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PROMISING PRACTICES TO PREVENT VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

Report of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women

**Hélène LeBlanc
Chair**

JUNE 2015

41st PARLIAMENT, SECOND SESSION

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THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

has the honour to present its

SEVENTH REPORT

Pursuant to the Order of Reference of Wednesday, October 1, 2014, the Committee has studied promising practices to prevent violence against women and girls and has agreed to report the following:

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PROMISING PRACTICES TO PREVENT VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Efforts to end violence against women in Canada have grown significantly in recent decades, with support from national and local women's organizations, collaboration among groups with violence prevention mandates, and partnerships among all levels of government. These violence prevention efforts aim to overcome remaining challenges: women continue to be at greater risk than men of experiencing certain forms of violence, such as sexual assault and criminal harassment; women are primarily victimized by men, and in most cases, by men they know and trust; and women face unique barriers in seeking assistance and escaping such violence.

In its report *Promising Practices to Prevent Violence Against Women and Girls*, the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women ("the Committee") examines and makes recommendations on promising practices aimed at addressing and preventing violence against women and girls in Canada. The study serves to raise awareness of the violence that affects over 1,000 of every 100,000 women in the Canadian population, leading to both immediate and long-term security concerns, physical and mental health problems, and reduced economic and social prosperity for women.

Although testimony covered a range of themes, this report focuses on promising practices that emerged: raising awareness about violence against women and promoting societal change; engaging men and boys in initiatives to address violence against women; fostering the bystander approach;¹ supporting parents and intervening in at-risk families; encouraging collaboration and sharing of promising practices among groups dealing with violence against women; educating the population about cybersafety; increasing the role of health care professionals in addressing violence against women; providing more shelters and housing for victims of violence; increasing access to social services for victims of violence; and addressing practices with unintended harmful consequences for victims in law enforcement and the justice system.

The report indicates that women experience violence disproportionately at the hands of men and are at significant risk of being victimized by men that they know. According to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), 92% of murders of non-Aboriginal women and 93% of murders of Aboriginal women are committed by an intimate partner or spouse, family members or acquaintance, while the remainder were stranger-perpetrated acts.²

1 The bystander approach is centred on the idea that everyone has a role to play in challenging and interrupting violent behaviour and that in each peer culture, individuals should be upholding social norms that condemn violent behaviour. The approach has the goal of teaching participants how to react and intervene when they see incidents of gender-based violence.

2 House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women [FEWO], [Evidence](#), 25 November 2014, 0930 (Tyler Bates, Director, National Aboriginal Policing and Crime Prevention Services, Royal Canadian Mounted Police).

As discussed in the report, certain groups of women are particularly vulnerable to violence, and experience violence of a different scope and severity than do other women. These groups of women include girls and young women, Aboriginal women, immigrant and minority women, disabled women, and sex workers.

The report's findings are based on testimony from the Committee's study on promising practices to prevent violence against women and girls, for which 11 meetings were held from November 2014 to February 2015. The study began with briefings from officials from Status of Women Canada, Statistics Canada, the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC), Justice Canada, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, Public Safety Canada, and the RCMP. In total, the Committee received testimony from 48 witnesses – 4 of whom appeared as individuals, with the remainder representing 34 organizations.

The Committee greatly appreciates the contributions of witnesses who offered their knowledge, ideas and insights on the topic of preventing violence against women. As well, the Committee thanks those witnesses who shared personal stories of being victimized or having witnessed acts of violence, as well as their own ongoing efforts in preventing such violence. The Committee is impressed by the dedication and determination of organizations across Canada in their work to address violence against women.

Furthermore, the Committee applauds the courageous and powerful leadership of women across Canada in the movement to combat violence against women, and the important role that men and boys have begun to play, acting as allies of women in violence prevention efforts. The Committee agrees with Mr. Todd Minerson, Executive Director of the White Ribbon Campaign, who explained that men have a role to play “as bystanders, as faith and community leaders, as employers and business leaders, as government and institutional policy-makers, and as human beings.”³ Mr. Matt Schaaf, MANifest Change Coordinator at the Ottawa Coalition to End Violence Against Women, spoke of how men can change their behaviours to support the fight to end violence against women: “[Men] are taught to look the other way for a friend, to keep our head down at work when we suspect harassment is happening, or laugh along with rape jokes in the locker room, whether or not we believe those things. For many men, they value respect and non-violence towards women.”⁴

In addition, the Committee recognizes the work of various levels of government in addressing violence against women, but acknowledges that there remain more challenges to overcome. The Committee encourages the federal, provincial, territorial and local governments to continue their fight to end violence against women and to uphold a “zero tolerance” approach. The Committee agrees with the statement by Ms. Megan Walker, Executive Director of the London Abused Women's Centre; she told the Committee that

3 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 3 February 2015, 1125 (Todd Minerson, Executive Director, White Ribbon Campaign).

4 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 19 February 2015, 1150 (Matt Schaaf, MANifest Change Coordinator, Ottawa Coalition to End Violence Against Women).

“[I]legislative changes, along with advocacy, public awareness, and information can make a difference in the lives of women and their children.”⁵

The Committee launched its study in advance of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence, held from 25 November to 10 December, which includes Canada's National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence against Women on 6 December. These 16 days are a time for Canadians to reflect on the violence that is still perpetrated against women in our society. Following its study, the Committee calls on all Canadians to reflect on such violence throughout the year – not just during the 16 days of activism – and to invest time and energy into efforts to end such violence year-round, in their own families, in their workplaces, in their schools, and in their neighbourhoods. The Committee supports the sentiments expressed by Ms. Kimberly Elmslie, Assistant Deputy Minister of Health Promotion and Chronic Disease Prevention Branch at PHAC: “[B]y continuing to bring attention to the issue, as this Committee is doing, we can continue to make progress towards achieving a world where violence against women is not acceptable.”⁶

The Committee hopes that this report and its recommendations shine a spotlight on an issue with serious and damaging consequences as violence against women harms not just the women themselves, but also their families, their friends, and their communities. The Committee is optimistic that its report will improve awareness of promising practices to prevent violence against women and girls, and in this way inform further efforts to address and end such violence.

5 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 19 February 2015, 1150 (Megan Walker, Executive Director, London Abused Women's Centre).

6 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 20 November 2014, 0915 (Kimberly Elmslie, Assistant Deputy Minister, Health Promotion and Chronic Disease Prevention Branch, Public Health Agency of Canada).

INTRODUCTION

The House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women (“the Committee”) agreed on 30 October 2014 to conduct a study on promising practices to prevent violence against women and girls in Canada.⁷ The Committee adopted the following motion:

That, pursuant to the Order of Reference of Wednesday, October 1, 2014, the Committee undertake a study on the subject of best practices in education programs, social programs and policies in Canada that prevent violence against women, and report its findings to the House within one (1) year of the study's initiation.

The Committee was briefed by officials from Status of Women Canada (SWC), Statistics Canada, the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC), Justice Canada, Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC), Public Safety Canada, and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP). The Committee received testimony from 48 witnesses – 4 of whom appeared as individuals, with the remainder representing 34 organizations. The briefings and testimony were received over a total of 11 meetings held from 20 November 2014 to 19 February 2015. In addition, the Committee received briefs from a number of organizations, many of which had appeared before the Committee, along with written speaking notes and follow-up responses to questions from Committee members.

This report summarizes evidence gathered during the study on promising practices to prevent violence against women and girls, and presents an overview of violence against women in Canada, a summary of promising practices to prevent violence against women, and a description of groups of women with particular vulnerabilities to violence. The promising practices that emerged during the testimony cover a range of themes, those being: raising awareness about violence against women and promoting societal change; engaging men and boys in initiatives to address violence against women; fostering the bystander approach;⁸ supporting parents and intervening in at-risk families; collaboration and sharing of promising practices; teaching cybersafety; increasing the role of health care professionals; providing more shelters and housing; increasing access to social services; and addressing practices with unintended harmful consequences for victims in law enforcement and the justice system. These themes, in turn, serve to underpin the report’s recommendations included at the end of certain chapters in the report.

The Committee’s study of promising practices to prevent violence against women and girls involved an examination of the prevalence, causes and types of violence against groups of women particularly vulnerable to violence: girls and young women, Aboriginal women, immigrant and minority women, disabled women, and sex workers.

7 The evidence cited in this document is from the [House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women \[FEWO\], 2nd Session, 41st Parliament](#), unless otherwise noted.

8 The bystander approach is centred on the idea that everyone has a role to play in challenging and interrupting violent behaviour and that in each peer culture, individuals should be upholding social norms that condemn violent behaviour. The approach has the goal of teaching participants how to react and intervene when they see incidents of gender-based violence.

The importance of this study was recognized by both Committee members and witnesses. The study serves to raise awareness of the violence that affects 1,090 of every 100,000 women in the Canadian population, leading to both immediate and long-term security concerns, physical and mental health problems, and reduced economic and social prosperity.⁹ The Committee agrees with Ms. Linda Savoie, Senior Director General of the Women's Program and Regional Operations Directorate at SWC that: "reducing and preventing violence against women and girls is a key building block for success in other aspects of their lives."¹⁰

The Committee concurs with the statement made by Ms. Kimberly Elmslie, Assistant Deputy Minister of Health Promotion and Chronic Disease Prevention Branch at PHAC, at the outset of the Committee's study:

[A]s you do the study you're going to be very impressed as you look across the country by the number of dedicated community organizations that are leveraging funding and expertise to make a difference in violence against women and children.¹¹

The Committee recognizes the important contributions made by witnesses and thanks them for sharing their knowledge, ideas and insights. The Committee acknowledges the courage and strength of witnesses who shared their personal stories of being victimized or having witnessed acts of violence, as well as their own ongoing efforts in preventing such violence. The Committee hopes that this report will serve to inspire women and men, of all ages, to play a role in violence prevention in their families, schools, communities, and wider Canadian society, and in this way contribute to a safer country for all people – girls and boys, women and men – in Canada.

OVERVIEW OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN CANADA

The Committee learned that while men and women in Canada face a comparable risk of violent victimization according to police-reported data, evidence shows that women are more likely to experience particular types of violence, often of a more severe form, than men.

According to a briefing by Statistics Canada, women are at greater risk of experiencing certain forms of violence; women are ten times more likely to be victims of sexual offences, women are three times more likely to be victims of criminal harassment, and women are twice as likely to be victims of indecent and harassing phone calls.¹²

9 [Evidence](#), 20 November 2014, 0845 (Cathy Connors, Director, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Statistics Canada).

10 [Evidence](#), 20 November 2014, 0900 (Linda Savoie, Senior Director General, Women's Program and Regional Operations Directorate, Status of Women Canada).

11 [Evidence](#), 20 November 2014, 0930 (Kimberly Elmslie, Assistant Deputy Minister, Health Promotion and Chronic Disease Prevention Branch, Public Health Agency of Canada).

12 [Evidence](#), 20 November 2014, 0845 (Cathy Connors, Statistics Canada); Statistics Canada, "A statistical overview of violence against women in Canada – presentation to the House of Commons' Standing Committee on the Status of Women," *Speaking Notes*, 20 November 2014, p. 4.

The Committee was also informed that women experience violence disproportionately at the hands of men; eight in ten women who experience violence are victimized by men.¹³ Furthermore, women face a greater risk of being victimized by men that they know; female victims of violence aged 15 years and older were three times more likely than male victims to experience violence at the hands of an intimate partner, including married, separated or divorced partners, common-law partners, and dating partners.¹⁴

Officials from Statistics Canada told the Committee that while rates of some of the most severe forms of violence have declined over the past five years, including homicide, attempted murder, and physical assault, there has been no similar decline in rates of sexual assault, which is disproportionately targeted at women, over that same time period.¹⁵

A. Root Causes of Violence Against Women in Canada

Witnesses told the Committee that violence against women is a sociological phenomenon that has a number of complex and interconnected root causes. The Committee heard that the root cause of violence against women is gender inequality; societies remain male-dominated and pervasive values of patriarchy underline cultural, religious and social norms around the world, including in Canada.¹⁶ Violence against women is a manifestation of the gender inequality rooted in the historical and ongoing power difference between men and women.¹⁷ Ms. Lise Martin, Executive Director of the Canadian Network of Women's Shelters and Transition Houses, explained that such violence is based on men exercising power over women, whether between intimate partners, colleagues, or strangers on the street.¹⁸ Ms. Lisa Steacy, Representative of the Canadian Association of Sexual Assault Centres, told the Committee that the "myriad acts of violence [by men...] enforce and exploit women's unequal civic, political, economic, and

13 [Evidence](#), 20 November 2014, 0845 (Cathy Connors, Statistics Canada); Statistics Canada, "A statistical overview of violence against women in Canada – presentation to the House of Commons' Standing Committee on the Status of Women," *Speaking Notes*, 20 November 2014, p. 5.

14 Statistics Canada, "A statistical overview of violence against women in Canada – presentation to the House of Commons' Standing Committee on the Status of Women," *Speaking Notes*, 20 November 2014, p. 6.

15 [Evidence](#), 20 November 2014, 0845 (Cathy Connors, Statistics Canada).

16 [Evidence](#), 2 December 2014, 0900 (Alia Hogben, Executive Director, Canadian Council of Muslim Women); [Evidence](#), 27 January 2015, 1110 (Jackson Katz, Founder and Director, MVP Strategies); [Evidence](#), 3 February 2015, 1125 (Todd Minerson, Executive Director, White Ribbon Campaign); [Evidence](#), 19 February 2015, 1145 (Megan Walker, Executive Director, London Abused Women's Centre); London Abused Women's Centre, "London Abused Women's Centre Responses to Questions raised by Status of Women Committee," *Submitted response to questions*, 18 March 2015.

17 [Evidence](#), 27 November 2014, 0920 (Kasari Govender, Executive Director, West Coast Women's Legal Education and Action Fund); [Evidence](#), 2 December 2014, 0910 (Beba Svigir, Chief Executive Officer, Calgary Immigrant Women's Association); [Evidence](#), 4 December 2014, 0910 (Sharlene Tygesen, Executive Director, Ernestine's Women's Shelter); [Evidence](#), 3 February 2015, 1125 (Todd Minerson, White Ribbon Campaign); [Evidence](#), 19 February 2015, 1150 (Matt Schaaf, MANifest Change Coordinator, Ottawa Coalition to End Violence Against Women); [Evidence](#), 29 January 2015, 1130 (Nathalie Duhamel, Coordinator, Regroupement québécois des Centres d'aide et de lutte contre les agressions à caractère sexuel); [Evidence](#), 29 January 2015, 1120 (Jenny Wright, Executive Director, St. John's Status of Women's Council Women's Centre); [Evidence](#), 19 February 2015, 1145 (Megan Walker, London Abused Women's Centre).

18 [Evidence](#), 4 December 2014, 1025 (Lise Martin, Executive Director, Canadian Network of Women's Shelters and Transition Houses).

social power in relation to men.”¹⁹ Witnesses told the Committee that harmful cultural, religious and social norms which reinforce this power difference shape young boys as they grow, teaching them that violence against women is acceptable.²⁰

The Committee learned that another root cause of violence against women is the influence of damaging ideas of masculinity on the socialization of boys.²¹ Witnesses shared that from a young age, boys are not violent human beings and do not automatically discriminate against girls and women.²² Ms. Rosemary McCarney, President and Chief Executive Officer at Plan International Canada Inc., stated that when her organization surveyed Canadian boys, 96% said they believed in gender equality.²³ Another witness, Ms. Jane Doe, author, activist, litigant in *Jane Doe v. the Toronto Police Force*, told the Committee that there is:

[T]he need to look at masculinity and the manner in which we are socializing men, our baby boys and youth, who are born to us free of malice or ill will, and how those wonderful creatures are raised and socialized to understand violence as acceptable.²⁴

Mr. Todd Minerson, Executive Director of the White Ribbon Campaign, suggested that boys encounter “impossible-to-meet standard of what it means to be a real man.”²⁵ He gave examples of phrases used with boys, such as “man up,” “boys don’t cry,” “you throw like a girl,” and “don’t show emotions,” which serve to reinforce negative ideas of masculinity, with terrible costs to girls and women.²⁶ Mr. Minerson told the Committee that this harmful concept of masculinity serves to reinforce violence as part of boys’ lives, and normalizes the idea that:

[Men] are a mini-skirt away from being a rapist, or that we're unable to control ourselves and we're just barely able to contain ourselves from sexually assaulting somebody if we have a beer....²⁷

In a later section of the report on *Engaging Men and Boys*, testimony is referenced that discusses how to redefine masculinity by replacing the restrictive and violence concept with a positive idea of what it is to be a man.

19 [Evidence](#), 27 November 2014, 0905 (Lisa Steacy, Representative, Canadian Association of Sexual Assault Centres).

20 [Evidence](#), 27 January 2015, 1110 (Jackson Katz, MVP Strategies).

21 [Evidence](#), 3 February 2015, 1105 (Jane Doe, author, activist, litigant in *Jane Doe v. the Toronto Police Force*, D.U. LLD, as an Individual); [Evidence](#), 3 February 2015, 1240 (Todd Minerson, White Ribbon Campaign); [Evidence](#), 19 February 2015, 1145 (Megan Walker, London Abused Women’s Centre).

22 [Evidence](#), 3 February 2015, 1200 (Rosemary McCarney, President and Chief Executive Officer, Plan International Canada Inc.); [Evidence](#), 3 February 2015, 1125 (Todd Minerson, White Ribbon Campaign).

23 [Evidence](#), 3 February 2015, 1200 (Rosemary McCarney, Plan International Canada Inc.).

24 [Evidence](#), 3 February 2015, 1105 (Jane Doe, as an Individual).

25 [Evidence](#), 3 February 2015, 1125 (Todd Minerson, White Ribbon Campaign).

26 Ibid.

27 Ibid., 1240.

Witnesses explained that another root cause of violence against women is specific to Aboriginal communities; this is the history of colonial violence and community trauma.²⁸ Ms. Claudette Dumont-Smith, Executive Director of the Native Women's Association of Canada, provided historical and ongoing examples that have served to damage communities and normalize violence; she says:

The *Indian Act*, for example, the residential school policy, the sixties scoop, and the current child welfare system are all connected to poverty, racism, and violence against our women.²⁹

The unique root causes of violence against Aboriginal women are addressed in a later section of the report on *Aboriginal Girls and Women*.

As well, the Committee learned that there are risk factors that put women at greater risk of experiencing violence than men; these factors include homelessness, poverty, and substance abuse.³⁰ As well, certain groups of women, such as girls and young women, Aboriginal women, immigrant women, disabled women, and sex workers, experience violence of a different scope and severity than do other women; this phenomenon is discussed in a later section of the report, *Groups of Women with Particular Vulnerabilities to Violence*.

B. National Data

The Committee learned that there are two primary sources of national data used by Statistics Canada to measure violence against women. The first source is data provided by police services across the country on all *Criminal Code* offences that are reported to and investigated by the police. The second source is self-reported data that were collected from Canadians aged 15 years and older through the 2009 General Social Survey on victimization.³¹

According to Statistics Canada, police-reported data indicate that there were 309,000 victims of violent crime in 2013, with slightly more than half (52%) of the victims being women aged 15 years or older. Among women, the rate of violent victimization was 1,090 female victims for every 100,000 women in the population, slightly higher than the rate for men (at 1,034 for every 100,000 men).³² According to 2013 Statistics Canada

28 [Evidence](#), 5 February 2015, 1130 (Claudette Dumont-Smith, Executive Director, Native Women's Association of Canada); [Evidence](#), 3 February 2015, 1125 (Todd Minerson, White Ribbon Campaign); [Evidence](#), 9 December 2014, 0945 (Tracy O'Hearn, Executive Director, Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada).

29 [Evidence](#), 5 February 2015, 1130 (Claudette Dumont-Smith, Native Women's Association of Canada).

30 [Evidence](#), 27 November 2014, 1005 (Jocelynn Cook, Scientific Director, Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada); [Evidence](#), 20 November 2014, 0850 (Cathy Connors, Statistics Canada).

31 [Evidence](#), 20 November 2014, 0845 (Cathy Connors, Statistics Canada).

32 [Evidence](#), 20 November 2014, 0845 (Cathy Connors, Statistics Canada); Statistics Canada, "A statistical overview of violence against women in Canada – presentation to the House of Commons' Standing Committee on the Status of Women," *Speaking Notes*, 20 November 2014, p. 3.

police-reported data, among women, those aged 15 to 24 experienced the highest rates of violence, with rates subsequently decreasing with age.³³

Officials from Statistics Canada told the Committee that self-reported data serve to complement police-reported data as they offer information on victimization that is both reported and unreported to police.³⁴ Self-reported data show that most victims of violence choose not to report the incidents to police. In 2009, among incidents of spousal violence, more than two-thirds (70%) of female victims said they did not report the incident to police. Among women who experienced non-spousal violence incidents, 72% did not report the incident to the police. In addition, the majority of sexual assaults were not reported to the police.³⁵

C. Types of Violence Experienced by Women

1. Sexual Violence

Statistics Canada data indicate that women are the most frequent victims of sexual assault in Canada; 87% of victims of sexual assault, who reported such assaults to the police in 2009, were women. Of those accused of sexual assault in 2009, over 97% were men.³⁶ According to the self-reported victimization data in Statistics Canada's 2009 General Social Survey, nearly nine in ten sexual assaults were never reported to the police.³⁷

The Committee learned that among children under the age of 18, police-reported data indicate that there were more than 14,000 victims of a sexual offence in 2013, and more than 80% of these young victims were female.³⁸

Certain categories of women are at greater risk of sexual assault, such as young women, Aboriginal women, and women with disabilities.³⁹

33 [Evidence](#), 20 November 2014, 0845 (Cathy Connors, Statistics Canada); Statistics Canada, "A statistical overview of violence against women in Canada – presentation to the House of Commons' Standing Committee on the Status of Women," *Speaking Notes*, 20 November 2014, p. 7.

34 [Evidence](#), 20 November 2014, 0850 (Cathy Connors, Statistics Canada).

35 [Evidence](#), 20 November 2014, 0850 (Cathy Connors, Statistics Canada); Statistics Canada, "A statistical overview of violence against women in Canada – presentation to the House of Commons' Standing Committee on the Status of Women," *Speaking Notes*, 20 November 2014, p. 10.

36 Tina Hotton Mahony, "[Women and the Criminal Justice System](#)," *Statistics Canada – Women in Canada: A Gender-based Statistical Report*, pp. 7 and 20.

37 Shannon Brennan and Mia Dauvergne, "[Police-reported crime statistics in Canada, 2010](#)," *Statistics Canada: Juristat*, 21 July 2011, pp. 11–12.

38 [Evidence](#), 20 November 2014, 0845 (Cathy Connors, Statistics Canada); Statistics Canada, "A statistical overview of violence against women in Canada – presentation to the House of Commons' Standing Committee on the Status of Women," *Speaking Notes*, 20 November 2014, p. 8.

39 [Evidence](#), 9 December 2014, 0845 (Marion Little, as an Individual).

2. Intimate Partner Violence

The Committee learned that intimate partner violence includes physical and sexual violence, and emotional and financial abuse committed by a current or former spouse, common-law partner or dating partner. According to Statistics Canada, in 2009, 6.4% of Canadian women – which is around 601,000 women – currently or previously living in a spousal relationship experienced spousal violence in the previous five years. A similar rate of spousal violence was reported for men (6.0% or 585,000 men).⁴⁰

Statistics Canada data show that while women and men in Canada experience spousal abuse at comparable rates, self-reported data indicate that the repercussions of spousal violence are more severe for female victims. Female victims are more likely than men to suffer the most severe forms of spousal violence, such as being sexually assaulted, beaten, choked, or threatened with a gun or knife.⁴¹ The representative from PHAC added that female victims of spousal violence are twice as likely as male victims to be physically injured, three times more likely to experience disruptions in their daily lives, and nearly seven times more likely to fear for their lives.⁴²

Statistics Canada data show that in cases of spousal violence that was not reported to police, women and men indicated that they did not report the incident to police because they dealt with it another way or because it was a personal matter. However, among reasons for not reporting violent incidents, women were six times more likely than men to say an incident was not reported out of fear of their spouses.⁴³

The Committee heard that Aboriginal women experience spousal violence at a rate nearly three times higher than non-Aboriginal women.⁴⁴

3. Homicide

The Committee learned that while men are at greater risk than women of homicide, women are significantly more likely to be murdered as a result of intimate partner violence. In 2009, women accounted for 71% of victims of homicide committed by a current spouse, 88% by a former spouse, and 78% by an intimate partner.⁴⁵

According to the RCMP, 92% of murders of non-Aboriginal women and 93% of murders of Aboriginal women are committed by an intimate partner or spouse, family

40 Maire Sinha, "[Measuring violence against women: Statistical trends](#)," *Statistics Canada: Juristat*, 25 February 2013, p. 24.

41 Statistics Canada, "A statistical overview of violence against women in Canada – presentation to the House of Commons' Standing Committee on the Status of Women," *Speaking Notes*, 20 November 2014, p. 13.

42 [Evidence](#), 20 November 2014, 0905 (Kimberly Elmslie, PHAC).

43 [Evidence](#), 20 November 2014, 0850 (Cathy Connors, Statistics Canada); Statistics Canada, "A statistical overview of violence against women in Canada – presentation to the House of Commons' Standing Committee on the Status of Women," *Speaking Notes*, 20 November 2014, p. 11.

44 [Evidence](#), 20 November 2014, 0905 (Kimberly Elmslie, PHAC).

45 Tina Hotton Mahony, "[Women and the Criminal Justice System](#)," *Statistics Canada – Women in Canada: A Gender-based Statistical Report*, April 2011, p. 16.

members or acquaintance, while the remainder were stranger-perpetrated acts.⁴⁶ The Committee heard that on average, every six days, a woman is killed by her intimate partner in Canada.⁴⁷ In addition, Ms. Kasari Govender, Executive Director of the West Coast Women's Legal Education and Action Fund, told the Committee that 25% of all women who were murdered by their spouses had left the relationship already.⁴⁸

PROMISING PRACTICES TO PREVENT VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

While witnesses described challenges that remain in the fight to end violence against women to the Committee, they also shared information about a number of promising practices to prevent such violence. Witnesses provided the Committee with examples of what is currently being done to address violence against women, as well as suggestions for ways to further limit violence against women. These existing and suggested promising practices are outlined in the sections below.

Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada work with organizations to utilize proven best practices to prevent violence against women and girls.

A. Raising Awareness and Promoting Societal Change

Witnesses told the Committee that awareness and understanding of violence against women in Canada has improved greatly over recent decades. While they applauded this progress, witnesses acknowledged that there is a need for long-term public campaigns to further heighten awareness and change attitudes in society.⁴⁹ Witnesses compared the necessary shift in public perception of violence against women to those that took place regarding the acceptability of drinking and driving and smoking in public places, changes which were brought about by campaigns, advocacy and legislation.⁵⁰ Witnesses suggested that the misogyny in video games and music videos⁵¹

46 [Evidence](#), 25 November 2014, 0930 (Tyler Bates, Director, National Aboriginal Policing and Crime Prevention Services, Royal Canadian Mounted Police).

47 [Evidence](#), 27 November 2014, 0920 (Kasari Govender, West Coast Women's Legal Education and Action Fund).

48 Ibid.

49 [Evidence](#), 29 January 2015, 1135 (Nathalie Duhamel, Regroupement québécois des Centres d'aide et de lutte contre les agressions à caractère sexuel); [Evidence](#), 27 November 2014, 0900 (Ann Decter, Director, Advocacy and Public Policy, YWCA Canada); [Evidence](#), 3 February 2015, 1240 (Todd Minerson, White Ribbon Campaign); [Evidence](#), 19 February 2015, 1145 (Megan Walker, London Abused Women's Centre); [Evidence](#), 20 November 2014, 0945 (Kimberly Elmslie, PHAC); [Evidence](#), 4 December 2014, 0945 (Sharlene Tygesen, Ernestine's Women's Shelter); [Evidence](#), 5 February 2015, 1110 (Lana Wells, Brenda Strafford Chair in the Prevention of Domestic Violence, Faculty of Social Work, University of Calgary).

50 [Evidence](#), 29 January 2015, 1135 (Nathalie Duhamel, Regroupement québécois des Centres d'aide et de lutte contre les agressions à caractère sexuel); [Evidence](#), 27 November 2014, 0900 (Ann Decter, YWCA Canada); [Evidence](#), 3 February 2015, 1240 (Todd Minerson, White Ribbon Campaign); [Evidence](#), 19 February 2015, 1145 (Megan Walker, London Abused Women's Centre).

51 [Evidence](#), 27 November 2014, 1020 (Ann Decter, YWCA Canada); [Evidence](#), 2 December 2014, 0855 and 0950 (Carmela Hutchinson, President, DisAbleD Women's Network of Canada).

and the “rape culture” on campuses are symptoms of the ongoing need for a societal shift.⁵²

Witnesses shared with the Committee a number of examples of successful awareness campaigns in Canada. The campaigns are intended to improve the understanding of gender-based violence, knowledge of services for victims, and shifting the blame for such violence from abused women to the perpetrators.⁵³ One example of such a public awareness campaign is the *Shine the Light on Woman Abuse* campaign, held every November, originating in London, Ontario and now held in 26 communities across Ontario.⁵⁴ Ms. Megan Walker, Executive Director of the London Abused Women's Centre, said that the campaign was a way to show that the community stands in support of and solidarity with female victims of violence. She explained that the “goals of the campaign are to raise awareness about men's violence against women, increase the profiles of agencies that can provide service to these women, and shift the blame and shame abused women so often feel to the shoulders of the perpetrators.”⁵⁵ The campaign has had measurable success as service demands and calls have increased annually between 49% and 120% at the London Abused Women's Centre since the launch of the campaign.⁵⁶

The Committee also heard of the work of the White Ribbon Campaign in raising awareness of violence against women in Canada and internationally. In Canada each year, the White Ribbon Campaign ships around 150,000 white ribbons across the country to communities and organizations that are involved in activities to engage men and boys in addressing violence against women; these ribbons are for participants to wear to show their support for the cause.⁵⁷

The Committee was informed of the ongoing work at the federal level to raise awareness and improve understanding of violence against women. The Committee heard of the role of SWC in promoting commemorative events to raise awareness of violence against women, such as the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence, recognized yearly from 25 November to 10 December, which includes Canada's National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women on 6 December. In addition, the International Day of the Girl, recognized annually on 11 October, serves as a reminder of the violence facing girls in Canada and internationally.⁵⁸

52 [Evidence](#), 27 November 2014, 0905 (Lisa Steacy, Canadian Association of Sexual Assault Centres).

53 [Evidence](#), 19 February 2015, 1145 (Megan Walker, London Abused Women's Centre); [Evidence](#), 4 December 2014, 1040 (Lynn Ward, Executive Director, Armagh House).

54 [Evidence](#), 19 February 2015, 1145 (Megan Walker, London Abused Women's Centre); London Abused Women's Centre, “London Abused Women's Centre Responses to Questions raised by Status of Women Committee,” *Submitted response to questions*, 18 March 2015.

55 [Evidence](#), 19 February 2015, 1145 (Megan Walker, London Abused Women's Centre).

56 London Abused Women's Centre, “London Abused Women's Centre Responses to Questions raised by Status of Women Committee,” *Submitted response to questions*, 18 March 2015.

57 [Evidence](#), 3 February 2015, 1135 (Todd Minerson, White Ribbon Campaign).

58 [Evidence](#), 20 November 2014, 0900 (Linda Savoie, SWC).

The RCMP told the Committee it is working to raise awareness of the issue of violence against women in a number of ways, for example: awareness campaigns in schools to sensitize youth to issues of gender-based violence; distribution of posters on the issue of relationship violence and the support services available, in collaboration with the Native Women's Association of Canada and the Assembly of First Nations; an upcoming public service announcement encouraging women to speak on the issue of intimate partner violence and to report incidents to police.⁵⁹

The Committee appreciated the initiatives that are already raising awareness of violence against women, and was interested to learn about further practices that could be implemented to improve awareness. The Committee was told that one practice to raise awareness could be the provision of standardized and specialized training for professionals in a number of sectors, such as education, health, the justice system, and social services, in order to detect violence against children and women and to know how to respond to cases of violence.⁶⁰ The Committee also heard that to improve understanding in these sectors, information on gender-based violence could be included in the college and university curriculums of legal, journalism, health care, humanities and other programs.⁶¹

The Committee heard that a key entry point to raise awareness of gender-based violence is to leverage the school system to reach children and youth with age-appropriate messages on healthy relationships, gender equality, respect, and addressing violence.⁶² Ms. Lana Wells, the Brenda Strafford Chair in the Prevention of Domestic Violence in the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Calgary, noted that evidence indicates that working with grades 7, 8 and 9 students reduces dating violence.⁶³ Ms. Marie-Christine Plante, Executive Assistant of Carrefour pour Elle, spoke of a workshop for children in secondary 2 and 3 called "What relationship do you want?" where facilitators discuss healthy and equal romantic relationships.⁶⁴

59 [Evidence](#), 25 November 2014, 0915 (Tyler Bates, RCMP).

60 [Evidence](#), 27 January 2015, 1155 (Jackson Katz, MVP Strategies); [Evidence](#), 5 February 2015, 1110 (Lana Wells, University of Calgary).

61 [Evidence](#), 3 February 2015, 1145 (Jane Doe, as an Individual).

62 [Evidence](#), 5 February 2015, 1130 (Deepa Mattoo, Staff Lawyer, South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario); [Evidence](#), 5 February 2015, 1110 (Lana Wells, University of Calgary); [Evidence](#), 27 January 2015, 1110 (Jackson Katz, MVP Strategies); [Evidence](#), 3 February 2015, 1145 (Todd Minerson, White Ribbon Campaign); [Evidence](#), 29 January 2015, 1220 (Marie-Christine Plante, Executive Assistant, Carrefour pour Elle); [Evidence](#), 19 February 2015, 1145 (Megan Walker, London Abused Women's Centre).

63 [Evidence](#), 5 February 2015, 1110 (Lana Wells, University of Calgary).

64 [Evidence](#), 29 January 2015, 1100 (Marie-Christine Plante, Carrefour pour Elle).

Witnesses said that raising awareness and understanding of proper consent to sexual activity among the general population could have a positive impact on the rates of violence against women.⁶⁵ Witnesses suggested teaching youth at an early age about consent by including ideas around consent to sexual activity and healthy sexual relationships in school curriculums.⁶⁶ As an example, the Committee was told about the work of the Centres d'aide et de lutte contre les agressions à caractère sexuel in schools through sexual assault prevention programs that address "sexuality, power relationships, consent, and hypersexualization."⁶⁷

The Committee was told of the need for increased awareness among the general public of sexual assault, of what constitutes consent in sexual relationships, and of the harm perpetrated by the stigma and myths associated with sexual assault.⁶⁸ Mr. Todd Minerson, in his work as Executive Director of the White Ribbon Campaign, explained that the campaign aims to deconstruct widely-perpetuated "sexual violence myths," which connect a woman's sexual assault to a misguided assessment of "what was she wearing, what was she drinking, why was she there alone, all of these types of things."⁶⁹

The Committee heard that awareness and education of proper consent is necessary in high schools and on university campuses.⁷⁰ Ms. Ann Decter, Director of Advocacy and Public Policy at YWCA Canada, spoke of a shift towards a "yes means yes" approach, whereby people are educated that a continual "yes" is needed for healthy sexual activity.⁷¹ Ms. Nathalie Duhamel, Coordinator of the Regroupement québécois des Centres d'aide et de lutte contre les agressions à caractère sexuel, requested that the federal government invest in a sexual assault awareness campaign, whereby the general public is educated about consent in sexual relationships.⁷² The Committee also heard awareness campaigns could target officials in law enforcement and the justice service, who may not have a full understanding of the concept of consent as defined in the *Criminal Code*, thus perpetuating rape myths, while investigating, prosecuting or defending women who have been sexually assaulted.⁷³

65 [Evidence](#), 29 January 2015, 1155 (Nathalie Duhamel, Regroupement québécois des Centres d'aide et de lutte contre les agressions à caractère sexuel); [Evidence](#), 27 November 2014, 0925 (Kasari Govender, West Coast Women's Legal Education and Action Fund); [Evidence](#), 27 November 2014, 1035 (Ann Decter, YWCA Canada); [Evidence](#), 3 February 2015, 1105 (Jane Doe, as an Individual); [Evidence](#), 3 February 2015, 1155 (Todd Minerson, White Ribbon Campaign).

66 [Evidence](#), 27 November 2014, 1035 (Ann Decter, YWCA Canada); [Evidence](#), 3 February 2015, 1145 (Jane Doe, as an Individual); [Evidence](#), 27 November 2014, 0925 (Kasari Govender, West Coast Women's Legal Education and Action Fund).

67 [Evidence](#), 29 January 2015, 1130 (Nathalie Duhamel, Regroupement québécois des Centres d'aide et de lutte contre les agressions à caractère sexuel).

68 *Ibid.*, 1135 and 1155.

69 [Evidence](#), 3 February 2015, 1125 (Todd Minerson, White Ribbon Campaign).

70 [Evidence](#), 27 November 2014, 1035 (Ann Decter, YWCA Canada).

71 *Ibid.*

72 [Evidence](#), 29 January 2015, 1135 (Nathalie Duhamel, Regroupement québécois des Centres d'aide et de lutte contre les agressions à caractère sexuel).

73 [Evidence](#), 27 November 2014, 0955 (Lisa Steacy, Canadian Association of Sexual Assault Centres).

A witness suggested that the federal government invest in a comprehensive long-term awareness strategy with the goal of shifting attitudes and changing norms and behaviours that directly or subtly uphold violence against women.⁷⁴ The Committee was told that the law and policies of Canada can play a role in creating social change and these should be revised to ensure that they do not act as obstacles for women escaping violence.⁷⁵

Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends that Status of Women Canada ensure that preventing violence against women and girls continues to be a priority.

Recommendation 3

The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada act on the policies and programs in place that are centred on prevention and education in efforts to prevent violence against women and girls, emphasizing best practices.

Recommendation 4

The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada continue to fund projects through Status of Women Canada in efforts to prevent violence against women and girls.

Recommendation 5

The Committee recommends that the Minister of Status of Women work toward putting the issue of sexual violence and assault on the next federal/provincial/territorial meeting agenda.

B. Engaging Men and Boys

A great majority of witnesses spoke of the importance of engaging men and boys in the fight to end violence against women and girls.⁷⁶ Witnesses told the Committee that there needs to be a shift in the perception that violence against women is a women's issue, when in fact it should be viewed as men's problem; the majority of men do not commit violence, but the majority of perpetrators are men.⁷⁷ For this reason, the

74 [Evidence](#), 5 February 2015, 1110 (Lana Wells, University of Calgary).

75 [Evidence](#), 27 November 2014, 0920 (Kasari Govender, West Coast Women's Legal Education and Action Fund).

76 [Evidence](#), 20 November 2014, 0940 (Kimberly Elmslie, PHAC); [Evidence](#), 25 November 2014, 0930 (Tyler Bates, RCMP); [Evidence](#), 27 November 2014, 0900 (Ann Decter, YWCA Canada); [Evidence](#), 2 December 2014, 0905 (Alia Hogben, Canadian Council of Muslim Women); [Evidence](#), 2 December 2014, 0915 (Beba Svigir, Calgary Immigrant Women's Association); [Evidence](#), 9 December 2014, 0900 (Tracy O'Hearn, Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada); [Evidence](#), 27 January 2015, 1105 and 1110 (Jackson Katz, MVP Strategies); [Evidence](#), 19 February 2015, 1150 (Matt Schaaf, Ottawa Coalition to End Violence Against Women).

77 [Evidence](#), 27 January 2015, 1110 (Jackson Katz, MVP Strategies); [Evidence](#), 3 February 2015, 1120 (Todd Minerson, White Ribbon Campaign).

Committee was told that men – from fathers, to coaches, to community leaders – need to take a stand in public against gender-based violence and hold their male family members, friends and colleagues accountable.⁷⁸ Witnesses shared that when men act as allies in the fight against gender-based violence, they increase momentum for societal change and reduce sexist backlash.⁷⁹ Mr. Matt Schaaf, MANifest Change Coordinator at the Ottawa Coalition to End Violence Against Women, explained that the majority of men do not condone violence, but need guidance and tools on how to address subtle and overt forms of violence against women:

[T]he majority of men do not directly commit violence against women. What do we do with this large group of men who are well intentioned but don't know what to do? Those of us who don't use violence directly, we are taught to look the other way for a friend, to keep our head down at work when we suspect harassment is happening, or laugh along with rape jokes in the locker room, whether or not we believe those things. For many men, they value respect and non-violence towards women. Those are the men that [we seek] to engage.⁸⁰

Another witness, Mr. Jackson Katz, Founder and Director of MVP Strategies, suggested shifting society's perception of violence against women as a "women's issue," in order to incorporate and understand men's role in both the problem and the solution. He said:

[W]e talk about how many women have been raped in Canada, rather than how many men raped women. We'll say things like how many girls in the Ottawa school system have been harassed or abused rather than how many boys harassed or abused girls.... [We have] to understand that this is not just a problem about women that men are helping out with, but that we really have to ... focus on men.... we really have to start understanding ... the need for men's leadership.⁸¹

The Committee heard of a number of successful examples of projects and programs whose goal is to engage men and boys in combatting violence against women. A central element of the White Ribbon Campaign is for boys and men to "pledge ... to never commit, condone, or remain silent about violence against women."⁸² Another promising practice is the Ottawa Coalition to End Violence Against Women's *MANifest Change* program, which has the goal of helping men recognize and respond to violence against women. The program has developed an online awareness campaign, workshops led by male facilitators, and a long-term mentoring component for young men.⁸³

The Committee also learned of the "I am a Kind Man" (Kizhaay Anishinaabe Niin) project, initiated by the Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres and the White

78 [Evidence](#), 27 November 2014, 0900 (Ann Decter, YWCA Canada); [Evidence](#), 3 February 2015, 1120 (Todd Minerson, White Ribbon Campaign); [Evidence](#), 27 January 2015, 1100 (Jackson Katz, MVP Strategies).

79 [Evidence](#), 27 November 2014, 0900 (Ann Decter, YWCA Canada).

80 [Evidence](#), 19 February 2015, 1150 (Matt Schaaf, Ottawa Coalition to End Violence Against Women).

81 [Evidence](#), 27 January 2015, 1100 (Jackson Katz, MVP Strategies).

82 [Evidence](#), 3 February 2015, 1120 (Todd Minerson, White Ribbon Campaign).

83 [Evidence](#), 19 February 2015, 1150 and 1155 (Matt Schaaf, Ottawa Coalition to End Violence Against Women).

Ribbon Campaign, with the goal to engage Aboriginal men and boys in addressing violence against women in their communities.⁸⁴ Specific to Inuit communities, the Committee heard that Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, with funding assistance from SWC, has collaborated with stakeholders to determine the resources needed to engage men and boys in reducing violence and to help men to heal following their own experiences of being violently victimized.⁸⁵

The Committee was impressed with the efforts being made to engage men and boys in violence prevention, and was interested to learn of the successful characteristics of such projects and programs, as well as the suggested next steps in these efforts. The Committee heard that programs engaging men and boys should serve to raise awareness and understanding of gender-based violence and provide a safe space for conversations and exchanges of ideas.⁸⁶ In addition, such programs should help men and boys recognize subtle and overt forms of violence against women, and provide participants with strategies for responding to such situations.⁸⁷ As well, the Committee was told that many programs are led by strong male role models who act as facilitators or are peer-led initiatives.⁸⁸

The Committee was told that campaigns that use fear, guilt or shame to change behaviours among men and boys are not effective methods of engaging men.⁸⁹ The Committee heard that there are a number of categories with respect to engaging men and boys; projects that focus on men acquiring the confidence and skill to speak out against violence; projects that teach boys and men about healthy relationships; and projects that are youth-led, by both girls and boys, to create dialogue at a young age.⁹⁰ Ms. Lana Wells, the Brenda Strafford Chair in the Prevention of Domestic Violence in the Faculty of Social Work of the University of Calgary, suggested developing and implementing a comprehensive strategy in Canada to engage men and boys as allies to end violence against women.⁹¹

The Committee was informed that when engaging men and boys to combat violence against women, there are several essentials: such work should focus on gender equality from a human rights perspective; it should challenge harmful ideas of masculinity; it should take into consideration the limited resources for women's issues; it should be

84 [Evidence](#), 3 February 2015, 1200 (Todd Minerson, White Ribbon Campaign); [Evidence](#), 9 December 2014, 0945 (Tracy O'Hearn, Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada).

85 [Evidence](#), 9 December 2014, 0855 (Tracy O'Hearn, Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada).

86 [Evidence](#), 19 February 2015, 1155 (Matt Schaaf, Ottawa Coalition to End Violence Against Women).

87 Ibid.

88 [Evidence](#), 19 February 2015, 1155 (Matt Schaaf, Ottawa Coalition to End Violence Against Women); [Evidence](#), 20 November 2014, 0900 (Linda Savoie, SWC).

89 [Evidence](#), 3 February 2015, 1150 (Todd Minerson, White Ribbon Campaign).

90 [Evidence](#), 20 November 2014, 1030 (Linda Savoie, SWC).

91 [Evidence](#), 5 February 2015, 1105 (Lana Wells, University of Calgary).

evidence-based,⁹² and, it should be done in partnership with women's organizations.⁹³ In addition, while witnesses supported efforts to engage boys and men, they stated that the funding and resources being put into those programs should not take away from the services and programs for women.⁹⁴

The Committee heard that men can act as powerful role models for boys and young men;⁹⁵ some of the central role models to which witnesses referred included fathers, coaches, faith and community leaders, employers and business leaders, government and institutional policy-makers.⁹⁶ A number of programs, such as the White Ribbon Campaign's "It starts with you. It stays with him." initiative, encourages these men to develop their knowledge on the issue of gender-based violence and have conversations on this issue with the young men in their lives.⁹⁷

The Committee heard that a key entry point for engaging men is through their role as fathers.⁹⁸ It was explained that men should learn about the connection between being a more involved parent and advocating for gender equality and against gender-based violence.⁹⁹ A number of violence prevention programs promote positive images of fatherhood and encourage fathers to talk with their boys about healthy relationships, the idea of consent in sexual situations, and respect of women.¹⁰⁰

A number of witnesses spoke of the importance of engaging men and boys through programs that revolve around sports team, with professional players as role models.¹⁰¹ It was explained that professional athletic organizations can use their influence, brand power and resources to uphold healthy norms and behaviours, and to partner with prevention programs in the field of domestic violence or sexual assault.¹⁰² Ms. Linda Savoie, Senior Director General of the Women's Program and Regional Operations Directorate of SWC, spoke of the "Huddle Up and Make the Call" program launched by the White Ribbon Campaign, with funding from SWC, in which the athletes in

92 [Evidence](#), 3 February 2015, 1130 (Todd Minerson, White Ribbon Campaign).

93 [Evidence](#), 19 February 2015, 1155 (Matt Schaaf, Ottawa Coalition to End Violence Against Women).

94 [Evidence](#), 4 December 2014, 1030 (Lise Martin, Canadian Network of Women's Shelters and Transition Houses); [Evidence](#), 3 February 2015, 1130 (Todd Minerson, White Ribbon Campaign).

95 [Evidence](#), 3 February 2015, 1205 (Todd Minerson, White Ribbon Campaign).

96 *Ibid.*, 1125.

97 [Evidence](#), 3 February 2015, 1155 (Todd Minerson, White Ribbon Campaign); [Evidence](#), 27 January 2015, 1100 (Jackson Katz, MVP Strategies).

98 [Evidence](#), 3 February 2015, 1125 (Todd Minerson, White Ribbon Campaign).

99 [Evidence](#), 3 February 2015, 1205 and 1215 (Todd Minerson, White Ribbon Campaign); [Evidence](#), 5 February 2015, 1105 (Lana Wells, University of Calgary).

100 [Evidence](#), 3 February 2015, 1205 (Todd Minerson, White Ribbon Campaign); [Evidence](#), 5 February 2015, 1105 (Lana Wells, University of Calgary).

101 [Evidence](#), 20 November 2014, 1000 (Linda Savoie, SWC); [Evidence](#), 5 February 2015, 1105 (Lana Wells, University of Calgary); [Evidence](#), 27 January 2015, 1125 (Jackson Katz, MVP Strategies).

102 [Evidence](#), 5 February 2015, 1105 (Lana Wells, University of Calgary); [Evidence](#), 27 January 2015, 1135 (Jackson Katz, MVP Strategies).

the Toronto Argonauts Football Club address gender-based violence and promote health relationships in high schools in the greater Toronto area.¹⁰³

The Committee was told that another way to get men involved is to make the connection between the issues of gender-based violence and men's experiences with family violence in the home.¹⁰⁴ Boys who are raised in homes with family violence are at a higher risk of becoming perpetrators of violent behaviour when they reach adulthood, which serves to perpetuate the cycle of violence.¹⁰⁵ Particularly in Aboriginal communities, where a significant number of men experience violence as children, often as a result of residential schools, programs are engaging men and boys by encouraging them to heal themselves. For example, Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada is developing a tool kit for men's groups which promote group discussion to address challenges in men's lives.¹⁰⁶

Witnesses explained the importance of socializing boys at a young age to teach them healthy ideas of masculinity, to demonstrate respectful relationships, and to instil the concept of gender equality.¹⁰⁷ As mentioned in an earlier section on raising awareness, the Committee heard that it is important for boys, not just girls, to be educated on the rights and obligations related to sexual consent and on respectful communication in relationships.¹⁰⁸

A great number of the existing programs engaging men and boys use a version of the bystander approach, explained in the upcoming section.

Recommendation 6

The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada continue to support efforts to engage men and boys in preventing violence against women and girls.

C. Fostering the “Bystander Approach”

The Committee learned that the “bystander approach” to gender-based violence prevention is centred on the idea that everyone has a role to play in challenging and interrupting violent behaviour and that in each peer culture, individuals should be upholding social norms that condemn violent behaviour. As explained by Mr. Jackson Katz, Founder and Director of MVP Strategies, the bystander approach is about “making it clear within the peer culture that abusive behaviour will not be acceptable, not just because it's illegal and you might get in trouble, but because the peer culture itself doesn't

103 [Evidence](#), 20 November 2014, 0845 (Linda Savoie, SWC).

104 [Evidence](#), 27 January 2015, 1130 (Jackson Katz, MVP Strategies).

105 [Evidence](#), 20 November 2014, 0905 (Kimberly Elmslie, PHAC); [Evidence](#), 9 December 2014, 0945 (Tracy O'Hearn, Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada).

106 [Evidence](#), 9 December 2014, 0855 (Tracy O'Hearn, Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada).

107 [Evidence](#), 27 January 2015, 1100 (Jackson Katz, MVP Strategies).

108 [Evidence](#), 27 November 2014, 0945 (Kasari Govender, West Coast Women's Legal Education and Action Fund).

accept the behaviour.”¹⁰⁹ The approach has the goal of teaching participants how to react and intervene when they see incidents of gender-based violence, as most bystanders do not know what to do in such situations.¹¹⁰ Mr. Katz elaborates on the basis of the bystander approach:

All of us have a role to play. If you yourself are not abusive but you don't use whatever platform of influence you have in your peer culture, or in a hierarchical sense if you have a leadership platform in your community, in your workplace, etc., then you're being a passive bystander in the face of abusive behaviour. Let's talk about how you can do something more active and more transformative.¹¹¹

The Committee was informed that the bystander approach involves expanding the circle of influence beyond the perpetrator and victim to include everybody in a given peer culture, such as “friends, teammates, classmates, co-workers, colleagues, [and] family members.”¹¹² The bystander approach was described as “the mainstream of the prevention field in North America.”¹¹³ The bystander approach can be used to challenge nascent sexist attitudes and beliefs and harmful behaviours (such as harassment) that could lead to gender-based violence in the future.¹¹⁴ As Mr. Katz explained to the Committee: “It's not just about intervening at the point of attack. It is about a sensibility that you have a responsibility to challenge and interrupt attitudes and beliefs and micro-aggressions and behaviours that fall short of physical aggression or physical assault.”¹¹⁵ Many programs that engage men and boys use the bystander approach as it teaches men that they have some responsibility in addressing male violence against women, and that they can do something proactive and hold other men accountable.¹¹⁶

The Committee heard of a significant number of programs that successfully use this approach, such as the “Be More Than a Bystander” campaign, run collaboratively by the Ending Violence Association of British Columbia, MVP Strategies and the B.C. Lions football team. In this campaign, B.C. Lions football players deliver an awareness campaign, where they condemn violence against women through radio, television, online, and presentations to students directly.¹¹⁷ Mr. Katz also described the MVP program, launched in the United States, which began with the aim of engaging men in the sports culture to confront violence against women, but was expanded to encourage both men

109 [Evidence](#), 27 January 2015, 1105 (Jackson Katz, MVP Strategies).

110 [Evidence](#), 27 January 2015, 1105 (Jackson Katz, MVP Strategies); [Evidence](#), 20 November 2014, 1025 (Linda Savoie, SWC); [Evidence](#), 29 January 2015, 1200 (Marie-Christine Plante, Carrefour pour Elle).

111 [Evidence](#), 27 January 2015, 1105 (Jackson Katz, MVP Strategies).

112 Ibid.

113 Ibid., 1125.

114 Ibid., 1105.

115 Ibid.

116 [Evidence](#), 4 December 2014, 1030 (Sharlene Tygesen, Ernestine's Women's Shelter); [Evidence](#), 27 January 2015, 1200 (Jackson Katz, MVP Strategies).

117 [Evidence](#), 27 January 2015, 1140 (Jackson Katz, MVP Strategies).

and women in sports, in high schools, in universities, and in larger communities, to respond to cases of violence.¹¹⁸

Mr. Katz suggested that the bystander approach can be implemented in workplaces across the country; he gave the example of the Canadian military, where he suggested that violence prevention be built into military training at all levels, from new recruits to admirals and generals.¹¹⁹ Ms. Megan Walker, Executive Director of the London Abused Women's Centre, shared a training program for all City of London employees, called "I Step Forward to End Violence and Abuse in my Community, Workplace, and Home," which was organized in collaboration with the London Abused Women's Centre. The program improves understanding of violence against women and encourages employees to respond safely to situations of violence at home, at work and in the community.¹²⁰

D. Supporting Parents and Intervening in At-Risk Families

The Committee heard that an important step in preventing and decreasing violence against women and girls is to focus on intervening early with children and youth who have been abused.¹²¹ As the Committee learned, prevention and early intervention are critical because the "cycle of abuse" connects an individual's abuse as a child to ongoing violence later in life.¹²² Ms. Bonnie Johnston, Chief Executive Officer at the Sheldon Kennedy Child Advocacy Centre, told the Committee that this violence is particularly damaging to children who are still growing and learning, as "93% of our kids are abused by people they know and trust."¹²³ It was explained to the Committee that children who experience abuse are more likely to be revictimized as adolescents and adults and to commit violence against their partners or children in the future.¹²⁴ Furthermore, the Committee was informed that witnessing violence in the home is a form of child abuse, and is often accompanied by some form of violence directed at the child.¹²⁵ Ms. Jenny Ofrim, Evaluation Coordinator at the Sheldon Kennedy Child Advocacy Centre, explained to the Committee:

The term "cycle of abuse" is used often, and it is a reality for many of the children we see at the centre. We need to recognize that child abuse is a national public health issue. We need to put concerted effort into preventing abuse from happening to children. If it does

118 Ibid., 1130.

119 Ibid., 1120.

120 [Evidence](#), 19 February 2015, 1150 (Megan Walker, London Abused Women's Centre).

121 [Evidence](#), 9 December 2014, 0905 (Bonnie Johnston, Chief Executive Officer, Sheldon Kennedy Child Advocacy Centre).

122 [Evidence](#), 9 December 2014, 0905 (Bonnie Johnston, Sheldon Kennedy Child Advocacy Centre); [Evidence](#), 4 December 2014, 0905 (Sharlene Tygesen, Ernestine's Women's Shelter); [Evidence](#), 9 December 2014, 0915 (Jenny Ofrim, Evaluation Coordinator, Sheldon Kennedy Child Advocacy Centre); [Evidence](#), 29 January 2015, 1220 (Marie-Christine Plante, Carrefour pour Elle); [Evidence](#), 20 November 2014, 0905 (Kimberly Elmslie, PHAC).

123 [Evidence](#), 9 December 2014, 1015 (Bonnie Johnston, Sheldon Kennedy Child Advocacy Centre).

124 Ibid., 0905.

125 Ibid.

happen, we need to ensure that the best services are wrapped around them as early as possible so they can move forward with healthy and productive lives, free of violence.¹²⁶

Witnesses shared evidence that children who witness violence learn that violence is acceptable or normal, and develop emotional difficulties that affect them their entire lives. The Committee heard that these children demonstrate higher rates of depression, aggression and delinquency; they struggle with substance abuse and sexualized or aggressive behaviour; and, they grow into adults who struggle to have healthy intimate relationships and to be a good caregiver.¹²⁷ As Ms. Ofrim explained, violence is a learned behaviour and when children see violence, it becomes “ingrained in [a child’s] own way of interacting with other people.”¹²⁸ Ms. Leslie Josling, Executive Director of KW Counselling Services and Co-Chair of the VAW Forum, stated that:

[W]omen who have experienced abuse and men who use abuse in intimate relationships ... have a history of trauma, often stemming from abuse in their family of origin. We know that this trauma affected them as children. It affected their brain development, including their emotion regulation. Children who experience trauma and attachment disruptions often develop what the literature calls “negative working models” of the world. They grow into adults who struggle both with intimate relationships and with caregiving. Caregivers who have a history of trauma themselves often traumatize their own children in turn, because they simply have no experience of healthy connections and relationships to draw on.¹²⁹

The Committee learned about the specific impact that violence has on girls, young women, and mothers. The Committee heard that among girls who are abused, compared to those who are not, the consequences can be significant; they are more likely to report ideas of self-harm or suicide, less likely to graduate from high school, more likely to use illicit drugs as an adult, and more likely to have an early unplanned pregnancy.¹³⁰ Dr. Jocelynn Cook, Scientific Director at the Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada, informed the Committee that violence against pregnant women and young mothers can have serious consequences, such as “early breastfeeding discontinuation, bonding impairment between mother and babe, fewer positive parenting behaviours, substance abuse, [and] self-harm.”¹³¹

The Committee heard that violence prevention programs should focus on children when they are still young, as early as preschool.¹³² In order to break the cycle of abuse, the Committee heard that children who are witnesses to domestic violence require support

126 [Evidence](#), 9 December 2014, 0910 (Jenny Ofrim, Sheldon Kennedy Child Advocacy Centre).

127 [Evidence](#), 29 January 2015, 1115 (Leslie Josling, Executive Director, Co-Chair VAW Forum, KW Counselling Services); [Evidence](#), 4 December 2014, 0905 (Sharlene Tygesen, Ernestine’s Women’s Shelter); [Evidence](#), 9 December 2014, 1000 (Jenny Ofrim, Sheldon Kennedy Child Advocacy Centre); [Evidence](#), 5 February 2015, 1105 (Lana Wells, University of Calgary).

128 [Evidence](#), 9 December 2014, 1000 (Jenny Ofrim, Sheldon Kennedy Child Advocacy Centre).

129 [Evidence](#), 29 January 2015, 1115 (Leslie Josling, KW Counselling Services).

130 [Evidence](#), 9 December 2014, 0910 (Jenny Ofrim, Sheldon Kennedy Child Advocacy Centre).

131 [Evidence](#), 27 November 2014, 0845 (Jocelynn Cook, Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada).

132 [Evidence](#), 20 November 2014, 0930 (Kimberly Elmslie, PHAC).

services and ongoing engagement.¹³³ The Committee was told of the work of the PACIFIX program, launched by Carrefour pour Elle and funded by PHAC's Community Action Program for Children, which provides assistance to child victims of family violence and aims to improve the relationship between child and parent.¹³⁴

The Committee was informed of the work done by Child Advocacy Centres to address cases of child abuse. These centres assist families where children have been victimized by bringing together all necessary services in multidisciplinary teams that treat, investigate and support children and families impacted by violence.¹³⁵ Ms. Pamela Arnott, Director and Senior Counsel of the Policy Centre for Victim Issues at Justice Canada, noted that the department has financed more than 20 Child Advocacy Centres across Canada since 2010, and that these centres "reduce the trauma that child victims and their families may experience in dealing with the criminal justice system, often including children who have witnessed or experienced violence, including violence against women or against themselves."¹³⁶ Such centres offer multidisciplinary teams, bringing together police, child protection services, forensic nurses, attorneys, mental health services, victim services, and other community resources.¹³⁷

The Committee was told about the work of the Sheldon Kennedy Child Advocacy Centre, a not-for-profit organization assisting and treating children who are victimized, in collaboration with six relevant organizations, those being the Calgary Police Service, Calgary and Area Child and Family Services, Alberta Health Services, Alberta Justice, RCMP, and Alberta Education.¹³⁸ Ms. Johnston suggested that funding for child advocacy centres be increased with the goal of furthering the development and operation of these centres.¹³⁹

Witnesses also described positive parenting support and courses as a promising practice, particularly for families who may be at greater risk of experiencing violence.¹⁴⁰ Ms. Kimberly Elmslie, Assistant Deputy Minister of Health Promotion and Chronic Disease Prevention Branch of PHAC, shared evidence showing that early intervention in at-risk families to prevent violence and promote healthy parenting has a greater likelihood of success in keeping families resilient and safe.¹⁴¹ The Committee learned of group programs run by KW Counselling Services, entitled "Trusting, Loving Connections" and

133 [Evidence](#), 4 December 2014, 0920 (Lynn Ward, Armagh House).

134 [Evidence](#), 29 January 2015, 1100 (Marie-Christine Plante, Carrefour pour Elle).

135 [Evidence](#), 9 December 2014, 0905 and 0915 (Bonnie Johnston, Sheldon Kennedy Child Advocacy Centre).

136 [Evidence](#), 20 November 2014, 0915 (Pamela Arnott, Director and Senior Counsel, Policy Centre for Victim Issues, Justice Canada).

137 *Ibid.*, 0955.

138 [Evidence](#), 9 December 2014, 0905 (Bonnie Johnston, Sheldon Kennedy Child Advocacy Centre).

139 *Ibid.*, 0915.

140 [Evidence](#), 4 December 2014, 0915 (Lynn Ward, Armagh House).

141 [Evidence](#), 20 November 2014, 0930 (Kimberly Elmslie, PHAC).

“Enhancing Attachment,” with the goal of helping “caregivers understand the effects of trauma on their own lives and the effects of trauma on their children.”¹⁴²

A representative of PHAC told the Committee that family violence can be reduced by focusing on community-based maternal and child health programs; they explained that “positive parenting, parental involvement, attachment, resilience, and healthy relationships are all factors that are associated with reduced risk of violence later in life.”¹⁴³ According to PHAC, it provides programs to 250,000 at-risk children and their parents in more than 3,000 communities in Canada, with 77 of these projects currently delivered out of shelters for women and children leaving abusive situations.¹⁴⁴ PHAC has also contributed to programs to train community workers to deliver parenting programs for mothers who had survived violence with the goal of developing coping skills and promoting good mental health.¹⁴⁵

The Committee heard that one way to support parents, particularly women who wish to re-enter the workforce in order to leave an unhealthy relationship, is to provide low-cost and safe access to child care.¹⁴⁶ Some witnesses recommended the implementation of a national child care strategy.¹⁴⁷

E. Collaboration and Sharing of Promising Practices

The Committee heard that there has been significant progress in addressing violence against women in Canada, but that such progress has sometimes occurred in silos. Witnesses highlighted the need to share practices among women’s organizations and other not-for-profit organizations, different levels of government, and the various systems, such as the criminal justice system, the family law system, and the child protection system.¹⁴⁸

The Committee heard from a number of organizations that currently promote valuable collaboration among not-for-profits with violence prevention mandates, including the Canadian Association of Sexual Assault Centres, a coalition of rape crisis centres,¹⁴⁹ and the Canadian Network of Women’s Shelters and Transition Houses, which brings together 12 provincial and territorial shelter networks representing over 350 shelters

142 [Evidence](#), 29 January 2015, 1235 (Leslie Josling, KW Counselling Services).

143 [Evidence](#), 20 November 2014, 0910 (Kimberly Elmslie, PHAC).

144 Ibid.

145 Ibid.

146 [Evidence](#), 9 December 2014, 0915 (Bonnie Johnston, Sheldon Kennedy Child Advocacy Centre); [Evidence](#), 29 January 2015, 1155 (Nathalie Duhamel, Regroupement québécois des Centres d’aide et de lutte contre les agressions à caractère sexuel).

147 [Evidence](#), 29 January 2015, 1150 (Jenny Wright, St. John’s Status of Women’s Council Women’s Centre); [Evidence](#), 5 February 2015, 1105 (Lana Wells, University of Calgary).

148 [Evidence](#), 27 November 2014, 1035 (Kasari Govender, West Coast Women’s Legal Education and Action Fund); [Evidence](#), 3 February 2015, 1110 (Rosemary McCarney, Plan International Canada Inc.).

149 [Evidence](#), 27 November 2014, 0905 (Lisa Steacy, Canadian Association of Sexual Assault Centres).

across Canada.¹⁵⁰ In addition, the Regroupement québécois des Centres d'aide et de lutte contre les agressions à caractère sexuel, established in 1979, now has 27 members in 16 different regions of Quebec.¹⁵¹

The Committee heard about the Ontario Woman Abuse Screening Project, a provincial initiative promoting collaboration across sectors. According to a brief submitted by the London Abused Women's Centre, the lead agency responsible for the initiative, this project involves:

More than 160 agencies and programs in the mental health, addiction, woman abuse, sexual assault, and allied sectors, as well as, women with lived experience [who] are collaborating to provide trauma-informed services and to implement screening for woman abuse, sexual assault and trauma in mental health and addiction agencies.¹⁵²

Another example of a collaborative approach to anti-violence work is the Violence Against Women Forum (VAW Forum), described by Ms. Leslie Josling, who assists as co-chair for the forum. In a brief submitted to the Committee, Ms. Josling explained that the "VAW forum is a group of nearly 30 organizations that deliver VAW counselling and shelter services across Central West Region [of Ontario]."¹⁵³ With support from the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services, the VAW Forum was established in 2007 with the intent:

[T]o raise the profile of [violence against women] services in our region, exchange knowledge and expertise, and enhance collaboration among [violence against women] agencies and other key stakeholders, and in an effort to strengthen the service system and continue to build on excellent practices already in place.¹⁵⁴

The VAW Forum has a "tri-sector collaboration model," which promotes collaboration among not-for-profit, university and government partners. The brief elaborated on the value of this model by describing what each partner brings to the VAW forum:

The agencies provided their expertise in delivering services to women who experienced abuse, the government provided much needed funding, leadership and facilitated co-ordination and the university provided the academic research and training that was otherwise not affordable and/or available. Together each sector provided more to the Forum than they individually would have provided or achieved.¹⁵⁵

150 [Evidence](#), 4 December 2014, 0855 (Lise Martin, Canadian Network of Women's Shelters and Transition Houses).

151 [Evidence](#), 29 January 2015, 1130 (Nathalie Duhamel, Regroupement québécois des Centres d'aide et de lutte contre les agressions à caractère sexuel).

152 London Abused Women's Centre, "London Abused Women's Centre Responses to Questions raised by Status of Women Committee," *Submitted response to questions*, 18 March 2015.

153 Leslie Josling, "Trisector Collaboration Benefits – VAW Forum 2014," *Submitted Brief*, 28 January 2015.

154 Ibid.

155 Ibid.

One of the results of the VAW Forum is the development of a strategic plan to address violence against women in the region, which reflected the input from all partners, and served to identify critical issues, priorities, gaps, trends, and strategic objectives.¹⁵⁶

The Committee also heard of the “National Community of Practice” project, run by the White Ribbon Campaign, and supported by SWC. The project aims to facilitate collaboration and knowledge sharing among nine SWC-funded projects aimed at engaging men and boys in the prevention of violence across Canada. By building this community of practice, the White Ribbon Campaign aims to establish mutual support among organizations with similar mandates, to identify promising practices, and to create a national evaluation framework for future projects.¹⁵⁷ The Committee also learned of a francophone community of practice focused on practices to deal with sexual violence, which was established by the Regroupement québécois des Centres d'aide et de lutte contre les agressions à caractère sexuel, with funding from SWC. The project unites organizations in Quebec, Ontario and New Brunswick and establishes a virtual library collection of programs, projects and activities to promote sharing.¹⁵⁸

The Committee also learned of federal initiatives that promote collaboration and sharing of promising practices. The Family Violence Initiative, led and coordinated by PHAC, involves 15 federal departments collaborating to address family violence in Canada.¹⁵⁹ As well, PHAC has developed the Canadian Best Practices Portal, where more than 80 violence prevention intervention techniques are posted to help professionals and organizations learn and implement successful evidence-based initiatives.¹⁶⁰ PHAC also manages the National Clearinghouse on Family Violence, which serves to share information across sectors with health professionals and communities.¹⁶¹

Ms. Alia Hogben, Executive Director of the Canadian Council of Muslim Women, told the Committee that SWC should include women’s organizations, from various Canadian communities, in the development of policies and action plans. These practitioners and activists could contribute their unique knowledge to the work of the agency.¹⁶² Ms. Lisa Steacy, Representative of the Canadian Association of Sexual Assault Centres, spoke of the need to mobilize and fund independent women’s groups to regularly advise the government on best practices.¹⁶³

156 [Evidence](#), 29 January 2015, 1110 (Leslie Josling, KW Counselling Services).

157 [Evidence](#), 3 February 2015, 1135 (Todd Minerson, White Ribbon Campaign).

158 [Evidence](#), 29 January 2015, 1130 and 1135 (Nathalie Duhamel, Regroupement québécois des Centres d'aide et de lutte contre les agressions à caractère sexuel).

159 [Evidence](#), 20 November 2014, 0905 (Kimberly Elmslie, PHAC).

160 *Ibid.*, 0910 and 0925.

161 *Ibid.*, 0910.

162 [Evidence](#), 2 December 2014, 0905 (Alia Hogben, Canadian Council of Muslim Women).

163 [Evidence](#), 27 November 2014, 1015 (Lisa Steacy, Canadian Association of Sexual Assault Centres).

Witnesses also called on the federal government to partner with provinces, territories, Aboriginal governments, and not-for-profit organizations to implement strategies to respond to violence against women.¹⁶⁴

F. Cybersafety

Witnesses spoke of the violence that women experience online and in social media, often referred to as cyberviolence, which can also comprise cybermisogyny and cyberbullying. Cyberviolence directed against women includes, for example, sharing intimate images without consent, cyberstalking and online hate speech.¹⁶⁵ The Committee was informed that committing such acts online is particularly damaging as anonymity makes it easier for the attacker to express hateful opinions that would not be acceptable in wider society.¹⁶⁶

The Committee also heard that the online world can create opportunities for new acts of violence to occur, or can extend a real-world act of violence into the online realm.¹⁶⁷ The Committee was also informed that cyberviolence can turn into real violence when a woman's address, social insurance number, or telephone numbers are posted online.¹⁶⁸ As well, Ms. Sharlene Tygesen, Executive Director of the Ernestine's Women's Shelter, noted that emerging technology creates new challenges for women who are escaping a violent family situation; as an example, a violent man can find his partner through the GPS device on her cellphone.¹⁶⁹

The Committee learned that it is important to teach youth how to navigate the cyberworld safely, since there is a lack of understanding of the risks and damage associated with online acts.¹⁷⁰ For example, the Committee heard that many youth are "sexting" – delivering sexually explicit text messages – without being aware of how quickly messages can be distributed through technology and social media.¹⁷¹

The Committee also heard that it is important to educate youth on what constitutes unacceptable or criminal behaviour online. As an example, youth should understand

164 [Evidence](#), 4 December 2014, 0910 (Sharlene Tygesen, Ernestine's Women's Shelter); [Evidence](#), 3 February 2015, 1110 (Rosemary McCarney, Plan International Canada Inc.).

165 [Evidence](#), 27 November 2014, 0925 (Kasari Govender, West Coast Women's Legal Education and Action Fund); [Evidence](#), 3 February 2015, 1125 (Todd Minerson, White Ribbon Campaign); [Evidence](#), 3 February 2015, 1110 (Rosemary McCarney, Plan International Canada Inc.); [Evidence](#), 2 December 2014, 0850 (Carmela Hutchinson, DisAbled Women's Network of Canada).

166 [Evidence](#), 27 November 2014, 1005 (Kasari Govender, West Coast Women's Legal Education and Action Fund).

167 [Evidence](#), 27 November 2014, 1010 (Kasari Govender, West Coast Women's Legal Education and Action Fund); [Evidence](#), 4 December 2014, 0940 (Sharlene Tygesen, Ernestine's Women's Shelter).

168 [Evidence](#), 27 November 2014, 1010 (Kasari Govender, West Coast Women's Legal Education and Action Fund).

169 [Evidence](#), 4 December 2014, 0940 (Sharlene Tygesen, Ernestine's Women's Shelter).

170 [Evidence](#), 2 December 2014, 0950 (Carmela Hutchinson, DisAbled Women's Network of Canada).

171 [Evidence](#), 2 December 2014, 0950 (Carmela Hutchinson, DisAbled Women's Network of Canada); [Evidence](#), 29 January 2015, 1100 (Marie-Christine Plante, Carrefour pour Elle).

how the idea of consent in sexual situations applies in cyberspace, on social media profiles, smartphones and other platforms.¹⁷² Ms. Kasari Govender, Executive Director of the West Coast Women's Legal Education and Action Fund, said that her organization offers workshops and a small legal information booklet for youth called "Is That Legal?".¹⁷³

Witnesses explained to the Committee that the goal of programs on cyberviolence and cyberbullying is to create productive and safe spaces for youth, who typically spend a significant amount of time online.¹⁷⁴ The Committee was told of a program for youth entitled "24 heures texto," which raises awareness among youth of the dangers of cyberbullying and sexting.¹⁷⁵

The RCMP told the Committee that it has hosted a number of interactive video conference sessions with a number of classrooms across the country, called RCMPTalks, on the subject of cyberbullying and bullying.¹⁷⁶

Ms. Govender spoke in support of the recent criminalization of non-consensual sharing of intimate images, provisions which were contained in the *Protecting Canadians from Online Crime Act* and took effect in March 2015. She noted that "I think that [such criminalization] is positive. I think it's unfortunate that it was coupled with provisions that look like they may very well contravene the [Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms] around rights to privacy."¹⁷⁷

The Committee heard that a central challenge in addressing cyberviolence is that parents, teachers, law enforcement officials, and others, are unprepared or unaware of how to address the emerging phenomenon. Ms. Govender spoke of her organization's work in raising awareness and sharing knowledge on the topic:

Earlier this year, we released a report called "#CyberMisogyny: Using and strengthening Canadian legal responses to gendered hate and harassment online". We did this project in response to both the number of high-profile and tragic cases of girls and young women facing online abuse and the more invisible, but increasingly common cases of what are called revenge porn sites, the sharing of intimate images without consent, cyberstalking, and online hate speech.... In this report we make a number of recommendations to government, including the creation of a new office independent of government, but focused within the federal ministry of the Status of Women to conduct research, to facilitate dialogue, and to make recommendations to government about appropriate legal

172 [Evidence](#), 27 November 2014, 0950 (Kasari Govender, West Coast Women's Legal Education and Action Fund).

173 Ibid.

174 Ibid.

175 [Evidence](#), 29 January 2015, 1100 (Marie-Christine Plante, Carrefour pour Elle).

176 [Evidence](#), 25 November 2014, 0915 (Tyler Bates, RCMP).

177 [Evidence](#), 27 November 2014, 0955 (Kasari Govender, West Coast Women's Legal Education and Action Fund); Justice Canada, "[The Protecting Canadians from Online Crime Act](#)," *Backgrounder*, March 2015.

responses to the challenges of protecting and promoting the equality of women and girls and other vulnerable communities online.¹⁷⁸

The Committee was informed that while the cyberworld can encourage and facilitate violence against women, it also acts as a tool in the fight to end violence against women as it provides a low-cost venue to distribute a powerful anti-violence message.¹⁷⁹

Ms. Ann Decter, Director of Advocacy and Public Policy at the YWCA Canada spoke of launching an online campaign, #NOTokay, to address violence against women in “social media, video games, music videos,” by encouraging people to speak out against such messages. Ms. Decter explained the campaign, which uses a version of the bystander approach:

We're asking people, when they see things that promote violence against women or attack women, that they call them out online by saying it is not okay. We're hoping it will be a simple tool that moves people from letting things ride to actually expressing it when they feel it's not okay. I think that's a bit of a crucial thing, particularly with men and boys who tend to go with peer behaviour, rather than being the one who disrupts what's going on. I think we certainly see that on campuses. We really need those guys to be able to say they're not okay with this.¹⁸⁰

G. A Greater Role for Health Care Professionals

Witnesses reminded the Committee that violence against women is acknowledged as a serious health concern in Canada and globally.¹⁸¹ Ms. Kimberly Elmslie, Assistant Deputy Minister of the Health Promotion and Chronic Disease Prevention Branch of PHAC told the Committee that “there is growing international recognition of violence as a health issue.”¹⁸² In addition, the Committee learned that health-related costs of violence against women in Canada exceed \$1.5 billion a year.¹⁸³ Ms. Tracy O'Hearn, Executive Director of Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, said that “[t]here's the whole range of responses [to violence]: emergency, interventions, medevac, surgeries, rehabilitation, time away from their families, and employment.”¹⁸⁴

The Committee heard that while physicians should play a role in preventing violence against women, few physicians have the training to recognize signs of abuse or the knowledge of what to do when situations of violence are identified. For example, the

178 [Evidence](#), 27 November 2014, 0925 and 0930 (Kasari Govender, West Coast Women's Legal Education and Action Fund).

179 [Evidence](#), 27 November 2014, 1020 (Ann Decter, YWCA Canada).

180 Ibid.

181 [Evidence](#), 9 December 2014, 0855 (Tracy O'Hearn, Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada); [Evidence](#), 20 November 2014, 0910 (Kimberly Elmslie, PHAC).

182 [Evidence](#), 20 November 2014, 0910 (Kimberly Elmslie, PHAC); [Evidence](#), 27 November 2014, 0845 and 0850 (Jocelynn Cook, Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada).

183 [Evidence](#), 4 December 2014, 0905 (Sharlene Tygesen, Ernestine's Women's Shelter).

184 [Evidence](#), 9 December 2014, 0855 (Tracy O'Hearn, Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada).

Committee learned that only around 3% of incidents of violence against pregnant women are identified by primary-care physicians.¹⁸⁵

Doctors can develop the skills to identify women who may be at greater risk of experiencing violence or abuse during their lives and to understand the complexity of the violent environment in order to refer these women to appropriate treatment and intervention services.¹⁸⁶ Officials from PHAC told the Committee that the agency coordinates with national health professional organizations to discuss their role in responding to family violence.¹⁸⁷ As an example, Ms. Elmslie said that PHAC is currently supporting two multi-year research projects to measure the effectiveness of a nurse-family partnership with the goal of preventing violence from occurring in the homes of at-risk young mothers.¹⁸⁸

The Committee heard that there are additional opportunities for health care professionals to play a role in addressing violence against women. The Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada issues guidelines on intimate partner violence, which, for example, advise health care providers to understand the social determinants of health in cases of violence.¹⁸⁹ Regarding family violence against children, the Committee heard there should be standardized and specialized training provided to professionals in the health system.¹⁹⁰ As well, Dr. Jocelynn Cook, Scientific Director at the Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada, suggested developing curricula and training courses in the medical field on the role of health care providers in understanding the health impact of violence against women, in identifying risk factors, in addressing such violence, and in providing women with resources.¹⁹¹

At the federal level, the Committee heard that PHAC addresses violence against women from a public health perspective by coordinating the federal Family Violence Initiative, conducting surveillance and research, compiling and sharing information with health professional and community groups, and supporting community-based children's programs that encourage health relationships and positive parenting.¹⁹²

185 [Evidence](#), 27 November 2014, 0845 and 0850 (Jocelynn Cook, Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada).

186 *Ibid.*, 0845.

187 [Evidence](#), 20 November 2014, 0905 (Kimberly Elmslie, PHAC).

188 *Ibid.*, 0910.

189 [Evidence](#), 27 November 2014, 0845 and 0850 (Jocelynn Cook, Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada).

190 [Evidence](#), 9 December 2014, 0915 (Bonnie Johnston, Sheldon Kennedy Child Advocacy Centre).

191 [Evidence](#), 27 November 2014, 1010 (Jocelynn Cook, Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada).

192 [Evidence](#), 20 November 2014, 0905 (Kimberly Elmslie, PHAC).

Recommendation 7

The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada continue to support and focus on maternal, newborn and child health through engagement of stakeholders.

H. Shelters and Housing for Women and their Children

Statistics Canada officials told the Committee that the Transition Home Survey indicated that, on the “snapshot day” of 18 April 2012, there were over 8,000 women and children staying in shelters across Canada, with three-quarters of women seeking shelter because of abuse. As of 2010, there were 593 shelters in Canada servicing the needs of abused women, which represented a 17% increase from 2000.¹⁹³

Witnesses spoke of the important role of shelters in protecting women escaping family violence, and in preventing the violence from recurring.¹⁹⁴ The Committee learned that shelters offer more than a safe environment; they enable women and their children to recover from violence, to rebuild self-esteem, and to regain an independent life.¹⁹⁵

While it was acknowledged that there is a “mature social service system” with a network of shelters across Canada, the Committee heard that there remain gaps in shelter service. Canada lacks shelters in the northern territories, for rural women, for deaf women and women with disabilities, for Aboriginal women, for immigrant and minority women, and women with mental health and addiction issues.¹⁹⁶

However, the Committee was impressed by the efforts of existing shelter providers to help all women find immediate safety and long-term security. The Committee heard of the work of a number of shelters and second-stage housing in Canada. Ms. Lynn Ward, Executive Director of Armagh House, explained that her second-stage housing is for women and children who are escaping domestic violence in the Mississauga region. She says:

[W]e 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

193 [Evidence](#), 20 November 2014, 0850 (Cathy Connors, Statistics Canada); Statistics Canada, “A statistical overview of violence against women in Canada – presentation to the House of Commons’ Standing Committee on the Status of Women,” *Speaking Notes*, 20 November 2014, p. 15.

194 [Evidence](#), 27 November 2014, 0855 (Ann Decter, YWCA Canada); [Evidence](#), 4 December 2014, 0855 (Lise Martin, Canadian Network of Women’s Shelters and Transition Houses); [Evidence](#), 4 December 2014, 0905 (Sharlene Tygesen, Ernestine’s Women’s Shelter); [Evidence](#), 4 December 2014, 0915 (Lynn Ward, Armagh House).

195 [Evidence](#), 4 December 2014, 0855 (Lise Martin, Canadian Network of Women’s Shelters and Transition Houses).

196 [Evidence](#), 27 November 2014, 0855 (Ann Decter, YWCA Canada); [Evidence](#), 2 December 2014, 0930 and 0950 (Carmela Hutchinson, DisAble Women’s Network of Canada); [Evidence](#), 9 December 2014, 0950 (Tracy O’Hearn, Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada).

overcome the multiple issues they now must face with overcoming the realities of violence.¹⁹⁷

Ms. Sharlene Tygesen, Executive Director of Ernestine's Women's Shelter, told the Committee that her women's shelter in the Toronto area opened in 1983 and has assisted over 5,000 families seeking safety from situations of domestic violence.¹⁹⁸

The Committee was told that violence plus poverty leads to homelessness, and homelessness in turn makes women even more vulnerable to violence.¹⁹⁹ Ms. Ann Decter, Director of Advocacy and Public Policy at YWCA Canada, suggested "prioritizing women's access to social housing, rent control, rent subsidies, seeding non-profits to create housing, requiring affordable housing units in all housing developments, and direct development of social housing by government."²⁰⁰

A danger assessment tool was identified as a promising practice used in shelters. Workers use the tool to assess an abused woman's ongoing level of risk and to advocate for the woman's protective needs in the law enforcement system. The Committee learned that, by participating in the danger assessment, many abused women re-affirmed their decision to leave and were motivated to take action and develop a safety plan.²⁰¹

The Committee heard that supportive long-term housing for women could have a positive impact on the rate of violence against women. Women can settle in supportive long-term housing with their families, where the residents are provided with counselling, support for education, and child care, after leaving an emergency shelter.²⁰² The Committee heard that women, after leaving shelters, require resources and services in order to lead safe lives; these supports should help women with access to safe and affordable housing, finding quality child care, and securing employment with adequate incomes.²⁰³

A number of witnesses had specific recommendations for the federal government. Ms. Decter suggested a change to the federal government's existing Homelessness Partnering Strategy, which focuses a large portion of funding on the Housing First model with access criteria based on chronic and episodic homelessness. She recommended

197 [Evidence](#), 4 December 2014, 0915 (Lynn Ward, Armagh House).

198 [Evidence](#), 4 December 2014, 0905 (Sharlene Tygesen, Ernestine's Women's Shelter).

199 [Evidence](#), 27 January 2015, 1155 (Jackson Katz, MVP Strategies); [Evidence](#), 27 November 2014, 0855 (Ann Decter, YWCA Canada); [Evidence](#), 4 December 2014, 0920 (Lynn Ward, Armagh House); [Evidence](#), 27 November 2014, 1005 (Jocelynn Cook, Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada).

200 [Evidence](#), 27 November 2014, 0855 (Ann Decter, YWCA Canada).

201 [Evidence](#), 4 December 2014, 0855 (Lise Martin, Canadian Network of Women's Shelters and Transition Houses).

202 [Evidence](#), 27 November 2014, 1030 (Ann Decter, Director, YWCA Canada).

203 [Evidence](#), 27 November 2014, 0855 (Ann Decter, YWCA Canada); [Evidence](#), 27 November 2014, 0925 (Kasari Govender, West Coast Women's Legal Education and Action Fund); [Evidence](#), 4 December 2014, 0900 (Lise Martin, Canadian Network of Women's Shelters and Transition Houses); [Evidence](#), 4 December 2014, 0915 (Lynn Ward, Armagh House); [Evidence](#), 9 December 2014, 0850 (Marion Little, as an Individual); [Evidence](#), 29 January 2015, 1150 (Jenny Wright, St. John's Status of Women's Council Women's Centre).

that the federal strategy be accompanied by a “deliberate strategy” to include abused women.²⁰⁴ As well, Ms. Bonnie L. Brayton, National Executive Director of DAWN Canada, suggested that the Enabling Accessibility Fund, a federal grants and contributions program that supports capital costs of construction and renovations related to improving physical accessibility and safety for people with disabilities, could have a targeted stream for shelters and transition houses in order to build a network of accessible shelters.²⁰⁵ Specific to Inuit communities, Ms. Tracy O’Hearn, Executive Director of Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, recommended investments to address the shortage of safe shelters for Inuit women and children fleeing violence.²⁰⁶

A number of witnesses recommended establishing a national housing strategy to ensure there is access to affordable housing for women escaping domestic violence.²⁰⁷ Ms. Decter suggested “prioritizing women’s access to social housing, rent control, rent subsidies, seeding non-profits to create housing, requiring affordable housing units in all housing developments, and direct development of social housing by government.”²⁰⁸

I. Increased Access to Social Services

The Committee heard that women often seek social services when facing violence, particularly in situations of intimate partner abuse. Statistics Canada told the Committee that women who are victimized by a spouse are more likely than male victims to use social services (38% compared to 18%).²⁰⁹

The Committee learned that women need comprehensive social services in safe environments. Women, depending on their situations, may need to address a number of outstanding health and safety issues, such as receiving counselling or getting their child’s health examined.²¹⁰ Witnesses spoke positively of existing social services that provide both immediate and long-term assistance to women escaping violence. In particular, the Committee heard of front-line crisis support and intervention programs with accompanying services, such as a confidential phone line, as well as long-term programming with ongoing supports for women in different aspects of their lives, in the legal, social and financial realm.²¹¹

204 [Evidence](#), 27 November 2014, 0855 (Ann Decter, YWCA Canada).

205 [Evidence](#), 2 December 2014, 1020 (Bonnie L. Brayton, National Executive Director, DisAbled Women’s Network of Canada).

206 [Evidence](#), 9 December 2014, 0950 (Tracy O’Hearn, Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada).

207 [Evidence](#), 29 January 2015, 1150 (Jenny Wright, St. John’s Status of Women’s Council Women’s Centre); [Evidence](#), 5 February 2015, 1105 (Lana Wells, University of Calgary); [Evidence](#), 5 February 2015, 1115 (Gerry Mills, Director of Operations, Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia).

208 [Evidence](#), 27 November 2014, 0855 (Ann Decter, YWCA Canada).

209 [Evidence](#), 20 November 2014, 0850 (Cathy Connors, Statistics Canada); Statistics Canada, “A statistical overview of violence against women in Canada – presentation to the House of Commons’ Standing Committee on the Status of Women,” *Speaking Notes*, 20 November 2014, p. 14.

210 [Evidence](#), 20 November 2014, 0945 (Kimberly Elmslie, PHAC).

211 [Evidence](#), 27 November 2014, 0905 (Lisa Steacy, Canadian Association of Sexual Assault Centres); [Evidence](#), 29 January 2015, 1100 (Marie-Christine Plante, Carrefour pour Elle).

The Committee learned that many social services are now adopting a harm-reduction approach which involves assisting and treating all women, regardless of the complex issues in their lives.²¹² As an example, Ms. Lise Martin, Executive Director of the Canadian Network of Women's Shelters and Transition Houses, described a project entitled *Reducing Barriers* which taught shelter workers how to accommodate women with substance use and mental health concerns.²¹³

Witnesses told the Committee of the outstanding work of sexual assault centres in supporting women who have experienced sexual violence, and cited these centres as promising practices in addressing violence against women.²¹⁴ Ms. Ann Decter, Director of Advocacy and Public Policy at YWCA Canada, said: "Sexual assault centres are an excellent and long-established practice supporting women who have experienced sexual violence. Their role in preventing violence has long been undervalued."²¹⁵

Ms. Lisa Steacy, Representative of the Canadian Association of Sexual Assault Centres, described one of the functions of sexual assault centres in the country:

One of the crucial functions of CASAC is to speak publicly for the thousands of women who tell us their stories on confidential phone lines. Every woman who calls a CASAC centre takes the risk of speaking honestly and deliberately about the violence she has experienced.²¹⁶

Crisis counselling, whereby organizations offer women short-term counselling in order to refer them to resources and provide immediate assistance, offers important support to women victimized by violence.²¹⁷ Ms. Leslie Josling, Executive Director of KW Counselling Services, said her organization offers a walk-in counselling clinic, where women could receive a counselling session at a moment of crisis and, as a result, are given advice at a key moment when they are most ready to change their life situation.²¹⁸ A number of witnesses also spoke of the value of long-term counselling for women and children, in the form of individual or group sessions, with the goal of helping them to recover from violence.²¹⁹

212 [Evidence](#), 4 December 2014, 0855 (Lise Martin, Canadian Network of Women's Shelters and Transition Houses); [Evidence](#), 27 November 2014, 0855 (Ann Decter, YWCA Canada); [Evidence](#), 4 December 2014, 0945 (Sharlene Tygesen, Ernestine's Women's Shelter).

213 [Evidence](#), 4 December 2014, 0855 (Lise Martin, Canadian Network of Women's Shelters and Transition Houses).

214 [Evidence](#), 27 November 2014, 0930 (Lisa Steacy, Canadian Association of Sexual Assault Centres); [Evidence](#), 27 November 2014, 0900 (Ann Decter, YWCA Canada).

215 [Evidence](#), 27 November 2014, 0855 (Ann Decter, YWCA Canada).

216 [Evidence](#), 27 November 2014, 0905 (Lisa Steacy, Canadian Association of Sexual Assault Centres).

217 [Evidence](#), 25 November 2014, 0850 (Susan MacPhee, Acting Director General, Immigration Branch, Citizenship and Immigration Canada); [Evidence](#), 29 January 2015, 1215 (Leslie Josling, KW Counselling Services).

218 [Evidence](#), 29 January 2015, 1215 (Leslie Josling, KW Counselling Services).

219 [Evidence](#), 29 January 2015, 1215 (Leslie Josling, KW Counselling Services); [Evidence](#), 4 December 2014, 0915 (Lynn Ward, Armagh House); [Evidence](#), 29 January 2015, 1230 (Nathalie Duhamel, Regroupement québécois des Centres d'aide et de lutte contre les agressions à caractère sexuel); [Evidence](#), 20 November 2014, 0930 (Kimberly Elmslie, PHAC).

Witnesses also put forward a number of suggestions for the federal government on how to improve practices in the provision of social services. Ms. Leah Gazan, member of Wood Mountain Lakota Nation and member of the Faculty of Education at the University of Winnipeg, recommended that the federal government provide resource centres in each province with all information, programs, and support services required by women affected by violence.²²⁰ Another witnesses requested the establishment of national standards for social services, health care, and education.²²¹ The Committee also heard that funding should go into training social service workers on legal information, enabling them to help women escaping violence access counsel and the justice system.²²²

J. Addressing Practices with Unintended Harmful Consequences for Victims in the Law Enforcement and Justice System

The Committee heard that addressing practices with unintended harmful consequences for victims in law enforcement and the justice system can serve to reduce violence against women. Witnesses suggested to the Committee that the low reporting and conviction rates in cases of violence against women signal the need to reform the justice system.²²³ There was an acknowledgment that the legislation addressing violence against women is generally good, but that at the police and judicial level, the law is not properly applied or enforced.²²⁴

The Committee heard that the law is not properly applied or enforced in some cases of sexual assault because of “sexual assault myths,” in which officials in law enforcement or the justice system consciously or unconsciously place blame on the victim or dismiss claims of sexual assault. Ms. Lisa Steacy, Representative of the Canadian Association of Sexual Assault Centres, explained to the Committee:

The rape myths we've heard so much about and that pervade the way sexual assault is investigated, prosecuted and defended are probably one of the largest factors that serve to dismiss women when they go forward and speak out about what has happened to them, so, although the *Criminal Code* definition of consent is very clear, the police, when they're investigating rape, still use the excuse of “he said, she said; we can't prove it”²²⁵

220 [Evidence](#), 19 February 2015, 1135 (Leah Gazan, Member of Wood Mountain Lakota Nation, and Faculty of Education, University of Winnipeg, as an Individual).

221 [Evidence](#), 19 February 2015, 1205 (Kim Pate, Executive Director, Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies).

222 [Evidence](#), 27 November 2014, 0900 (Ann Decter, YWCA Canada).

223 [Evidence](#), 27 November 2014, 0910 (Lisa Steacy, Canadian Association of Sexual Assault Centres); [Evidence](#), 27 November 2014, 0900 (Ann Decter, Director, YWCA Canada); [Evidence](#), 3 February 2015, 1100 (Jane Doe, as an Individual).

224 [Evidence](#), 27 November 2014, 0910 and 0955 (Lisa Steacy, Canadian Association of Sexual Assault Centres).

225 *Ibid.*, 0955.

As a result, according to this witness, authorities fail to investigate and prosecute in some cases of sexual assault, which leads to greater reluctance among women to report such cases.²²⁶

While statistics vary, there was widespread agreement that violence against women, particularly sexual assault, is significantly underreported and under-convicted. Ms. Cathy Connors, Director at the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics at Statistics Canada, stated: “[I]t’s important to acknowledge that incidents of sexual violence often go unreported to police.”²²⁷ Ms. Steacy said that less than 10% of sexual assaults are reported to police and only 0.3% of rapes committed result in a criminal conviction.²²⁸ Ms. Ann Decter, Director of Advocacy and Public Policy at YWCA Canada, shared research that indicated that there are 460,000 sexual assaults annually in Canada, and that for every 1,000 assaults, 33 are reported to police, 29 are recorded as a crime, 12 have charges laid, six are prosecuted, and three are convicted.²²⁹ According to Ms. Jane Doe, author, activist, litigant in *Jane Doe v. the Toronto Police Force*, women do not report sexual assault as the conviction rate is less than 1% for such charges.²³⁰

The Committee heard that at the federal level, a number of promising practices are underway to assist female victims of violence in attaining justice and to make improvements to the law enforcement and justice system overall. The Committee was also told of the work that is ongoing to improve the response of law enforcement and the justice system to cases of violence against women. The Committee heard of the Federal Victims Strategy, led by Justice Canada, and its objective to give victims an effective voice in the criminal justice and federal corrections system.²³¹ The Victims Fund, within the Federal Victims Strategy, works towards the same goal by providing grants and contributions to victims.²³²

Officials from the Justice Canada told the Committee that women and girls who have been victimized can be offered testimonial aids and other tools to encourage their meaningful participation in trials. As well, in sentencing, courts are required to take into consideration whether offences involved a breach of trust or the abuse of someone in a vulnerable situation.²³³

226 Ibid., 1025.

227 [Evidence](#), 20 November 2014, 0845 (Cathy Connors, Statistics Canada).

228 [Evidence](#), 27 November 2014, 0910 (Lisa Steacy, Canadian Association of Sexual Assault Centres).

229 [Evidence](#), 27 November 2014, 0900 (Ann Decter, YWCA Canada).

230 [Evidence](#), 3 February 2015, 1210 (Jane Doe, as an Individual).

231 [Evidence](#), 20 November 2014, 0915 (Pamela Arnott, Justice Canada).

232 Ibid., 0945.

233 Ibid., 0915.

Officials with Public Safety Canada spoke of the National Office for Victims. This central resource offers information and referrals to victims who interact with the Correctional Service of Canada and the Parole Board of Canada.²³⁴

The RCMP informed the Committee that its resources and responses to cases of family violence are governed by a policy that differs from responses to other violent crimes. In such cases, Superintendent Tyler Bates, Director of the National Aboriginal Policing and Crime Prevention Services at the RCMP, told the Committee that:

[I]nvestigations must be built around evidence that can stand on its own, as victims of violence will frequently recant their stories. If evidence exists to proceed with charges, charges must be pursued, regardless of whether or not the victim recants.²³⁵

As well, Superintendent Bates explained that, in these cases, “the police priority is victim safety rather than offender accountability. Information on risk is gathered the moment a call is received.”²³⁶ The RCMP uses a standardized risk assessment tool and require the development of a victim safety plan to protect the victim.²³⁷

The Committee was also told that there are opportunities to improve the justice system by implementing suggested promising practices. Based on aforementioned data that demonstrates sexual assault cases rarely lead to a criminal conviction, the Committee was told of the need to improve investigations and prosecutions of sexual assault cases by all justice departments and police forces in Canada.²³⁸

The Committee also heard that there is a need to provide legal aid for women escaping violent situations.²³⁹ Witnesses explained that, without assistance dealing with legal issues related to child custody, child support or property division when leaving a violent relationship, women may decide there is greater risk trying to leave the relationship than to stay in it.²⁴⁰ As well, the Committee heard that research indicates that when women are provided with legal information and accompanied by an advocate, such as a staff person from a sexual assault centre, her chance at a thorough police investigation improve.²⁴¹ Ms. Kasari Govender, Executive Director of West Coast Women’s Legal

234 [Evidence](#), 25 November 2014, 0905 (Angela Connidis, Director General, Crime Prevention, Corrections and Criminal Justice Directorate, Public Safety Canada).

235 [Evidence](#), 25 November 2014, 0920 (Tyler Bates, RCMP).

236 Ibid.

237 Ibid.

238 [Evidence](#), 27 November 2014, 1025 (Lisa Steacy, Canadian Association of Sexual Assault Centres).

239 [Evidence](#), 9 December 2014, 0850 (Marion Little, as an Individual); [Evidence](#), 3 February 2015, 1210 (Jane Doe, as an Individual); [Evidence](#), 3 February 2015, 1215 (Rosemary McCarney, Plan International Canada Inc.).

240 [Evidence](#), 27 November 2014, 0925 and 0940 (Kasari Govender, West Coast Women’s Legal Education and Action Fund).

241 [Evidence](#), 27 November 2014, 0910 (Lisa Steacy, Canadian Association of Sexual Assault Centres).

Education and Action Fund, suggested that federal transfer payments be regulated to guarantee that a certain level of funding goes to provincial legal aid plans.²⁴²

Some witnesses indicated that certain marginalized women, including disabled women,²⁴³ Aboriginal women²⁴⁴ and immigrant women,²⁴⁵ need targeted assistance and support in order to be guaranteed equal access to the justice system. Ms. Marion Little, who appeared as an individual, stated: “Education across the justice system about marginalized women is necessary to increase reporting, ensure effective responses, protect the vulnerable, and prevent violence.”²⁴⁶

Witnesses also spoke of the need to reform the judiciary and justice system to encourage women to bring cases of violence to court and to improve prosecution rates.²⁴⁷ A witness suggested, as an example, that a harmful legal practice is the legal defence team’s sharing of a female complainant’s past sexual, medical, mental, familial and work history.²⁴⁸ Another practice described to the Committee was the use of expert psychiatric witnesses during trials, with the goal of discrediting the female complainant.²⁴⁹ The Committee was also informed that in the court process for custody, access or support, a judge may insist that a woman provide her address, which can in turn put the woman at risk of violence from a former intimate partner who is often angry about the ongoing situation.²⁵⁰

The Committee was told that police forces and the judiciary should receive specific training on gender-based violence.²⁵¹ Mr. Jackson Katz, Founder and Director of MVP Strategies, explained that such training for police should go beyond enforcement tactics and making arrests, and focus on practices in prevention of violence.²⁵² Ms. Doe indicated that judges need training to know when to disallow certain harmful practices in sexual assault court cases.²⁵³

242 [Evidence](#), 27 November 2014, 0925 (Kasari Govender, West Coast Women’s Legal Education and Action Fund).

243 [Evidence](#), 2 December 2014, 0930 and 1020 (Bonnie L. Brayton, DisAbleD Women’s Network of Canada).

244 [Evidence](#), 9 December 2014, 1015 (Tracy O’Hearn, Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada).

245 [Evidence](#), 2 December 2014, 0910 (Rekha Gadhia, Manager, Family Services Department, Calgary Immigrant Women’s Association).

246 [Evidence](#), 9 December 2014, 0850 (Marion Little, as an individual).

247 [Evidence](#), 3 February 2015, 1215 (Rosemary McCarney, Plan International Canada Inc.); [Evidence](#), 3 February 2015, 1210 (Jane Doe, as an Individual); Kim Pate, “Submission of the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Status of Women Regarding Promising Practices to Prevent Violence against Women,” *Submitted Brief*, 19 February 2015.

248 [Evidence](#), 3 February 2015, 1100 (Jane Doe, as an Individual).

249 *Ibid.*, 1105.

250 [Evidence](#), 4 December 2014, 0940 (Lynn Ward, Armagh House).

251 [Evidence](#), 3 February 2015, 1215 (Rosemary McCarney, Plan International Canada Inc.); [Evidence](#), 27 January 2015, 1120 (Jackson Katz, MVP Strategies).

252 [Evidence](#), 27 January 2015, 1120 (Jackson Katz, MVP Strategies).

253 [Evidence](#), 3 February 2015, 1105 (Jane Doe, as an Individual).

As well, Ms. Doe encouraged the federal government to revisit the language of sexual assault versus rape, and the use of the three categories of sexual assault in the *Criminal Code*. She expressed concern that the legislation allows sexual assaults to be “argued down” to a less serious category.²⁵⁴ It was also recommended that women can be further empowered in criminal sexual assault trials by granting them their own legal representation, beyond Crown representation; typically women have no direct legal representation in these cases.²⁵⁵

The Committee learned that a promising practice to encourage women to go to trial is the provision in the *Criminal Code* that enables judges to protect a complainant’s or witness’s identity through a publication ban. Ms. Doe, a survivor of sexual violence, who had chosen to maintain her anonymity under legislation that protects the privacy of individuals who are sexually assaulted, provided the Committee with a description of the ban’s purpose, which is to “foster complaints by victims of sexual assault by protecting them from the trauma of widespread publication resulting in embarrassment and humiliation.”²⁵⁶

GROUPS OF WOMEN WITH PARTICULAR VULNERABILITIES TO VIOLENCE

Witnesses told the Committee that certain groups of women are particularly vulnerable to violence. A description of the violence encountered by these groups of women, as well as existing and suggested promising practices to address this violence, are outlined in the sections below.

A. Girls and Young Women

The Committee heard that violence against women can begin very early in life, and is rooted in two vulnerability factors – being female and young.²⁵⁷ The Committee learned that young girls are most often victimized in the privacy of their homes by a family member because they are dependent on adults, such as their parents, for their daily needs. According to Statistics Canada police-reported data, in 2011, around 8,200 girls under the age of 12 were victims of violent crime, a rate of 381 girl victims per 100,000 population, which is comparable to the rate for boys of the same age (375 per 100,000).²⁵⁸ As indicated by Statistics Canada, police-reported data show that in 2013, almost half (47%) of all police-reported violent crimes against girls under the

254 Ibid., 1255.

255 Ibid., 1210.

256 Ibid., 1100.

257 [Evidence](#), 3 February 2015, 1115 (Rosemary McCarney, Plan International Canada Inc.).

258 Maire Sinha, [“Measuring violence against women: Statistical trends,”](#) *Statistics Canada: Juristat*, 25 February 2013, p. 15.

age of 12 were sexual in nature, much higher than the rate of 7% among women aged 18 and over.²⁵⁹

The Committee was informed that violent crimes against older girls (aged 12–17) are more likely to be perpetrated by individuals outside the family, such as peers and dating partners, in particular because girls entering their teen years increase their activities and contacts as they broaden their independence.²⁶⁰ The Committee also heard that young women are at risk of victimization because they are at an important transition period in their lives, where self-esteem is still developing and where they are not yet equipped to handle challenging violent or sexual situations.²⁶¹ According to 2011 Statistics Canada police-reported data, 27,000 females between the ages of 12 and 17 were violently victimized, a rate of 2,273 per 100,000 population.²⁶² The rate of victimization in this cohort was six times higher than the rate for girls under the age of 12 and nearly twice as high as the rate for adult women, aged 18 and over. Girls aged between 12 and 17 were eight times more likely than boys to be victims of sexual assault or other sexual crimes.²⁶³

Regarding young women in college and university, the Committee was told that violence is ongoing and systemic on campuses, and the recent male-led chants promoting rape on some university campuses were cited as evidence of its persistence.²⁶⁴ The Committee heard that violence against women is facilitated by the physical infrastructure on campuses, certain campus events, such as frosh week or Halloween parties, and alcohol or drug consumption.²⁶⁵ The Committee learned that there is a lack of support services for women who have been victimized on campuses; these service gaps act as a significant barrier for women seeking support or looking to report violent incidents.²⁶⁶

The Committee heard of initiatives at the federal and not-for-profit level aimed at addressing on-campus violence. Ms Linda Savoie, Senior Director General of the Women's Program and Regional Operations Directorate of SWC, told the Committee that it is funding a number of projects to engage young people in preventing violence against

259 [Evidence](#), 20 November 2014, 0845 (Cathy Connors, Statistics Canada); Statistics Canada, "A statistical overview of violence against women in Canada – presentation to the House of Commons' Standing Committee on the Status of Women," *Speaking Notes*, 20 November 2014, p. 8; Tina Hotton Mahony, "[Women and the Criminal Justice System](#)," *Statistics Canada – Women in Canada: A Gender-based Statistical Report*, April 2011, p. 16.

260 Maire Sinha, "[Measuring violence against women: Statistical trends](#)," *Statistics Canada: Juristat*, 25 February 2013, p. 15.

261 [Evidence](#), 20 November 2014, 0945 (Linda Savoie, SWC); [Evidence](#), 9 December 2014, 0845 (Marion Little, as an Individual).

262 Maire Sinha, "[Measuring violence against women: Statistical trends](#)," *Statistics Canada: Juristat*, 25 February 2013, p. 16.

263 Ibid.

264 [Evidence](#), 27 November 2014, 0905 (Lisa Steacy, Canadian Association of Sexual Assault Centres); [Evidence](#), 27 January 2015, 1125 (Jackson Katz, MVP Strategies); [Evidence](#), 3 February 2015, 1110 (Rosemary McCarney, Plan International Canada Inc.).

265 [Evidence](#), 20 November 2014, 1010 (Linda Savoie, SWC).

266 Ibid.

women on college and university campuses. These projects are intended to address institutional barriers, policies and programs, social dynamics, security provisions, and physical safety issues.²⁶⁷

The Committee heard that a promising practice to address violence against girls and young women is to build their self-confidence and independence.²⁶⁸ Ms. Ann Decter, Director of Advocacy and Public Policy at YWCA Canada, spoke of the YWCA's program "Power of Being a Girl," which is a conference for young girls in middle school. She explained that it was run across Canada during the Week Without Violence with the goal of empowering girls "so they can lead in their own lives."²⁶⁹ Ms. Alia Hogben, Executive Director of the Canadian Council of Muslim Women, said that by building the self-confidence of girls and young women, they are more likely to report incidents of violence directed against them.²⁷⁰

The Committee also heard that homeless youth are at greater risk of experiencing violence. Ms. Marion Little, appearing as an individual, recommended that as part of primary prevention, "we must provide stable housing, food security, and nurturing supports for the over 65,000 youth in Canada who are currently homeless or at risk of homelessness."²⁷¹

B. Aboriginal Girls and Women

Witnesses told the Committee that by improving certain socioeconomic conditions, such as increasing access to education, Aboriginal women are more likely to escape violent situations and succeed.²⁷² However, the Committee learned that data from both the provinces and territories show that Aboriginal women are significantly more likely to be violently victimized than non-Aboriginal women. According to Statistics Canada, Aboriginal women who reside in the provinces were almost three times more likely than non-Aboriginal women to report having been violently victimized in 2009. The same data indicate that 13% of all Aboriginal women aged 15 and older living in the provinces reported that they had been a victim of a violent crime in the past year.²⁷³ In the territories, where the majority of the population is Aboriginal, the rate of police-reported violent crime

267 Ibid., 0900.

268 [Evidence](#), 2 December 2014, 1000 (Alia Hogben, Canadian Council of Muslim Women); [Evidence](#), 27 November 2014, 0855 (Ann Decter, YWCA Canada); [Evidence](#), 20 November 2014, 0940 (Kimberly Elmslie, PHAC); [Evidence](#), 4 December 2014, 0855 (Lise Martin, Canadian Network of Women's Shelters and Transition Houses). [Evidence](#), 4 December 2014, 0920 (Lynn Ward, Armagh House).

269 [Evidence](#), 27 November 2014, 0855 (Ann Decter, YWCA Canada).

270 [Evidence](#), 2 December 2014, 1000 (Alia Hogben, Canadian Council of Muslim Women).

271 [Evidence](#), 9 December 2014, 0850 (Marion Little, as an individual).

272 [Evidence](#), 4 December 2014, 0910 (Sharlene Tygesen, Ernestine's Women's Shelter).

273 Shannon Brennan, "[Violent victimization of Aboriginal women in the Canadian provinces, 2009](#)," *Statistics Canada: Juristat*, 17 May 2011, p. 7.

against women in 2011 was nearly 13 times higher in Nunavut, 9 times higher in the Northwest Territories, and 4 times higher in Yukon than the national average.²⁷⁴

Furthermore, in 2009, 15% of Aboriginal women, compared to 6% of non-Aboriginal women, reported that they had been the victim of spousal violence. As well, the incidents of domestic violence experienced by Aboriginal women were typically more severe and resulted in injury.²⁷⁵

The Committee heard that Aboriginal women are more likely than the general female population to grow up in marginalized situations without key support networks in their homes and communities.²⁷⁶ Witnesses said that economic and social inequalities, drug and alcohol abuse in communities, a breakdown of family life resulting from the residential school experience, the impact of colonization on traditional values and culture, and racism have put Aboriginal women at a heightened risk of exploitation and violence compared to the non-Aboriginal female population.²⁷⁷

The Committee heard that violence has become “normal” in certain Aboriginal communities, and that it harms all community members, not just women.²⁷⁸ Ms. Angela Connidis, Director General of Crime Prevention at Corrections and Criminal Justice Directorate for Public Safety Canada, explained that this normalization of violence creates “a sense of hopelessness that often seems inescapable.”²⁷⁹

The Committee also learned that certain Aboriginal communities face higher levels of violence and greater challenges in accessing help; for example, communities in the North that are very remote, have limited access to criminal justice resources, specialized health supports, such as psychiatric services, and shelter services.²⁸⁰ Ms. Tracy O’Hearn, Executive Director of the Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, stated that a recent report indicated that “Nunavut is the most dangerous jurisdiction in Canada in which to be a woman or child, and that’s absolutely true.”²⁸¹

274 Maire Sinha, [“Measuring violence against women: Statistical trends,”](#) *Statistics Canada: Juristat*, 25 February 2013, p. 13.

275 Shannon Brennan, [“Violent victimization of Aboriginal women in the Canadian provinces, 2009,”](#) *Statistics Canada: Juristat*, 17 May 2011, p. 10.

276 [Evidence](#), 25 November 2014, 0915 (Angela Connidis, Public Safety Canada).

277 [Evidence](#), 25 November 2014, 0915 (Angela Connidis, Public Safety Canada); [Evidence](#), 5 February 2015, 1130 (Claudette Dumont-Smith, Native Women’s Association of Canada); [Evidence](#), 27 November 2014, 0905 (Lisa Steacy, Canadian Association of Sexual Assault Centres); [Evidence](#), 19 February 2015, 1135 (Leah Gazan, as an Individual); [Evidence](#), 9 December 2014, 1035 (Tracy O’Hearn, Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada).

278 [Evidence](#), 25 November 2014, 0915 (Angela Connidis, Public Safety Canada).

279 Ibid.

280 [Evidence](#), 25 November 2014, 0920 (Tyler Bates, RCMP); [Evidence](#), 9 December 2014, 0950 (Tracy O’Hearn, Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada); [Evidence](#), 5 February 2015, 1130 (Claudette Dumont-Smith, Native Women’s Association of Canada).

281 [Evidence](#), 9 December 2014, 0855 (Tracy O’Hearn, Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada).

A number of witnesses spoke of the significant number of Aboriginal women that are missing and murdered.²⁸² The RCMP told the Committee that its *National Operational Review on Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women* (2014 National Operational Review) showed that there were 164 missing and 1,017 murdered Aboriginal women in 2014, with 105 women missing for more than 30 days and 120 unsolved homicides between 1980 and 2012.²⁸³

Witnesses told the Committee that a central challenge in remote Aboriginal communities is the limited support systems and specialized services to address both the violence itself and its physical and psychological effects.²⁸⁴ While AANDC has funded a network of on-reserve shelters,²⁸⁵ witnesses also requested increased support to ensure that all women on reserve have access to shelter, even in remote communities.²⁸⁶

Witnesses described a number of promising practices that may serve to prevent violence against Aboriginal women. The Committee was informed that such violence prevention policies and programs must be based in the culture, values, practices, geography and language of the population.²⁸⁷ Ms. O'Hearn explained that programs that involve being on the land, including going hunting and returning to traditional practices, are effective at addressing root causes of violence.²⁸⁸

In addition, the Committee heard about the importance of building healthy Aboriginal communities and working with youth to shape the next generation. The Committee learned that teaching Aboriginal children and youth about maintaining healthy relationships and how to manage unhealthy relationships is helpful in minimizing violence in their lives.²⁸⁹ The Committee heard that to address violence against Aboriginal women, there needs to be improved accessibility and affordability of educational opportunities, as well as economic opportunities both on and off reserve.²⁹⁰ As well, the Committee was told about Project PEACE, launched by the Native Women's Association

282 [Evidence](#), 27 November 2014, 0905 (Ann Decter, Director, YWCA Canada); [Evidence](#), 4 December 2014, 0900 (Lise Martin, Canadian Network of Women's Shelters and Transition Houses); [Evidence](#), 4 December 2014, 0905 and 0910 (Sharlene Tygesen, Ernestine's Women's Shelter); [Evidence](#), 29 January 2015, 1210 (Jenny Wright, St. John's Status of Women's Council Women's Centre); [Evidence](#), 5 February 2015, 1130 (Claudette Dumont-Smith, Native Women's Association of Canada).

283 [Evidence](#), 25 November 2014, 0915 (Tyler Bates, RCMP); Royal Canadian Mounted Police, *Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women: A National Operational Overview*, 2014, p. 3.

284 [Evidence](#), 9 December 2014, 0855 (Tracy O'Hearn, Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada); [Evidence](#), 5 February 2015, 1130 (Claudette Dumont-Smith, Native Women's Association of Canada).

285 [Evidence](#), 25 November 2014, 0855 (Marla Israel, Director General, Social Policy and Programs Branch, Education and Social Development Programs and Partnerships Sector, Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada).

286 [Evidence](#), 9 December 2014, 0950 (Tracy O'Hearn, Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada).

287 *Ibid.*, 0855.

288 *Ibid.*, 0945.

289 [Evidence](#), 25 November 2014, 0900 (Marla Israel, AANDC).

290 [Evidence](#), 5 February 2015, 1135 (Claudette Dumont-Smith, Native Women's Association of Canada); [Evidence](#), 19 February 2015, 1135 (Leah Gazan, as an Individual).

of Canada with funding from SWC, which is working to create safety networks for Aboriginal women and girls.²⁹¹

Furthermore, the Committee was told that programs must focus on healing Aboriginal men, as many have suffered abuse as children particularly at residential schools, and as result, they are caught in a cycle of violence.²⁹²

Specific to Inuit Communities, Ms. O'Hearn told the Committee: "[T]here haven't been enough Inuit-specific violence prevention initiatives that have been evaluated over time to really even offer promising practices."²⁹³

The Committee also heard of initiatives at the federal level whose goal is to prevent and address violence against Aboriginal women. Officials from Public Safety Canada spoke of the *Action Plan to Address Family Violence and Violent Crimes Against Aboriginal Women and Girls*.²⁹⁴ According to Public Safety Canada, the department will expand its initiative of developing community safety plans in Aboriginal communities as part of the Action Plan to address violence against Aboriginal women and girls; these culturally appropriate safety plans are led by trained Aboriginal facilitators with the goal of improving a community's capacity to work collectively to "define the risks that lead to crime and victimization, build on existing strengths, and identify gaps in responding to those risks."²⁹⁵

The Committee heard that AANDC funds a network of 41 shelters for women, children and families living on reserves.²⁹⁶ As well, officials from AANDC indicated that it provides funding to prevention efforts by funding community projects that involve "public outreach and awareness campaigns, conferences and workshops, stress and anger management seminars, and community-needs assessments."²⁹⁷

According to Justice Canada, the Victims Fund advances culturally sensitive services for Aboriginal victims of crime and for families of missing and murdered Aboriginal women.²⁹⁸ As well, the Department has produced a "Compendium of Promising Practices to Reduce Violence and Increase Safety of Aboriginal Women in Canada," which offers information on promising practices to reduce violence and improve the safety of Aboriginal girls and women.²⁹⁹

291 [Evidence](#), 5 February 2015, 1150 (Claudette Dumont-Smith, Native Women's Association of Canada).

292 [Evidence](#), 9 December 2014, 0945 (Tracy O'Hearn, Pauktutit Inuit Women of Canada).

293 Ibid.

294 [Evidence](#), 25 November 2014, 0905 (Angela Connidis, Public Safety Canada).

295 Ibid., 0910.

296 [Evidence](#), 25 November 2014, 0855 (Marla Israel, AANDC).

297 Ibid., 0900.

298 [Evidence](#), 20 November 2014, 0915 (Pamela Arnott, Justice Canada).

299 [Evidence](#), 20 November 2014, 0920 (Gillian Blackwell, Senior Counsel and Coordinator, Children's Law and Family Violence Policy Unit, Justice Canada).

The Committee was informed that the RCMP's efforts to prevent violence against Aboriginal women are guided in great part by the 2014 National Operational Review, which has been used to understand the vulnerability factors associated with violent victimization of Aboriginal women, the most effective prevention efforts, and the communities where Aboriginal women are most at risk.³⁰⁰

Recommendation 8

The Committee recommends that Status of Women Canada continue its practice of issuing Calls for Proposals on preventing violence against women and girls, with a focus on Aboriginal women.

Recommendation 9

The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada continue to support the implementation of the *Action Plan to Address Family Violence and Violent Crimes Against Aboriginal Women and Girls*.

Recommendation 10

The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada continue to invest in economic development ventures that nurture the safety and economic well-being of women and girls on and off reserve.

C. Immigrant and Minority Women

Witnesses told the Committee that when violence is addressed and eliminated in the lives of immigrant and minority women, they become successful members of society. The Committee heard that the two central causes of violence against immigrant and minority women are differences in perceptions of gender equality in Canada compared to the immigrants' home country, and a lack of integration support in their new communities. Some of the challenges with respect to integrating into a new community include: finding employment and suitable pay; cross-cultural parenting; language barriers; isolation; and, difficulty accessing community resources and supports.³⁰¹

The Committee learned that immigrant and minority women face unique barriers to escaping a violent relationship. This particular group of women is concerned about losing its cultural or religious identity, may lack understanding of Canadian laws, and often faces racism, isolation and poverty. Immigrant and minority women have difficulty assessing services, which is made worse by a lack of cultural understanding among service

300 [Evidence](#), 25 November 2014, 0915 (Tyler Bates, RCMP).

301 [Evidence](#), 2 December 2014, 0910 (Beba Svigir, Calgary Immigrant Women's Association); [Evidence](#), 5 February 2015, 1120 (Nanok Cha, Coordinator, Young Immigrant Women's Leadership Project, Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia); [Evidence](#), 29 January 2015, 1105 (Marie-Christine Plante, Carrefour pour Elle).

providers, the police and the courts.³⁰² The Committee also heard that government policies and practices can sometimes make it more difficult for immigrant women to leave violent relationships. Ms. Deepa Mattoo, Staff Lawyer at the South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario, stated that government “policies shouldn’t be there to basically bind them into violence; our policies should be to free them from violence.”³⁰³

In addition, violence in some immigrant communities remains hidden because of shame associated with being victimized and family expectations to respect one’s family members.³⁰⁴ As well, some immigrant and minority girls and women may face forms of abuse that are not prevalent elsewhere in Canadian society, such as forced marriage, sometimes from a young age, or honour-based violence.³⁰⁵

Witnesses shared their perspective on the topic of forced marriage among immigrant and minority communities. Ms. Mattoo said that forced marriage “is part of the continuum of violence against women.... It should be dealt with within that same framework.”³⁰⁶ Ms. Rekha Gadhia, Manager of the Family Services Department at the Calgary Immigrant Women’s Association, explained situations of forced marriage that some immigrant women and girls face in Canada:

We are well aware of girls being sent back to their home country by their parents to be married to an older man because the family found out the girl was dating or was having a relationship with a boy. We also know of instances where girls are tricked into going back home for a visit and the family in their home country takes over the marriage arrangement from there. We have coordinated with police to have them intervene and stop the parents at the airport from taking their daughters to their home country.³⁰⁷

Witnesses shared a number of promising practices in order to prevent violence against immigrant and minority women. To address family violence, the Committee heard that immigrant and minority women require culturally sensitive services that support the entire family, namely by involving boys and men, and address conflict between generations.³⁰⁸ Witnesses noted that immigrant and minority women also benefit from parental support programs and access to child care.³⁰⁹ As well, immigrant and minority women require programs that address impediments to integrating into their new

302 [Evidence](#), 2 December 2014, 0905 (Alia Hogben, Canadian Council of Muslim Women); [Evidence](#), 2 December 2014, 0910 (Beba Svigir, Calgary Immigrant Women’s Association); [Evidence](#), 29 January 2015, 1105 (Marie-Christine Plante, Carrefour pour Elle); [Evidence](#), 5 February 2015, 1115 (Gerry Mills, Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia).

303 [Evidence](#), 5 February 2015, 1200 (Deepa Mattoo, South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario).

304 [Evidence](#), 2 December 2014, 0910 (Rekha Gadhia, Manager, Family Services Department, Calgary Immigrant Women’s Association).

305 Ibid.

306 [Evidence](#), 5 February 2015, 1155 (Deepa Mattoo, South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario).

307 [Evidence](#), 2 December 2014, 0910 (Rekha Gadhia, Calgary Immigrant Women’s Association).

308 [Evidence](#), 2 December 2014, 0915 (Beba Svigir, Calgary Immigrant Women’s Association).

309 [Evidence](#), 2 December 2014, 0915 and 1010 (Beba Svigir, Calgary Immigrant Women’s Association); [Evidence](#), 2 December 2014, 0935 (Rekha Gadhia, Calgary Immigrant Women’s Association).

communities, which contribute to the risk of family violence, such as programs that address poverty, unemployment, homelessness, isolation and language barriers.³¹⁰

As well, the Committee heard that immigrant women need to be more aware that violent behaviour is not acceptable in Canada, that there are support services in place, and that they do not have to remain in abusive relationships.³¹¹ Ms. Marie-Christine Plante, Executive Assistant at Carrefour pour Elle, spoke of raising awareness during French language courses for newcomers, through a module entitled “Quand on s'aime, on s'aime égal,” where Carrefour pour Elle added information on “what constitutes domestic violence, forms it may take, services provided by shelters and the role police play, both in terms of prevention and enforcement.”³¹²

The Committee heard that, in order to be successful, programs must address the conflict between cultures that immigrant and minority women, as well as their families, encounter on a daily basis. The Committee was told that front-line staff of social services should enhance their understanding of different cultures to make such programs and services accessible to immigrant families.³¹³ As well, the Committee learned about a project entitled “Common Ground” that helps young Muslims, particularly young men, to manage their multiple identities in Canada, in terms of their religion, culture and Canadian citizenship.³¹⁴

Another program that serves to prevent violence against immigrant women is the Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia’s “Young Immigrant Women’s Leadership Project,” funded by SWC, whose objective is to build young women’s leadership skills and empower the women in their communities.³¹⁵ Ms. Nanok Cha, Coordinator of the Young Immigrant Women’s Leadership Project at Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia, explained the importance of targeting young immigrant women:

[P]roject activities have been designed to build self-esteem, strengthen their leadership skills, negotiate the social system and gain community resources, and address social issues from their standpoint. Young immigrant women are one of the most vulnerable populations and they have less community support for them to build the capacity to challenge critical social issues such as domestic violence, bullying, and being victims of sexism and racism in the community.³¹⁶

The Committee heard of a number of federal initiatives aimed at preventing and addressing violence against immigrant and minority women. Officials from CIC explained that the department has made special efforts to address the issue of forced marriages. For example, CIC has worked with its visa officers to improve their ability to detect and

310 [Evidence](#), 2 December 2014, 0915 (Beba Svigir, Calgary Immigrant Women’s Association).

311 [Evidence](#), 25 November 2014, 0850 (Susan MacPhee, Citizenship and Immigration Canada).

312 [Evidence](#), 29 January 2015, 1200 (Marie-Christine Plante, Carrefour pour Elle).

313 [Evidence](#), 2 December 2014, 0915 (Beba Svigir, Calgary Immigrant Women’s Association).

314 [Evidence](#), 2 December 2014, 0940 (Alia Hogben, Canadian Council of Muslim Women).

315 [Evidence](#), 5 February 2015, 1120 (Nanok Cha, Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia).

316 Ibid.

manage forced marriage cases, with special guidance on how to protect the victims. As well, under CIC's settlement program, the department provides funding to a number of organizations offering services to immigrant women who may be in vulnerable situations. In 2012–2013, more than 200,000 people used CIC's settlement services; around 60% of those participants were women and nearly 70% of those accessing CIC-funded language training classes were women. As well, CIC's "Welcome to Canada" guide states that "female genital mutilation, honour-based crimes, and forced marriages will not be tolerated in this country."³¹⁷

Witnesses shared their perspectives on a number of federal policy areas relevant to violence against immigrant and minority women. Witnesses provided different perspectives on the two-year conditional permanent resident status for certain sponsors' spouses or common-law partners. Officials from CIC told the Committee that the conditional aspect can be waived in situations where there is evidence of physical, sexual, psychological or financial abuse, or forced marriage, during that two-year period.³¹⁸ Other witnesses told the Committee that having conditional immigration status in Canada increased the vulnerability of sponsored immigrant spouses in abusive relationships. Despite the exceptions CIC may provide in cases where there is violence against the spouse, abusers may continue to use the threat of deportation against their victims.³¹⁹ Ms. Kasari Govender, Executive Director of the West Coast Women's Legal Education and Action Fund, said that women with language and cultural barriers may not understand that there is an exception to the two-year conditional rule in cases where there is abuse.³²⁰ Ms. Gerry Mills, Director of Operations at the Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia, said "many women fear deportation much more than they fear spousal violence."³²¹

The Committee also heard about terms and conditions of the temporary labour migration program that make women vulnerable to violence. Under this program, women depend on permits that tie them to a single employer and a specific job, they may be isolated due to language or geographic barriers, they have precarious immigration status in Canada, and they lack effective routes to raise complaints about their treatment.³²² Ms. Fay Faraday, Lawyer and Visiting Professor at Osgoode Hall Law School, suggested the federal government could play a role in establishing standards to protect female

317 [Evidence](#), 25 November 2014, 0850 (Susan MacPhee, Citizenship and Immigration Canada).

318 Ibid., 0845.

319 [Evidence](#), 27 November 2014, 0925 (Kasari Govender, West Coast Women's Legal Education and Action Fund); [Evidence](#), 29 January 2015, 1105 (Marie-Christine Plante, Carrefour pour Elle); [Evidence](#), 5 February 2015, 1115 (Gerry Mills, Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia).

320 [Evidence](#), 27 November 2014, 0925 (Kasari Govender, West Coast Women's Legal Education and Action Fund).

321 [Evidence](#), 5 February 2015, 1115 (Gerry Mills, Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia).

322 [Evidence](#), 9 December 2014, 0920 (Fay Faraday, Lawyer, Visiting Professor, Osgoode Hall Law School, as an Individual).

migrant workers that must be met before employers can apply for labour market impact assessments and authorization to hire women.³²³

As well, witnesses spoke on Bill S-7, the *Zero Tolerance for Barbaric Cultural Practices Act*, which was referred to the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration in March 2015 and was reported back to the House of Commons in May 2015.³²⁴ Ms. Susan MacPhee, Acting Director General of the Immigration Branch at the Department of CIC, explained to the Committee:

This legislation would help provide more protection and support for vulnerable immigrants, particularly women and girls. One of the bill's proposals is to render all temporary and permanent residents inadmissible if they practise polygamy in Canada. The bill would also strengthen marriage laws and further protect victims of early or forced marriage by criminalizing certain conduct related to these practices.³²⁵

In addressing the subject of Bill S-7, some witnesses told the Committee that existing legislation and the current justice system are sufficient for addressing the issue of forced marriage. There was concern that a consequence of Bill S-7 is that it will criminalize the families of female victims of violence, which will instead increase reluctance among these victims to report such violence to the authorities.³²⁶ In addition, witnesses said that Bill S-7 targets specific communities, and this serves to further marginalize immigrant and minority women, which acts as another barrier to these women when they are thinking of accessing services and assistance.³²⁷

Certain witnesses also spoke against the use of the term “barbaric” in the bill’s title, saying that using such a term damages the reputations of certain cultural communities as it links harmful practices, such as forced marriage, to immigrants, despite the fact that such practices also occur among the non-immigrant Canadian population.³²⁸ One witness suggested that in order to address the issue of forced marriage, the federal government should instead follow the British model and develop links with the countries where the girls may be taken for the marriage ceremony.³²⁹

323 Ibid., 1040.

324 Parliament of Canada – LegisInfo, [Senate Government Bill: S-7](#).

325 [Evidence](#), 25 November 2014, 0850 (Susan MacPhee, Citizenship and Immigration Canada).

326 [Evidence](#), 5 February 2015, 1155 (Deepa Mattoo, South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario); [Evidence](#), 2 December 2014, 0910 (Rekha Gadhia, Calgary Immigrant Women’s Association).

327 [Evidence](#), 2 December 2014, 0945 (Alia Hogben, Canadian Council of Muslim Women); [Evidence](#), 5 February 2015, 1220 (Deepa Mattoo, South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario).

328 [Evidence](#), 2 December 2014, 0900 (Alia Hogben, Canadian Council of Muslim Women); [Evidence](#), 5 February 2015, 1210 (Deepa Mattoo, South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario).

329 [Evidence](#), 2 December 2014, 0930 (Alia Hogben, Canadian Council of Muslim Women).

Recommendation 11

The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada provide newcomer women with information about settlement services, crisis resources and their rights under Canadian law, through publications such as *Discover Canada*, *Welcome to Canada*, as well as the Citizenship and Immigration Canada website.

D. Disabled Women

The Committee learned that disabled women, defined as those who have an “activity limitation” such as a “physical or mental [health] condition or health problem that restricts a person’s activities,” are at significantly greater risk of violence than other women.³³⁰ The Committee heard, for example, that rate of spousal violence for disabled women was nearly double that for other women in the past five years.³³¹ As well, according to Ms. Sharlene Tygesen, Executive Director at Ernestine’s Women’s Shelter, women with disabilities are 150 times more likely to be sexually abused or assaulted than women without disabilities.³³² The Committee was informed that because violence against disabled women is systemic and long-standing, it requires a long-term vision to end it.³³³

A number of factors contribute to the relatively high rates of violence against disabled girls and women. Disabled women tend to have higher levels of poverty and unemployment, more dependence on family or caregivers, socialization that emphasizes obedience to authority, and lack of mobility, which can lead to social isolation.³³⁴ Ms. Bonnie Brayton, National Executive Director of DAWN Canada, indicated that the frequency at which disabled women are abused normalizes the violence, making them less likely to report the abuse.³³⁵

The Committee also learned that gender-based violence can be the cause of women’s disabilities.³³⁶ Witnesses explained how women who suffer violence can sustain both physical and mental disabilities. The Committee heard about women whose physical trauma left them with mobility challenges and/or caused debilitating mental health

330 [Evidence](#), 4 December 2014, 0905 (Sharlene Tygesen, Ernestine’s Women’s Shelter); Maire Sinha, “[Measuring violence against women: Statistical trends](#),” *Statistics Canada: Juristat*, 25 February 2013, p. 60.

331 [Evidence](#), 2 December 2014, 1025 (Bonnie L. Brayton, DisAble Women’s Network of Canada); [Evidence](#), 2 December 2014, 0855 (Carmela Hutchinson, DisAble Women’s Network of Canada); Maire Sinha, “[Measuring violence against women: Statistical trends](#),” *Statistics Canada: Juristat*, 25 February 2013, p. 60.

332 [Evidence](#), 4 December 2014, 0905 (Sharlene Tygesen, Ernestine’s Women’s Shelter).

333 [Evidence](#), 2 December 2014, 1020 (Bonnie L. Brayton, DisAble Women’s Network of Canada).

334 [Evidence](#), 2 December 2014, 0850 (Carmela Hutchinson, DisAble Women’s Network of Canada).

335 [Evidence](#), 2 December 2014, 0930 (Bonnie L. Brayton, DisAble Women’s Network of Canada).

336 [Evidence](#), 2 December 2014, 0855 (Carmela Hutchinson, DisAble Women’s Network of Canada).

conditions, such as post-traumatic stress disorder, borderline personality disorder and dissociative identity disorder.³³⁷

The Committee heard about existing and suggested promising practices to reduce violence against disabled women in Canada. Ms. Brayton told the Committee of a Canada-wide project launched by DAWN Canada, with funding from SWC, aimed at reducing violence against women with disabilities and deaf women by collaborating with key stakeholders to improve community support. This project received recognition as a promising practice by international aid organization Handicap International.³³⁸

In a submitted brief by DAWN Canada, the organization recommended establishing information and education sessions for women with disabilities to learn about what constitutes abuse and their rights, as well as accessible resources and services in their community. They also suggested family and caregiver support groups and counselling focused on building healthy relationships with women with disabilities; developing a volunteer roster for home visits, to drive women to appointments and take them to events and activities; and collaboration between disability-specific agencies and mainstream social service organizations to develop disability-relevant and accessible resources.³³⁹

E. Sex Workers

The Committee heard that sex workers are particularly vulnerable to experiencing violence and to exploitation. Witnesses shared a number of promising practices to address violence against sex workers. The St John's Status of Women organization runs a front-line service for sex workers in Newfoundland and Labrador, called Safe Harbour Outreach Project.³⁴⁰ As well, PEERS Victoria and sister agencies across Canada offer peer-to-peer supports for current and past sex workers when they have experienced violence or are seeking assistance.³⁴¹ Ms. Marion Little, who appeared as individual, explained:

The respectful relationship between PEERS Victoria, the sex workers they serve, and the Victoria police special victims unit routinely leads to the arrest and jailing of violent offenders, increasing public safety. Support for marginalized groups positively impacts the whole community.³⁴²

Addressing the situation at the federal level, witnesses shared their perspectives on the recent passing of Bill C-36, *Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act*,

337 [Evidence](#), 2 December 2014, 0855 (Carmela Hutchinson, DisAbleD Women's Network of Canada); [Evidence](#), 4 December 2014, 0855 (Lise Martin, Canadian Network of Women's Shelters and Transition Houses).

338 [Evidence](#), 2 December 2014, 0925 and 1020 (Bonnie L. Brayton, DisAbleD Women's Network of Canada).

339 DisAbleD Women's Network of Canada, "Parliamentary Brief: Promising Practices to End Violence Against Women Study," *Submitted Brief*, 2 December 2014.

340 [Evidence](#), 29 January 2015, 1150 (Jenny Wright, St. John's Status of Women's Council Women's Centre).

341 [Evidence](#), 9 December 2014, 0850 (Marion Little, as an individual).

342 Ibid.

which received Royal Assent on 6 November 2014.³⁴³ Ms. Lisa Steacy, Representative of the Canadian Association of Sexual Assault Centres, told the Committee: “The buyers of sex who will soon be criminalized by Bill C-36 for the exploitation of women in prostitution in brothels and on the streets are overwhelmingly men.”³⁴⁴ Ms. Megan Walker, Executive Director of the London Abused Women's Centre, said that her organization had actively supported Bill C-36 as prostitution is “the sexual exploitation and commodification of women.”³⁴⁵ A brief by the London Abused Women's Centre states:

Bill C-36 will not provide an immediate end to prostitution. It will however, shift the culture for future generations to one where girls will learn they are valued and boys will learn women are to be valued. Future generations of girls and women will have real options in their lives. In holding the buyers accountable for their choice to exploit women, society is sending a strong message that women deserve more.... The approach taken by the government in legislating action to end prostitution can be compared to mandatory charge policies for domestic violence. In both these instances, a combination of legislation, access to services and safety has made and is making a difference in the lives of women.³⁴⁶

Ms. Little, expressed concern that under Bill C-36, sex workers will “be even more reluctant [to go to police] because they will be uncertain about what the implications are for themselves,” and this “is likely to drive sex work underground.”³⁴⁷ Another witness, Ms. Jenny Wright, Executive Director of the St. John's Status of Women's Council Women's Centre, shared a similar perspective, stating that since Bill C-36 has passed, the impact has been “a population left vulnerable and moving deeper and deeper underground.”³⁴⁸ In part, Ms. Wright said this is because sex workers have “a great amount of fear and lack of understanding about the law.”³⁴⁹ Ms. Leah Gazan, Member of Wood Mountain Lakota Nation and member of the Faculty of Education of the University of Winnipeg, stated that Bill C-36 further marginalized “already vulnerable indigenous women and girls.”³⁵⁰

343 Parliament of Canada – LegisInfo, [House Government Bill: C-36](#).

344 [Evidence](#), 27 November 2014, 0905 (Lisa Steacy, Canadian Association of Sexual Assault Centres).

345 [Evidence](#), 19 February 2015, 1150 (Megan Walker, London Abused Women's Centre); London Abused Women's Centre, “London Abused Women's Centre Responses to Questions raised by Status of Women Committee,” *Submitted response to questions*, 18 March 2015.

346 London Abused Women's Centre, “London Abused Women's Centre Responses to Questions raised by Status of Women Committee,” *Submitted response to questions*, 18 March 2015.

347 [Evidence](#), 9 December 2014, 0955 (Marion Little, as an individual).

348 [Evidence](#), 29 January 2015, 1125 (Jenny Wright, St. John's Status of Women's Council Women's Centre).

349 *Ibid.*, 1150.

350 [Evidence](#), 19 February 2015, 1135 (Leah Gazan, as an Individual).

LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada work with organizations to utilize proven best practices to prevent violence against women and girls. 11

Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends that Status of Women Canada ensure that preventing violence against women and girls continues to be a priority. 15

Recommendation 3

The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada act on the policies and programs in place that are centred on prevention and education in efforts to prevent violence against women and girls, emphasizing best practices..... 15

Recommendation 4

The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada continue to fund projects through Status of Women Canada in efforts to prevent violence against women and girls. 15

Recommendation 5

The Committee recommends that the Minister of Status of Women work toward putting the issue of sexual violence and assault on the next federal/provincial/territorial meeting agenda..... 15

Recommendation 6

The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada continue to support efforts to engage men and boys in preventing violence against women and girls. 19

Recommendation 7

The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada continue to support and focus on maternal, newborn and child health through engagement of stakeholders. 31

Recommendation 8

The Committee recommends that Status of Women Canada continue its practice of issuing Calls for Proposals on preventing violence against women and girls, with a focus on Aboriginal Women. 45

Recommendation 9

The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada continue to support the implementation of the Action Plan to Address Family Violence and Violent Crimes Against Aboriginal Women and Girls. 45

Recommendation 10

The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada continue to invest in economic development ventures that nurture the safety and economic well-being of women and girls on and off reserve. 45

Recommendation 11

The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada provide newcomer women with information about settlement services, crisis resources and their rights under Canadian law, through publications such as *Discover Canada*, *Welcome to Canada*, as well as the Citizenship and Immigration Canada website..... 50

APPENDIX A

LIST OF WITNESSES

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
Department of Justice Pamela Arnott, Director and Senior Counsel Policy Centre for Victim Issues Gillian Blackell, Senior Counsel and Coordinator Children's Law and Family Violence Policy Unit Public Health Agency of Canada Kimberly Elmslie, Assistant Deputy Minister Health Promotion and Chronic Disease Prevention Branch Statistics Canada Kathy AuCoin, Chief Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics Cathy Connors, Director Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics Status of Women Canada Linda Savoie, Senior Director General, Women's Program and Regional Operations Directorate	2014/11/20	36
Department of Citizenship and Immigration Justine Akman, Director Immigration Branch Susan MacPhee, Acting Director General Immigration Branch Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development Andrew Beynon, Director General Community Opportunities Branch, Lands and Economic Development Marla Israel, Director General Social Policy and Programs Branch, Education and Social Development Programs and Partnerships Sector Public Safety Canada Angela Connidis, Director General Crime Prevention, Corrections and Criminal Justice Directorate Kimberly Lavoie, Director Crime Prevention, Corrections and Criminal Justice Directorate Royal Canadian Mounted Police Tyler Bates, Director National Aboriginal Policing and Crime Prevention Services Canadian Association of Sexual Assault Centres Lisa Steacy, Representative	2014/11/25	37
	2014/11/27	38

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada Jocelynn Cook, Scientific Director	2014/11/27	38
West Coast Women's Legal Education and Action Fund Kasari Govender, Executive Director		
YWCA Canada Ann Decter, Director Advocacy and Public Policy		
Calgary Immigrant Women's Association Rekha Gadhia, Manager Family Services Department Beba Svigir, Chief Executive Officer	2014/12/02	39
Canadian Council of Muslim Women Alia Hogben, Executive Director		
DisAbled Women's Network of Canada Bonnie L. Brayton, National Executive Director Carmela Hutchison, President		
Armagh House Lynn Ward, Executive Director	2014/12/04	40
Canadian Network of Women's Shelters and Transition Houses Lise Martin, Executive Director		
Ernestine's Women's Shelter Sharlene Tygesen, Executive Director		
Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada Tracy O'Hearn, Executive Director	2014/12/09	41
Sheldon Kennedy Child Advocacy Centre Bonnie Johnston, Chief Executive Officer Jenny Ofrim, Evaluation Coordinator		
As an individual Fay Faraday, Lawyer Visiting Professor, Osgoode Hall Law School Marion Little		
MVP Strategies Jackson Katz, PhD, Founder and Director	2015/01/27	42
Carrefour pour Elle Marie-Christine Plante, Executive Assistant	2015/01/29	43

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
KW Counselling Services Leslie Josling, Executive Director Co-Chair VAW Forum Regroupement québécois des Centres d'aide et de lutte contre les agressions à caractère sexuel Nathalie Duhamel, Coordinator St. John's Status of Women's Council Women's Centre Sheila Ryan, Program Coordinator Jenny Wright, Executive Director	2015/01/29	43
Plan International Canada Inc. Rosemary McCarney, President and Chief Executive Officer White Ribbon Campaign Todd Minerson, Executive Director As an individual Jane Doe, Author, activist, litigant in Jane Doe v the Toronto Police Force, D.U. LLD	2015/02/03	44
Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia Nanok Cha, Coordinator Young Immigrant Women's Leadership Project Gerry Mills, Director of Operations Native Women's Association of Canada Claudette Dumont-Smith, Executive Director South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario Deepa Mattoo, Staff Lawyer University of Calgary Lana Wells, Brenda Strafford Chair in the Prevention of Domestic Violence Faculty of Social Work	2015/02/05	45
Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies Kim Pate, Executive Director London Abused Women's Centre Megan Walker, Executive Director Ottawa Coalition to End Violence Against Women Matt Schaaf, MANifest Change Coordinator As an individual Leah Gazan, Member of Wood Mountain Lakota Nation Faculty of Education, University of Winnipeg	2015/02/19	47

APPENDIX B LIST OF BRIEFS

Organizations and Individuals

DisAbled Women's Network of Canada

REQUEST FOR GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the Committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to this Report.

A copy of the relevant *Minutes of Proceedings* ([Meetings Nos. 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 47, 53, 58, 60, and 61](#)) is tabled.

Respectfully submitted,

Hélène LeBlanc

Chair

INTRODUCTION

New Democrats believe immediate action is required to address the high levels of violence against women in Canada. Unfortunately, the report from the Standing Committee on the Status of Women: “Promising Practices to Prevent Violence Against Women” leaves out crucial testimony and recommendations heard throughout the committee hearings.

While other levels of violence have decreased in Canada, levels of violence against women remain high. New Democrats are appalled at the Conservative government's refusal to acknowledge the problem of violence against women in Canada. The government has been steadfast in its refusal to work with the opposition, experts, organizations or individuals, many of whom came to the committee during the course of this study.

While New Democrat members of the committee recognize the importance of applauding, supporting and encouraging promising practices to fight violence against women, we must first and foremost call attention to the fact that there remain systemic causes of violence. These barriers restrict women's access to choice and to opportunities widening the gender gap.

New Democrats recognize that the causes of violence are complex and that the solution must be comprehensive. Many witnesses pointed out that piecemeal policy does not work, and sometimes makes the situation worse. Further, while we welcomed the chance to participate in the study, New Democrats feel the resulting report is not entirely representative of the testimony. The testimony frequently included calls for a National Action Plan and an inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, but these two pieces are absent from the official report. New Democrats are dismayed that the report was not a synthesis of the evidence or representative of the recommendations heard by the committee during the study.

NATIONAL ACTION PLAN

A great number of witnesses called for a National Action Plan on violence against women in Canada. Such an action plan would address gaps in services and the legal system, coordinate policies and services across jurisdictions, and improve collaboration among all levels of government, civil society, survivors of violence, and first responders.¹ In addition, witnesses called on the government to commit adequate human and financial resources to

1 [Evidence](#), 2 December 2014, 0930 (Ms. Carmela Hutchinson, President, DisAbled Women's Network of Canada); [Evidence](#), 27 November 2014, 0905 (Ms. Ann Decter, Director, Advocacy and Public Policy, YWCA Canada); [Evidence](#), 2 December 2014, 0905 (Ms. Alia Hogben, Executive Director, Canadian Council of Muslim Women); [Evidence](#), 4 December 2014, 0900 (Ms. Lise Martin, Executive Director, Canadian Network of Women's Shelters and Transition Houses); [Evidence](#), 4 December 2014, 0910 (Ms. Sharlene Tygesen, Executive Director, Ernestine's Women's Shelter); [Evidence](#), 4 December 2014, 0920 (Ms. Lynn Ward, Executive Director, Armagh House); [Evidence](#), 3 February 2015, 1110 (Ms. Rosemary McCarney, President and Chief Executive Officer, Plan International Canada Inc.); [Evidence](#), 5 February 2015, 1105 (Ms. Lana Wells, Brenda Strafford Chair in the Prevention of Domestic Violence, Faculty of Social Work, University of Calgary); [Evidence](#), 5 February 2015, 1130 (Ms. Deepa Mattoo, Staff Lawyer, South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario).

specifically carry out a national action plan.²

The action plan, according to several witnesses, should include commitments and clear targets, an outline of effective prevention mechanisms, a guarantee of universal coverage of response mechanisms for survivors, a review of law enforcement and justice practices, support for reliable data collection, and necessary human and financial resources to support these measures.³ Ms Lana Wells, the Brenda Strafford Chair in the Prevention of Domestic Violence of the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Calgary, suggested that the action plan focus on four main areas: prevention mechanisms, social policy responses, legal responses and service responses.⁴ Ms. Wells also stated that the action plan must be customized to meet the unique risk factors of specific populations, such as Aboriginal women and refugee women.⁵

The Committee heard that the action plan should involve consultation with all stakeholders, such as front-line workers and violence survivors, non-governmental and community organizations, as well as men and allies.⁶

Witnesses were clear that the National Action Plan should be a comprehensive and integrated action plan, with effective legislation and regulation, safe and effective reporting for women and girls, evidence-based policy formation on a foundation of statistical evidence, well-supported and well-trained personnel, partnerships across government and local groups, across school boards, police commissions, policing, and police officers, as well as shelters and the experts who are legion across this country⁷. -

2 [Evidence](#), 4 December 2014, 0910 (Ms. Sharlene Tygesen, Executive Director, Ernestine's Women's Shelter).

3 [Evidence](#), 4 December 2014, 0905 (Ms. Lise Martin, Executive Director, Canadian Network of Women's Shelters and Transition Houses); [Evidence](#), 4 December 2014, 0910 (Ms. Sharlene Tygesen, Executive Director, Ernestine's Women's Shelter).

4 [Evidence](#), 4 December 2014, 0945 (Ms. Lise Martin, Executive Director, Canadian Network of Women's Shelters and Transition Houses).

5 [Evidence](#), 5 February 2015, 1105 (Ms. Lana Wells, Brenda Strafford Chair in the Prevention of Domestic Violence, Faculty of Social Work, University of Calgary).

6 [Evidence](#), 4 December 2014, 0905 (Ms. Lise Martin, Executive Director, Canadian Network of Women's Shelters and Transition Houses); [Evidence](#), 4 December 2014, 0910 (Ms. Sharlene Tygesen, Executive Director, Ernestine's Women's Shelter); [Evidence](#), 4 December 2014, 0920 (Ms. Lynn Ward, Executive Director, Armagh House); [Evidence](#), 5 February 2015, 1105 (Ms. Lana Wells, Brenda Strafford Chair in the Prevention of Domestic Violence, Faculty of Social Work, University of Calgary).

7 [Evidence](#), 3 February, 2015, (Rosemary McCarney, President and Chief Executive Officer at Plan International Canada Inc)

MISSING AND MURDERED INDIGENOUS WOMEN

By refusing to hold a national inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous women and girls, in spite of recommendations from the Canadian Human Rights Commission, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, all the Premiers of Canada, international bodies and other experts, the government is telling indigenous women and girls that their lives don't matter.

NDP members heard from Claudette Dumont-Smith, from the Native Women's Association of Canada, that *"indigenous women and girls are five times more likely to experience violence than any other population in Canada. Often the violence goes unreported, in particular, spousal assault and other family-related abuse. The actual rates are likely higher... The AFN, NWAC, first nations and indigenous women's organizations, and families of murdered and missing indigenous women have long been advocating for a national public inquiry on violence against indigenous women and girls, including the circumstances around those who have been murdered or are missing. We need a national public inquiry to examine this issue from all angles and develop solutions to address this in a comprehensive manner. Nothing else will do."*⁸

Leah Gazan presented very strong testimony, reminding the committee that Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and the former UN Special Rapporteur on Indigenous Rights, James Anaya, have condemned the Canadian government's inaction on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and have *"all called for the need for a national inquiry and immediate action to address the crisis levels of violence perpetrated against indigenous women and girls."*

"We represent 4.3% of the Canadian population, yet we represent 16% of all reported homicides. It is not safe to be an indigenous woman or girl in Canada right now. This is related to a number of factors, including high rates of poverty—more characteristic among indigenous women—and issues with the very systems that are supposed to uphold the safety of Canadian citizens. – continued Ms. Gazan, further noting that the 2014 RCMP National Operational Report on Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women concluded that there was an overrepresentation of murdered and missing indigenous women and girls, which exceeded the RCMP's previous estimates.

FUNDING

New Democrat members of the committee noted that many witnesses criticized the lack of stable, consistent funding from Status of Women Canada for initiatives to fight violence against women.

As one witness said:

"At the end of two years, it will finish and that will be the end of the project. It's just the way

⁸ Evidence, 5 February, Claudette Dumont-Smith, Executive Director of the Native Women's Association of Canada

that the funding works. It's impossible to go after the same funding for the same project.” - Gerry Mills 2015-02-05

Jane Doe added: *“Until we examine the multiple and systemic nature of sexual assault, until we spend the money and take the time to do that, the social band-aids that we've been applying will continue to fall off and will result in more crime.” - Jane Doe 2015-02-03*

CHILDCARE

Many witnesses pointed to the need for a national child care strategy as one of the things the federal government could do to address violence against women.

Witnesses said the federal government should invest in a national child care strategy, one that is based on the principles of affordability, accessibility and high-quality care and that this national strategy would support healthy child development and improve opportunities for women who wish to go back to the workforce, or get out of unhealthy or abusive relationships.

⁹

According to Ann Decter from YWCA Canada, *“research on Quebec's low-cost, broad-based child care system confirms that child care dramatically increases single mothers' access to employment. Based on the Quebec experience, it is hard to overstate the positive impact of widespread access to low-cost child care on women raising children on their own.”*¹⁰

WOMEN'S ECONOMIC SECURITY

NDP members of the committee feel that it is ineffective to address the issue of violence against women without addressing gender inequality, specifically economic inequality. As one witness said:

*“We need the government at all levels in Canada to take a stand and say, “Not on our watch. On our watch we have a zero tolerance to men's violence against women. We need to name the problem and understand its source. The source is patriarchy and women's inequality, and we need to set our minds to achieving women's full equality in society. We also need action. We need an investment in violence prevention, and public education and awareness programs, starting in the very early years in school.”*¹¹

⁹ Evidence, 5 February 2015, Ms. Lana Wells, Brenda Strafford Chair in the Prevention of Domestic Violence, Faculty of Social Work, University of Calgary)

¹⁰ Evidence, 27 November, 2014 (Ms Ann Decter, Director, Advocacy and Public Policy, YWCA Canada

¹¹ Evidence, 19 February 2015 (Ms. Megan Walker, Executive Director, London Abused Women's Centre)

CONCLUSION

New Democrat members of the committee appreciated that many witnesses, of all backgrounds and areas of expertise, spoke to the need to meaningfully consult and engage with communities, experts, and survivors. Many felt that current federal policies marginalize women, and target them and their communities. New Democrats believe that the federal government has a key role to play in addressing and preventing violence against women and all forms of gender-based oppression.

This is beautifully put by Deepa Mattoo in her testimony:

“I think that's my recommendation, to please treat women in their full capacity, because we are doing a disservice to our own country if we do not take them as who they are and do not take them as our leaders.” - Deepa Mattoo 2015-02-05 12:10

NEW DEMOCRATS THEREFORE PROPOSE THE FOLLOWING RECCOMENDATIONS:

- That the Government of Canada develop a comprehensive National Action Plan on Violence Against Women with adequate human and financial resources, in collaboration with provincial, territorial and municipal governments, civil society, and First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples, with clear goals, measurable targets, and specific timelines as outlined in Motion M-444.
- That the Government of Canada establish a national inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls and that where possible, Indigenous women are involved in the design, decision-making, process and implementation of this inquiry.
- That the Government of Canada work with the provinces, territories and Indigenous communities to create a universal early childhood and childcare program delivered with common principles like affordability, availability and quality that costs no more than 15\$/day per child.
- That the Government of Canada take steps to address the economic security of women and girls.

LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA DISSENTING REPORT: PROMISING PRACTICES TO PREVENT VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

Kirsty Duncan, Member of Parliament for Etobicoke North

INTRODUCTION

This dissenting report first thanks all the witnesses who appeared before the Committee. The committee heard moving testimony of the struggles women face leaving violence but also inspiring stories of women's courage and strength. I thank these witnesses for telling their story. I also thank those on the front lines helping women escape violent situations including shelter workers, transition homes, social housing and family law practices and civil society organizations for the tremendous work they do to end violence against women. Unfortunately, two key recommendations the committee heard repeatedly are sadly missing from the report: namely, (1) the need for a national action plan to end violence against women and girls; and (2) a national public inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls.

While witnesses' testimony is largely untouched throughout the report, any testimony regarding the two issues has virtually been scrubbed from the report. This report might best be labelled a "construct, construe, and ignore report".

Construct

When I first joined the Status of Women committee, I brought forth a motion to end violence against women and girls, but no study followed.

A Conservative motion came from the House of Commons to study promising practices to prevent violence against women in Canada. That is, a motion was "constructed" by the Government to highlight its actions and investments in ending violence. Questioning from government members during hearings reinforced both areas.

Unfortunately, the facts do not support this conclusion. Rates of violence against women have changed little over the past decade. The current response to violence against women and girls has failed to significantly lower the levels of violence they experience. But Canadian women and girls fleeing violence, and those working in health and social services serving them deserve better than a report recognizing the Government's initiatives. Rather, they deserve real action to end the violence.

The committee's study was therefore fatally flawed from the beginning, as it aimed to recognize and protect the status quo, rather than to recommend new actions, such as a national action plan to end violence against women and girls, and a national public inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls--both of which are likely to lead to a reduction in the violence.

Construe

The committee then construed "promising practices" to mean only practices currently implemented in Canada, rather than promising practices internationally—although no such parameters were in the motion.

The promising practice internationally is a national action plan. The United Nations has called on all countries to have a National Action Plan by 2015.

In 2010, both the United Kingdom and Australia developed such a national action plan. In the case of the United Kingdom, the action plan was updated in 2012 and 2013 in consultation with key stakeholders. Australia is in the midst of implementing a 12-year plan. Currently, Canada has no comprehensive national plan or strategy to deal with violence against women. Initiatives at the federal level lack coordination, rely too heavily on the criminal justice system, and fail to acknowledge the gendered dimension and root causes of violence against women.

This results in insufficient and underfunded services that do not reflect women's lived realities, or effectively prevent violence and reduce its impact. National Action Plans provide a framework for strengthening the systems that respond to violence against women. They establish national standards and call for collaboration between all levels of government, civil society, survivors, and service responders, and they put women's needs, experiences, and knowledge at the centre.

Ignore

As previously mentioned, key testimony or evidence by witnesses was ignored. Testimony related to the need for a national action plan and the need for a national public inquiry does not appear in the report.

Instead of honouring witness testimony, the report reflects the government's position, and stubbornly refuses to endorse a national public inquiry.

This is in stark contrast to the overwhelming consensus that an inquiry is needed. Grieving families, Indigenous leaders, victims' advocates, civil society, the international community, and every provincial and territorial premier have urged the government to call a national inquiry.

Only a national, public inquiry would have the credibility, scope and resources to address the systemic problems underlying the violence, provide the accountability to ensure implementation of its recommendations, and bring justice and reconciliation for the victims and their families.

Liberals have long-joined Aboriginal communities and Canadian society in calling for a national public inquiry on missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls.

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations 1-4 reinforce the status quo : namely, that the Government should ensure ending violence against women and girls is a priority; that the Government should work with organizations (we would all hope so); that the Government should act on the policies and programs in place (again protecting the status quo); and the Government should continue to fund projects. No ambitious goals or objectives to be found.

Recommendation 5 represents a missed opportunity. Instead of recommending putting sexual violence and assault in post-secondary institutions on the next Status of Women federal/provincial/territorial meeting agenda, the report recommends that the Minister "work to putting" the issue on the agenda.

The Minister for the Status of Women has a powerful tool to convene meetings with her provincial and territorial counterparts in order to work toward mutually agreed upon objectives. Putting this issue on the agenda would send a strong message that the government will not stand for such conduct on Canadian campuses.

According to a 2013 Statistics Canada of police-reported data, women aged 15 to 24 experience the highest rates of sexual violence in the country. As a result, I have written to the Minister of Status of Women Canada to ask that she put the issue of sexual assault at Canadian post-secondary institutions on her next federal/provincial/territorial meeting agenda, as an estimated, nearly one in five women are likely to be sexually assaulted as students.

Recommendation 6 says little, except that the Government should “support efforts to engage men and boys”. What are the current efforts, how should the Government support efforts, and what strategies should be used to engage boys and men?

Recommendation 7 focuses on maternal, newborn, and child health, an important initiative internationally.

It is more than ironic, however, that while the Government focuses on protecting the health and safety of children internationally, it refuses to create a federal, independent advocate for Canadian children, as the UN recommends, and for which my Liberal colleague MP Marc Garneau advocated.

This refusal is particularly concerning, as in 2012 the United Nations reviewed Canada’s performance with respect to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and expressed concern that “vulnerable Canadian children may be falling through the cracks of a fractious federal system that lacks accountability and a clear strategy”. “The UN’s committee on the Rights of the Child said that Canada needs to raise the bar in how it protects the rights of children, especially when it comes to aboriginal, disabled and immigrant children.”

Recommendation 8 calls for continuing the practice of calls for proposals on preventing violence against women and girls with a focus on Aboriginal Women. How much money is available for these calls from Status of Women, and is it even a fraction of what is needed?

Recommendation 9 is particularly offensive, as it calls on the Government to support its own Action Plan to address violence against Aboriginal women and girls.

Unfortunately, the action plan does nothing new to stop violence against Indigenous women and girls. Instead it is a laundry list of existing federal government initiatives, many not even specific to Indigenous women and girls.

Moreover, the \$25 million highlighted in the fall 2014 announcement is not “new money.” It is simply a re-announcement of funding from Budget 2014, which is an extension of temporary funding of \$25 million over five years, first announced back in 2010.

Recommendation 10 also protects the status quo, as it suggests that the Government should help newcomer women through its existing pamphlets, and again, protecting the status quo. How might a newcomer come to know about these pamphlets, particularly when settlement services have been so drastically cut?

WHAT IS MISSING

While poverty and a lack of affordable housing, shelters, and transition homes prevent women and children from leaving their abusers, there is absolutely no recommendation that addresses these fundamental issues.

The lack of any such recommendation is in sharp contrast to the needs and the testimony heard throughout the study. In our country, on any given night, 4,600 women and their 3,600 children are forced to sleep in emergency shelters as a result of violence. And on a single day 379 women and 215 children were turned away from shelters in Canada, usually because they were full.

CONCLUSION

Violence against women and girls is abhorrent, it is a human rights violation, with devastating and serious impacts that may last generations.

The time has come that we no longer talk about reducing violence against women, but actually end emotional, financial, physical, psychological, and sexual violence.

To do this, there needs to be a concerted and sustained effort to develop a National Action Plan to end violence against women and girls, with real consultation with those women who are fleeing violence, with shelters and support services, with the provinces and territories, etc., and we need a national public inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls immediately.

It is time for all of us to stand up and say that violence against women is not okay, and that the time for action is now so that no woman will ever again face violence at the hands of a man.

This report could have sent a bold message and recommend a re-thinking of Canada's approach to violence. Instead, it is a fierce affirmation of the status quo.