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• (1305)

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Sonia Sidhu (Brampton South, Lib.)): I call this meeting to order. Welcome to meeting number 16 of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted on Tuesday, February 1, the committee will commence its study on resource development and violence against indigenous women and girls.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the House order of November 25, 2021. Members are attending in person in the room and remotely using the Zoom application. Per the directive of the Board of Internal Economy on March 10, 2022, all those attending in person must wear a mask, except for members who are at their place during the proceedings.

To ensure an orderly meeting, I would like to state a few rules for the witnesses and members.

Before speaking, please wait until I recognize you by name. If you are participating by video conference, click the microphone icon to activate your mike. Please put your mike on mute when you are not speaking. For the interpretation, if you are participating in the meeting via Zoom, you have the choice at the bottom of your screen of floor, English or French. If you are participating in person, you can use the headset provided and select the channel you want. I would remind the members and witnesses that all their comments must be addressed through the chair. Just so witnesses are aware, if anything comes up, we will seek unanimous consent to pause the proceedings.

I want to welcome our witnesses to today's panel. As an individual, we have Pamela Palmater, chair in indigenous governance at Ryerson University, now known as Toronto Metropolitan University. We also have Kathleen Quinn, executive director of the Centre to End All Sexual Exploitation; Viviane Doré-Nadeau, director of ConcertAction Femmes Estrie; and, from the Quebec Native Women Inc., we have Marjolaine Étienne, president, and Stéfanie Sirois-Gauthier, legal and policy analyst.

We'll begin with opening remarks. You will each be provided with five minutes. When you see me hold the red folder, that means you have one minute, so please begin to wrap up.

I'm now going to turn the floor over to Pamela Palmater for five minutes.

Dr. Pamela Palmater (Chair in Indigenous Governance, Ryerson University, As an Individual): Thank you.

Kwe' Ni'n teluisi Pam Palmater. I am from the sovereign Mi'kmaq nation and unceded Mi'kma'ki. My home community is Ugpi'Ganjig Eel River Bar First Nation. Today I'm coming to you from the sovereign territories of the Mississaugas of Scugog.

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this important study on the relationship between resource development and violence against indigenous women and girls. This is something I've worked on for quite a long time, not just for the national inquiry but also for international human rights.

I think it's appropriate to start with the fact that several years ago, KWG Resources Inc., a Canadian mining company, posted a video online of women in bikinis to promote mining on indigenous lands in the Ring of Fire. The then president, Frank Smeenk, defended the video, saying that "sex sells" mining. This goes to show just one of many examples that mining is not just about exploiting minerals on indigenous lands. It's about the exploitation of local indigenous women and girls as well.

Sadly, this is consistent with research and statistics on Canadian extractive companies in particular. In 2009 a secret report commissioned by the Prospectors & Developers Association of Canada confirmed that Canadian mining corporations are the worst human rights violators globally—not just here in Canada but all around the world—and that they are far more likely to engage in unlawful activities and grave human rights violations despite the fact that they all have corporate social responsibility policies.

It's not limited to mining. Obviously, it's also other extractive industry. We know that high-risk projects include resource development but also the extractive industry and transnational corporations specifically; energy projects like hydro and nuclear; and megaprojects that include major construction and decommissioning projects, highways, airports, bridges, roads and tunnels. The high-risk areas within those projects include man camps but also the high influx of temporary or transient workers who are predominantly male: the trucking industry, the transportation industry, private security and, sadly, law enforcement.

The types of violence that indigenous women and girls are subjected to by all of those players are increased rates of physical violence, including but not limited to domestic violence, high rates of sexual exploitation and sex trafficking, sexual assaults and rapes, and increased rates of disappearance. This is in addition to the failure of all of those parties just mentioned to not respect the aboriginal title of indigenous women and girls; their aboriginal and treaty rights; their rights to self-determination, which includes an equal voice in decision-making; and the right to have free, prior and informed consent—basically, the right to say no to violence.

Canada as a state has failed to protect the rights of indigenous women and girls by not preventing the racism, sexism, misogyny and sexualized violence by state actors like law enforcement, in particular the RCMP; private actors like human sex traffickers; and corporate actors like those engaged in man camps, private security and especially the trucking industry.

The failure to address all of these things has led to severe rates of sexualized violence, but it's also important to note that Canada as a state has the responsibility to uphold the human rights of these women regardless of what their constitutional makeup is. It is not a defence in international law to say that the provinces are responsible for this and we're responsible for that. Canada as a state is responsible for all of it. Its continued failures hurt indigenous women and girls directly.

This PDAC report, FBI reports, Amnesty International, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and the United Nations—all have concluded that indigenous women and girls face high rates of sexualized violence and criminalization, and surveillance by state, private and corporate actors.

In terms of solutions, we need a public inquiry into the relationship between all of these resource and extractive projects and megaprojects by state actors and corporate and private actors.

We need to respect the right of indigenous women and girls and their nations to say no to projects. We should heed the UNCERD calls to halt all megaprojects until there is free, prior and informed consent.

• (1310)

We must give reparations to those who have been harmed and ensure that indigenous women are key decision-makers moving forward.

Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Sonia Sidhu): Thank you, Ms. Palmater.

We will now go to Viviane Doré-Nadeau for five minutes.

[Translation]

Ms. Viviane Doré-Nadeau (Director, ConcertAction Femmes Estrie): Good afternoon.

On behalf of ConcertAction Femmes Estrie, I want to thank the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women for inviting our organization to take part in its study on resource development and violence against indigenous women and girls.

. As we do at assemblies of ConcertAction Femmes Estrie, I would like to acknowledge that our offices are situated on the traditional unceded lands of the first peoples. I want to pay tribute to their presence and their role as guardians of the lands and waters where each of us stands today. As members of a feminist organization focused on social and environmental justice, we believe it is essential to acknowledge the past and present consequences of colonialism and to support the indigenous resistance on these lands. I commit to ensuring that I am guided by these words and intentions in my remarks here today.

As ConcertAction Femmes Estrie is not an indigenous organization, it will be hard for me to testify personally to the impact of extractivist violence on indigenous women and girls. I will therefore try to make the best use of the privilege we have of speaking today.

ConcertAction Femmes Estrie is an issue table consisting of some 30 member groups. Its mission is to advocate for the rights of women. It coordinates the World Women's March—Estrie committee, which assists in coordinating that international organization in Quebec.

The World Women's March—Estrie committee has established ties of solidarity with indigenous women, more specifically those from the Macronorte region of Peru, who are also involved in the World Women's March.

The World Women's March—Estrie committee first became interested in Canadian mining companies in 2015 in the course of actions organized on the theme of liberating our bodies, our land and our territories and influenced by the indigenous women of the south. The indigenous women reminded us that we belong to the earth and that the earth does not belong to us. They also said that the systems of colonialism and patriarchy exploit mother earth just as they exploit women's bodies.

In discussing resource development and the violence committed against indigenous women and girls, we must understand that two very different cultures are involved and that different systems of oppression come into play.

First, the present government and the practices of the mining companies appropriate the land of indigenous peoples and thus perpetuate colonialism. That prevents them from living on their lands. We must remember that 66% of mining operations around the world is conducted by companies headquartered in Canada.

Indigenous people have lived here for more than 10,000 years, and when the Europeans arrived, the lands and water were intact. After 600 years of living on these lands, we have already polluted all the waterways, destroyed the forests and torn apart the earth. That also constitutes a form of violence.

When we refer to violence against indigenous women and girls, another system of oppression comes into play, and that is patriarchy, which causes violence against women.

According to a study conducted by the Native Women's Association of Canada in 2021, more than half of the women surveyed had been victims of repetitive violence, sexual harassment and psychological violence at five different mining sites. One woman said she had been fired after reporting a problem to her company, while another woman was asked to remain silent.

The report on the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls outlines the violence that is committed around workers camps at natural resource development sites.

In 2017, the Firelight Research Group published a report stating that sexual assault cases had increased 38% in the first year of the construction phase of a camp in the Fort St. James area.

Last Monday, the World Women's March—Estrée organized a meeting with indigenous women from Peru and Argentina. A Canadian mining company has appropriated 90% of the lands of one community in Peru, leaving only its school, health centre and place of worship. When the community objected to the land grab, it was subjected to violent repressive acts. Some individuals suffered permanent after-effects such as the loss of vision and paralysis. Activists in Argentina were imprisoned after resisting attempts to establish the mine there.

We want measures to be taken to improve the situation.

For example, efforts must be made through the education system to talk to children about gender equality, to show children and adolescents that violence is unacceptable and to teach them to build non-violent, compassionate relationships.

Mining companies should also be required to enforce a policy against the psychological and sexual harassment of women.

Furthermore, we ask that indigenous female workers be informed of their rights of recourse in the event of psychological and sexual violence.

Furthermore, Canada should increase the resources and powers of the Canadian Ombudsman for Responsible Enterprise, who acts as an advocate in matters pertaining to Canadian mining interests and has power to sanction.

• (1315)

We also ask that Canada pass legislation on due diligence with respect to human and environmental rights.

Legislation to prevent planned obsolescence should also be enacted.

Lastly, we demand that the activists imprisoned in Argentina be released.

Thank you very much for listening.

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Sonia Sidhu): Thank you, Madame Doré-Nadeau.

We will now hear from Kathleen Quinn.

Go ahead for five minutes.

[Translation]

Ms. Kathleen Quinn (Executive Director, Centre to End All Sexual Exploitation): Good afternoon.

[English]

Thank you for this opportunity.

I am calling in from the traditional territories of Treaty No. 6 first nations and Métis zone 4. I have served as the executive director for CEASE, the Centre to End All Sexual Exploitation, for 25 years. I speak from the experience of a community-based organization responding to commercial sexual exploitation, sex trafficking and violence against girls and women, many of whom are indigenous.

Edmonton is known as a gateway to the north and the north is known for resource extraction industries, including oil, gas and coal. There is also a significant logging industry often adjacent to these resource extraction industries. All of these industries impact every aspect of life in first nations and Métis communities. While these communities strive to create positive socio-economic outcomes by engaging with the resource development companies, there are negative impacts.

I will focus my comments on migration from communities near resource development industries and the violence indigenous girls and women face when they leave for towns and cities.

A key vulnerability factor is transportation. There are many communities where there is no or very limited access to buses. Hitching a ride puts youth and women at risk of male drivers who may demand sexual services in exchange. When they are dropped off in a nearby town or city, they encounter more risks.

Over 70% of Edmonton's indigenous population originate from other communities. The 2016 census identifies that indigenous people comprised 5.5% of the population. The indigenous population of central Edmonton neighbourhoods, where I live, ranges from 10% to 17.5%. These neighbourhoods are often where indigenous youth and adults migrate first and where they are preyed upon by sex trade exploiters, traffickers, gangs and drug trade profiteers.

While industry work camps are able to establish codes of conduct for workers and contractors on site, there is little control when they leave the camps and travel to nearby towns and cities. This demand by males for access to female bodies fuels the sex trade, especially when women have few economic options. Where there is a demand, there are also those who see a business opportunity to traffic in human beings.

At least 44 sexually exploited women, including transgender and two-spirit persons, were murdered in the Edmonton area in the past 39 years. Many were last seen in our central Edmonton communities, and then their bodies were found outside the city. Over 52% were identified as indigenous, which shows the overrepresentation of indigenous girls and women exploited through sexual violence in the sex trade. Only 11 of these murders have been solved.

For those who survive, they endure the harsh reality of the long-term physical and mental health impact of sexual violence. When compounded with poverty, precarious housing, racism and intergenerational trauma, many indigenous girls and women live the majority of their lives in these conditions of vulnerability. This needs to change.

In conclusion, resource industries must continue to work with indigenous and Métis communities on community plans to decrease violence and sexual exploitation and increase safety and well-being for indigenous girls and women.

They can expand their codes of conduct for workers and contractors to include training on sexual violence, commercial sexual exploitation and human trafficking, such as Enbridge is doing on May 4 for all of their North American operations. They can fund community safety initiatives, employment training bursaries and financial literacy programs both on first nations and Métis communities, and in towns and cities. They can develop wellness programs for the male workforce and focus on positive masculinity, healthy relationships and healthy coping strategies to deal with the unusual workplace stresses required in the resources industry.

Thank you.

• (1320)

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Sonia Sidhu): Thank you, Ms. Quinn.

Finally, we will hear from the representative from Quebec Native Women Inc.

You have five minutes.

[Translation]

Ms. Marjolaine Étienne (President, Quebec Native Women Inc.): Kuei, hello.

Madam Chair, I would like to take a minute to inform you that I will have to leave you at 2:15 p.m. because I have another engagement at the United Nations. My colleague Stéfanie Sirois-Gauthier will finish the meeting with you.

First of all, I would like to thank the members of this committee for affording Quebec Native Women, or QNW, the opportunity to discuss issues of concern arising from the violence, in all its forms, experienced by the indigenous women and girls of Quebec.

For 48 years, QNW has worked for and contributed to the restoration of a balance between men and women, both indigenous and non-indigenous, by giving voice to the needs and priorities of women.

Promoting non-violence has been QNW's main focus since its inception. Our organization therefore thanks the Standing Committee

on the Status of Women for listening to our priorities on the issue of violence as it pertains to mining.

It goes without saying that indigenous women and girls are disproportionately victims of violence in all its forms, by which I mean physical, psychological and sexual violence, but also cultural, mental, spiritual, social, institutional and financial violence. These forms of violence are present in our communities and urban environments. Indigenous women and girls deserve protection from the scourge of violence in all its forms, which has been an additional burden during the pandemic. This violence is the result of all forms of colonial policy that were and still are designed to assimilate indigenous people, more particularly indigenous women.

The report on the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, or NIMMIWG, states that mining formed the basis of colonization policies. The objective was to develop an international trade based on resources and a land never conceded as belonging to the indigenous communities that occupied it, and to do so without their agreement or consent.

The NIMMIWG report condemns the fact that indigenous women and girls are 12 times more likely to be murdered than any other women in Canada, precisely because they are marginalized persons. The discriminatory, patriarchal and assimilatory policies, as well as the indigenous residential schools that were established, are convincing examples that have had, and still have, heavy and permanent intergenerational repercussions. They amount to a slow but devastating genocide.

It scarcely bears mentioning how harmful this has been in the communities and for all indigenous women. I do not want to downplay the violence experienced by women generally, but statistics very clearly show that indigenous women are far more affected by violence than their non-indigenous sisters.

Calls for justice 13.1 to 13.5 in the NIMMIWG report refer expressly to the resource-extraction industries and their impact on indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQIA+ people. These calls for justice mainly request that the safety and security of indigenous women be considered when resource extraction and development are carried out. For that purpose, they must be made stakeholders in the process before, during and after projects are implemented. Projects must also be subject to socioeconomic impact assessments.

The government is also asked to fund research projects on these issues, and the industries concerned are asked to expand and reinforce existing social infrastructure and increase service delivery capacity.

Since we are here today to discuss the violence that indigenous women and girls experience in a resource development context, our organization wonders whether these calls for justice will in fact be answered. Is the project analysis process complete and multifactorial? What are the criteria for project implementation or non-implementation? Are representative indigenous persons, experts and organizations sitting or represented on the various committees? And what of the ongoing monitoring referred to in call for justice 13.2?

All these questions in fact lead back to one single question: does the implementation of development projects actually take into consideration the safety, protection and well-being of indigenous women and girls?

These calls for justice also concern the right to free, prior and informed consent guaranteed under articles 18, 19 and 38 of the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and Canadian constitutional law. It goes without saying that the principle of honour of the Crown is not being honoured in any appreciable way.

Our organization is also concerned about the action taken in response to call for justice 13.5 in the NIMMIWG report, under which governments are supposed to provide further funding for research projects undertaken to understand the problem more clearly. For example, in March 2021, the Native Women's Association of Canada released a relevant study on this point, lamenting the fact that women who work in the resource-extraction industry experience incidents such as unwanted touching and emotional abuse and are subjected to sexual comments, sexual harassment and violence.

• (1325)

One question nevertheless remains: what other recent studies expose the problem? Are there any current studies on the violence that occurs off mining sites? The answer that our organization would like to give is that too few studies have been conducted for women to be heard.

Slightly more women have been working on sites in recent years, but it has previously been acknowledged...

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Sonia Sidhu): I'm sorry—

[Translation]

Ms. Marjolaine Étienne: ...that 99% of jobs are occupied by men.

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Sonia Sidhu): That is your time. You can add more points in your answers. Thank you.

With that, I thank all of our witnesses for your testimony.

We are now going to start our round of questions. For the first round, we'll start with Ms. Dominique Vien.

You have six minutes. Go ahead.

[Translation]

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

Thanks to each of you for this very important testimony.

My first question is for Pamela Palmater.

Ms. Palmater, you indicated that Canada is failing to protect indigenous women. What has the government not done and what should it have done?

[English]

Dr. Pamela Palmater: Thank you very much for the question. I think it's an important one.

Throughout our history, Canada has failed to respect the basic human rights of indigenous women and girls. You can see that in how indigenous women and girls were treated, the theft of children into residential schools, forced sterilizations, scalping bounties and the institutionalization of women, of course. Also, throughout the Indian Act, indigenous women were treated as not being Indian enough to belong to their communities, which set them outside of their communities and put them at risk. There's a long history of law and policy in that regard.

There's also what's happening today, such as the continued forced foster care situation theft of women, the sexual assaults by state actors like the RCMP, police, doctors and nurses—

[Translation]

Mrs. Dominique Vien: Thank you, Ms. Palmater. Pardon me for interrupting, but I have very little time.

How do you view the issue of violence against indigenous women in mining development and resource extraction? I think it's a shared responsibility. I said last week that everyone should be concerned about the situation, the chief of police, the RCMP in this instance, and community leaders, corporate managers and their owners. Where do we begin? Do we sit everyone down around the same table? Ms. Étienne and Ms. Quinn touched on this. Where do we begin? We can't stop economic development, but we can be better and do things better. How do we go about it?

• (1330)

[English]

Dr. Pamela Palmater: In fact, I think the starting premise is that we can stop certain projects. The presumption that all projects must go through in all situations, no matter what the human cost is, is how we got into this. Some projects are simply not safe for the environment or indigenous peoples.

The federal government has significant financial and political levers in its relationships with the provinces and territories. They have the ability to make it conditional that any federal approvals, any federal support and any federal money is conditional on a guarantee of prevention of violence against indigenous women and girls in all of its forms, also to purposefully investigate, prosecute and rout out all of the RCMP sex offenders, all of the man camp sex offenders and all of the corporate sex offenders doing these things both in Canada and around the world.

We shouldn't be talking about Canadian mining companies that are engaged in gang rapes, and that's what's happening here in Canada, the United States and around the world. Canada has the legal obligation to stop that, and it has the tools to do that.

[Translation]

Mrs. Dominique Vien: Thank you very much, Ms. Palmater.

Ms. Étienne, you mentioned federal research projects. Do you think we have a lot of data on resource development and violence against women?

Do we have conclusive data on that?

Ms. Marjolaine Étienne: As I mentioned, there's very little documentation on indigenous women and resource development. I think women have to have their own place in natural resource development. It's not just a matter of being able to hunt big game. That power was historically reserved for men and still is today. Indigenous women are allowed to engage in another activity that's more cultural in nature. I'm talking about picking berries and medicinal plants. So we'd better find a place in resource development.

Here's a telling example. Plants may be uprooted during forestry and other resource development operations, which prevents them from growing back. Consequently, funding should be provided for research projects in that field as well.

Mrs. Dominique Vien: Thank you, Ms. Étienne.

My final question is for Ms. Quinn.

How do you view accountability...

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Sonia Sidhu): I'm sorry, Ms. Vien, but that's your time.

[Translation]

Mrs. Dominique Vien: Perhaps I can come back to that later if I have the time. Thank you.

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Sonia Sidhu): Now we go to Ms. Lambropoulos for another six minutes.

Please go ahead, Emmanuella.

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

I would like to begin by thanking all of our witnesses for being here with us today. Thank you for the great testimony and for being here to answer our questions.

My first questions are for Ms. Palmater.

Thank you very much for your very passionate testimony. I can see how much this issue is one that you care deeply about. A lot of the statistics and facts that you mentioned were very shocking to me. It's great that we're learning about this, at least here. I'd like to know and get a bit of your input specifically on how we can make things better.

In terms of what happens in Canada, you mentioned the RCMP. I sat on the public safety committee. I know that the RCMP needs to do better. Not even members in the RCMP are safe from the system itself, so I can only imagine for communities like indigenous communities, which are often victimized, how much they might be at risk when they're at the hands of the RCMP.

Why is it, do you think, that Canada has the status that it has around the world in terms of human rights violations when it comes to resource development?

I guess I'll ask the second question as well.

You mentioned Canada having the possibility of implementing policies that would help us to deal with that. Do you know of any countries around the world that do have stricter policies? If the U.S. is doing it better than we are, what exactly do they have in place to protect indigenous communities around the world? If you know of any countries that are doing better, what can we take from that?

● (1335)

Dr. Pamela Palmater: Thank you so much for your questions.

The first one, if I understand it, is relating to Canada's reputation worldwide and why it has that reputation.

There are a very significant set of factors here. The large number of entities that are engaged in the extractive industry worldwide are known as transnational corporations, so corporations that are instituted here in Canada but they also conduct work in other countries. When massive human rights violations happen, especially the killing of indigenous people and the gang rapes of indigenous people in other countries, and we try to bring Canada to account, Canada denies any ability to deal with it. They say, "Well, that crime happened in another country. We can't interfere with their sovereignty." They sit back and don't take responsibility for it, despite the fact that they are Canadian companies. The Canadian companies basically say, "We're in Canada. You can't touch us."

It leaves primarily indigenous women all around the world without too many options. We have human rights organizations that try to advocate on their behalf. Sometimes they might get settlements, but these settlements are almost always confidential. They're never published, so you don't have an accurate account of just how bad it is. All we know is from the individual evidence that we see on the ground.

It is Canada's failure to actually step up and take responsibility for what Canadians and Canadian companies do around the world that is fearful. Other people in other contexts think Canada is great, but when I go to other countries and I meet with indigenous women, they say, "You're from Canada. You know their companies are the worst; they commit the worst atrocities." That's not something that Canada should be proud of, and it reflects how they've failed to deal with indigenous women here in Canada.

In terms of what they could do, there are a plethora of things.

The United Nations special rapporteur on violence against women visited Canada and talked to Canadian officials and indigenous women, and was shocked to hear about all of the violent sexual assaults by RCMP officers on indigenous women and little girls. They called on Canada to have a specific review or inquiry into that.

We asked the national inquiry.... We asked Canada to specifically include an investigation of RCMP and other officers in the extractive industry in the sexualized violence against indigenous women and girls, and those two things were specifically left out of the terms of reference. We have to stop economics from trumping human rights.

I think there are a lot of things we can do.

On a go-forward basis, no project happens until it can pass the bare minimum human rights standard that is now incorporated in UNDRIP. UNDRIP is the bare minimum human rights standard. That means that any project that has the risk of sexualized violence for indigenous women and girls does not go ahead unless there are guarantees of protections for these women in all of their forms: sexual exploitations, murders, disappearances, the use of their lands and resources, and failure to respect their rights.

Canada has financial levers. Even where Canada isn't the only authorizer of projects, it can say that a condition of our approval, on say, this multiprovincial project, is all of these guarantees that go to indigenous women and girls to protect them. It could do that. It chooses not to.

The provinces are like the wild west. They're literally a free-for-all. Canada has to step up and show leadership in this regard.

• (1340)

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Thank you very much.

There are a few things you said in there that I think will definitely help us in terms of recommendations as well, so thank you for being more specific on that.

You mentioned the UN, but are there any other countries you would point to that are doing a better job? What exactly are they doing? Have you looked into that at all?

Dr. Pamela Palmater: My research is on what's happening in other countries in terms of violence in the extractive industry.

We know that in the United States it's just as bad, if not worse. It's the same within Mexico. Anywhere where there are Canadian mining companies, that's what we've been tracking. We haven't looked at other countries. There are just so many countries, but it's following what the UN is trying to tell Canada and other countries to do around protecting women here and around the world.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Sonia Sidhu): Thank you, Ms. Palmater.

Thank you, Emmanuella.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Thank you very much.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Sonia Sidhu): Next, we'll continue with Madame Larouche for six minutes.

[Translation]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Madam Chair, this is Sylvie Bérubé speaking. I'm replacing Ms. Larouche, who's otherwise occupied.

I want to thank all the witnesses here for appearing as part of this study, which I think is very relevant. It's high time we talked about everything that's going on relating to indigenous women. I come from the riding of Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, and I'm very well aware of what's going on.

My first question will be for Ms. Étienne.

We know that the unacceptable violence still occurring in resource development industries is definitely inconsistent with the very objectives of reconciliation that the government advocates and must achieve. Since 2019, we've had an important report before us that sheds light on that issue. The purpose of that study is directly related to calls for justice 13.4 and 13.5 stated in the report on the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, or NIMMIWG. That report contains important recommendations to which the federal government must respond.

Why do you think the problem of resource development and violence persists when that violence was named and exposed in this national inquiry in 2015?

Ms. Marjolaine Étienne: Initially, we had the NIMMIWG recommendations. There are various articles. A great deal of work definitely remains to be done to mitigate current trends in all areas where women suffer violence, in economic development and other fields. I won't name them because I think we're aware of all that. Particularly since, as I noted in my remarks, indigenous women and girls have to fight this phenomenon in urban areas and in their own communities.

In response to your question, I think that reconciliation is a goal and that everything has to start somewhere. We see things emerging in Canada, the graves, in particular, and everything else. All these things inevitably affect women. I think the implementation of this plan must be subject to enhanced monitoring. When I say plan, I'm talking about the NIMMIWG report, which contains a series of measures and recommendations. We have to find a way to ensure that a plan is implemented in the short, medium and long terms so that it's ultimately carried out.

As regards women on mining sites and so on, we know that it's men who generally oversee all these economic development aspects. We have to get into solution mode in order to ensure that women are everywhere, even in these sectors. With regard to that aspect, I would even say that women should also be involved in the fight against climate change. It's also important to ensure that indigenous women are involved in those fields.

I don't know whether that answers your question in a general way. I do think we have to do more to raise awareness about the situation of women. Ancestral rights to the lands under development must also be recognized. Then there's the issue of reparations for everything that happened during the events that have marked the history of women and the ensuing reconciliation process.

• (1345)

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé: Ms. Étienne, we discussed the NIMMIWG report.

Do you think any progress has been made in implementing calls for justice 13.4 and 13.5 of the national inquiry report?

Ms. Marjolaine Étienne: Measures are currently being introduced, although perhaps not to the extent we would like because, as I said earlier, much remains to be done. Certain things are being done, and some must be done upstream before access to certain funding comes to an end. You always have to be two steps ahead to ensure a response to the plan and recommendations and that measures are introduced in connection with the NIMMIWG report.

Things are being done now, perhaps not to the extent we would like, but we'll closely monitor what happens next to ensure that what's done addresses the situation of Quebec's indigenous women and girls.

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé: Thank you, Ms. Étienne.

I'd like to ask Ms. Doré-Nadeau a question if I still have a little time left.

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Sonia Sidhu): You have 25 seconds.

[Translation]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé: Ms. Doré-Nadeau, you said that an act could prevent planned obsolescence.

Would you please tell me more about that?

Ms. Viviane Doré-Nadeau: Planned obsolescence refers to the fact that the lifespan of cell phones and many other devices is planned so that it's far shorter than it might otherwise be.

As a result, we have to develop some of our resources even more to support a whole system of consumption. This also causes violence, as we have seen. Consequently, we must adopt legislation on planned obsolescence.

Other countries have done so, and it's important that Canada do the same.

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Sonia Sidhu): Thank you, Ms. Doré-Nadeau and Madame Bérubé.

Before going ahead with our next speaker, Ms. Palmater, there seems to be a slight problem with your sound. Could you unplug and replug your headset and then say a few words? We'll see if your sound is good.

Dr. Pamela Palmater: Is that better? I hope you can hear this.

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Alexie Labelle): It's okay. It didn't change, but they can keep interpreting. It's a little staticky, but they're going to do their best.

Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Sonia Sidhu): Thank you.

Next we will go to Leah Gazan for six minutes.

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Thank you so much, Chair.

Thanks to all the witnesses for being here today for this very important study.

My first questions are for Dr. Palmater.

In the last Parliament, we passed Bill C-15 and now the government is required to ensure that all the laws are aligned with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. As you mentioned, these are minimum human rights that any human being needs, indigenous or not, to have. These aren't special rights. These are just rights that haven't been afforded to indigenous peoples specifically.

How is the government's failure to uphold this new legislation by ensuring its implementation—including turning a blind eye to the violence being perpetrated against women, girls and two-spirit people around resource extraction—further exacerbating this crisis and normalization of violence?

• (1350)

Dr. Pamela Palmater: Thank you for the question. It's exceptionally important.

You've hit on all of the key points. We're now in an entirely different legal and policy field.

UNDRIP is the bare minimum standard, and UNDRIP says there can be no violence against indigenous women and girls. It says that special attention in everything Canada does has to be given to indigenous women and girls and that they have the right to say yes or no to things that happen to them, their bodies and their lands. They have a right to be a part of self-determination and to decide whether or not they want to protect their territories, their coastal seas, their waters and their resources, and to benefit from it. This is the bare minimum.

The other thing that UNDRIP does is recognize that indigenous peoples have the right to enact their own laws and govern their own territories. Indigenous women are at the forefront now of being decision-makers.

Everything has to change. It is not just about the Canadian federal laws but also provincial laws, because all of these human rights obligations vest in the state, regardless of our constitutional make-up. It's no defence to say—

Ms. Leah Gazan: I asked that because we're witnessing in real time, for example, militarized RCMP involved in excessive violence against indigenous women who are defending their unceded lands and territories. In the Wet'suwet'en territory, for example—I often use that example—they used an axe, a chainsaw and a guard dog to rip down a door. Two women were behind the door, totally unarmed.

How does the involvement of state police within these resource extractions further implicate the federal and provincial governments' failure to ensure that indigenous women are protected and that their minimum human rights are also protected?

Dr. Pamela Palmater: Again, you've raised a really important issue. The RCMP not only failed to protect indigenous women and girls from violence, but they failed miserably to investigate or even open up files. We know that from the B.C. inquiry into missing women. We know this from the national inquiry. We know that internally, they sexually assault and abuse their own female officers. They're not stepping up to protect indigenous women and girls.

On the other hand, they criminalize them, surveil them, physically assault them and arrest and charge them for peacefully protecting their lands and waters, for peacefully protecting their own territories. They're unarmed. The police come in militarized. The fact that they have authorized themselves to use lethal overwatch on unarmed indigenous women and girls is something the whole world has seen and has spoken out about, such as the UN and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.

Canada uses the RCMP and other police forces in different provinces as the enforcers of their genocidal policies—extraction and land at all costs. The RCMP does so willingly and, sometimes, independently of what governments have to say. They're a real loose cannon that we have to deal with. Again, however, it's not just them. The RCMP in Winnipeg is one of the worst police forces in the country. There's the OPP, the SQ—you name it, we have a huge problem—and they're all involved in some way in criminalizing, brutalizing and assaulting indigenous women and girls, especially in land defence situations.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Thank you very much.

I asked that because there were certain calls to justice related specifically to policing. The sad part of this story is that the very systems that were supposed to be designed to protect us have been part of the harm against indigenous women and girls.

You previously called the violence with resource development industries caused by man camps, such as Muskrat Falls, “a modern day form of genocide”. Could you please elaborate on that?

• (1355)

Dr. Pamela Palmater: It's the general sense that men in these man camps—transient workers, RCMP officers or anyone involved in this corporate industry—assume that indigenous women and girls are going to be there for the taking. How did they know that? Why do human traffickers in those contexts target indigenous women and girls?

It's because, traditionally, no one has cared. There are very few, if any, prosecutions that get all the way to a successful prosecution. People in law enforcement who engage in the same kind of predat-

tory acts are not going to follow up with other people doing the same thing, because they're involved in it.

That's the problem here. There's this assumption, which is a very old stereotype, that we are there to be exploited, and they can exploit us because they can get away with it.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Sonia Sidhu): I'm sorry, Dr. Palmater. That is your time. I'm so sorry to interrupt.

That is the end of our first round.

Thank you, Ms Gazan.

In our second round, we'll go to five minutes for the CPC, five minutes for the Liberals and two and a half minutes each for the Bloc and the NDP.

We'll start with Ms. Ferreri for five minutes.

Michelle, the floor is yours.

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

I would love to start with Ms. Quinn, if I may.

Ms. Quinn, thank you for the work you're doing.

One of the things I'd love to focus on—I'm a big believer in prevention—is raising men in a culture that has the right education and tools, so that they know things. There's a bit of a gap, and that's being gracious. There's still a big gap in understanding the vulnerability of indigenous women, murdered and missing indigenous women, for lot of people if they haven't been exposed to it or know about it.

What do you guys do in your centre to educate? Do you have outreach programs in the community for education around this?

Ms. Kathleen Quinn: Thank you very much for that question.

CEASE does a number of things, and some in relationship with others. We actually offer what's called the “sex trade offender program” for men who have been arrested with attempting to buy sexual services, both street-based sexual services as well as those online. We take that opportunity to educate men about all of the aspects of our laws, but more importantly, the impact on women and girls. We have indigenous women who participate in the education program, because we know that we have to build empathy. When you care about another human being and hear their story, you will reflect and make changes in your behaviour. That is one thing we do.

I consulted with the Bonnyville native friendship centre before appearing here, because they are a town in the midst of resource-based industries, where there is also a lot of transiency. They have just recently started a human trafficking community initiative, and they are doing awareness. The biggest thing they said that they really need to concentrate on right now is awareness. They know they're ruffling feathers in the community because they're speaking out and they're putting things out boldly. In Edmonton, we've also done the same kind of really bold fieldwork campaigns and other things.

More importantly, though, awareness is one part of it, but it's really about engaging boys and men in looking at themselves and their attitudes towards girls and women and two-spirit persons, and beginning that shift at an early age, countering the negative stereotypes that boys and men are raised with. We have some great male leaders in Edmonton, who are bringing forward those conversations on how to be a healthy male, not a toxic male.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Yes, I love that.

Ms. Kathleen Quinn: I'm very encouraged by the leadership of men in our community.

• (1400)

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

It's nice to hear that you're targeting the men in the education aspect. I loved that it's building empathy, which is very valuable. Thank you very much for that. It sounds like it's a success.

Can I get a yes or a no? Are these programs a success? Do you have any data to come out of them yet?

Ms. Kathleen Quinn: We have minimal data. It always takes money to study the long-term impacts, but we do believe that we see changes in the attitudes and behaviours of those who come to the program.

One indicator, too, is that sometimes we have men call us and say, "I haven't been arrested, but can I come? I know I have a childhood problem." That's a good thing.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: That's a big step.

I know we're short on time, so I'm going to jump right over to Madame Étienne.

I'm wondering if you have any stats on a reduction in family violence with economic development. My experience in speaking with chiefs of indigenous nations across the country is that there is definitely a want for economic development. I'm wondering if you have any stats around a reduction in family violence with economic development.

[Translation]

Ms. Marjolaine Étienne: We have very little in the way of information, statistics or documentation on indigenous women and girls and economic development, the economy and so on.

As I said earlier, funding should be provided in order to study and document the theme of indigenous women and natural resource development. That would help us determine what those women need so they can hold positions on sites, acquire more training and entrepreneurial support and so on. We need to know more about

women and economic development and all the development that's being done on the land.

I'd also say that some communities in Quebec are approaching promoters for the purpose of developing natural resources but aren't doing it in an organized way. Certain criteria have to be met to respect the indigenous families that use the land.

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Sonia Sidhu): Thank you, Ms. Étienne.

Thank you, Ms. Ferreri.

Next we go to Ms. Shanahan for five minutes.

Brenda, the floor is yours.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Thank you very much, Chair.

I also thank the witnesses for being here today. This is a topic that has been of great concern to our government since we formed government in 2015, and we have been putting significant sums of money into organizations that are working directly against gender-based violence and preventing gender-based violence.

My question is for Ms. Quinn.

You addressed earlier that you're doing education, and I agree that. With men and boys, it's very important to do so. For women and girls, we've also heard that women and girls who face abuse growing up have more difficulty recognizing abuse in other relationships.

Can you explain or expand on how this trauma makes indigenous women and girls more vulnerable to sexual exploitation and what strategies we can use to address this? Could you also comment on whether you've seen the effects of the additional funding that this government has put into preventing gender-based violence?

Ms. Kathleen Quinn: Thanks. I'll do my best, and I would defer to the indigenous women on this panel.

There are a number of wonderful initiatives. We have the Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women in Alberta that engages women all the time and also works with young women, and I celebrate their work in the community. Again, there are programs called Girl Power that are specially oriented towards indigenous girls in first nation and Métis communities as well as different types of educational initiatives.

I know that through WAGE, for example, the Bonnyville Native Friendship Centre received some funding, and they are working in their community. I think we're seeing some changes.

I know, too, the Canadian Women's Foundation work has been really critical in Fort McMurray and other places. I think there's some good news happening, but we still have to do the big work to counter exploitation. I think I would defer to Ms. Palmater because things have to go into policy as well, that and enforcement.

We can do all the great preventive education in our communities and in our own ways. At the same time, if we are not looking at the structural injustices that are there.... For example, I would encourage everyone to check out the recent statement from Enbridge pipeline about human trafficking. They have engaged an indigenous woman to do the training of their workers and contractors in North America. That's the big change we need to see that will support indigenous girls and women.

Thank you.

• (1405)

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Very good. I will ask Dr. Palmater to comment on that same question. Hopefully I'm going to have time to talk to Madame Étienne as well.

Go ahead, Dr. Palmater.

Dr. Pamela Palmater: One thing that Canada is often celebrated for is that it has a ton of laws, human rights laws, liberties and freedoms, and any time it goes to the UN or the Inter-American Commission, it can make a giant list of tons of program initiatives, pilot projects and everything else.

What happens is that they haven't shown how that translates into less violence against women, less foster care, less exploitation or less trafficking. In fact, if you look at the statistics over a 20-year period, it continues to increase, so Canada is really dropping the ball, sometimes because it's focusing in the wrong direction. We're looking at—

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: I'll just break in there. Have you seen the effects, though, of the additional funding that we have put in place? I'm a cost-benefit person by profession, and I just want to know if we are putting money in the right places overall.

Dr. Pamela Palmater: No. Disproportionately you put too much money into political organizations and not enough into the community-based grassroots groups that are doing the work on the ground, that are helping the homeless, that are helping the women in the Downtown Eastside and that are advocating for women in prisons.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Thank you very much.

[Translation]

Ms. Étienne, I don't know whether we have any time left...

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Sonia Sidhu): I'm sorry, that's all the time you had, Ms. Shanahan.

It's now the Bloc Québécois' turn.

Ms. Bérubé, you have two and a half minutes.

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé: If I have enough time, I'd like to ask Ms. Étienne to tell us about resources for helping and supporting women victims of violence, particularly since many communities are rural and remote.

What you think the needs of those communities are?

Ms. Marjolaine Étienne: Their needs are considerable. Indigenous communities in Quebec are situated in remote places. The Atikamekw nation, for example, lives in the forest and thus is isolated. Major investment is required to ensure an appropriate quality of health care. That's also the case in every other respect.

The needs of the communities located near cities are different because they don't live in the same environment. What happened to Ms. Echaquan, for example, something that was one of the significant events of the past two years, suggests systemic racism was involved.

Quebec, and more specifically the government of that province, will have a lot of work to do to acknowledge that there is indeed systemic racism in its institutions. The task will be to provide an accessible, high-quality service that's appropriate and culturally suited to the needs of indigenous women and children, as well as to a general clientele.

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé: Thank you.

My next question is for Ms. Doré-Nadeau. I'm sure you'll agree with me that it's also important in the context of this study to find concrete solutions to this problem.

Do you feel that the federal government should implement measures and regulations for extractive companies? This would involve establishing a specific framework, including rules on harassment, that these companies would have to comply with.

• (1410)

Ms. Viviane Doré-Nadeau: Yes, it's extremely important to introduce measures. For a very long time, various groups have been asking for an ombudsman. As Ms. Palmater was saying, when acts of violence are committed in other countries, it's really very difficult to ensure that our Canadian companies are held accountable. We need due diligence legislation in Canada for human rights and the environment. Our companies ought not to be able to exploit and kill people on grounds that they were resisting the companies' presence on their land. It tarnishes our country's reputation seriously, and of course many lives are at stake.

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Sonia Sidhu): Thank you, Madame Bérubé. Your time is up.

For the final round, we'll go to the NDP for two and a half minutes.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Ms. Quinn, one of the focuses of your organization deals with income bridges to address exploitation. I put forward a bill for a guaranteed livable basic income, Bill C-223. Senator Kim Pate has put forward the same bill—exactly the same language—on the Senate side, Bill S-233. Part of the reason I put forward that bill was in response to calls for justice recommendation 4.5 from the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, because as you indicated, there's a direct correlation between income security and the increased risk of violence.

Would you agree with me that a guaranteed livable basic income would assist women, girls and two-spirit individuals to be safer from violence?

Ms. Kathleen Quinn: Thank you so much for that question, and thank you for putting that bill forward. We absolutely support it.

During the pandemic, we got a little grant through some federal money, and we did a little pilot project where we added in dollars, about \$1,000 a month for six months to five women. We asked, what difference did that make? These were all women who were in sexual exploitation, trying to make money by providing sex services. They all said that a guaranteed annual livable income would mean they would not have to sell their bodies.

I absolutely support this move. It would make a major difference for indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBT people, for all people, if we had this. I commend you on that leadership.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Thank you so much.

I often feel that indigenous people are provided with a false choice. Economic development or being safe from violence and sexual exploitation is an example that we're studying here, and certainly in the inquiry that happened in Quebec.

My question is for President Étienne. It was tragic seeing what came out of Lac-Simon, especially with the involvement of the SQ. What safety measures have been put in place since that inquiry to ensure indigenous women of that territory, who often have been given that choice around resource extraction, are safer, or is it the same?

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Sonia Sidhu): Answer very quickly. You have just five seconds.

[Translation]

Ms. Stéfanie Sirois-Gauthier (Legal and Policy Analyst, Quebec Native Women Inc.): Ms. Étienne had to leave, as she told us earlier.

Very few measures have been introduced as a result of these criticisms. So few, in fact, that I would venture to say that there were none at all. That is extremely disappointing. We were just now talking about reconciliation, but basically, nothing is being done.

• (1415)

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Sonia Sidhu): Thank you.

Thank you, Ms. Gazan.

This completes our second round. I want to thank our witnesses once again for their answers.

Now, for the third round each party will have six minutes. We will start with CPC member Shelby Kramp-Neuman.

You have six minutes.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, CPC): First of all, thanks to all of the witnesses for all of your time, expertise and opinions.

I'd certainly like to start by suggesting, acknowledging and stressing unequivocally the unacceptability of any of the violations that so many of these individuals are enduring. It's not okay.

That being said, I would like to just make reference to what Ms. Palmater said. Earlier you referenced something particular in your report. It's absolutely correct on the statistics of the report, stating that Canadian mining companies are three times more likely than other countries to engage in violations. However, it's important for me to clarify two points from that particular report. Allow me to read it into the record.

The report is "Corporate Social Responsibility: Movements and Footprints of Canadian Mining and Exploration Firms in the Developing World" done by the Canadian Centre for the Study of Resource Conflict. It states under its "Results and Analysis" section that:

It is important to note that only information on incidents that have attracted significant public attention are captured in this report. Countries where media or civil society groups are negatively controlled by the state or industry will necessarily have less transparency and accountability. As a result, those countries will appear to have limited violations.

Secondly, the report also states, "Considering Canada does have over 75% of the world's mining and exploration company headquarters, it follows that there should be a proportional concentration of CSR violations."

I just wanted to point that out for the committee.

Moving forward, I'd like to ask a question. I had intended on asking Madame Étienne, but I'll ask either you, Ms. Sirois-Gauthier or Ms. Quinn, if you'd prefer to answer.

The question is more directed to that of progress. Earlier there was a lot of conversation about reports and studies done, but what are we doing to move forward? There was the federal pathway that was brought forward with the intention to support systematic change and address all of the tragedies. My specific question to either one of you is this. Based on your experiences, could either of you speak about the potential effectiveness and/or ineffectiveness of the federal pathway program?

Go ahead, Ms. Quinn.

Ms. Kathleen Quinn: I would defer to Ms. Sirois-Gauthier, if she would like to speak first.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: Perfect. Thank you.

[Translation]

Ms. Stéfanie Sirois-Gauthier: Thank you for asking that question. It's very interesting to be talking about the plan that was presented in June 2021.

Remember that the National Inquiry into MMIWG was conducted in 2019. Two years later, we presented a plan, but it was not really implemented. We are hoping for major changes soon.

Even though we at Quebec Native Women have great hopes and are very optimistic about the introduction of desired changes, we have serious doubts. In fact, nothing has yet demonstrated that there have been any concrete changes on the ground.

It's true that considerable amounts of funding have been invested to combat all forms of violence, but there are so many types of violence affecting indigenous women in so many different ways that their impact is not very tangible.

That's what I wanted to say about systemic change. We hope that there will be major changes, but there have been few results so far.

[English]

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: Excellent. Thank you.

Go ahead, Ms. Quinn.

● (1420)

Ms. Kathleen Quinn: My apologies, I'm not familiar with the pathway report. However, I would speak to a couple of things.

I'm very proud of our City of Edmonton. They developed an indigenous framework and have been steadily working on that. On April 6 there was a renewed commitment to specifically listening to the voices of indigenous women around what more we need to do in Edmonton as a city—I don't work for the city—to decrease the number of murdered and missing women and improve and lift up the contributions to our community.

Our Alberta government has also made a strong commitment over the last number of years to the family information liaison unit to support the families of murdered and missing women throughout the province and to, again, make renewed commitments through building in indigenous advisory committees every step of the way.

I am also privileged to support the work of the indigenous advisory and monitoring committee for the socio-economic subcommittee of the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion. As I sit and listen to the meetings, I see heavy engagement of communities along that pipeline route, shaping what is happening and identifying the gaps in resources, such as shelters or the need for training. I see those positive developments around me.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: I guess another question....

Am I done?

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Sonia Sidhu): Yes. Thank you, Shelby.

We will now go to Ms. Kayabaga for six minutes.

Go ahead, Arielle.

Ms. Arielle Kayabaga (London West, Lib.): Thank you so much, Madam Chair.

I want to take the opportunity to thank the witnesses for being here and for the information they've shared with us.

Ms. Palmater, in your expertise, what are the necessary steps you have identified, or the ones that have been shared with you, that

you see would reduce the risk for indigenous women who live near resource extraction sites?

Dr. Pamela Palmater: Thank you so much for your question. It's something that we talk about internationally when we compare at the UN and the Inter-American Commission but also amongst women on the ground. I think one of the biggest things is for action to actually be taken on all of the ongoing violence and exploitation.

It's one of those things that happen right in plain sight. You have human trafficking happening at truck stops near the man camps. You have it happening just outside the man camps and sometimes inside the man camps. Everybody knows about it. Police know about it. The managers know about it. It doesn't ever get addressed. There seems to be this barrier to want to address this for indigenous women and girls.

The other thing is to look at what hasn't worked. There have been a million recommendations that say that they just need cultural awareness or gender sensitivity training, but the problem has never been our culture. The problem is violent sexual crimes and violent human trafficking crimes. How do you have zero tolerance for these violent criminal acts that are happening—with the RCMP, corporate actors, state actors or private actors—when there's no follow-up or investigation? There's no real prosecution. They all do it with relative impunity.

I think we really need to look at anything where you can check a box—you know, a community initiative or a donation to a pow-wow. All of those things should be happening anyway, as partnerships, but the failure to address the ongoing and right out in the open violence that's happening, that's what seems to elude everybody. They want to pick around the edges and not really address the problem.

Ms. Arielle Kayabaga: Budget 2021 did allocate \$540.3 million over the course of five years, beginning in 2021-22, and \$126.8 million ongoing, to support indigenous communities currently served under the first nations policing program and to expand the program to new indigenous communities.

What do you think have been some of the take-aways for communities who are served by the first nations policing program? What have you heard from that program?

Dr. Pamela Palmater: Some of the key concerns are around a lack of jurisdiction and a lack of recognition of first nation laws, whether they be laws created under the Indian Act, such as bylaws, or their own traditional laws. There's a lack of jurisdiction to deal with the predominantly non-native predators who engage in these acts of violence.

Generally, jurisdiction tends to be limited to the reserve boundaries, or, at best, band members, but statistically, the vast number of people who engage in acts of human trafficking, exploitation, murders and disappearances of indigenous women are non-native people. It's the same kind of problem that the tribes have in the U.S. They have court systems, they have laws and they have police officers, but their jurisdiction is limited to on reserve. We know that the majority of the violence happens off reserve by these man camps.

That's going to be an ongoing problem. I'm glad they are providing more money to first nations to have their own policing or safety officers or whatever alternatives they want, but it's the lack of recognition of our laws and jurisdiction that prevents dealing with the majority of the offenders, including the RCMP or people in the military. How can we go against them when they have their own insulated processes?

• (1425)

Ms. Arielle Kayabaga: Thank you for sharing your comments, Ms. Palmater.

[Translation]

Ms. Doré-Nadeau, ConcertAction Femmes Estrie recently organized a round table called "L'exploitation des minières canadiennes à l'international et ses impacts sur les femmes", about international Canadian mining company operations and their impact on women.

What were the conclusions of this roundtable? Do you think they could be applicable in Canada?

Ms. Viviane Doré-Nadeau: Yes. One item that came up at the round table discussions was a Canadian mine in Peru that had attacked activists. Our main recommendation was that there be genuine consultation of local populations when mining projects are undertaken. The mining companies ought not to take over the land.

There were also all kinds of violent repression in Argentina. Fourteen activists are in prison now because they opposed mining development. That's why we are asking for a policy that would give an ombudsman the resources required to levy sanctions when Canadian companies cause harm abroad. Sometimes there is fierce violence causing permanent harm, like paralysis or blindness, to some people. Violence like that is totally unacceptable.

We also want our Canadian companies to be much more accountable for their actions when they infringe human rights in other countries.

Ms. Arielle Kayabaga: Thanks. If I could ask you another question...

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Sonia Sidhu): Thank you, Arielle.

[Translation]

Ms. Larouche, you have the floor for six minutes.

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I'd like to thank the witnesses for their testimony, to which I listened attentively before leaving to give my speech on Bill C-233, whose purpose is to counter violence between intimate partners. I

took the time to listen to you before rushing off to the House of Commons.

I'd like to return briefly to Ms. Étienne's opening address. Given that she had to leave, Ms. Sirois-Gauthier might be able to answer my question.

In her address, Ms. Étienne spoke about the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which has not yet been signed.

What are the consequences of the fact that this United Nations declaration has still not been signed?

Ms. Stéfanie Sirois-Gauthier: When Ms. Étienne spoke about the United Nations Declaration, she was referring to the MMIWG calls to action 13.1 to 13.5, which we also discussed earlier.

The goal of these calls to action is for the welfare and safety of indigenous women to be taken into consideration in the development of mining projects, which is currently not being done, or at least not enough. Indigenous women are entitled to consultation, as provided in Canadian constitutional law and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Ms. Étienne and I are in New York at the moment to take part in the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. One of the issues being discussed is free and informed consent. The fact is that the absence of consent is blatant. That's the link with the declaration.

What is clear is that mining projects are implemented even if there is no consent. We want to note, however, that Femmes autochtones du Québec is not necessarily against projects that would be beneficial to communities and their residents *Technical difficulty* economic emancipation. However, such projects have often not been conducted in a way that respects human rights or guarantees the safety and welfare of indigenous women.

Unfortunately, that means women continue to experience all forms of violence, in addition to having their land and resources developed without being consulted and without their consent. With all this is happening right in front of them, it continues to have serious intergenerational impacts, added onto the colonization process and what happened in residential schools.

All of the repercussions we are still experiencing today in terms of mining, forestry and resource development in general are like a wheel going round.

The cycle of all forms of violence never ends. The consequences are felt on many levels and they are neither taken into consideration nor properly assessed.

• (1430)

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: Thank you very much.

When you say that you're not necessarily against all projects, I take that to mean that you believe it's important to speak nation to nation and establish a better dialogue.

My next question is for Ms. Doré-Nadeau.

You talked a lot about the mining companies this week. I'd like to point out that my colleague from Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot attempted to introduce a motion in the House pertaining to these Canadian mining companies in order to obtain a better overview of their impact abroad. Unfortunately, the motion was defeated.

I'd like to return to this issue because you talked about it earlier and my colleague Ms. Bérubé also asked some questions about it.

Can you give me examples of what extractive companies that operate internationally do elsewhere? Has any progress been made in Quebec on this?

Ms. Viviane Doré-Nadeau: Unfortunately, at the international level, there is often a great deal of corruption and the police continue to behave violently towards women, as they do here.

Any indigenous opposition to the mining companies is ignored. We are asking for indigenous peoples to be consulted when a mining company begins operating on their land so that the development process can go smoothly. That's not what we are seeing at the moment.

Canada needs stricter legislation for companies. There are, unfortunately, serious shortcomings in this respect. Canada is becoming a paradise for the mining companies because there is so little regulation. It really needs to do something about it.

We also talked at length about changes that were needed from the environmental and sustainable development standpoint. It's important to think about how best to extract primary resources and rare earths.

In our discussions about climate change, we really need to reconsider how we use the land, and our idea of progress, which encourages methods that are really destroying our land. We need to draw inspiration from the methods used by the people of the First Nations to protect their lands.

Thank you.

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: I agree with that. Resource development is threatening the environment, and that affects all of us in one way or another.

Madam Chair, I think my speaking time is up.

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Sonia Sidhu): Thank you, Madame Larouche.

We will go to Ms. Leah Gazan for six minutes.

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

I know that some of the committee have talked about the pathway plan. I've actually put forward an Order Paper question to see what funds have gone out the door from the 2021 allotment, because it seems to me that the government is not responding with the urgency that this current situation demands.

One of the committee members talked about return on investment. I'm arguing that the money hasn't yet been invested, and in fact, zero dollars have been invested in the new budget to deal with the crisis of murdered and missing indigenous women and girls.

This isn't a concern just for me. AFN, NWAC and National Family and Survivors Circle have also noted inadequate investment and put forward numbers, to no avail. It's certainly a crisis, and the voices of indigenous women seem to constantly be disregarded.

Madame Sirois-Gauthier, you spoke about the failure to achieve or receive free, prior and informed consent from indigenous women around resource extraction.

In your opinion, why do you think there is such a fear to actually get free, prior and informed consent from indigenous women and girls, who seem to be at the front lines of the most acts of violence? Where is this fear coming from?

● (1435)

[Translation]

Ms. Stéfanie Sirois-Gauthier: I'm going to change the wording of your question to make sure that I've understood properly.

You want to know why indigenous women are not taken into consideration.

Is that right?

[English]

Ms. Leah Gazan: Yes. For instance, in an extraction project, why is there a consistent failure to receive the free, prior and informed consent of indigenous women, in your opinion?

[Translation]

Ms. Stéfanie Sirois-Gauthier: As was mentioned earlier, for some years now there have been a few more indigenous women in the mining industry, even though they are still a small minority. It's mainly men who work in this industry. Many, but not all, of the few women who decide to work in mining are subjected to abuse and violence, and this was condemned in the study by the Inuit Women's Association in March 2021.

Women who work in the industry often suffer serious trauma, but they don't want to speak out about their abusers, or are forced not to. This state of affairs strongly deters other women from doing this kind of work.

I'm going to answer your question by asking some other questions.

How is it possible to consult women if they are not working in this area? How can women be consulted when they're afraid to speak out because of the many barriers that prevent them from doing so? How can we go about finding these marginalized women in their own communities and in the cities?

I get the impression that my questions are a good answer to your question. It's very difficult for indigenous women not to be afraid of speaking out when an organization asks them questions. I think they find it very intimidating.

[English]

Ms. Leah Gazan: Thank you so much.

My question is for Madame Doré-Nadeau.

I know that your organization works to mitigate violence against indigenous women. Can you discuss that a little bit, and also describe any interactions you've had with the extraction industry in your efforts to mitigate violence and assist with fighting against violence against indigenous women in communities?

[Translation]

Ms. Viviane Doré-Nadeau: We owe a lot to our involvement in the World March of Women, an international movement that we were able to put together with various indigenous women's organizations from around the world. In our struggle, we place a strong emphasis on the fact that we need to ask ourselves societal questions. For example, what kinds of developments and systems are we in favour of?

It's important to work on awareness, but various measures, including legislation, are needed to transform society. Earlier on, Ms. Sirois-Gauthier was talking about women who worked in the mines. One of our demands was for women to be able to work in the mines if a mining project was ever approved in the community. But then we learned that there were acts of violence. That's why we want policies introduced to combat violence against women. We also have policies about psychological and sexual harassment. Not only do these policies need to be applied, but women need to be able to have proper recourse when they make a complaint. We would also like them to be told about the forms of recourse available to them and the authorities who might be able to help them. In Quebec for example, there is the CNESST, a commission for occupational standards, equity, health and safety.

We spoke at length about the acceptability of some of the projects being launched. We are also asking why we haven't yet signed the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. As for the lack of recognition for indigenous peoples, the ongoing acts of violence and the existing systems, we think that it would be extremely valuable to have better collaboration and communication.

• (1440)

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Sonia Sidhu): Thank you, Ms. Gazan.

This is the end of our third round. In our fourth round, we'll go with five minutes for the CPC, five minutes for the Liberals, and two and a half minutes each for the Bloc and NDP.

We'll start with Ms. Ferrari for five minutes.

Michelle, please go ahead.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Thank you so much, Madam Chair. I am actually going to pass my time to my colleague Ms. Kramp-Neuman.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: Thank you, Michelle.

This has been another moving hour and a half. I always find these committees kind of heart-wrenching. You hear all these dif-

ferent stories. I'll be quite honest. This is not something that I was raised around. I didn't talk a lot about it at school. It wasn't talked about a lot in my home as a young adult.

How do we engage and encourage and educate more people who are not hearing about this every day? I have the beauty and the ability to be on this committee today, but I don't think enough people are talking about this. We're starting, we're talking, and I applaud each and every one of you for all your efforts, because communication is healthy and being here today is huge. I know that so many of you are doing so much on the ground.

Very seldom is there a carte blanche approach to anything. There are a lot of different intricacies.

I'll pose my first question to Ms. Palmater.

In what ways are there different, distinct groups of indigenous women and girls, and how do they have different needs from one another? I don't anticipate that it's one carte blanche need.

Dr. Pamela Palmater: Thank you for the question. Obviously there are first nations, Métis and Inuit, but in particular amongst first nations, we're nation based: Mi'kmaq, Mohawk, Wet'suwet'en, all of those. We have different histories, different experiences, but—

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: I'm sorry to cut you off.

With that, how do we do it? What's the different plan?

Dr. Pamela Palmater: On a national level, it should be a crime to sexually violate indigenous women, whether they're first nation, Métis or Inuit. There's a certain number of things that the federal government can and should be doing that really isn't about distinctions but about how different nations want to go forward. It could be policing, whether they want to approve projects. That's up to those areas.

Some might want to go on a nation basis. The Mi'kmaq might want to say, "You need to deal with us as a nation," but other areas, like Treaty No. 4, might say, "No, deal with us on a treaty area basis."

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: If the government continues to pour more money, more money and more money without specific plans in place, are the plans working?

The money has been distributed at different times, in different budgets. Different studies have been done. What needs to be done differently? Clearly, it's not working. Things are still happening. What needs to be done differently?

• (1445)

Dr. Pamela Palmater: There are two things. One is the gross underfunding of all of these programs and services. It looks like a lot of money, but when you look at the actual population and what it covers, it's grossly underfunded across all socio-economic conditions. We know that through lots of litigation.

Number two, not only do we have to increase that funding so that it's not racially discriminatory, but we also have to put funding to where we're not putting funding. This is in things like supporting self-determination, the implementation of our laws, supporting indigenous women to be decision-makers, to be on every decision-making body that there is and to be able to have alternatives to pipelines. It can't simply be, "Here, it's a pipeline or you go to jail." There has to be....

Maybe some indigenous women want to engage in green tech, green energy and all of these other things. It's about the paternalistic control of what our options are and not giving us any control.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: Is there a way that we can educate people with resource development? There were a lot of parallels you were drawing earlier in the meeting. Are there statistics to support that?

We know it's happening in some regard, but how do we educate the resource development? We need pipelines, so how do we balance that?

Dr. Pamela Palmater: We may or may not need pipelines in certain areas for certain purposes. We can't always presume that the answer is yes. Otherwise, that violates the legal principle of free, prior and informed consent.

The most fundamental thing we need to do moving forward, for indigenous women and girls, and for our indigenous nations, is to respect the right to say, yes; yes, with conditions; no, not right now, I'll reconsider it later; or absolute no. Until we get there, we won't ever stop the violence that is associated with forcing those things to happen where they shouldn't be happening. To accept that—

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: Do you see a link between resource development and economic reconciliation?

Dr. Pamela Palmater: Most definitely. All of the social research shows that the first nations that have no suicide or lower rates of domestic violence, for example, are those that aren't focused on economic development at all costs. They're focused on self-determination, language revitalization, cultural restoration, land defence and all of those things. They're the ones that instill pride in who they are.

In many cases, we see some of the bands that are some of the richest have some of the worst socio-economic conditions, because economic development in and of itself doesn't necessarily solve the problem when you don't get to change—

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: Do you see a link between poverty and violence?

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Sonia Sidhu): I'm sorry to interrupt.

Thank you, Ms. Kramp-Neuman.

Next we'll go to Ms. Lambropoulos for five minutes.

Emmanuella, go ahead, please.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'll continue my round of questions from earlier. My first question was going to go to Madame Étienne, but will now go to Madame Sirois-Gauthier.

[Translation]

According to Ms. Étienne, indigenous women should be consulted before, during and after projects are started up in their region.

My next question is for all the witnesses, because they've all touched upon the subject.

What approach might the government and the big companies that develop resources in these lands take to consult indigenous women? Could you give us more details about how they should go about it?

I'd like Ms. Sirois-Gauthier to answer first, but if anyone else has any comments afterwards, they shouldn't hesitate to comment.

Ms. Stéfanie Sirois-Gauthier: Thank you for the question.

We are indeed talking about consultations before, during and after project implementation. Beforehand, when a project plan is in development, the neighbouring communities and indigenous women should be consulted about the right to free, prior and informed consent. It's also important to make sure that everything is consistent with their values and that the development is culturally appropriate.

During project implementation, things don't necessarily always go as planned. In any development project, as with other areas, changes or other events can happen at any time. It's therefore important to monitor the situation. We need to ask what happened after the project launch that led to what's happening now, to how things are going, and whether the initial commitments are being acted upon.

Once a project is under way, it needs to be re-evaluated. This means determining whether the initial commitments are still being acted upon. When a decision is made to launch a project, everything might look wonderful and perfect, and appear to be proceeding as expected, but in reality, once it's in progress, human rights are violated, women are subject to violence, and the environment and natural resources are not respected, contrary to what was in the initial agreement.

It's therefore truly important to ensure that indigenous populations, experts, representative organizations, and the communities themselves, are involved from the start of the project to the end, on ongoing basis. The honour of the Crown and consent are violated when there is only token consultation with the community. They say that it's been done, in order to tick that box, but it has only symbolic value.

That's what we don't like. It's happening today in all the development projects around the world. The situation has a direct impact on indigenous populations. It's most unfortunate that constitutional law recognizes it without really delivering on the promises.

● (1450)

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Thank you.

Are there any other witnesses who would like to add something?

[English]

Ms. Quinn, you spoke to us about how, in a lot of these communities, there is displacement that occurs because of the projects and there aren't enough buses. People get bused into the cities, and that is where lots of the crimes happen, a lot of the victimization happens. There are lots of issues in here that were touched on, like the fact that hitchhiking is obviously not safe and that there aren't enough buses.

What can you suggest to the committee? You described the situation well, but what suggestions can you make that would limit the danger in this type of activity? Obviously, displacement shouldn't be happening, but if it occurs, in what ways can it become safer for these communities and for these women?

Ms. Kathleen Quinn: Thank you for that question. I have a couple of suggestions.

One, there could be investment in developing local transportation routes. Greyhound abandoned the west completely, and there's nothing, so I think some investment in local companies, local initiatives, maybe indigenous companies running the buses so that they create that safety and that's built in.

Another is, for example, in the big city, the role of the native friendship centres to create what we call "new in town", going out and finding people who are at risk as they migrate into the cities. One of our organizations here, Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society, does that. They go actively looking for people who appear to be new so that they are not preyed upon by gangs, drug dealers or sexual predators, and then they link them into community and healthy resources.

I think the biggest challenge is around safe housing for indigenous girls and women coming into towns as well as a big city like Edmonton. We really need to be attentive to that. Edmonton does not have an indigenous women's shelter, but Calgary does.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Sonia Sidhu): Thank you, Ms. Quinn.

Thank you, Emmanuella.

Next, we go to the Bloc for two and a half minutes.

Madame Larouche, the floor is yours.

[Translation]

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

Once again, I'd like to thank the witnesses for the work they have been doing on an everyday basis with women and girls. It's remarkable.

I'd like to end on a note that might be a bit more positive.

Ms. Doré-Nadeau, we've harshly criticized situations abroad in connection with mining companies. I'd like to know, however, whether you have heard anything about companies that might have introduced measures to limit the harmful consequences of their own operations. By this I mean resources for women and girls, and in particular indigenous women and girls.

If there are any, can you tell us about any positive examples, and how successful the measures introduced have been?

Ms. Viviane Doré-Nadeau: Thank you very much for the question.

Unfortunately, I don't have an answer to those questions. We've discussed at length the need to conduct research. It would indeed be very interesting to document companies that are behaving in an exemplary fashion and that could have a positive influence on practices and legislation we could use here in Canada.

I'm sorry that I'm unable to answer your question.

● (1455)

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: From that I conclude that we need to continue to look for positive examples that we can draw on for inspiration. Let's hope that happens. Thank you very much for your testimony, Ms. Doré-Nadeau.

Ms. Quinn mentioned friendship centres in her last answer.

I would therefore now like to ask Ms. Sirois-Gauthier about her organization and the friendship centres that assist women, including indigenous women.

How important are these organizations in connection with the study we are now conducting?

Ms. Stéfanie Sirois-Gauthier: In fact, the Femmes autochtones du Québec organization and the friendship centres might be described as two completely different worlds, and yet they are similar in many respects. The experience of women living in a community setting is nevertheless very different than for women living in a city.

It's very important to include both circumstances in studies, because women living in a city often do not use the resources available to them, either out of fear or because they are simply unaware of them.

The friendship centres introduce them to these resources. However, even though the friendship centres do remarkable work, many indigenous women live in cities. I think that it's very difficult to meet the needs of women given the small amount of support received by indigenous organizations like ours, or the friendship centres. This is definitely not a criticism, but rather a comment about funding for organizations that represent indigenous people. As for the reality of women living in the community...

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Sonia Sidhu): Thank you, Madame Sirois-Gauthier.

[Translation]

Thank you, Ms. Larouche.

[English]

We'll now go to Ms. Gazan.

Ms. Leah Gazan: First, I want to thank all the panellists for your powerful testimony, and also the committee for listening and learning with such open hearts and minds. It really means a lot to me, and I know it has really touched my heart.

I know we've talked a lot about poverty. One of the greatest quotes I've ever heard was from an elder and residential school warrior who said that the greatest poverty one can ever experience is the poverty of the spirit.

Madame Doré-Nadeau, I'll start with you. What are some support services that can be established by community-led organizations that are also trauma-informed services to ensure that individuals can be protected from harm?

[Translation]

Ms. Viviane Doré-Nadeau: I believe that services need to be generated by the indigenous women themselves, because they are the ones who are aware of the needs. If such services do not exist, then they should be created. If they exist, then it's important to make sure they are provided with the resources they need to meet demand.

We have spoken at length about the importance of organizing consultations when mining companies move into the community. This means making sure that women can take part in the consultations.

[English]

Ms. Leah Gazan: Dr. Palmater, could you respond to the same question, please?

Dr. Pamela Palmater: Was it in regard to the things that are working?

Ms. Leah Gazan: What are some support services that can be established by community-led organizations to protect women, girls and two-spirit individuals from harm?

Dr. Pamela Palmater: In addition to all of the organizations, whether they be native housing organizations, friendship centres, women's organizations or all of that, there also needs to be funding to support first nation-led programs that want to help their band members who live off reserve to have support, whether they're at home on reserve or off reserve.

Also, let's not forget about all of the grassroots people who are not part of organizations, but who themselves are spending all their time and energy walking the streets, helping women and providing services. They're not formally recognized, but they could use all of that financial support to help these women have a place to transition with transitional housing, to transition out of prison and all of these other things, such as protection from police, man camps and things like that.

● (1500)

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Sonia Sidhu): Thank you, Dr. Palmater.

Thank you, Leah. That is the end of our time.

Thank you so much to all of our witnesses for joining the panel today. On behalf of all of us, I thank you for the work you do in the community and for your important testimony.

Members, for our next meeting on Tuesday, we are scheduled to hear from Ellen Gabriel, an indigenous land defender from Quebec, and Hilda Anderson-Pyrz, chair of the National Family and Survivors Circle.

Is it the will of the community to adjourn?

Thank you. Today's meeting is adjourned.

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