



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

45th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

Standing Committee on the Status of Women

EVIDENCE

NUMBER 019

Monday, December 8, 2025

Chair: Marilyn Gladu



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• (1545)

[English]

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

Welcome to meeting number 19 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women. Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the Standing Orders.

I'll make a few comments for the benefit of members and witnesses. Please wait until I recognize you by name before speaking. You may choose on your devices here in the room the language you want to hear—English, French or the floor, which gives you both. If you wish to speak, raise your hand. Thanks for your co-operation.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted by the committee on Monday, September 15, 2025, the committee will resume its study of anti-feminist ideology.

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

I'd like to welcome our witnesses. We have with us today Rachel Gilmore, journalist, Bubble Pop Media; and Vé Mikaelian, mobilization coordinator, Fédération des femmes du Québec.

Welcome. You have five minutes for your statements. To help you out, when you have one minute left, you'll see the yellow card. When you have 30 seconds left, you will see the red card. At the end of your time, I will ever so gently tell you so.

With that, we'll start with Ms. Gilmore for five minutes.

Rachel Gilmore (Journalist, Bubble Pop Media, As an Individual): A few months back, I came across a research paper that I found deeply chilling.

The study, by Emelia Sandau and Luc Cousineau, was published in June in the journal *Gender and Education*. Its title was "'Trying to talk white male teenagers off the alt-right ledge' and other impacts of masculinist influencers on teachers".

The researchers used data collected from the teachers subreddit community on Reddit.com to dig into how those users described the influences of a resurging misogyny on the jobs of teachers and

in classrooms. It turns out that teachers are being bombarded with the rhetoric these kids are learning from the worst men on the Internet.

The researchers found that students are actively parroting male supremacist rhetoric at school, and that is serving to devalue women teachers and make classrooms less safe. They found that it influences gender dynamics in the classroom, to the point that a male faculty member said that the way his female colleagues are treated makes him wonder if they're "teaching in the same school".

The teachers face degrading, awful comments from the boys in their class. A lot of it is terminology straight from the manosphere space, like boys calling all women and girls "holes" and any boy who is kind to girls a "simp".

Beyond impacting the gender dynamics in their classrooms, the teachers also raised genuine safety concerns that arose because of the stuff these kids were consuming online. Here's what one teacher had to say about a student who had been influenced by manosphere influencer Andrew Tate: "I had a student write a paper in graphic detail about how sexual assault victims 'deserved' it and 'all women were asking for it' and a lot of other extremely alarming sentiments. The paper topic was nowhere close to anything like this, but he wrote it anyway."

The research went on to highlight different approaches the teachers had discussed for addressing this phenomenon, but it was clear that overall there was no consensus on what works. Beyond that, some administrators told teachers who approached them with these concerns that "boys will be boys".

Despite everything I just described, the reason I wanted to share this study and these anecdotes is that it gave me a very chilling overarching realization, which is that these testimonies from teachers are akin to standing on a beach and seeing the water suddenly receding very quickly and very significantly. When that happens, it's an early warning sign of a tsunami. That's how I felt about that study, because these boys are young right now and they're saying and doing these things in classrooms, but they're going to grow up and they're going to bring these ideologies into the broader world.

That's why I am so glad you're studying the issue of anti-feminist ideology. Thanks to a confluence of factors, including the advent of social media, incompetent moderation from tech giants and manosphere influencers' creation of soft entry points for a more radical ideology, academics I've spoken to have said that anti-feminist ideology is experiencing a resurgence. Unfortunately, it is nothing new.

While experts like Luc Cousineau and Emelia Sandau would be better placed to speak to the literature and studies on these topics, I can attest to some of the real-life experiences of encountering this ideology. As someone who exists prominently online as an outspoken woman, I often intersect with these virulently anti-feminist spaces and ideologies. That means, unfortunately, that I have had first-hand interactions with the vicious misogyny these ideologies make manifest.

Often the white nationalists I cover, who spew racist and transphobic vitriol, don't have the kindest words for women either. As a female journalist who exposes them, I've therefore found myself on the receiving end of that hate. Harassers have engaged in softer tactics, like mocking my voice and turns of phrases to dismiss my work. They swarm whenever I receive career opportunities, spreading often unspecific and gendered attacks against my character, hoping to intimidate those who would think to offer me such opportunities in the future. At times, such as with respect to a CTV fact-checking job, it works. In fact, after my last committee appearance, the manner in which I spoke was mocked by several of these same voices as evidence that I was unqualified for the honour of testifying before Parliament.

If you're uncomfortable hearing some of these stories, like the time a man photoshopped semen on my face and circulated it around the Internet, you can only imagine how uncomfortable it is to live this, so I am very glad that once again you guys are studying this. I can only hope that I will be of some service today in helping to answer your questions.

Thank you.

• (1550)

The Chair: Thank you so much.

Now we'll turn to Ms. Mikaelian for five minutes, please.

[*Translation*]

Vé Mikaelian (Mobilization Coordinator, Fédération des femmes du Québec): Thank you for having me here today.

Let me get directly to the point. As you know, antifeminism is not an opinion. It is not a cultural quirk in response to progress made by women. Today, it's one of the fastest-growing extremist

ideologies in the west. It poses a real threat to public safety, social cohesion and our democratic institutions.

Recent research is unequivocal. A study analyzing 28.8 million messages posted on the manosphere shows accelerating radicalization. In 10 years, the number of messages posted within these communities has more than doubled. Researchers are observing a marked increase in violent rhetoric and attacks against women. In certain “incel” communities, the percentage of messages that are openly hostile toward women has risen by more than 60% since 2016.

We also observe that the most violent communities are the ones growing the fastest. Users are leaving moderate spaces and joining the most extreme groups.

Radicalization is therefore no accident—it's the dominant trend in the manosphere. And these ideologies, you know, don't remain online. Since 2014, attacks carried out in the name of “incel” ideology have caused at least 89 deaths, including 15 in Canada. This puts our country in second place among locations in the world most affected by ideologically motivated misogynist violence.

In Canada, one of the most striking concerns Alek Minassian, who carried out the 2018 Toronto attack after declaring that he had acted on “incel” ideology. His actions were not isolated but representative of a broader movement in which hatred of women becomes a direct driver of violence.

These figures must be taken seriously. We're not speaking of isolated individuals. We're speaking of attackers who explicitly claim allegiance to a structured ideology, fuelled by online spaces where violence against women is framed as a political act.

Research also shows that each time users participate in the manosphere, they become more aggressive, more hostile toward women, and more receptive to all types of extremist discourse. Hatred toward women is not an incidental symptom. For many, it is the starting point of their radicalization.

Alongside this explicit radicalization, there is another phenomenon that is just as alarming. It's the fact that antifeminism is becoming normalized and is now expressed without inhibition. Research shows that it's causing the circulation of more and more discourses presented as reasonable, moderate, or even humorous. We hear of a crisis of masculinity, we portray equality as extreme, feminist gains are challenged in the name of freedom or tradition. In the context of widespread social unease, economic crises and uncertainty, these narratives find fertile ground to spread. These discourses may not directly advocate violence, but they create an environment where extreme ideas become thinkable and acceptable.

Finally, it is essential to recognize the existence of structural antifeminism. Some public policies, even without claiming to be antifeminist, produce effects that disproportionately harm women—particularly racialized, Muslim, migrant, or vulnerable women. Consider, for example, laws adopted in the name of a so-called secularism that instrumentalizes gender equality. They limit access to employment for women who wear religious symbols, reducing their professional and social mobility. Consider also security or border-control policies, such as Bill C-12, which have direct consequences on the safety and protection of migrant or asylum-seeking women.

When the state weakens the ability of certain women to participate fully in society, it contributes to institutional antifeminism. This institutional antifeminism in turn feeds violent ideologies. Discriminatory policies validate misogynistic narratives, and those narratives then justify the policies. It's a kind of vicious circle.

The warning signs are neither weak nor ambiguous; they are massive, documented and convergent. They point to a dangerous outcome unless we act now. Antifeminism is an extremist ideology based on gender. It weakens democracy because it calls into question the equality of citizens, reduces women's participation in public life and now serves as a point of entry to forms of extremism that directly threaten national security. It fuels other forms of hatred. It spreads among young people more rapidly than our current prevention mechanisms can keep up with.

We can no longer look away.

• (1555)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We will start with Mrs. Vien for six minutes.

Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Ladies, thank you for taking the time to be with us this afternoon. We are pleased you are here.

This is a topic that's very important to us. Frankly, we are all shocked by what we've been hearing and seeing in recent years with respect to antifeminism. Just last year, 240 women were murdered in Canada; that's one woman every two days, every 48 hours. It's extremely concerning.

Ms. Mikaelian, you seem quite pessimistic. You paint a very bleak picture for us, and I can sense that you are very concerned about all of this. Organization is probably responsible for ringing the alarm.

You refer to a political act. What specifically do you mean? You said, unless I misunderstood, that antifeminism was a political act.

Vé Mikaelian: Yes, for men in the manosphere, it becomes political. For them, expressing and asserting themselves in society as antifeminists is like exercising their democratic rights. It's a political identity that these boys and men adopt to defend their right to participate in this society.

Dominique Vien: The committee has talked a lot about education in our other studies. We're a bit hyperactive here, considering that we've conducted nine studies in the past four years, and education always comes up. I remember one study, among others, that said young boys really need to be targeted as well. What should be

done? What would you recommend be promoted to help these young boys follow a much different path?

Vé Mikaelian: Clearly, more prevention is needed. People on the ground need to be equipped to engage in these discussions with our boys.

Dominique Vien: What do you mean by prevention?

Vé Mikaelian: As prevention, I mean there needs to be public education. It's essential that the people on the ground, teachers, be equipped to do that.

Parents also need tools since they have a responsibility in this matter. They need to be asked to take an interest in what their boys are doing, not just confront them, but also to be interested in the world they're immersed in. You know, in the manosphere, it's two clicks of an algorithm and then all control is lost: boys start looking at something about bodybuilding on their cellphone and it leads to antifeminist content.

Parents and significant adults really need to take a genuine interest in what their boys are doing and what they're watching.

Dominique Vien: Yes. As for technology, it is what it is. I am overwhelmed by technology myself, as I am not of an age where I'm very comfortable with it. Parents may also have difficulty keeping up. We heard that teachers—I think it was 60%—were completely overwhelmed by events in the classrooms.

Vé Mikaelian: Yes. A study was conducted recently, and what I'm about to say is blunt. In that research conducted by GRIS, an organization advocating for sexual diversity, boys were asked how they would feel if they learned that their sister was a lesbian. Many boys added a box to say that they would kill their sister if she announced that she was a lesbian. That's what research has shown. This is a study that has just been conducted. There's an increase in this kind of narrative. That's what my colleague was saying as well in her remarks.

Dominique Vien: Ms. Gilmore, let's talk about Andrew Tate, though I'm loath to speak his name to avoid giving him too much publicity. A witness came here last week—unfortunately I don't remember her name—and said that every time this person is on the air or gets publicity, the number of clicks or the number of people following him skyrockets. He made a guest appearance on the public show *Tout le monde en parle*. I don't know if you're familiar with the show, one among other public affairs programs, on Sunday evenings. Should we give these people an open forum, a voice? He had a great space for communicating that evening.

• (1600)

Rachel Gilmore: I think if we want to talk to these people, we need to do it in a responsible way. We need to ask them tough questions about their ideas. I wasn't in the room when they decided to invite him. If I had been a host of that show, I might not have invited that kind of person. When these men are given a platform, we need to ask them tough questions about the concepts they promote.

Dominique Vien: Ms. Mikaelian, we're looking for solutions and recommendations here. You talked to us about prevention. Do you have any other recommendations for the government?

[English]

Vé Mikaelian: Of course.

[Translation]

Feminist groups that conduct research must be funded because much more data is needed to be able to legitimize the actions being attempted on the ground. It's a measure that the government could take that would help us in our fight tremendously.

[English]

The Chair: Excellent. Now we're going to Ms. Khalid for six minutes.

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

Thank you to the witnesses for being here today. All of your work in this space is much appreciated. I'll start with Ms. Gilmore.

We talk about anti-feminist ideology and indoctrination by an organization or organized in a certain way. Who are the "they"? Who is organizing all of this?

Rachel Gilmore: There's a lot of money in it. It's not necessarily organized always in the sense that there's a traditional structure to it, but you could argue that the profit model and incentive structure that is created through social media and through the ways in which these figures can take advantage of creative ways of achieving virality is the institutional structure that creates an atmosphere where these people can thrive. Andrew Tate is a great example. He was actually deplatformed initially, but he has been able to thrive despite that because he told his followers, when I'm deplatformed, take my clips and post them everywhere. He gave his followers permission to do that and he encouraged them to do that, so that there was this sort of perverse reaction that ended up happening where he exploded even more in popularity when he was deplatformed.

The "they" are these tech platforms, the alt media. There are all kinds of alternative platforms that, when an individual is deplatformed from a more mainstream one, still allow them to reach an audience. I wouldn't say it's organized in a traditional sense, but there are absolutely a lot of different hands in the pot here.

Iqra Khalid: Thank you. I appreciate that.

You spoke about Andrew Tate. There are many others who are like him. What makes young people so vulnerable to being susceptible to that message?

Rachel Gilmore: I asked an academic who studies these issues that exact question about Andrew Tate on my podcast not long ago, and what he told me was that a lot of these young men want some-

one to tell them how to be a man in this society. Guys like Andrew Tate claim to have an answer to that. They also package their content in such a way that it's very difficult to navigate some of the moderation, because when he's just doing his fighter bodybuilding stuff, that isn't the kind of thing that you can take down. It's a soft entry point that eventually leads these people who are consuming fitness content, as you mentioned earlier, to this pipeline towards this deeper radicalization.

It's difficult because the fact that these guys exist and present themselves as role models for those young men on how to be men is something that we really need to have a counterbalance to. Frankly, I think we need to disrupt the notion that this is in any way what manhood is.

• (1605)

Iqra Khalid: Are you implying that these influencers or "role models" take the vulnerability of young men to make money for themselves?

Rachel Gilmore: Definitely—yes, absolutely. All of this is a grift. Some of them are ideologues, sure, but there are a lot of people who have figured out that there is a ton of money in exploiting people's fear, their insecurity. It's a scary world. It's overwhelming. There is a lot of money you can make in telling people that you have all the answers on how they should live and can help them to get the girls, the money and the fast cars. It's disgusting to me because there are real problems in this world that need to be addressed, but nothing that Andrew Tate offers will provide that redress.

Iqra Khalid: Thank you.

Ms. Mikaelian, do you want to comment on that?

[Translation]

Vé Mikaelian: We are currently experiencing a lot of instability: the cost of living is rising, prospects are dwindling for young people, buying a house seems out of reach, the environment is burning and so on. Young people are therefore vulnerable and the time is just right for these influencers to capture their attention. The distress that these young people feel is real and justified. We need to address this distress because it comes from somewhere real. Influencers seem to provide young people with an easy solution that seems to offer quick answers to everything. We must also take the bull by the horns.

[English]

Iqra Khalid: Thank you.

Here's the dichotomy for me. Over my entire lifetime, I don't recall women being given the accommodation of saying, "Oh, these are the reasons why this young woman or this girl is feeling the way that she is," yet here we are having a whole study on why young men and boys are feeling the way they are and are being indoctrinated the way they are.

I think we are all agents of our own choices. Where is that balance between providing prevention support to young boys and men, and holding them accountable for the shitty actions that they are oftentimes taking?

Rachel Gilmore: I think it's important not to coddle them by acting like young men are in a specific crisis that young people, period, aren't facing.

Income inequality is at a record-high in Canada, and that is the precursor to a lot of the feelings of vulnerability and insecurity that young people—period—are dealing with. It just so happens that a lot of these young men are being targeted by grifters who are profiting off of these specific ways in which that insecurity manifests itself among young men. However, I think that it's unhelpful to act as though the root issues are inherently unique to the lived experiences of young men when so much of this is a societal issue.

The Chair: Thank you.

[*Translation*]

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

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

I thank the witnesses for joining us today for this study on the rise of antifeminism and masculinism, the source of so many femicides and so much violence against women, which unfortunately, inevitably leads to increased violence against women.

Ms. Gilmore, you're a journalist, and Ms. Mikaelian will perhaps have something to add.

Last week, there was a lot of talk about the problematic media situation. I'm coming back to the media because of the role that misinformation and disinformation play in radicalization and the rise of the antifeminist movement. As said by Marie-Eve Carignan, a professor at the Université de Sherbrooke, while acknowledging the media crisis created by the fact that the digital giants of this world aren't paying their share and have reduced the advertising revenues available to the media, why is it important to have a diverse range of media voices to prevent disinformation and misinformation? What role can the federal government play to help?

• (1610)

Rachel Gilmore: It is vital that the media include diverse opinions. Local journalism is especially important. It's essential to society in a number of ways. Local media is the only source of reports on issues concerning municipal councils and similar organizations. Without local media, we would never know how to address community issues or discuss them. Without real facts on societal issues, people will look for someone to blame them on. As already said, a lot of people take advantage of the situation to cast blame, and that's why a diverse, strong, well-funded media is essential to counterbalance problematic individuals who exploit people. That's where the government can help.

Andréanne Larouche: Ms. Mikaelian, I see you nodding. Do you have something to add?

Vé Mikaelian: Yes. We also need the media to pay attention to what people or community groups are doing on the ground, because the expertise comes from there. We're the ones doing the research;

we're the ones with expertise on the ground. We need connection between the media and what we do.

Andréanne Larouche: Another researcher, David Morin, came to tell us last week that he found the line blurred when it comes to freedom of expression, but he understood the importance of legislation addressing online hate speech. Léa Clermont-Dion, another researcher, came to talk to us about the importance of legislating against cyber-violence, something that falls directly under federal jurisdiction since it pertains to the Criminal Code.

Why is it important to equip ourselves with intervention tools when the situation goes too far?

Vé Mikaelian: It's certainly important. Adopting such legislation is an excellent step forward. However, if we keep reacting instead of preventing, it will never end. We'll confront increasing violence. We can't put all these people in jail; we can't arrest them all. It takes prevention. That's the heart of the matter.

Andréanne Larouche: As they say, it's a continuum. That's what we hear in committee, that we need to work upstream on the causes of violence, but we also need to equip ourselves to send a strong message because, at some point, there are limits. We work in education, but no tool is effective against people who go too far.

Ms. Gilmore, do you have anything to add concerning the importance of fighting cyber-violence?

Rachel Gilmore: Personally, I get a lot of death and rape threats. I find that we're always in reaction mode when it comes to adopting legislation. Based on my experience, even when threats are made, legislation doesn't do much good. When threats are made online, we're told that investigating and finding solutions is very difficult because there are too many people online. I just want to say that it's really important to prevent these problems, rather than react to them. Personally, that forces me to change how I live.

[*English*]

The Chair: Very good. Thank you.

Now we're going to go to our second round. We'll go to Ms. Roberts for five minutes.

• (1615)

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

Thank you for attending our meeting. This is a very interesting conversation.

I have a question for both of you. With the rise in intimate partner violence by 76%, do you agree that the laws need to be tightened so we can protect women?

Rachel Gilmore: That's an incredibly vague question. Do you have specifics?

Anna Roberts: I'll give you an example. We have a family that had a bond put against their daughter's partner, who was out on bail—not once, not twice, but three times. He eventually killed her. He shot her four times, once in the eye.

How do we protect innocent women against men who instill violence? Do you not think he should have been kept behind bars?

Rachel Gilmore: Are you specifically asking about tightening bail laws? Is that specifically your question?

Anna Roberts: Yes.

Rachel Gilmore: Okay.

In the context of bail laws, I think that while there are aspects of the bail system that need reform, within the bail system currently in Ontario—I don't have the figures handy in my head right now—my understanding is that there are more legally innocent people currently incarcerated than there are who have gone through the justice system and been found guilty and been incarcerated. I'm not sure that just putting more people in the carceral system in that respect is necessarily the answer.

There are a lot of people who are more qualified to speak to aspects of tightening the bail system, or not, than I am. I will say that the ways in which it's broken aren't necessarily going to be solved by just arresting more people and putting more legally innocent people behind bars.

[Translation]

Vé Mikaelian: Once again, we react to events that have already happened, when we should be putting measures in place to prevent them from happening. There's also a lot of talk about coercive control: We need laws on coercive control. The continuum of violence includes not only physical assaults or murders, but a real trend that develops before that: Economic or psychological violence, for instance, that makes a woman feel uncomfortable even about ending her relationship or contacting authorities. The authorities often victimize women as well. As a result, women don't feel comfortable; They often feel a bit degraded by the justice system. So a lot of things need to be put in place before reaching for the extreme solution of simply putting more people behind bars.

[English]

Anna Roberts: My concern is that we've studied IPV, and the rates have gone up 76%. In my community, I've been approached by several parents who have lost children, women, to this violence. I understand we have to educate and have to prevent. I get that, which is great.

I have a son and a daughter. I treat them equally, and I've taught them that they need to treat everyone, regardless, with respect. You're going to get to the point where, sometimes in our culture, it doesn't.... For example, individuals coming from other cultures don't understand our laws, and they're not able to protect themselves. We had a witness here who came from a different culture where men have the opportunity to be the dominant individual. Unfortunately, her family felt that it was okay and that the abuse was okay. We need to stop that.

You're talking about education, but how do we educate women coming here? I work with a group in York Region, and they try to

educate them about the law so that they can be better protected. If we don't educate them before they come here and are terrorized, how are we going to protect them?

Rachel Gilmore: There are plenty of men here who terrorize women.

Anna Roberts: I understand that.

Rachel Gilmore: I'm not sure why we're specifically isolating men coming here and terrorizing our women.

Anna Roberts: I understand that. I'm not isolating it. I'm saying that it's something that has to start from the home, that we understand.... I'm a mother, and I've always said to my son that he needs to treat every individual with the respect they deserve if he wants that respect back. If we can teach our men that women are just as important as men, then we'll have a better society, and then we have more opportunity to be equal. Do you agree?

• (1620)

[Translation]

Vé Mikaelian: As my colleague mentioned, the problem is not more prominent in one social group than another, but it generally involves men. Statistics don't show that migrant men are more violent than white men. That narrative does not hold water.

I also think that access to services is needed. Women who come often and women who are migrants here don't have access to services. They don't feel that civil society takes them seriously. They feel rejected and uncomfortable about seeking the help they need. Let's give them access to support, make it even easier for them to get it and include them in society as much as possible. I think this is the way we can protect women.

[English]

Anna Roberts: Do you think—

[Translation]

The Chair: Your time is up.

We'll now move on to Ms. Ménard.

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

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

Thank you, ladies. Your presence here is very valuable.

Since the study began, many witnesses have appeared and each expert opinion has provided us with new insights. That's what makes the effort so worthwhile.

Ms. Gilmore, you're a journalist. You've worked for different media outlets. You're now an independent journalist. I want to take advantage of your presence to hear you testify. You're a public figure. There's a consensus that journalism is a fact-based profession and one of the bulwarks protecting our democracy.

What impact does it have on the rest of society to know that a woman like you, a journalist who works with facts, is exposed to online violence? Some women and girls are insulted and threatened with death and rape every day on social media. Given that a lot of people follow your work, what dynamic does that convey?

Rachel Gilmore: I think I'll respond to you in English.

[English]

I've stretched my French to the limit. I'm sorry.

I worry constantly about the impact that seeing the vitriol that I face has on young women who are watching and following my journalism. It is one of the things that makes me the most sad, because I want to inspire young women. I don't want them to see what I'm going through and think that they couldn't live with that or that they couldn't do that. I'm not going to sit here and pretend that it's easy. I've had to change how I live my life. There are things I cannot do that I used to do.

[Translation]

Marie-Gabrielle Ménard: Can you give us some examples?

[English]

Rachel Gilmore: When I have friends over, I tell them they can't take any photos that show outside my windows. I'm very cautious about sharing live locations when I'm moving around. Actually, I used to go out dancing sometimes and maybe have a couple of drinks. Now I'm usually in bed early and I rarely have more than two drinks, just because I'm afraid of being in any way out of control in public, lest one of my harassers or the men who have threatened me show up in person.

It's even impacted my partner, who is a musician. I've had individuals show up at his concerts to film me and harass me, so I even have to be cautious with sharing that part of my life and if I'm ever moving around. There are tons of things that I have to do, and it's very unpleasant.

I'm not sure if you had another question, or if you wanted me to speak to the issue of the....

[Translation]

Marie-Gabrielle Ménard: In fact, the experience that you're telling us about right now might lead you to believe that young girls would be discouraged from pursuing a career in journalism or from putting themselves out there in the public space.

Rachel Gilmore: Absolutely.

[English]

It's a free speech issue; it absolutely is. There are going to be young women who see my experience and choose not to go into the profession that I am in, which breaks my heart. I think it's why people do this. I think it's why I deal with the harassment I deal with, in part, because people want there to be fewer voices that aren't straight, white men in journalism.

I tick most of those privilege boxes in general, but I do think there is a desire to silence people doing journalism the way I'm doing it, given the fact that I'm an outspoken young woman—well, youngish.

It's devastating to think of that, and that's why I also try to project strength and show that this isn't stopping me. If they ever choose to go into journalism, there is a whole community of women who will have their back, but there are a lot of men trying to make it scary.

[Translation]

Marie-Gabrielle Ménard: Ladies, my next question is for both of you. You're both active in the digital space, the web space. What can you tell us about what's happening regarding the impact of hashtags and how community aggregation works in the case of antifeminism?

Vé Mikaelian: I don't know if hashtags are the problem, but I don't think these communities form as easily in the mainstream media as they do in niche communities like Reddit or other similar media, which let people use hashtags to locate a community or a chat group on specific topics and which they make their home and favourite location. The mainstream media let people express their opinions and attack individuals like my colleague here. However, the finer details are really covered on more alternative channels.

• (1625)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

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

Andréanne Larouche: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Once again, Ms. Gilmore and Ms. Mikaelian, thank you very much for your testimonies.

Ms. Gilmore, I would add that journalism is not the only field where women are more sensitive to the phenomenon of violence. Right now, I think that women account for barely 30% of politicians, and so there's a regression there. I'm convinced that no woman would say she would willingly expose herself to such violence, or expose her children to it. It's something we don't talk about enough. There should be more women in politics.

What could be done at the federal level? We're in solution mode. I asked you about the Criminal Code question, and we're trying to come up with proposals for the federal government on supporting action by the media.

Ms. Mikaelian, there is another matter that comes under the federal government's jurisdiction. You talked about government policies. One of the federal government's responsibilities is foreign policy. This morning, I met with Afghan women and their message is that Canada must continue its leadership. However, they're worried, because it's concerning to read that Canadian foreign policy is no longer feminist. That's the message it sends.

Vé Mikaelian: It's sending the worst possible message.

It's important to apply gender-based analysis plus to all policies and legislation, to make it a primary focus. Otherwise, people will be left behind. When the rights of marginalized or minority groups come under attack, it slowly wears away at everyone's rights. One day, women's rights will come under attack. Anyone's rights can become diminished. That's how we need to approach the issue, from that perspective.

The Chair: Thank you.

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

Dominique Vien: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I'm going to share a little slice of life. I'm a journalist by training and trade. Obviously, I don't practise journalism now that I'm a member of Parliament. I also come from the community sector. When I was a journalist, I was personally targeted because I covered a story that didn't sit well with certain people, and they let me know it. That dates back many years, so it being easy to confront a woman this way is nothing new. However, I digress.

All that to say that it's good to have women and girls in journalism who take the bull by the horns. In politics, other women are advancing the cause of women.

Last week, I gave a speech—as we all did, by the way—on the sad Polytechnique commemoration. I don't know how many people spoke to me about that speech over the weekend, but there's some glimmer of hope. That's what I was trying to say earlier: This glimmer of hope was the outcome of small acts that everyone is capable of.

Ms. Mikaelian, earlier you said that feminist organizations need more funding. Does the Fédération des femmes du Québec receive funding from the federal government?

Vé Mikaelian: Yes, it receives some funding for certain projects.

Right now, we have a project on paid internships that's funded by Women and Gender Equality Canada, but that's not where most of our funding comes from.

Dominique Vien: In any case, we're concerned because the departmental plan of the Department for Women and Gender Equality could include budget cuts. Is that something that might worry you? You seem well informed.

• (1630)

Vé Mikaelian: Yes, for sure.

Less public sector funding means fewer opportunities to secure the resources needed to carry out our work, which is to fight and to continue amassing all the knowledge we need to carry on the fight.

Dominique Vien: Earlier, you talked about coercive control. I just want to reassure you about one thing: The women at the table are asking the Government of Canada to fast-track the former Bill C-332, which proposed the criminalization of coercive control. The bill received unanimous support in the House of Commons and made it to the Senate, but then died on the Order Paper just a few weeks later.

Is criminalizing coercive control the right thing to do?

Vé Mikaelian: I don't have an official position from the federation stating that we absolutely must criminalize coercive control. From a personal standpoint, however, I can say yes, it's something that should be included in the Criminal Code. Right now, women are being subjected to acts of violence that aren't acknowledged as acts of violence.

Dominique Vien: Okay.

It's such a vague concept. It's clear to us but, in everyday life, there are people who won't know what coercive control is. So training and awareness are needed.

I'll take you down a different path. We received Partage au masculin, a group I've known in Beauce for about 30 years. They're really nice, and I encourage you to get in touch with them. They take guys who are angry, who can't take it anymore, who are fed up, who blame everyone, especially women, and who are overwhelmed by events. They take them and support them. They also maintain connections with other women's groups to create connections between men and women so that they can learn to communicate and respect each other.

Would that be a possibility for the federation? Is that an option that you've already developed or considered? You're a strong organization in Quebec.

Vé Mikaelian: Would it be to work with men?

Dominique Vien: It would be to work with other groups of men.

Vé Mikaelian: I must admit that no, and sometimes I tell myself—

Dominique Vien: In any case, they've been doing that in Beauce for several years.

Vé Mikaelian: I don't doubt it, but sometimes I've thought it's crazy the amount of resources we have to spend just to make sure, at the end of the day, that a woman isn't killed.

To get back to my answer, I'd say that, no, it's not something we do. However, the problem is certainly complex enough to approach it in different ways. As I keep saying, prevention is extremely important, and that is one way of doing it.

Dominique Vien: In any case, they seemed to—

Vé Mikaelian: The fact that men support feminism is always a good thing.

Dominique Vien: You said that the state weakens women's participation in the public space. Did I understand correctly? Is that what you said earlier?

Vé Mikaelian: Yes.

Dominique Vien: In two or three sentences, tell me what you meant by that. Why would the state prevent women from participating?

Vé Mikaelian: Women are prevented from teaching because they wear a veil, for example. That's one way women are prevented from fully participating in civil society. I could give many examples like that.

[English]

The Chair: Very good. We're going to go to Ms. Nathan for the last five minutes of this panel.

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

Thank you to both of you for being here and for sharing your personal experiences as well.

Ms. Mikaelian, we've observed political leaders deliberately targeting new immigrants, especially Muslim women. We've also seen political leaders specifically targeting queer communities, or particularly trans people, by claiming they have only recognized two genders.

Can you explain the implications of these messages? Who are they trying to appeal to, and why might they be using this approach? Is it working? What other communities are affected by it, especially young women?

[Translation]

Vé Mikaelian: I just want to make sure I understood your question correctly. Do you want to know how policies that lean toward transphobia can influence society and antifeminism?

[English]

Juanita Nathan: It's about politicians specifically being vocal about this, because they're usually seen as community leaders. It's leaders talking about this.

[Translation]

Vé Mikaelian: Trans and non-binary groups are under constant attack right now. I think this is part of a rising tide of right and radical right narratives. These are marginalized groups trying to live with dignity.

I haven't mentioned it, but there's been a huge increase in violence and hate speech targeting these groups. Just today, I saw media reports about schools in Quebec that were going to prevent teachers from being addressed as anything but Mr. or Ms. So, young people are being told that gender is binary, that there are only men and women and that a person's dignity will not be respected if they want to be called something else because they identify differently.

When we adopt measures like this, we give credibility to masculinist and transphobic narratives. Furthermore, it's happening in front of our youth. Yes, it's really very concerning when political leaders voice this kind of narrative.

• (1635)

[English]

Juanita Nathan: I don't know if you have anything to add to that. I know you've been harassed yourself.

Rachel Gilmore: I've been horrified seeing the virulent transphobic rhetoric that has been spread through society. Even some politicians in our House of Commons have been saying disturbing things that have gotten them condemned by Egale Canada and other organizations. Pierre Poilievre's comments about trans folks have been egregious, saying that he's only aware of two genders.

I think that one of the massive issues within this is that you're ultimately not only.... All of our rights are intertwined, and when you adjudicate the presentation of gender for, say, going to the bathroom, what you are doing is adjudicating who is going to be harassed in that bathroom.

I'm a six-foot tall woman. If I go pee and there's a bathroom ban, are people going to speculate about my genitalia? Am I going to be harassed when I'm just trying to use the washroom? Anyone who doesn't present in a very effeminate way is going to face questions and harassment. They are open to that. It's not only rigorously enforcing the forms of gender expression that exist in our society, but also.... Even among cis women, they are going to be harassed for this. All of our rights are intertwined, and it is essential that we fight for all of them.

Juanita Nathan: Can you talk a little bit about the anti-DEI movement and how that is affecting women in general, especially young women?

Rachel Gilmore: Anti-DEI is one of the stupidest things I've ever heard. You're opposing diversity and equity and inclusion. Why? What is wrong with any of those things?

I think there's a fundamental misunderstanding of how DEI operates in Canada as well. We tend not to use quotas, which is the aspect that is often attacked as privileging certain groups over others. What we tend to do is just audits of workplaces to ensure that everyone is having equality of opportunity.

I think that to attack these notions is a dog whistle to the worst elements of society, which are seeing a slide towards a more fascist world, and every politician who engages in that should be ashamed of themselves.

The Chair: I'm so sorry, but that's the end of our time for today. We had a bit of a late start with the votes.

I want to thank our witnesses. Thank you for being so open and for sharing freely with the committee. We really value that.

I'm now going to suspend briefly while we switch up for the next panel.

Thanks.

• (1635)

(Pause)

• (1645)

The Chair: Welcome back.

We're here for our second panel, and we have additional witnesses.

For the benefit of the witnesses, at the bottom of your screen, for those on video, you can pick whether you want English, French or floor audio, which gives you both. It's the same with the equipment that's here in the room. If you need any assistance, we have our technician.

If you want to speak, raise your hand or wait until I acknowledge you by name.

All comments should be addressed through the chair.

[*Translation*]

For our second group of witnesses, we have, from the Alliance des femmes de la francophonie canadienne, Ms. Nour Enayeh, president, and Ms. Soukaina Boutiyeb, executive director. Welcome.

[*English*]

From the Healthy Gamer Foundation, we have Dr. Alok Kanojia, trustee and president.

[*Translation*]

We'll start with the opening remarks.

Ms. Nour Enayeh, you have five minutes.

Nour Enayeh (President, Alliance des femmes de la francophonie canadienne): Madam Chair, members, on behalf of the Alliance des femmes de la francophonie canadienne, I'd like to thank you for your invitation. My name is Nour Enayeh, and I'm president of the AFFC. I'm speaking to you from Vancouver, from the traditional and unceded territory of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh nations. I'm accompanied by Soukaina Boutiyeb, our executive director, who is with you in person.

The AFFC is a national non-profit feminist organization dedicated to raising awareness and promoting the role and contribution of over 1.5 million minority francophone and Acadian women. Our organization comprises a network of 17 member organizations across the country. We're here today to talk with you about antifeminist ideology because, in May 2020, the AFFC was the target of disturbingly violent intimidation. We received a suspicious package.

I warn you: Some people may find what I am about to say disturbing.

The package contained not only explicit threats to beat us, but also a hundred threatening pieces of writing highlighting that a woman's place is in the kitchen. The messages conveyed antifeminist values and made discriminatory remarks about francophones and immigrants. The incident is not trivial and isn't an isolated occurrence. It fits within the broader context of rising masculinism in recent years, which endangers women's safety. The incident reflects the rise of anti-gender and anti-rights movements, and well-funded and coordinated networks that use fear and disinformation to attack the rights of women, 2LGBTQI+ individuals and minorities.

That incident illustrates a particularly dangerous ideological convergence. Francophone women are being attacked not only because they advocate for gender equality, but also because of their minority language identity. Francophone and Acadian women are doubly,

if not triply, marginalized: as women, as francophones and based on other identity factors.

These forms of oppression are not cumulative, they combine and intersect to create specific vulnerabilities and exclusions that we have to confront on a daily basis. This reality requires an intersectional approach in order to design tailored responses. We therefore organized the first pan-Canadian forum on masculinism and francophobia, launching a vitally important conversation that needs to continue. Throughout the process, we were accompanied by a youth delegation that played a critical guiding role. The recommendations that we're presenting to you arise from that forum and propose concrete actions to counter antifeminism.

We propose that the government support and value the voice of young minority francophones and involve women's organizations in defining issues and developing solutions. We also propose that the government work with the provinces and territories and with civil society to pool expertise and implement concrete projects to fight antifeminism. We also propose that the government increase training for professionals on antifeminist ideology, and that it promote funding for research on discrimination and how gender and language overlap.

We also propose that the federal government require a more comprehensive gender-based analysis with a focus on the reality of official language minorities and ensure access to the results. We also propose that the government adopt legislative measures aimed at regulating and sanctioning hate speech and violent and discriminatory acts against women and individuals from gender-diverse backgrounds, while recognizing the specific situation of minority francophones. Finally, we propose that the government provide mission-based funding for francophone and Acadian women's organizations in minority situations to address their needs and mitigate the impacts of the antifeminism they experience.

• (1650)

Thank you. Our executive director, Ms. Soukaina Boutiyeb, who is with you, will now answer your questions.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[*English*]

Now we are going our second witness, Dr. Kanojia, for five minutes.

Dr. Alok Kanojia (Trustee and President, Healthy Gamer Foundation): Thank you, Madam Chair and members of the committee, for inviting me to speak today.

My name is Dr. Alok Kanojia and I'm a psychiatrist and trustee of the Healthy Gamer Foundation, which is dedicated to research and advocacy around the mental health needs of the digital generation.

Much of our work centres on understanding how online environments shape emotional development, motivation and well-being, especially for young people. I spent the last five years working directly with young men involved in incel, black pill, red pill and other online subcultures.

What I'd like to offer today are not just clinical observations, but human stories and patterns I've seen repeat across thousands of individuals who end up in these communities and what these mean for policy-making.

Most of the young men I work with do not begin with anti-feminist ideology. They begin with loneliness, shame and a sense of falling behind their peers. A typical pathway looks something like this. A young man feels isolated. He experiences repeated rejection or humiliation, sometimes romantic, sometimes academic, sometimes familial. He turns to the Internet for support because he has nowhere else to go. Online spaces provide simple explanations for complex situations. Those explanations slowly harden into ideology.

The core psychological start is with hopelessness that then transforms into hatred. Communities built around hopelessness naturally drift towards extremism because shared suffering becomes fused with shared resentment. Online spaces amplify these vulnerabilities in several ways. Algorithms surface more extreme content because extreme content keeps people engaged. Isolation becomes reinforced. Young men who feel socially inadequate compare themselves with curated, idealized lives online. Anonymous forums reward cynicism, pessimism and anger, and vulnerable young men are told, "Your failure is predetermined. Your genetics define you. The world is rigged"—usually against you.

This is the psychological backbone of the black pill.

Toxic manosphere algorithms are successful because they are validating and empathic for men's experiences. Most men are not taken seriously when they complain. Most men do not perceive that their issues are being taken seriously. Manosphere influencers will be empathic by saying, "Yes, you are right: The world is rigged against you and no one will come to help you. Survival is up to you, and you can't count on anyone." Frequently, they will offer a way to become an "alpha", to no longer be a loser.

Across nearly all cases, I see five recurring themes: social deprivation characterized by lack of friendships, mentorships or a meaningful community; emotional illiteracy, as these young men were never taught how to process rejection, shame or grief; trauma histories, oftentimes including bullying, childhood emotional neglect and attachment issues; unmet mental health needs, as depression, anxiety, ADHD and autism spectrum conditions are disproportionately common; and a loss of purpose, with academic or career stagnation that creates identity collapse.

When these needs go unaddressed, ideology becomes a coping mechanism.

The encouraging news is that many of these young men do improve and they do leave these communities once they have alternatives.

What we found works is building agency by helping them take small, achievable steps that contradict the narrative of hopelessness; teaching emotional skills, especially around rejection, resilience and self-worth; creating off-line community, including mentorship, peer support and structured social environments; focusing on mental health treatment, addressing underlying conditions that contribute to their despair; and positive identity pathways,

helping them see value in themselves beyond dating or status hierarchies.

These interventions are far more effective than shame, punishment or moral confrontation. When we offer belonging, dignity and purpose, ideology loses its grip.

I respectfully suggest three evidence-based approaches: first, invest in preventative mental health supports for young men, especially those dealing with loneliness, school disengagement or neurodevelopmental conditions; second, promote digital literacy and emotional literacy curricula in schools, teaching youth how to interpret online spaces, regulate emotions and navigate rejection; and third, support community-level programs, including peer programs, mentorship networks, skills-building groups and spaces where isolated young men can reconnect with society in healthy ways.

Young men who feel included do not become radicalized. Young men who feel valued do not seek refuge in hopeless communities. Young men who have purpose do not turn to anti-feminist ideology for identity.

These individuals are not born villains; they are young people in pain who found the wrong kind of community at the right time. If we address their underlying suffering, not just their ideology, we can meaningfully reduce harm, improve mental health outcomes and create a more inclusive and resilient society.

• (1655)

Thank you very much, and I look forward to your questions.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

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

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

Anna Roberts: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses for being here today. My first question is for Dr. Kanojia.

I have raised a son, and sometimes as parents, we have a hard time seeing the problems that our children are experiencing.

From your clinical experience, how does this loneliness make them more susceptible to joining misogynistic and extremist online communities?

Dr. Alok Kanojia: The loneliness is an important risk factor because in these online communities, that's where they find connections.

Let's say I'm a high school student and I feel socially isolated. What I can do is turn to the Internet, where there are millions of people who feel similarly socially isolated. We all form bonds through an experience of shared social isolation, which I know is a little bit contradictory, but that's how it works.

Anna Roberts: One of the reasons I was interested in listening to you is that you speak about men and you speak about boys. I think it's important at a young age that we encourage them. You mentioned bullying and you mentioned numerous things that could deter them from understanding.

I went through my own experience with my son after losing my husband at a very young age. He was bullied and he was criticized, but the thing that really alarmed me was that his female teacher was the one who was criticizing him.

When we addressed the issue, the concern was that this particular individual had had a bad day. We had to sit my son down, and I sat down with a psychiatrist and said it was one of those experiences where you have to understand that sometimes people do have a bad day, but when you're talking to a young man, that's how they form their thought processes about women.

How do you turn that around?

Dr. Alok Kanojia: I think it's more about interaction.

The scenario you described is incredibly common. I would say in about 75% of people who have gone down the manosphere ideology rabbit hole, each of them I have talked to has a very seminal, hurtful experience, oftentimes with a woman.

The problem is that as they start to isolate, there's a well-studied phenomenon called online drift, which is a simple radicalization of any belief system when you spend time online. These people will start to socially isolate, and then they don't have additional experiences with women that are neutral or positive. That's what's so damaging about it. All they do is surround themselves with Internet forums where people are sharing very similar experiences, so they have a very poor selection bias in terms of what kind of information and interactions they have.

• (1700)

Anna Roberts: Thank you for that. I know that my time is limited, so I do appreciate that.

I want to put on notice, Madam Chair, that I know on Wednesday we will be discussing this in committee:

That, given that human trafficking in Canada has skyrocketed, with total police-reported incidents of human trafficking increasing 72.7% from 2015 to 2023, and 93% of victims of police-reported human trafficking were women and girls, the committee undertake a study of no less than four meetings to examine the rise of human trafficking of women and girls for sexual exploitation, prevention measures, tools and resources available to law enforcement, supports for survivors, and the effectiveness of awareness campaigns, education programs and community partnerships and that the following witnesses be invited to appear for no less than one hour each:

1. Gary Anandasangaree, Minister of Public Safety
2. Rechie Valdez, Minister of Women and Gender Equality
3. Ruby Sahota, Secretary of State (Combating Crime)

And that the committee also receive evidence from other witnesses deemed appropriate by the committee; at the conclusion of the study, the committee pre-

pare a comprehensive report with their findings and recommendations, and request a government response, pursuant to Standing Order 109.

I do want to say that since I originally provided this motion in both languages, the numbers have increased to 84.24%. That number's a little outdated, but it's on a rise.

The Chair: Thank you. The motion is in order, and we will talk about it on Wednesday because we're with our witnesses.

You have one minute left to question.

Anna Roberts: Thank you.

I want to go back to Dr. Kanojia.

Dr. Alok Kanojia: You can call me Dr. K.

Anna Roberts: I like that.

I was very fortunate and blessed with the fact that I had my opportunity. In those days, my son was very young. One of the things I found a little appalling was the fact that when you sit down with that type of an experience, sometimes they become so indoctrinated that it becomes a pattern, and they allow this abuse to continue. How do you stop that?

Dr. Alok Kanojia: The pattern of abuse by who?

Anna Roberts: By women.

Dr. Alok Kanojia: By women towards men...?

Anna Roberts: Yes.

Dr. Alok Kanojia: I'm not sure exactly how you did it, but a strong advocate is a big part of that. Another big part of that is simply paying attention, not allowing our preconceived notions to influence the person who's sitting in front of us.

The Chair: Thank you.

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

[*Translation*]

Marie-Gabrielle Ménard: Thank you to all the witnesses who are with us today.

Dr. Kanojia, your deconstruction strategies seem to encourage interactions. Is it far-fetched to think that we can penetrate these online communities? Because I feel that's where a lot of narratives are formed, shaped and intensified. Is it too late if we catch some communities off-line, after many activities have already taken place? What's your view on that? Can we enter the digital space to interact?

[*English*]

Dr. Alok Kanojia: Is it utopian? Maybe a touch, but I also think it's quite effective. There's a lot of progress we can make, and that's a lot of the work we do. One of the things that has shocked me is how little effort is required, if done the right way, to make a big change.

The reason I'm here today with the Healthy Gamer Foundation is that I started streaming on the Internet. I started making YouTube videos around mental health, and the response we've received is very positive.

We're talking about the core problem being isolation that then drives these people to coalesce. Once they coalesce, then they radicalize. There are no contrary perspectives. We are watched by both men and women, and we had a period of time when we had this influx of incels into our community. It was very challenging for a little while, and there were some evidence-based techniques we needed to use

One of the really shocking things was when an incel hears the experience of a woman and how isolating that can be, how lonely women can be and that everything isn't automatically easier for women. The problem is that, if you're in an incel forum, you're never going to hear from women.

I actually think there's a lot of positive social interaction these people are being deprived of. Once you start intentionally intervening, I'm amazed at how much progress can be made.

• (1705)

[Translation]

Marie-Gabrielle Ménard: That's very interesting. I know from your work that you're interested in engagement. We talk about forums; we talk about video game practices. I don't want to conflate things that don't belong together, but when a person joins a forum, they're encouraged to express themselves, to speak up and perhaps even outdo each other. Does that have an impact outside the digital space?

[English]

Dr. Alok Kanojia: Absolutely. You're touching on something that is very fascinating. When a man joins, let's say, an incel forum, they're encouraged to speak up. They learn a certain kind of rhetoric. If they open their mouth anywhere else, the immediate response is ostracization, which I think is pretty fair because they'll oftentimes engage in very hurtful or hateful language, which isn't socially acceptable.

Even though the response is appropriate, it doesn't help the problem. Now this person is moving out into the real world. They're voicing some kind of rhetoric, and there's no attempt to understand. There's no curiosity. I'm a clinician. I'm a psychiatrist, so it's my job to try to understand everyone who comes into my office.

You're spot on that when people move out into the real world, that becomes very difficult for the audience of people who are listening to these people as well as for that person. What we found is that there's a certain amount of tolerance that is necessary to almost socially rehabilitate these people, to help them understand why their words are hurtful as opposed to simply banning the person from the space. That's a lot of work, and it's kind of an uphill battle.

[Translation]

Marie-Gabrielle Ménard: Yes, indeed. Thank you.

Ms. Boutiyeb, thank you for being with us. Your colleague's testimony at the beginning of the presentation shows that community organizations have also become targets for antifeminist actors, not just individuals. What does that tell us about the situation? Do you want to expand on that? Have other colleagues of yours had these experiences as well? What's your take on the situation?

Soukaina Boutiyeb (Executive Director, Alliance des femmes de la francophonie canadienne): The thing to remember in this situation, which the AFFC has experienced itself, is that minority francophone women were the victims of these attacks. This rise of masculinism and francophobia is a reality that's not discussed in our society. In our case, the difference is that something was sent directly to our offices to tell us about this ideology. That doesn't mean that these kinds of comments don't exist on the Internet; they do, but sometimes it can be taken even further. Fortunately, in our case, it stopped with a package, but there were clear threats.

Generally, it can even lead to direct and physical violence against women. It's very important to recognize this, because we often downplay actions online and shrug them off. However, those actions can have serious consequences. It also serves as a reminder that women's advocacy organizations are easy targets since they carry that voice.

Marie-Gabrielle Ménard: You mentioned during your presentation that you'd like to see things done differently. Let's talk about mission funding. What would it change?

Soukaina Boutiyeb: It would change a lot by providing structure to organizations. The reality today is that some women's organizations within Canada's francophonie don't have funding. Many have no funding, yet they still carry on the mission of an entire province or territory.

I'll give you an example. In Saskatchewan, one of our member organizations consists of just one part-time person who has taken on the entire mandate of serving Saskatchewan's francophonie. How can one part-time person take concrete action for women in her region? Unfortunately, this is one of the underfunding realities that organizations face. Providing funding to women's organizations also allows them to address relevant needs and create opportunities for women, but also collaboration that fosters further discussion on a fairer, more equitable world.

• (1710)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Boutiyeb.

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

Andréanne Larouche: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Dr. Kanojia, thank you very much for being with us today. It gives us another perspective on this study.

Ms. Enayeh and Ms. Boutiyeb, we've met several times. Your request for more support for minority francophone women is crucial. When we talk about violence, it's often because the situation is urgent and we need to be able to speak and get services in our language. What's the status of this situation? Give us an idea of the lack of support confronting minority francophone women.

Soukaina Boutiyeb: The current reality is that we have a very fragile network. For a woman who needs immediate service in French because she's confronting violence, services are not available in French at shelters across all provinces and territories. In western Canada, there's only one organization with French services, Chez Rachel, but it only has five apartments. It's a transition house, not an emergency shelter. This demonstrates the reality that what the organizations lack most is services.

Unfortunately, when a woman wants to escape violence, being able to speak with someone in her language, in French, is a luxury in some places. My president in British Columbia could easily speak on the situation in that province, where no housing organization offers service in French. When one does exist, the organization usually covers a vast territory, from the Yukon to British Columbia, on a shoestring budget, in other words, with just one part-time person. How are needs to be met?

We're talking only about responding to needs, not to mention the prevention and awareness work needed to bring about future systemic changes and eventually make antifeminism a thing of the past. I like to dream big, which is why awareness projects are also important for an effective response to future and present needs.

Andréanne Larouche: Thank you very much.

Your recommendations also mentioned gender-based analysis plus, or GBA Plus, on a more exhaustive scale. Recently, my colleague on the public accounts committee forwarded me a 2022 report from the Auditor General of Canada concerning GBA Plus.

Despite the law, there seems to be a lack of support. Obviously, a GBA Plus analysis doesn't happen on its own. The government needs to direct operations, provide resources and send a clear message that the various departments must be given the means to conduct these analyses. In your opinion, what could that change?

Soukaina Boutiyeb: We need to keep in mind that GBA Plus has been discussed since 1995 and that Canada signed its ratification. GBA Plus seeks to ensure that public policies or projects are implemented in a way that adequately addresses all potential population identity factors. In that context, it's also important to establish a public policy or provide funding that adequately meets the needs of women who belong to Canada's francophonie.

Unfortunately, that's not the reality. Although we're told that a GBA Plus has been done, francophone women in Canada are often, if not always, forgotten or disregarded when it comes to specific needs on the ground. That's why one of our recommendations is to conduct a comprehensive GBA Plus that takes account of language minorities, and to make the analysis available. Indeed, we would be delighted to understand how a flagrant need like the situation facing women belonging to Canada's francophonie was overlooked to begin with.

Andréanne Larouche: Ms. Enayeh, I see you nodding. If you want to add anything, feel free.

• (1715)

Nour Enayeh: As Ms. Boutiyeb said, when we talk about GBA Plus and services, we're talking about things that should already have happened in 2025. We're still talking about things that should be automatic. When federal action plans make no mention

of francophone women in official language minority communities, that's very concerning. We can see the impact on the ground directly.

Andréanne Larouche: We also heard from Marie-Eve Carignan and David Morin, researchers from the Université de Sherbrooke, who are doing a lot of work on rising extremes. They say that we lack data and research on antifeminist ideology. We already talked about GBA Plus. We talked about support for minority francophone women. Why is more research needed? Why do we need these figures and better documentation?

Soukaina Boutiyeb: Research is what allows us to articulate what we experience on the ground. Unfortunately, we may experience situations that already exist. The situation involving the package that we told you about is a concrete example. We experienced that in May 2020, five years ago.

Unfortunately, there is no concrete data on the issues women face, much less data specific to minority francophone communities. The reason? There's not enough funding allocated to specific projects and research on this topic. That makes it important to ensure that we have concrete data reflecting realities on the ground if we want to address population needs as well.

The Chair: Thank you.

We will continue with Mrs. Vien for five minutes.

Dominique Vien: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Thank you all for coming and making yourselves available this afternoon.

Dr. Kanojia, you give us reason to hope when you tell us that many young people are finding alternatives to these somewhat toxic networks, leading them down negative paths. You're saying that they've found other alternatives. Since you're in contact with many young people, could you tell us about an actual case of a young person who realized they were not on the right path?

[English]

Dr. Alok Kanojia: If you look at a lot of podcasts—there's a term, “podcast bro”, and I don't know whether you have heard this term—a lot of men are interested in self-development. There are toxic communities of self-development and self-help, and then there are helpful communities. Part of the reason I'm standing here today, and part of the work the Healthy Gamer Foundation does, is that I'm a psychiatrist but I also make YouTube videos. I livestream on Twitch and on YouTube, and about 10 million to 15 million people—about 7 million to 12 million men—tune in to me every month to hear healthy alternatives.

There absolutely are positive communities, several podcasts and those kinds of adjacent followings. There are several social media and content-creator types of people who will do this work. Then, there are more local things, like Big Brother and Big Sister programs, peer-support programs that can provide healthy alternatives.

[Translation]

Dominique Vien: Thank you very much.

Could you give us an overview of how this radicalization is affecting young men in North America? We're going to include the United States, unless you have specific statistics for Canada. What are your observations on that?

[English]

Dr. Alok Kanojia: Are you asking what percentage of young men are becoming radicalized?

Dominique Vien: Yes.

Dr. Alok Kanojia: Remember that it's a continuum. There are people who are at the early phase of radicalization, and that can grow all the way to very severe radicalization.

There aren't very good statistics in North America or elsewhere, but I think if you look at related conditions like the rise of pornography addiction and things like video game addiction, these are oftentimes comorbid. When you have someone who is addicted to pornography, the likelihood that they're engaged in anti-feminist ideology is high.

What we're basically seeing is probably somewhere between 6% and 15%. That would be my guess, depending on the study.

• (1720)

[Translation]

Dominique Vien: Thank you very much.

Teenagers go through a tsunami of emotions, their body is changing, everything is changing. You said that loneliness is a really important risk factor. A teenager is a teenager. They're going through a tough time. How could we improve their adolescence and alleviate this loneliness? Is it worse today than it was 20 or 30 years ago?

[English]

Dr. Alok Kanojia: Absolutely. I think you touched on the main thing. Teenagers have always been teenagers, but the world they live in now and the world they grow up in now is different. I think we are seeing all kinds of changes; the world is changing.

A couple of things we have to understand is that technology offers us alternatives. When I was growing up, I was also bullied and I was very socially isolated, but I had no choice but to socially rehabilitate myself. When I went to university, there was a lot of forced social interaction. That essentially allows us to become socially rehabilitated.

That's no longer the case today. When someone is socially isolated now, if you think about a 25-year-old man or even a 15-year-old, you don't have to leave the house anymore. You can get food delivered and you can work from home, and you never have to socialize

with anyone. That's why we need more programs to help teenagers train in certain skills that we never needed social training in.

We have an event on our Discord server where we practise asking people out on dates, and 200 people will show up and practise that. We train social skills. We train emotional regulation skills. These were things that people would basically acquire before, but now the way that our society is structured, no one is forced into social acquisition skills.

I'm sure the members of the committee can think about times in their lives when they didn't feel like doing something socially, and they learned how to do it.

The Chair: Thank you.

[Translation]

Dominique Vien: Thank you.

It's over already, but I had some questions for the ladies.

The Chair: I'm sorry, but your time is up.

[English]

I needed that training when I was younger, but I don't need it now.

Now we're going to Mr. Chen for five minutes.

Shaun Chen (Scarborough North, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Dr. Kanojia, you said the world is changing. We know that anti-feminist ideology has long existed, but now young men and boys are more connected than ever in this technological world.

Are there positive examples that you can share of how gaming platforms, streaming sites and social media have addressed the ways they have been used to disseminate anti-feminist messaging or have tried to address it?

Dr. Alok Kanojia: Your question is whether there are success stories of platforms trying to protect against anti-feminist messaging. Is that correct?

Shaun Chen: Yes.

Dr. Alok Kanojia: I think this is happening slowly but surely, in a very inconsistent way. There are, for example, certain gaming platforms that will implement a system where a user will be given the right to communicate or to be unable to communicate via voice chat. If I am someone on voice chat, and I speak in a toxic or harmful way, the game will recognize that by using certain voice modulation analysis.

I don't know if this makes sense, but right now I'm speaking and I'm not upset, whereas if I start using expletives and start yelling at people, we actually have the technology to recognize when someone is being toxic. Then there will be certain kinds of auto-mute functions or mute functionality against particular things.

I worked with one game studio to try to develop a more positive cycle of social community. We built something around more timely feedback. I don't know if this make sense, but if you think about how we police human behaviour, if your child says something inappropriate, if you're a parent, you tell them right away. One of the big problems that platforms have is that when they punish someone, the person is not given a reason. Oftentimes, there is a lag between the behaviour and the punishment. If I say something and then a week later I get banned from a platform, there's no way of my knowing what I did wrong or what the right corrective action is.

There absolutely are platforms that are moving in this directions.

• (1725)

Shaun Chen: Thank you.

When you talked about the shared suffering that some of these young men and boys are experiencing that compelled them to join in this shared community where they're united by their common social deprivation, the trauma they might have experienced, their unmet mental health and other needs, when I hear that list, I also think about those who are oppressed, the young women and girls who are on the other end of this anti-feminist ideology.

What do you think is possible in terms of creating empathy that allows these young men and boys to understand that what they perpetuate is exactly the harm that is experienced by those who are on the other side of the issue?

Dr. Alok Kanojia: It's a beautiful question.

These problems have gotten a lot worse as we have become isolated and radicalized. I think the most important thing is to move in the opposite direction to try to create situations where people can have greater exposure to different people's lives.

We find that one of the biggest problems with some of these incel communities is that, literally, when they open their mouths in the public space, everyone wants to kick them out, which is an understandable reaction because they'll oftentimes have hateful rhetoric and have overly generalized views of what women are like and will say that all women are a particular way.

I think there's a certain amount of being able to tolerate that and then educate these people and give them a better perspective. There's a lot of research that shows that mentorship and older peers are very important for that. It's something that's really missing in these communities.

Shaun Chen: From your clinical and research experience, what emotional or developmental factors make young men, at this point, particularly vulnerable to the types of anti-feminist narratives we are seeing?

Dr. Alok Kanojia: The most important thing that I think is underaddressed is something called "normative male alexithymia". Alexithymia is being colour-blind to your internal emotional state.

Most men do not understand what they are feeling, through a combination of biology and social conditioning. If you take an incel, they don't understand that they feel ashamed or fearful; they just think the world is out to get them. They're not aware of their internal emotional state.

The reason that we call—

The Chair: Thank you.

I just would remind all of our witnesses that if you don't get a chance to say everything you want to say, please submit anything else that you want to the clerk. The committee is very happy to do that.

My job is to move it along.

[*Translation*]

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

Andréanne Larouche: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Ms. Enayeh and Ms. Boutiyeb, I'd like to keep discussing your recommendations. You specifically mentioned legislative measures in one of your recommendations. A lot of witnesses are telling us about the importance of having tools to counter online threats and cyber-violence. Researchers and victims tell us that there aren't enough tools.

You talk about more legislative tools, including a law that would set limits on what can be said online and allow for intervention when things become too violent.

Soukaina Boutiyeb: One of the recommendations we suggest includes two components. First, we need to hold the people who make antifeminist and violent statements accountable and accept that these statements affect lives. Second, we need to hold platforms accountable if they allow this kind of narrative, which is perpetuated and amplified by algorithms. They're also responsible. So, we have to try to hold them accountable to reduce their impact.

• (1730)

Andréanne Larouche: Do you have anything to add?

Nour Enayeh: Yes, I wanted to add that intersectionality is worsening the situation for women. For example, with what's happening politically, the comments I receive as a Muslim woman and a veiled woman are changing. When platforms don't set limits, there are no limits on what people say. It goes directly into people's homes. It feels like the comments are reaching out to us directly and personally, at home, affecting our children and our families. It keeps going further and further as policies change.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

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

Anna Roberts: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you again to the witnesses for being here.

I have a question for the Alliance des femmes de la francophonie canadienne.

You spoke about awareness, education and supporting minority women. I participate with an organization in my community that supports women who come from other countries. How do we educate them about the laws of our land so that they understand what their rights are? How do you do that without having that male interference?

[*Translation*]

Soukaina Boutiyeb: That's a very good question.

I believe that every woman has a right to be aware of her rights, whether she lives here, whether she's a newcomer or whether her family has been here for generations. Unfortunately, not all women are fully aware of their rights, which is why it's important to work closely with organizations to ensure that awareness-raising projects are implemented to inform women about their rights and in their language as well.

In that context, francophone women are not a homogeneous group. They are a diverse group of many women from different cultures and identity backgrounds. What they all share in common is French. That's why it's also important to ensure that projects exist in French to adequately meet the needs of minority francophone communities.

[*English*]

Anna Roberts: Would you say that maybe the government should look at implementing those rules in immigration policies? A lot of new immigrants I've been involved with have no clue about their rights. Would you say that should be addressed prior to their applying for immigration? I know that certain cultures have a male-dominated situation, and women aren't aware that, in the west, we have the same rights.

[*Translation*]

Soukaina Boutiyeb: That's often the challenge. We're often told that we live in a highly egalitarian society, at least in Canada. However, the fact that we have to talk about antifeminism shows that a lot of work remains to be done in our society.

To come back to the question, which was a very good question, it's important to ensure that everyone knows their rights, that the law is close to the people and that everyone understands their rights. We should ensure that no language, economic or other barriers stand in the way, especially for women, and that everyone knows their rights.

[*English*]

Anna Roberts: Thank you.

Dr. K., I'm going to ask you the same question. Do you work with new immigrants and explain that the laws here in the west are somewhat different and how the respect for women in Canada

might be different from in a different country or the different part of the world they come from?

Dr. Alok Kanojia: I wouldn't say that I work with immigrants as a class, but I absolutely have several patients and have worked with many people who are immigrants whom I do have to educate on all manner of things, including equality between genders, as well as various aspects of sexual health, which oftentimes they're not educated in.

I run into it, but it's not something I do as a class-based intervention.

• (1735)

The Chair: I see that Ms. Enayeh has her hand up.

Anna Roberts: Yes, I know. I was just going to....

Nour, could you please...? Thank you.

Nour Enayeh: I was just going to jump in to say "culturally adapted". I worked with refugees before, and the thing that I can tell you that does not work is when we have the same language for everyone, saying, "Here in Canada, this is how we do it; this is how you have to do it." We have to adapt the language to the population we're working with.

[*Translation*]

Men shouldn't feel targeted. That's the first thing. As soon as we wanted to talk to women, men felt targeted, when in fact, we were talking to them for the sake of the family.

[*English*]

Each culture has its own way of dealing with it, and each culture wants the women to be safe. It's just a way of knowing how to give that message.

Anna Roberts: It's interesting because when I speak to these women, they're amazed that Canada has such rights and privileges. It gives me the feeling that they weren't aware of that. When they get educated, there's always a friction between them and their spouse because that's not the world that they came from.

How do we protect them, and how do we ensure...? Listen, it's not against the men. It's not against the women. How do we—

The Chair: I'm sorry. That's end of your time. It's a great question.

I would say to the witnesses that if they do want to send something to the clerk on that, that's great.

We're going to go to our final round of five minutes.

Ms. Khalid.

Iqra Khalid: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Just following up on what Ms. Roberts had to say, I don't think that it's a community or an immigrant issue. We've been dealing with gender-based violence all across the world, including in Canada. It doesn't matter what the colour of your skin is. It doesn't matter how old you are or how educated you are. When women are treated violently—when they are killed, when they are abused—it has nothing to do with where they come from and how they adapt to laws that may or may not exist in any specific country in the world.

I'm sorry. I just had to add that piece because, as a coloured woman, I have to say that it's not just specific newcomer communities that deal with this. It is everybody who deals with this, all across the world.

One interesting thing that Dr. Kanojia said—and I would love to have the input of both Soukaina and Nour on this—is that the rise of porn and the rise of gaming have accentuated or exacerbated what I think has already been there. We were talking about what the factors are that are creating this culture of anti-feminism, of anti-feminist ideology. I will ask you guys if you can take time to comment.

Initially, in fashion magazines as women's bodies were being objectified, there was a certain standard that women had to fit to—how their eyebrows looked, what shape their bodies were, what clothes were the best clothes to wear, what colour of skin was the best colour of skin. How did we deal with the mental health challenges that women were going through at that time, whether it was anorexia nervosa or bulimia? What lessons from the awareness campaigns that came out of that to support women and girls can we apply to how we're now trying to support men and boys?

Nour, if you want to start, and then we'll go to Soukaina. Thank you.

Nour Enayeh: I think it's in representation. I think what we're doing with women now.... Culture is changing. It's a whole culture that needs to change. The same way we did with women's representation—of different shapes or ages of women.... I think for men it's the same.

I'm not a doctor, so maybe Dr. Kanojia can correct me on this. However, I see a lot online when it comes to exercising—like gym buddies, like men who talk about how to exercise. This is where I see that it's giving an image, a message, that men have to look a certain way and that women have to look a certain way. Being fit and being healthy is always related to a certain image.

We're starting to work well on doing more representation around women's bodies, ages, wrinkles and all that. I think men should also be represented differently. We're still making fun of dads' bellies. I think men need to be more comfortable with what they see representing them.

• (1740)

Iqra Khalid: Thank you. Dad bods are the best, by the way.

Soukaina, do you want to comment?

Soukaina Boutiyeb: I can comment on that one.

[*Translation*]

Absolutely. In my opinion, we still need to acknowledge the loss of role models, and we often forget how important it is to have role models. Without realizing it, people always compare themselves to others. It's part of our subconscious. It's also important to value and promote the different body sizes of the people who make up society. When I say promote them, I mean to normalize them, rather than always putting one type on display. I also think that the more we normalize our physical differences in public, the more it becomes normal, and the more we focus on what a person says rather than how they look.

[*English*]

Iqra Khalid: Thank you.

Finally, Dr. Kanojia, do you want to end this session with your final remarks, please?

Dr. Alok Kanojia: I think you're touching on something really important. Body dysmorphia and eating disorders are on the rise in young men. A lot of this shame comes from.... They have this Internet-based idea of what kind of man they're supposed to be, and they don't live up to this false idea. One of the things I'll tell people to do is to go to a playground. They'll see real moms and real dads. They are not what you see on Instagram or TikTok.

The Chair: Excellent. Thank you so much to our witnesses for all of your testimony today. That was great.

For committee members, I want to remind you that tomorrow in the House, we are tabling our femicide report. Right after that, at 10:30, there's a presser. We agreed that everyone in the committee would be able to come. One member from each party will speak after me, and then I'll summarize—same as last time.

Are there any questions about that before I adjourn?

Madame Ménard.

[*Translation*]

Marie-Gabrielle Ménard: I had a question, but you just answered it, Madam Chair.

Ms. Larouche and Mrs. Vien, the last time we went to a press conference, there was a bit of confusion. Are we agreed that everyone is welcome, and that one person will speak per party?

[*English*]

The Chair: Yes. Everyone is welcome, and it is one speaker per party. I'll start. Then it will be one from the Liberals, one from the Conservatives, one from the Bloc, and then I'll summarize and open it for questions. Really, we can answer the questions together. It's fine.

Excellent. Thank you so much for your attention tonight.

With that, I'll adjourn.

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