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Chair

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc

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•(0855)

[English]

The Chair (Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP)): I apologize for my tardiness. You know I like to be on time. I especially want to thank you all for being here and punctual.

[Translation]

Welcome to the 40th meeting of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, in which we will be examining promising practices to prevent violence against women. It will soon be December 6. It is now December 4, so this is perfectly appropriate.

Today, we welcome Ms. Martin, who is the executive director of the Canadian Network of Women's Shelters and Transition Houses.

[English]

We also welcome from Ernestine's Women's Shelter, Sharlene Tygesen, executive director; and from Armagh House, Madam Lynn Ward, who is also executive director. Thank you and welcome.

I will let you each make your presentation of 10 minutes, followed by a question period.

[Translation]

Let us start with you, Ms. Martin. You have 10 minutes.

[English]

Ms. Lise Martin (Executive Director, Canadian Network of Women's Shelters and Transition Houses): Thank you for the invitation and the opportunity to discuss with you promising practices in our collective efforts to prevent and eventually end violence against women.

The Canadian Network Of Women's Shelters and Transition Houses brings together 12 provincial and territorial shelter networks, which represent over 350 shelters across Canada. The network is a young organization, which was incorporated in November 2012. The network represents a unified voice that works to make violence against women a priority. Shelter workers across the country recognize that services alone will not put an end to violence against women.

The network, along with its member shelters, is committed to working toward long-term systemic change. For this reason, our presentation will speak to both promising practices that deal with the immediacy of the needs of women and their children fleeing violence, as well as promising practices that could lead to the long-term change required to make a visible difference in the rates of violence against women in Canada.

It is important to be reminded of the fact that shelters contribute much more than a safe place to stay. They provide vital services and resources that enable women and their children, who have experienced abuse, to recover from the violence, rebuild self-esteem, and take steps to regain a self-determined and independent life. Shelters also contribute to awareness raising and social change as part of broader efforts to prevent and eliminate violence against women and girls.

I will begin by first presenting a few promising practices that have been put in place by our members.

Women leaving volatile abusive partners face the extreme challenge of accessing timely and responsive safety supports from courts and police. All too often their lives hang in the balance.

In 2001, the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters piloted Dr. Jacquelyn Campbell's danger assessment tool to help shelter workers assess abused women's risk of lethality and to advocate for women's protective needs with legal and police services. This tool is comprised of a set of 20 weighted questions and an incident calendar that women complete alongside shelter workers.

A 2009 study on this program showed that while the process of completing the danger assessment tool is emotionally difficult for women, it often affirmed their decision to leave, motivated them to take action and develop a safety plan, and finally raised awareness of community services. Since 2009, the danger assessment tool has been disseminated in Alberta through its inclusion in their shelter practice orientation manual.

Through the Walking the Path Together program, the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters has recently adapted the danger assessment tool for off-reserve shelters serving indigenous women alongside a safety plan tool called "Protection, Options, Planning: Taking Action Related to Safety".

Once risk has been assessed, at-risk women need mechanisms for coordinating with multiple safety and support services. A circle of safety and support is one such mechanism that is offered in Prince Edward Island. In this program, women who are concerned about their physical or emotional safety because of family violence can be referred to a circle of safety facilitators. Together, they select a group of support people in the woman's life to participate in the circle: police victim services, probation, mental health or addiction staff, family, neighbours, friends, employers, church, or social groups.

The group meets in person several times to discuss how they can all contribute to a personalized safety plan for the woman and her family. The program helps build links and continuity of care between support services and helps ensure that women feel safe and supported in the community. Most importantly, it reduces the risk of physical or psychological violence, or murder for women leaving volatile abusive partners.

Women who experience long-term abuse often have co-occurring mental health or substance use concerns. This can create barriers to receiving effective support from women's shelters.

In 2011 the BC Society of Transition Houses piloted the Reducing Barriers project to improve practices in caring for abused women. The pilot took the form of a working group that brought together staff from different transition houses with a range of criteria for accepting abused women as residents, as well as staff training sessions, and a best practice tool kit on how to accommodate women with substance use and mental health concerns.

- (0900)

As a result, the pilot evaluation showed that shelters were accepting a 9% higher proportion of women with some kind of substance use or mental health issue who previously may have been unable to access service at some shelters. The women accepted at shelters after the Reducing Barriers project also arrived with greater needs, reporting higher levels of poverty and past abuse and lower levels of family support. Women receiving shelter services reported a high sense of support from the shelters after the project but dissatisfaction in accessing supports and services from the broader community, where they continue to face many barriers. This project shows the impact of a harm-reduction approach for the most at-risk groups of women through staff training and accommodation. It also highlights the limitations of providing isolated pockets of support within a broader context of barriers.

It should be noted that a number of promising practices are developed and implemented with project-based funding. Although promising, these practices often do not live up to their full potential for lack of funding. It is estimated that the time period between the beginning and full implementation of a promising practice is three years. Project funding rarely is beyond two years. When one implements a practice that has clear positive outcomes, the next logical step is to scale it up. Unfortunately, funding is even more difficult at this stage, as governments often reject these applications on the basis that they are duplications of previous work. This was the case with the project in Alberta, which had adapted the danger assessment tool to work with aboriginal women. A proposal was submitted to Justice Canada to scale up implementation of the tool in all of Alberta's shelters. However, the proposal was turned down.

In March 2014, the network released the results of its first annual shelter survey. We chose to call it "Shelter Voices" to highlight the voices behind the numbers, the voices of the women who have survived abuse as well as the women's shelter workers. From across the country, 242 shelters responded to our survey. Shelter workers were asked to identify the top three critical, urgent issues they faced. Effectively addressing increasingly complex issues faced by clients was indicated by 60%, while 51% noted the feeling of not being able to affect the systemic causes of the issues facing clients, and 46% noted low pay.

Shelter workers were also asked if they were able to change one thing that would improve the lives of abused women and their children, what would it be? The top four responses were access to affordable and safe housing, a comprehensive and promptly responsive legal system, adequate income and social support, and services that are interconnected and continuous. In the words of one shelter worker:

It's so hard to watch how the system wears women down, especially when they have so many barriers, that they want to give up. That's why we care so much because every woman should feel like she has a chance to make it.

Indeed, every woman needs to have a chance to make it. For this to happen, we need to go beyond addressing the symptoms of violence against women. We need to make a concerted effort to bring about systemic change. A promising practice to enable this is to develop and implement a national action plan on violence against women. Presently, Canada has no comprehensive strategy to deal with violence against women. We are of the position that the federal government needs to launch a national public inquiry into missing and murdered aboriginal women immediately. Canada's national action plan on violence against women will need to be informed by the outcomes of the inquiry. The action plan specific to aboriginal women will thus inform Canada's broader action plan on violence against women.

National action plans can provide a framework for strengthening the systems that respond to violence against women. They call for collaboration between all levels of government, civil society, survivors, and first responders. In April 2014 the Canadian Network of Women's Shelters and Transition Houses convened a meeting of 26 women who represented various sectors of the violence against women movement in order to begin to develop a blueprint for Canada's national action plan on violence against women. This work is ongoing, and we sincerely hope all political parties will commit to the development and implementation of an action plan as part of their platforms for the 2015 federal election.

● (0905)

Along with many partners, the network feels that an action plan is a promising practice, as it will help ensure consistency across and within jurisdictions in policies and legislation; consistent approaches to the prevention of and responses to violence against women; collective pursuit of the most appropriate solutions; high-level commitment to a multipronged, coordinated, pan-Canadian approach; and coordinated, clear, and effective services and systems for survivors of violence against women that respect and respond to diversity.

In order for Canada's action plan to successfully lead to long-term change, it will need to include, among other things, new commitments and clear targets; effective prevention mechanisms; universal coverage of response mechanisms for survivors; a review of justice mechanisms and policing practices; support for reliable data collection, allowing for better tracking and evaluation; and substantive human and financial resources to support these measures.

Finally, the process for developing Canada's national action plan must include consultation with all stakeholders, including front-line workers and survivors; the direct and meaningful participation of non-government actors, and a formal mechanism for their ongoing participation in the implementation process; high-level leadership and accountability from governments at all jurisdictional levels; clearly defined, time-bound goals measured against detailed baseline data; and substantive human and financial resources to support these processes.

There are lessons to be learned from Australia, where a national action plan on violence against women was announced after a two-year development process that included a broad cross-section of stakeholders. Australia's plan spans over a 12-year period and is divided into four three-year plans. Our colleagues in the Australian shelter network have noted that an important part of this work has been the bipartisan support at the federal level as well as the collaboration of the states and territories. They feel that for the first time ever they have a national landscape at federal and state-territory levels, where there is a consistent policy understanding of gender-based violence.

Although we advocate for an effective national action plan on violence against women as a promising practice, we cannot stress enough the importance of a broad-based consultation with stakeholders in both the development phase and the actual implementation.

Thank you.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Martin.

The floor now goes to Ms. Tygesen, for 10 minutes.

[English]

Ms. Sharlene Tygesen (Executive Director, Ernestine's Women's Shelter): Thank you, honourable members of the study. Thank you for the opportunity to address the committee and share with you my experience as a survivor of violence against women, as a front-line worker and as a lead of a shelter for abused women and

children, and as someone who has spent nearly 30 years working to end violence against women and children.

My name is Sharlene Tygesen, and I am the executive director of Ernestine's Women's Shelter in Rexdale, Ontario. Ernestine's was opened in 1983 by a group of community members who saw a need for a safe place for women and children fleeing violence. Since that time, Ernestine's has assisted over 5,000 families with critical immediate care services. I think it's safe to say we know a thing or two about domestic violence and intimate partner abuse.

I genuinely appreciate the opportunity to provide my experience. I hope this study continues to reach out and listen to front-line organizations such as Ernestine's but the key word is listen. Because if you do listen, you will quickly realize there isn't an enormous amount of information that is revolutionary or new.

I could tell you stories starting with my own about what it means to encounter violence and abuse, or I could tell you the stories of all the families who have sought shelter or critical immediate care services at Ernestine's alone. Our shelter is one of 13 in the greater Toronto area and one of approximately 593 across the country. If I started telling stories of each of the 3,300 women and 3,000 children who seek refuge in our country's shelters every day, I would be speaking non-stop for more than four days. The sad part is that I wouldn't be telling this committee anything it hasn't already heard in some form or another.

Evidence of the severity of the scope of the violence against women and children is well known, well researched, and indisputable. One out of three women has been beaten, forced into sex, or otherwise abused in her lifetime. Every second a woman somewhere in Canada experiences some form of sexual violence. Eighty percent of aboriginal women have been assaulted or abused. Women with disabilities are 150 times more likely to be sexually abused or assaulted than women without disabilities.

In Canada, one to two women are murdered by a former or current partner every week. Every year in Canada, up to 360,000 children are exposed to domestic violence. Children who witness family violence often display elevated rates of depression, aggression, delinquency, and other emotional issues.

Women are three times more likely than men to be physically injured by spousal violence and five times more likely to require medical attention. Eighty-nine percent of sexual assault victim survivors have no visible physical injuries. Violence against women and girls is a global pandemic. Violence is a major factor in women's health and well-being. Health-related costs of violence against women in Canada exceed \$1.5 billion a year. Five hundred women and children have been murdered in Ontario alone since 1990. How long to tell all those stories? Do we really need to go over all of this again?

This government has a bold initiative to improve the lives of women and children across the globe. It's called "Saving Every Woman, Every Child: Within Arm's Reach" and has been announced with justifiable pride and fanfare. How unfortunate from the perspective of organizations who have had to deal with the day-to-day realities of violence and abuse that the government has been systematically taking deliberate steps to place safety beyond the reach of many women and children.

This has been going on since 2006 when Status of Women Canada had its budget reduced by 40% and 12 of its 16 offices were closed. At the same time, the government changed the funding rules to specifically exclude organizations that the government feels are providing advocacy, including the defunding and resulting closure of the National Association of Women and the Law, a vital legal advocacy resource. Make no mistake, we cannot change our society for the better. We cannot rid ourselves of the horrible costs of violence and abuse without advocating for actual recognition of the rights of women and children.

Despite repeated calls by women's groups, first nations and provincial leaders, this government has also refused to launch an inquiry into the more than 1,200 aboriginal women missing and murdered since 1970. We cannot hope to address the complex needs of vulnerable communities such as first nations without an honest and transparent study of those socio-economic causes and effects of violence and abuse.

This government eliminated the national child care program, which previous governments had spent years negotiating with the provinces. Lack of access to adequate child care resources is a critical factor in a woman's return to an abusive relationship and can completely deny her the opportunity to realize economic self-sufficiency. It also places children at risk by returning them to unsafe and unhealthy environments for lack of better affordable options.

● (0910)

There is no federal initiative like the Ontario partner assault response services program that uses the resources of the justice system to identify and intervene in the cycle of abuse, by holding abusers accountable and requiring mandatory counselling and education. Instead, the federal approach is to offer support as victims of crime rather than acknowledging the gender composition of this violence.

As this government sends millions of dollars overseas, we are doing very little to address the human and financial costs of violence and abuse in our own society.

Your own Department of Justice concluded in a 2012 study that the total economic cost of domestic violence is \$7.4 billion every year. That is a staggering amount of money. We wouldn't even need anywhere near that amount to make lasting and effective change in this country. The incentives are there, both human and economic, so what is stopping the federal government from decisively leading Canada and the world toward the end of violence and abuse?

I have some recommendations for a national action plan and I'm happy to offer my thoughts, but I'm sure you've already heard what I'm about to tell you. In fact, the Ontario Association of Interval and

Transition Houses has presented almost exactly these findings in its 2013 case of a national action plan on violence against women.

I recommend that the federal government lead the provinces, territories, and aboriginal governments in the collaborative effort to address violence and abuse.

I recommend that as part of this effort the federal government ensure that all levels of government continue to draw on the advice and expertise of survivors, shelters, and community organizations.

I recommend that this federal government recognize the gender reality of domestic violence and intimate partner abuse and the historically unequal power relationships between men and women.

I recommend that this government recognize that gendered violence is a form of discrimination and a violation of the human rights of women and children.

I recommend that the government, in partnership with provinces, territories, and aboriginal governments, implement clear strategies to help communities prevent and respond to different types of violence.

I recommend that this government undertake an inquiry into the causes and outcomes of domestic violence in aboriginal and other vulnerable communities, particularly the cause and solution to missing and murdered aboriginal women.

I recommend that this government, in partnership with provincial, territorial, and aboriginal governments, create initiatives to address socio-economic factors contributing to the violence against women, particularly education, housing, pay equity, and the provision of a natural socialized child care.

I recommend that this government clearly set specific goals, timelines, and outcomes for measuring progress.

Finally, I recommend that this government commit adequate human and financial resources to specifically carry out a national action plan.

Once again, I am truly grateful to all of you for having me here and the opportunity to share my experience and my recommendations.

● (0915)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Madam Tygesen.

[*Translation*]

Now over to Ms. Ward, for 10 minutes.

[*English*]

Ms. Lynn Ward (Executive Director, Armagh House): Thank you, Madam Chair and the committee, for this opportunity today.

Just to let you know, I'll be referring to Armagh House by its first name in the rest of my discussion with you today.

“What is Armagh?”, some of you might be thinking. Well, it's not a shelter; it is a home. It is second-stage housing for women and children who have been victimized by domestic violence. To paint a picture of the physical setting where we help victims of violence, Armagh is a 1920s renovated home that houses women and their children in Mississauga.

I would like to give you a few important facts about Armagh. It has nine separate units, apartments if you will, ranging from 300 square feet to 600 square feet. The apartments are self-contained apartments for which our residents pay rent like any other apartment. They do so, however, with it being scaled to their income.

Each resident can reside with us for up to one year. Right now, today, Armagh continues to be the only facility to assist women and children in the Region of Peel after they leave emergency shelters.

The need for Armagh is clear when one considers that, in a period of 18 months, we had 110 referrals for women and children in need and we can only house 21 families for that period. We can house up to 40 women and children at one time. We often receive referrals from the Milton and Oakville areas, since these cities have no second-stage housing to offer these women who are leaving the shelters.

The above details show the need for Armagh, but it does not show how we have renovated the residence into a home so that the families we help have a safe, supportive environment for them to continue their fight towards independence and overcome the multiple issues they now must face with overcoming the realities of violence.

I would like to give you a brief history of Armagh to give you an idea where Armagh has come from and where it wants to go. Armagh has been open as the next housing option for women and children leaving local shelters since 1991. Historically, although these women would be referred to Armagh by the shelters, that is no longer the case.

Armagh is now housing women referred from the local Children's Aid Society and specifically from the domestic violence team. The need for places like Armagh is only expanding, but its importance goes far beyond simply giving these people a place to reside.

What does Armagh do besides simply offering housing? Armagh aims to move these women towards overcoming the challenges they face after escaping from violent homes. Our primary goal is to increase the safety of women and their children when they begin to return to the community. We also assist women on a personal level by enhancing their self-esteem to stop the cycle of returning to a violent relationship. We also help these women and their children heal from the effects of violence through counselling and we direct them to services to address their legal, social, and financial needs.

These goals are achieved through the many programs that Armagh offers. Examples of our programs and the scope of the issues they encompass include the following: developing safety plans to address the immediate safety concerns these women have and when they return to the community; providing parenting support for women with children, including public health consultations if required; applying for income support for the many women who do not have an income, education, or the knowledge how to; assisting and securing immigration status if needed; offering legal support,

including applying for and being approved for legal aid; providing court support during the court process; and giving on-site group and individual supportive counselling.

There are a few more points I would like to raise. In 2013 we undertook to produce a strategic plan for Armagh, a defining moment in its history with the introduction of its first ever strategic plan. The strategic planning process was inclusive of volunteer board members, staff, clients, funders, donors, and community partners. Our collaborative strategic planning process confirmed that there is a clear admiration for Armagh's services within the Region of Peel and a desire to see services expand to meet the ever-present and growing demand of this high-population community.

We identified the following three pillars: establish capacity expansion and facility compliance options, care for the future by supporting our clients' children, and help clients build their new future.

As for establishing capacity expansion and facility compliance options, Armagh's impact is in part limited due to its location, size, and the age of the facility structure. It is our plan to expand in the future by exploring options to increase capacity at the present and possible future locales. This initiative is in the preliminary stages. It is one being discussed due to the needs placed on our current facility.

● (0920)

As for caring for the future by supporting our clients' children, it is widely acknowledged that a key opportunity to break the cycle of abuse is the engagement, support, and education of children who are witnesses of domestic violence. Our objective is to establish a comprehensive service model for women and children residing at Armagh. This model includes programs and community service partnerships, focusing on education and supportive policies for parenting, to stop the cycle of abuse.

In the strategic planning process, supporting children and youth emerged as a leading priority. Recognizing this programming gap for our clients, we are in the process of securing a plan for educating them and their families in an attempt to address the needs they have clearly expressed to us. A plan of this nature is sorely needed to assist these individuals to become healthy, first and foremost, as well as self-confident, and ultimately, self-sufficient.

As for helping clients build their new future, overwhelmingly, participants identified Armagh as providing not only a safe haven for clients, but also, the best possible opportunity for a new future. Participants also widely acknowledged that there are significant systematic barriers for women attempting to transition to independent living. Key barriers included economic disparity due to lack of employable skills, affordable and accessible child care, language barriers, lack of affordable housing, and cultural factors such as social isolation.

In conclusion, Armagh makes a difference in the lives of women and children who have had their lives stolen due to violence. How? It gives them the tools to rebuild themselves before re-entering the community, often for the first time in their lives.

We are part of the rebuilding process for these victims when it comes to their needs that stem from the realities of abuse. Establishing second-stage housing with supportive programs in communities where they don't exist, or are scarce, is one area where we can create stability, and strengthen prevention in the future for violence against women.

A national strategy would need to be tied to achieving clear and specific outcomes and strategies, and include measures to evaluate success. It would need to acknowledge the higher risk of marginalized women, connect it to other social issues such as homelessness, recognize the impact of children's exposure, ensure men and communities are all part of the solution, include effective justice responses, and include a comprehensive prevention plan with strategies ranging from public education to interventions for victims and perpetrators.

All levels of government would need to work together to bridge the service gap and ensure its success.

We are proud of our accomplishments in providing women and their children with the best possible opportunity to overcome the devastating effects of abuse, to deal with the past, to address the present, to plan for their future—the future for them and their children, and to live violence-free lives.

I hope the information I have provided will be useful for your committee's study. I thank you for your time and would be very pleased to answer any questions you may have.

• (0925)

[Translation]

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

Now we have a period for questions.

Ms. Truppe, you have the floor for seven minutes.

[English]

Mrs. Susan Truppe (London North Centre, CPC): Thank you, Madame Chair.

Welcome and thank you everyone for sharing your testimony with us.

This study is on best practices and promising practices, things that your organization may have done that might help someone else, projects that you've done. I heard a lot of initiatives that you would like to see, but they weren't necessarily best practices or promising practices of things you've done. These are great organizations, so hopefully I can get something great that you've done in your organization, so we can use it as a model, perhaps, for other organizations.

I wanted to clarify something else.

Sharlene, I think you had mentioned the funding for Status of Women.

I wanted to clarify that the reduction was due to administrative savings and that it wasn't project funding. In 2007, 10 million new dollars were put in there. It was announced to give more money to the programs, and that brought the program funding to \$19 million. I just wanted to clarify that. Also, \$146 million in funding has been approved to end violence against women and girls since 2007.

I have a couple of questions about best practices.

Lise Martin, maybe I can start with you if that's okay. You were talking about Walking the Path Together, taking action in relation to safety. Do you have a best practice that came out of that initiative?

Ms. Lise Martin: Actually, that is a best practice. It was a project done in Alberta specifically because there's a very high percentage of women in the shelters in Alberta who are aboriginal, and it was around the danger assessment tool.

In fact, I was speaking to the executive director of the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters yesterday. She told me that they had a call from the family of an aboriginal woman who had done the danger assessment tool. It had made a huge difference in her life. In terms of the police, she had ensured that charges were laid. She was actually going back to school and had really taken control over her life after having had the opportunity to use this danger assessment tool.

Again, that's the project where they did want to scale it up to other shelters, but it was turned down.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Was this your organization's initiative, or did you get it from someone else and it had been working?

Ms. Lise Martin: No, it's the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters' initiative.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: You also mentioned—

Ms. Lise Martin: Actually, there's quite a bit of information I could share about that project.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: That would be great. Thank you.

You also mentioned long-term abuse. There are barriers to getting help from the shelters; I think you called it the Reducing Barriers project.

Ms. Lise Martin: Yes, from B.C.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Can you tell us a bit more about that? What great thing came from that one, because that sounded like a really interesting initiative as well.

Ms. Lise Martin: I could speak a bit to it, then my colleagues could perhaps speak to more specifics in terms of... I think it's a well-known fact that women who are survivors of abuse, because of the abuse, often develop either addiction issues or mental health issues.

It is a challenge for shelters to accommodate some of these women because, as Sharlene said—actually I'm not sure if it was in your presentation—there are often an important number of children within shelters. That presents challenges. So this project was really to face this issue with the harm reduction approach, to give proper training to shelter workers to be able to accommodate these women. You need specific infrastructure at times to really and truly implement a harm reduction approach, so they did develop a tool kit, which has also had positive results.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Thank you very much.

Sharlene, I think you talked about the violence on children when we were talking about children in the shelters, and Ernestine's Women's Shelter recognizes the impact of violence on children and acknowledges the rights of children. Is there something that your organization has done that would be a best practice that you'd like to share, or we could use as a model as well?

• (0930)

Ms. Sharlene Tygesen: We've done a bunch of different things. One of them is going into schools. High schools are actually much easier to get into. I don't know if it's because they're older and can make those decisions. However, getting into the elementary schools is not so easy. Quite frankly, it would be great if we could do that.

We do have some partnerships with some great schools. The principals are the kings and queens of those castles, so it does depend on who is there whether or not we'll be able to get our foot in the door and do that. Even now, doing it is still only grade 4 through 8. It would be really nice to be able to get into kindergartens and day cares and much younger, and start very young to talk about issues of witnessing and violence and children's experiences needing to be heard. It's important. The majority of clients residing in our shelters are children. That's who they are.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: I agree, younger would be better.

Ms. Sharlene Tygesen: Totally.

We're a 32-bed shelter and we have 14 bedrooms, so you have 14 women and you have 18 that are going to be kids. Often we will go over that if we have to.

Again, engaging men in work that we do is really.... I think that landscape is kind of changing—

Mrs. Susan Truppe: It is for sure. Yes.

Ms. Sharlene Tygesen: —from when I started to where we're going. There's definitely more of a need for us to engage men in the work we're doing.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Through Status of Women, we've been funding projects that engage men and boys, which is key.

Ms. Sharlene Tygesen: Yes.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: I totally agree.

I think you're right. The landscape is changing, and more people are agreeing to that, because they have to be involved and know what's going on in order to have the protection for the girls and the women.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Thank you. That seven minutes goes fast.

Voices: Oh, oh!

The Chair: Yes.

[*Translation*]

Thank you, Ms. Truppe.

Your turn, Ms. Ashton.

[*English*]

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Thank you so much to our witnesses who came forward today. We've heard from many experts in this field and from survivors as well.

I want to particularly indicate how much we appreciate hearing from those of you who are at the front lines. I was involved for a number of years with the board at our local women's shelter. It gave me a very acute understanding of the immense commitment you put in and, without question, how much our society relies on the work you do day in and day out. Thank you very much for the work you do and for being able to come here and share with us what we need to be doing.

Really, I had a series of questions that I wanted to talk about, touching on the various issues, but perhaps like you, I think many of us in this room and across the country were shocked and deeply saddened by the homicide of Zahra Abdille and her children in Toronto a few days ago. I'm wondering if all three of you could speak to perhaps the experience that we're hearing about from her case, which is the fact that women get trapped in situations where they have no access to housing and no access to legal services.

Even though shelters are there to help as much as they can, there are so many other issues that compound the victimization that women face, and also particularly, perhaps, women in immigrant communities or racialized communities who may not have access to culturally appropriate services. How can we relate dealing with those compound issues to the kind of action that we need to see from the federal government?

Perhaps, Ms. Tygesen, we could start with you, and then hear from Ms. Martin and Ms. Ward.

Ms. Sharlene Tygesen: I'm going to try to figure out all of what you've asked. I'm very familiar in terms of what happened this week in Toronto. I'm not familiar with the specifics of that case. It's probably very similar to a lot of situations that happen if a woman returns. There are other things that are implemented in a shelter when a woman returns, in particular when there are children. When there are children, child protection is notified because if a woman decides to return—and there are a lot of reasons that she would be doing that—when children do go back with her, then we get child protection involved in making sure that all of those things are looked into as well. There are lots of cases that happen like that.

We had a similar situation happen in our shelter, and no shelter staff ever want that to happen to them for sure. It doesn't matter how much you put in place and everything that you did right, and all of the safety, and what you wanted to do, if he wants to kill her, he's going to. That's a reality. If he wants to, he is going to find a way to do that.

In our situation I think a lot of systems let her down. We have court systems; we have police systems. There are all of these different groups of people who sometimes are working in a very fragmented way, and not together in a collaborative way to ensure that this doesn't happen. I think sometimes as shelter workers we're looked at as men hating, family annihilating, trying to rip the family apart, trying to keep men away from their children. It's not what we do, and I wish people would inquire more about what it is that we do. So trying to work together with people who are already thinking that about us makes our jobs very difficult. We're not over-exaggerating when we tell somebody that they're at risk, when we call another agency and say, look, there's great risk here, and these are the things that we see are going to happen and we're worried that the outcome is going to be very devastating—as it was in a particular case for us.

The client had gone to court. We wanted them to consider having no access to the child at this time until something was put in place in terms of his own anger and what he needed to do, and they didn't do that. In fact, he found her at our shelter and when that happens we have to move her. She is no longer safe in our shelter and we have to move her. Often, they are found at our shelters not just because he's done some searching around, but the systems have told him.

So in a courtroom a judge decided that he had the right to know where his child was. So now he's publicly said our address. We now have to go back, and this domino effect takes place where we have to now move her, we have to change this child's school. There are all of these things that happen. Then she goes to another shelter. The court again says, "No, he can have access, he can come and pick the child up at your house," and that's exactly what he did, and he stabbed her to death in front of the children.

You would like to think he is currently in jail, but he's not. He's out. I think he served four years. I don't know that there's anything at the federal level that happens when they're in jail. He is now released. What is the process to ensure that every woman he ever comes into contact with is going to be okay?

Even at the provincial level we have the PARS program, but it's not evaluated. We have no idea whether these programs that spend a lot of money are working. How do we know they're working? How do you measure them? How do you do those kinds of things?

I don't know if I've answered your question; I probably went off a bit.

● (0935)

Ms. Niki Ashton: Well, you shared your own experience in that.

We just have over a minute left. Perhaps Ms. Martin could share something.

Ms. Lise Martin: I think Sharlene responded perfectly in terms of that's sometimes the best way to understand, through a concrete example of what the shelter workers told us in terms of the need for

services that are interconnected and continuous. Just too often this is slipping between the cracks, so we really have to do something about that.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Ms. Ambler, you have the floor for seven minutes.

[English]

Mrs. Stella Ambler (Mississauga South, CPC): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Thank you to all three of you for not only being here today but for all the work that you do in the communities helping women and their children. We really do appreciate it. Thank you for informing our study in this way.

I wanted to tell my colleagues, Lynn, how I met you and how I found out about Armagh House. I was knocking on doors in the 2011 election and I knocked on the door of Armagh House and like a good candidate, I wanted to know who lived there and if they would be voting. I wanted to meet them. The person who answered the door was very cryptic and refused to tell me who lived there. I thought this is strange. It's such a big house. It's beautiful. Clearly people live here. So your folks do a good job of...

Even though it's on a street in a regular old neighbourhood, it's a little bit tucked away. It just kind of got me curious. There's no big sign, as you know. We met shortly after that and I got to hear about all the good work that you do there. I wanted to thank you for that. Here we are about three and a half years later. Now that I know what goes on at this second-stage house, I'm glad that it exists there to help the people in our community and our neighbourhood. So thank you for that.

There's a whole bunch of things I wanted to ask you but let me start with something I think is very immediate and that I know you do well, and that's your goal to increase the safety of the women who are living at Armagh. How do you do this? What kinds of supports do you offer them? What works? What doesn't?

● (0940)

Ms. Lynn Ward: To start, we do a risk assessment when they first move into Armagh so we know their level of risk because they come in from either the crisis shelter, the emergency shelter, and/or through the Children's Aid domestic violence team.

Mrs. Stella Ambler: Similar to the one that Lise, Ms. Martin, was talking about?

Ms. Lynn Ward: Yes.

However, we're finding the safety changes for the residents that we work with when they're actively in their court process for custody, access, and support. So we're reviewing the safety plans with the women at different stages when they're going through court. The reason for that is that the men are often hostile about the situation with the women, having access to the child, calling them, harassment. They're often trying to find them again.

Mrs. Stella Ambler: Obviously, your staff are trained and equipped to deal with this.

Ms. Lynn Ward: Yes, they're trained and equipped to deal with this on a regular basis as part of our best practices. Professional development is always a must. Keeping updated with any new tools that are in place or are happening out there, we ensure that they're implemented.

Ms. Sharlene Tygesen: Can I add something to that?

Mrs. Stella Ambler: Yes.

Ms. Sharlene Tygesen: I'm just thinking as you're talking about it, when new technology.... New technology makes our jobs very difficult. More recently there are things like apps. Google does its Google map thing and then all of a sudden our addresses are online. I'm pretty sure it's not rocket science to not do that kind of stuff. But even just trying to find who we need to talk to at Google or wherever to remove it.... You get apps where we've had a situation with a partner finding her because he had all her information from her cell phone so he could find the GPS.

So every time these new kinds of...nobody considers the impact it might have on a woman's safety. Then other apps come out to try to figure out how we can protect women. When they're coming in, we're talking to them. We actually have sheets now about the process of...okay, your cell phone, you need to do this, this, and this. I just wanted to make sure we're talking about technology.

Mrs. Stella Ambler: That is such a good point, thank you. We hadn't heard that. Sure the family iCloud, everything gets....

Ms. Sharlene Tygesen: There's no downtime.

Mrs. Stella Ambler: Right. Thanks.

Ms. Lynn Ward: If I could add just one thing with regards to the safety plan, it's around the court system. When the women are going through court, whether through the criminal process or family court, the judge often forces the women to provide their address. We are finding that is a big challenge in what we're facing and we're often advocating on the women's behalf for their protection.

Mrs. Stella Ambler: That is so good to know. Thank you. I think we are all making a note of that.

I wanted to ask you, and Sharlene as well, about roughly what percentage or how many of the women who come to your shelter also have those mental health or addiction issues as a result of abuse?

• (0945)

Ms. Sharlene Tygesen: Again, the landscape is just kind of changing. I don't think it's necessarily new. I've been there since 1991 and I don't necessarily think it is new. It's just that we are way more aware of it. There is more public awareness of them, so people are a little more comfortable talking about things.

We're trying really hard to work from a harm reduction model. Lise as well was saying that a lot of times people are concerned about a harm reduction model because there are kids in the house, but when they're at home, there are children in the house too. So working from that kind of a model—

Mrs. Stella Ambler: Are we talking about depression, postpartum

Ms. Sharlene Tygesen: All of it, yes.

Mrs. Stella Ambler: —bipolar disorder, all of that?

Do you see that too, Lynn?

Ms. Lynn Ward: We are starting to see it more often, yes.

Mrs. Stella Ambler: Thanks.

I wanted to talk to you about enhancing self-esteem. You mentioned that specifically. How does that help? Why is it necessary?

Ms. Lynn Ward: We've implemented one program, and pertaining to the children, we've implemented a part-time child and youth program through our fundraising efforts this year, and that encompasses a therapeutic dog that comes in with the children. The children will read books and often the books are about safety planning and their feelings and emotions. Those help get them talking about the situation, and then we move into safety planning. That is what we have just started implementing, and it has been successful so far.

The Chair: You are making my job very difficult to cut times on these discussions. Thank you very much.

[Translation]

This is really interesting. It is hard for me to cut you off.

Ms. Duncan, the floor is yours, for seven minutes.

[English]

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

To all the witnesses, thank you for your time and effort this morning. More importantly, thank you for the life-saving work you do each and every day. Sharlene is in my riding, and we proudly work together. My heartfelt thanks go to all of you.

I'm looking for a yes or no answer from each of you. The minister has put forward an action plan for family violence.

Ms. Martin, were you consulted—yes or no?

Ms. Lise Martin: No, but I'm not aware of.... Are you talking about something specific to aboriginal women?

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: No.

Ms. Tygesen.

Ms. Sharlene Tygesen: No.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Ms. Ward.

Ms. Lynn Ward: No.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Thank you.

I'm going to start with Ms. Martin.

With regard to the survey of shelter workers, you've mentioned the blueprint is ongoing. Can you discuss some of the key elements of what you'd like to see in a national action plan, your top three choices?

Ms. Lise Martin: We are looking at it in terms of prevention mechanisms, social policy responses, legal responses, and service responses. Those are the four main areas that need to be covered.

I spoke in my presentation about what we felt the national action plan could do, but also we feel that the process of developing the plan is as important as the plan itself. So for us, it would be actually very disappointing to hear, as good as any plan could be, that it's a *fait accompli*, that there is, all of a sudden, an announcement that there is this national action plan, because it is very important that stakeholders be involved.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Thank you.

Ms. Tygesen, you mentioned the national association and the law. Can you describe what the loss of that has meant and what impact it's had on Ernestine's—

Ms. Lise Martin: That's the National Association of Women and the Law.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: That's NAWL, right.

Ms. Sharlene Tygesen: The impact for us has to do with being able to understand the stuff that's rolling out that legally impacts women. We're not often consulted about a lot of things, including what will happen to women during processes of the law.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: When I've been at the shelter you have talked a lot about GPS.

Ms. Sharlene Tygesen: Yes.

• (0950)

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: You've talked about technology and about how men are now able to find women. Do you think there's a role for government to make changes?

Ms. Sharlene Tygesen: If the powers that be have the ability to review laws or policies, or if legislation comes out to include those kinds of things in strategies to make sure that this is being looked at.... It's using a “violence against women” lens on everything that you do, so that everything that is put forth or that people want to discuss or talk about is put through the lens of how it is going to impact women fleeing violence or end their living in violence.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: You mentioned that there's a difference between the Ontario government program and the federal government's approach to support for victims. Is that correct?

Ms. Sharlene Tygesen: Yes.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Can you elaborate more on that?

Ms. Sharlene Tygesen: What I was talking about in particular was the PARS program, which is the partner assault response program that is done provincially, through the courts and so forth. I'm not aware of what the federal government implements when there is violence in the family or what is involved at a federal level for abusers when they get out of jail.

With the provincial pieces there is no evaluation of the PARS program, so we don't know whether it is successful. We don't know how much abuse is being done again, whether they are leaving, whether a woman is safe, or if there is follow-up, what that follow-up looks like for her when he's going through those programs.

It's that kind of stuff.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Thank you.

Ms. Martin, the survey of shelter workers identified the legal system as an impediment. Is that correct?

Ms. Lise Martin: Yes.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: What do you mean, and can you elaborate on it?

Ms. Lise Martin: I would defer to Sharlene and Lynn concerning the response. They are the ones who have to deal with the day-to-day pieces of it.

First of all, it's the delays in court systems.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: What do delays mean for women?

Ms. Sharlene Tygesen: They mean having to keep going back. I've never gone anywhere but that somebody has said, “Oh, that person is not here? Well, come back in a couple of weeks.” And we'll come back and it will be a couple of weeks before a bench warrant is issued.

It's not being able to get things done in a timely manner that keeps her safe.

Ms. Lise Martin: And it wears you down just psychologically.

Ms. Sharlene Tygesen: Even the system itself.... There is a court right now in Toronto, modelled after one in Buffalo, in which the criminal and family judges—there are a couple of judges—are hearing both sides. It's a domestic violence court. They're hearing both sides, so that they get the criminal case part and they get the family case part and then hopefully are able to make a more informed decision around the safety of the family, the safety of the children.

It has been around for two or three years now, but there are some flaws that they're trying to address. It originally was not a mandatory court, so I'm not sure who would offer to volunteer to go and say, “Yes, I'll absolutely have a criminal judge and a family judge hear my story”. When they were separate, neither knew what the other was doing, and that was a problem.

Then, when you try to speak with judges around understanding or educating around family violence, they have absolutely said that they are not allowed to be educated on such matters. It's kind of odd; I don't understand that process.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Tygesen, you were mentioning a practice.

[English]

This is something that you have heard is done in the United States, I understand.

Ms. Sharlene Tygesen: Yes, it was in Buffalo.

The Chair: If you have any more information on it, I think it might be something to be considered. Would you feel that it might be a promising practice to resolve some of the lengthy delay?

Ms. Sharlene Tygesen: Yes, for sure.

The Chair: I don't know whether it's applicable in Canada—that is not what I'm saying—but if you could send to the clerk any references you have to it, I think this would be interesting to look at as maybe a promising practice.

[Translation]

Ms. Young, you have the floor for five minutes.

● (0955)

[English]

Ms. Wai Young (Vancouver South, CPC): Thank you very much.

I want to thank you so very much for coming today. Some 30 years ago I worked in the downtown eastside as a native youth and family counsellor. It was when one of my youth got raped that I decided to become a foster parent. I took her home, and subsequently I fostered seven different children in my home. I just give this to you as context for where I'm coming from.

I only have five minutes, as you've heard. I would love to spend hours and hours with you instead. But very specifically, we've been touching a little bit on the legal system, which is huge because of its complexities and difficulties. Certainly I've done it on the children side, getting them out of the home and all of that sort of thing.

Over the past 30 years, would you say that has changed or become better? Are there any best practices? Can you make some recommendations regarding the legal system while you're here? After all, we are in Ottawa, and this is where we can maybe effect some change in the future.

I'll start with you, Sharlene, because of your 30 years of experience as well; that's something that we can perhaps share later on.

I will give you this example. Years ago we used to take the women and children out of the home. Maybe about 10 or 15 years ago there was a change to that, where we took the offender out of the home, leaving the women and children in the home. Has that effected a change? Is that a best practice? Should we be following up on that, and doing a study on that, to look at how that has been better?

I mean, the answer perhaps is not to build more shelters. The answer perhaps is to keep women safe in their homes with their children, if you know what I mean.

Can you give a response to that?

Ms. Sharlene Tygesen: Yes. One of the things that's happening now is that they're just charging them both. There's definitely more dual charging happening. Often it's because she's defending herself, right? But it becomes a he-said-she-said issue, a situation that happens quite a bit now.

It doesn't feel like it's gotten any better. From my experience, it doesn't feel like it's gotten better. I spoke with some officers who teach at the college, and when I asked them how much time officers

spend getting training on domestic violence, they said three days. Wow; that was very eye-opening for me.

I do think we also have a responsibility as a shelter to connect with our police divisions, our divisions within our shelter community, to better that partnership and that relationship. That's certainly some of what we do, but there are also officers who don't even know where we are.

Ms. Wai Young: Perhaps you could reflect on and send us—just because I'm lacking in time here—any best practices in terms of noticeable changes in the legal system, such as any noticeable changes in how things are happening in the courts.

Lynn, I'll ask you to answer that question as well. Have you noticed any changes in the last few years, or any best practices that we should perhaps follow up on or take a look at in the legal system to help all of this?

Ms. Lynn Ward: I would like to make one suggestion, or one recommendation, and that is to hold perpetrators more accountable when there is hard evidence against them about a situation.

I'll give you an example. One woman who had come to us had been incested by her father. Because of a delay in the criminal court proceeding, he is out. It has taken two years for a trial, even though there is hard evidence to prove that he will be guilty. Allowing him that option to keep going to court, saying he's not guilty—that's not holding men accountable, or any perpetrators, in fact, for their actions.

Ms. Wai Young: Right.

May I ask you, Lise, under the Canadian Network of Women's Shelters and Transition Houses, do you track any of this stuff? As a national organization, what kind of policy work do you do in this area?

Ms. Lise Martin: It's definitely something that we need to do and we'd like to do. The reality is that the network is young. I was basically on my own until October, when I was joined by a part-time colleague. There are limits to what we can do.

One thing that I did want to mention as, I feel, a potential around the national action plan is the domestic violence court that Sharlene referred to. There had been one in St. John's, Newfoundland. That was operational for three years, and then the Newfoundland government cancelled it. Within the light of this committee, I think it's really good to collect different promising practices, but I think that whole notion of promising practices needs to be looked at as well. Yes, okay, we have all these different practices, but how do they continue? As I said, how do we scale them up to really benefit from their full potential? If you could also touch on that in the report, I think it would be really useful.

Ms. Wai Young: Thank you very much.

● (1000)

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Young.

Ms. Sellah, you have the floor for five minutes.

Mrs. Djaouida Sellah (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Ladies, thank you for being here and testifying before us in order to direct the government's attention to violence against women. I feel that you are the leaders of social change and leaders in the fight against violence against women.

I had a lot of questions to ask, but, after hearing Ms. Tygesen speak about the other side of the GPS system coin, and how it can be used to locate women who are the victims of violence and are supposed to be in a safe and undisclosed location, I would like her to tell us more about it.

What could the federal government do to eventually protect these women from these modern technologies?

[English]

Ms. Sharlene Tygesen: Again, I guess it's where they have the power to look at legislation that is about communication, that is about policies that govern.... Whoever is developing these technologies, if the government is overseeing it, like they do with Rogers about what goes on your television, it's those kinds of things.

I'm not really sure which levels of government have control in looking over those kinds of things. I mean, I know there's Internet lobbying, child porn, other issues of violence against women and children that are technology warranted. I'm not sure who's got that authority. If it's federal or if it's provincial or if it's municipal, get in the sandbox together and play nice.

[Translation]

Mrs. Djaouida Sellah: I also have a question about the network's 2013 report entitled "The case for a National Action Plan on Violence Against Women in Canada". The report reviews gaps in policies and legislation related to violence against women in Canada.

What are those gaps in policies and legislation related to violence against women in Canada that the report points out? What are the main reasons why the network is demanding a national action plan on violence against women?

Ms. Lise Martin: We are calling for a national plan mostly to make sure that women all across the country can have access to the same level of services. A woman in Thunder Bay must have access to the same services as a woman in Toronto. Accomplishing that would be very significant.

If we really want violence against women to be reduced and eventually stopped, it must be a project for society as a whole. Our system has various levels of government and we must be able to work together. If we have to get into the sandbox together and play nice, as Sharlene just said, let's do it.

This is a society-wide project. It is not something that lasts only as long as a political mandate. It will take a number of years to achieve.

In federal policies related to violence against women, the women seem to have become invisible, in a way, because of the neutral terminology. The words "violence against women" are being used less often, and everyone is basically being placed in the same boat.

Mrs. Djaouida Sellah: Thank you.

Madam Chair, I am giving the last minute of my time to my colleague Ms. Ashton.

●(1005)

[English]

Ms. Niki Ashton: Thank you very much for your feedback.

I do want to bring the attention back to the tragic case of Zahra Abdille because it is making national news and highlights the way in which the system is failing Zahra and women like her. Given the earlier discussion, I would like to take the opportunity to bring forward a motion. In the wake of the tragedy of Zahra Abdille and the fact that almost every witness this committee has heard so far has agreed that a national action plan is urgently necessary to help women like Zahra, I would like to take the last few minutes of this meeting to table a motion to expand the mandate of this study to include the study of a national action plan to address violence against women, including an inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women, so that Zahra and women like her don't go missing anymore.

[Translation]

The Chair: Given that the motion is related to the study in progress, it is in order.

Ms. Truppe, you have the floor.

[English]

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Thank you, Madam Chair.

If we're going to discuss the motion as committee business, I move to go in camera.

Ms. Niki Ashton: A recorded vote, please....

[Translation]

The Chair: We will move to a recorded vote.

[English]

Mrs. Susan Truppe: I move to go in camera.

The Chair: Yes, and we are having the vote on the motion to move in camera.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Too bad, because the witnesses—

The Chair: Okay. The thing is that there is a request to move in camera, and we're voting on it, with a recorded vote, now.

The vote to go in camera—

An hon. member: There's a point of order here, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Yes, Mr. McColeman.

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brant, CPC): My experience as a committee chair is that recognition of the fact that you're going in camera is non-debatable, and you must go in camera for a recorded vote. That would mean that anyone in the room who is not a member or an assistant to a member needs to clear the room so that vote can happen in camera.

An hon. member: We're voting on going in camera.

The Chair: One moment, please. Thank you very much. I'll confer with the clerk.

Thank you, Mr. McColeman.

Mr. Phil McColeman: Madam Chair, maybe I'm misinterpreting your ruling here, but is the vote to go in camera? Is that what it is?

The Chair: Yes, that's it. The request was for a recorded vote to go in camera, and after that we go in camera, discuss the motion, and then we'll—

Mr. Phil McColeman: I'm sorry, I was mistaken. I thought you were moving to the vote on the motion.

The Chair: No, not at all, Mr. McColeman. The recorded vote was requested following the request from Mrs. Truppe to go in camera.

[Translation]

So let us vote on the motion.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 6; nays 3) [See *Minutes of Proceedings*]

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]

● (1005) _____ (Pause) _____

● (1020)

[*Public proceedings resume*]

The Chair: Let us resume the meeting.

My thanks to the witnesses for coming back.

[English]

Thank you very much for coming back.

Now I have Ms. Crockatt for five minutes.

Ms. Joan Crockatt (Calgary Centre, CPC): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I feel compelled to explain to you what just went on because I'm really saddened when we have terrific witnesses like we have today, and then some sort of procedural snag is thrown in the middle that takes away from our time with you. I want to apologize and tell you that it was not our intention and we're very happy to have you back.

Many of us here today on both sides have a lot invested in trying to keep women safe. You heard a bit from Wai and from some of the others about the work they've done.

My mom started one of the first women's shelters in Alberta. I was a founding member of a sexual assault centre. We've all worked on these problems, and I understand the frustration that I hear in your voices because it is a very tough job. It's a burnout job, and we see the cycle of violence continuing. That's what we started talking about back in the seventies when my mom started shelters: how do we end that cycle of violence?

I think that's what we're here for today. We can talk about lots of other things. We know the problems exist. We know they're really tough to deal with on a daily basis, but what we're really trying to get at is—and several of you mentioned this and I love the fact that you see this—that we need to find ways to be able to change the channel on violence against women.

That's why we're looking for best practices today.

I was really interested, Lynn, to hear about the dog program that you briefly talked about and the aboriginal women's program and the

tools that are being used, the danger assessment tool, in Alberta. I hope I can go through the three of you and have you....

Lynn, could you talk more about the dog program so we can hear what some of these best practices are because I think Sharlene and Lise both mentioned that we have all these programs out here. Some of them have their funding renewed and some of them don't, and often it's because we don't know what's working and it's very hard for people to assess where the money should go.

Today we're trying to find the cream so we know when these programs come up which ones you recommend that are really cutting edge, that are changing the channel, and we can start to have real progress in the areas you find are working.

Lynn, could I start with you, please, and then go to Sharlene and Lise. Thank you all very much for your contributions.

Ms. Lynn Ward: To start with, the therapeutic dog program we have in place is for all ages, so a child does not have to be reading, they can read from pictures. That comes from a therapeutic best practice approach of course when you incorporate that into a program.

Ms. Joan Crockatt: Sorry to interrupt you, but could you focus on the prevention aspect? It may help kids deal with the very difficult transition of getting their life back to normal, but will it help us stop the cycle? Is there a prevention component to it?

Ms. Lynn Ward: I believe there is. It's still in its early stages, but we know it is working. In terms of safety, how do children keep themselves safe?

Access to the Internet is huge. Children are accessing the Internet. They're on chat lines, Facebook, Instagram, and so on. We're intertwining teaching them how to be safe when they're accessing the World Wide Web.

Also, it is about their personal safety. They're no longer in the family unit. They're going to visitations, so to speak, to see their father. We're giving them the tools on how they can be safe when they're visiting with dad because sometimes issues come up. For example, they could be asked where they are living and what they're doing, and the child should be self-confident and empowered to be strong in their response.

Another is still in its infancy, and that is healthy relationships. That can start at a young age, at school: what does a healthy relationship look like?

● (1025)

Ms. Joan Crockatt: Okay.

Sharlene, thank you.

Ms. Sharlene Tygesen: There are some different things we're doing. There's a project we started with child protection agencies a couple of years ago as a pilot that looks as though it's going to.... Again, that's going to be based on whether or not there's funding available to do it. We took VAW shelter workers. A couple of shelters participated.

The Chair: It's very interesting, but we're running out of time.

Continue.

Ms. Sharlene Tygesen: We put workers from the violence against women shelters into the CAS offices, working with their DV team but going out on the very first call with the CAS child protection workers. They identify that they are a violence against women worker. For all intents and purposes, we have found this to be wonderful—if I can use the words “wonderful” and “child protection” in the same sentence. That partnership and that collaboration have really helped the woman and helped support her and her kids during the process of an investigation. It provides child protection and it provides the mother with some other options around her safety, such as whether she needs to go into a shelter or whether the father is going to go into a Caring Dads program.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Barlow, you have the floor.

[English]

Ms. Joan Crockatt: Can the third witness not answer?

The Chair: Sorry, Mrs. Crockatt. You know I've been very.... But that's good.

Ms. Joan Crockatt: Could you send us in something?

The Chair: If you have anything you would like to add, you're always welcome to send it to the clerk and then we can distribute it to members.

Mr. Barlow, go ahead for five minutes, please.

Mr. John Barlow (Macleod, CPC): Thank you.

Lise, for my first minute, would you mind answering Ms. Crockatt's question, now that we have some time?

Ms. Lise Martin: I will. I'm not sure what you'll think of my response, because I feel—

Mr. John Barlow: I think all the responses are good.

Ms. Lise Martin: Well, I think we have to talk about the root cause of violence against women. Basically, that's men exercising power over women, whether it's intimate partners, colleagues, or strangers on the street. Also, it's about inequality, and if we're going to really address that, basically men have to give up some power. That's neither comfortable nor easy, but I think, in terms of our long-range plan, that definitely has to be integral to it.

Mr. John Barlow: That was perfect timing for my question. That's good.

If you don't mind staying on that theme, Sharlene, you mentioned in your testimony that you're doing some programs to engage men.

To all three of you—and this is from my perspective—I think our focus here, as some of my colleagues have said, is on how to break the cycle. It's one thing to address it today, but we need to address this for future generations. I think a big part of that, obviously, is men and boys.

Sharlene, you kind of mentioned that you do have some programs that are educating men. Can you talk about that a little?

Ms. Sharlene Tygesen: Actually, no. I said that we're at a place now where we're ready, and I think the landscape is changing in

terms of doing work with men and engaging them in the work we do. We have not moved on doing that, other than in the schools, obviously, through working with young boys on prevention.

Mr. John Barlow: If you don't mind staying on that theme, then, if you say you're ready to take that on or move to that level, what would you see as that step? What can we do to look at the male side, and how do we educate men and boys? I agree with you. I think the fact that we are having this discussion today.... But we see it in the media every day. What would you see as an approach we can take in educating? I would ask all three of you.

• (1030)

Ms. Sharlene Tygesen: I think the biggest thing would be to suggest that stuff be implemented to help men hold other men accountable so that they take some responsibility in addressing male violence with men. That's kind of what I'm thinking in terms of that stuff. I think there's a lot we can be doing, but right now I feel that there's a readiness within the sector to engage men in a very different way, a very hands-on way.

I don't want to take up a lot of time, because clearly I keep doing that. So I will let them go ahead.

Ms. Lise Martin: There definitely is agreement that we need to engage men and boys. However, violence against women is still very much a reality for far too many women, and the problem more recently has been that the pie has not been expanded. A lot of resources are going to engaging men and boys, but a lot of those resources are taken out of that same pie that was to provide services for the women. We need to enlarge the pie, I think, to bring in.... Again, as I said, to me it's really a societal project, and we have to put that importance on it. We have to say this is something we want to make a difference on.

Mr. John Barlow: Lynn, did you have anything?

Ms. Lynn Ward: =I do. I can share something with you that we are actively in the process of. For example, we have men on our board of directors, and part of our practice in this upcoming year is having a speaker's bureau and training this board of directors to go out there and engage them in public speaking when we're asked to speak about our services and support. Included in part of that speaker's bureau we will make sure to include Bill 168, which is in line with the law on harassment in the workplace.

Mr. John Barlow: Toronto and the B.C. Lions, the two CFL football teams, both have programs that they're working on, where the football players go and speak to boys in school to talk about violence against women. Also, Calgary has a very successful speaker series called Magnificent Men!, where we have some very prominent men from across Canada who speak about violence against women, but also violence against children.

I think this is a step in the right direction. We're having prominent people talk about these issues and we're bringing it out from the shadows.

Ms. Lynn Ward: I believe that engaging men to be part of this process will—

The Chair: Thank you.

Thank very much, Monsieur Barlow.

Ms. Joan Crockatt: Madam Chair, a point of order here. I think when we have a witness who's answering the question and she is in the middle of a sentence she should be allowed to finish her sentence. She was saying engaging men and boys—

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Crockatt.

Ms. Ward, I'm sorry if I interrupted you. Would you like to finish your sentence?

Ms. Lynn Ward: [*Technical difficulty—Editor*]

The Chair: Could you press the button for your microphone? Thank you.

Ms. Ward, following Mr. Barlow's remark you were mentioning...?

Ms. Lynn Ward: Our process is to engage men for the speaker's bureau for our organization, not just to speak to organizations or places that contact us but actively being part of that in the community where we are offering the speaker's bureau to address violence against women.

The speakers come from the men's side. That's one of our goals. It is actively in process and I look forward to bringing that to life in the next year.

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

Ms. Duncan, you have five minutes.

• (1035)

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to address the technologies. I'll ask either Ms. Martin or Ms. Tygesen, whoever would like to take this. Can you provide this committee with very specific examples of a technology that has been used to find a woman, and whether it's cellphones, it's Google...? List them and give us the specific example of how that impacts you.

Ms. Sharlene Tygesen: In my situation, it was the GPS on her phone. He ended up actually at the shelter in the parking lot. A staff member was leaving and demanded that she... He didn't know what that building was—

The Chair: I'm sorry, but we seem to have a little technical problem at this point. I will just ask you to manually open and close your microphone when you are speaking so we can have interpretation. Thank you very much. It's just a little technical glitch that we have right now, so that's okay.

Ms. Sharlene Tygesen: All right.

In our situation, he showed up at the shelter. He was able to find the shelter through her GPS on her phone. He demanded that the staff go and get his wife out of there. He didn't know what the building was. He figured it was some sort of government building, but she needed to come out. So the staff was able to sort of de-escalate the situation, send him on his way, but then coming back in to say that we now need to move her immediately. Then we figured out what was on her phone and we got it turned off, etc.

But it raised other questions. Suppose he had shown up with a weapon. What if he had come to the door with a weapon and made

demands of the staff? We have policies. We have lock-in, lock-down procedures that do get put into place, unfortunately, a little too often. Most of the shelters have this sort of locked space, so as soon as you come in you cannot go any further until another outside door shuts and then the inside door will open up. Then there's bulletproof glass within that perimeter.

If he had come to the door, then it would be a conversation with staff. What would have happened if he had grabbed her, come to the door, held a gun to her head and said, "Let me into the shelter; I want into the shelter"? Then we're not going to let her in, if it meant putting everybody else at risk. But these are the kinds of things that happen, because we have to play out the scenario in our minds: "Okay, he got this far, what would have happened if he had gotten that far?"

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: You've talked about scaling up of best practices. What would you like to see in this report? What would be your recommendation to this committee regarding the scaling up of best practices?

Ms. Lise Martin: As I mentioned, I think a good way to start the report could be to look at that notion of best or promising practices generally, before you start enumerating all your best practices. Then looking in terms of how many have been scaled up and what the barriers are to scaling up. I think that would be really useful.

I'm going to sound self-serving, but really, before 2012 there was no national network. Actually, it was established following the first global networks meeting that happened in Edmonton in 2008, where there were a number of countries that did have national network associations. I do feel that an association like ours would have the capacity to share better. I think the work of this committee will be very useful, but really that information has to be in the hands of those who are on the front line.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: What are the barriers? What are the barriers to scaling up, and what do you need in the report to address those barriers?

Ms. Lise Martin: In order for us to be able to share them, we need to have more than one staff person, for sure. It's the way our country is set up and we have to work within that, but every province has its different ways. I do know that in terms of the technology there is a project funded with the BC Society of Transition Houses. It is an ongoing project now dealing specifically with technology and it's funded through Status of Women.

• (1040)

The Chair: Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Thank you very much.

We now move to Ms. Ambler. You have seven minutes.

[*English*]

Mrs. Stella Ambler: Thank you.

I'm delighted to have this opportunity to continue. Perhaps I might continue along with what John Barlow was talking about regarding involving men and boys. I wanted to ask you specifically about your governance model, the board structure, and specifically how you involve men and why you involve men, also, not really related but more to governance, how you raise money.

Maybe you could talk about Walk a Mile in Her Shoes, as some of the other places, communities and cities in Canada, may do something similar. I know we've met up there a few times and some of the folks dress up in superhero costumes. I don't really know the significance, but maybe you could tell us about all of that and how it all works.

Ms. Lynn Ward: Okay.

We're governed by a board. We can have a maximum of 12 members on our board.

Mrs. Stella Ambler: What is their role?

Ms. Lynn Ward: There are various roles. We have a treasurer, vice-president, president, and then members of the community at large. We often engage professionals with various expertise to be on our board. We do that because we want them as well to go into the community and talk about being a board member and about our services and about how we are trying to prevent violence against women and how we are supporting these women and children who have been victims—

Mrs. Stella Ambler: As diverse as possible....

Ms. Lynn Ward: Yes, it's as diverse as possible.

Mrs. Stella Ambler: Do they do most of your fundraising? How much of your funds come from what they do? How does that all work?

Ms. Lynn Ward: For second-stage housing, we unfortunately receive a significantly lower amount of money from the government. We have to fundraise more than 50% in order to maintain our services and support. That is one huge barrier for us and is often a challenge when we want and we try to implement best practices and programs, and to be part of the community at large.

Mrs. Stella Ambler: What kind of dollar numbers are we looking at? What is 50% of your operating budget, if I might ask?

Ms. Lynn Ward: It's more than \$250,000 per year.

Mrs. Stella Ambler: Is that the total?

Ms. Lynn Ward: We have to fundraise about \$250,000 for the year. That's the 50%.

Mrs. Stella Ambler: Oh, that's the 50%. Thank you.

How much of it does Walk a Mile in Her Shoes—the one event that's held in the spring of every year—raise? How much does it raise?

Ms. Lynn Ward: We've actually just done an evaluation of that. It raises annually approximately \$20,000.

Mrs. Stella Ambler: I know that you involve the Peel Regional Police, the firefighters, the paramedics. I guess those are all essential, because they are your stakeholders, if you will, the people you deal with all the time. But who else is involved? We are talking about links to other stakeholder groups.

Ms. Lynn Ward: The purpose of the event is, first and foremost, to engage men and boys to help us raise awareness about violence against women in our local community. Men and boys will walk one mile in red high-heeled shoes and generate pledges to get support.

• (1045)

Mrs. Stella Ambler: We all agree that men are part of the solution.

You know, Ms. Martin, I appreciated your very succinct answer to that question. It's something that we all more or less know but need to hear. Canadians need to know that this is the issue; that it's a power imbalance, that it's about inequity, and that we're not going to fix this problem until we recognize that.

We all appreciate that.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Ambler.

I'm sorry, the clock is a little bit misleading, so we are running out of time.

I want to take the opportunity to thank immensely our witnesses today for all your input and for your recommendations.

I would like to remind members to submit your lists of five more witnesses by December 5 at four o'clock.

We have a nice meeting set up for next Tuesday at the same place and same time.

Thank you very much.

[Translation]

The meeting is adjourned.

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