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Chair: Marilyn Gladu



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• (1655)

[*English*]

The Chair (Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton—Bkejwanong, CPC)): I call the meeting to order. We are back, and we are in public.

Madame Vien has the floor.

[*Translation*]

Dominique Vien: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I thank my colleagues for agreeing to allow us to discuss this important motion in public.

Here are the facts.

We have started a study on women's safety in relation to the Criminal Code, more specifically section 810, and the legislative amendments resulting from the passage of Bill C-5 and Bill C-75 in the House of Commons.

As part of this study, we all agreed that we wanted to hear from the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Public Safety. This was not a frivolous request. It was justified by the invaluable contribution that these two ministers could make to our committee's study. Their input is important for our analysis, because we are going to make recommendations that could change a number of things, including in the Criminal Code.

We tried several times to convince the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Public Safety to come and meet with us. I know that our Liberal colleagues will try to soften the blow by saying that they didn't quite refuse. However, the fact is that they refused to come and meet with us as part of this study, period. If anyone thinks that appearing in January or February amounts to the same thing, they're wrong. We've completed the study. We've heard from all the witnesses and received all the briefs. We're at the stage of giving instructions to the analysts. January or February will be too late to hear from ministers.

Need I remind you that the Minister of Justice himself is talking about a 41% increase in the incidence of crime? This isn't Dominique Vien saying this, nor is it the members of the committee. The Minister of Justice himself said so just two weeks ago.

What we're asking for is not that big a deal. We're asking the ministers to come and sit here for an hour. An hour is small part of someone's schedule. We can acknowledge that ministers are very busy. I was a minister for a long time myself, so I know what it's like. However, in this case, we asked ministers to come and sit with

us on this committee, to share their experience and to hear what we have to say to them in order to improve women's lives and safety. I can't believe they couldn't find an hour of their time to come and meet with us. I repeat, if they come in January or February, it will be too late, the study will be over.

Therefore, this is the motion I am moving today. I put it on notice several days ago, and even a few weeks ago. Everyone was able to read it. The motion is as follows:

Given that Gary Anandasangaree, Minister of Public Safety, and the Minister of Justice, Sean Fraser, each received two separate invitations from the committee and refused to appear, the committee expresses its disappointment with the ministers and requests that their refusal to be accountable to parliamentarians and Canadians be reported to the House.

Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Very good.

I have a speaking list. Ms. Fancy is first.

Jessica Fancy (South Shore—St. Margarets, Lib.): Thank you very much.

I'd like to thank my colleague in terms of trying to wrap up the study that we are doing today.

I'm new. We're supposed to be doing the study within five days. Clerically speaking, this is day four, because we've had witnesses not be.... We had only the one witness. We are trying to reschedule them. Can we not change the timeline within the study?

I've been privy to different correspondence between both ministers' offices, trying to work with the clerk in terms of dates that would work. I know that Minister Anandasangaree was at SECU on October 9, and again on October 23. He was then at INAN on November 5, and then back to SECU on November 6 for two hours. In terms of the dates that would have worked for us, he was already pre-scheduled.

We want them to come. There was not ever, in any communication, an outright no. It was a question of suggesting a different timeline, and I know with the clerk.... I'd probably ask if they could please share and explain why they had agreed to a date in mid- to late January or February that we have correspondence for. It's not that they've ever said that they do not want to respond. As a matter of fact, in hearing about this a couple of weeks ago, I very quickly reached out to my Nova Scotia colleague, Minister Fraser, regarding this. He said, "No, I'm coming. I think they're still working on dates." It was never, "No, I'm not doing this."

Being new, I'm thinking that this is a huge study. We've had to readjust our sales a little bit in terms of our timeline. Isn't this something that we could work on with the ministers to amend? Instead of having...make it timeable. I think the correspondence between the clerk and one of the ministers' offices was to have it by February 13 or something along those lines. That would probably be a better use of the testimony of the ministers, which we all agreed was what we wanted in the first place. It's a matter of adjusting the timeline by a couple of weeks, because it is an important study.

Instead, can we not use the drafting instructions that we were going to do today and postpone those? I think that also ties into a discussion of.... I know that in other committees, because I'm serving on two and a half of them right now, they are doing concurrent studies to allow for this, and this is before the weather in the winter even gets bad, for those who want to appear in person.

For me, if we were to open up the suggestion.... We have lots of amazing motions that are being tabled. Can we not do concurrent studies to help fill some of these gaps so that we can get the witnesses we really want—the two ministers who are part of this amendment? That was what I was going to say in terms of concurrent study—changing the schedule to allow them to come.

It's not like they've ever.... None of them has said no. We have correspondence that proves that none of their offices has said no, that they don't want to come serve on FEWO. What they're saying is that they've been trying to work with the clerk, and it just didn't meet the timeline of our proposed study. That's what I wanted to open up for discussion.

I used to be a teacher, and sometimes you have to move the benchmark a little bit. As a group, if we wanted to discuss changing the timeline to allow the ministers.... Those are just the dates that I pulled really quickly for Minister Anandasangaree that correlated with this committee's time slot. I think there's a way that we can all work together here in changing the schedule so that we can get the testimony they really want.

That being said, if we're going ahead with this motion and we don't want to talk about changing the schedule or the timeline, then can I propose a couple of amendments to that?

• (1700)

The Chair: Yes.

Jessica Fancy: Okay.

It says, "Given that Gary Anandasangaree, Minister of Public Safety, and the Minister of Justice, Sean Fraser, each received two

separate invitations from the committee". Could I please take out "two" so that it says, "each received separate invitations from the committee"?"

As well, I would take out "and refused to appear", because they never refused to appear. It was all about scheduling.

I would then keep "the committee expresses its disappointment with the ministers" and just call it that. I would strike everything else.

The Chair: Thank you.

I have just a couple of clarifications. The study was supposed to be a five-meeting study. Specifically, the study motion did call for the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Public Safety. You may recall that initially the Minister of Justice said he was not going to come but would give his department officials. The Minister of Public Safety said he was not going to come but we could have his department officials. The committee then wrote a second letter to the Minister of Public Safety pointing out specifically the areas that would matter. Obviously, with a femicide every other day and sexual assault up 76%, you have the Minister of Justice who is able to put the Criminal Code in place and you have Minister Anandasangaree who is responsible for public safety.

After that, we had an indication from the Minister of Public Safety that he was going to come the first week of December. That would have been very good for us to fit into our study time, but then I had a meeting with him on Thursday, at which point he indicated that he wasn't going to be able to come until the new year, when the study was going to be completed.

We're now discussing an amendment from Ms. Fancy to take out the number "two", to take out "refused to appear", and to just end by saying that we are disappointed with the ministers.

Ms. Nathan, I have you next on the list.

• (1705)

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

As you always say—to quote you back—we are the masters of this committee. We can do whatever we want with the committee. In light of both that and what Jessica is saying, this is an important study. There are bills going through the House of Commons pertaining to the exact study we're doing. It would be imperative for us to hear from the ministers.

We have such a large gap. February seems so far away. We're not sitting for six weeks. If we were sitting, we'd probably find more suitable times. We could do another study in between and fill the time. We could still do that. Even listening to the witnesses, half of them we couldn't hear. I don't think this study really got what it deserves even from the witnesses, because half of them, because of technical difficulties, we weren't hearing properly. It might serve us well to maybe get a few more different witnesses in here, or even to have the ones who weren't able to answer questions to come back. When we hear from the ministers, maybe we can fill in those time slots with some of these witnesses to have more robust information in this report.

The report can be written at any time. We're not racing against time to do this report. It's a study that's supposed to inform our system. I would agree with Jessica's amendments, but I also feel like a lot of these things are not necessary. We could maybe suspend this study at this moment and start with something else and complete that. Then it'll be time for the ministers to come. We could hear them and complete that study and have the two reports looked at in the future.

That would be my suggestion. Otherwise, we're going to waste a lot of time unnecessarily in the House and everywhere else, whereas we could be doing good work. I don't want FEWO to be a very partisan type of committee. We're doing good work for the Canadian people, and it's our duty to make things work.

Thank you.

The Chair: Very good.

From a procedural point, we have a motion. We have an amendment to the motion. We can't have a second motion about changing the number of meetings, at this point, but I can add you to the list of people who want to bring motions. We have quite a long list today.

Next on the list is Ms. Cody.

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

I want to say that I agree with my colleague Madame Vien and I support her motion. Having the ministers come to our committee in a timely manner, when we're discussing the concerns, is very important. We're in a crisis situation. Time is of the essence. We've heard from witnesses on these serious issues and things that are negatively impacting their lives. Women are being murdered. The serious concerns about safety and section 810 need to be addressed by the ministers. We can't have any further delays.

In my community of Cambridge, people want answers. They want to hear from the ministers, and not months from now. How many more women are going to be murdered in the weeks that we have to wait to hear from the ministers on what they're going to do and to answer questions? When lives are at stake, delay is unacceptable. These ministers need to come, answer questions and be held accountable, not only to Parliament but to the people of Canada.

• (1710)

The Chair: Thank you.

Go ahead, Ms. Khalid.

Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I have a couple of concerns.

First and foremost, I understand and appreciate the importance of this study, the importance of the government combatting gender-based violence in our country and the role of this committee to make recommendations—to take impact statements from experts and to put together recommendations that the government can then hopefully take advice on and respond to, eventually.

This motion.... I'll take a step back before I get to the motion. We were having a wonderful meeting in camera. We were having a

good discussion. We spent almost half an hour moving this meeting in public. I'm sure we could have had this exact same conversation in camera. I will let people infer where this is going. I agree with Juanita saying that it's better if things are non-partisan and we're having a collaborative discussion.

On the amendments that have been proposed, there are two things I want to clarify with the clerk, if that's okay. When we're talking about how many invitations were sent out and whether there were explicit refusals from the ministers to appear in this committee, is that something that perhaps the clerk can clarify for us before I continue with the rest of my remarks?

The Chair: Sure, the clerk can perhaps indicate how many times each of the ministers' offices was contacted and whether they refused or whether they merely didn't respond.

She's adding them up. I think that means there's more than one.

Iqra Khalid: Would it be possible to read out the correspondence so we know in what context they were asked?

The Chair: The clerk has indicated that the emails did invite for a date and time. She can let you know what the date and time is, if that's acceptable.

The Clerk of the Committee (Tina Miller): The Minister of Justice was invited on October 1 for October 22 and was not available. We invited the minister for November 3. On October 22, he indicated that he was not available for November 3 and offered to send officials only. On October 23, the Minister of Justice was invited for November 24 or 26. On October 31, officials were available to appear on November 17 or 19. On November 3, the minister was not available November 24 or November 26. On November 17, he was available to appear at a later date. On November 18, there was an invitation for December 1 or December 3. On November 19, the minister indicated no availability and asked for dates after the winter break.

Iqra Khalid: Just to clarify, Chair, when these invitations were sent out—and again, these are communications between the clerk and the minister, so I'm not privy to any of this—did the ministers outright refuse to attend the meetings, or were they trying to figure out when and where they could come? Was there a back-and-forth between the dates they were playing with?

As Ms. Fancy pointed out, Minister Anandasangaree was at SECU on October 9, SECU again on October 23, INAN on November 5 and SECU on November 6 for two hours.

The reason I'm going down this path is that it seems like the motion is blaming the ministers for refusing to attend. I'm wondering if it's a refusal or if we are looking at basically a scheduling issue that we've now spent over an hour discussing.

My understanding is—and I'm sure the clerk would be happy to clarify as well—that the ministers have agreed to come before the committee early in the new year, and I'm hopeful the clerk will clarify that for us.

• (1715)

The Clerk: Yes. After the November 18 invitations, the responses were that they accepted the invitations but that they were not available.

Iqra Khalid: It seems—

The Chair: If I could also comment, I believe the clerk could verify that, with respect to Mr. Anandasangaree, his response indicated he didn't think our study was related to anything he could contribute to. Is that correct?

The clerk can look for that one. It doesn't really matter, but that's the whole reason we decided to write a letter. It was based on that one.

Ms. Khalid.

Iqra Khalid: I really appreciate that, Madam Chair.

Based on my understanding, earlier today—I'm not sure if I'm allowed to say this publicly, because we are in public—you shared that you had a meeting with the minister, who indicated to you that he would be willing to come in the new year, depending on his schedule.

I don't understand why this motion is necessary, when we realize that it's not a refusal to appear, but it is a scheduling challenge, as other committees are also competing with us for the ministers' time. Ms. Vien indicated earlier that the study has been concluded. My understanding, as per Ms. Fancy, is that the clerk sent out an invitation, and the minister accepted, saying that, yes, he's happy to appear in the new year.

If the study was concluded, then why would we continue to invite them to speak to the study? Also, if the study was not concluded, and we're still making room for them, what is the purpose of this motion?

How it reads now, with the amendments, is that they've "received two separate invitations from the committee and...the committee expresses its disappointment with the ministers". I just really don't understand the purpose of this. I thought the purpose of this committee was to complete the report.

As valuable and as accountable as they are, ministers are not the sole definers of what our committee reports are going to look like. We heard from many different experts and looked at many different written testimonies, here in person and online, for people to give their feedback.

We are trying to move things forward. As you know, Madam Chair, there have been a lot of issues that we could have dealt with and that we should be dealing with on a regular basis. However, for us to put forward a motion that we're now spending an hour debating.... I still don't understand the purpose of this motion. As corrected, the ministers—both of them—did not refuse to appear. Then, we're talking about "their refusal to be accountable to parliamentarians".

As a committee, we have the dominance of our own domain here. We figure out how we're going to move things forward. When we know that ministers are being seconded to all of these different committees, is there not a workaround?

I sat on many committees in the past, Madam Chair. There have been opportunities where, if a witness is not available or if a minister is not available, we keep moving forward with the study, or we pick up a different study in the queue until we find availability for that minister or for that witness, whoever it may be, to be able to come.

That doesn't stop the analysts from starting their reports or from continuing the work. It doesn't stop the committee from continuing its work.

• (1720)

With the fact that we went from having a great, wholesome discussion in camera about all the wonderful work that we want to do as the status of women committee, to then spending half an hour becoming public, and then going on and finding out that there's misrepresentation here in this motion, and now trying to fix it up with the amendments that Ms. Fancy quite prudently put forward, I'm just really wondering why we are here. I thought the status of women committee was supposed to be more of a collaborative committee.

I'm sorry. I'm still new. I'm still learning.

I think there are opportunities for us to put away this motion and get to the reality of business and to the actual work we've been trying to do, instead of posturing or playing politics, which I think is beneath us here in this committee. I know I am surrounded by some phenomenal women who do excellent work and who genuinely care about the issues we speak about on a daily basis and at every single committee meeting.

Therefore, I support Ms. Fancy's amendments as they are proposed. However, I am opposed to the substance of the motion in and of itself.

I'll park my comments there, Chair, but I do reserve the right to come back if I need to.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Khalid.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Larouche, you have the floor.

Andréanne Larouche: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I wish we could have received the amendment proposed by Ms. Fancy so that we could analyze it. I just want to make sure I understand the amendment proposed by the Liberals, because the issue is quite serious.

In a number of committees, we see that ministers don't always accept invitations. We might find that reprehensible. However, I want to make sure I understand Ms. Fancy's amendment. We want to have a debate, but we don't want excessive procedures, either.

Right now, I'm trying to wrap my head around this amendment. It says that we may have to wait until January. I would really like to understand Ms. Fancy's amendment.

[English]

The Chair: The motion as amended would be, “Given that Gary Anandasangaree, Minister of Public Safety, and the Minister of Justice, Sean Fraser, each received separate invitations from the committee, the committee expresses disappointment with the ministers.” That’s with the amendments.

Ms. Roberts.

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

The Chair: I’m sorry. I think Madame Larouche is not quite finished yet.

[Translation]

Ms. Larouche, you have the floor.

Andréanne Larouche: I want to properly write down the amendment. Could you repeat the motion as it would be amended, please? It would have actually been helpful if we’d been emailed the wording.

[English]

The Chair: It says, “Given that Gary Anandasangaree, Minister of Public Safety, and the Minister of Justice, Sean Fraser, each received separate invitations”—we’re taking out the word “two” there—“from the committee”, and then we’re striking out “and refused to appear”. Then it continues, “the committee expresses its disappointment with the ministers.” We’re striking out the rest of it—“and requests that their refusal to be accountable to parliamentarians and Canadians be reported to the House.” Those are the proposed amendments.

Ms. Roberts.

Anna Roberts: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I just want to make something clear, because this is getting a little out of control for me. Please bear with me.

Let’s remember this number—76% increase in violence against women.

Last Thursday, I had the honour and pleasure of attending the justice committee, where we listened to several witnesses. At the justice committee, they expressed their disappointment about how long it took for the Liberals to respond to the concern of a witness. She contacted all parties. The only party that responded to her within 48 hours was the Conservative Party. The NDP did not respond at all. The Liberal Party waited seven months. After seven months, they responded, and she was pushed off to an MP. That particular MP, who was mentioned at the justice committee, did absolutely nothing.

The individual is afraid to even live in this country. She comes here to testify and gets absolutely no results, and has to come here as a witness with protection.

Women are dying. The priority of this study is to save the lives of women. Ministers are responsible and accountable to us. This is a serious issue, ladies and gentlemen.

• (1725)

Iqra Khalid: I have a point of order, Madam Chair.

The Chair: We have a point of order from Ms. Khalid.

Iqra Khalid: Thank you.

The point of order is on relevance. I am wondering what Ms. Roberts’ statement has to do with the amendments that are being discussed here.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Khalid.

We’ll go back to Ms. Roberts. Perhaps she could bring it back to the point.

Anna Roberts: Thank you.

I didn’t interrupt you when you spoke. Please understand that I’m a little upset when I have to pick up my phone and listen to mothers, fathers, daughters and sisters about who they lost because this government did absolutely nothing to protect women.

Are we not all women? Are we not afraid for our children, our grandchildren and the children who will come after that? We need to do something better. We need to get these ministers here to ensure that we—

Iqra Khalid: I have a point of order.

The Chair: There’s a point of order from Ms. Khalid.

Iqra Khalid: Thank you.

I would again respectfully ask that we stick to what is being debated here, which is the amendments to this motion by Madame Vien.

The Chair: As you know, there is sometimes latitude given. I understand Ms. Roberts is very frustrated.

Please continue.

Anna Roberts: I’m passionate and I apologize for my anger, but when I have to stand and listen to parents whose daughter was shot four times—once in the eye—after they repeatedly.... The guy was out on bail four times. To listen to their story breaks my heart.

I don’t want to see another woman killed because of the incompetence of this government, which has not put laws in place to protect women. We are all equal here. We all understand. We all have families. We all have children. If we don’t protect the women of this country, we’re failing them. We have to be accountable.

The ministers are the ones who need to come to this committee so that we can present to them the information that was presented to us by the witnesses and the importance of what we need to do to make things in this country safer and better for everyone.

The Chair: Thank you.

Before I go to the next one on the list, I want to consult with the committee, because we’re at 5:28. We can go a little bit later because of the number of suspensions we had.

Is that the will of the committee?

I have two more on the speakers list.

Iqra Khalid: I’m sorry, Chair, but I missed what you said.

The Chair: I said that it’s 5:28. We do have a little bit of extra time because of the number of suspensions in the meeting. I’m asking if it’s the will of the committee to continue.

Iqra Khalid: Madam Chair, if it's okay with you, could we suspend this meeting and come back at the next one to pick up where we left off? Would that be okay?

The Chair: Yes, I think that would be good.

Is that the will of the committee?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: We will suspend.

[*The meeting was suspended at 5:28 p.m., Monday, November 24*]

[*The meeting resumed at 4:30 p.m., Wednesday, November 26*]

• (6430)

The Chair: I call this meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number 16 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Vien, you have the floor.

Dominique Vien: Good afternoon, Madam Chair.

Good afternoon, colleagues.

With your permission, I would like to move to adjourn debate on the motion that I moved the last time we met.

[*English*]

The Chair: Is it the pleasure of the committee to allow the adjournment of that motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Is it also the pleasure of the committee to proceed to our panel of witnesses for today?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: I will call forward our panel of witnesses. I'll suspend briefly while they get here.

• (1630)

(Pause)

• (1630)

The Chair: Welcome to the resumption of the meeting.

Pursuant to the standing order, we are beginning our study on anti-feminist ideology.

I want to provide a few reminders for the benefit of our members and witnesses. You can choose on your headpieces which language you prefer to hear. If you need assistance, just flag it to our tech people. You can choose English, French or the floor.

Please wait until I recognize you before speaking, and if you wish to speak, raise your hand. All comments should be addressed through the chair.

I will let you know when you have one minute left in your speech. When you have 30 seconds left, you will get the 30-second

red card and I will ever so gently bring you to a close. Each of our witnesses will have five minutes for their remarks.

Before we introduce our witnesses, I do want to say that we have a trigger warning. We will be discussing themes and experiences related to anti-feminist ideology. 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.

Now I would like to welcome our witnesses: Dr. Dan Irving, an associate professor; from Next Gen Men, Jake Stika, the executive director; and from Professional Engineers Ontario, Jennifer Quaglietta, the chief executive officer and registrar.

As a fellow engineer, I want to definitely welcome a fellow female engineer.

Let's start out with Dr. Irving for five minutes.

Dan Irving (Associate Professor, Carleton University, As an Individual): Thank you, Madam Chair, for the invitation to serve as a witness for the parliamentary committee investigating anti-feminist ideology and its impact on the mental health of youth.

It is no coincidence that this recent iteration of feminist backlash or anti-feminist ideology comes in the wake of the success of the Idle No More movement in 2012, the #MeToo movement, the Black Lives Matter movement in 2016 and the passing of Bill C-16 in 2017. Anti-racist feminists, indigenous activists, Black feminists, and queer and trans feminists gained some political ground in our challenges to settler colonialism, police brutality, gender-based and sexually based violence and anti-trans hate.

As an associate professor who teaches feminist theory, it is important to me to stress that feminism goes deeper than, and beyond, sex, gender and sexuality. Critical strains of feminist theory that cannot be separated from the feminist practice I just outlined above employ intersectional analysis to grapple with the ways that structural oppression rooted in capitalism, settler colonialism, nationalism and heteropatriarchy interlocked with sex and gender to oppress all members of society, albeit in different ways.

Feminist theories, including indigenous feminism, women of colour feminism, trans feminism and socialist feminism, are threatening to those who are invested in hegemonic systems of power. Anti-feminist discourses are conservative. They are reactions to the work that critical feminism does to create personal, intellectual, political and social spaces that empower youth by enabling, for example, a trans or non-binary youth to understand that they are not deviant, sick or confused—rather, that western colonial society is rooted in a sex-gender binary, and the west cannot count past two—or fostering connections between indigenous youth and Black youth based on intertwined histories of dispossession, slavery and disposability that continue to do violence to both communities today, or encouraging a young white cis man to express his anxieties, fear and sadness while helping him understand that naturalized forms of masculinity govern by ensuring that no one can ever measure up.

Furthermore, critical feminists are productive by encouraging youth to think collectively across differences to challenge oppressive systems while engaging in world-making activities or creating more equitable, democratic and socially just spaces where they go to school, work and gather.

I've often asked my students in sexuality studies courses what value they see in studying sexuality and gender studies. One student stated, "These courses keep us alive", a sentiment that was shared enthusiastically by her peers.

Similar to a multi-headed hydra, anti-feminist ideology has many facets, as well as particular groups that espouse it, ranging from radical anti-feminist right-wing Conservatives to right-wing extremist and fascist groups to right-wing religious actors. Creating categories of "us versus them", anti-feminist ideologues, often espousing right-wing populism, claim that men, straight people, white working-class or middle-class people and women—when it's convenient for their argument—are under attack by trans and non-binary people, the 2SLGBTIAQ+ community, immigrants and feminists.

Claiming common sense and often portraying marginalized populations as elites who are receiving special attention and rights, political efforts are mobilized and fuelled by anxiety, resentment, anger and fear to protect the heterosexual nuclear family, white Canadians, and women and children.

I want to provide two touchstones concerning the impact that anti-feminist ideology has on the mental health and well-being of youth in Canada.

The first relates to anti-gender ideology and organizing, which began in 2016 in response to Bill C-16.

Many of the arguments send trans and non-binary children and youth the message that they are not real, given the essentialist and biological determinist discourses espoused by sex. Not honouring their names and pronouns in school presents them with the understanding that they're not valued. It produces shame. It produces barriers to their education. It produces fear of being found out at home by their parents—and home, for many Canadians, is not a safe space.

• (6435)

In my last 30 seconds, I want to touch on the digital manosphere, in which many young men are mired. This affects their anxiety and their depression. It feeds and breeds misogyny. It feeds and breeds racism and homophobia—

The Chair: I'm sorry. Hopefully, we'll get the rest of that when we get to the round of questions. Thank you for that.

We'll go now to Mr. Stika for five minutes.

Jake Stika (Executive Director, Next Gen Men): Awesome.

Dr. Irving, I'll try to pick up where you left off.

Good afternoon, members of the committee. Thank you for inviting me to speak today.

I'm Jake Stika. I'm the co-founder and executive director of Next Gen Men, a Canadian organization that has worked with boys and

men for the last 11 years. What I want to share today isn't theoretical. It comes from thousands of direct conversations with young people across the country.

I want to start by telling you about a 13-year-old boy who recently messaged one of our staff members. He liked a girl who didn't like him back. He was convinced that something was wrong with him—that he wasn't good-looking enough, funny enough or interesting enough. When our staff member tried to reassure him, he told them, "Don't BS me." What struck my colleague wasn't just his certainty that he was inadequate. It was that they couldn't even have a conversation, because they were starting from two different places. A week later, at 1 a.m. on his birthday, he messaged again: "I just spent the first 45 minutes of my birthday crying. I don't want to be seen like this. I feel like I would be laughed at just for expressing myself." Here was a young person facing a double crisis: convinced he wasn't good enough, and equally convinced he couldn't tell anyone about his pain.

This is where anti-feminist ideology finds its opening, but here's what is crucial to understand: It doesn't necessarily start by targeting women; it starts by targeting boys themselves. To paraphrase activist scholar bell hooks, patriarchy's first act of violence isn't toward women; it's toward boys themselves. Should boys be unsuccessful in emotionally crippling themselves, they will be met by a group of patriarchal men who will do it for them. When boys learn that they can't express fear, sadness or vulnerability without being seen as less than male, they're learning to cut themselves off from their own humanity.

In this weakened state, patriarchal messaging seeps in: "You're not good enough. You're not man enough. You're weak." They take normal feelings of insecurity that every young person experiences and turn them into a crisis of masculine identity. They take the fear of being seen as feminine, as weak—qualities our society has long devalued—and weaponize it. Let's name it plainly: This is misogyny. Teaching boys that the feminine is weak trains them to hate the feminine in themselves and then to punish it in others. Only after convincing boys they're inadequate do influencers offer their solution, whether that's supplements, leading to rises in body dysmorphia, whether it's "get rich quick" schemes, speculation leading to gambling or being scammed in crypto schemes, or whether it's a world view that puts women down to make men feel powerful.

While we often talk about online influencers, these messages don't stay on screens. They're reinforced in locker rooms from coaches who mock anything soft. They come from uncles at family dinners sharing their world view about how men should be. They spread peer to peer when one boy falls down a rabbit hole and brings those ideas back to his peer group—if he has one. The algorithms fuel this, yes, but the damage happens in everyday spaces where boys are learning what it means to be a man.

This matters, because you cannot successfully address anti-feminist attitudes toward women without addressing the underlying messages of masculine inadequacy. When we focus only on misogyny, we miss the foundation it's built on.

The good news is that boys and young men are hungry for different models. They want permission to be whole people. They want to know that strength can include kindness, that being a man doesn't mean rejecting everything feminine and that their worth isn't measured by dominance over others. Our work shows that when you create spaces where young men can be honest about their struggles, when you give them language for their emotions, and when you show them that real strength includes vulnerability, they take the lead. It's not because we're lowering standards but because we're raising them to include the full range of human capacity.

The path forward requires three things: first, media literacy that helps young people recognize when they're being sold inadequacy as a business model, or when someone profits from their pain; second, education that directly challenges the equation of femininity with weakness; and third, positive models of masculinity that don't require putting anyone else down, models they can actually see and access in their daily lives.

Thank you for undertaking this study. I'd be happy to answer your questions.

• (6440)

The Chair: Thank you so much.

Now we'll go to Mrs. Quaglietta for five minutes.

Jennifer Quaglietta (Chief Executive Officer and Registrar, Professional Engineers Ontario): Good afternoon, members of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

I am both honoured and humbled to be speaking with you today. I am also acutely conscious of the fact that we are just 10 days from the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women.

As the first woman to hold the dual role of chief executive officer and registrar of the largest professional engineering regulator in Canada, I am profoundly aware of the tragic event that shook our country 36 years ago, as well as the connection it has to the engineering profession. As we all know, on December 6, 1989, an armed man entered a mechanical engineering classroom at Montreal's École Polytechnique. After separating the women from the men, he opened fire. Fourteen women were killed that day because they were women and also because most of them aspired to become engineers.

This tragic day should have been the turning point for the engineering community. It certainly compelled the profession to be hon-

est and purposeful about addressing its long-standing gender imbalance. Since 1989, there has indeed been progress. The number of women enrolled in post-secondary engineering programs has risen, as has the number of women in the engineering profession. Yet, despite steady increases in the representation of women, progress toward gender parity is slow. To this day, men significantly outnumber women in science and math-related careers. In Canada, women make up less than one-quarter of the people employed in STEM careers, and only 13% of all licensed engineers in this country are women. In Ontario, that number is slightly higher at 14.5%.

This past August, I had the opportunity to speak with a grade 8 girls' STEM camp about my engineering journey and the exciting, rewarding future that science, technology, engineering, arts and math can offer. It was a powerful reminder that encouraging a more inclusive profession begins with moments like these.

Inspiring the next generation starts long before university or licensure. It begins with how we engage young students, especially girls, in STEM. By age six, girls already associate brilliance with boys, discouraging them from pursuing ambitious professions like engineering. However, research such as that from the University of Wisconsin makes it clear: success in math is shaped by culture, not gender. Girls have the same potential as boys. The real challenge is building a world that shows them they do.

As Ontario's engineering regulator, PEO has a responsibility to promote a profession that reflects the diversity of the public it serves. Creating pathways that welcome everyone into engineering is essential to building a profession that is innovative, resilient and trusted by society.

Through our anti-racism and equity code, we are removing barriers for marginalized communities in engineering, including not just women but also Black, indigenous and other populations. We are developing specific strategies to counter systemic discrimination impacting persons based on gender identity, including women, two-spirit, intersex, transgender and gender-variant persons.

In an audit of our licensing process, we learned that significant barriers to women getting licensed and staying in the profession include the experience requirements, lack of supports and a relative lack of female role models. However, I would pause to acknowledge that the chair of this committee is herself a powerful engineering role model, a licensed engineer who spent over two decades working in the profession before becoming the first engineer elected to Parliament.

If our future licence-holders are to reflect both Ontario and the Canadian society, we must ensure that any systemic barriers to entry and retention are removed. The profession itself also must make sure that strong female role models are visible and celebrated in all aspects of the profession and its work.

At the national level, PEO is an active participant in Engineers Canada's inclusivity task force. Together with our colleagues across the country, we are defining what an inclusive profession truly means in today's context. That task force will help to clarify the role that regulators play in making that a reality.

We do not underestimate the challenge that lies ahead. Last year, just 20% of newly licensed engineers in Ontario identified as women. We are still a long way from reaching our goal of parity, but I am heartened knowing that in the last three years we have licensed more women than at any other point in PEO's history.

● (6445)

It took a devastating and tragic loss to bring the challenges of our profession to light. No matter how much time passes, the Montreal massacre of December 6, 1989, is still difficult to bear. As we prepare to honour the memories of the 14 women who died on that day, my hope is that we create a profession they would have been proud of.

Thank you very much for the time.

The Chair: Thank you so much for that.

As to the accolades, there's just a slight correction: I was the first female engineer ever in the House of Commons.

Now we go into our rounds of questions. We begin with Madame Vien for six minutes.

[Translation]

Dominique Vien: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'd like to thank all the witnesses for making themselves available today. We've all been looking forward to working on today's topic. We are therefore pleased to hear from people who have given it a lot of thought.

Mr. Stika, you said something that somewhat startled me: Antifeminism comes not from misogyny, but from the person himself. It comes from a boy or man who is suffering and who can't identify with the models put forward, which dictate that he shouldn't cry because it's weak or he's not manly enough, and so on. All of that creates insecurity.

This rhetoric actually has a long history. My father, who is 89, still lives according to these frameworks and paradigms. Strangely, we still feel that antifeminism is relatively new.

These ideas of being manly and not crying have been around for a long time, have they not?

● (6450)

[English]

Jake Stika: Definitely. Patriarchy is the system we've existed under since we've known history, and it wrote history too. During the last 70-plus years, we've had a really brilliant conversation

about women's roles, norms and stereotypes. We've made tremendous progress—the first female engineer elected to Parliament, and there are many of those types of milestones.

However, in having that gas pedal for women and girls, we've simultaneously held down the brake on having similar conversations about norms, roles and stereotypes for men and boys. I think we need to let go of that brake and expand what it means to be a man, and masculinity. The conversation, rightfully so.... Men, as a class, benefit within patriarchy in terms of representation, earnings and all of those types of things, but individually they are deeply harmed when it comes to rates of suicide, substance abuse and incarceration. I think that conversation needs to be had at the same time.

[Translation]

Dominique Vien: Would you say that it's a scourge?

I also don't want to use strong words or be alarmist. That said, is this a looming crisis? Is there something we're not detecting? Maybe we're just seeing the tip of the iceberg.

You see young men and you talk to them. Do you see a lot of these cases? What idea should we form of young men when it comes to antifeminism?

By the way, the most popular soap opera right now in Quebec is developing a story line around antifeminism. Even in entertainment, in the media and in fiction, people are talking about this phenomenon.

Is it bigger than we think?

[English]

Jake Stika: To Dr. Irving's point, there's a backlash right now against all of the different gains of the intersectional feminist ideologies that we've had put forward, but I think that backlash is also because men and boys haven't seen themselves in the conversation, and a new, hopeful future for them. They see it as a zero-sum conversation: As others gain, they must lose. Some civil society conversations have contributed to that as well—"Men have had their turn" or "You still have so much privilege"—but the statistics of boys and men struggling with various issues are rampant.

Earlier today, I took part in a ministerial round table with the Minister of Health around young men's mental health and the crisis we're seeing in Canada around that. Young men, in particular, don't see a lot of hope for themselves and those possibilities. Girls today are raised by a generation of women who had to work twice as hard to get half as far, and boys are really struggling with what is possible for them. There's this civil war among men about masculinity. One is regressive and restrictive, and one is expansive and trying to transcend some of those old norms that we had.

[*Translation*]

Dominique Vien: Thank you, Mr. Stika.

Ms. Quaglietta, you say that parity has not been achieved. That's for sure. Even in Parliament, we don't have parity.

Are we saying that antifeminism is somehow a major concern because women are not achieving parity? What's going on?

I would like to ask you the same question I asked your colleague. Are we dealing with something of unimaginable scope, or are we getting a little worked up for no reason? What is the current situation?

• (6455)

[*English*]

Jennifer Quaglietta: Is there a myth? What I can speak to is the academic perspective. In 2005, 20% of the student population enrolled in engineering studies were women. Twenty-five years later, we're only up by two or three per cent. Parity still has not come to fruition. We've made modest progress.

There was progress made in biosystems engineering, chemical engineering and environmental engineering. Those still with the lowest number of women in classes continue to be mechanical, electrical, software and computer engineering. While we haven't met parity from that lens, I think there's still work to do.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Chenette, welcome to the committee. You have the floor for six minutes.

Madeleine Chenette (Thérèse-De Blainville, Lib.): Thank you for having me at the committee.

Thank you to the witnesses.

As you've already said, the subject at hand is extremely sensitive, and it requires data and better understanding. I have to say that, a year and a half ago, I was ambassador to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development when it was studying the phenomenon of antifeminism. Data from Belgium and France have shown that the phenomenon exists there. It is not unique to Canada; it exists in all western countries. Developing countries have said, Welcome to our world. These models need to be taken into account in a global context.

Based on Mr. Stika's comments, I will address Mr. Irving.

Obviously, there are patriarchal models. Men seem to be on a quest to find out how to get in touch with their feminine side and be proud of it.

Is the anxiety you talked about just from having different models of masculinity or is there a combination of anxiety-inducing factors? Do you have any data on that?

In fact, the phenomenon of antifeminism emerged after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Climate change, which is clearly having an impact on everyone, can also be a source of anxiety.

Let's also not forget the anxiety related to the rhetoric and reality of our society's digital transformation. People realize that their job is not guaranteed for life.

Adding to that is the fact that young boys and adult men who have to deal with all of that are questioning their identity.

Are there any studies that show a link between the rise in anxiety and the fact that masculinism is making a comeback?

[*English*]

Dan Irving: I don't have the data with me, but there are definitely data and studies that are done on the rise of anxiety among young men after COVID-19, particularly social anxiety. I don't see this as an individual malady that's tied to COVID-19; it's also tied to wider economic structures.

If you look at, for instance, neoliberalism and the way it espouses hyper-individualism, there's a real erosion and attack on a collective or a community. Many young men are feeling anxious, both because we're in a climate crisis and in an economic crisis and also because they don't necessarily have that community; they think they have to bear that by themselves. They're also doing this more through isolation and withdrawal, where they're getting this community online, which isn't the same thing. It becomes an echo chamber that can—and there is a lot of data on this—perpetuate those feelings of alienation, depression and loneliness.

• (6500)

[*Translation*]

Madeleine Chenette: Thank you. That brings me to a question for Mr. Stika.

One of the solutions you propose is digital literacy. It's true that the phenomenon is rife on social media. Do you know if we have any data not just on young men, but also on older ones? Toxic masculinity doesn't just affect young men. That said, do we have any data on the proportion of young men who still use traditional media, as opposed to the ones who are on social media and who keep up with the news simply by watching what goes on there?

Do we have any data on how media use contributes to a more toxic masculinity? If we want people to be digitally literate, it's important to know how to get in touch with them, given that there are different ways of communicating today.

[English]

Jake Stika: There's definitely data that relates to it. I'm just trying to think about the intergenerational piece. The anxieties are very different.

When we talk about male suicide in Canada, the vast majority are actually men 55 to 65. It's men who have subscribed to a deal around masculinity, have gotten into the later parts of their lives and are perhaps on their second or third significant relationship. Their children might be estranged from them. Their workplace is trying to push them out. That's one form of that anxiety piece.

There's a hopeful part, I think, in the middle generation, because this generation of fathers is three times more engaged than any generation prior, which is exciting. They're doing it with a lack of role models, so they might be making mistakes as they go. We'll have to wait 18 years to see what kind of young people that generation raises.

Then we think about the young people. They know what consent, trans identities and all these things are. An author named Ruth Whippman wrote a book called *Boy Mom* last year. In it, she coined this term "impossible masculinity". In this post-#MeToo world, boys understand these things, but then, to your point on the online narratives, they are hearing all these hypermasculine, relentless, rich, ripped narratives. They look at that and say, "I can't be both of those things at the same time", so the anxieties are different.

Online is part of young people's existence, one way or another. How do we meet them where they are, and how do we also help them foster those relationships in those off-line spaces as well?

[Translation]

Madeleine Chenette: My last question—

The Chair: I'm sorry, but your time is up, Ms. Chenette. Thank you.

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

Andréanne Larouche: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I really wanted to do this study in conjunction with my Liberal colleagues. It actually stems from one of the motions I moved at the beginning of the session. I wanted to look at how the justice system treats victims of violence, but also at ways in which we can improve prevention. Taking a look at the rise of the antifeminist movement, I think, is part of that.

As Ms. Quaglietta mentioned, what happened in Quebec in 1989 was a defining moment for the rise of antifeminism. I still remember the first speech I gave in the House in 2019 to mark the 30th anniversary of the Polytechnique tragedy. Marc Lépine's bombshell letter sums up this antifeminist and misogynistic thinking, this masculinity that fears women's changing place in society. When you reread that letter, you feel sick and heartbroken.

Since then, I have had the opportunity to see the theatrical dramatization entitled *Projet Polytechnique*, which explains the rise

of the antifeminist, masculinist movement. There was also the documentary *Alphas*.

In addition, in the last parliament, the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security did a study on violent extremism, and the antifeminist, masculinist movement was part of that.

When I went to see the play *Projet Polytechnique*, there was a discussion afterward. I think some CEGEP teachers had forced their students to go and see the play. One of the authors asked if anyone knew about Andrew Tate, and the majority of the young CEGEP students awkwardly raised their hands.

I apologize for being a bit long-winded. Now I'll get to my questions.

First, are these influencers a big part of the movement?

I'll let all three of you answer that question.

• (6505)

[English]

The Chair: We'll go to Mr. Irving first.

Dan Irving: I think they have a tremendous role to play in the anti-feminist movement. They're extremely influential.

Part of the problem, too, is that they come across as very successful. They're good at marketing themselves. They speak a lot of misinformation, and they do it very convincingly. Part of how we can begin to inoculate youth against such persuasion has to do with education and critical thinking, so there's a bigger picture here, too.

I'll pass it on to the other panellists.

[Translation]

Andréanne Larouche: Do the other witnesses want to add anything about the role of influencers before I move on to my next question?

[English]

Jennifer Quaglietta: While I cannot speak to the role of influencers such as Andrew Tate, what I can describe or speak to is the role of role models, specifically in terms of employers and academic institutions. That becomes very important, especially acting as a role model.

For instance, we know that women who seek employment in engineering fields have a lack of technical mentors. We know that access to supports and technical work experience is a factor in why women in engineering are not becoming licensed or perhaps begin the process but don't complete it. Removing bias in hiring and technical job assignments is something we have to pay more attention to and look to see what we can do, especially in relation to the review of the evaluation process.

Jake Stika: Similarly, on the role models note—and this isn't from a “woe is me” perspective—when we look upstream where boys are forming some of their identities around what it is to be a man, towards primary and even secondary education, women are very overrepresented in those teaching roles. We have to admit that this is an intersection of capitalism as well, because those are undervalued roles in our society, and men are not often seeing themselves in those spaces to be educators and role models.

We do need those off-line role models, and then when we get a chance to partner with technological platforms.... We know that the algorithms are amplifying these negative ones because it serves their business model. Having positive role models and positive conversations doesn't lead to the engagement, the clicks, the rage and the comments.

[Translation]

Andréanne Larouche: You've been talking about that. Echo chambers and the dark web play a role in all of this. We also have to consider the effect of the pandemic, when people spent more time online. I'll come back to that in a future round.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

All right. Now we're into the second round, and we'll go to Ms. Roberts for five minutes.

Anna Roberts: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'd like to thank the witnesses for coming today. This is a study that I feel we all agree on and that is important to all of us. Thank you very much.

I'm going to start with Jennifer Quaglietta.

As the CEO of Professional Engineers Ontario, you've led initiatives aimed at promoting equity, diversity and inclusion. Have you observed any push-back from male employees who have felt excluded or disadvantaged by these programs?

Jennifer Quaglietta: Not at all. In fact, I think we have a more engaged and inclusive workforce at the organization. With 150 staff, our engagement scores just came in a few weeks ago at 93.3% of the staff being engaged or almost engaged...in commenting on an increase of, I believe, over 18% feeling that it is a more inclusive environment.

• (6510)

Anna Roberts: Do you think men feel we're at a different point in society where there is equality among men and women in the engineering field, or do you think we still have a lot of work to do?

Jennifer Quaglietta: That's a really good question. It's something we all need to think about more and study more.

Anna Roberts: My next question is for Mr. Jake Stika.

I recently went to an Italian chef-off. In my riding, they get together once a year, and all the expert chefs come from Italy. It was an Italian thing, because I'm Italian. I had the opportunity to speak to one of the chefs. He said that he's always been interested in cooking because he was raised by his mother and by his grandmother—his father passed away during the war—and it was acceptable there.

When he came here as a young man, he wasn't treated like “if you're cooking, that's a woman's job”. He said that when we look at that field, there are a lot more men who are excellent chefs, with my brother being one of them. He married a beautiful young woman from the northern part of Italy, and she just loves the fact that he does all the cooking.

Do you think we've moved away from that way of thinking? It's okay; it's not really a woman's domain. What do you think about that?

Jake Stika: A few weeks ago, I had the chance to join the Reykjavik Global Forum, where they presented the global index on ideas around leadership related to gender. One side we didn't get into in the conversation, but we saw it in the preview, was the sector bias. I can't remember them off the top of my head, but there are still ideas of “men's work” and “women's work”.

We have these science, technology, engineering and math initiatives to have girls and women represented in the economic security and in the opportunities that exist within STEM, but we're missing a parallel conversation. Richard Reeves has called it the HEAL movement: health, education, arts and literacy. How do we get men into those fields as well?

As we truly pursue gender equality or parity and those types of things, as men move out of one space, they also have to be invited into a new space where there are opportunities and new possibilities for them.

To your specific question around being a chef or cooking, a lot of that comes to the level of performance. Perhaps to just be a cook has stigma, but to be a chef is still aspirational. That's why we see that there. Similarly, a lot of those narratives for men are that they have to be the top, the CEO, the pilot, the top person and not necessarily in a supportive role.

Anna Roberts: I'll have a man cook for me any time.

You mentioned earlier that this generation of fathers is more engaged than those in the past. I think that's true. It's also because, today, both parents have to work due to the economic situation in this country. The roles have now shifted where they both take that responsibility.

I'd like comments from any of you. Do you not think that is a great way to raise our children, to let them know that we're both equal, of equal standing?

Jake Stika: Simply, yes.

Anna Roberts: Yes.

The Chair: That's good, because we're out of time.

[Translation]

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

Marie-Gabrielle Ménard: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses for being here. We have less than an hour with them, but from the outset, their high-quality presentations gave us so much useful and relevant information.

I'm just finishing up reading Scott Galloway's *Notes on Being a Man*, so I'd like to take a moment to talk about the theme of rejection, which I think is a really interesting stone to turn over.

Galloway presents the experience of rejection from a gendered perspective. His writings show that women stereotypically tend to surround themselves with their friends and even perhaps their co-workers and follow their passions, while men tend to isolate themselves.

I'd like to hear what you have to say about men's self-isolation and vulnerability when they are in pain and distress. Wouldn't that become fertile ground for going down some dark paths?

Dr. Irving, you can go first.

• (6515)

[English]

Dan Irving: Yes, that's exactly what that means. One of the articles I was reading in preparation for today talks about exactly that—that the manosphere often will bring in adolescent boys who are experiencing their first rejections in the dating world, for instance. As my co-panellist has said, that is an inroad for anti-feminist ideology.

This particular isolation and the feelings that they may have then get fuelled within this very algorithmic digital world, which will then tell them that this rejection is the fault of women. If they haven't come in with some misogyny, there's a huge chance that they're going to develop that through this. Then they see this as their community. It's hard, then, to remove oneself from it.

[Translation]

Marie-Gabrielle Ménard: Thank you.

Mr. Stika, I'm curious to hear your comments on this issue.

[English]

Jake Stika: I think that baked into it is a sense of male entitlement, because women, newcomers and folks on the margins have also faced a lot of rejection, difficulty and frustration in their lives. Therefore, I think we need to address and head-on note that a lot of boys and young men particularly feel entitled to certain outcomes. However, in noting that, we can approach them with empathy and compassion for their experience of rejection, as well. The reality is that a lot of their peer groups don't have that. One of our young men on the Discord server that we run called his male friend group the most unsupportive support group that he has.

How do we give young men particularly the skills to support one another and to also understand the narrative that it's not necessarily our, often female, romantic partners' sole role to do our emotional labour? How do we do that within community or with non-roman-

tic, platonic partners and friends as well? I think young men are really just lacking a lot of the skills to navigate this.

[Translation]

Marie-Gabrielle Ménard: It's interesting that you talk about developing interpersonal skills.

Is there a role for government in interpersonal skills development?

[English]

Jake Stika: I would say yes. I mean, there's only so much you can ask of the federal government, as well. However, we have a great working relationship with the Department for Women and Gender Equality, so continue to support that, because that's a department that understands the gendered realities of different individuals.

Also, we look at the budget that was just released and all of the different investments made in predominantly male-dominant industries. Those are great entry points for those conversations as well, whether it's defence or industry.

How do we support those fathers to be better and more engaged at home to create pathways? If there's equity at home, there are opportunities for equity in the workplace, to bring more leaders in there as well.

There is a lot of opportunity.

[Translation]

Marie-Gabrielle Ménard: Do I have at least a minute left, Madam Chair?

The Chair: You have 15 seconds.

Marie-Gabrielle Ménard: It's not going to be enough.

Thank you again to the witnesses for being here. I may have a chance to ask them more questions in a future round.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Larouche, you have the floor for two and a half minutes.

Andréanne Larouche: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you again to the three witnesses for their very enlightening testimony.

I would like to come back to some of the ideas I presented during the study on violent extremism conducted by the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security.

I want to go back to something you touched on, Mr. Irving. Do periods of crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, have an impact on the isolation of men who adopt this way of thinking? What role do crises play in the development of masculinist and antifeminist ideas?

• (6520)

[*English*]

Dan Irving: Yes. In terms of not repeating what has already been said, I'll say that I think the Internet fills a void that often isn't filled in other places. In terms of isolation, if we're talking about crises—climate crises, economic crises, crises in masculinity or normal developmental phases—I think the Internet can often supplement.

If I can, I'll just answer your question with another comment in terms of what the government can do to combat isolation. Funding is huge, funding in arts and music. Studies have shown that men can often express their feelings through hip hop, music and poetry, these things that are more acceptable, yet we're seeing the cuts to funding in schools for these very programs.

[*Translation*]

Andréanne Larouche: I have 30 seconds left, so I'm going to give Ms. Quaglietta or Mr. Stika a chance to speak.

During the study, we noticed other theories related to masculinism and the antifeminist movement. Obviously, there was nativism. There was also the issue of white supremacy. These ideas are connected to all that.

Where do these other ideas that are very much associated with an extremely conservative and traditional vision fit in?

[*English*]

Jake Stika: I would say that anti-feminist ideologies or misogyny help lay the groundwork as well, because it is one of the earliest experiences of othering—boys, girls, one is blue, one is pink—and a lot of other ideologies can get layered on top of that too. I would say one is foundational to the other. Gender is the largest demographic divide we have in society, roughly 50-50, acknowledging trans and non-binary identities within that as well. If we can build bridges across gender... The vast majority of men are heterosexual, and many have daughters. Those skills and experiences then help us build bridges to other, more marginalized groups and understand our privilege, our power and how we can relate and create space.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

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

Connie Cody: Thank you, Chair.

I want to thank all the witnesses for coming today. Like I said, it's a very important topic.

There isn't much time, so I'm going to go right into the questions. I'd like to ask Ms. Quaglietta a question.

First off, I'd like to thank you for all your work on representing women in engineering. As you know, getting licensed is the first step to working as an engineer.

What I'd like to ask you is, since engineering is a profession that often requires work in complex environments, construction sites, industrial facilities and other high-risk settings, these spaces can present unique challenges for safety and respect, particularly for women. This could be, perhaps, one of the deterrents for women to pursue engineering. Regulators have a critical role in setting standards and ensuring accountability. With that in mind, what role do regulators like PEO play in ensuring that these spaces are safe and respectful for women? What accountability mechanisms exist for potential conflicts?

Jennifer Quaglietta: There are a number of things that the organization is doing from an external perspective to create an environment where everybody feels like they belong. From a policy standards and guidelines perspective, we are now looking at all of our current guidelines and standards, as well as those coming, with an equity lens. Two years ago, more broadly, we were the first regulator to remove the Canadian experience requirement, particularly to support those internationally trained and experienced engineers.

In relation to the workplace, again, I'll go back to the gender audit we conducted, in which researchers interviewed 374 women who went through the licensing process. This really is a call to employers to ensure that women are supported through the licensing process, that they have access to role models, as well as those in technical jobs to help support them and mentor them—not just to encourage them in having confidence in applying to more technical jobs, but to ensure that they're prepared for that, that they're supported and that they have the access to resources and the skills development training in order to continue on that pathway.

There are a number of stakeholders across the sector—employers, academic institutions and all of us as individuals—to support women in advancing, particularly in those STEAM-related careers.

I'll just stop there.

• (6525)

Connie Cody: Thank you.

Canada's energy projects, such as pipelines, require thousands of skilled engineers and are often seen as economic drivers. Women remain under-represented in technical roles, and attracting them to these sectors could strengthen both the workforce and project outcomes. How do you see pipeline projects in Canada creating meaningful opportunities for women in engineering careers, and what partnerships or training programs would make this possible?

Jennifer Quaglietta: I think this is an area where we need to currently conduct more research, but I would just go back to saying that it goes back to role modelling, providing equitable access to the hiring processes and ensuring that all folks in industry are supported in their career aspirations, regardless of where they work or what technical aspect or role they're in.

Connie Cody: You said that in 2005, women represented only 20% of the student population, and 25 years later, it's at 25%.

How do we create an environment where both women and men not only see the benefit of the field of engineering, but feel accepting and comfortable working together, both in the schools and in the field?

Jennifer Quaglietta: The number one thing we can all do is encourage women and remind them that they can do it. The number of dropouts in high school physics is remarkable, and that is one of the entry courses that are required to enter into the profession of engineering.

It is a call to all of us, whether you're a neighbour to an aspiring engineer or a young lady who wants to go into STEAM, that the best thing any one of us can do is remind them that they can do it.

Connie Cody: Thank you. I think that's really important.

I have 30 seconds. I don't think I can get a question in.

The Chair: I think Mr. Stika would love to comment.

Jake Stika: I would just add to that. We work a lot with educators, coaches and youth workers, but we also work in male-dominant industries like oil and gas, construction, mining, etc. Ostensibly, when we work with a lot of those organizations, they bring us in because they want to increase gender diversity and representation within those organizations.

What we ended up finding is that those environments are not conducive to the men within those environments either. There's a lot of interpersonal competition, domination, substance abuse, isolation and those types of things. When women enter into that workspace, they get the brunt of that experience, too.

To your question around pipelines as an opportunity, I think it's an opportunity to create better workplaces for everyone, so we can then have that diversity and representation as well and encourage men to take better care of their mental health and well-being, take parental leave and be engaged members of the community. It's all wrapped up in it as well.

The Chair: Excellent. Thank you.

The last five and a half minutes—because that was a long answer—will go to Ms. Nathan.

Juanita Nathan: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you so much for coming in person to be a witness. I really appreciate it.

This is an important topic for us. It relates to some of the other topics that we are studying, as well.

Dr. Irving, we are increasingly seeing political messaging from political leaders across multiple countries that draws on masculine narratives. For example, there are party leaders commenting on

women's biological clocks or lobbying for stronger gun laws. It could also be for security or any of those things.

From your perspective, how does this type of rhetoric deepen harm for women and girls? How does it reinforce the broader ecosystem in which anti-feminist ideologies thrive?

• (6530)

Dan Irving: For one thing, it reinforces a very narrow understanding of women and girls, in terms of the category in and of itself. It excludes trans women and girls, for instance, if we're talking about women's biological clocks. It also reduces women to their sexuality and reproductive capacity.

When you were talking, I was thinking about a particular Conservative leader who was on Jordan Peterson's podcast espousing this very rhetoric.

Going back to another question in terms of what spawns this anti-feminist rhetoric, part of it is white supremacy and a resurgence of a particular understanding of the nation as white. This is to harness some women's reproductive capacity, while saying that other women are dangerous. This signals a huge crisis and a violence in and of itself.

Juanita Nathan: Your research also explores the emotional lives of young men. You didn't get to the last bit of your speech. Maybe you could talk a little bit about that, including how white masculinity intersects with feelings of isolation and grievances. How do these emotional dynamics create openings for anti-feminist or misogynistic ideologies to take hold among youth specifically?

Dan Irving: Not to be too repetitive, but I think one of the ways has to do with—and one of my co-panellists said this as well—a lot of young men needing to be validated and needing to be heard. Even when they have emotions that are ugly, like anger and rage, sometimes we're not listening, but these anti-feminists are.

Part of it is to bring them into the fold, which is sometimes about lending an ear and hearing these ugly feelings that they have—add to that a particular knowledge and misinformation. If we're not equipping young people with the critical skills to suss out what is misinformation and what isn't, they can fall victim to that because of the emotional validation they receive. I think that's a problem for a lot of progressives who often don't want to confront particularly heavy or ugly feelings.

Juanita Nathan: In your research, have you come across bigger differences between the minority communities and newcomers versus the white male mainstream community in terms of these ideologies?

Dan Irving: I haven't. The research project we're talking about was only among white young men, so I'm not qualified to speak about that.

Juanita Nathan: Maybe I could throw the same question to Mr. Stika.

Do you have anything on that last question?

Jake Stika: I can't speak from a research perspective, but from an anecdotal experience, cis, hetero, white ideologies of masculinity are definitely fuelling this the most. When you look at a lot of these anti-feminist influencers, many of them have intersecting identities around diversity of race or those types of things. Andrew Tate himself is lightly mixed race but is able to really establish himself within a white supremacist culture. David Goggins is another person who comes to mind.

It's not absolute, but those dominant, hegemonic narratives are definitely fuelling it more so.

Juanita Nathan: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

That brings us to the end of our first panel.

I want to thank our witnesses.

If there's any data or information that you want to contribute that you didn't get to, please send it to the clerk, and we'd be happy to receive it. Thank you again for your input.

Iqra Khalid: Do you think it would be possible for us to send questions that we may not have been able to ask today to these panellists for them to answer?

The Chair: I think that's fine.

I'm going to briefly suspend while we switch up the panels.

• (1730)

(Pause)

• (1735)

• (6535)

The Chair: We are back with our second panel.

I want to welcome our witnesses.

I have a few instructions for our committee. If you're on Zoom and you want to pick your interpretation, whether you get French, English, or the floor, which is both, it's at the bottom of your screen. It looks like a little globe. If you wish to speak, please use the "raise hand" function. All comments go through the chair.

Each of you will have five minutes to speak.

We would like to welcome Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak and Lisa Pigeau, the director of intergovernmental relations. From Partage au Masculin, we have Jean-Michaël Dubé-Rousseau, executive director. Welcome.

We will begin with Ms. Pigeau.

You have the floor for five minutes.

• (6540)

Lisa Pigeau (Director of Intergovernmental Relations, Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak): Thank you, Madam Chair, for the chance to speak with the committee today.

Before I begin, I want to acknowledge that I'm joining you today from Spencerville, Ontario, on the unceded and unsundered territory of the Anishinabe people. I also honour the enduring relationship that the Haudenosaunee and Huron-Wendat peoples have with this land.

As an indigenous person living and working here, I see the acknowledgement as a call to act, not just to speak. It reminds me to support indigenous rights, to strengthen community relationships and to contribute to work that protects our lands, our families and our future generations. Reconciliation asks us to engage, to challenge systems that cause harm and to help create spaces where indigenous voices lead and indigenous people are safe and respected. I'm grateful to be here, and I remain committed to carrying these responsibilities forward in meaningful ways.

I'm Lisa Pigeau. I serve as the director of intergovernmental relations with Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak. We're the national voice for Métis women, girls and two-spirit and gender-diverse people. Our work is grounded in our culture, community and the rights and well-being of Métis women across the motherland.

We're seeing a growing pressure from ideas that work against gender equality. People often refer to this as anti-feminist ideology. It shows up in ways that can seem calm and polite. It can also show up in ways that are openly hostile. Whatever form it takes, the underlying message is the same. It tells women, girls, two-spirit people and gender-diverse people to expect less—less safety, less voice, less choice and less leadership.

Feminism has never been about taking anything away from men. It is not rooted in hatred and misandry. It's not about domination or creating new hierarchies. Feminism is simply about fairness and about dignity. It's about the freedom to make choices, to build opportunity and to raise our children in communities where each person is valued. When women and gender-diverse people are safer and stronger, families and communities become safer and stronger as well. It's not a competition.

For Métis women, this is deeply familiar. Long before colonial systems disrupted our communities, Métis women held enormous responsibility. They managed trade routes, shared knowledge, taught language, cared for children across cultures, supported governance and helped shape diplomacy. Their leadership was woven into daily life.

When colonial systems arrived, they imposed strict ideas about gender and control. They tried to silence women and erase those roles that kept Métis communities balanced and thriving.

Some of the anti-feminist messages we hear today echo those old systems. We hear people say that gender equality has gone too far or that speaking about sexism, racism or colonial violence is somehow divisive. We hear arguments that naming identity, language or lived experience is harmful. However, telling the truth about our lives is not divisive. It's an act of clarity. It's an act of healing. If we cannot name harm, we cannot repair it.

Intersectionality matters. A Métis woman living in a northern community experiences sexism differently from a young mom in an urban centre. A two-spirit youth faces pressures that others may never see. A woman living with a disability or a woman carrying the weight of intergenerational trauma walks a path that is shaped by forces most people never acknowledge. Anti-feminist rhetoric often pretends these differences do not exist, but in our communities we know better. We know that power, control and discrimination land differently depending on who you are and where you stand.

Choice is at the heart of empowerment—the choice to speak freely, to participate in decisions, to follow your gifts, your culture and your responsibilities without fear. That is what equality looks like in real life.

Métis women carry a long memory. We know that when women are pushed out of leadership, the entire community feels the loss. We know that when women rise, everyone rises. When two-spirit and gender-diverse people are welcomed and respected, our circle becomes stronger. This is what our ancestors understood. They lived in a way that valued balance and relationship.

As we confront the rise of anti-feminist ideology today, we need to remain grounded in who we are as Métis people. We need to speak plainly when misogyny harms us. We need to challenge the idea that equality is a threat. Our work is not about taking power from anyone. It's about building communities where every person has a chance to grow, to lead and to live free from violence.

● (6545)

This is how we honour our ancestors and protect our future generations—by choosing equality, by choosing respect and by lifting each other up.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Dubé-Rousseau, you have the floor for five minutes.

Jean-Michaël Dubé-Rousseau (Executive Director, Partage au Masculin): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you for inviting Partage au Masculin to take a position on the rise of antifeminist rhetoric.

I've been the executive director of Partage au Masculin for two years, but I've been working for 10 years at the organization, which my father founded 30 years ago. All my life, I grew up watching this man work so hard and fight for men to have a space to talk about their emotions, to show their suffering and to ask for help when they are going through a difficult time. My mother worked at a women's shelter for victims of domestic violence for a number of years. I remember always finding it great to hear them talk. Both my parents worked to advance the cause of equality, but with different clienteles.

Partage au Masculin has always been about men having the right to seek help and women not being our enemies but our allies. We do have to work together in order to live better together in society. For example, we often invite people from our local women's shelter for victims of domestic violence to come and present its services and talk about the reality of these women to the men who seek help from Partage au Masculin, because we believe that it matters.

Being here and having a chance to talk about all of this means a lot to me. Over the years that I've worked at Partage au Masculin, I've seen that attitudes have evolved. Today, it's more accepted for a man to seek help when he needs it. The guys don't hide it anymore. They talk about it among themselves, which is positive. The perhaps more traditional mentality in my region, Chaudière-Appalaches, is no longer as common as it once was.

Also, men's roles are changing. Fathers are no longer simply providers. They are more involved in the lives of their children, they are emotionally open with their spouses, their friends and even their children, and they have a role as educators.

What really angers me about the rise of toxic masculinism is that it seems as though we are going back in time to the early years when my father built Partage au Masculin. Andrew Tate was mentioned, but how many other influencers directly approach our young men to sell them a false reality? They are being sold a bill of goods. They are being manipulated while they are in the midst of building their identity. Influencers draw them in by telling them that if they want to succeed, be attractive to girls and solve all the problems in their lives, all they have to do is side with what they are proposing and listen to what they are telling them. Everything will be fine once they are shown the way. They are lured in with lofty words and promised these things. The more they're immersed in it, the more insidious and toxic it becomes and the more it is hammered home that women are to blame for everything wrong in their lives and the fact that they are rejected.

It's not even a return to traditional masculinity, strictly speaking, because our fathers and grandfathers didn't hate women. Yes, they had trouble talking about their emotions, communicating and asking for help. Yes, roles were very traditional. When men came home, they did not help with cooking and cleaning. However, they didn't hate women and they didn't have these antifeminist narratives. Today's masculinists, in the name of returning to something traditional, will tell others that women are actually the cause of all their problems.

I find that really shameful. I would like to see more counter-narratives against all these influencers, because I think that's missing. Whether on social media, in our schools or elsewhere, I get the feeling that, on the one hand, a lot of influencers are approaching young men to draw them in and get them all worked up. On the other hand, when I look at what exists to approach these young men and tell them that there is another way, that it's not true, that they have to watch out and develop their critical thinking, I get the feeling there's nothing, at least in my region. Something has to be done to fix that.

• (6550)

[English]

The Chair: Excellent. Thank you so much.

Now we're going to begin our first round of questions.

We'll start with six minutes for Madame Vien.

[Translation]

Dominique Vien: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Jean-Michaël Dubé-Rousseau, I knew your father, Guy. That was when I was young and kind. I was a journalist at the community radio station that I helped get on the air. I think we were probably one of the forerunners in giving airtime to people from an organization like Partage au Masculin. They talked about guys, how they suffer, the reasons for their anger and what was going on. That was 33 years ago. I am pleased that you are now running the organization. By the way, say hello to your dad.

Jean-Michaël Dubé-Rousseau: I absolutely will.

Dominique Vien: In your daily work, what do you notice about the guys you meet, particularly the ones from Beauce? It's pretty macho out there. They are contractors who get things done. Is this a

phenomenon you really see every day, particularly among younger men?

Jean-Michaël Dubé-Rousseau: I think that Beauce has always been very traditional, as you say. The men are strong and hard-working, and they don't show their pain, they just get things done. Personally, I have seen a change over the years. In the beginning, the guys from Beauce who came to our organization rushed in and out. At the time, people smoked more than they do now, but they didn't go out for a smoke at a group activity for fear they would be seen under the Partage au Masculin sign.

Today, men aged 35 to 55 are no longer afraid of that. They talk about it among themselves and out in the parking lot after our meetings, and it's no big deal. They come back and tell us that they have talked to their co-workers about their meetings at Partage au Masculin and that their co-workers are happy for them. There's still this thing about being very manly, very macho, but I find that the mentality is changing, even in Beauce. Contractors also want to help their employees.

However, I think younger men are more likely to buy into the influencers' toxic masculinity rhetoric.

Dominique Vien: It's true that the Internet is now part of the equation. Earlier, a colleague was talking about the dark web.

How can we counter this influx of stupid information that flows toward young men, puts ideas in their heads and encourages them to develop these feelings towards women?

Jean-Michaël Dubé-Rousseau: I don't think we can reasonably counter the influx that comes through their cell phones without simply taking away their phones or Internet access.

Dominique Vien: What should be done, then?

Jean-Michaël Dubé-Rousseau: I feel like we need a counter-narrative.

A friend of mine, whom I studied with, is a social worker on the north shore. She asked me if our organization could go into schools to talk about positive masculinity and positive male role models and tell the guys that it's okay not to be well and to ask for help, for example. I told her, first of all, that it was not in the territory covered by our organization. That made me realize that no one was doing that in my region. No community organization, at least, offers these kinds of services. There's a lack. No one has a mandate to go into schools to talk to our young teenage boys.

Dominique Vien: However, it should start there. We need to talk to young men.

I'm going to ask a hypothetical. I'm not saying it's true, but you'll tell me what you think.

I am the mother of a 29-year-old guy. When children are born, they are with their mothers. When they start day care, they are with an educator. Let's face it, there are no men working in day cares. When they start elementary school, just about all teachers are women. Earlier, someone gave economic explanations, but almost all teachers are women. When these kids get to high school, a few of their teachers are men. There are more at CEGEP and university. As you see, there's a whole process where kids don't have meaningful and positive male figures. They're around women all the time.

Here is my hypothetical. There are no more meeting places for guys like there used to be. Back then, guys would go to the bar or the tavern, but that seems less prevalent. I remember that at school, my son had to line up. Little boys like to roughhouse, but they weren't allowed to. Didn't we go a bit to the other extreme, where there aren't enough meaningful male figures for the guys?

• (6555)

Jean-Michaël Dubé-Rousseau: My clientele is adult men, so child and adolescent development is not my field. However, I don't think it's going too far to say that any little boy needs to have a positive male role model in his life. Sometimes it's his father. Sometimes it's his brother. Sometimes it's an uncle. Sometimes it's a neighbour. It can be anyone. However, sometimes there is simply no one. Sometimes the boy lives in a family where the parents are separated, with a single mother raising her child alone, or in a family where the father is there every other weekend.

Dominique Vien: It's not easy.

Jean-Michaël Dubé-Rousseau: It is what it is, but there is no positive male role model to develop the—

Dominique Vien: I'm sorry to interrupt you, Mr. Dubé-Rousseau, but I have only 30 seconds left.

Can you tell me in a few words what our men are suffering from right now? Why are they so anxious? Why are they so isolated? Why do more men commit suicide? What's going on?

Jean-Michaël Dubé-Rousseau: Why do more of them commit suicide? It's because they are isolated. There's still social pressure on men to be strong and hardworking and never show weakness.

It's true that attitudes change. More guys are willing to ask for help, but it's still hard for them to talk. That's why we always tell the guys that talking is a strength. Spilling your guts is a sign of strength. It's painful, it's hard, but man, do I ever admire guys who manage to do that.

Dominique Vien: You're right.

The Chair: That's excellent.

[English]

Now we go to Ms. Khalid for six minutes.

[Translation]

Iqra Khalid: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you for your participation.

I'm sorry, I'm going to speak to you in English.

[English]

Mr. Dubé-Rousseau, I'm not sure whether you tuned into the testimony earlier, from Dr. Irving and Mr. Stika, with respect to toxic masculinity and colonial impacts. I'd like to ask you, if that's okay, what do you think has been the impact of colonialism, and what's that intersection, when we talk about indigenous communities, minority communities and white supremacy as well?

[Translation]

Jean-Michaël Dubé-Rousseau: I can't comment on colonialism per se.

In terms of intersectionality, people can have layered realities that add a certain amount of pressure.

I don't know if this helps answer your question, but I really get the feeling that antifeminist rhetoric uses the codes of traditional masculinity to attract young men and gradually get them to fall further into hate speech and antifeminist rhetoric. It starts off so simple. For example, they draw in young men by asking them if they want their business to be successful. This is something that is very traditionally masculine. They are also asked if they want to be attractive to girls. That, too, is something that is very traditionally masculine.

They justify themselves by claiming that they are not telling girls that they have to stay at home, that it's their choice. They try to be all nice and sweet and drum up old codes by saying that we have to go back to the wonderful family values of the past. They say it was so much better before. It was great, it was simple, it worked. Families were close-knit.

To me, what they are promoting is a fantasy. It's a mirage. These are things you can't say no to. If you ask people if they are against wonderful family values, they will say no, they are not. Are they against the fact that a man can run a successful business? No, of course they're not against that. Once they have roped them in with these ideas, they drive them deeper into antifeminist ideology.

I don't know if that answers your question, but I don't think I have the expertise to give any other answer than that.

• (6600)

[English]

Iqra Khalid: I understand. Thank you.

I'll ask you about something that you may have expertise on. Diversity, equity and inclusion is a hot topic, a divisive issue that is ongoing, not just in Canada but all across North America and the world. There are policies that were put in place to make sure that not just women but all gender-diverse people and all minorities are protected and are, basically, given equality of opportunity to participate in our workforce. What impact do you think this negative rhetoric around diversity, equity and inclusion has had on toxic masculinity and on anti-feminist ideology?

[Translation]

Jean-Michaël Dubé-Rousseau: It definitely has a negative effect. I feel that this is still something that is going to be used to say that they are looking for the the most qualified person, as if gender-diverse people or people of a different ethnicity who don't fit the straight, white male profile could not be in a highly qualified position or a position of power.

Attacks on diversity and inclusion are very direct and negative. These people think that men are the ones who need to be empowered, need to be in the workforce, need to have people below them and need to be in decision-making positions. We never stop hearing about white men. Clearly, the more space antifeminist rhetoric takes up, the more it sets back equality, diversity and inclusion. Yes, it has a negative effect.

[English]

Iqra Khalid: Thank you very much.

Ms. Pigeau, do you also want to comment on the impact of negative social media and negative policies against diversity, equity and inclusion?

Lisa Pigeau: Thank you. I appreciate the question.

The anti-feminist ideas often create hesitation around gender equity and equality work. They influence whether any program for women and gender-diverse people will receive support, and they encourage narratives that dismiss gender-based violence as exaggerated or political. It leads to slower action and selective funding decisions. For example, when governments stop naming inequality clearly, it becomes easier for harmful assumptions to take hold.

When we look at... Folks may be considering that diversity, equity and inclusion is harmful. It's actually the opposite. It's harmful not to consider diversity, equity and inclusion in all aspects of public policy and programming and in government decisions. With the last government, you heard support for a gender-based analysis. We focus all of our work on a Métis-based gendered and intersectional lens that clearly honours and respects the different starting points of everyone.

I'll just refer back to your earlier question around the impacts of colonization and the attempt at total racial—

The Chair: I'm sorry. That's the time for that section.

Now we'll go to Madame Larouche for six minutes.

[Translation]

Andréanne Larouche: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Once again, we realize that this study will be very informative, and I'd like to thank both witnesses for contributing to it.

Mr. Dubé-Rousseau, I'm going to ask you a question, but first I would like to commend your organization, Partage au Masculin. It reminds me a lot of the Ressource pour hommes de la Haute-Yamaska, in Shefford, a Maison Oxygène with a mission very similar to yours. I had the opportunity to go there and speak with men who use these resources, and I saw how valuable they are in supporting them through difficult times. We realize that it's less obvious for men to seek help. These centres have to work hard to make themselves known to the men who might need them.

You also mentioned the importance of having positive male role models. Mr. Stika, in the previous panel, spoke about the importance of funding for the arts and music. That's a big part of it. Right now, there's a lot of buzz about the series *Bellefleur*, which focuses on positive masculinity. I don't know if you've had a chance to see it, but it's a series that wants healthy, authentic men, far from the traditional male clichés. It addresses vulnerability, brotherhood and the strength of friendships, while deconstructing male stereotypes.

Mr. Stika suggested, among other things, that more funding be provided for the arts and music. How do you think that could help promote positive role models and reposition this issue of masculinity?

● (6605)

Jean-Michaël Dubé-Rousseau: I think young men need to be given more ways to express their emotions or masculinity. We need to give them space to do that. Without these men necessarily starting to express their masculinity, we can start from the basics and help them express their emotions. We need to give men space to talk about what they are going through and show their vulnerability. For many of the men who come to see us at Partage au Masculin, both young and old, it is the first time in their lives that they have had the opportunity to open up about this subject and that they have a place to do so. This place can be within their circle of friends, their family, or their workplace. They can also open up through a form of expression, such as music. They have never had a place to come and say that, beyond the fact that they were angry, they had gone through difficult times and had experienced pain. People often express other things through anger. We know that for many men, anger becomes a vehicle for expressing other emotions, such as sadness, a feeling of betrayal, or suffering.

So yes, I think schools need to provide our young men other ways to express themselves. More generally, we need to value the fact that they have the right to talk about their emotions and give them the space to express what they're going through and what they think, rather than rejecting them and seeing them shut down.

Earlier, I heard something that I really liked: If we don't talk to these young men, if we don't listen to them, antifeminist influencers will. They will listen to them, respond to them, talk to them and allow them to express themselves. That's why we need to use direct methods, such as counselling, discussion groups, service presentations, or school activities, to reach young men where they are. If we can meet adult men in their environment to give them the opportunity to express themselves and it works well for them, it will definitely work well for teenagers, too. If we don't do it, online influencers will. They're going to go to chat rooms, comments under videos, TikTok; they'll go wherever young people are and talk to them.

So young men need to be given a space to express themselves, whether it be an organization like Partage au Masculin, an organization for young people or through activities offered at school. This is important.

Andréanne Larouche: I'm going to be a little chauvinistic and invite you to watch *Bellefleur*, a series by Sarah-Maude Beauchesne, who is from Granby, and Nicola Morel. We'll talk about it again later.

Speaking of positive measures, I would also like to point out that Auberge sous mon toit, a resource located in Shefford that also helps men, has produced a podcast in which men are interviewed in an effort to spark positive change. It includes beautiful testimonials from men who talk about how seeking help has helped them get through their struggles. Podcasts like this one are very positive.

I hope we can talk about it again in a future round.

Now, I'd like to take the minute I have left to quickly turn to you, Ms. Pigeau.

In a previous answer, you mentioned the role that gender-based analysis can play for indigenous communities. I know that yesterday, one of my colleagues was at the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, which was doing a follow-up study on a report tabled by the Auditor General following an audit to determine whether the government had implemented gender-based analysis plus, or GBA+. Are you referring to this analysis?

Can you tell us, in 30 seconds, how important it is to apply GBA+ properly so that all government measures promote gender equity?

[English]

Lisa Pigeau: Absolutely. The gender-based analysis plus.... Of course, from our perspective we use a Métis-based gendered and intersectional lens, so we're changing that terminology from simply GBA+ to really emphasize the importance of culture and the experiences that we have through our culture, and also realizing different experiences and intersectionality.

I think the important part about a gendered and intersectional analysis is that it should be applied reflexively. It shouldn't be separate and apart from any policy development or government position. It should be automatically built in.

I'm hoping that I addressed the question appropriately, Madam Chair.

• (6610)

The Chair: Yes, absolutely, you did.

I also want to say to our witnesses that if there is something else that you'd like to share with the committee—data or answers to questions that you didn't get a chance to answer—you can send the information to the clerk, and we would be happy to receive it.

Now we do have time for about half of a round, because there's a vigil tonight for the victims of the École Polytechnique shooting.

I think we'll go first to Madame Cody for five minutes.

Connie Cody: Thank you to all the witnesses for coming out.

I'd like to address my first question to Mr. Dubé-Rousseau.

Thank you for joining us.

The term “anti-feminism” is being used more often in public debate, but it's not clearly defined. When labels are applied broadly, they can shape how men see themselves and how they relate to women. At the same time, these narratives can influence mental health and relationships. Understanding what this term really means in practice is important if we want to ensure that conversations remain respectful and focused on solutions.

From your perspective, should there be a clear definition? In its absence, what does anti-feminism mean in the context of your work, and how do you see this label impacting men's views or treatment of women?

[Translation]

Jean-Michaël Dubé-Rousseau: I don't know if I'm the right expert to offer a good definition of antifeminism. I find that people much smarter than I am, who have studied the subject more extensively than I have, have come up with very good definitions of antifeminism. Of course, we need to define it. That said, we must be careful because it's the kind of term that, if poorly defined, can be misperceived by men who already feel rejected by services or who feel that the help available isn't intended for them.

I'll take the time to answer the question properly.

For example, when shelters for women who are victims of domestic violence give presentations in schools, it sometimes seems as though men feel that services don't exist for them and that only women are helped, which isn't true.

I wish the....

Can you repeat your question? I really feel like I'm getting lost.

[English]

Connie Cody: That's okay. I was wondering more about the generalization of the term “anti-feminism”.

What I do want to ask you is this. Suicide among men is on the rise. Are you able to provide the most recent statistics on the suicide rate among men?

[*Translation*]

Jean-Michaël Dubé-Rousseau: I don't have the statistics at hand, but I know that they show that even today there are about three times as many suicides among men as among women. As for the methods used, men tend to use firearms more, which are a much more lethal option for taking one's own life, while women are more likely to use medication.

The fact that it's still difficult for men to ask for help and open up about what they're going through definitely has an impact on suicide rates. For example, when women are on the brink, they are more likely to seek help. Before reaching that point, she talks about it more to her friends or family members. She tells them that she isn't doing well, and they can then direct her to resources for help. In contrast, more traditional men who are experiencing distress tend to shut down and want to get through it on their own at all costs. When that doesn't work, he sees it as a huge failure. He tells himself that he has failed in life, that he's not a real man and, as a result, he wonders whether he deserves to live. Then he will attempt suicide, or he will ask for help when he is very close to acting on his thoughts.

So, yes, suicide statistics show that even today, three to four times more men—depending on the age group—will take their own lives. We must not continue the discourse of toxic masculinity, in which men are encouraged to be successful and told that they must succeed in business and with women. What we're selling them is an unattainable ideal. When they see that it isn't working, they'll be even more inclined to withdraw and see themselves as failures who have missed out on life. They are then more likely to take their own lives.

• (6615)

[*English*]

Connie Cody: I see.

Do you think the broad negative characterizations are a contributor to the challenges men face, when their concerns are mis-characterized as anti-feminist? Does this actually stop them from seeking the supports they need?

[*Translation*]

Jean-Michaël Dubé-Rousseau: Ideologies of toxic masculinity are clearly preventing men from seeking the help they need. In traditional masculinity, a man must cope on his own, he needs to be strong, he must never falter, and he is not allowed to show his emotions or show weakness. It's clear that these ideals of toxic masculinity and antifeminism harm men and prevent them from seeking the help they need when they're in distress, whether it be—

The Chair: Thank you very much. Ms. Cody's time is up.

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

Madeleine Chenette: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses. This is a great discussion.

Ms. Pigeau, I'm going to repeat the question that my colleague asked you about the consequences of colonization, since you didn't have a chance to finish answering it. I'd like you to tell us more about that.

You could also add to your comments by telling us about the reality of Métis and indigenous communities, where the power relationship has shifted. It's more of a victim's logic, given everything that's been experienced.

What should we learn from this reality? Their current narrative is that these men are victims, so how can we remedy the situation? What have you learned that could help us deal with all this toxic masculinity in a more comprehensive way?

[*English*]

Lisa Pigeau: Colonization has been well studied and well documented. The impacts are pervasive. They affect every area of our lives as Métis people, in my case, and more specifically Métis women, taking away our traditional roles and taking us away from being the dominant society in Canada toward being submissive and subject to genocide and so on.

We saw that word used predominantly in the missing and murdered indigenous women and girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ work in the inquiry. Through those recommendations and our ensuing report, “Weaving Miskotahâ”—“*miskotahâ*” means “change”—we had 62 Métis-specific calls that relate to how colonization has impacted our security, our safety, our education, our employment and our place and space in leadership, in governance and in every single aspect. I can certainly provide that report to the committee.

I do want to reiterate one thing I brought forth in my intervention. Feminism is not about undermining the needs and role of men in our communities. We all have very important roles. That role is joint. That's what colonization really destroyed, the concept of working together and how it's not us against them. From my perspective, that is what feminism is about. It's about honouring everyone in our community. Colonization specifically just completely stopped that ideology. It's taken hundreds and hundreds of years to destroy that concept, but at Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak, we work every day to try to rebuild that. That is what the Métis reality looks like specifically for Métis women.

I also want to touch on the previous question to my co-panellist about suicide. What we lack in our community is Métis-specific and disaggregate data to be able to move forward and to be able to fully understand the problem and concept. Data is what we really need to work towards.

Thank you.

• (6620)

[*Translation*]

Madeleine Chenette: Thank you very much.

Mr. Dubé-Rousseau, we're looking at the reality of young men and wondering what we can do to improve it. We have ideas, but I want to come back to the situation of adults and the effects of influencers. Basically, young men absorb all this toxicity and then become active on the ground.

Of course, we need to work with both men and women. However, if you have limited resources, what needs to be done to really help both women cope with the situation and men change their behaviour? Should we focus on those who behave appropriately and value them more? Where would you wave your magic wand to really change things?

Jean-Michaël Dubé-Rousseau: At Partage au Masculin, whether on our social networks as we do now, or through more traditional media as we did before, we have always worked to convey the message that men can break away from all this toxic, antifeminist and company narratives and be positive role models for themselves, their families and their communities.

I think we have to keep hammering away at this and telling men not to listen to these speeches or get involved in this kind of thing. They have a right to be men who show their emotions. They are equals to women. They can be more than just someone bringing money home. They can get involved in their children's lives and with their spouse to share household chores, in particular.

So we have to continue to show them that there are different and positive models. That's what I would work on. How it manifests itself—

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Dubé-Rousseau. Ms. Chénette's time is up.

Ms. Larouche, you have the last turn. You have two and a half minutes.

Andréanne Larouche: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I'm going to try to ask each witness a quick question.

Mr. Dubé-Rousseau, we have clearly understood the importance of having resources to support men and show positive role models.

What else can we do to deconstruct this victim narrative that's developing in the androsphere and in the online communities that are rallying members of this movement? Do you have any other suggestions for solutions?

Jean-Michaël Dubé-Rousseau: I feel that, when men are deeply immersed in this, it's as if they're in a cult. I don't know if that's a good comparison. Perhaps I don't know enough about the difference between a cult and the androsphere, but in my humble opinion, when people are immersed in it, I really get the impression that they're part of a cult. No matter what we try to tell them, if it goes against what the cult says, it won't fly. They'll always say that we're the ones who don't understand because we're not involved in it. They'll tell us that we're wrong and that we should join them, because they're the ones who are right.

What needs to be done to reach these men and get them out of this situation? I am tempted to say that the question is similar to the one we might ask ourselves if we were trying to remove someone from a cult. Unfortunately, I don't have an answer to that question.

What I'm saying is intense, but that's honestly the image I have in mind.

Andréanne Larouche: That makes sense. Perhaps we should see it more as a cult. Thank you. It is illuminating, and it will certainly give us some direction.

Ms. Pigeau, you will have 30 seconds to answer my question.

We just talked about the internet. What federal partnerships would be necessary to protect young indigenous women online from attacks by antifeminists or misogynists? Do you have any potential solutions for us?

[English]

Lisa Pigeau: Very quickly, in terms of online harassment, it allows those harmful narratives to spread widely. Indigenous women face threats meant to silence them and discourage civic participation. In Canada, we need a stronger reporting system, quicker responses from platforms and, I would say, funding for indigenous women's organizations to provide digital safety supports.

The Chair: Excellent. That is the end of our panel today.

I want to thank our witnesses. Your testimony is greatly appreciated. Thank you for your work. Again, if you have anything else that you wanted to add, you can send it on to the clerk.

At this point, I'm going to adjourn the meeting.

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