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# Standing Committee on the Status of Women

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Chair: Marilyn Gladu





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• (1630)

[English]

**The Chair (Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton—Bkejwanong, CPC)):** I call this meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number 11 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the Standing Orders. Members are attending in person in the room and remotely, using the Zoom application.

I'd like to make a few comments for the benefit of members and the witnesses here today. Please wait until I recognize you by name before speaking. For those who are participating by Zoom, you'll click on the microphone icon to activate your mic, and please mute yourself when you're not speaking.

For interpretation, for those on Zoom, you can select the appropriate channel at the bottom of your screen: floor, English or French. For those in the room, of course, you know how to use the earpieces.

If you wish to speak, please raise your hand. For those on Zoom, you can use the “raise hand” function. This is a reminder that all comments should be addressed through the chair. Thank you, all, for your co-operation.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted by the committee on Monday, September 15, 2025, the committee will resume its study of section 810 of the Criminal Code and women's safety.

Before we welcome our witnesses, I want to provide this trigger warning. We will be discussing violence against women. This may be triggering to viewers with similar experiences. If any participants feel distressed or need help, please advise the clerk. For all witnesses and for members of Parliament, it's important to recognize that these are difficult discussions, so let's try to be compassionate in our conversations.

[Translation]

I would like to welcome the witnesses, who are joining us by video conference.

From the Association des directeurs de police du Québec, we're joined by Pierre Brochet, president, and Didier Deramond, executive director.

From the Directeur des poursuites criminelles et pénales, we're joined by Patrick Michel, director, and Audrey Mercier-Turgeon, assistant director.

From the Regroupement des maisons pour femmes victimes de violence conjugale, we're joined by Louise Riendeau, co-lead for political affairs.

Before starting the first round of questions, each organization will have five minutes to speak. We'll begin with the Association des directeurs de police du Québec.

Mr. Brochet, you have the floor for five minutes.

**Pierre Brochet (President, Association des directeurs de police du Québec):** Good afternoon, everyone.

My name is Pierre Brochet. I'm a vice-president of the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police and president of the Association des directeurs de police du Québec. I'm joined by Didier Deramond, executive director of the Association des directeurs de police du Québec.

I would first like to sincerely thank the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women for giving us the opportunity to speak about ways to improve section 810 of the Criminal Code to ensure the safety of women and children.

Over the past two years, in many cases, an intimate partner or former partner has threatened to physically harm the other partner. In most cases, the person threatened was a woman. These threats often occurred despite the enforcement of section 810 and all the conditions imposed on the perpetrator.

This means that your current work is vital to improving the safety of women and children across the country. The legislative environment is changing rapidly. The country's police forces must lend their assistance through consultation activities such as today's meeting.

I'll cut to the chase. Certain provisions of the Criminal Code amended by Bill C-5 and Bill C-75 need further clarification to boost the public's sense of safety. I'm referring specifically to mandatory minimum sentences for firearms offences, particularly in cases of domestic violence.

As the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police already pointed out, clearly mandatory minimum sentences for firearms crimes directly affect an individual's decision to use a weapon. However, the number of crimes committed in cases of domestic violence—in which three out of four victims are women—continues to rise. Legislators must heed the desperation of women and take measures to curb these crimes and build public confidence. They must also take action on legislative measures that allow, under certain conditions, individuals to remain in their homes while awaiting trial or during proceedings for a serious crime.

This brings us to another legislative provision that absolutely must come into effect. This provision concerns coercive control. We're calling for coercive control to become a criminal offence under the Criminal Code as soon as possible. The devastating effects of coercive control on victims are well documented. These effects include isolation, dehumanization and loss of freedom. Coercive control also increases the risk of serious violence.

In 2021, the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police passed a resolution stating that, on average, 70 victims are murdered each year by their intimate partners. The resolution also noted that the proliferation of technology and social media means that many victims of intimate partner violence who have taken steps to end a relationship may not be free from the controlling behaviour of their partner. These types of situations clearly show the complexity of police work. Maintaining a supportive relationship, accompanying some victims to their family homes, following up on cases and answering victims' frequent questions all play an integral role in the daily work of investigators.

The Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police's resolution also noted that the Canadian criminal justice system treats intimate partner violence as an episodic event, without recognizing repetitive tactics of abuse that include exploitation, isolation and the micro regulation of everyday life. This resolution was an opportunity to reiterate that police officers have a responsibility to determine when intimate partner violence is present, including coercive control.

The Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police concluded its resolution by asking the federal government to pass legislation to amend the Criminal Code to ensure that former intimate partners, regardless of living arrangements, are also covered. The police officers will then have the legislative tools and means of prevention needed to deal with perpetrators and protect women's lives.

In conclusion, significant progress has certainly been made in provincial and federal legislation to combat domestic violence.

• (1635)

Rest assured that we remain available for any further consultation on this matter. We also remain available for more extensive discussions on the implementation of the legislative measures adopted by the House of Commons.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Deramond, I can see you now. Welcome.

Mr. Michel, you have the floor for five minutes.

**Patrick Michel (Director, Directeur des poursuites criminelles et pénales):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Good afternoon, everyone.

I want to thank the committee members for their interest in hearing from the Directeur des poursuites criminelles et pénales, or DPCP, in connection with their work.

I'll introduce myself briefly. My name is Patrick Michel. I'm the director of the DPCP. I'm joined by Audrey Mercier-Turgeon, assistant director of the DPCP. Her work focuses on institutional development, particularly on policies, programs and practices for supporting and protecting women who are victims of domestic and sexual violence.

In short, the DPCP's role is to act as a prosecutor on behalf of the Quebec government in all criminal cases in Quebec. There are over 800 DPCP prosecutors throughout the province.

We appreciate this opportunity today to share some of our specific practices regarding domestic violence and to answer your questions.

I want to clarify the limits of my involvement here. Given our status as public prosecutors, we must exercise restraint with regard to legislation or opportunities to amend legislation. We're here to share our experience and some of our practices in order to contribute to your deliberations on possible amendments to legislation or to the review of the proposed amendments in Bill C-14.

I'll now touch on a few aspects of our practices. The DPCP prosecutors are subject to guidelines. We have specific guidelines for cases involving domestic violence and sexual assault. The general rule—I would even say the cardinal rule—underpinning these guidelines and practices dictates that, from the beginning to the end of the proceedings, the safety of victims must guide our approach to handling legal cases. This cardinal rule must serve as a guide for prosecutors at every stage of the legal process.

In Quebec, we practise what we call “vertical prosecution”. This means that, from the beginning to the end of the legal proceedings, a single prosecutor handles a case involving a victim. The objective is twofold. First, the goal is to develop, nurture and maintain a relationship of trust with victims to encourage their involvement in the legal process until the end of the proceedings. Second, the goal is to avoid double or even triple victimization by making victims recount their suffering to more than one prosecutor. Of course, there may be exceptions to this rule, particularly in cases where prosecutors are involuntarily absent. However, in the vast majority of cases, the rule is to apply the vertical prosecution principle. This means assigning one prosecutor to a victim until the end of the legal proceedings.

In Quebec, we also use post-charge meetings. As is the case in New Brunswick and British Columbia, we give pre-charge approval. Police officers don't file charges directly with the court. A prosecutor must first pre-approve the charges. Once a prosecution has been approved, we quickly meet with the victim of domestic violence in order to, once again, establish a relationship of trust. We explain the requirements of the legal process and inform the victim of any arrangements that can be made during the proceedings to make it easier to testify in general and to navigate the legal process.

• (1640)

We've also developed other practices that I can discuss in more detail when answering your questions. These practices mainly concern the assessment of homicide risk at the interim release stage. The DPCP prosecutors also help victims transition through the separation process by allowing them to terminate their residential lease when they wish to leave their partner. We also step in when a victim needs to obtain authorization for the care of a child whom she had with her abusive partner.

These are all kinds of ways for the prosecutor to become involved both inside and outside the legal process.

At the DPCP, we've also implemented—

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you. I'm sorry. That's your time.

**Patrick Michel:** That's okay. Thank you.

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** You can wrap up by answering the questions.

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

**Louise Riendeau (Co-Lead, Political Affairs, Regroupement des maisons pour femmes victimes de violence conjugale):** Good afternoon.

I want to thank the committee members for giving us the opportunity to speak about measures to ensure the safety of women.

The Regroupement des maisons pour femmes victimes de violence conjugale consists of 47 houses that help women fleeing domestic violence. The Regroupement works with a number of partners to improve the justice system's approach to this type of violence.

Let me start by pointing out that intimate partner violence is a specific type of crime. For a long time, it was justified and legitimized by the right of men to subject their spouse to their will. Attitudes have changed, but some men still feel that they can legitimately control their partners.

When an initial charge is brought against a violent spouse, or when a request is made to apply section 810 of the Criminal Code, the spouse will have repeatedly assaulted his partner. These assaults may be considered offences or various forms of coercive control. These assaults aren't isolated incidents. They constitute a pattern of controlling and coercive behaviour over time to establish dominance. Criminal records alone don't help to predict the risks to the victim's safety. To obtain a more accurate picture of this type of crime and to take into account all acts that deprive victims of their

freedom and safety, we're calling for the creation of a coercive control offence.

Ultimately, the decision to arrest, detain, prosecute and sentence an offender can't be based solely on the offence committed. The decision must take the context into account. A victim of domestic violence may assault her intimate partner in an act of self-defence. A spouse may slap his partner after losing his temper during a heated argument. A controlling man may deprive his partner of resources, isolate her, impose rules on her, threaten her when she fails to comply and strike her to show that he means business. These three individuals don't pose the same risks and shouldn't be treated the same way by the justice system.

At the Regroupement, we believe that police officers should receive better training so that they can properly identify and document the history of the relationship. That way, they can differentiate between conflict and coercive control and identify the primary aggressor when a counter-complaint is filed.

In Quebec, the public safety department has implemented a number of measures at the interim release stage to ensure the safety of victims. These measures include offender assessments, the use of electronic monitoring bracelets, a follow-up service for accused individuals and a residential community centre accommodation program. However, these programs are used only if the offender appears in court while in custody.

Unfortunately, many police officers, likely owing to the principle of restraint, feel compelled to release violent spouses. We believe that better training in identifying and documenting the grounds of public interest would help them justify keeping more perpetrators of domestic violence in custody until their court appearance. This would make it possible to offer an assessment.

To supplement this training, it would be helpful to create a clear guideline, such as the one included in the recent Bill C-14. This guideline would state that the principle of restraint doesn't require the release of an accused person if the detention is justified for the safety of the victim.

One limitation of Quebec's program for assessing domestic violence offenders is that the assessment remains voluntary. We believe that giving the court the option of ordering this type of assessment, as proposed in Bill C-225, would be an avenue worth exploring. The assessment plays a key role in decisions about release, conditions, sentencing and the appropriateness of applying section 810 of the Criminal Code as a preventive measure.

Another factor to consider in ensuring victim safety and public trust is the handling of breaches of conditions. These include conditions set out in a promise to appear, conditions of release or conditions related to section 810 of the Criminal Code. Individuals who violate the conditions imposed by the police or the court should appear in court and carry the burden of proving that their release won't endanger the safety of their victims.

To assess this evidence, all justice system stakeholders must receive training. As we said, a criminal record isn't always enough evidence in cases of domestic violence.

• (1645)

We know that 90% of homicide cases involved coercive control. However, we also know that, in some cases, the homicide or attempted homicide was the first act of physical violence.

We believe that these measures can be useful. However, resources must also be provided to institutions such as police forces and prosecution authorities, and judges must be made aware of the issue. Everyone needs access to these training programs and the staff to carry them out.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

[*English*]

Now we are going to start our rounds of questions. Each party gets a certain number of minutes.

I will be very helpful. When there's one minute left, you'll see the yellow card go up. When there are just 30 seconds left, you'll see the red card go up. Then I will, ever so gently, cut you off at that time and move on to the next person.

We're going to start with the Conservatives and Madame Vien for six minutes.

• (1650)

[*Translation*]

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

It's my turn to welcome the guests. I would like to thank them for accepting our invitation.

My first question is for you, Mr. Michel.

I'll provide some context. I fully understand the clarification in your remarks. However, we can't pretend that these things didn't happen and weren't said.

I'll quote Simon Jolin-Barrette: "We work so hard in Quebec to combat sexual violence that it's unacceptable for [these types of individuals] to serve their sentences at home because the judge must grant the stay in the absence of a criminal record or based on the facts of the case."

One of the prosecutors working for you said the following: "Right now, Justin Trudeau [and Justice Minister] David Lametti probably have to answer to victims of sexual assault." He added that, as a Crown prosecutor, he's now seeing a step backwards in sentencing for sexual assault. In a recent article by Patrick Lagacé, an anonymous prosecutor spoke candidly and passionately about these issues. A motion was passed in the National Assembly. Prosecutors from other parts of Canada and premiers have also spoken out.

Are your prosecutors discouraged by our constant revolving door system? I haven't mentioned the murders of Ms. Renaud or Ms. McCourt, which happened quite recently.

What are your thoughts on this? How are morale levels? How can we resolve this?

**Patrick Michel:** Thank you for your question.

Your examples of public or anonymous statements from prosecutors show one thing. Prosecutors are human beings. All human beings have emotions. Even though we must demonstrate independence, neutrality and objectivity in carrying out our duties, we're bound to feel discouraged at times and to react in this way.

That said, the statements made by these prosecutors don't reflect the positions of the Directeur des poursuites criminelles et pénales.

**Dominique Vien:** Last week, the Minister of Justice, Mr. Fraser, introduced a bill. This bill actually acknowledged that a crime rate of 41% in Canada is quite high.

When we look at Bill C-14, we can see that it maintains the principle of restraint for parole. This principle gives criminals, even some repeat offenders, the opportunity to serve their sentences at home. We noted that four times more sex offenders were able to serve their sentences at home.

Does that worry you?

**Patrick Michel:** Without necessarily commenting on the content of the bill, I can say that we appreciate efforts to adjust the implementation of the principle of restraint, in particular by putting priority safety considerations into perspective.

That's my answer to your question.

**Dominique Vien:** Thank you, Mr. Michel.

Mr. Brochet, thank you for joining us today.

When he appeared before the committee in fall 2024, the Peterborough police chief, Stuart Betts, said that he felt quite discouraged. He described the system as a revolving door.

You seem a bit concerned about the situation, particularly the experiences of women. You're keenly aware of the coercive control issue.

In his press release last week, the Minister of Justice basically told the provinces that he was making changes and introducing a bill, but that they must provide the money and resources needed to make the system work on the ground.

Let's assume that more people will end up behind bars. Will you have enough resources? Will the system have enough to handle the situation?

• (1655)

**Pierre Brochet:** Regarding the first part of your question, I would say that we welcome Bill C-14, sponsored by Mr. Fraser.

Since the implementation of the principle of judicial restraint in recent years, police operations have been completely transformed. Police officers are actually complaining about this. Every day, we see people being released under this principle, even though we're sure that they shouldn't be released.

I'll give you the example of a recent case where a judge released an individual who then failed to comply with the conditions of release. Given my 40 years as a police officer, I can say that, in these cases, the person routinely goes back into custody to wait for their court appearance. Now, they're almost routinely released. Where does that leave us? The person is released despite the condition of release already ordered by a judge.

When it comes to resources—

**Dominique Vien:** Do you really think that this will change?

**Pierre Brochet:** I think that it will help us. It isn't perfect, and we'll see how it works with the stricter control mechanisms. If suspects are detained more frequently, police officers will have less work to do. Right now, their work is repetitive. They arrest the same people over and over again.

For example, they arrest a person in the morning, who is then released on a promise to appear. The next day, they arrest the person again, and he's released again on a promise to appear. These repeated incidents create a workload of their own. Some domestic violence cases may require police involvement six times in one month. That said, there might have been only one or two incidents of police involvement had other measures been in place. Ultimately, I think that it's a good start.

Furthermore, the current economic situation isn't easy for Quebec and the municipalities. We certainly can't expect to have many more police resources in this situation.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Brochet.

Ms. Ménard, you now have the floor for six minutes.

**Marie-Gabrielle Ménard (Hochelaga—Rosemont-Est, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I would like to thank you all for coming. Your comments have been informative and valuable. Thank you for taking the time this afternoon to discuss this issue, which we're obviously concerned about.

I'll start by asking Ms. Riendeau my question.

Good afternoon, Ms. Riendeau. Thank you for joining us.

I want to check whether you still agree with what you said. I've heard you explain your vision for combatting gender-based violence. You said that we need to come up with a type of “three-pronged approach” that involves legislative action, but remains focused on prevention and support for survivors.

Are you still advocating for this three-pronged approach?

**Louise Riendeau:** Absolutely. I think the justice system's involvement is important. It serves to send a message not only to victims, but also to perpetrators of violence and to society. However, the justice system gets involved when assaults have unfortunately already happened.

We think that we really need to work upstream with young people and the general population to change mindsets. We want men to no longer feel that the use of sexual or domestic violence against women is legitimate. It's also really important to help victims who are dealing with the consequences of what they've experienced.

It's obviously important to look at the big picture.

**Marie-Gabrielle Ménard:** My question is still for you, Ms. Riendeau.

This summer, we were both at a round table initiated by my colleague, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice. You presented us with a very interesting initiative by the Regroupement des maisons pour femmes victimes de violence conjugale about training. That seems to be the crux of the matter for you, in addition to the other projects you're working on. Could you tell us about what you've implemented and the benefits of such training for those who have taken it?

What demographic did you reach? What changes took place?

**Louise Riendeau:** We're convinced that most actors in the justice system are well intentioned and want to protect victims. However, they sometimes lack training to understand all the nuances that various manifestations of coercive control can have. That's why we've worked with police services in Quebec, with the director of criminal and penal prosecutions, as well as with other actors to try to raise awareness about all forms of coercive control and the right ways to work with victims so that they can move through the justice system and obtain justice and protection.

To date, we've trained about 12,000 professionals in Quebec, including about 5,000 police officers, and that work is ongoing. I was talking earlier about training to better distinguish a spousal conflict from domestic violence, for example, or training to better discern and document the public interest grounds that, despite the principle of restraint, could make it possible to keep a spouse detained until their appearance. Yes, I think it's important to take that approach.

I also believe that training is the key aspect to focus on. Training would make it possible for a lot of people to work well with victims and, if some are not co-operative, it would then be possible to turn to directives. I think that most people want to do a good job and that this is a condition for achieving that.

Still, it's important to give organizations the resources they need to be able to take on this training.

• (1700)

**Marie-Gabrielle Ménard:** Thank you, Ms. Riendeau.

Mr. Deramond, you're obviously very close to your personnel.

Can you testify about the effect of training on police forces? I'm thinking of the kind of training that was designed by the Fédération des maisons d'hébergement pour femmes, for example.

What are you seeing in concrete terms? How does the police approach change?

**Didier Deramond (Chief Executive Officer, Association des directeurs de police du Québec):** Thank you for your question.

Indeed, as Ms. Riendeau was able to mention, training helps raise awareness, inform police officers and prevent incidents, which is the key—

[English]

**Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.):** Chair, there's no interpretation.

**The Chair:** Excuse me one moment. We have a problem with the translation. Let's just check.

[Translation]

Is the sound okay?

[English]

The translators are saying the sound is not good enough for them to translate.

[Translation]

**Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ):** Did Mr. Deramond do the sound test before the meeting started?

[English]

**The Chair:** Yes, the test was done, and it was acceptable then.

Speak for a little bit.

[Translation]

**Didier Deramond:** Okay. Can you hear me better?

**The Chair:** Mr. Deramond, can you continue speaking?

**Didier Deramond: (Inaudible—Editor)** Absolutely. As I was saying, further to what Ms. Riendeau said....

Can you hear me better?

[English]

**The Chair:** No, unfortunately, between the Internet and the voice quality, it's not good enough. IT will call you, and we'll move along. We still have a minute for Madame Ménard.

[Translation]

**Marie-Gabrielle Ménard:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'll come back to that question, then.

Mr. Brochet, the government has just introduced Bill C-14, which introduces new provisions on reverse onuses for assault and sexual assault charges. That explicitly includes choking, suffocation and strangulation.

From your point of view, is that a worthwhile avenue to better protect survivors going forward?

**Pierre Brochet:** Certainly. We very much welcome the initiative, both across Canada and in the province of Quebec.

It's an initiative that we had even already recommended in Canada-wide resolutions. Reverse onus helps the justice system a lot. In fact, it sends a clear message. It tells people that, when they

commit those acts, they're going to have to be accountable and show us that they should be released. This is excellent news, then, and we welcome it very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

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

**Andréanne Larouche:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Ms. Riendeau, Mr. Michel and Mr. Brochet, I'm going to start with something that your three testimonies had in common. You practically started your opening remarks by talking about the importance of criminalizing coercive control.

The last Parliament had a bill that dealt with this. The committee also conducted a study on the importance of criminalizing coercive control.

To help us understand how important that is, can you talk about the concrete changes it could make?

• (1705)

**Louise Riendeau:** It's clear to us that criminalizing coercive control would make it easier to recognize what victims have experienced. Right now, intervention is in response to isolated incidents.

A Belgian prosecutor once said that domestic violence wasn't a photo, but a film. If all the manifestations that women experience were taken into account, they would feel more heard by the system.

It would also give police officers some leverage. They often say that the system doesn't work, but that they can't use offences. Mr. Brochet will probably be able to say more on that than I can.

If the umbrella of coercive control were to include not only what are already considered to be offences, but also manifestations that aren't, I think we could take more action, and act in advance, by preventing the risks associated with coercive control.

**Andréanne Larouche:** Mr. Michel and Mr. Brochet, I see you nodding. Do you want to add anything?

**Pierre Brochet:** I completely agree with the last comment.

Domestic violence is a story, not one event. We need analytical points that help us understand the real situation we're facing. That would probably also help us justify certain detentions and even stricter conditions. This isn't a matter of considering one slap in the face or one event like that.

An analysis makes it possible to cover all the coercive control measures used by the suspect to control their victim. With that in hand, we present the court with a completely different case. If those measures are also made into offences, that becomes really important for the court to consider.

**The Chair:** Mr. Michel, the floor is yours.

**Patrick Michel:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

If time permits, I'd like to clarify one thing. Although coercive control isn't criminalized in Canada yet, it's been incorporated into the practices of the director of criminal and penal prosecutions, or DPCP. We've even adopted a definition. Prosecutors have to take the phenomenon of coercive control into account when assessing the evidence in the case.

Prosecutors already receive basic training on the concept of coercive control, but we're going to train them more on this phenomenon.

**Andréanne Larouche:** That was indeed a request from the “*Rebâtir la confiance*” report on rebuilding trust in Quebec. That report contains a long series of recommendations to try to eliminate the scourge of intimate partner violence. The DPCP would have been part of that study.

Ms. Riendeau, at the end of the Liberals' turn to speak, there was talk of reversing the onus. From your perspective, from the perspective of shelters, what do you think of that?

**Louise Riendeau:** We think that, in the case of repeat offenders and people who haven't complied with the conditions imposed on them, the reversing the onus is an important measure.

The offender will have to prove that they have a release plan and that it doesn't pose any issues for the victims' safety. That way of doing things will allow for a better analysis of situations. It will also give the justice system a better handle on making the right decisions.

In short, we're absolutely in favour of reversing the onus in the case of repeat offenders or people who breach their conditions.

• (1710)

**Andréanne Larouche:** Okay.

Mr. Brochet, Mr. Michel, do you have anything to add?

**Pierre Brochet:** I don't personally have anything to add.

**Andréanne Larouche:** Okay.

I'll quickly ask one last question. Should the much-discussed risk assessment be mandatory before release or recognizance?

**Louise Riendeau:** I don't know if it should be mandatory, but certainly the court should definitely be given the power to order it so that we don't end up in a situation like the one we're in right now, where some lawyers are discouraging their clients from accepting that assessment. I think it provides much more insight and makes it possible to determine the possible release conditions and whether release is desirable.

The assessment enables us to know who we're dealing with and gives us a better perspective beyond simply noting that we're dealing with an offence. It's appropriate to consider the circumstances and context in which the offence was committed, as well as the temperament of the person who committed it. It enables us to continue using discretionary measures to adapt to each situation.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Madame Larouche, that's your time.

We're now going to Mr. Brock for five minutes.

**Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant South—Six Nations, CPC):** Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to all the witnesses for your attendance and participation on this important study.

My first question would be to Mr. Michel.

Mr. Michel, I'm the current Conservative shadow minister for justice and the attorney general. I was a former Crown counsel in the province of Ontario for almost two decades. I thank you for what you are doing and for your appearance today.

I had the opportunity of meeting with the Quebec justice minister this past summer, Mr. Jolin-Barrette. I had a frank discussion with him as to what the province would like to see by way of bail reform.

I also had a wonderful presentation by the good folks at the CAVAC Centre in downtown Montreal. I was aware of the vertical prosecution system, the merits behind that, and how that alleviates many of the concerns that victims have in terms of not being believed, not being trusted and not feeling part of the system. Thank you for leading the way in the province of Quebec. It's a model that should be shared across Canada.

I'd like to get your thoughts on Bill C-14. I understand that you probably had a brief opportunity to take a look at it. It was only introduced last Thursday, and it is specifically on the issue of sexual assault. You must be profoundly disappointed, as I was, when I found out that the provisions for sexual assault in terms of taking away the ability of applying for a conditional sentence only apply when the Crown proceeds by indictment.

If the Crown proceeds by summary conviction, the vast majority of sexual assault prosecutions will proceed by way of summary conviction, at least for the province of Ontario. I trust the province of Quebec is not much different. This government left out a significant pathway to protect victims by now allowing their perpetrators, their offenders, from serving a sentence by way of house arrest.

What are your thoughts, please?

[*Translation*]

**Patrick Michel:** Thank you for your question, sir.

As I said in my opening remarks, I want to offer the perspective of the experience of prosecutors at the director of criminal and penal prosecutions, or DPCP. Since Bill C-5 was passed, we've been implementing the new conditional sentence provisions and the increased availability of conditional sentences.

One thing we see in the application of conditional sentences or community sentences for sexual assault and domestic violence is that the reintroduction of conditional sentences enables us to see that deterrence and denunciation principles, recognized as predominant in sentencing for domestic and sexual violence—

• (1715)

[English]

**Larry Brock:** Excuse me, Monsieur Michel. I have very limited time.

I'd like to get your thoughts on the question I posed to you. Are you disappointed, as a director of public prosecutions in the province of Ontario, that the Liberal government did not afford protections to victims whose matters proceed by summary conviction, which allows their abusers to serve a conditional sentence? Are you pleased with that or displeased with that?

[Translation]

**Patrick Michel:** With all due respect, as I said in my presentation, I'm not commenting on my assessment of the legislative measures.

I can still explain that if—

[English]

**Larry Brock:** Okay. Thank you, sir.

I'll move on to Monsieur Brochet.

Could I have your thoughts, sir, on that gap?

[Translation]

**Pierre Brochet:** As police officers, we deal with victims of sexual assault on a daily basis. We know how traumatic it is for women—it's mostly women who are affected—and how much they need to be supported in every way. We think the measures need to be strict and that Bill C-14 should really help us keep women safe. The stricter the measures, the more it will help us in our work, and the more we'll be able to keep victims safe. Some victims of sexual assault sometimes take several years to file a complaint. When the sentence is underwhelming, when the perpetrator has a conditional release or serves a sentence at home, the victim suffers further trauma.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

[English]

**Larry Brock:** Thank you.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Ms. Nguyen, you have the floor for five minutes.

**Chi Nguyen (Spadina—Harbourfront, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'm sorry, but I'm going to ask my question in English because my French isn't very good.

[English]

I want to thank all the witnesses for spending some time with us on this very important conversation. I know that there is important legislation in front of the House in looking to ensure we have the right tools in our system to address the epidemic and the realities of the gender violence we have in our communities.

I want to dig into some of the elements in what we're looking to move forward on. We are thinking about how the justice system can better integrate more community-based prevention measures,

alongside prosecution, to address intimate partner violence before it escalates and getting to some of that work in the front end so that we can try to address this at an earlier stage.

Madame Riendeau, you spoke to some of this in the conversation. I'm wondering if you could reflect a bit more on some of the measures we should be thinking about.

[Translation]

**Louise Riendeau:** In terms of preventive measures that the justice system itself can take, I think creating a coercive control offence would make it possible to intervene much earlier, upstream, and send a clear message. We know that preventing coercive control also helps prevent more serious crimes, such as femicides, so that step could also certainly be taken.

Any measure that builds trust among victims and the public also helps to prevent such acts.

[English]

**Chi Nguyen:** Thank you very much for that reflection.

I wonder if you could speak to the role of the sector—women's shelters and organizations—in preventing violence and making sure that we are doing all of this work before the criminalization occurs. I want to ask about how our federal policies could better support frontline services in that prevention work and in the role we can play in terms of a partner in responding here.

• (1720)

[Translation]

**Louise Riendeau:** Prevention can happen at different levels. The workers in our network of shelters and support centres go and speak in schools, with young people, to help them understand what an egalitarian relationship is. That's one way of doing it.

We also speak in workplaces to help with recognizing victims of domestic violence and, above all, supporting them when they disclose it.

We also work with female newcomers to inform them of their rights and the resources available.

Those are all measures that help with preventing violence or acting very quickly when it happens.

[English]

**Chi Nguyen:** Thank you very much.

Mr. Brochet, if you could recommend one key change to section 810 or other bail and sentencing measures that would meaningfully enhance public safety for women and children, can you speak to what that could look like?

[Translation]

**Pierre Brochet:** As police chiefs in Quebec and Canada, our view is that section 810 of the Criminal Code is often used with events that aren't defined as an assault or an offence under the Criminal Code. We think that going back to a coercive control law is going to solve a large part of the problem and clarify unacceptable behaviour. The federal government would be sending a clear message that would help us out.

It's important to get back to coercive control. That won't strengthen section 810, but replace it, in a sense. Instead of not having a criminal offence, we'll be able to act on the basis of a criminal offence.

[English]

**Chi Nguyen:** I have 30 seconds left, so I don't know that I have another question to throw in there, but I want to thank you all for your time and your incredible work to support victims and survivors of gender-based violence. It's really critical, so thank you for what you do.

**The Chair:** I think that Mr. Deramond's connection might be strong enough now.

Mr. Deramond, do you want to give us a few comments?

[Translation]

**Didier Deramond:** Can you hear me okay?

[English]

**The Chair:** No, unfortunately. We'll keep working on that.

We'll go to Madam Larouche for two and a half minutes.

[Translation]

**Andréanne Larouche:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Minimum sentences are another topic that was addressed in the opening remarks. Mr. Brochet has already talked about this, so I'd like to hear from the other two witnesses on the matter.

My question is for Ms. Riendeau and the DPCP.

Do you think introducing minimum sentences would be effective for repeat offenders of domestic violence? Could this tool be used to deter people from committing domestic violence?

**Louise Riendeau:** I'll start.

We aren't big fans of minimum sentences. As we said earlier, we think each situation should be assessed on a case-by-case basis. Still, minimum sentences may have to be considered when it comes to recidivism, but care has to be taken to consider to whom they apply and what's involved.

For example, I wouldn't want all intimate partner crimes to be subject to minimum sentences, because I wouldn't want those sentences to be served by women charged with assault or other types of offences committed against an intimate partner when they were defending themselves and were sometimes poorly defended in the justice system.

I think those sentences have to be given very carefully, and every situation has to be assessed to determine the sentence.

**Andréanne Larouche:** Mr. Michel, do you have anything to add on the matter?

**Patrick Michel:** I agree with Ms. Riendeau on the importance of properly adapting, on a discretionary basis, the intervention or sentence to each situation.

That said, minimum sentences still send a message of deterrence. If the sentence and the circumstances are clearly defined, that message of deterrence might be helpful.

• (1725)

**Andréanne Larouche:** Thank you.

[English]

**The Chair:** Yes, I think you have only five seconds, so we'll move along to Ms. Cody for five minutes.

**Connie Cody (Cambridge, CPC):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

My question is for Mr. Brochet.

First off, I'd like to thank you for your long service in protecting our communities.

Earlier this month, I got the privilege to go on my first ride-along with our police in Cambridge. It was quite an eye-opening experience. I saw first-hand the frustration the officers had chasing after the same criminals they had just released.

I saw, back in April, that during an interview, you said that there had been decisions in terms of laws that had been made in recent years that were of great concern to you. I was wondering if you could please expand on what recent decisions the government has been making that make it difficult to protect Canadians, and what changes in these laws you see as being effective to protect victims of IPV.

[Translation]

**Pierre Brochet:** Thank you for your question.

Obviously, we were really concerned about Bill C-5, which abolishes mandatory minimum sentences. In fact, I testified about this before a House of Commons committee.

We think that mandatory minimum sentences should remain. In the case of certain types of offences, particularly violent repeat offenders, particularly those who use firearms. We believe that we've taken a major step backwards by completely eliminating this possibility. I know that we're currently thinking about finding other avenues that would improve the situation.

Bill C-75 is another element that has an even greater impact on bail in domestic violence cases and in police work as a whole across Canada. These are concerns that we've discussed at the boards of police associations across Canada and Quebec. This is a really important issue, because we're dealing with situations where inmates who are released.... In some cases, there is even extreme caution on the part of police officers across Canada, who, under this principle, are inclined to release certain people quickly, even for crimes for which they could have argued and forced the detention of suspects.

I would say those are the two main things that have marked the history of the last three or four years in terms of changes.

[*English*]

**Connie Cody:** Thank you.

In another part of that interview—which was in French, so I may not have translated it correctly and excuse me if so—you mentioned you might go through a difficult situation. If you get shot, you accept it, otherwise you wouldn't have become a police officer. You expect, however, that the justice system, in particular, will support you. You expect that, if someone shoots you, there will be consequences. Really, our scales are completely turned upside down.

What changes are needed to help restore trust in our justice system not just for yourself but also for frontline officers and survivors?

[*Translation*]

**Pierre Brochet:** I think the use of firearms should be severely punished. I am the police director in Laval. In recent years, as in most major cities, we have seen a proliferation of firearms. In the past, in a city like Laval, with a population of 450,000, we might seize four or five firearms a year. Now we're seizing between 25 and 40 firearms a year. It has become a trend. People have firearms, and this phenomenon also affects domestic violence cases.

We believe that we need to find solutions in the Criminal Code so that there are meaningful consequences for people who knowingly decide to use a firearm in committing a crime, especially if they are repeat violent offenders.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** I believe you're going to share the rest of your time with Madame Vien.

[*Translation*]

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

Mr. Brochet and Mr. Michel, I have a quick question for you.

How much do you think Bill C-5 and Bill C-75 have contributed to the rather alarming increase in crime in general in Canada and Quebec, whether we're talking about sexual assault or domestic violence? Do you think it's a large part, an average part or a small part?

I'm going to ask Mr. Brochet to answer my question first. Then I would invite Mr. Michel to respond.

• (1730)

**Pierre Brochet:** Thank you for your question.

I would say that the growth or decline in the crime rate is caused by a number of factors. We understand that very well. For example, after the COVID-19 pandemic, we saw an increase in crime, an increase in crimes against the person across the country. I don't think we can pin everything on those laws, but they are an integral part of it. This is one of the factors that we believe is important in this evolution of crime and violence across the country.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Dominique. That's your time.

[*Translation*]

**Dominique Vien:** Oh, Mr. Michel didn't have time to answer my question. I'm sorry about that.

We don't have enough time, so that's our frustration.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** We're now going to Madame Khalid for five minutes.

[*Translation*]

**Iqra Khalid:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

[*English*]

Thank you to the witnesses here today for their testimony.

I want to start with Ms. Riendeau.

You mentioned the importance of context and first-degree murders in relation to intimate partner violence.

Can you expand on that concept a bit to help us know how to make sure that legislation, regulation and the action of law enforcement...? These need to be within the context of women and what they've experienced.

[*Translation*]

**Louise Riendeau:** Yes, we're talking about creating a coercive control offence. For example, police officers are already encouraged to examine all instances of control that a woman may have experienced. As Mr. Michel said, prosecutors in Quebec already have to take this into account, and we see that this is a very strong incentive for police officers to document these instances of control. Also, as a result of the training we've provided, we're now seeing things in police reports that we would never have seen before. For example, they describe the isolation experienced by the victim, the deprivation of care and resources, and so on.

When we know that coercive control is a significant precursor to lethality, we see it as a solution. Once this offence is enshrined in law, police officers will be required to leave no stone unturned and examine all events, not just isolated incidents. This will help us to respond more effectively and, by extension, improve prevention.

I don't know if that answers your question.

[English]

**Iqra Khalid:** Thank you for that.

There is a private member's bill, Bill C-225, that would address some of these issues you've spoken about. Do you think that bill is enough? Is it adequate to address these challenges?

[Translation]

**Louise Riendeau:** Unfortunately, no.

On the one hand, Bill C-225 simply repeats most offences and places them in a context of intimate partner violence. That maintains the logic of isolated incidents, which wouldn't be the case if there were instead an offence of coercive control.

On the other hand, let's take the example of any of these offences, for example in the case of assault, since that's more likely to be the case. A victim who left marks on their attacker by biting or scratching them while they were being strangled would be charged with a crime against an intimate partner, just like a controlling and violent spouse. Coercive control leaves no mark on the victim's neck. In our opinion, this is not the solution to consider. We really need to look at whether there were signs of control in this situation, or whether it was an isolated act or an act of self-defence. That's why we hope to see a bill that creates an offence involving several elements of coercive control, rather than simply transforming the offences usually invoked in the context of domestic violence by adding the term "between intimate partners". That is what we would much prefer.

However, what we very much appreciated about Bill C-225 was the possibility of allowing the court to order an assessment of the risk of reoffending. We believe that it could also help us gain a better understanding of the context.

• (1735)

[English]

**Iqra Khalid:** Thank you very much for that.

Mr. Brochet, what are some of the challenges you and your team face on the ground when dealing with coercive and controlling behaviour and when dealing with intimate partner violence? How do the laws impact how officers act on the ground?

[Translation]

**Pierre Brochet:** The work of police officers is directly dictated by the parameters of the legislation. We have no power other than to enforce the law. When the legislator decides to clarify certain aspects, to specify acts, actions and to declare them illegal, it helps our work a great deal, because we don't deal with nuance, "maybe" or reasons. When we respond to a call for domestic violence, we analyze the facts, and if the legislator has clearly described that such and such a thing, such and such an action, is illegal, that helps us enormously. If we didn't have that, we could obviously respond to a domestic violence call and see an incident of coercive control, which is often the case, but our ability to act would be very limited if there had been no assault, for example. We could advise the victim, do prevention, talk to the suspect, but in terms of taking action, we would be powerless.

[English]

**The Chair:** That's excellent.

Now we're going to go to our third round, and we're going to go to Ms. Roberts for five minutes.

[Translation]

**Pierre Brochet:** As I said earlier, we operate under legislation and a regulatory framework. There must be training for police officers and Crown prosecutors, but if we want to protect women, the legislator must send a clear message. There are far too many victims of domestic violence, and far too many women are being killed. At some point, solutions must be implemented. Some people have concerns about human rights, but we have a duty and a mission to protect women, who are still far too mistreated in our society and who suffer extreme violence. That's up to the legislator. That's where all the other initiatives come from. In Quebec, for example, a lot of good things have been put in place, such as training, procedures and the anti-approach bracelet, but what remains to be done is to strengthen the laws.

[English]

**Anna Roberts (King—Vaughan, CPC):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

My first question is for Pierre Brochet.

Fifty-five per cent of women who experience physical or sexual IPV feared a partner at some point. Between 2011 and 2021, police reported 1,125 related homicides of women and girls in Canada. Sixty-six per cent were perpetrated by an intimate partner.

You stated earlier that you will have to wait and see if the new laws will make a difference. My concern is that I don't think we have the opportunity to wait that long because each day we hear of these crimes. We recently had one a few weeks ago in Brampton, where a mother was killed by her intimate partner, leaving four children without parents.

How do you feel about ensuring that we have laws that protect women and that they are made so that these criminals stay behind bars and children won't be left without parents?

**Anna Roberts:** Would you agree with me that, as legislators, we have failed women over many years by not ensuring that the laws protect them? It frightens me to know that women can't be protected because of our weakness. Would you agree that the laws have to be tightened, that the laws have to be mandated and that these guys should not be out of jail?

• (1740)

[Translation]

**Pierre Brochet:** Certainly. That's what we're asking for: that the laws be stricter and that more powers be given to police officers and justice stakeholders to detain violent individuals, especially accused who don't comply with their release conditions. Recently, in Saint-Jérôme, a man accused of killing his former spouse violated his release conditions 16 times. He was still at large.

There's a flaw in the system. Even if we do good things, we need to be more categorical about our intolerance of violence against women.

[English]

**Anna Roberts:** This guy violated his conditions 16 times and was left out on bail. That is absolutely appalling. How can we, as parliamentarians, ensure that the bill that's going to be put forward allows us the guarantee that these guys will not be allowed out 16 times, that women will be protected? As a woman myself and as a mother and a grandmother, I fear for my children and my grandchildren because, as police officers, you can't do your job if we don't implement those laws. Would you agree with that?

[Translation]

**Pierre Brochet:** I couldn't agree with you more. Police officers and justice officials need to be given more powers.

What is happening right now is very worrying, frustrating and concerning. We feel a little caught off guard and helpless when we arrest the same person 15 or 16 times and they are always released.

Change is needed.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Before we go to our next questioner, I want to say to Mr. Dera-  
mond that we, as a committee, absolutely value what you want to say. I'm sorry about these technical problems. What I would suggest is that you write your answers to questions you wanted to respond to that you want the committee to know about, and send them to the clerk. They will be included in the testimony. Again, I apologize for the technical difficulties.

Now we'll go to Ms. Nathan for five minutes.

**Juanita Nathan (Pickering—Brooklin, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you all for being here today to give your expert witness testimonies.

I'll be splitting my time with Madame Ménard.

I would like to start with Mr. Brochet. I wanted to talk a bit about police practices. I'm not very familiar with police practices in Quebec. Do you have police officers trained in domestic violence attending the cases at every station?

[Translation]

**Pierre Brochet:** In Quebec, what is unique is that police officers first obtain a college diploma in police techniques after three years of training. They then attend the École nationale de police. As a re-

sult, they are probably some of the best-trained police officers in Canada. In addition, various police departments have added training specifically on domestic violence.

Is there still work to be done? Yes, possibly. A lot of training is required in several areas, and we're always looking for ways to improve. Several police forces in Canada have decided to hire investigators or police officers who specialize in domestic violence and focus on prevention, but this isn't consistent across the country.

[English]

**Juanita Nathan:** When they attend the scene the first time, they have proper training on this. Thank you for that.

Are the charges laid by the police or the victim? Is the victim just a witness to the police in Quebec?

• (1745)

[Translation]

**Pierre Brochet:** Mr. Michel can add to my answer, but the system in Quebec is different from that in other provinces.

First of all, if police officers respond to a domestic violence call and have reasonable grounds to believe that a criminal offence has been committed, they will lay charges, even if the victim doesn't file a complaint. This ministerial policy was adopted by the Government of Quebec more than 20 years ago, so it has had some effect.

Furthermore, in Quebec, we file a complaint with the prosecutor, who then decides whether to lay charges. I know that in other provinces, such as Ontario, it is the police officer who lays charges directly, and the proceedings follow. Mr. Michel is probably in a better position than I am to answer you.

**Patrick Michel:** I have little to add to complete Mr. Brochet's answer. Indeed, in Quebec, prosecutors decide whether or not to lay charges, not only in domestic violence cases, but in all cases.

Thank you.

[English]

**Juanita Nathan:** Thank you for that.

Mr. Michel, can you talk a bit about repeat offenders being released? What matrix do you use to look at the offences and let them out? What is the bail hearing like, and why are repeat offenders out on bail?

[Translation]

**Patrick Michel:** Thank you for your question, Mrs. Vien.

I'm going to come back to something related to your question, something Ms. Riendeau raised. We use the recidivism risk assessment, also known as a dangerousness assessment. However, since the judge can't impose it even if we request it, the consent of the accused is required, which means that the use of this tool varies greatly from one service point to another.

As a result, we can't adopt a uniform practice, since the court can't impose it, but it's a very useful tool when it's present in our case.

**The Chair:** That's great.

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

**Andréanne Larouche:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Earlier this week, we read a news story that shocked us a bit. It detailed how a Montreal man triggered 93 alerts with his anti-approach bracelet to terrorize his ex.

In Quebec, people are of the opinion that wearing these electronic bracelets helps restore trust. The federal government agrees.

I'd like to hear what you have to say about this case. Should we review the technology, protocols and penalties for the misuse of these devices?

Would one of you like to answer my question, Mr. Brochet, Mr. Michel or Ms. Riendeau?

**The Chair:** Mr. Michel, you have the floor.

**Patrick Michel:** Thank you.

I'll answer very quickly and then turn it over to Ms. Riendeau.

This is a technology used by the Department of Public Safety, and we have little control over it. Our view on this technology is quite positive. Like any technology, there can be some downsides. Generally speaking, and based on our experience with the anti-approach bracelet, or AAB, our prosecutors have a fairly positive opinion of the device as a complementary tool.

**Andréanne Larouche:** Ms. Riendeau, what mechanisms are needed to support this technology? Do we need to set up police surveillance, coordination centres, sending an automatic alert to the victim?

**Louise Riendeau:** I agree with Mr. Michel that according to the figures presented to us, the anti-approach bracelet is generally a deterrent when worn. There aren't that many alerts.

However, in a situation like the one you mentioned, it would have to be determined who should be required to wear an anti-approach bracelet and what stricter measures should be taken when the person wearing it uses it to worry and harass the victim or to abuse the system that manages these devices. Should the device be deactivated in some cases?

The whole issue of evaluation seems essential to us. We have to take the right measures based on the person's profile.

• (1750)

**Andréanne Larouche:** So you have to assess the risk.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much. That concludes your round of questioning.

Mrs. Vien, you have the floor for five minutes.

**Dominique Vien:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

It's always a bit frustrating when we have such a good panel. We have a very short period of time.

Mr. Michel, I'd like to let you finish your previous intervention about the question from my colleague Larry Brock about the continued use of conditional sentences in sexual assault cases when the Crown proceeds by summary conviction. Aren't you a little disappointed by this situation?

**Patrick Michel:** Thank you for your question, Madam.

I'm not necessarily disappointed. I see the usefulness of this practice for the legislator in assessing whether or not to maintain conditional sentences in summary conviction cases. If the stay is closed in the case of summary conviction, there may be a risk. We've seen it in practice. Instead, judges issue a conditional or absolute discharge. A conditional sentence is seen as being more lenient than imprisonment in the community.

**Dominique Vien:** It's a bit of a trade-off between the two. I see.

I've already put the question to Mr. Brochet, and I'll put it to you, Mr. Michel. I know I'm asking you to walk on eggshells, but I have to ask you this. To what extent do you think the increase in the crime rate can be attributed to the changes resulting from Bill C-5 and Bill C-75? The numbers are staggering. I have quite a few of them. It's unbelievable.

We talked about the case of Gabie Renaud a little while ago. This woman's ex-spouse committed some 20 offences and was charged 16 times for failing to comply with his conditions. It's incomprehensible.

**Patrick Michel:** It's hard for me to answer your question from a public safety perspective. I'm not a police officer and I'm not the head of a police force like Mr. Brochet. I also haven't analyzed the statistics.

From a justice perspective, it is clear that imposing conditional sentences in sexual assault cases has had an impact on public trust and on victims' trust in the justice system. This is also true for discharges, whose impact has sometimes been even greater.

There is a need to strike a balance between the various sentences that can be imposed by the court.

**Dominique Vien:** You're not having an easy time today. Thank you.

Mr. Brochet, is it a good idea to go back to mandatory minimum sentences? Even Simon Jolin-Barrette, in the National Assembly, thinks it's a good idea.

**Pierre Brochet:** We're convinced that we should go back to it in the case of certain crimes.

We have experience on the ground. We went on patrol, we conducted investigations, particularly investigations related to organized crime, and responded to domestic violence incidents.

Earlier, we talked about a person who had committed 93 offences while wearing an ankle bracelet. These people are incorrigible; they make a living from crime, they repeat the same crimes and they victimize people in the community on a daily basis.

Therefore, I think it's important to have mandatory minimum sentences. Otherwise, the sentence depends a lot on the evidence that has been presented and the level of tolerance of the judges who will make the decision.

**Dominique Vien:** It's a matter of common sense, as we say back home and in my party.

Ms. Riendeau, on QUB radio recently, you said that demand for spaces in shelters for women victims of violence had increased since the pandemic. You said that, despite that, there had been no increase in funding, whether for shelters to help women who are victims of violence, for prosecutors to manage all these cases or for the police.

That's why I asked Mr. Brochet a question earlier about police resources.

We are expecting budget cuts at the Department for Women and Gender Equality. Could you expand on that a bit? What is your concern? Have you had any funding cuts? Are you expecting any funding cuts? I think departments were asked to reduce their spending by 15%.

• (1755)

**Louise Riendeau:** Fortunately, the provinces are responsible for funding shelters for women victims of violence. Therefore, there has been no reduction in funding and we don't expect to see any, but we need a lot more resources.

Just yesterday, I was looking at the statistics on the increase in intimate partner violence. Of course, it requires more police responses and more actions by prosecutors, if the cases are approved. There have to be the necessary resources to do things properly.

**Dominique Vien:** I don't know how you're going to get there, because—

I'm out of time. Thank you to all the witnesses.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

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

**Marie-Gabrielle Ménard:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

It's six o'clock. At 1 p.m. today, I stood next to the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Women and Gender Equality to announce \$660 million in funding over the next five years to support community organizations, in particular. We believe in prevention and support.

Mr. Brochet, I am the member for Hochelaga—Rosemont-Est, in Montreal. I'm sure you're not familiar with all the community organizations, but I had the opportunity a few weeks ago to meet with one called Avant Coup. This community organization works with

the police at station 23, which I commend. It implements initiatives aimed at supporting men who are trying to change their behaviour.

I'd like to know more about your vision for co-operation between police forces and experts on the ground and in the community.

**Pierre Brochet:** Thank you for your question.

We couldn't do this work without the co-operation of community groups. They provide support that we can't do without. They develop expertise that we in the police don't have. I see it in Laval, and it's the same everywhere in Canada.

We would not be able to do the work they do. For example, the police would not be able to work with individuals who commit domestic violence crimes. There would be a conflict of interest that would not be well received. We are there to enforce the law and crack down on crime. Of course, we also do prevention work with young people in schools, but community organizations are essential to preventing domestic violence. It's important to work with them to cover all aspects of the problem.

**Marie-Gabrielle Ménard:** Thank you, Mr. Brochet.

Madam Chair, have we lost Mr. Deramond? I'm not ready to say goodbye.

Can he speak to us? Are there still technical problems?

**The Chair:** We can try.

**Marie-Gabrielle Ménard:** Mr. Deramond, I know you're with us. Can we hear you? Let's do a test.

**Didier Deramond:** Okay.

Can you hear me okay?

**Marie-Gabrielle Ménard:** The test seems conclusive to me, at least. I'm satisfied.

I'd like to come back to the question I asked you a little earlier, during our discussion.

What do you observe about the police force when it receives training on domestic violence?

**Didier Deramond:** Everything depends on prevention— Can you hear me?

**Marie-Gabrielle Ménard:** It's pretty intermittent.

**Didier Deramond:** It's pretty intermittent—

**Marie-Gabrielle Ménard:** It's not working.

Mr. Deramond, please know that I am heartbroken. I would have loved to continue this conversation.

Ms. Riendeau, tell us in a few seconds what the current situation is. You're on the front lines. You are with the Fédération des maisons d'hébergement pour femmes. Women's shelters are very important resources for women who want to leave a violent, traumatic home. You're in Quebec.

What can you tell us?

**Louise Riendeau:** I can tell you that the various associations—we are the Regroupement des maisons pour femmes victimes de violence conjugale—take in only these women and their children.

Right now, there is a glaring lack of services. SOS violence conjugale tells us that, in more than 50% of shelter applications, it is unable to direct women to a resource in their region. This is a problem that we would like to see resolved in the medium term.

However, it takes time to set up shelters and provide services. We would very much like to work with the Government of Quebec, which is responsible for service delivery.

Indeed, since the pandemic, demand has exploded, alongside an increase in police responses to domestic violence incidents. We really have to make sure that the measures we put in place are successful, reach the victims, send a clear message to the perpetrators and also allow society as a whole to form a circle around these families to help them.

• (1800)

**Marie-Gabrielle Ménard:** Woe is me, my time is up. Thank you for being here this afternoon.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** I just want to repeat to Mr. Deramond that if there are things you want to say to the committee, please send those comments to the clerk. We would certainly gladly receive them.

We do have enough time for a partial round. Then we have a little bit of housekeeping for the committee to do.

I think Ms. Roberts and Ms. Cody will share their five minutes.

**Anna Roberts:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to go back to Mr. Pierre Brochet.

You mentioned that coercive control should be criminalized. I believe that was your statement. I hope I'm correct.

My concern is this. In the previous Parliament, we had a situation in which a mother, with her children, reported abuse to the police. The children also testified against the father.

There was a cultural thing, something that they practised back in their homeland. She was basically cut off from her family. However, her children were able to present evidence to the judge that they felt that they were not safe, and there were medical records from taking the kids and the mother to the hospital, so there was a lot of proof. It took a lot of courage for her to do that.

What was upsetting was that her family obviously stood by her partner, her ex-husband at the time. He got no jail time, but she continuously lived her life in fear.

Would you agree with me that when you have that kind of evidence, the individual should be placed in jail?

[*Translation*]

**Pierre Brochet:** I can't speak to that specific situation.

However, it's clear that proving coercive control or a criminal offence in court requires a lot of courage on the part of victims, particularly children. In fact, it is somewhat tragic to ask children to

testify against their father. It is hard to go through, but we understand that it is a mandatory process in the justice system. That said, I'm not in a position to say whether, in this particular case, the father should have been detained or not.

Your question also concerns immigration. As we know, there is immigration across Canada and, in some countries, the values are not the same as ours, particularly when it comes to relations between men and women. That's why I come back to the fact that, by sending a clear message about coercive control, the legislator is also sending a message about Canadian values. It's important to point that out.

[*English*]

**Anna Roberts:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Ms. Cody, go ahead.

**Connie Cody:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

This question is for Madame Mercier-Turgeon.

I saw in a committee that you commented on prosecutors having to work overtime. Can you explain how the current bail system impacts prosecutors' workloads?

• (1805)

[*Translation*]

**Audrey Mercier-Turgeon (Assistant Director, Directeur des poursuites criminelles et pénales):** Thank you for your question.

In fact, under the bail system, when you receive an inmate's file, you have to decide whether to conduct a bail hearing or release the accused without a hearing.

A bail hearing requires prosecutors to spend more time working on it. All the work of prosecutors is analyzed based on each person's workload. It doesn't necessarily follow that applying for bail automatically requires overtime. That is not the case; it is assessed based on the workload of the prosecutors.

[*English*]

**Connie Cody:** My next question is for Madame Riendeau.

You spoke a lot about the training. Would training actually stop someone who has been repeatedly violent, is currently out on bail and intends to attack their intimate partner? Would training actually stop that? Would future planning and training protect a woman from being killed?

[Translation]

**Louise Riendeau:** When I talk about training, I'm specifically talking about training for police officers, prosecutors and all the other people involved.

I think that, if police officers are properly trained, they will be able to identify all aspects, all manifestations of coercive control experienced by a woman. They will be able to better document their cases and provide more information to the prosecutors who will have to plead the cases. In addition, they will have all the evidence to say that, in their opinion, despite the principle of restraint, the person in question should be detained and undergo a bail hearing. This will make it possible to assess all the circumstances and, for a repeat offender, to take tighter measures than usual.

Obviously, if people are not sufficiently trained or, because of the principle of restraint, feel forced to release people with a summons to appear, we are obviously not bringing the repeat offender back before the court or using reverse onus mechanisms. As a result, the victims of these individuals are more at risk. We think that, indeed, the important—

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Riendeau.

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

[English]

**Chi Nguyen:** Thank you very much.

I want to start by acknowledging, as somebody who has been an advocate for the work to end gender violence for a long time, that I'm really pleased we are thinking about a public health...an ecosystem approach. There's a role for everybody here: police, the legal system, women's organizations, men and boys. Everybody has to do their part as we try to create safety for communities. That's what I think our response, in terms of Bill C-14, is really emphasizing. It's both stronger laws and stricter bail, as well as investing in prevention and social supports in the community.

As my colleague Madame Ménard was mentioning today, we made an announcement and a strong commitment to the national plan to end gender-based violence, which really will create stability for women's groups over the next number of years. I wanted to have a bit more reflection on what that means for the ecosystem to have reliable, stable funding for prevention work in addressing gender violence in this way.

[Translation]

I'd like to hear from Ms. Riendeau and other witnesses who support the system.

**Louise Riendeau:** Funding allocated to groups working on the ground is essential. It enables us to work directly with victims, do prevention and to contribute to the arguments when it comes to reporting what works in the legislation and what doesn't. Measures like this are essential. We are pleased to see that the funding for

Women and Gender Equality Canada will be maintained. It will allow groups to work on the ground.

• (1810)

[English]

**Chi Nguyen:** If other voices have any other additions to that, that would be helpful.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Mr. Brochet, the floor is yours.

**Pierre Brochet:** Obviously, funding is what enables us to take concrete action on the ground. The stronger the community organizations are, the better equipped we are to prevent domestic violence. Funding is the crux of the matter. We can only welcome it. As I said earlier, community organizations are extremely important in this regard. If, on top of that, the laws in the Criminal Code truly address the real issues facing women in our society, we'll make great strides.

**The Chair:** Mr. Michel, would you like to add anything?

**Patrick Michel:** I will very quickly give you a concrete example showing how the involvement of community organizations, such as the one Ms. Riendeau represents, is beneficial. We have close partnerships with such community organizations, especially when it comes to training prosecutors. We may not be directly benefiting from community groups, but we are indirectly benefiting from them. We're very happy about that.

**Marie-Gabrielle Ménard:** Let me suggest the following, Madam Chair.

Mr. Michel, you have a great deal of experience in the field. In a few seconds, could you tell us what survivors tell you? What are they telling you after going through the legal process? What could be improved? Especially when people file a report, how can the government better support them? In 2025, what are you still hearing from survivors?

**Patrick Michel:** That's a very good question.

Victims still have a tough time. What more could we do? While I can't speak for the entire system, I can speak for the DPCP, the director of criminal and penal prosecutions. We do a lot of work to support survivors. In fact, we have completely changed our approach. We now try to involve the victim in the judicial process. She is still legally a witness, but we want to give her some control over the proceedings. That's why we consult with her and involve her. We also develop a relationship of trust with her that will help her remain engaged throughout the process.

It's hard for me to tell you what more we could do so that victims don't emerge scarred from the legal process, as is sometimes the case. It's hard for me to say what more we could do or what more you could do as legislators.

For us, it's more about looking at things from an operational point of view every day.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** All right.

Now we're going to the final question with Madame Larouche.

You have two and a half minutes.

[*Translation*]

**Andréanne Larouche:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Ms. Mercier-Turgeon, I see that you have raised your hand. Could you please respond in 30 seconds so that I can then ask my question?

**Audrey Mercier-Turgeon:** What we hear most often is that the delays are extremely difficult for victims. Naturally, during the judicial process, cross-examination is probably the most difficult stage to get through. However, that is how the justice system works.

**Andréanne Larouche:** Thank you, Ms. Mercier-Turgeon.

Ms. Mercier-Turgeon, Ms. Riendeau, Mr. Michel, Mr. Brochet and Mr. Deramond, I would like to commend you on your work and your commitment to this important issue. Thank you very much for your testimony today.

The Bloc Québécois has some questions. The Criminal Code falls under federal jurisdiction, but the administration of justice is entrusted to Quebec. How can we harmonize practices on these issues without negating the specific features of the Quebec prevention model?

By recognizing the Criminal Code on the one hand and the administration of justice on the other, and without encroaching on Quebec's jurisdiction, how could the federal government strengthen the effectiveness of section 810?

I have about one minute left of my speaking time. I now invite the witnesses to answer my questions. To do so, they could share the remaining time.

• (1815)

**Pierre Brochet:** I will answer you quickly, Ms. Larouche.

I must come back to the issue of funding, especially in this era of economic hardship. There is currently talk of budget cuts at several levels of government and at the municipal level. At the very least, current funding must be maintained. The risk is that funding to combat domestic violence will be discontinued or reduced.

**Andréanne Larouche:** Would anyone else like to add anything?

**Louise Riendeau:** I agree with Mr. Brochet.

In Quebec, several police services have specialized units dedicated to domestic violence. Currently, these units are under threat: We

do not know if they will still exist after March 31. Funding is therefore really the key to success.

These people make a difference in the service received by victims.

**Andréanne Larouche:** I have 10 seconds left.

Ms. Riendeau, should the federal government improve existing programs or should it complicate matters and set up new ones?

**Louise Riendeau:** It is always a bit complex to see what could be done in terms of areas of jurisdiction.

I think that in Quebec, everyone will continue to say that passing a bill on coercive control would be an important step on the part of the federal government. On our side, that's where we stand. We will also try to help our colleagues across Canada get to the same place we are. It's part of our thinking and our practices.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Ms. Riendeau.

[*English*]

That concludes our panel for today.

I want to thank the witnesses very much for their testimony today. It really helped us out. That was awesome.

We're going to turn to a little committee business. If it's boring for you, you can log off. If you want to stay, that's fine too.

I understand the whips have been in discussion about a procedural motion.

Madame Vien.

[*Translation*]

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

Allow me to table my motion:

That, notwithstanding the usual practices of the committee concerning access to and distribution of documents,

a. up to three associate members of the committee per party be authorized to receive the notices of meetings and notices of motions and be granted access to the digital binder;

b. that the associate members be designated by the offices of the whips of each recognized party and sent to the committee clerk; and

c. that the provisions of this motion expire as of Monday, January 26, 2026, unless otherwise ordered.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

It's my understanding that, in order to vote on this motion, we need unanimous consent for it to come forward.

Is there unanimous consent?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

**The Chair:** That's wonderful.

Ms. Ménard, please go ahead..

[*Translation*]

**Marie-Gabrielle Ménard:** Madam Chair, I toyed with the idea of raising a point of order during the last hour of the meeting, but I will not do so.

However, I would like my comment to be taken into consideration.

I felt very uncomfortable with the way a member of the committee treated one of the witnesses. We sit on the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, and in almost every intervention we make, we must keep in mind the nature of the topics being discussed. Furthermore, we value the presence of witnesses, who are not paid, and who prepare to come here and make themselves available to answer our questions.

I would like this discomfort to be noted.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** I would say, especially after we had the training on the sensitivity of these matters, that we really want to have a very collegial attitude towards the witnesses. When we're having people substitute in, in the future, we should give them a little refresher on what we heard in terms of how they should question.

Madam Larouche.

[*Translation*]

**Andréanne Larouche:** I would like to add to what my colleague said.

The problem is that the substitute members who come to the committee have not all received the same training as we have. This is an interesting point: We have received this training, and we have been made aware of this issue.

I also felt a deep sense of unease. I see a lack of respect on the part of substitute members who come here to the committee without having all the background knowledge that we have. This leads me to note the importance of this training.

That is all I have to say, Ms. Ménard.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Yes, I think it's important. Perhaps when I see that there is a substitution, I will caution people at the beginning. Because of the sensitive nature of the subject we're studying, I would encourage everyone to be very respectful to the witnesses, etc. Hopefully, that will help.

Is there anything else before we adjourn?

All right, then I adjourn the meeting.

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