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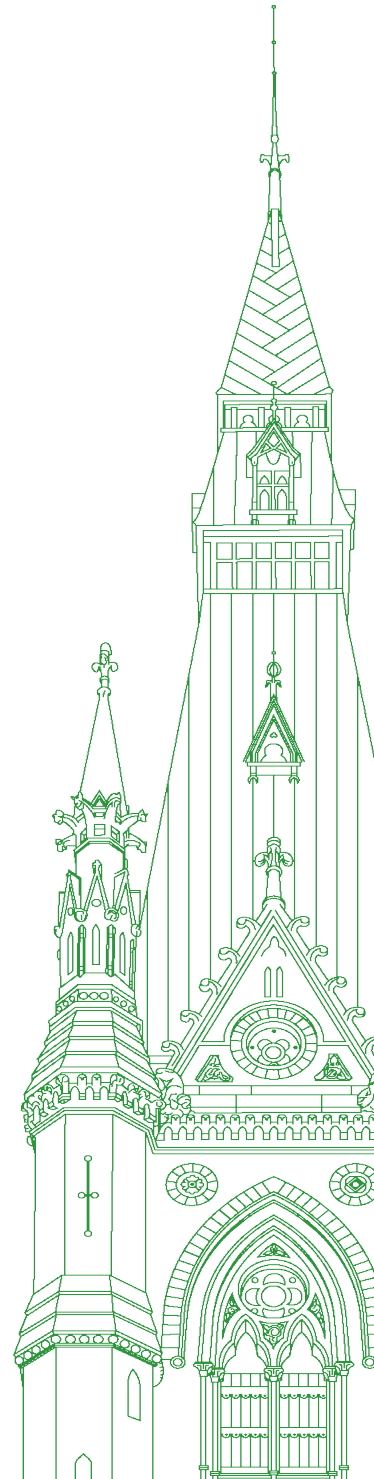
Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights

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Chair: James Maloney



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• (1635)

[English]

The Chair (James Maloney (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.)): Good afternoon, everybody.

I'd like to call this meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number 24 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

Pursuant to the order of reference of February 2, 2026, the committee is meeting to continue its study of Bill C-16, an act to amend certain acts in relation to criminal and correctional matters regarding child protection, gender-based violence, delays and other measures.

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

I'd like to confirm that the sound tests were done successfully.

Before we continue, I would ask all in-person participants to consult the guidelines written on the cards on the table. These measures are in place to help prevent audio and feedback incidents and to protect the health and safety of all participants, including the interpreters. You will also notice a QR code on the card, which links to a short awareness video.

I'd like to make a few comments for the benefit of witnesses and members.

Please wait until I recognize you by name before speaking.

For those participating by video conference, click on the microphone icon to activate your microphone, and please mute yourself when you are not speaking. For those on Zoom, at the bottom of your screen you can select the appropriate channel for interpretation: floor, English or French. For those in the room, you can use the earpiece and select the desired channel.

As a reminder, all comments should be addressed through the chair.

For members in the room, if you wish to speak, please raise your hand. For members on Zoom, please use the "raise hand" function. The clerk and I will manage the speaking order as best we can, and we appreciate your patience and understanding in this regard.

Welcome to our first panel of witnesses.

In the first hour, we have, from the Canadian Centre for Child Protection, Monique St. Germain, general counsel; from Daughter Project Canada, Kristin Szabo, advocacy lead; and from the London Abused Women's Centre, Jennifer Dunn, executive director.

The floor is open to the three groups.

Each of you will have up to five minutes to make opening remarks. Following the conclusion of all of the opening remarks, I'll open the floor to questions.

Ms. Dunn, I'll start with you.

Jennifer Dunn (Executive Director, London Abused Women's Centre): Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today.

My name is Jennifer Dunn. I am the executive director of the London Abused Women's Centre here in London, Ontario. For over four decades, our organization has supported women and girls who have been subjected to male violence, including intimate partner violence, sexual exploitation and trafficking, with long-term counselling, advocacy and support.

With my time today, I will focus on the proposed amendments related to femicide and the proposed criminalization of coercive and controlling conduct within Bill C-16.

The London Abused Women's Centre welcomes the recognition of femicide within this legislation. Treating murders that occur in the context of control, hate, sexual violence or exploitation as the most serious form of homicide and naming femicide as a distinct form of violence are important. It acknowledges what frontline organizations like ours, researchers and families have long known, which is that violence against women is gendered, patterned and deeply rooted in inequality. Recognizing femicide helps make visible the realities that too often go unnamed.

However, it's important to be clear that naming femicide alone will not prevent it. While recognition is meaningful, it must be accompanied by sustained investment in prevention to address the root causes of male violence against women and the systemic barriers that women face. Without that, we risk creating language without impact.

I would now like to turn to the proposed new offence of coercive and controlling conduct.

The London Abused Women's Centre agrees that coercive control is real, dangerous and often precedes lethal violence. It is a critical concept in understanding how abuse operates over time. However, we have serious concerns about the risks of criminalizing coercive control in the system as it currently operates. I urge you to consider the reality of mandatory charge policies in intimate partner violence cases, for example.

In May 1981, the London Police Service became the first police force in Canada to institute a mandatory charging policy for intimate partner violence cases. These policies were intended to relieve victims, most often women, of the responsibility of deciding whether their partner should be charged and to increase their safety. Police were directed to lay charges where there were reasonable probable grounds.

Introducing a new, highly nuanced criminal offence without addressing these systemic issues risks widening that harm. Police officers responding to intimate partner violence calls are often making decisions in highly volatile, time-limited situations. It is not possible to have a full picture of an intimate partner relationship when responding to an emergency call. There is a real and growing risk that survivors, particularly those who are seen to resist, defend themselves or present themselves as less ideal victims, could be misidentified and criminalized.

If this offence proceeds, it cannot stand alone. Coercive control is a deeply nuanced concept. Its identification requires an understanding of power, gender, trauma and systemic bias. We have seen this in other areas such as judicial education on sexual assault, that training cannot and should not ever be optional. We cannot afford to repeat that gap. There must be mandatory, ongoing and accountable training for police, Crown attorneys and judges. This training must include coercive control and trauma- and violence-informed practice. Without it, the law risks being applied unevenly and unjustly.

Finally, I want to emphasize what we know to be true. Criminal law on its own does not prevent violence. As highlighted in the brief by the Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic and LEAF, criminalizing coercive control does not address the underlying causes of violence against women, nor the barriers that prevent survivors from reporting.

We know what does help prevent violence. In London, our high-risk action table for femicide prevention brings together police, community agencies and service providers to identify and intervene in the highest-risk cases before lethal violence occurs. This kind of coordinated, multisector response allows for a fuller picture of risk, which is something no single system, including policing, can achieve on its own. If we are serious about ending violence, we must invest in these coordinated, preventative models alongside early intervention, long-term advocacy and support for survivors, housing, and guaranteed livable income.

In closing, we support efforts to better recognize and respond to the realities of violence against women, including femicide and coercive control. This is a significant step forward. Legislation must be grounded in the lived realities of survivors and the systems that respond to them. Without careful implementation, safeguards and investments, there is a risk that these changes could unintentionally

cause further harm to the very women they are intended to protect. We cannot afford to get this wrong.

Thank you.

● (1640)

The Chair: Thank you. You're right on time.

Ms. St. Germain, we'll go over to you.

Monique St. Germain (General Counsel, Canadian Centre for Child Protection): Thank you, Chair Maloney and committee members for inviting our agency to participate in this study.

My name is Monique St. Germain, and I am general counsel for the Canadian Centre for Child Protection, a national charity that works across Canada and globally to reduce the incidence of missing and sexually exploited children.

We operate Cybertip.ca, Canada's tip line for reporting the online sexual exploitation of children. As of March 31, 2025, nearly 471,000 reports have been processed through Cybertip. Reports overwhelming pertain either to child sexual abuse and exploitation material or online luring.

We also operate Project Arachnid, a platform that prioritizes the removal of harmful child sexual abuse content online. As of this month, Project Arachnid has issued over 141 million notices requesting the removal of CSAM, child sexual abuse material, from the Internet.

We support the changes in Bill C-16 that are aimed at protecting children and victims of image-based abuse, including the following.

First, the expansion of the luring offence to include luring to facilitate extortion, criminalizing threats to distribute CSAM and intimate images, and the addition of sextortion as an aggravating factor on sentencing, are all great additions to the arsenal of available tools in the Criminal Code to address sextortion. Over the past decade, sextortion offences have skyrocketed. On average, Cybertip receives six sextortion reports per day. In 2024 alone, our support services department managed nearly 2,800 requests from children and their caregivers. In our experience, boys are typically extorted for money, while girls are extorted for more images. Tactics used can be very extreme and terrifying for the young person. In some tragic instances, the young people threatened feel so helpless and trapped they have died by suicide. This is an incredibly serious crime, and we are confident these new provisions will help.

Second is increasing the age of those protected by section 161 preventions orders from 16 to 18. A section 161 order is only available to a court once a person has been convicted of certain sexual offences. By adding to the offences for which such an order is available and increasing the age of children able to be protected by such orders, we are providing courts with a powerful tool to prevent future offending. This change is one our agency has long advocated for, and we feel strongly that it will make a tangible difference in protecting children from predatory conduct.

Third, we support the changes to the mandatory reporting legislation clarifying who is bound by the law, increasing the preservation requirement, and the new requirement for transmission data to be sent to police. These are all critical improvements to the law.

Fourth, we're pleased to see the addition of a safety valve to re-establish mandatory minimum sentences into the code. It has been incredibly disheartening to witness the dismantling of these sentences on the basis of hypotheticals.

We regularly monitor Canadian case law, and it's clear that the extent of offending against children is getting much worse. Most offenders we see before the courts have inflicted grave harm on victims and society, yet the seriousness of their crimes is downplayed when the focus turns to hypothetical offences and offenders. We are cautiously optimistic Bill C-16's changes will lead to more meaningful sentences that tie directly to the offender before the court and the actual offence that the offender committed.

Fifth, while we welcome the changes to address sexual deepfakes, we also want to see the creation of this imagery addressed. Cybertip processed 9,000 sexually explicit AI-generated images and videos of children and youth in 2024. The problem is harming more and more Canadians and it has to stop. It is the creation of this imagery that first violates the victim's privacy and sexual integrity. It's the creation that starts the chain of victimization. These images are also a powerful silencer of women and girls. They are not harmless products of the imagination.

Finally, while we are pleased to see distribution of bestiality imagery criminalized, we would like to see the law go further and also criminalize the making, possession and accessing of such materials.

In closing, while we support Bill C-16, we and the survivors we support also want to see Canada enact laws that hold online companies accountable and mandate the swift removal of CSAM and intimate images and provide better more accessible remedies for victims of such crimes.

• (1645)

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll go over to you, Ms. Szabo.

Kristin Szabo (Advocacy Lead, Daughter Project Canada): Good afternoon, committee members. It is an honour for me to appear before you today.

Daughter Project Canada is a Canadian non-profit organization working to end the sexual exploitation of children and youth through awareness, prevention and advocacy.

As a national organization, our work is informed by direct engagement with communities across Canada and by the growing realities of online harm facing Canadian children. Daughter Project's publicly available resources, including the sextortion safety guide, were developed in response to a demonstrated need from Canadian families.

Daughter Project Canada supports the intent of Bill C-16. We welcome recognition of harms such as coercive control, online sexual exploitation and technology-facilitated abuse, particularly as they affect children and youth.

It is our view that any Canadian child accessing the Internet can quickly become at risk. With this in mind, Daughter Project has made two recommendations for amendments to Bill C-16 and two recommendations around implementation if it is passed.

First, strengthen the definition of intimate image to reflect a harm reduction standard. We recommend that the definition of intimate image in Bill C-16 be amended to replace the current standard, "likely to be mistaken for a visual recording of that person", with "that is presented or capable of being presented as a visual recording of that person." We submit that the harm of a sexualized deepfake or a non-consensual intimate image does not depend on how convincing it is. The harm lies in its creation and potential distribution and its impact on the dignity and well-being of the person depicted.

Second, address online exploitation through not only criminal penalties but also shared responsibility. Children are being exploited online in environments designed for engagement and addiction, not safety. Effective prevention requires shared responsibility among individuals, platforms, communities and governments. Individual accountability is essential, but systems shape risk. Criminalizing conduct after images are created or shared does not stop initial harm. Therefore, rapid takedown mechanisms, platform accountability and digital literacy education are essential complements to the law. If the bill is passed, we recommend that criminal offences are paired with mandatory national prevention.

Our mandate focuses on preventing exploitation before a child is harmed. Our concern is with ensuring that laws do not unintentionally place victims, especially young people, in greater danger or discourage disclosure of abuse. Children and youth who experience exploitation often require years of trauma-informed counselling and supports such as stable housing and family connections. Without sustained investment, we risk seeing survivors cycle back into vulnerability even after their abusers have been convicted. Root causes such as harmful gender norms, online normalization of sexual exploitation, lack of digital safety education and economic vulnerability are not addressed through criminal offences alone. Addressing these requires prevention strategies alongside legislation.

Lastly, mandate national data collection and public reporting on child sexual exploitation. Daughter Project Canada recommends the introduction of statutory obligations to collect standardized national data on child sexual exploitation and technology-facilitated abuse, and to publicly report on trends, prosecution outcomes and prevention gaps.

Bill C-16 defines and criminalizes new forms of exploitation, but it does not require systematic data collection or reporting. Other organizations appearing before this committee have highlighted that a lack of data undermines both prevention efforts and accountability.

In closing, Canada cannot arrest its way out of child exploitation. If Parliament recognizes new harms, it must also invest in stopping those harms before a child becomes a victim. Prevention reduces victimization upstream of the judicial system. Education for parents, caregivers, educators and communities, especially around online grooming and coercive behaviour, is one of the most effective ways to reduce demand for criminal justice intervention.

Thank you, Chair and committee members, for your commitment to the safety of Canadian children and youth represented in this bill.

• (1650)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll start the first six-minute round of questions with Mr. Lawton.

Andrew Lawton (Elgin—St. Thomas—London South, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

Thank you, witnesses, for your time today.

I'd like to start with you, Ms. Dunn. By way of disclosure, I'll share that my wife sits on the board of the London Abused Women's Centre. Due to my deep appreciation for your work, I want to start with you.

I know that LAWAC has done a lot on human trafficking, which I was hoping to see addressed in Bill C-16. We know this has a direct connection to intimate partner violence in some cases. We also know that London, St. Thomas and that whole 401 corridor have really become a terrible hot spot for these sorts of crimes.

Could you speak to what you think the law could do that would better address that concern?

Jennifer Dunn: You're absolutely right. London and area have been recognized as a hub for sex trafficking because of our proximity to the 401 corridor. I think it's really important to look at it as a

full picture. We need to focus on prevention and education, as young as elementary school age. Educators need to know what to recognize when it comes to human trafficking, what to do about it and how to respond.

As well, we need organizations like ours that can support women and girls who have been subjected to trafficking and not in a way that's going to be an overnight fix. Based on the work that we do, we know it takes quite a while for a woman to trust us, for example, to share her story of what she's been through. It's very, very important that we have proper resources available for women who have been subjected to trafficking.

Andrew Lawton: When we look at intimate partner violence, there are a lot of offences that you can see along the way that escalate over time. Bill C-16 looks at this in the context of animals. We have also seen, again, an escalation of behaviour from coercive control to violence.

One of the challenges we have in the system right now, as we spoke about when you testified before this committee last time, is that in some cases, people who do commit violent acts against intimate partners are not staying behind bars. We've seen in London the tragic consequences of this with Breanna Broadfoot.

We also see in this that there has been an attempt to restore mandatory minimums with some guardrails. Do you believe that mandatory minimum sentences can save lives and can protect women and that those are an important part of sentencing?

Jennifer Dunn: My answer is going to be similar to the last answer, even though it's a completely different topic.

I think that all of the systems need to work together. We need to look at what the minimum penalties would be and how they would apply. When you're looking at high-risk repeat offenders, that's going to look a lot different from something that's considered maybe a less serious charge.

I'm going to go back to the prevention and education piece as well. We need to look at alternative methods to justice. We often hear women sharing with us that they want to choose what their journey to justice looks like. It's very important to have multiple different avenues for justice.

With regard to mandatory minimums, again, I'm going to circle back to what I said at the beginning. It's really important to look at what crime is being committed, because it's not one-size-fits-all.

• (1655)

Andrew Lawton: A point you raised when you testified previously that I think is relevant to Bill C-16 is that decisions around sentencing and, in that context, bail, are life or death decisions for some women. I think there is an urgency here that we get this right as much as possible.

What do you think we could do beyond what's in the bill already? What's missing from this? Understand that we are tasked with looking specifically at federal legislation and can't necessarily, in this bill, solve all of the interconnected system challenges you've raised.

Jennifer Dunn: It's important to look at what can be done. I know this is federal.

For example, police have a really big job to do when they're responding to these crimes. It's important that we look at that in a way of police operations. I know that's not a federal issue, but we need to look at proper training, proper education and the way the systems, including policing, are implementing these offences. You brought up Breanna Broadfoot. Between the years of 2023 and 2024, there were four femicides in London alone. Those four women lost their lives because of their intimate partners. We need to look at what's going on in these situations and how we can do better as a community together, not in isolation.

What you said is absolutely true. We need to be looking at those high-risk repeat offenders, what we're doing and why they are being released, especially when I had mentioned in that appearance before you the issues of strangulation, for example. We need to take all of that seriously, and that's going to come down to training and education across the entire justice system.

Andrew Lawton: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lawton.

Ms. Dhillon, we'll go over to you for six minutes.

Anju Dhillon (Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle, Lib.): Thank you to all of our witnesses for being here today.

I'll start with Ms. St. Germain.

Bill C-16 addresses gaps by criminalizing the invitation to a child to expose themselves for a sexual purpose and by creating a new offence for recruiting youth into crime. In your view, how important is it to close these kinds of gaps to better reflect the realities of how predators are operating today?

Monique St. Germain: The invitation to expose, modifying that particular offence, is definitely necessary to close the gap. A lot of offending, when it comes to that particular offence, is occurring online, where that is the invitation that is happening by the offender in terms of what they are asking the child to do. That is a very important provision to be adding to the code.

The other one you mentioned in terms of the recruitment of a child is another important one. I did not mention that in my opening remarks primarily in the interest of time. One thing that may bear looking more closely at is whether or not the offence itself needs to have the limitation that the person be in a position of trust or authority.

There is a lot of case law that has developed in the meaning of that term and, although I know there is a provision in the bill that clarifies that, if the person is over 18, that puts them in a position of trust or authority. That doesn't quite accord with how the case law has developed. There might need to be some tweaking on that, but fundamentally, the recruitment of a child to commit a criminal offence is real, it happens, so it is important to have that reflected in our offences.

Anju Dhillon: Could you speak to the engagement that your organization has had with the government in developing these measures? Do you feel that the bill reflects the expertise and recommendations of organizations such as yours that will work to protect these children?

Monique St. Germain: Our organization is constantly reviewing case law and picking up on various gaps. We put together documents to assist in terms of ideas that may be helpful in Criminal Code reform. Some of the provisions that ended up in this bill are the product of previous advocacy by our organization. The section 161 changes that I mentioned in my opening remarks are an example of that.

We believe that criminal law reform is an ongoing process. This bill does a lot to close a lot of the gaps that we see. We certainly have some other ideas that we would like to put on the table, but we understand the bill the way that it is, and we are very pleased with a lot of the provisions as they pertain to children.

• (1700)

Anju Dhillon: My next question will be for Ms. Szabo.

The bill would expand mandatory reporting obligations to include all online platforms, extend data preservation to 12 months and improve transparency. From your experience, are these tools essential for law enforcement to effectively stop offenders?

Kristin Szabo: They are, without a doubt, vital. Right now, when these offences occur, a lot of it is a child at home alone, and parents feel like they don't know what to do. They don't even know where to begin. If the data is saved, it gives more power to law enforcement to give them the time needed to approach it, because they need to keep in mind—and I think it needs to be remembered—that trauma-informed care is vital, especially when it comes to handling minors and even their parents. There are many layers of trauma to these types of offences, so in preserving the data and giving law enforcement time to review the case, that can add to providing the trauma-informed care that is absolutely vital when it comes to working with children as victims.

Anju Dhillon: You've spoken at length about the rise of online exploitation, including the non-consensual distribution of intimate images. Bill C-16 would also create a specific offence for threatening to distribute child sexual abuse material. Would you agree that explicitly criminalizing sextortion in this way is the necessary and overdue step that was needed?

Kristin Szabo: I agree that it's very overdue. In the last just over 10 years, this offence has increased almost 350% in Canada. That is an atrocity. It's something that we are very far behind on. In particular, we've heard from our communities—parents, guardians, teachers, educators and our supporters—that they don't know how to deal with this. We've developed resources funded purely by our donors to deal with this and to educate the public about it.

Without a doubt, we are behind on this. I welcome this being part of our legislation.

Anju Dhillon: Thank you so much.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Dhillon.

Mr. Fortin, it's over to you for six minutes.

[Translation]

Rhéal Éloi Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to thank the three witnesses for being here.

My first question is for Ms. Dunn.

You spoke a lot about the importance of education, and you spoke about police officers, lawyers, and so on.

I'd like to hear your thoughts on what kind of training could be provided early on to women, men and children in today's society, to see how we can—

[English]

The Chair: Excuse me for interrupting, Mr. Fortin.

It's getting really loud in here. I'm having trouble hearing Mr. Fortin. I can't hear the questions.

Thank you.

[Translation]

Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Back to my question, Ms. Dunn.

Regarding education, of course, a two-year transition period has been set aside for police officers and lawyers before these provisions take effect, precisely to allow people time to receive training.

I would like to hear your thoughts on the type of education that could be provided to children, women and men in our schools or elsewhere.

How can we be proactive in preventing controlling and coercive behaviours, violent behaviours?

Do you think this is possible, Ms. Dunn? If so, what type of training do you suggest?

[English]

Jennifer Dunn: We suggest mandatory, ongoing and accountable training very specifically on coercive control, on trauma- and violence-informed practice, and on systemic bias for police, Crown attorneys and judges. It can't be optional. It has to be mandatory. It has to include accountability measures to ensure that it's actually being applied in practice. That's at a high level for police, Crown attorneys and judges, but it can be as young as elementary school. It can be as simple as healthy relationships. That can be taught very easily and put into the curriculum. Again, I know that this is federal and it would be provincial.

An exact example of a program we do here from the London Abused Women's Centre is Coaching Boys Into Men. Our staff go out and train coaches for high school teams on how to have healthy relationships and how to be good men. It's as simple as that. It can start very young.

● (1705)

[Translation]

Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Do you feel that this type of program works? How can it be improved? We're seeing an increase in crimes related to controlling and coercive behaviour and in violent crimes between spouses. It's on the rise, not on the decline. I have the impression—perhaps wrongly—that we're not doing enough proactively, that we're not doing enough in terms of prevention.

We can certainly make changes to the Criminal Code and establish prison sentences. We can be strict with offenders, but is there anything we can do as a society to prevent individuals from developing behaviours like these?

[English]

Jennifer Dunn: I think you're absolutely right. Prevention really and truly means identifying and responding to risk before violence escalates. For example, I mentioned off the top our high-risk action table for femicide prevention. You're bringing multiple systems together to share information and intervene early before something happens. It also means investing in areas like housing and income and services that allow women to leave safely. It includes education, school boards and all of that.

I want to suggest that I don't think prevention and education are funded properly. That's one of the issues. I mean, in our organization here, we do have provincial core funding for our core services, but for anything else we want to do as it would relate to prevention and education, for example, we have to apply for money to do that. It's really important that it's funded.

[Translation]

Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Thank you, Ms. Dunn.

I will now turn to Ms. St. Germain.

You mentioned a problem: the recruitment of children to commit criminal acts. Bill C-16 proposes one approach, and I had other ideas. Many of us probably have different ideas on this.

From your perspective, how do you view this?

An adult who approaches a child to get them to commit a crime—which is utterly absurd, in my view—is even more serious than committing the crime itself. In my opinion, the individual could have been sentenced to serve twice the sentence they would have received had they committed the crime themselves.

I'd like to hear your opinion on this issue, that is, on the recruitment of children to commit criminal acts. What do you propose in this regard?

[English]

Monique St. Germain: It's definitely a serious issue. The length of the sentence is something to talk about.

When it comes to sentencing, as we know, it's very individualized in the way that judges approach these things. They use a lot of different sentencing principles, etc. I'm not sure whether having in the code that it's double the sentence would actually have the desired effect, because I think it would end up getting cut down in some way.

More important is recognizing the seriousness of this type of activity by having an actual criminal offence that speaks to it. We definitely will see things like this happening in the context of, let's say, human trafficking or exploitation through prostitution offences. These are all very important things to tackle.

Regarding the previous question that you asked, one thing I would add to what was said is the exposure to pornography that we have in our society to young people. That may be something we want to tackle.

[Translation]

Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Fortin. I gave you a little extra time because of the interruption earlier too.

[Translation]

Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Szabo, you talked about the lack of data.

In your opinion, what data is missing and how can we get it?

• (1710)

[English]

Kristin Szabo: We find, when we are developing resources specifically, that we're missing Canadian data. There are a lot of studies we can get out of different states, which we think perhaps have somewhat of a reflection here in Canada.

Specifically, we're looking at trends and gaps in prevention. As you heard from my colleagues here, prevention is key. We would be able to identify the gaps if we had data on trends and prosecution outcomes specifically.

[Translation]

Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Szabo and Mr. Fortin.

Mr. Gill, we'll go over to you for five minutes.

Amarjeet Gill (Brampton West, CPC): My thanks to all witnesses.

My question is for Ms. Dunn.

In your opening statement, you talked about the femicide provision in this bill. I'm going to ask a few questions about this subject.

Is making intimate partner violence a first-degree murder charge enough, in your opinion?

Jennifer Dunn: I think it's a good step. I definitely do not think it's enough.

Amarjeet Gill: As you said, this is a good first step. What are the next steps that need to be taken, in your opinion?

Jennifer Dunn: I'm going to end up repeating myself a little, but I think it's really important to have a sustained investment in prevention to address the root cause of male violence against women and the systemic barriers that women face. Without that, nothing will happen. Women will continue to lose their lives.

Amarjeet Gill: I'm asking about the next steps. This Liberal government introduced the bill and took the first step. They always take a first step. However, they do not address the root cause, and they do not take any further steps needed to improve the legislation and provide support to the victims.

What is your answer to that?

Jennifer Dunn: It's important that we look at this from multiple directions. The legislation is one piece, but we also have to look at proper funding for organizations like ours. Not all women are going to choose to or want to report to police. They are not going to want to go through the criminal justice system. Whatever their journey to justice looks like, they're going to want to come to an organization like ours, and so it's really important that organizations like ours are properly funded.

I'm going to go back to prevention and education as well. Prevention and education must be funded by all levels of government so that generations can continue to learn about what is wrong and what is right. That's the only way we're going to be able to make proper change.

Amarjeet Gill: You talked about the training and programs that are needed. Do you know if the government is taking these critical next steps?

Jennifer Dunn: Just to clarify, are you asking if I know if the government is taking those steps?

Amarjeet Gill: Yes. Are they taking the steps you have suggested in terms of programs or funding?

Jennifer Dunn: I can speak about our organization specifically. We receive core funding from the provincial government, but we also receive time-limited grants and funding from the federal government for these exact types of initiatives. I think there have been opportunities for this, but there need to be more. We need to have more access to core funding so that we don't have to use our resources, for example, to apply for funding and then to turn around and report on the funding. We need longer opportunities for funding.

Amarjeet Gill: How will victims be affected without these programs and training, in your opinion?

Jennifer Dunn: I'm sorry that I repeat myself on this, but it's not one-size-fits-all. Women need to be in the driver's seat when they want to heal or get through something they've been subjected to, whether it's intimate partner violence or coercive control, as we're talking about. I think it's important that there are options for women when they have been subjected to violence.

I touched a little on something we're doing here in London. It's a high-risk action table for femicide prevention, where organizations across sectors come together and work in a collaborative way to identify and intervene. It takes everybody coming together. We can't be siloed when we're doing this work.

• (1715)

Amarjeet Gill: You also told this committee in October that when a violent offender is released, survivors are often forced to relocate, leave work or lose their jobs, or live in hiding. These are not just disruptions; they are losses of safety, identity and stability.

For the sake of the victims, should violent and repeat offenders serve stronger and longer sentences?

The Chair: You can give a very short answer, please.

Jennifer Dunn: Absolutely. A violent and repeat offender needs to be held accountable for what they've done. I agree 100%.

Amarjeet Gill: Thank you so much.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Gill.

Mr. Housefather, go ahead, please.

Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Szabo, Ms. St. Germain and Ms. Dunn, thank you very much for being here today.

Ms. Dunn, I'll give you a break since you just answered all of the other questions.

I want to get to the issue of intimate images, which is a subject covered in the bill. It's also covered as part of deepfakes.

One of the things you raised in your opening statement, Ms. St. Germain, is the issue of—and you talked about it with respect to bestiality—criminalizing the distribution but not criminalizing the creation of the materials. I think this is also true with respect to deepfakes.

Can you talk about what your organization believes we should do with respect to adding to that section to include the creation of material and why? Anyone else can elaborate on this as well.

Monique St. Germain: When it comes to the intimate images, the creation is what starts the cycle of victimization for the victim. We are seeing a tsunami of instances and examples where these types of images are being created, primarily of women and girls. This is a very gendered issue.

While we are happy to see the distribution of deepfakes being added into the intimate image offence, as well as the addition of the threats portion of that offence, we believe very strongly that the creation of these images also needs to be tackled. It may be there has to be some additional studies and some additional information to have it be constitutionally compliant, but I believe it's possible. I believe that the safety of women and girls in this country demands it.

Anthony Housefather: Can I ask you an additional question? I only have five minutes.

Monique St. Germain: Sure.

Anthony Housefather: We have only until next week to come up with amendments to the bill, so I really want to delve into this.

In terms of the creation when it comes to deepfakes, which are not actual images of the person, could you talk about what harm could be created, in your view, with respect to a deepfake that is never shared?

Monique St. Germain: Even if it's never shared, it can be used by the person to enhance cognitive distortions of the person who is depicted. As well, if you have images of a lot of different women, for example, that can help to make you feel like women are available for you in whatever sort of context you might be able to dream up.

I think there's harm to women and girls generally in terms of the existence of these images, even when they are held for private use.

Anthony Housefather: When it comes to, for example, an actual intimate image that was taken consensually and is somebody who is an adult, presumably that could not be criminalized. It would become criminal in the event that actions were taken with that intimate image. You think, with respect to the deepfake, that it would be different and the creation of the deepfake itself should be covered.

I think I understand. The same would be true with the bestiality images, as I understand that.

Monique St. Germain: That's correct. With the bestiality—I wasn't talking about the deepfake—the issue is a little bit different in terms of the possession and having the bestiality depictions be covered in the same way as child sexual abuse material, for all of the same reasons.

• (1720)

Anthony Housefather: I want to go to Ms. Szabo because she raised a different part of the intimate image issue, besides the criminalization issue. It is that most of the victims are real.... The criminalization is one part of this, but there have to be other things because you need to get this off the Internet in order to deal with the primary thing that the victim is concerned about at that moment in time, which is the continued harm that is being done by it being on the Internet.

Ms. Szabo, could you talk about how you see that parallel track and what we should be imposing on the platforms with respect to takedown?

Kristin Szabo: Absolutely. There has to be a mandatory time frame for takedown with no exceptions. When you think of the ongoing trauma this could inflict on Canadians, especially young underage Canadians....

We tell our children the Internet is forever. These large tech companies don't have any reason to act on these things in any sort of timely fashion, but we know it's possible. We definitely know that we may have to hit them where it hurts. It may have to be a financial penalty.

The Chair: Thank you. I'm going to have to stop you there. We're running tight on time.

Mr. Fortin, go ahead for two and a half minutes.

[Translation]

Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Dunn, back to the training issue.

To your knowledge, are there any programs anywhere in Canada that address the issue of domestic violence, either in schools or with adults?

If so, which programs would you like us to pay particular attention to?

If not, are there any obstacles, such as funding issues or others?

[English]

Jennifer Dunn: I think there are many organizations like ours out there that have many types of programs and initiatives that provide training and education to all different types of sectors.

I'm more than happy to send a list of programs and education measures to the clerk of the committee for you to go through, if you'd like.

[Translation]

Rhéal Éloi Fortin: That's a good idea. Thank you.

Ms. Szabo, same question.

To your knowledge, are there provinces that are more successful than others in educating children or couples?

[English]

Kristin Szabo: We are a national organization. I can only speak to the fact that we have heard from all over Canada that education is necessary.

Again, it goes back to funding. As my colleagues have said, we need continued funding so that we can approach this holistically. Parents are only one line of defence, as are educators and people who naturally intersect with children on a day-to-day basis. It really does go back to sustained funding, whether it's provincially or federally.

[Translation]

Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Thank you, Ms. Szabo.

Ms. St. Germain, I have about 30 seconds left. Same question. To your knowledge, are there any provinces that are performing better than others in educating children or adults about domestic violence or child abuse?

[English]

Monique St. Germain: Our organization has educational programs that are delivered in schools across the country in both official languages. What we see is almost 100% coverage in the province of Manitoba right now in terms of the programs that we have, which are year over year. They start in elementary school and go right up until high school, focusing on respectful relationships, privacy issues, etc. It's called Kids in the Know.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[Translation]

Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Thank you, Ms. St. Germain.

[English]

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

Tamara Kronis (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Ms. St. Germain, I was really struck by your comment in your opening remarks about how disheartening it is to see the Supreme Court of Canada strike down offences related to the sexual exploitation of children, like they did in Senneville, based on reasonable hypotheticals.

While Bill C-16 doesn't prohibit the courts from using hypotheticals in their reasoning, clause 63, the so-called safety valve, makes exceptions in some cases to preserve and signal the importance of mandatory minimums for things like murder and treason.

I was wondering whether including offences related to the sexual exploitation of children to the safety valve of clause 63 might address your concerns.

• (1725)

Monique St. Germain: We actually feel that the provision that's been added to Bill C-16 is a reasoned response to the jurisprudence that exists. The reality is that we have the case law that we have on mandatory minimums.

From our perspective, since the Friesen decision was issued in 2020, sentencing, when it involves offences against children, has improved considerably.

When we talk about edge cases, which is what the hypotheticals were really focused on, that's where you start to lose sight of what the harm actually is in the vast majority of the cases.

From our perspective, this safety valve should help to preserve the mandatory minimums for the vast majority of cases that actually do reach the courts in this country.

Tamara Kronis: I would love to dig into that a little bit. I'm wondering how it does that.

I worry that the cases that would cause the safety valve to be used become the very hypotheticals that then allow the whole offence to be struck down. If you're getting out of edge cases.... If there's a case that's in front of the courts, then it's not an edge case. I worry that they will also decide that those are edge cases as well, and it might actually increase the probability that the law gets struck down.

Do you see what I'm getting at?

Monique St. Germain: Yes, but the safety valve is about sentencing; it's not about the offence itself. That would be a different issue, on challenging the offence and the constitutionality of the offence and what it covers, whereas the sentencing part is about what the sentence actually is going to be and whether or not a mandatory minimum is justifiable in the case of the specific offender who's before the courts and the specific offence that offender committed.

Tamara Kronis: You don't think the defence counsel will then use that to argue that the offence itself, because of the way that it was structured.... You're not concerned that there's going to be additional litigation as a result of this.

Monique St. Germain: I didn't say that.

What I was talking about was the difference between sentencing and the offence itself. There are always going to be constitutional challenges to offences, and we expect that will continue, but the safety valve provision is about preserving the mandatory sentences to the greatest extent possible in light of the jurisprudence we actually have.

Tamara Kronis: Right, but it is the mandatory minimum. It's the sentence that actually gets struck down in these circumstances. We get into a bit of circular loop, as you can see from the question itself.

Are there amendments that you think would help under these circumstances? Are there amendments that would solve the circumstances that are causing the disheartenment?

Monique St. Germain: The safety valve will help in terms of reducing the amount of litigation that is then focused on hypothetical scenarios, because the safety valve itself is saying that when you're

imposing something less than the mandatory minimum sentences is when that mandatory minimum sentence would be cruel or unusual as applied to that offender. The way things were working prior to the safety valve is that the courts could come up with a hypothetical and then use that hypothetical offender who wasn't before the court, and that offence being committed in that way that also wasn't before the court, to say in that circumstance this sentence would be excessive.

What we see is that the cases where the mandatory minimum sentence, or where a court is imposing less than mandatory minimum sentence.... It's not that often. When it does happen, there are some extenuating and exceptional circumstances that exist.

Tamara Kronis: Do you think that a one-year mandatory minimum for child pornography is reasonable?

The Chair: Give a very short answer.

Monique St. Germain: Absolutely. We've always been supportive of the mandatory minimum sentences for child sexual abuse and exploitation material.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Kronis.

The last round is for you, Ms. Lattanzio. You have five minutes.

Patricia Lattanzio (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): I want to thank Ms. Dunn, Ms. St. Germain and Ms. Szabo for being here today and helping us do our work on Bill C-16.

My first question will be addressed to Ms. St. Germain.

The bill would significantly enhance the mandatory reporting act by extending data preservation timelines, broadening its application to all online platforms and increasing transparency.

In your opinion, how will these changes improve law enforcement's ability to detect, investigate and prevent child sexual exploitation online?

• (1730)

Monique St. Germain: The mandatory reporting by providers is a very significant contributor to identifying cases that do need to be investigated for law enforcement. The mandatory reporting act has always been an important act. Mandatory reporting that happens in the U.S. also triggers a lot of Canadian investigations.

The amendments that are being made in the mandatory reporting legislation are really important because they are clarifying the scope and extent of these obligations for Canadian companies. They're making it clear that it's covering companies that provide Internet content hosting, as well as those who are incorporated in Canada and have their head office in Canada, etc. Those are all very helpful amendments.

Patricia Lattanzio: My next questions are going to be for Ms. Szabo.

Your organization and you, in your opening remarks, highlighted that online child sexual exploitation has increased in the last years, reaching record levels. In light of the alarming trend, Bill C-16 would restore mandatory minimum penalties for offences such as making, distributing, possessing and accessing child sexual abuse material—offences that courts have previously struck down in both Senneville and Pike.

From your perspective in working with survivors, how important is it that the law clearly reflects the gravity and the lasting harm of these crimes through meaningful sentencing?

Kristin Szabo: I think meaningful sentencing is one component of the entire approach when it comes to supporting survivors and victims. It's vital that the seriousness of the offence is reflected in the sentence.

However, I would also argue that the seriousness of the offence can be reflected in funding and supports that are given to survivors and victims of the crime, whether that's after it's occurred or through prevention upstream of the judicial system and education. I think it is one component.

Patricia Lattanzio: Based on your frontline experience preventing child sexual exploitation and supporting victims, do you believe that the proposed sentencing reforms in Bill C-16, including the restoration of mandatory minimum penalties, are aligned with what is needed on the ground to better protect children in Canada?

Kristin Szabo: Again, it is part of what's needed to protect children in Canada, but I cannot stress enough how important prevention upstream of these systems is.

Patricia Lattanzio: Bill C-16 also updates the child luring offence, as both of my colleagues have pointed out this afternoon, to capture extortion-related conduct. Given how predators now operate online and how often manipulating and coercing youth occurs, would you agree that this change better reflects the reality that your organization is seeing on the ground?

Kristin Szabo: Yes, definitely. It's happening every day, as our friends at the Canadian Centre for Child Protection have echoed. Yes, we do support that.

Patricia Lattanzio: Do you have data that you can share with us in terms of how much of it is happening?

You said that we're reaching record levels. Do you have any data that you can provide to the committee?

Kristin Szabo: The initial statistic I provided was that since 2014, online sextortion cases have increased by 347%. I would let you know that there was a massive uptick during COVID when everyone was inside and the screen time for children increased.

Patricia Lattanzio: How much more time do I have, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: You have 30 seconds.

Patricia Lattanzio: I have no more questions.

The Chair: Thank you to all of our witnesses. We appreciate your making the time to be here today and your valuable contribution to this discussion on Bill C-16. I will let you go.

We'll suspend very briefly to prepare for the next panel.

- (1730) _____ (Pause) _____
- (1735)

The Chair: I call the meeting back to order.

Before we begin, I would like to say a few words on parliamentary privilege in the context of our study of Bill C-16, the protecting victims act, which, as you know, could raise sensitive issues, personal matters or even legal matters involving the witnesses appearing before us.

It is well established in Canadian law that parliamentary proceedings, which includes the deliberations of this committee, are covered by the parliamentary privilege of freedom of speech. This most fundamental and ancient right protects parliamentarians and witnesses appearing before committees for anything said in the course of parliamentary proceedings. Any comments made during today's meeting cannot be used in a legal action against the person who made them or to attack that person's credibility in a court of law.

That said, parliamentary privilege does not apply if the comments are repeated or reproduced outside of this committee's proceedings. Anyone wishing to consult today's proceedings should be directed to the committee's official website.

On that note, we are pleased to be joined by Kendra Cooke, as an individual.

From the Ontario Child Sexual Exploitation Investigators Association, we have Andrew Ullock, board chair, and Lisa Henderson, a member.

From the Raoul Wallenberg Centre for Human Rights, we have Angela Marinos, chief general counsel.

Thank you to all of our witnesses for joining us.

Each individual or group will be given up to five minutes to make opening remarks, and then we will open the floor to questions.

Ms. Cooke, I'll start with you.

- (1740)

Kendra Cooke (As an Individual): Good evening, and thank you, Mr. Chair.

I am grateful for the invitation to speak today regarding your study of Bill C-16.

My name is Kendra Cooke, and I am here to reflect my experiences of intimate partner violence and coercive control.

I experienced coercive control throughout my marriage and continue to be subjected to these abuses more than three years post-separation.

Here is a list of just some of the ways I have experienced, and continue to experience, coercive control: dozens of false reports made against me to police, children's aid, health care providers and the children's school; repeatedly urging me to kill myself and offering to give me one of his firearms to do so; isolation from family and friends; limiting my ability to work; stalking and surveillance by my ex and a work colleague of his; abhorrent and harassing communications in person and through the phone, social media and a court-ordered parenting app; disregarding numerous court orders dictating the content and tone of our communications and contact; employing the legal system to perpetuate harms; financial abuses; intimidation through the purchase and display of firearms; psychological and emotional abuse of our children during his parenting time; withholding child support and employee health benefits for the children; warning me that he has befriended a judge who would be presiding over our family court case and threatening that he would gain full custody of our children; weaponizing the justice system against me; involving our children in parental conflict, eroding their sense of safety and well-being; having me criminally charged without providing evidence to police or the Crown attorney; and threatening to kill me, my parents, my current partner and her children.

For years, I sought support to safeguard my family from these abuses and their far-reaching consequences. Unfortunately, all of the child welfare and justice systems I have encountered are woefully ill-equipped to respond to the abuse we are experiencing. I have routinely been told that because there has been no physical violence in the home, there was nothing anyone could do to help me and that self-help would negatively impact my efforts to secure a divorce and custody agreement in family court.

I met the criteria to live in a second-stage residence for women who have experienced violence, qualified for supports through victim services and consistently scored as high risk for spousal assault through B-SAFER, a tool developed by Canada's Department of Justice. Even a court-ordered investigation by the Office of the Children's Lawyer and a subsequent report detailing serious concerns regarding my ex's abusive behaviours have not been enough to end the abuse.

My experience makes it gravely apparent that the professional expertise of social workers and counsellors is not acknowledged within the systems that could actually intervene to create safety and to hold perpetrators to account and that those systems do not operate in a legislative framework that supports victims.

A move to criminalize coercive control must include efforts to educate actors throughout the justice system and across jurisdictions. As stated in the bill, coercive control can only be defined through a pattern of coercive and controlling behaviours experienced over time. Demonstrating these patterns becomes nearly impossible for victims because every part of the justice system is designed to operate in a silo, systematically disregarding evidence and experience that occurs outside of it, not to mention the unreasonable burden of proving an intent to harm in the current writing of this bill.

We must recognize the authority of professionals working to support victims to affirm experiences of coercive control when police and courts are investigating such crimes. It may also be imperative

to adjust other laws and interventions to align with the language in Bill C-16, particularly that "a person's safety includes their psychological safety."

For example, in order to be granted a peace bond, the applicant must have had a prior physical assault. I learned this the hard way when I applied for a peace bond; I was advised by the Crown attorney that current legislation does not support issuance of such, given the lack of physical harm I had experienced. Unsurprisingly, angered by my efforts to seek a peace bond, my ex retaliated by having me arrested and charged for a crime I did not commit without providing any evidence. This experience was traumatic and violating, and it continues to limit my ability to contribute to my community and provide for my family.

In closing, a collaborative approach across systems, along with public education, will be necessary to achieve any positive outcome from the criminalization of coercive control. I urge this committee to carefully consider the work of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women and its report on coercive control in Canada in addition to the witness testimony you hear as you continue the crucial work of studying Bill C-16 and its potential implications in the lives of victims.

• (1745)

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Cooke.

Ms. Marinos, please go ahead.

[Translation]

Angela Marinos (Chief General Counsel, Raoul Wallenberg Centre for Human Rights): Good morning, members of the committee. Thank you for inviting me to contribute to the important work you are doing on Bill C-16, the Protecting Victims Act.

My name is Angela Marinos; I'm the chief legal counsel for the Raoul Wallenberg Centre for Human Rights, founded by the Honourable Irwin Cotler.

[English]

I joined the Wallenberg Centre a couple of years ago after almost 23 years of litigating at the Department of Justice, where I represented the Attorney General of Canada and various federal ministers across a number of governments, across party lines and across all levels of court. As such, I'm well familiar with defending federal decisions, policies and the law as it is, but today, I'm here to advocate for the law as it should be.

[Translation]

I believe that my experience appearing before the Supreme Court of Canada on behalf of the Raoul Wallenberg Centre on issues addressed by this bill may inform your deliberations. I hope so.

[English]

Our brief offers five main proposals, but in the time I have, I want to focus on three: independent legal representation; providing a holistic trauma-informed approach to our understanding of exploitation in the trafficking context; and adding human trafficking and sexual services offences to the protective screening mechanism at section 276 of the Criminal Code.

Before I elaborate on these issues, I want to commend the broad reform that's been proposed with Bill C-16. At the same time, we believe this bill can be strengthened in a handful of areas.

The biggest transformational change to this bill would be providing independent legal representation for victims and survivors of sexual violence and sex trafficking from the moment they engage with the legal system when they give their statement to the police to appearing in court.

We are asking for this because we've seen victims torn apart by the legal system time and again, because they don't trust the system as it is, as demonstrated by the fact that 94% of these crimes are not reported to the police and because victims and survivors do not have a meaningful voice in the judicial system. The Crown is not their voice and cannot be their voice. Currently, there are very limited circumstances where complainants have independent legal standing.

This is not enough. We can and must do better. We've done it before, and we can do it again.

Given the time, I'm not going to touch on our other proposal, in which we seek an independent right to counsel where the Crown seeks to admit evidence of prior sexual activity or where there is a joint application, but those submissions are detailed in our brief.

I want to move very briefly to our second proposal with respect to exploitation and then touch on section 276.

We are urging a holistic, trauma-informed lens be applied to the definition of exploitation and that trauma and PTSD are made an integral part of the definition. We're also asking that the definition of exploitation include the belief that the safety of the resident or pet is threatened if they fail to provide the labour or service, and we are asking that the term "manipulation" be added to the factors that should be considered.

Turning to section 276, we submit it's important to specifically enumerate human trafficking, sexual services offences and other sexual offences, because otherwise, defence counsel will argue and the courts will find, as they did at the court of appeal in *R v. A.M.*, that it was Parliament's intention to exclude them.

Does Parliament really intend to exclude these groups from the benefit of section 276? I find that hard to reconcile with Parliament's stated intention to protect the dignity, privacy and equality interests of these vulnerable groups.

I appreciate that the proposed amendment seeks to add the phrase "or any other offence under this Act that is of a sexual nature or that is committed for a sexual purpose". However, as we submitted in the brief and as one of the Supreme Court judges put it in the *R v. A.M.* appeal, that will be rife with litigation. That phrase will only bog us down in arguments that the offence was not committed for a sexual purpose. The solution, then, is to list the offences.

In closing, we know this government and this committee want to be transformative and are committed to providing those subjected to sexual violence and sex trafficking with better, stronger protections. We can do this, and I urge you to accept the changes.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

• (1750)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Marinos.

It's over to you, Mr. Ullock or Ms. Henderson, or both, if you're going to share the time.

Andrew Ullock (Board Chair, Ontario Child Sexual Exploitation Investigators Association): Good afternoon, members of the committee. Thank you for giving us the time to share with you the perspective of the Ontario Child Sexual Exploitation Investigators Association, or OCSEIA, on Bill C-16.

Our organization includes law enforcement, members of the private sector and retired Crown attorneys. We bring with us a considerable depth of knowledge and expertise that we feel can assist the committee as it deliberates Bill C-16. There are several sections in Bill C-16 that, if passed, will have a significant impact on the investigation and prosecution of offenders who use the Internet to harm children. It is these sections that we wish to focus on.

First, we would like to emphasize the importance of restoring mandatory minimum sentences for offences in the Criminal Code, particularly child exploitation offences. Because the Supreme Court has struck down mandatory minimum sentences for most online exploitation offences, conditional sentences are available for offenders who seek to prey on children in a sexual manner. It is the position of OCSEIA that nothing could be more unreasonable than allowing offenders who do so much harm to the community to serve their sentences in the community. We would confidently argue that there is no realistic scenario where an individual would be convicted for an online exploitation offence and not merit a custodial sentence. The proposed revisions in clause 63 of Bill C-16 that re-establish mandatory minimums in the Criminal Code with a safety valve built into it is an important step for Parliament to take to send a message that society will not tolerate the online exploitation of children.

Second, we would like to speak to the importance of the proposals in proposed part XV.1 of Bill C-16, which deals with the way courts address unreasonable delay in trials. OCSEIA respects the importance of protecting the rights of citizens as guaranteed by section 11(b) of the charter. However, under the current state of law, the courts have only a single “all or nothing” remedy that results in an entire case being thrown out when, for any number of reasons, the Crown is not able to complete the trial of the accused in what can only be described as an arbitrary time limit. The proposals being put forward in proposed part XV.1 will allow for a more reasonable and just assessment of whether or not the accused was tried within a reasonable time, and will allow for a range of remedies that can be applied that is proportional to the degree in which 11(b) has been infringed upon in a given case.

This is important to members of OCSEIA, since most of our cases are highly complex and require the analysis of huge volumes of data. This data analysis usually occurs after the arrest, while the Jordan clock is ticking. OCSEIA believes there is a high societal interest in seeing online child sex offenders held to account, which means the Jordan timeline assessment must be a realistic one that takes into consideration the complex and unalterable nature of these kinds of investigations.

Lastly, we would like to provide the committee with a sense of how urgent it is to update and reform our laws to deal with the very large and persistent threat that endangers all children in Canada regardless of their social status, background, language spoken or geographic location. In the last decade, the exploitation of children has increased at an exponential rate. Our laws in their current state are simply not sufficient to keep up with this problem.

You don’t need to take our word for it. We would like to share with you the perspective of a sextortion expert that we obtained from his user manual that he recently published, for free, over the Internet. We would like to be clear that when we use the term “sex-tortion expert”, we are not referring to an Internet safety expert who lectures to parents and kids about how to stay safe online. What we mean by that term is a person who is an expert in committing sextortion offences against, according to him, over 5,000 child victims over seven years.

This offender published an over 100-page how-to manual to teach others how to be successful in victimizing children over the Internet in the most heinous of ways. Having read the manual, I can tell you that he knows what he is talking about. In the intro to his manual, this offender answers a question that some of you might be asking. He states, “But why is sextortion the fastest-growing crime in the modern era? The reason for this is simple: power. Sextortion is an escape from the daily lives of perpetrators who seek to exert control and dominance, and they cannot do that in any other way. By exploiting their intimate photos or videos, they manipulate and blackmail victims into submission, gaining a sense of power and gratification. Additionally, the anonymity provided by the Internet makes it easier for perpetrators to carry out these acts without fear of being caught, further fuelling the growth of sextortion as a crime. Sextortion is much more than the basics; once you successfully acquire an obedient victim who has everything to lose, their fear of being exposed is just the beginning; they become a cyber

slave, willing to do anything for you, no matter how difficult and painful the task may be.”

● (1755)

This brutally honest confession from a skilled online offender demonstrates the scale and importance of the task we all face. Canada must do more to catch and deter these offenders and to protect our children. If this is not a top priority for us, what does it say about us as a country?

Thank you. We are happy to take your questions.

The Chair: Thank you, sir.

We'll start with Ms. Kronis for six minutes.

Tamara Kronis: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Marinos, I'm hoping to take advantage of your keen legal mind today. I'll ask you a few questions about the safety valve provisions.

Do you agree that Parliament enacts mandatory minimum penalties to set a clear floor for sentencing? Is that the purpose of it?

Angela Marinos: There are two objectives.

I think we would all agree that the mandatory minimums are there to signal the severity of these crimes and Parliament's denunciation of them. We all want to see those mandatory minimums pass constitutional scrutiny. Parliament has to strike the right balance.

Tamara Kronis: That's a very good explanation of it.

In terms of the safety valve, that's going to allow a judge to go below the floor, if in the circumstances—and it's in the circumstances—the judge decides that the minimum punishment would amount to cruel and unusual punishment for that offender. It allows for that balance to be struck in any specific, individual situation that is in front of the court. Is that correct?

Angela Marinos: Yes, I would read it that way. The judge has the discretion with this safety valve to give a sentence that is less than the mandatory minimum, if the section 12 charter threshold is met.

Tamara Kronis: It's based on the circumstances of the offender.

Angela Marinos: Yes, that's my understanding.

Tamara Kronis: That's the only factor that's laid out in this section. The circumstances of the offender are the only criteria laid out. Is that correct?

Angela Marinos: In the safety valve, yes, but I think that in every case, the judge is taking all sentencing provisions and discretion into account.

Tamara Kronis: The only circumstance where the nature of the crime comes up as a consideration is in those exceptions that are in the section, which basically amount to circumstances of murder and treason. Is that right?

Angela Marinos: Those are the circumstances, yes.

Tamara Kronis: It's not the impact on the victim of the crime, though.

Angela Marinos: The impact on the victim is always considered in sentencing when the victim has an opportunity to do their victim impact statement. Of course, the judge is always balancing other considerations, mitigating factors, aggravating factors and what the crimes involve. They're always doing that balancing act.

Tamara Kronis: It's not through this section, though.

Angela Marinos: No, but there are other sections in the Criminal Code, obviously, that provide for that.

Tamara Kronis: Is there a limit on how much lower than the mandatory minimum the judge can go?

Angela Marinos: Not according to this legislation, no.

Tamara Kronis: If we have two accused who are convicted of kidnapping with a firearm, which has a five-year mandatory minimum, and who have equal participation in the crime but have different personal circumstances, the judge could, theoretically, give one of them a six-month sentence and the other one a six-year sentence, if the judge decided that the circumstances of one of the offenders warranted it.

• (1800)

Angela Marinos: Sentencing is, as you know, an individual exercise. Yes, there's a range.

I am not a criminal prosecutor. I should add that caveat.

Yes, presumably there is the possibility of getting two different sentences.

Tamara Kronis: There is also the principle of parity.

Let me put it this way. If the Supreme Court of Canada can use reasonable hypotheticals, then I've just laid out a reasonable hypothetical. You could have personal circumstances of the accused. How do we explain that to the victim?

Angela Marinos: It's really hard. When you look at the jurisprudence on mandatory minimums, for the most part, the court is not striking down the mandatory minimums for the specific offender. It's striking down the legislation for the reasonable hypothetical. Reasonable people can disagree.

I was an intervenor in *Senneville*. Intervenors don't have the right to take a position on the outcome. If you ask me my personal opinion, I would be siding with the dissent on that particular case.

Is a reasonable hypothetical reasonable? Sometimes it is and sometimes it isn't. There are five people who think one hypothetical is reasonable and four people who don't.

Tamara Kronis: If you're looking at it from the perspective of the victim, then where you're at in this particular scenario is that the two accused have participated equally. The impact on the victim is the same.

Angela Marinos: That's right.

Tamara Kronis: However, the court is going to put the interests of one of those accused ahead of the interests of the victims.

Angela Marinos: In *Senneville*, I always took the court back to the fact that we were dealing with hundreds and hundreds of images of mostly little girls, age three to 10, that these two accused had.

Explaining to those victims.... What I said to the Supreme Court of Canada was that these are not victimless crimes. We may not know who these children are. They have names, but they're unidentified. They are often unidentifiable, but it doesn't mean they're victimless. I completely agree it would be very difficult to explain why this decision was struck down, but there you have it.

Tamara Kronis: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Kronis.

Next, we have Mr. Housefather.

Anthony Housefather: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to all the witnesses.

Thank you so much, Ms. Cooke, for telling your story.

Ms. Marinos, you were able to bring forward three of the five main points you had in your brief. Do you want to briefly summarize the other two for everyone?

Angela Marinos: The other two have to do with records, and they have to do with restorative justice.

The restorative justice is very simple in our view. We need to ensure that complainants' voices and inputs are integrated into the restorative justice process, and there needs to be some sort of safety valve for the situation where everyone agrees that restorative justice is a good process but then it doesn't work. What happens then?

The second one was therapeutic records, adding section 286.4, which we think is missing from the area of records and also adding current and potential harm to the subject of the record or therapeutic record as a factor that can be considered. This is basically ensuring that the confidentiality of the complainant's personal information is respected.

Anthony Housefather: I want to get to your specific recommendation related to section 276. I understand, which I hadn't been aware of, you're an intervenor in *R v. A.M.*

Angela Marinos: Yes.

Anthony Housefather: As I understand it, we've added in a phrase "or any other offence under this Act that is of a sexual nature or that is committed for a sexual purpose". You're concerned that the general provision may not deal with some offences where the argument will be made that they're not necessarily sexual offences.

Angela Marinos: That's right.

• (1805)

Anthony Housefather: Can you explain to everyone what that means and why we should be amending the bill?

Angela Marinos: This came up in *R v. A.M.* squarely where the defence counsel was arguing that they wanted to cross-examine the complainant, not on the sexual services part of the offence but on running your own business and being an independent contractor. This was a commercial element.

When I saw that phrase, the appeal was under publication ban, but one of the questions that came up when this phrase was mentioned was that this is rife for litigation. Do we want more litigation? We want less litigation, and I say that as a litigation lawyer.

Anthony Housefather: As I understood it from your brief, you're suggesting we take the therapeutic records section of the law and add those sections to this section.

Angela Marinos: That's right. We'd make it consistent. There is case law that says that clause 276 and the records and therapeutic records scheme are parallel systems with the addition of 286.4, which isn't included.

Anthony Housefather: That makes a lot of sense. I appreciate that because, again, this is new. I hadn't thought of the fact that the general would not include the specific, so thank you.

I want to go to the next point you had made about exploitation, which in the current draft requires a reasonable expectation that the person's safety or that of a person known to them would be threatened.

Angela Marinos: That's right.

Anthony Housefather: Again, at first blush when I read that I thought that made a lot of sense and that it's a well-drafted provision. What you're saying, however, is that there are ways of threatening somebody that don't involve their physical safety. Can you get into that and explain it to us? For example, if I threaten to burn your house down but you're not in it, then I'm not threatening your safety. I'm threatening your property, which is equally, to some extent, important because it's the whole value that you've created over your life.

Can you explain that for us?

Angela Marinos: That's exactly right, and it's coming directly from the *R v. A.M.* case, in which the complainant told the police, "He threatened to burn my house down. He threatened to kill my cat." If you look at the provision as it stands, as you said, it only covers their safety or the safety of a person known to them. It doesn't cover threats like, "I'm going to burn your house down when you're not there," or "I'm going to burn your parents' house down," or "I'm going to kill your pet if you don't do these things."

If we're making these changes, why not add the fuller panoply of the manipulation tactics and threats that traffickers use?

Anthony Housefather: Introduce the word "manipulation", which is not currently there in the definition.

Angela Marinos: That's right.

Anthony Housefather: Thank you.

We had other witnesses who came forward. Somebody, for example, said that it made no sense for their dog to be included but not the dog that is owned by somebody else, because the ownership of the dog is confined to the individual concerned. I think we do need to look at that section.

How much time do I have, Chair?

The Chair: You have 35 seconds.

Anthony Housefather: On the question of independent legal counsel, as we know, provinces generally are responsible for that issue. We have legal aid services.

Can you talk about where you see the federal government perhaps co-operating with the provinces? How would this bill deal with, for example, independent legal representation?

Angela Marinos: We know that the DOJ does fund ILA, independent legal advice for various clinics across the country, although not uniformly, so there are provinces that don't get these benefits, but it's not for independent legal standing necessarily in court from the start to the finish.

I know that we're running out of time.

Anthony Housefather: Thank you so much.

Angela Marinos: I appreciate that.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Housefather.

Mr. Fortin.

[Translation]

Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to thank all the witnesses for joining us today. Bill C-16 is important, and their insights are always valuable to us.

Ms. Marinos, I'm going to leave your area of expertise and talk about children.

Bill C-16 proposes provisions on femicide. Can you give me your legal definition of femicide?

Angela Marinos: Thank you very much for the question.

I'm not an expert on femicide.

[English]

As I said, I don't prosecute cases. I believe that this is an attempt to deal with a problem that we're facing across the country. We've seen so many femicides in Canada, too many. It is an attempt to take the various provisions from—

• (1810)

[Translation]

Rhéal Éloi Fortin: I apologize for interrupting you, but time is running out.

There's no definition of hate, yet hate could be included in the definition of femicide. Furthermore, many people often equate femicide with any murder committed against a woman.

Should that be the case or not?

Should we distinguish between the murder of a woman at random—for example, while she is in a bank during an armed robbery—and the murder of a woman by her husband or partner, who kills her for financial gain because she has a good insurance policy? What about the murder of a woman because of a general hatred of women, such as what happened at Polytechnique a long time ago?

These three cases still seem different to me.

In your opinion, is it femicide in all three cases?

[English]

Angela Marinos: The Polytechnique would be a clear example in my mind of femicide. Other cases may not be as clear, but we heard from the witness, Ms. Cooke. That's the kind of situation we would be trying to avoid with these sorts of provisions so that we don't get to that point.

[Translation]

Rhéal Éloi Fortin: When trying to define femicide, we wonder whether we should distinguish between girls and women—we discussed this at the last meeting. I still haven't quite grasped the distinction between the two. I'd like to hear someone's opinion on the subject someday.

Beyond that, let's take the example of a transgender person born in a male body who, through a process, becomes a woman.

In your opinion, should we consider this person to be a woman or a girl and, if so, should we classify their potential murder as a femicide?

[English]

Angela Marinos: I think, Monsieur Fortin, you're getting outside the ambit of my organization's expertise. We all have our personal views about that, but—

[Translation]

Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Thank you, I understand.

I'd like to address another topic, if I may.

The issue of harassment arises with Bill C-16, namely whether we want to define fear as subjective rather than objective. Do you think this is a good idea?

Let's take the example of a person who is being harassed or threatened with a crime, for example, someone who is told that their cat will be killed. Should we assess that person's fear based on an objective or subjective criterion? In other words, should we ask whether a reasonable person would fear something in such a case, or—regardless of how a reasonable person might react—whether the victim of the threat actually feels that fear?

Do you have an opinion or expertise on this matter?

[English]

Angela Marinos: I don't have expertise on that. I'd have to look at the provision to see how exactly that provision is worded, if it's subjective or objective. I would think that you'd have to have a subjective fear.

[Translation]

Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Okay, I understand.

I'm going to move on to a third topic.

Please excuse me if I'm moving quickly but, like my colleague, I'm trying to take advantage of your legal expertise.

I was talking to you about time limits and the Jordan decision, specifically about trials that are abandoned because there isn't enough time to hold them within a reasonable time frame. I believe the time limits set by the Supreme Court of Canada—that is, 18 months for provincial courts or the Court of Québec and 30 months for superior courts—seem reasonable to me. However, we are unable to meet them for all sorts of reasons we won't go into today.

Bill C-16 proposes certain provisions to revise how time limits are calculated and to allow courts, in certain cases, to impose consequences other than dismissing the case.

I'd like to hear your opinion on this. Is this a good idea or not?

Before you give me your opinion, I'd like to clarify something now, because I may not have time to do so later. We're often told that if we give courts too much leeway to deviate from the 18-month and 30-month deadlines, we could send a signal that the deadlines are less important and create a situation where courts will be more likely to let the deadlines lapse.

What are your thoughts on this issue?

[English]

Angela Marinos: I think it's a good thing to set the parameters around those delays. We've seen delay be a huge issue in the justice system, with stays of proceedings that are granted and victims who don't see accountability for crimes that have been committed. I think it's a good thing to set those limits.

● (1815)

[Translation]

Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Thank you.

Mr. Ullock—

The Chair: Mr. Fortin, your time is up.

[English]

We're going to start the second round. It's a five-minute round, so we're going to go to one Conservative, one Liberal and the Bloc, and then we're going to have to stop. Then we have to pass our budget, and we'll be done by 6:30.

Mr. Lawton, you have five minutes.

Andrew Lawton: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, witnesses.

I'd like to turn to the witnesses from the Ontario Child Sexual Exploitation Investigators Association.

I'm not sure which of you would like to address this, but just to establish, as a baseline, you view mandatory minimum sentences as having a very important role in the criminal justice system. Is that correct?

Andrew Ullock: Yes, we do.

Andrew Lawton: When we look at the way we're trying to protect those, hopefully, in the course of our work on Bill C-16, I just want to point out that in the Senneville decision, which triggered this part, we actually saw at the lower court level a judge go below the mandatory minimum sentence and give an offender, who had possessed hundreds of videos and images of children as young as, I believe, four, a 90-day sentence.

From your perspective, when we already had a mandatory minimum in place and that decision came down, how can we stop that, moving forward?

Andrew Ullock: I'm sorry, but is the question how we stop judges from going below the mandatory minimum?

Andrew Lawton: Yes. I know that you and other investigators have seen judges disregard what I think a lot of people in society and certainly a lot of the people who elect us would expect of the justice system. I'm just wondering what legal tools we can use to ensure that we actually have mandatory minimums that have teeth.

Andrew Ullock: The initial answer is that if a judge gives a ruling that goes against the law, the remedy is for the Crown to appeal and to bring it up into an appellate court to enforce the mandatory minimum.

My co-witness, Lisa Henderson, may have something to say on that as well.

Lisa Henderson (Member, Ontario Child Sexual Exploitation Investigators Association): For the benefit of the committee, I retired a few years ago, but I was a Crown attorney for 32 and a half years. In the last 20 years of my career, I was Ontario's provincial lead for our provincial strategy to prevent Internet crimes against children.

I think that in many of the cases where the mandatory minimums were struck down by the courts, it was based on a, theoretically at least, reasonable hypothetical and not on the idea that the sentence imposed on the particular offender or the particular facts for which they were being sentenced was cruel and unusual punishment. Rather, the defence counsel or the court would get creative in coming up with some idea of an example where the mandatory minimum sentence would be inappropriate, strike down the minimum, and then feel like they could give a sentence below the minimum to an offender.

I think the way this bill is worded goes some distance to stopping that, in the sense that it tells the court that they can't come up with some hypothetical situation. They have to look at this particular offender and the facts of this particular case and determine whether or not that would be cruel and unusual.

Andrew Lawton: I don't think that it will stop the overall problem of hypotheticals in the long term, but I understand your point, Ms. Henderson.

Do you, as a former Crown, believe that, in virtually any case you were prosecuting in which there was a mandatory minimum in play, a defence lawyer would try to use this safety valve to argue against a mandatory minimum for their client?

Lisa Henderson: My mother used to always ask how someone can argue that. A simple answer is that people can argue anything. The question is whether a judge will buy it and then whether an ap-

peal court will uphold a judge for having accepted that argument. I think that's where there will be litigation in the beginning. Then we'll get decisions from trial judges and from appellate courts, which will limit how that is applied.

I can only tell you that in 2004 when mandatory minimums were brought in, they saved us having to fight a lot about the appropriateness of conditional sentences for image-based or child sexual abuse offenders. Now here we are in 2026 and we're fighting the exact same issues we were fighting in 2004.

• (1820)

Andrew Lawton: I only have a short time left.

I don't have any questions for you at this time, Ms. Cooke, but I just want to thank you for being here, first and foremost, and for sharing what you did. We cannot talk about law and laws in the abstract without hearing about the very real people affected by them. The testimony that you shared is a very real part of our consideration on this bill. I just want you to know—and I think I speak for all members of this committee—how appreciative we are and how much we admire your courage in speaking about something that I know is very fresh.

With that, thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lawton.

Ms. Lattanzio, go ahead.

Patricia Lattanzio: I also would like to thank you, Ms. Cooke, for bringing forward your story and sharing that with us. We hope that Bill C-16 will address most of the issues you brought forward today.

I also want to thank Ms. Marinos for being present.

My questions will be directed to both Mr. Ullock and Ms. Henderson.

Mr. Ullock, investigators have long faced challenges when certain online platforms argued that they were not captured by the mandatory reporting act. Would you agree that clarifying that all online services, including social media and app-based platforms, are covered will close a major loophole and materially improve your ability to identify offenders?

Andrew Ullock: Yes, we do. As you said, it takes away the question. It takes away the ability for them to say that they didn't think it applied to them. The obligation to report once they discover material on their platforms.... That's a very large source of our investigations in Canada.

When all of the Internet service providers are compelled to report on that, it increases the likelihood that we're going to investigate and then catch someone, which has that deterrent effect.

Ms. Henderson also has some experience in dealing with mandatory reporting.

Could you speak on that as well?

Lisa Henderson: In fact, the only convictions I'm aware of under the mandatory reporting act were for individuals I prosecuted. They all pleaded guilty and were sentenced to different things with respect to that.

I think part of the problem is that it's always hard to prove a negative. Proving that somebody failed to report is difficult. However, with the obligation existing and being much clearer about whom the obligation applies to, it should go some distance in ensuring that people do make the reports. Hopefully, then we won't have to have any more prosecutions for people who fail to do so.

Patricia Lattanzio: You often deal with complex investigations that take months and not days. Under the current 21-day preservation period, how often is critical evidence lost? Would extending that to one year significantly improve your ability to build cases and, more importantly, secure convictions?

Andrew Ullock: In other types of investigations, 21 days is a decent amount of time. However, in child exploitation cases, that's actually very short, especially when you consider that evidence and reports have to go through multiple hands before they land in the jurisdiction.

One of the challenges is figuring out where a report has to go, because the Internet doesn't have boundaries. A Canadian entity may have to report on it, but that doesn't mean the offender or the suspect is in Canada. There is an administrative process that has to be undertaken simply to figure out what jurisdiction it needs to land on. It passes through multiple hands, and each hand has its own backlog.

By the time it finds its way to an investigator's desk, it can be well beyond 21 days. It can be well beyond 30 days. Sometimes it's several months, and if all of the evidence has been purged before it even gets to an investigator, then the investigation never gets started. Therefore, extending that preservation time to 12 months would absolutely help.

Patricia Lattanzio: Currently, reports can be sent to different police services, which can create delays and fragmentation. Would you agree that centralizing reporting to a designated law enforcement body, such as the national cybercrime coordination centre, would streamline investigations and lead to faster, more effective responses?

Andrew Ullock: I would agree that this would work, so long as it is properly staffed and resourced. You get a net advantage in that you have one entity handling everything, and that's good. However, if it's not properly staffed and resourced, then that becomes a shortcoming. You have only one entity to handle all of it. That's where you get backlogs and things like that, and investigators will get their files a lot later. As long as it's adequately staffed, then that would definitely simplify things.

• (1825)

Lisa Henderson: I think the mandatory reporting act now requires people to report to a police service, but it doesn't say which one. Proving that somebody didn't report to any police agency becomes a bit overwhelming. If it were only one, then there would be only one place you would have to check to see if the report had been made.

I agree with Andrew that it has to be staffed appropriately so that things don't sit there, and they do get passed on to the relevant police agency. From the prosecution side, it would simplify proving that a report wasn't made.

Patricia Lattanzio: Thank you to you both.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Lattanzio.

The last word goes to you, Mr. Fortin, for two and a half minutes.

[Translation]

Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Cooke, in your presentation, you mentioned an expert report that you tried to submit to the court but that was reportedly rejected. I didn't quite catch that. I'd like you to tell me what it was about.

What kind of expert report was it? How did that go? What were the grounds for the rejection?

[English]

Kendra Cooke: I am not a legal expert, but I think the therapeutic records touch on this. There is a lot of overlap in coercive control cases, where family courts and criminal courts are involved. Therefore, the ability to use the information through these support services with the professionals who staff them and support victims would help the justice system generally to assess the risk level that exists.

[Translation]

Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Okay. Did you have an issue with a specific report, whether it was from a doctor, a social worker or a psychologist?

[English]

Kendra Cooke: I have a problem with all of them.

[Translation]

Rhéal Éloi Fortin: If I understand correctly, the issue was the use of this report before the various authorities, in the various court proceedings. Is that correct?

[English]

Kendra Cooke: Yes. It starts right at the beginning with reporting to police even before it gets to a court.

For example, when I applied for the peace bond, I had interactions with police prior, but I wasn't allowed to show that pattern to an individual officer. It was at their discretion. Therefore, that wouldn't go into court should that officer in interviewing me not see it necessary to include.

[Translation]

Rhéal Éloi Fortin: I see. Thank you, Ms. Cooke.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Fortin.

That concludes all our questions.

I would like to thank all of our witnesses for taking the time to be here.

Let me add my thanks to you, Ms. Cooke, for sharing your personal experiences. I know how difficult that is, and it's very meaningful to the committee, so I really appreciate it.

Witnesses, you're free to go. Thank you.

The last bit of business is that we need budget approval for this study. Everybody has received a copy, and I would like to get it approved. The total amount of the budget is \$46,600. Of that, \$40,600 is for witness expenses, \$2,500 is for headsets, and the balance is for meeting-related sundries and whatnot.

Do we have approval of the budget?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Thank you very much, everybody.

The meeting is adjourned.

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