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Chair

Ms. Marilyn Gladu

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• (1615)

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.)): I call this meeting to order.

We are starting with committee business. You all should have received the report from the subcommittee, so I need someone to move adoption of the report.

Ms. Malcolmson.

Ms. Karen Ludwig (New Brunswick Southwest, Lib.): I so move.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Pam Damoff): All in favour?

(Motion agreed to)

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Pam Damoff): Go ahead, Ms. Malcolmson.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): I have another matter of business. I'm sorry I didn't give notice on this, but we just got a letter from one of our NGOs that was thinking of applying to Status of Women for their funding announcement. The deadline is December 8, and they asked if we could try to get an extension, because December 8 is right in the middle of their 16 days of action to end violence against women.

I propose that the Status of Women committee write a letter to the Minister of Status of Women asking for an extension of the December 8 funding deadline for women's organizations.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Pam Damoff): Is there any discussion?

Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): I thank Ms. Malcolmson for letting us know this just a few minutes before the meeting, but I don't know anything about this topic. It's the first that I've heard of it, and I wonder if we could have just a little bit of time. If it's December 8, we still have some time if we are to write a letter, but I would like to be able to discuss that with my colleagues and find out whether or not there was information put out and how vast this problem is before we make a decision.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Pam Damoff): Is there any other discussion?

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: Could I move to table it to the next meeting?

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): This is just a thought on process. It seems to me that if the committee were to write a letter, we would need a meeting between drafting and reviewing the final letter. Perhaps, provisionally, a letter could be drafted so that at the next meeting we could decide one way

or the other what we want to do, and then if we decide to go ahead with it, the letter is already ready. Does that make some sense?

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Pam Damoff): Go ahead, Ms. Vandenberg.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: In that case, I think that it might be better that we make our own interventions to the minister as members and have civil society do the same. I'm not ready to start drafting a letter today.

• (1620)

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Pam Damoff): Then you move that we defer this?

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: Yes.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Pam Damoff): You're moving that the debate be adjourned?

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: Yes. I move that the debate be adjourned.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Pam Damoff): All in favour?

(Motion agreed to)

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Pam Damoff): That motion carries.

We will now welcome back our witnesses joining us by video conference. On behalf of all members of the committee, I want to thank you for your patience and understanding and for returning to us with information for our study on violence against young women and girls.

We have, from the Government of Ontario, Maureen Adamson, deputy minister responsible for women's issues, Ontario Women's Directorate, and Lisa Priest, assistant deputy minister, Ontario Women's Directorate.

We also have, from the Government of New Brunswick, coming to us from Fredericton, Jocelyne Mills, assistant deputy minister, Executive Council Office, women's equality branch, and Martine Stewart, director, violence prevention and community partnerships unit, Executive Council Office.

I understand that we are later going to be joined by Tessa Hill, who gave us her presentation previously on We Give Consent, but we'll start with the Government of Ontario for 10 minutes.

Ms. Maureen Adamson (Deputy Minister Responsible for Women's Issues, Ontario Women's Directorate, Government of Ontario): Thank you very much, and good afternoon. *Bonjour.*

I'd like to begin by thanking the committee for inviting Tracy MacCharles, the Minister Responsible for Women's Issues, to speak to you today, and I'm delighted to be here on her behalf. As you know, we are very committed to ending violence against women and girls in Canada and Ontario.

Although I am video conferencing from Toronto, we would also like to acknowledge indigenous peoples and their long prior history with the lands we are on today, and in particular to acknowledge the Algonquin peoples in the Ottawa region.

I want to start by telling you a bit about the Ontario Women's Directorate and the progress we are making toward the implementation of "It's Never Okay: An Action Plan to Stop Sexual Violence and Harassment", and then give you a very brief overview of some of the other work that we have undertaken to address gender-based violence and inequality.

Promoting gender equality by ending violence against women is a priority for the Government of Ontario. We want to make Ontario a place where everyone can live free from the fear, threat, or experience of sexual violence and harassment.

The Ontario Women's Directorate provides advice and support to the Minister Responsible for Women's Issues and all government ministries throughout the development and implementation of policies and programs related to violence against women, gender equality, and women's economic empowerment. Our key ministry partners are helping us to end the global pandemic of gender-based violence and inequality, and we continue to engage experts, communities, survivors, and the public.

Let me speak specifically on stopping sexual violence and harassment. In March 2015, Ontario launched "It's Never Okay: An Action Plan to Stop Sexual Violence and Harassment". This three-year plan builds on previous work and includes an investment of \$41 million.

We continue raising awareness about sexual violence and harassment through public education. Our multimedia campaign, #WhoWillYouHelp, received 85 million views worldwide, producing measurable results.

Six months after the campaign launched, the results were clear and measurable. Two-thirds of Ontarians surveyed recalled seeing the campaign, and research showed that 55% strongly agreed that they had an obligation to intervene when witnessing sexual harassment, up from 37% before the campaign launched.

Further, 92% agreed that they had an obligation to intervene if they witnessed sexual violence, up from 81% previously, and 83% agreed that if they witnessed sexual assault and did not intervene, they were in fact making a decision to allow it to continue, which is again an increase, up from 77%. These are some really great results.

Such a significant change in public attitudes in such a short period of time is rare, as we know, and we are working with other jurisdictions in Canada and beyond that have expressed interest in adapting this campaign.

We also launched a creative engagement fund that is administered by the Ontario Arts Council and supports 11 artistic projects, including a multidisciplinary arts program that will engage Franco-Ontarian youth across the province in dialogue and action on sexual violence and harassment, as well as "Sexual Assault: The Roadshow", a pop-up, participatory art gallery in a retrofitted shipping container that will travel to 15 areas in Ontario over the next three years.

We are enhancing training and resources for service providers so that they can better assist survivors and those at risk of sexual violence. For example, bartenders, servers, and others in the hospitality sector are being trained to identify and intervene in instances of sexual violence and harassment among employees and patrons.

We are also funding seven pilot projects, under our innovation fund, focused on survivors who are at a higher risk of experiencing sexual violence and require services tailored to their needs.

We also want to improve the experience of survivors navigating the justice system, which we know can be very challenging. One way we are doing that is by providing up to four hours of free, independent legal advice to sexual assault survivors. Since the pilot program was launched in Ottawa, Toronto, and Thunder Bay in June, we've already served more than 100 survivors.

We are inspiring generational change by helping students gain a deeper understanding about the root causes of gender inequality and issues of healthy relationships. Ontario has updated the health and physical education curriculum to help students understand online safety—including the risks of sexting—healthy relationships, and consent.

● (1625)

In March of this year, the Sexual Violence and Harassment Action Plan Act, 2016, a key commitment in the action plan, received royal assent. It strengthens provisions related to sexual assault and harassment in the workplace, on campus, in housing, and throughout the civil claims process.

The act actually requires colleges, universities, and private career colleges to have stand-alone sexual violence policies that are developed with student input and reviewed at least every three years. Policies must be in place by January 2017.

We wanted to raise awareness about sexual violence, challenge attitudes, encourage behavioural change, and equip bystanders with the tools to intervene. One of the lessons that we have learned is that a one-size solution does not fit all when it comes to public education campaigns. We've worked with experts in communities early to develop campaigns that are socially and culturally relevant. For example, the Ontario neighbours, friends and family initiative, which addresses domestic violence, has been adapted for francophone and indigenous communities, and for immigrant and refugee communities in 16 different languages.

While public education is a key element of the action plan, providing a forum for ongoing dialogue is also vital. With representatives from more than 20 organizations, the permanent Roundtable on Violence Against Women provides advice to the Ontario government on gender-based violence. I can tell you that I attended the first of one of those meetings, and they are very passionate stakeholders.

Proactively engaging this sector on an ongoing basis is improving gender-based analysis of specific policy proposals, and it's helping us to identify promising practices from the ground up. Some examples include recommendations to develop the independent legal advice for sexual assault survivors pilot program, the sexual violence and harassment action plan, and the Ontario strategy to end human trafficking.

In February, Ontario launched Walking Together: Ontario's long-term strategy to end violence against indigenous women. This too was developed in collaboration with the joint working group on violence against aboriginal women. The strategy reflects the government's commitment to programs developed by and for indigenous people, and \$100 million in new funding has been committed to support its implementation.

One initiative under this strategy is the family well-being program that was launched this year. This program supports indigenous families in crisis and helps communities address the effects of violence. The program will be available across the province, on and off reserve, and will provide 220 new workers in support of communities, additional program resources, and safe spaces for those at risk of violence.

Program models are being developed and implemented by first nations, Métis, Inuit, and urban indigenous partners and communities to respond to their local needs. Most recently, in June, we launched Ontario's strategy to end human trafficking, as I mentioned. It is aimed at raising awareness about the issue, holding traffickers accountable and, most importantly, ensuring that survivors have the support and services they need to heal.

Looking ahead, we want to build on the work of the action plan and strategies to address various parts of the spectrum of gender-based violence. We know that there is a link between women's economic security and violence. Ontario has committed to developing an economic empowerment strategy for women by the spring of 2017, and a gender wage gap strategy in 2018 that is part of that overall strategy.

Ontario has also committed to updating the domestic violence action plan, which was first launched in 2004. Ministries have gone

far beyond their original commitments, and as you can imagine, the landscape has shifted.

We need to measure and sustain what's working well, but we know there is still much more to be done. Premier Wynne has set bold and ambitious goals for the women's agenda for the Government of Ontario. We welcome the opportunity to work collaboratively with our federal, provincial, and territorial partners to advance these goals, which include ending violence against women and girls.

I would like to conclude by offering some thoughts in areas where we think that the collaboration of federal, provincial, and territorial leadership would help to advance our shared goals.

First, by working more collaboratively, we can strengthen data collection and reporting on gender-based violence across jurisdictions, and we can increase capacity to track impact.

Second, by working across jurisdictions, we can improve violence prevention, which includes public education and engaging men and boys in the dialogue.

Third, together we can do more to address cyberviolence, an issue that crosses provincial, territorial, and international borders. We respectfully submit that it is an area that could benefit from national leadership and a review of criminal law that incorporates a survivor-centred approach.

• (1630)

Working with provinces and territories, again, the federal government can identify and mobilize evidence-based initiatives and explore issues related to immigration status and intersections where vulnerability to gender-based violence exists.

Finally, Ontario is looking forward to co-chairing the next federal-provincial-territorial meeting on the status of women in June. We hope to provide an opportunity for us all to collaborate and address key and serious issues, such as human trafficking and the gender wage gap.

In closing, I want to thank the committee again for inviting us. Lisa and I are delighted to be here and delighted to have the opportunity, and we would be happy to take questions at the appropriate time.

Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Pam Damoff): Thank you very much.

We'll now go to New Brunswick for your 10-minute presentation.

Ms. Jocelyne Mills (Assistant Deputy Minister, Executive Council Office, Women's Equality Branch, Government of New Brunswick): Thank you very much.

Thank you, Madam Chair and members of the committee. It's a real pleasure for me to be here and to have an opportunity to talk to you today about our work at the women's equality branch.

I certainly want to express my gratitude, and that of the branch, for the invitation to talk about some of the work we're involved in from a provincial government perspective within New Brunswick.

I also want to introduce our director of violence prevention, Martine Stewart, who's joining me today. She leads our violence prevention unit, which strives every day to move toward the goal of ensuring that all women of our province are able to live free of violence. It's a privilege to work alongside that team every day.

[Translation]

I must tell you that I've prepared my notes in English. For my overview of the points I want to cover, I'll speak English, but I will be pleased to answer your questions in French or in English.

[English]

I'd like to start by giving you a bit of an overview of our organization to provide you with the context for our work, and then speak in a bit more detail on some of the initiatives and programs we are leading within the scope of your study in support of the prevention of violence against women and girls.

The women's equality branch is one of the units of the Executive Council Office within the Government of New Brunswick. We report to the clerk of the executive council, and our current minister is the Premier of New Brunswick, the Honourable Brian Gallant.

Being situated as part of the Executive Council Office positions us very well to deliver on our mandate of coordinating the implementation of government's actions and initiatives in the areas of women's personal, economic, and social security. We do this while working to promote gender equality, reducing systemic discrimination, and providing advice and support to our minister and to departments of government.

Our vision within the branch is a New Brunswick that is free of gender-based violence, where all women have achieved social, cultural, legal, and economic equality. To achieve that vision, we have two functional units, one focused on economic security and one on violence prevention. I want to focus today on the work in the area of violence prevention.

We have a very active violence prevention and community partnerships unit. The work of the unit is a blend of direct program delivery and supporting and fostering community partnerships in the area of violence prevention, as well as providing policy advice to government departments and leading and coordinating government action in the area of violence prevention.

On the program delivery side, we fund and support the following key programs: the domestic violence outreach program, which is a network of 14 outreach workers across the province; second-stage housing programs, which fund support services to residents of second-stage facilities within the province; the Moving Forward program, a program for agencies to develop a community-based group program for children and their mothers to heal from the hurt of living with domestic violence; and the provincial strategy on sexual assault services, which is delivered by community partners. It

provides the coordination of community-based sexual assault services, including 24-hour crisis support and training for service providers as well as other sexual violence support services.

The investment that government makes in these important programs and services for women and children, for victims of violence, and for some of our most vulnerable populations accounts for nearly half of our branch's annual budget.

In support of community partnerships in the area of violence prevention, the branch supports and leads Provincial Partnerships in Action, which is a network of community-based organizations, outreach workers, second-stage housing and transition houses, and regional family violence network representatives.

We also lead the development and sharing of best-in-class tools for those working with victims of domestic violence, including the Woman Victims of Abuse Protocols, which is a resource guide that was developed by the branch that is widely used within the province, as well as other tools, such as the danger assessment training. There are some tools from the Cybersafe Girl website, which is an Atlantic collaboration with our other Atlantic governments and ministries responsible for status of women.

● (1635)

We also foster partnerships in research and innovation in the field of violence prevention through participation and supports for regional family violence networks and participation in various study projects. Some of the current themes are a project in the area of violence against immigrant women. We also support the New Brunswick human trafficking working group and are involved in the Domestic Violence Death Review Committee within the province.

Finally, in the area of policy development and coordination, our team works in close collaboration with other government departments in the development and delivery of key initiatives to combat and prevent violence. Some of the key priorities of government in this regard currently include work in the area of violence against aboriginal women and girls and in the area of domestic intimate partner violence.

With respect to violence against aboriginal women and girls, the women's equality branch co-chairs an interdepartmental committee on the prevention and response to violence against aboriginal women and girls, as well as an advisory committee of New Brunswick aboriginal women who inform the priorities of government in this regard. Through the collective work of these two bodies, the branch has been able to develop some innovative models to serve the needs of the aboriginal women and girls in the province. One recent example has been the announcement of a pilot site for domestic outreach service in the Miramichi, and that's been a partnership with funding from Public Safety Canada. The pilot will serve four first nations communities within that area, and the goal will be to focus on establishing culturally appropriate outreach services for aboriginal women who are victims of violence.

In the area of domestic and intimate partner violence, considerable focus has been established in collaboration with community partners through the provincial crime prevention and reduction strategy. This strategy is a community and government partnership with a vision to make New Brunswick a world leader in crime prevention and reduction. This partnership has established three priorities, one of which is addressing domestic intimate partner violence.

In this area, government is committed to four key initiatives: education and awareness, which has been led with the establishment of the Love Shouldn't Hurt campaign; legislative tools; community-coordinated response; and conducting work to better understand and address the needs of children who are witness to or exposed to intimate partner violence. Our violence prevention unit is leading or co-leading on three of these initiatives, in close collaboration with key government departments and other community partners.

Working toward advancing equality is an important part of why we do the work we do. In my role, I can tell you that it's the pillar of our mandate. It is the foremost objective of the support and advice that we offer to other government departments and to stakeholders. Achieving equality by actions that promote opportunity and safe environments for women and girls contributes substantially to sustainable economic growth and social advancement by employing the contributions of all people to build better communities.

As we know, gender equality is a fundamental right, but it is one that bears repeating. Achieving that equality informs all the work by the individuals working within our branch. They devote their time to managing programs, participating in working groups, developing policies, and engaging with our stakeholders, all with the goal of improving the status of women in this province. The branch is focused on helping to achieve and implement the government's priorities as they relate to women.

Key current priorities in addition to those already discussed include improving pay equity, implementing gender-based analysis across government in all its decision-making, and improving the representation of women in leadership roles. While these actions are not solely focused on violence prevention, we also know that there is an intersectionality in the work on economic and social equality on the one hand and violence prevention on the other, because, in the end, violence is about power and control, and to end it requires social change in attitudes and beliefs about the equality of all genders. Therefore, the work around gender-based analysis and leadership as examples is also critical.

By doing this work, we demonstrate the important role that women and girls play in our communities, our workplaces, and our homes. That is why in our approach to our work we continue to provide focus to programs and initiatives that relate to women and children. We work with the community, our stakeholders, and service providers in order to build a system that better serves everyone, especially women and children, a population that has traditionally been marginalized through violence and discrimination.

• (1640)

Regional diversity, community involvement and energy, leadership champions, and creativity and availability of resources create opportunities for processes to evolve around problem-solving and learning from the experiences of others. That is why the focus on partnerships is a part of the overall provincial strategy.

Finally, I would be remiss in not stating that this partnership approach also extends beyond our borders. Our work with the federal government and with other provinces and territories through the FPT forum of ministers, through our Atlantic forum of Status of Women ministers, and through bilateral relationships is a valuable source for our province of learning best practices and collaboration.

I will leave it at that. I want to thank you very much for your attention.

[Translation]

Thank you for your attention.

[English]

Ms. Stewart and I are certainly available for any questions that you may have.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Pam Damoff): Thank you for your presentation.

We're going to start our first round with Ms. Ludwig.

Ms. Karen Ludwig: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to all the witnesses this afternoon.

I'm going to start with—

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Pam Damoff): Can I just interrupt you for one minute?

We have Tessa Hill on the screen on the left. You can direct questions to her as well.

Tessa, thank you for joining us again.

Ms. Tessa Hill (Co-Founder, We Give Consent): Thanks for having me.

Ms. Karen Ludwig: Great, and welcome back.

I represent the riding of New Brunswick Southwest, so I'm going to start my questioning with the Government of New Brunswick.

Why do you think, Ms. Mills, that it's important that Premier Gallant is the Minister for the Status of Women, and what are the benefits of that in the province?

Ms. Jocelyne Mills: Thank you for that question.

I've been with the branch for almost two years now. In my tenure with the branch, he has been the minister responsible, so I don't have an experience with another minister responsible.

I will share some of the feedback that we've received from stakeholders within the province on that issue. Overall, the feedback that we have received has been on the leadership. It shows that to have commitment from the very top has been really a great benefit to the file in terms of advancing the issue of women's equality in the province.

Certainly it's been demonstrated in the decisions by government in the last few years in some of the achievements that we've been able to make in terms of women in positions of leadership, for instance, and in advancing work in the area of government appointments to agencies, boards, and commissions throughout the province. I think having that leadership from the top has made a big difference and has had a big impact.

Also, we've been able to move forward with gender-based analysis within government by ensuring that all decisions through our cabinet process have a screen put on them as to whether there's a gender impact. If that screen yields that there is a gender impact to the decision, then a full gender-based analysis is required.

Those are a couple of examples from my experience that demonstrate that leadership from the top really does make a difference.

• (1645)

Ms. Karen Ludwig: I think it does as well. I think it sends a very strong message. Certainly the choice for the premier to be appointed as the minister—and it could have been any ministry—is a very significant message.

Also, I will say how pleased we are in the province of New Brunswick that Cathy Rogers was appointed as the first female Minister of Finance.

You talked about regional diversity. Could you inform our committee how you work regionally with other provinces? We were told earlier this week by the minister that we were very fortunate to have nine part-time positions across the country for status of women. In our region, one will be in Saint John, one in Charlottetown, and one will be in Halifax. We definitely have that regional representation, which is great.

How is New Brunswick similar to the other provinces within our region, and also, what is unique about New Brunswick in terms of our region?

Ms. Jocelyne Mills: I guess there are a couple of parts to that question.

First, in terms of how we work regionally, we have—and I alluded to it briefly in my comments—an Atlantic status of women ministers forum, represented by the four ministers in the four provinces. That provides us with an opportunity to work collaboratively among the

four Atlantic provinces. There's also a senior officials forum that supports the work of the ministers. The ministers tend to meet on an annual basis and provide direction to the forum, and then as a result of those meetings the four provinces have our areas of focus on which we collaborate on an Atlantic basis.

We're currently in the process of looking at the next set of priorities, I would say, on an Atlantic basis, and we hope that will be the subject of discussion by the ministers when they next meet. However, there have been successes in that area. We've been able to do things together that perhaps would have been more challenging, for financial reasons or others, to do on our own.

One of those examples is work in the area of cybersafety, particularly focused on girls. There was an initiative launched by the Atlantic forum of ministers. I'm going to get my dates wrong, but I think it was—

Ms. Martine Stewart (Director, Violence Prevention and Community Partnerships (Unit), Executive Council Office, Government of New Brunswick): It was in 2012 or 2013.

Ms. Jocelyne Mills: —in 2012 or 2013. We can provide you with exact dates.

We launched an online site with a number of tips and resources, focused both on parents and also on girls themselves. Those resources are providing ways for girls to be safe online. The site itself has been quite successful. What our research tells us so far is that probably parents have been using the site more than girls. We're looking at how to make some tools that perhaps will be more accessible to girls themselves as the next potential phase of some of this work.

• (1650)

Ms. Karen Ludwig: Okay. Thank you.

Can I just ask you one question? I'm not sure how much time—

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Pam Damoff): You have 30 seconds.

Ms. Karen Ludwig: I know there isn't much time, but at some point during your responses to the rest of the questions, would you be able to speak at all to small rural coastal communities and some of the challenges they face in terms of program delivery? There's my plug.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Pam Damoff): Thank you.

We'll now move to Ms. Harder. I understand you're sharing your time with your colleague.

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): Hi, there. Thank you so much for being with us today.

My question goes to Ms. Adamson.

You mentioned helping immigrant women in particular, and the need for a plan or further action with regard to that population, or that is what I understood. I'm hoping that you can expand on that a bit.

One of the things I'm quite passionate about is with regard to the Yazidi women. We have women and girls who are supposed to be coming into Canada. They're supposed to be arriving in February. I'm very curious as to the plan that's being put in place, and I'm wondering, from your angle, what you would recommend in terms of a plan for immigrants in general, but in particular with regard to a vulnerable population like Yazidi women and girls, who come from a background where they've been sexually exploited to the greatest extent possible by ISIS.

Ms. Maureen Adamson: In broad-brush terms, a lot of the public awareness and other programs we have, as I mentioned earlier, are in 16 different languages, so we're trying to address that.

In terms of the sexual violence round table that we have, we have a very rich representation around that table of service providers who represent and help new immigrants, whether that's some of the refugees who have just arrived.... These people are on the ground, dealing with the issues that many of these women face. We're trying to build that into all of our programming. However, that is one really important place where we seek advice from those on the front line working with the individuals.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Would you say that from a government perspective, then, more can be done?

Ms. Maureen Adamson: I think there's always more that can be done, not that I get to speak on any particular part of your government. I think that in Ontario there is a recognition that there are different needs for different communities and different folks who are affected. I would say that we're trying to target some of the programs we're making available, and they are to be tailored. Can more be done? For sure.

Ms. Rachael Harder: In your estimation, would you say that immigrant women are among the most vulnerable in terms of sexual violence and exploitation? Do you have facts on that?

Ms. Maureen Adamson: A lot of our focus is on what we found with indigenous women. They're at higher risk, certainly, in terms of being a vulnerable group. We can come back with some stats, actually, in the next couple of days regarding Toronto and Ontario being very diverse. We have some data we can probably get back to you with, if that helps.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Yes, I would be very interested, particularly with regard to our immigrant population and just what we're seeing there. Honestly, facts are great, but even anecdotal reflections are helpful.

Thank you. I'm going to hand it over to my colleague.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you, Rachel, and thank you to all of the witnesses.

I want to stick first of all with the witnesses from the Government of Ontario. Thank you for being here.

You spoke about the new health sex education curriculum in Ontario. You mentioned a number of the new components it includes.

One of the things we've talked and heard a fair bit about at this committee is the impact of violent sexual images. You could say pornography, but really we're talking about a subset or a certain kind of pornography and the way that and other media can lead to false

beliefs about violence against women, which young boys in particular can absorb, but also young girls.

I'd be curious to know if and how the new health curriculum addresses and discusses the issue of pornography.

Ms. Lisa Priest (Assistant Deputy Minister, Ontario Women's Directorate, Government of Ontario): Thank you very much for your question. It goes to two areas, really. There is our public awareness campaign, "It's Never Okay", and also our curriculum changes.

Let me tell you a little bit about the curriculum changes, if I may. We have an updated health and physical education curriculum for grades 1 through 12. It was implemented in September 2015. It helps students develop an understanding of root causes of gender inequality, and from a very early age—

• (1655)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Sorry to cut you off, ma'am, but I'm actually quite limited for time. If you could address the issue of if and how the curriculum addresses the issue of pornography and violent pornography, I'd really appreciate it.

Ms. Lisa Priest: It goes to the heart of teaching the dangers of sexting. That's one of the areas. I'm not familiar with whether it goes specifically to violent pornography. I could find out for you, but it does talk about the dangers of sexting and sending images electronically of people in various states of undress and understanding that it's a form of sexual assault.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: What I'm hearing you say is that essentially, no, it doesn't address the issue of the impact on someone of viewing violent pornography. Yes, it addresses the impact of a person perhaps sending an image of another person to someone else or of sending sexually explicit text messages, but it doesn't address this emerging issue of the impact, in terms of the formation of beliefs associated with consuming violent pornography. Am I understanding you correctly that it does not address those issues?

Ms. Lisa Priest: Not exactly. The first part is right, regarding sexting. I would need to get back to you on the latter and whether it addresses that. That's what I would like to do. I would not say that it does not. I'm saying that I need to find out and get back to you on that particular point.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Okay, fair enough. I, and I think the rest of the committee, would be quite interested in that clarification. Of course, no curriculum is finalized, and I'm sure there are ongoing updates, but that would certainly be an important emerging issue in this area.

Ms. Hill, you talked about the new health curriculum as well in your statement. I'd be curious about your thoughts on the relevance of violent pornography and if you have a sense that your peers are consuming this material and what the impact is on some of the issues you raised in your testimony.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Pam Damoff): You have just a few seconds.

Ms. Tessa Hill: I think it's extremely relevant to talk about the consumption of violent images. It is very prevalent among my peers. It's isn't necessarily a conversation piece with teenagers, but you see it on Instagram and within smaller groups of boys, and girls as well. It's so readily available that even if it's not something that we talk about a lot, it is there. I think that's the scary part of it.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Pam Damoff): I'm sorry to cut you off, but we've gone over the time.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you very much.

Ms. Tessa Hill: Okay. Thanks.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Pam Damoff): Ms. Malcolmson, you have seven minutes.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Thank you, Chair.

I want to thank all the witnesses for their work.

I want to start my questions with Tessa Hill. I want to welcome you back. I'm sorry your testimony got interrupted last time.

When you gave your presentation, you were talking about the need to change the health and education curriculum and the need to address sexual stigma, rape culture, and consent.

I wonder if you can talk a little bit more about what you'd like to see from the federal government around setting the tone for that, which the provincial and territorial governments can then pass on to school boards and the education system.

Ms. Tessa Hill: I think the most important thing is having comprehensive sex education. Much of the sex education across Canada, and even in some classrooms now, is still very fear-based and abstinence-based education, whereas I think it should be the opposite. Comprehensive sex education should include terms that I use in my remarks, like "body positive", "queer positive", "sex positive", and it should have a harm reduction approach. A harm reduction approach would not emphasize that you don't do this, but that if you make this choice, then here's what you should be aware of and here are the measures you should take.

In order to truly address those issues, you need sex education that has all of those things and that talk to youth in the way youth want to be talked to. We want to have real conversations about things that we see every day, like violent pornography images that are readily available to us online. We need to then group that with these positive conversations about sex education. Since it's a such a part of our lives, it's not something that can be ignored.

● (1700)

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: You're not seeing that now at a leadership level. I think you described that the school that you went to had that approach, but you thought that was sadly unique at this time.

Ms. Tessa Hill: I think that it's extremely important and great that Ontario has updated the sex education curriculum. There are still a lot of gaps within smaller school communities, as I mentioned, such as teachers and administrations who unfortunately don't feel the same way about sex education or who don't have the same understanding that sex education, in my opinion, should not be fear-based and abstinence-based. There is still a very large gap that needs to be filled.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: When you talked with us a couple of weeks ago, a concern you had about the Trump campaign was that it had given permission to express hate, and you were seeing that in your school. Can you give us an update on how that's unfolded over the last couple of weeks?

Ms. Tessa Hill: Definitely it has died down a bit. It's less immediate. It's based on a need for some people to start arguments and be opposed. I go to an arts school, so my school community is very aware, which is really great, but there are a few people to whom it has given permission in their community to be provocative and controversial. Over the past few weeks, it has died down a little bit and become a little bit better, though I know that it's still there under the surface, which I think is a really big issue.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: I'm glad to hear it's not getting worse, so thank you.

To our Ontario partners, Canada still does not have a national action plan to promote the protection of women against violence, despite the United Nations call that all countries have a national plan in place by 2015. I'm curious whether you'd say that the UN call was a motivation for Ontario to adopt its own provincial plan to end violence against women.

Ms. Maureen Adamson: Certainly the UN document has the attention of a lot of provinces and a lot of countries. To be very frank with you, just from my own experience, it's definitely had some play in what Ontario's policies have shaped up to be. There's not a lot of that kind of document out there that's so prevalent, so it's certainly had some play.

I know, Lisa, you wanted to add something to that.

Ms. Lisa Priest: Ontario is updating its domestic violence action plan. We'll be leading a review of existing programs and services. This action plan started in 2014, so we've started on that work, recognizing it's important.

Ms. Maureen Adamson: It's not been updated since 2004.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Excellent.

Part 11 of your Ontario plan was to "Establish a permanent roundtable to make Ontario a leader within Canada on issues of violence against women". How are you doing on that? Is there a permanent national platform for an exchange of ideas amongst provinces?

Ms. Maureen Adamson: In Ontario we have established the permanent round table. In fact, that was the one that I referenced in an earlier question. It's very cross-cutting in terms of representation, with some very front-line service providers, and then nationally Lisa tried to work with the other provinces, obviously, through the FPT process.

Ms. Lisa Priest: Yes. Ontario is co-hosting the FPT conference with the Status of Women, and domestic violence is one of the areas that we're looking at with a pan-Canadian approach.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Okay, thanks.

I think that's almost my time, so I'll thank you for your work, all of you, and our New Brunswick partners as well.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Pam Damoff): Thank you very much.

We're going to Mr. Mendicino for seven minutes.

Mr. Marco Mendicino (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses for their testimony today.

Ms. Hill, my question is for you. I understand that you made a short film for your class entitled "Allegedly". I'm just wondering how your male classmates and peers responded to the video. Do you think their attitudes towards consent were positively impacted by your video?

• (1705)

Ms. Tessa Hill: In my immediate school community when I made the documentary, I was in a school of 60 kids. It was a small alternative school, which was a really important community for me to make the project in. When my friend Lia and I finished the film, and throughout the campaign as well, because our entire school community followed our campaign, there were a lot of positive reactions.

I noticed that the topic of consent and rape culture generally became more talked about in my entire community, but also among my male peers. At the time there were a few issues going around with some male peers not totally understanding some boundaries with younger classmates. I saw a little bit of a click with that as we were talking about it on this larger level, where it did become a larger part of the conversation.

At the same time, though, I do know that's not the case everywhere, unfortunately. I think that there were a lot of young people who did hear about the campaign and hear about the documentary who did learn a lot of stuff. This past year the gym teacher at my school who teaches the male separated gym class showed my documentary to his grade 10 boys health class, and I heard through a few of my peers that there was strangely a lot of... not necessarily backlash, but definitely a lot of misinformation about rape culture. There were some boys who thought that the way the system worked when someone was accused of sexual assault was that they were immediately prosecuted and charged, which is definitely not the case. There was a lot of misinformation, such as the idea that rape culture doesn't exist.

I know that my school community where I did the documentary is unfortunately not the same as elsewhere, but I know that there have

been a lot of changes with how young people are starting to talk about rape culture.

Mr. Marco Mendicino: You should be congratulated for putting the video together. What's interesting from your answer is that there seems to have been a distinction between the way boys react in integrated school settings as opposed to just an all-boys gym class, where some of those stereotypes continue to prevail. Would you say that jibes with what your impressions were, based on the reactions to the video?

Ms. Tessa Hill: I wasn't in the class when the boys watched the video, but it's not great that gym classes are still separated by two binary genders. In order to have comprehensive sex education and health education, everyone needs to be integrated. Definitely that is a factor in that.

Mr. Marco Mendicino: My other question is for Ms. Mills, with the Government of New Brunswick.

You'd mentioned that there was a program just outside of Miramichi with four first nations communities. Could you take a moment to elaborate on some of the culturally appropriate outreach programs that have been successful there?

Ms. Jocelyne Mills: As I mentioned, it's a new initiative, and it's a pilot. In the province we currently have 14 outreach workers, none of whom are really specific for aboriginal communities. Through the work that we've been doing with our advisory committee of aboriginal women, that was one of the areas of need that was identified. One of the comments that often came up was that the services we had weren't necessarily accessible to aboriginal women in their communities.

Mr. Marco Mendicino: How did you make them more accessible?

Ms. Jocelyne Mills: For this pilot, we have found a location that is surrounded immediately by four first nations communities, so that's a way of making it accessible.

I'm going to ask Martine, our director of violence prevention, who's more intimate with the pilot, to add a bit more information.

• (1710)

Ms. Martine Stewart: As Jocelyn mentioned, we have one particular main site in one first nation community, but we've also secured satellite sites in the other three. The outreach worker would be able to travel to those communities as required, whereas in some of the outreach programs in the other parts of the province, the women would potentially go to the outreach worker in a particular city, and that outreach worker may or may not travel as far. In Miramichi—

Mr. Marco Mendicino: I understand that location is important. I'm sorry to cut you off. I only have about a minute left.

I'm wondering if you could elaborate a little bit more on what other aspects of the program were culturally appropriate and what strategies you used to ensure that they were most successful.

Ms. Martine Stewart: I will try to be as quick as possible.

This is work in progress. Right now, we are going to test the existing outreach model that is being used across the province. However, we do know, based on some of the consultation, that some of the meetings that will take place with women will likely have to be done in a different way and in a different format.

Again, this is a learning process for us, so I'm not comfortable giving you some of the actions just yet. We'd be pleased to share results with you in the next six months to nine months.

Mr. Marco Mendicino: Thanks very much.

Thanks, Madam Chair.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Pam Damoff): Thank you.

I understand we're probably going to have bells soon, but in the meantime we'll go to our Conservative colleagues, who I understand are sharing time, for five minutes.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Thank you very much.

My question goes to Tessa.

First off, thank you so much for making time to come back and chat with us this evening. We certainly appreciate it.

I'm wondering if you can chat a little bit about what you believe to be the main factors involved in how men and boys view women in today's society. What has your experience been?

Ms. Tessa Hill: I think there are a number of factors, and a few of them are hard to pin down.

In my experience, it's that there is an attitude from a very young age that women's bodies are inherently sexual and that women's bodies are objectified. There's just a general lack of respect for women. In my experience, I've seen this since a very young age. I know that it's in grade 4, grade 5—around puberty—that boys start to make comments about women's bodies and also start to view pornography.

I think that generally there's an attitude that is perpetuated in the media and I think also sometimes through adults. There are often, especially in school communities, adults and teachers who often don't call out this behaviour that happens. I've had experiences of a comment being made about my body—and this was a while ago, so not at my current school—and often teachers would not actually call out that child and explain why their comment is offensive or wrong. They won't explain the roots of it or actually take the time to talk about that.

I think those are two factors. A big thing is the media, obviously, and how they perpetuate this image of women and young girls.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Thank you.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you again.

Further to Ms. Adamson and Ms. Priest, you spoke about having a stand-alone policy on sexual assault for university campuses. One of the things we have discussed at the committee is the impact of university administration and student unions.

Here in Ontario we had a recent story from the University of Ottawa about.... I think it was opening week activities, and essentially there was a sort of "sex acts for points" activity that was being organized. I'm not sure exactly by whom, but it was happening at the university, in any event.

From the government's perspective, what approach would you recommend in terms of what these policies contain? How can something like that happen today, in a university here in Ontario, and what response can you take to that sort of thing?

● (1715)

Ms. Maureen Adamson: As I mentioned in my remarks, the policies are being developed by those who are on the ground, with students having input and so on, which I think is really important for peer accountability. The government is certainly reviewing these policies, and then, for compliance and accountability, it goes back to the universities.

Lisa, I know you wanted to add a couple of comments.

Ms. Lisa Priest: The rules or laws come into place in January. There is going to be a campus climate survey piloted in 2017, with data in 2018. Students are being involved in the governance structure through helping to devise these policies. I think there is a lot of data to show that the first couple of weeks of school are the high-risk period, which you pointed out quite well.

Just as an aside, we do run ads and public awareness campaigns targeted at exactly that time, to make people aware that they are coming into new environments, what they call "frosh week", and to make them aware of how to protect themselves.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: It sounds like you're saying that this is a process that you are ramping up now, and hopefully it will have results and prevent the kinds of things that I mentioned.

Would these policies apply to student union activities or activities organized by student groups that are not officially organized by or through the administration?

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Pam Damoff): That's actually....

Ms. Lisa Priest: That's a very good question. When are you not a student? Are you a student just on campus? When you leave campus, is it somewhere else? I think they define it largely by campus activities in private colleges, but that's something we've seen defined by the universities.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Pam Damoff): I'm sorry to cut you off, but that's your time. Unfortunately, we have to end there.

I want to thank all of our witnesses for their testimony, and also for coming back to answer our questions. It has been most helpful in our study.

With that, the meeting is adjourned.

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