. Law enforcement and our courts are not always educated on coercive control. We know that it puts more women at risk, so we must move forward with implementing Bill C-71, not only as a tool to strengthen our gun control laws, but as a way to prevent gun violence and domestic violence.

Might I just add this note? When I became the minister responsible for women and gender equality and youth, the first question I asked as Minister for Youth was, "How young? How do we characterize 'youth'?" I was told, I think, 15 to 29, and I said that's far too late. It's far too late for the kids on my streets. It's far too late for many kids across this country. We have to get to them sooner.

The bottom line is that a lot of kids are not seeing themselves. They're not seeing themselves in the education system. They're not seeing themselves as being part of society and being included. How do they get power? How do they take that back? Sometimes it's holding a gun. Sometimes it's perpetuating violence against others.

For me, it's things like mentoring and getting kids when they're younger. We say all the time, "If we can see her, we can be her" or "If you can see it, you can be it." That means something. Showing kids they can attain goals and be who they need to be prevents the violence we see later. There is a correlation.

Ms. Pam Damoff: I have only about a minute left.

Earlier you mentioned child care, so I'm switching gears a bit. This committee did an outstanding study in 2018 on the economic security of women. The number one issue was access to universal affordable child care. I'm one of those women. I would not have gone back to work had I not had a boss who was very generous, both financially and with time.

I wonder, in 45 seconds, if you could expand a bit on the importance of the child care program that is now universal across the country.

Hon. Marci Ien: You were one of those women, and I was one of those women. However, in my case, in the field of journalism, you don't plan on having kids any time soon because they're going to need you to be in a bureau for a while. These are the kinds of things that impact us as women.

This is seminal. This is huge. This means, with universal child care, that women and families across this country no longer have to make hard choices: Do I keep the lights on in the house or do I pay for child care? Can I go back to work or do I stay at home with my kids, because that's more financially feasible? This is huge. This is going to change the way that women at all levels see themselves and are able to contribute to society in a very different way.

I'm so sorry, Madam Chair.

• (1400)

The Chair: It's okay, Minister. Thank you so much.

On behalf of the committee, I would really like to thank the minister for being here today.

To Alia and Lisa, thank you so much. It's part of the great work.

We are going to suspend for about 30 seconds so the next panel can get online.

• (1400)

(Pause)

• (1400)

The Chair: Welcome back, everybody.

We are now going to welcome our second panel.

For our second panel, I would like to welcome Mercy Lawlivi, executive director of Immigrant Women Services Ottawa. From L'R des centres de femmes du Québec, we have Stéphanie Vallée, co-coordinator. From the Peterborough Police Service, we have Alice Czitrom, who is the coordinator of victim services, and Emily Jones, who is the coordinator of community development and engagement.

You will each have five minutes. If you could wind it up when you see my pen, that would be fantastic.

I'm going to first pass the floor over to Mercy.

You have the floor for five minutes.

Mrs. Mercy Lawlivi (Executive Director, Immigrant Women Services Ottawa): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Good afternoon, honourable members of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women. It is indeed an honour and a pleasure to have been invited to be on this panel today.

My name is Mercy Lawlivi, and I'm the executive director at Immigrant Women Services Ottawa, an organization that is dedicated to empowering immigrant and racialized women in the city of Ottawa and surrounding areas to participate in the elimination of all forms of violence against women and children.

I'd like to start by acknowledging that I'm joining you from the traditional unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe people.

My comments today will focus on the issues faced by immigrant and racialized women who are survivors of violence, and I will provide some recommendations.

One of the groups most vulnerable and most at risk of experiencing gender-based violence is immigrant and racialized women, whose experiences of intimate partner violence intersect with several other forms of oppression, including systemic racism, discrimination and marginalization.

COVID-19 has exacerbated the problem of gender-based violence for immigrant survivors, many of whom have been completely isolated and at the mercy of their abusers. This is particularly true for those with a language barrier. Many had to flee for their

safety and they discovered that shelters were not an option for them since most first-stage shelters were full, leaving them with options such as hotels or motels, which posed additional safety and emotional challenges.

The situation is worse for newcomer women, who have not yet built a social network and who feel totally isolated. Additionally, access to safe and affordable housing is a challenge because of inadequate housing availability. Unfortunately, certain communities have become oppressive enclaves in which racism—specifically Islamophobia, anti-Black or anti-Asian racism—further marginalizes survivors.

Furthermore, many immigrant and racialized survivors remain vulnerable and unprotected because they are afraid to call the police in an emergency for fear of revictimization, and, for non-status women, they are afraid of putting themselves at risk of deportation. This leads to the gross under-reporting of violence that exists within this group, and this is a problem, especially when femicide rates in Ontario increased by 94% from July 2020 to July 2021.

I'd also like to add that as immigration levels increase and as we welcome more immigrants to Canada, the lack of information on Canadian laws on gender-based violence and the resources available to these women puts them at greater risk of experiencing gender-based violence.

Having touched briefly on these issues, I would like to make some recommendations for consideration.

First, there is a need for intersectional approaches to policies and a review of the impact on the most vulnerable and marginalized communities. A review of the underlying social and economic causes of gender-based violence—such as poverty, housing, cultural and linguistic factors, low-paying jobs, immigration status, etc.—is needed, as is a review of policies that continuously support the patriarchal system of oppression.

Second, a robust national awareness and prevention strategy, including providing information on intimate partner and domestic violence to newcomers at all points of entry in their language of choice, needs to be implemented.

Third, there is a need for increased government-mandated training of law enforcement officers on all forms of gender-based violence and its potential impact on immigrant, refugee and non-status women, with additional training on intersectional and trauma-informed approaches. Training is also needed on how to effectively use interpreters during sensitive interviews.

There is also a need for a housing strategy that reflects the needs of marginalized communities seeking safety.

Finally, implementation of multi-year, increased and sustainable funding for women's organizations providing frontline responses to survivors of violence is needed.

I thank you for your attention.

• (1405)

The Chair: Thank you so much, Mercy.

Now we're going to pass it over to Stéphanie.

Stéphanie, you have the floor for five minutes.

[Translation]

Ms. Stéphanie Vallée (Co-coordinator, L'R des centres de femmes du Québec): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you for inviting me to testify before the committee.

This morning, my thoughts are with the community of Lebel-sur-Quévillon, where yesterday there was another suspected femicide, followed by a suicide.

I am here to introduce you to L'R des centres de femmes du Québec. Our organization brings together, year after year, 90 women's centres located in 14 administrative regions of Quebec. These autonomous community organizations were created to meet needs that were not met by traditional public services and to support women in all their efforts to regain their autonomy.

Women's centres are living environments where women can go during the day.

Workers receive women who want to participate in activities, collective actions, large marches, such as the World March of Women, which takes place every five years, or use the services offered by the women's centres. Women are received as they are, without judgment and without being labelled. Often, these are women who are experiencing different types of violence. They find themselves in a group, which helps them become aware that they are victims of domestic violence or any other type of violence.

I want to make it clear that women's centres are not shelters. In fact, they are parallel resources that welcome women and accompany them in their efforts. We sometimes refer them to shelters, but it often happens that women who are victims of violence do not go through shelters. One might ask why it is women who have to leave their homes, rather than their abusive partners.

Women's centre workers will work with women to help them rebuild their self-esteem and self-confidence, without blaming them for the violence they experience, of course. Through the strength of the group and steps to regain their autonomy, they will often emerge stronger and will finally be able to leave their home or get their abusive partner to leave.

Women's centres work on three levels: services, educational activities and collective action. Services often serve as a gateway. We can help women to prepare their curriculum vitae, for example, or to open a bank account. Indeed, there are still women who do not have a bank account and only have access to a joint account; often these women are victims of economic violence.

The women's centres believe that as long as there is no equality between humans, between women and between men and women, women will be victims of violence. Obviously, there is a need for universal services.

Earlier, we talked about childcare. That's all well and good, but spaces must be available. Currently, in Quebec, there is a major problem with access to these day care centres. We always say that day care centres will give women the opportunity to go to work, but it could also give everyone the opportunity to go to work. Women's

centres are working to change the mindset and to make sure that there is recognized and deep equality.

Again, thank you for the invitation.

I am ready to answer your questions.

● (1410)

[English]

The Chair: Thank you so much.

I'm now going to pass it over to the Peterborough Police Service.

However you wish to share the time, you have five minutes.

Ms. Emily Jones (Coordinator, Community Development and Engagement, Peterborough Police Service): Thank you so much.

I would like to start off by acknowledging that we are on the traditional territory of the Michi Saagiig and the Chippewa Nations covered by Treaty No. 20 of the Williams Treaties.

Thank you for inviting us to speak as a witness at this committee hearing. Specifically, thank you to Chair Karen Vecchio and our local MP, Michelle Ferreri.

Alice Czitrom is our victim services coordinator, and I am Emily Jones, the community development and engagement coordinator. Both of these positions are embedded within Peterborough Police.

These two positions within the service have the unique ability to focus on all three levels of social change, advocacy and supports: “micro”, individual victim support services; “mezzo”, community relationships; and “macro”, political and community strategies. This gives us the ability to hear and understand the issues for individuals, identify system barriers and supports and, ultimately, advocate for change within all levels of government and community systems.

I will now be handing it over to Alice Czitrom to discuss our recommendations to this committee.

Thank you.

● (1415)

Ms. Alice Czitrom (Coordinator, Victim Services, Peterborough Police Service): Good afternoon. Thank you for this opportunity to address the committee on behalf of Peterborough Police and its victim services unit.

Research has shown that violent crimes like intimate partner violence have long-lasting psychological, physical, social and economic impacts, not solely on the primary victim but on children, extended family members, neighbourhoods, schools, workplaces and the general safety and well-being of communities.

In recent years, police services across this country, like Peterborough Police, have committed themselves to becoming more trauma-informed with their investigations, collaborating in a more fulsome way with their community partners through committees and round tables, and committing to prevention education in school when it comes to healthy relationships.

What we know, based on decades of research on relational trauma, is that victims who experience intimate partner violence in the home as a child have a much higher likelihood of experiencing future victimization, such as polyvictimization and intergenerational trauma, mental health issues, addiction, risk of suicide and many other physical health issues such as cancer, obesity or heart disease. We also know that individuals and families who are indigenous, racialized, LGBTQ or experiencing other forms of marginalization, such as homelessness, poverty, addictions and living in remote communities, have additional barriers to healing.

What do we do with this knowledge?

The recommendation that we are respectfully putting forward to this committee is the reinstatement of a federal victim compensation program. Victims' needs for reconstructing their lives have been articulated in the research as fourfold—financial, physical, emotional and social—and we argue that victim compensation can address all of those. In fact, victim compensation is and always has been a symbol of our collective social response to the violence experienced by victims.

A report published in 2021 by the Office of the Federal Ombudsman for Victims of Crime stated, “Compensation is a critical first step on victims’ road to recovery.”

The United Nations adopted the “Declaration of Basic Principles of Justice for Victims of Crime and Abuse of Power”, which provides concrete actions that every government should adopt to respect the interests and needs of victims. It is based on the best knowledge and experience from across the world to specify what must be done to provide access to justice, protection, information, assistance and reparation for victims of crime. The UN declaration stresses that “[s]tates should endeavour to provide financial compensation [through the] establishment, strengthening and expansion of national funds for compensation”. It's worth noting that Canada played a critical role in this declaration.

The Victims Bill of Rights, which was introduced by the federal government in 2015, includes many of the same topics addressed in the UN declaration; however, it fails to mention a state compensation program. Another criticism of the Victims Bill of Rights is that it failed to include a method of enforcing the rights of victims and, as such, if Canada fails to uphold them, there is no recourse.

Canada no longer meets the standards and norms set out by the UN declaration with respect to state compensation. Victims of crime in Canada have uneven access to services. Eligibility criteria for compensation vary from province to province.

Compensation programs must address medical expenses, loss of income, mental health, practical needs, safety and, most important, pain and suffering. The symbolic value of dealing with these issues through some type of compensation helps validate the commitment of society to victim assistance as a whole. Currently, only two

provinces offer pain and suffering awards to victims of a crime, including intimate partner violence.

In Canada, we have just one Criminal Code, yet we have a disjointed patchwork of available services for victims. Following a trauma-informed approach, a federal victim compensation program would offer the recognition of the impact of intimate partner violence on Canadians and help pave the road in restoring a victim's value, power and dignity.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you so much.

We're now going to start our first round of questions. We are providing six minutes for each party.

We're going to start that off with Michelle Ferreri.

Michelle, you have six minutes.

• (1420)

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Thank you so much, Chair, and thank you so much to all the witnesses.

It's great work and, as the member of Parliament for Peterborough—Kawartha, I'm very happy and proud to see Peterborough on the list. Hi to everybody.

I want to start by going to Alice and Emily—more so to Alice, I guess.

Thank you for all of your recommendations. When we're looking at victim services, I think the compensation is a fair discussion that needs to be had. How do you get your life back? I think it's fair.

What we're also trying to look at is how to prevent victims from even becoming victims. In some of my conversations with victim services, they seem to say there are three things that victims are really looking for—and I'm curious if you agree with them—information before things happen, restitution and counselling.

Would you agree with that?

Ms. Alice Czitrom: Thanks for the question, Michelle.

Yes, I would agree. That's actually what the research has talked about, too. In fact, information is what they call the “gateway” to all of the other pieces and needs when it comes to addressing victims of crime. It's not just information about what's available out there, but once something happens, information is the groundwork that victims need for empowerment to feel like they have some level of control in the process that they have now embarked on.

As we know with domestic violence, because of mandatory charging, oftentimes there's a whole level and all these steps that are happening without a victim's input or involvement. This is all for the safety of the victim and the children, of course. Because of that mandatory charge piece, information is huge, so they can have an appreciation of what they can expect from this process.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Can you give a really specific example?

I know there's confidentiality, but could you give an example of what that would look like? What can be done or implemented, maybe at a policy level, to make sure that there is clear communication and that the victim is included more in the exchange of information?

Ms. Alice Czitrom: Sure. I can answer with different models that I've seen around the world where victim assistance is more of a case management approach. You have your worker and that worker is essentially your go-to person who's able to give you access to information on court and to keep you informed about services. Also, the worker is somewhat of a...not a trauma counsellor, but a person who is able to unpack some of the crisis intervention of early days and then maybe set up more long-term support.

This case management model that we see in other countries is fantastic. We know that the relationship is one of the key things when it comes to therapeutic models and therapeutic interventions. We don't have relationship when there's one person who's going to call you maybe once a month for this, or you speak to one person about that. It's very disjointed and very patchworky.

Trust and relationships are the fundamental pieces when it comes to therapeutic relationships.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: I hope that gets underlined when we have the report from this committee because I agree with you wholeheartedly.

I'm sorry. I would love to keep talking to you, but I know I'm short on time.

Ms. Alice Czitrom: That's okay. Thank you for the question.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Thank you for answering it.

Emily, just really quickly, you do so much work in terms of reaching out to the community and working with all of these agencies. You do really great work in understanding the mosaic. I like this word that's come up multiple times in this committee, because it is a mosaic. So many pieces have to come into play.

My question is very direct. Do you think money is the only thing that solves this issue?

Ms. Emily Jones: I don't think money is ever the only thing that solves an issue. I think it's incredibly important. Obviously, we know that resources are so important.

What I know about Peterborough specifically—I can't attribute it to other communities—is that we have what I like to refer to as a huge ecosystem of communities that really strive to work together. It's not always perfect, and I think a lot of the reason for that is that there is almost a competition for those resources.

When there's not a distribution or equal access to resources for people who are receiving direct access, such as clients and people

who have experienced violence, or to the services that are set to help them, it does become a highlighted issue. So—

• (1425)

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Sorry, I hate cutting people off.

Ms. Emily Jones: No, that's okay.

The Chair: You have about 45 seconds left.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Okay.

Would it be valuable for the government to implement some kind of strategy where you don't have this sort of “cannibalism” for organizations competing for funding so that they can be incentivized to work more together to help the greater good?

Ms. Emily Jones: Any time we can encourage agencies to be collaborative, it's always a good thing, and having direct access to funds for victims of crime or victims of violence is a good thing.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Thank you so much, Emily.

The Chair: Thank you so much.

We're going to switch it over to Anita Vandenbeld.

Anita, you have the floor.

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

My first question is for Ms. Lawluvi.

You mentioned that when we're talking about newcomer women, the lack of social networks, and sometimes language barriers, leads to significant under-reporting and also it means that they're very isolated and may not even be aware of services that are available to them.

Some years ago, after I was elected, I partnered with yours and a number of other organizations to put together fridge magnets, which I sent to every single household in my constituency, that had your organization's, Immigrant Women Services Ottawa's, number among other numbers of emergency contacts on them.

How important is it that we have ways of reaching people who may not even be leaving the house very often, who may not have other ways of even being aware of what number they can call? I know there are still people who have that on their fridge. It's been there for years; they forget that it's there. If needed, if there's an emergency, that number is right there for them to call.

I've seen it also on college campuses, for example in Algonquin College in the bathroom. The women's bathroom has a number of services listed, including yours, about where women can go and whom they can call for help.

Can you tell me how important that is? What are other ways that organizations like yours and others in the community can raise awareness and reach those people who are extremely isolated and don't have other means of finding out how to get support?

Mrs. Mercy Lawluvi: Thank you for this important question.

Yes, absolutely, it is important that women have access to all the information they need to be able to reach out to receive services. Having our information on fridge magnets, that is key. More so, it has to be a cross-sectoral venture, making sure that all organizations within our communities are aware of all these resources so when there's an immigrant woman who comes to them—it could be a health centre—they're able to provide this information. It has to be a cross-sectoral initiative where everyone is informed of all the resources that are available.

On our part, at Immigrant Women Services Ottawa, we've taken the initiative to have an awareness and prevention initiative where we're connecting with community agencies and reaching out to pockets of immigrant women who are isolated. They're not getting out. They need the information on the resources that are available to them, so if they're not getting it, someone needs to get it to them.

This is one of the initiatives that we're taking, trying to reach out to women where they're at and provide them with information, and at the same time have that cross-sectoral engagement. And we're trying to involve the men, also, because it's not just a women's issue. They have to also be involved and know the ramifications of actions and so on.

Thank you.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: Thank you.

Our committee has actually heard about some very creative ways in which women were reaching women, even through hair salons. It sounds like that's a very important way of doing it.

How important is it, particularly for newcomer women, that the services are culturally sensitive? You mentioned issues even in terms of interpreters and how to interact with interpreters, issues with housing. What can we do as legislators to make sure that there are culturally sensitive services available for newcomer women?

• (1430)

Mrs. Mercy Lawluvi: It's really a critical issue. IWSO was formed 34 years ago was precisely for this reason, because immigrant and racialized women found it a barrier to access existing mainstream services. There was the need to have organizations that provide that cultural response to their needs.

Immigrant women have different and additional systemic barriers. They have additional barriers that need different responses. It's critical that there are organizations that will meet the cultural needs of these women. One size does not fit all.

For immigrant and racialized women, it's critical that there is an understanding of the cultural issues they're facing, the barriers, the additional challenges they are facing in their day-to-day lives. How does that intersect with their experience of violence? A very good understanding of all of that is needed to be able to help them effectively.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: Thank you.

How many seconds do I have?

The Chair: You have 45 seconds.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: Very quickly, then, for women who have more children than the average, is there an additional barrier, and how do we resolve that in terms of shelters and making sure that there is space that's modular for larger families?

The Chair: You have about 25 seconds to respond.

Mrs. Mercy Lawluvi: Thank you for that question, because that is a real concern. I have known of immigrant women who have stayed in shelters for longer periods of time because they have large families, many children, and therefore couldn't get space in subsidized housing. This is a real issue.

Consideration has to be made for immigrant families, which are usually large families. That is something that should be on the table when considering housing.

The Chair: Thank you so much.

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

Andréanne, you have six minutes.

[Translation]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I thank the four witnesses for appearing before the committee today and for the work they do on a daily basis with respect to this very important issue of intimate partner violence.

My first question will be to Ms. Vallée.

At the last meeting of the committee, which was held last Tuesday, a witness told us:

[...] we must absolutely support the feminist movement and feminist organizations, because research has shown that they are the ones that bring about change when it comes to violence against women and spousal violence.

Obviously, I support these words. Your contribution to the fight against violence against women is undeniable. I think your centre and the work you do demonstrate that. I would really like to thank you for accepting our invitation to appear today.

In March 2020, your organization submitted a report to the Expert Committee on Support for Victims of Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence, which was entitled: "Adapter le parcours judiciaire au rythme et aux vécus des victimes et des survivantes" [Adapting the judicial pathway to the pace and experiences of victims and survivors]. In this report, you mention the importance of eliminating the barriers that hinder access to justice for women victims of domestic and sexual violence, since many victims are afraid to denounce their aggressor, in particular because of these obstacles.

Could you explain what the obstacles and barriers are that a woman has to overcome in order to agree to denounce the violence of which she is a victim?

Ms. Stéphanie Vallée: First of all, there is the fact that victims are always forced to repeat their story at every stage. Since the publication of our report, another report has been filed in Quebec. It is entitled “Rebâtir la confiance” [Rebuilding trust]. Several measures have been taken in response to feminist demands to remove the barriers that prevent women from denouncing the violence they experience.

In addition, in all categories of stakeholders who deal with women victims of violence, there is a lack of understanding of violence against women and the cycle of domestic violence. For example, it may happen that the police officer they meet in their small village is not adequately trained to help them or does not believe them. Thus, the stakeholders hinder the women's action and the women's taking control of their own lives. Each time, they relive a trauma.

• (1435)

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: I would like to ask you a question that relates to trust.

What could the federal government do to restore the confidence of women in the justice system and to facilitate whistleblowing?

Ms. Stéphanie Vallée: Personally, I am not aware of what the federal government is doing.

Earlier, a witness said we should listen to feminist groups.

In 2000, at the World March of Women, one of the big demands was to have a major awareness campaign over 10 years—it would be in the past tense if that had been set up. This would raise awareness and educate people about equality between people and the prevention of all types of violence.

At the time, campaigns on seat belts and drunk driving had a more repressive and preventive component. If the demand of feminist groups had been taken seriously 20 years ago, we might see improvements today.

This should be put back on the agenda. We need to raise awareness and take into account all the actors involved in violence, that is the men and the violent partners. However, we also need to raise awareness among children. We must make school accessible to all and promote equality.

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: Perfect.

You named the report “Rebâtir la confiance”. I have less than a minute of speaking time left, but I would like you to tell us more about it. This report contains several recommendations, including the establishment of specialized courts and the use of tracking bracelets.

We want to keep women safe. In your opinion, is the tracking bracelet for abusers a good legislative means of removing some of the barriers to reporting and restoring women's confidence, or at least ensuring their safety?

Ms. Stéphanie Vallée: These are certainly all perfect ways to get where we want to go. We just need to make sure it's accessible to all women in all regions.

At the moment, there is still a digital divide, meaning areas that don't have access to high-speed Internet. These gadgets work with Internet networks and cellular networks. It will therefore be neces-

sary to ensure that all regions are served equally by this type of action.

The same is true for specialized courts. We can certainly have this type of specialized court in Montreal, with actors who are very aware of the problem. However, there may not be any in Lebel-sur-Quévillon, for example.

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: There is one in my riding, in Granby, and it will be part of the models implemented.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you so much.

We'll now pass it over to Jenny Kwan.

Jenny, you have six minutes.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

To all the witnesses, thank you for your presentations and for the excellent work that you do in our communities.

Mercy, I'd like to ask you a question about newcomer supports. Is the current support system for newcomers who are experiencing intimate partner violence sufficient? Maybe more to the point, where do you see the gaps that need to be filled to better support newcomers?

Mrs. Mercy Lawluvi: Thank you for this question.

I don't think the supports for newcomers are sufficient at this point. Newcomers are particularly vulnerable when they come to Canada. They don't speak the language, they don't know how the system works and they don't know where the resources are. As I mentioned in my opening statement, it's critical that they get the information sooner rather than later. As soon as they arrive in Canada, it's critical that they get information on the resources available, on Canada's laws around gender-based violence, and so on. That is needed.

Just to give you an example, when we had the influx of Syrian refugees, we had lots of referrals coming in for violence-related issues after a while. We asked ourselves, “Did they get any information about what their rights were and where to go for support?” We held focus groups among this group, and what we found was that they had no information.

It's critical that newcomer women coming into Canada receive that information, preferably right at the ports of entry and at their adult education schools. There must be some curriculum to tackle this, and information spread within the community, where, if they went for a doctor's appointment, they could easily pick up some resources in their languages. That needs to be there.

There are gaps. We need to reach out more, absolutely, to newcomers, because they are exceptionally vulnerable when they come to the country.

• (1440)

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Thank you very much for that answer. I particularly appreciate the notion of providing the information in their language at the port of entry, because that's what I am hearing from the community groups on the ground here in British Columbia, as well.

Your organization offers housing and transitional support programs and such. In terms of the major struggles that women—as well as gender-diverse individuals—and families face when attempting to flee violence and find housing, what can the government do and what should the government do to better provide this support?

Mrs. Mercy Lawlivi: I think there needs to be more affordable housing to begin with. There needs to be more space in shelters. That was a huge issue because, when COVID struck, the instances of violence shot up and we found ourselves not being able to find shelter space for women needing to flee for their safety.

There needs to be additional shelter space for women fleeing violence, and more affordable and safe housing, because that's also an issue. We're trying so hard to get women into safe and affordable housing, and the wait time is really long because there is not enough affordable housing. These are things to be considered.

Also, as I mentioned earlier, there are immigrants with large families coming with lots of children, so that becomes an issue. They are underhoused. They might have a two-bedroom apartment for a family of six or seven. These are issues that need to be considered.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Have you encountered this problem in your region? This is a problem that I know exists in Vancouver East, for example. Women who are fleeing intimate partner violence show up at the shelter, but the shelter is only available for them and their children. If one of their children is a boy who is 16 or older, he is not able to stay with the mother in that shelter, so they get separated.

Is that a problem you're encountering in your community, and what do you think the solutions are?

Mrs. Mercy Lawlivi: Yes, this is a problem here, as well. Sometimes we have children who are 16 and who are six feet tall, and it becomes an issue having them in a shelter.

What happens sometimes is that, as an option, they are placed in motels or hotels. That in itself creates additional challenges, because there are safety concerns. It's not as secure. Sometimes, in motels, they have to live on snacks and they can't cook meals. It creates a whole slew of issues.

My recommendation is that we bear this in mind as we are creating shelter space. It is critical that this be kept in mind, because it is an issue, especially with immigrant women who have.... It's a problem that must be kept in mind when shelter spaces and alternatives are being considered.

• (1445)

The Chair: Thank you so much.

We're now going to our next round. With our first five minutes, I'm going to pass the floor to Dominique Vien.

Dominique, you have five minutes.

[Translation]

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

I'd also like to thank our witnesses this afternoon.

I'd like to come back to Ms. Czitrom's remarks about this criminal injuries compensation plan.

Ms. Czitrom, tell me if I've understood correctly. You said that two provinces have this system in Canada. Certainly, you're talking about Quebec, where we have this criminal injuries compensation plan. Perhaps you mentioned the other province, but I don't remember it. You can tell us again.

Of these two plans that exist currently, Ms. Czitrom, which of the models could be implemented in Canada?

How do you see this plan in Canada?

Ms. Alice Czitrom: Thank you for your question.

[English]

I used to be bilingual. I'm going to answer in English so I say it properly.

I was talking about the two provinces that had the pain and suffering awards specifically around compensation. Right now, nine out of 10 provinces have some form of victim-related compensation. There are some provinces and territories that have absolutely nothing. Newfoundland is one of the provinces that have no victim compensation.

What I will say about Quebec's compensation program, because I had direct experience with Quebec's process this past year, is that it is one of the most robust compensation programs in the entire country. That's based on the monetary value that's allotted to victims and the pain and suffering award that is included.

Basically, what we have is a patchwork. Back in the 1990s, Canada essentially said that each province and territory is to take care of its own compensation programs. What happened is that these programs are so costly that some of the provinces either did cutbacks or took out the compensation program altogether. It's very much based on eligibility, which is different within each province. It's very time-sensitive, and it's limited. It's like, "Okay, you had a door broken down. We can replace your door."

We know that, with pain and suffering, especially when we're talking about intimate partner violence, one of the number one reasons women do not leave an abusive relationship is economic barriers: "What am I going to do once I leave? Where am I going to live? How am I going to feed my kids? I have to take time off work." There are all those things. What compensation does is address all those pieces in a much more trauma-informed, holistic way.

I don't know if that answers your question completely or if there was something else that you wanted me to address.

[Translation]

Mrs. Dominique Vien: What you would like to see, ultimately, is a uniform national compensation plan for victims of crime.

[English]

Ms. Alice Czitrom: Yes, that is the recommendation put forward by the federal ombudsman for victims of crime as well, based on well-researched facts around limitations to compensation and what compensation can do for victims of crime, especially domestic violence.

The Chair: You have a minute left.

[Translation]

Mrs. Dominique Vien: Thank you.

Stéphanie Vallée, thank you for being here.

You said that until there is equality, there will always be violence. Is it because you consider that equality of law does not correspond to equality of fact?

I have trouble understanding, because I think we are equal to men. There is equality. I don't understand the link you make between violence and gender inequality. I understand that there isn't enough time.

• (1450)

Ms. Stéphanie Vallée: Yes, that would be a discussion to have on a nice full evening.

Mrs. Dominique Vien: Yes, truly.

Ms. Stéphanie Vallée: My comments may offend some people, and I apologize, but I will tell you that the higher our socio-economic status, the more we think equality is achieved.

Some people I know have annual incomes of over \$250,000. They don't understand that equality is not achieved, but the people we meet who live on low wages know full well that that is not the case.

So there's something—

The Chair: Thank you for your response.

[English]

I'm now going to turn it over to Sonia Sidhu, who is sharing with Jenny.

I'll start with you, Sonia. You have the floor.

Ms. Sonia Sidhu: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to all the witnesses for being with us.

My question is for Ms. Jones or Ms. Czitrom, from the Peterborough Police Service.

One of the focuses of this study is around teen dating violence. How would you recommend families best support a teen in a violent relationship, particularly when there are sensitive cultural considerations?

Ms. Alice Czitrom: I'll start.

There are lots of layers to that question. One of the things that we know about supporting young people around teen violence is that

it's not just one solution, or one face to that question. There's the family dynamic. We have relationships where.... Whether or not the teen is honest about how healthy the relationship is, the parents suspect things are not going well. There's the school environment, where the teen is placed in a different environment and other dynamics are happening, and then we have the community at large.

To answer your question, we need a multipronged, multi-sector approach to dealing with teen violence. It can't just be police. It can't just be schools. It can't just be community-based programming. It has to be all of us together, working as one, so that we're all speaking the same language and we all understand the barriers to accessing services for teens, especially.

School systems can also provide such a rich value of knowledge around what is actually going on in the school systems for teenagers, and relationships that are formed within those environments.

I'll leave it to Emily if she wants to add anything to that.

Ms. Emily Jones: I don't have much to add, other than that, in Peterborough Police, we currently have officers who go into the schools. I know this is being assessed in Canada as to whether it's a good thing or a bad thing, especially for racialized youth and what that might mean in terms of feeling safe around officers.

What we're working toward, and what we've done really well, is that the officers who are engaging in the school system are trauma-informed. They're engaged with Alice and the victim services unit. They're making sure that they're making those referrals alongside me and Alice to those right ecosystems that are going help the youth navigate. We're making sure that we're in the right direction around being trauma-informed, especially because we know we're a police service.

Ms. Sonia Sidhu: My next question is for Ms. Lawluvi.

You mentioned that immigrant women need culturally sensitive support. Many immigrant women, including young women, are away from their families for the first time and lack awareness on where to get support, awareness that they have legal rights and what kind of rights they have.

How can education and awareness projects on gender-based violence cater to the needs of people from diverse cultures and racialized communities?

Mrs. Mercy Lawluvi: I'll go back to the fact that we have to have robust prevention. It's more about prevention, and getting that information to all these immigrant women and youth. It's critical that they have all this information.

Having that outreach and getting to communities that are isolated, that are not accessing services, coming to organizations and so on.... We need to go to those vulnerable organizations. We need to connect with mainstream organizations and provide resources that they can also distribute to immigrants who come. It's critical that information gets to them, so that they are aware of their rights.

A lot of immigrant women are afraid of the criminal justice system. They need to have information on what to expect should they involve the police. That is critical. A way of doing that is through community engagement and outreach into the community with all the information that is required.

• (1455)

Ms. Sonia Sidhu: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'll go over to Jenna.

The Chair: Jenna, you have 20 seconds.

Mrs. Jenna Sudds: That's not much time, but I guess I would just build on Sonia's question.

I know you mentioned, Mercy, the need for affordable housing. I'll just leave that as a comment. I'm not sure that you have time to respond to it.

The Chair: I'll give you about 10 seconds.

Mrs. Mercy Lawluvi: Affordable housing is a huge issue because, as you know, immigrant women mainly access low-paying, minimum-wage jobs. There's that element of poverty.

Is the time over?

The Chair: Yes, your time was over before you began.

Mrs. Mercy Lawluvi: Okay. Suffice it to say that it is a huge issue.

The Chair: Thank you so much.

For the next two and a half minutes, we're going to pass it over to Andréanne.

[Translation]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I'll go back to Ms. Vallée for my last round.

Ms. Vallée, I wish you a speedy recovery. When you have recovered from COVID-19, I too would like to have an evening to chat with you. I would really appreciate it.

Your organization's report, which was mentioned in the first round and which is entitled "Adapter le parcours judiciaire au rythme ou au vécu des victimes, des survivantes," mentions that "70% of abused women are not represented in official statistics.... Abused by their spouse, sexually assaulted, economically or psychologically controlled, these women make the choice to turn to their network, to their families or to anonymous, community-based solutions."

In this excerpt, you mention the concept of control. Are you talking about coercive control? Is that a familiar concept to your organization? Does your organization welcome women who are victims of controlling and coercive behaviour? Are you doing prevention to

help women and responders recognize the early signs of this coercive control?

Ms. Stéphanie Vallée: The answer to all these questions is yes.

We welcome women to acknowledge that they are experiencing violence and to help them regain control over their lives. Sometimes we also get women to recognize that they are violent themselves. We've started to do the work that I think you're referring to.

However, we make a distinction between the systemic problem of violence and violence committed by women, which does not stem from patriarchy. We don't deal with those two issues in the same way. I sincerely apologize, because I'm not familiar with the entire report as I wasn't working for L'R des centres de femmes when it was published. I do remember it, though, because I was in a women's centre.

What was the other part of your question?

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: Actually, my time is almost up.

I want to say two things. First, let's hope the next 10-year action plan doesn't take 10 years. You mentioned the World March of Women in 2000, which resulted in a 10-year action plan.

Ms. Stéphanie Vallée: Yes.

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: The delays are starting to mount.

Madam Chair, I will close by offering my condolences to all the relatives of the victim of the most recent femicide in Quebec, which took place in Lebel-sur-Quévillon, and to the entire community. I extend my deepest sympathies to them.

Ms. Stéphanie Vallée: Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much, Andréanne.

It is a very difficult time for the community, and I think those are words that we all share.

I'm now going to pass on the final two and a half minutes to Jenny Kwan.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'd like to ask this question of both of the witnesses.

Maybe I'll start with Ms. Vallée. L'R's "Basis of Political Unity" identified that poverty is connected to unpaid care work and government social policies that "prefer to reduce social spending rather than redistributing wealth and creating stable jobs." We know from research that raising living standards and moving individuals out of poverty is one of the key ways to address intimate partner violence.

My colleague Leah Gazan has put forward a bill for a guaranteed livable basic income to ensure that individuals and families doing unpaid work can have economic autonomy and opportunities to leave harmful living situations.

Would you agree that this is a fundamental step for the government to take to lift individuals out of poverty?

● (1500)

[Translation]

Ms. Stéphanie Vallée: Of course, all these measures added together will yield a result.

It's still important to understand that responsibility for the family, the caregivers are still women. It's still women who look after children. When there is no space in a day care, it's women who stay at home, because, socially, at the moment, it's still men who do jobs that traditionally pay more than the jobs of women, which are often caregiving jobs or in restaurants that are open at times when day care centres are not accessible. I'm talking about restaurants, but we're talking about any business.

If there were a guaranteed minimum income, as mentioned earlier, it would obviously give a good helping hand to these women victims of violence.

[English]

The Chair: Mercy, I think she wanted you to answer, too. You have 30 seconds.

Mrs. Mercy Lawluvi: I think this will be a huge step. Lifting women out of poverty is critical in curbing gender-based violence. Financial security is key. Economic dependence is one of the risk factors that put immigrant women at risk of gender-based violence.

I totally support a guaranteed livable income. Anything that can lift women out of poverty is welcome.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you so much to all of our witnesses today. Thank you to Mercy, Stéphanie, Alice and Emily for joining us for our panel. On behalf of all of us, thank you for your testimony.

Just a reminder, next Tuesday we are so busy. We will have, as an individual, Geneviève Lessard, the Calgary Immigrant Women's Association, Le Centre-Femmes de Bellechasse, Peter Jaffe, La Gîtée, La Jonction pour Elle Inc., Peel Regional Police, the Safe Centre of Peel, as well as the Assembly of First Nations.

Let's stay busy and let's get rested for next Tuesday.

Today's meeting is adjourned.

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