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# Standing Committee on the Status of Women

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Chair: Marilyn Gladu





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• (1530)

[*English*]

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

Welcome to meeting number 23 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

Today's committee meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the Standing Orders.

Welcome, Ms. Sudds, to our committee today.

I'll make a few comments for the benefit of the members and witnesses here today. Please wait until I recognize you before speaking. For interpretation, those in the room can choose, on their devices, English, French or floor, and same is on Zoom at the bottom of the screen. If you wish to speak, raise your hand. All comments should be addressed through me.

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

I'd like to welcome the Minister of Public Safety, the Honourable Gary Anandasangaree.

Thank you for being with us, Minister. This is an important topic, as you and I have spoken about before.

We also have, from the Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Tricia Geddes, deputy minister; Amy Johnson, director general, firearms policy; and Chad Westmacott, director general, community safety, corrections and criminal justice.

From the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, we have Bryan Larkin, senior deputy commissioner.

Welcome to all the witnesses. We look forward to your comments, and to the questions.

Minister, you'll have five minutes for your comments. You may begin.

**Hon. Gary Anandasangaree (Minister of Public Safety):** Thank you, Madam Chair and honourable colleagues, for the invitation to speak on the study of section 810 of the Criminal Code.

Let me acknowledge that we are gathered here on the traditional, unceded lands of the Anishinabe Algonquin people.

I also note that I am glad to be back here. The last time I was here, it was to discuss the red dress alert, which, as you are aware, is being successfully piloted in Manitoba.

In my early days of practising law, I advocated for and assisted women and children impacted by violence. Gender-based violence, including family and intimate partner violence, has no place in Canada. This is something we can all agree on despite our party differences.

[*Translation*]

We are advancing several measures to take strong action against gender-based violence.

[*English*]

In 2017, the federal gender-based violence strategy was launched. To date, we have invested over \$820 million through this strategy. It prevents gender-based violence, supports victims and survivors, and promotes a responsive justice system. It establishes our specific actions within the framework of the national action plan to end gender-based violence, which we began working on in collaboration with the provinces and territories in 2022, and which is aimed at fully eliminating gender-based violence in Canada.

[*Translation*]

We have also established the national strategy on countering radicalization to violence.

[*English*]

Through former Bill C-21, we also introduced strong gun control measures, such as the red and yellow flag laws. These ensure that those at risk of violent crimes involving firearms are protected, including in cases of gender-based, intimate partner and family violence, as well as stalking.

Furthermore, enhanced authorities came into force on April 4, 2025, to ensure that anyone suspected of domestic violence or stalking has their firearms licence revoked. Likewise, if an individual has been convicted of an offence where violence was used, threatened or attempted against an intimate partner or family member, they are not eligible for a firearms licence. We are moving forward with the necessary regulations to ensure that if someone is subject to a protection order or peace bond, their firearms licence application is refused or revoked.

[Translation]

We are also supporting provinces and territories that have adopted Clare's Law legislation.

[English]

These laws centre victims' rights, allowing police to inform a person's current or former intimate partner if they have a record of prior intimate partner violence, in turn ensuring that individuals can make informed decisions about their safety. The government is ensuring that there is RCMP participation in such legislation, including through regulatory amendments.

It is important to recognize all forms of gender-based violence, including pipelines that have the potential to radicalize individuals to violent extremism. That is why Public Safety Canada's community resilience fund supports research and frontline initiatives that work to prevent violent extremism. In October 2025, Secretary of State Sahota announced a federal investment of \$36.9 million through this fund, which supports organizations working directly in communities across Canada to prevent and counter violent extremism and gender-based violence.

• (1535)

[Translation]

Everyone in Canada has the right to feel safe and to be safe.

[English]

Despite all of this, there's always more work to do. That's why our government introduced Bill C-14, which aims to strengthen bail and sentencing laws, thereby reducing the risk of violence and femicides from recidivism.

We have also introduced Bill C-16, which includes consequential amendments that protect victims and survivors of sexual violence, gender-based violence and intimate partner violence. Women and girls in our country are at disproportionate risk of violence. Our government is working hard to address vulnerabilities and gaps in protective measures to ensure their safety.

Madam Chair, my top priority will always be the safety and security of all Canadians. That means standing up for victims and survivors, and preventing violence before it starts. I look forward to a collaborative approach as we discuss these matters.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Minister.

[Translation]

We'll start the round with Mrs. Vien.

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

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

Minister, good afternoon to you and your officials. Thank you for your time this afternoon.

You spent many minutes touting your so-called positive track record. Like my colleagues, I completely disagree with what you said. When we look at your government's track record since 2015, we see that violent crime is up by 55%; homicides are up by 30%; sexual assault is up by 76%; extortion is up by 330%; vehicle theft

is up by 25%; hate crime is up by 258%; and gun crime is up by 130%. I think you are jumping on the bandwagon a bit late in the game.

I would like to draw your attention to the issue of firearms. You launched your ideological gun confiscation program. Unfortunately, through the program, you're targeting hunters, sport shooters and indigenous people. I would remind you that there are approximately 300,000 hunters in Quebec and 2.3 million in Canada as a whole. I would also remind you that 91% of gun crimes involve illegally owned firearms. Meanwhile, you know very well that hunters, sport shooters and indigenous people are in good standing and have all their licences.

In addition, you are providing \$750 million for first-come, first-served buyouts. We know that people are going to lose a lot of money.

You also stated to one of your tenants that you didn't believe in the program and that, if you had to do it over again, you would do things a lot differently. You said that you tried to convince the Prime Minister to go in a different direction and that you failed.

Are you denying or confirming that you said that to one of your tenants?

**Hon. Gary Anandasangaree:** Thank you for the question, Mrs. Vien.

[English]

Let me address that. This program has been launched already. It launched and is available across Canada. Within the first week, we had over 22,000 individuals who had—

[Translation]

**Dominique Vien:** Minister, I apologize for interrupting. The question is this: Are you denying or confirming that you actually told one of your tenants that the program would be completely useless? Can you confirm that you said that, yes or no?

[English]

**Hon. Gary Anandasangaree:** Madame Vien, that's absolutely false. I think you're taking what I said out of context. Let me confirm that this program has been launched nationwide. In the first week, we had over 22,000 firearms registered that are deemed to be prohibited. Other individuals have until March 31 to come forward to register their firearms.

Let me also say that the firearms in question—

[Translation]

**Dominique Vien:** Thank you, Minister, but I know the parameters of the program. That wasn't the question.

Your program has been unanimously rejected. Whether it's the provinces, hunters' associations or indigenous peoples, everyone who complies with the regulations is against the confiscation program. Even police forces are opposed to it. Need I remind you that Clayton Campbell was opposed to the program? Isn't what you are doing with the program simple obstinacy?

Hunters are writing to tell us that they have invested a lot of money in their purchases and that the rebate will not even cover the majority of their expenses. What do you say to these people today? Are you going to top up the \$750-million fund? There is obviously not enough money in it.

● (1540)

[English]

**Hon. Gary Anandasangaree:** Madam Chair, I would appreciate the opportunity to answer this question properly.

Let me at the outset say that the premise of your underlying question, Madame Vien, is false. This is not about hunting rifles or firearms related to hunting. This is about taking serious firearms off our streets. There are 2,500 firearms that are listed as prohibited, but there are over 19,000 available firearms that can be used for hunting. There's ample choice; hunters can pick any one of those firearms and use it for hunting purposes.

When the program launched, in the first week, we had over 22,000 applications. This program will run until March 31. I would say that we do have a plan, including from Quebec, where the province has signed on to do the collection, and we will be implementing it across Canada.

[Translation]

**Dominique Vien:** I repeat that the majority of provinces don't want your program. Everybody says it's not going to be helpful and it's not going to make women safer.

How will the program make women safe when everyone, including the police, is saying the opposite?

[English]

**Hon. Gary Anandasangaree:** Do I have a chance to respond?

**The Chair:** You have 25 seconds.

**Hon. Gary Anandasangaree:** I will refer you, Madame Vien, to the Mass Casualty Commission report. I will refer you to PolySeSouvient. I will refer you to a number of civil society organizations, particularly women's organizations, that have been working on the front lines, including the National Association of Women and the Law, and have been asking for many decades.... In fact, PolySeSouvient, for example, has been working since 1989 toward ensuring that prohibited weapons are off our streets, and that is what we're implementing today, Madame Vien.

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

Before we go to Ms. Nathan, I would just remind committee members that the tradition is that however long the question is, we give about the same time for the answer. If you want a short answer, ask a short question, and if you want a long answer, ask a long question.

We'll go to Ms. Nathan for six minutes.

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

Thank you to the committee members and to the minister for being here today. I know the minister is busy with many committees, and I thank him for finding time to be here today.

My first question is this: What is the prevalence of firearms in incidents of intimate partner violence?

**Hon. Gary Anandasangaree:** It is actually quite startling across Canada. Every year, we have a number of high-profile incidents involving intimate partner violence. I know that in my community several years ago there was an incident right behind my office, and we see virtually every community across Canada being impacted by it. The chief of police for Halifax has been quoted as calling this an "epidemic" in his region.

It is an area where I think we need collaboration. We need non-partisanship when we speak about issues around intimate partner violence. The study you're doing is critically important, and the legislation that's before the House, again, is critically important. As we move to strengthen a number of areas of the law, including victims' rights, with Bill C-16, I'm hoping that as a country, as a government and as parties of different stripes we're able to find consensus on what those laws are and move forward.

**Juanita Nathan:** Thank you.

To follow up, you spoke briefly about the red and yellow flag laws introduced in the former Bill C-21. Regarding emergency situations and situations of immediate danger of violence, how can those be used to help address IPV or DV?

● (1545)

**Hon. Gary Anandasangaree:** Look, there are a number of mechanisms that are in Bill C-21, and they have been operationalized by way of Governor in Council orders that came into effect as late as last April. We have Bill C-16, which, again, speaks to strengthening those measures.

Those are long overdue. They speak to the ability of law enforcement, courts and others who are working and supporting victims to seek remedies by way of a yellow flag, which is a short-term, temporary measure, and red flag laws, which are for a much longer term and require a different standard of understanding of what happened.

**Juanita Nathan:** Thank you.

To what extent does policing delivered by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in first nations and Inuit communities through the first nations and Inuit policing program support the prevention of and response to domestic and intimate partner violence?

**Hon. Gary Anandasangaree:** I'll ask Deputy Commissioner Larkin to comment, but I will say that we do need greater collaboration on this piece. I know that those in law enforcement at every level are grappling with this issue. For many, it is their number one issue. We do need to have better collaboration. I know that, particularly within first nations communities, the shortage of resources does lead to inadequate supports.

Deputy Commissioner.

**Bryan Larkin (Senior Deputy Commissioner, Royal Canadian Mounted Police):** Thank you, Minister.

The RCMP police about 20% of the population but just over 80% of the land mass. Much of that is in rural Canada, which does present some significant geographical challenges.

One of our goals is to strengthen our approach to intimate partner violence, particularly in our northern territories. The reality is that this also includes a whole-of-community approach. We're very supportive of alternative resolutions and reconciliation measures, because those communities are unique. The democracy of our judicial system sometimes is not necessarily the best approach or the most applied approach in those territories. That requires on-the-ground work with our territorial representatives and our community representatives. It must be a victim-centric as well as a community-centric approach. That's where our training at Depot in Regina has shifted in terms of our cultural sensitivity and our preparation for when members deploy out of Regina and respond to remote, isolated communities. Our approach is much more focused.

As the minister alluded to, we're currently working on a significant internal indigenous-Inuit strategy to make progressive change, not only for now but for the years to come.

**Juanita Nathan:** Thank you, Mr. Larkin, for that answer.

I have a follow-up to that. You partially answered it with regard to police approaches being more culturally appropriate and effective in meeting the needs of victims of domestic and intimate partner violence. Can you talk a little bit about some of the training programs or the education pieces that go with that?

**Bryan Larkin:** Very quickly, that is really the focus of the work we're doing in our northern territories, as well as some key northern communities. Our indigenous policing program very much works with the community and works with indigenous-Inuit associations around various approaches.

The example I'll use is Nunavut. All 25 communities are fly-in communities. A traditional approach of arresting an individual often or sometimes requires them to leave the community. How do we approach community-based intervention? How do we approach community-based crime prevention and upstream prevention? Those are the things we're very much focused on in those particular areas.

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

[*English*]

**Bryan Larkin:** Of course, in more rural or urban areas where there's a land mass, we're traditional.

**The Chair:** I'm sorry. That's the end of your time, Ms. Nathan.

That's the hardest part of this job.

[*Translation*]

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

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

Minister, thank you very much for being with us today. I also want to thank the people working on this issue and the people affected by it.

The clear purpose for looking at section 810 of the Criminal Code, the subject of this study, is to find out whether it is actually appropriate for addressing the rise in femicide and violence against women. For all these reasons, we thought it was important for not only the Minister of Justice, but also the Minister of Public Safety, to come and testify before the committee.

The study is making some women's groups sit up and ask questions. We aren't doing a clause-by-clause consideration of a bill, but we still have a duty to ask questions that women's groups are concerned about. When these groups learned that the Minister of Public Safety was coming to testify before the committee to talk about violence against women, they sent us questions. Therefore, I am speaking on behalf of these groups when I ask my questions about things like compensation and the implementation of firearms regulations.

Bill C-21 contained key measures to remove firearms from perpetrators of domestic violence. However, according to these groups, some of the measures have still not been implemented. For example, one of the measures was to prohibit people subject to a protection order related to cases of violence from having access to firearms. Draft regulations to that effect were even tabled in March 2025, but women's associations wrote to say that they were too weak. They asked that the bill be strengthened, because it excluded, for example, protection orders issued under the Criminal Code. A second consultation has just been launched on section 810 peace bonds, but there have been no other consultations.

What can you say to reassure these women's groups?

● (1550)

**Hon. Gary Anandasangaree:** Thank you for your question, Ms. Larouche.

[English]

A number of very important measures have stemmed from Bill C-21, including the yellow flag and the red flag, as well as mandatory licence ineligibility and revocation.

Bill C-16, which is in the House right now, will address femicide. For the first time, we're recognizing femicide as a stand-alone offence, which is something that many organizations, particularly those working with those impacted by intimate partner violence, have been asking for. There are also additional measures around protection for women as part of Bill C-16.

With respect to section 810, one of the gaps we have is in the enforcement of breaches. This is something that I think needs to happen in a more robust way. I've heard about this extensively, speaking to law enforcement, Crown and defence counsel and those who represent women. There appears to be a fair bit of a gap in the law. As you're aware, a breach of a section 810 peace bond can lead to up to four years of incarceration, but it's rarely enforced.

[Translation]

**Andréanne Larouche:** In short, in terms of section 810 of the Criminal Code, could you strengthen the draft regulations to include all varieties of protection orders, including those under the Criminal Code, in cases of intimate partner violence?

[English]

**Hon. Gary Anandasangaree:** This is something that we will work on with Minister Fraser. I know he's coming next. I will certainly be willing to work with him to strengthen both the enforcement and the regulations.

[Translation]

**Andréanne Larouche:** There's also a measure in Bill C-21 that makes people ineligible to obtain a firearms licence if they are convicted of a crime involving violence. However, the department interpreted the act to apply only after the provision came into force. Women's groups have said that it should be retroactive.

Why would it apply only in the future, while women's lives are at risk? Could your department commit to making the measure retroactive to maximize women's safety? Would you consider that kind of measure?

• (1555)

[English]

**Hon. Gary Anandasangaree:** My understanding is that retroactivity will require a change in the law. That's not something that I think is in the cards at this point, but we'll certainly be willing to have that discussion with you.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Excellent.

[English]

Ms. Cody, you have five minutes in the second round.

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

Thank you to everyone for coming here today as witnesses, and especially you, Minister, for coming to our committee. It's greatly appreciated.

I have a few questions. Hopefully, we can go through some of them quickly.

As the Minister of Public Safety, do you know which weapon of opportunity is specifically used against women in cases of intimate partner violence and homicide?

**Hon. Gary Anandasangaree:** I'm sorry. I beg your pardon. What's the—

**Connie Cody:** What is the specific weapon that is normally used in cases of intimate partner violence and homicide? Do you know which weapon that would be?

**Hon. Gary Anandasangaree:** There is a range of weapons, including firearms.

**Connie Cody:** What is the number one?

**Hon. Gary Anandasangaree:** I am not—

**Connie Cody:** If you don't have that number off the top of your head, Minister, I can help you. According to the stats I have, for 65% to 70%, hands contribute to violence against women by pushing, beating or choking. Sexual assaults are up by 76%.

Do you know what weapon was used in the murder of Bailey McCourt?

**Hon. Gary Anandasangaree:** I'm sorry. What was that?

**Connie Cody:** Do you know what weapon was used in the murder of Bailey McCourt?

**Hon. Gary Anandasangaree:** No, I'm not aware.

**Connie Cody:** It was a hammer.

In the death of Bailey McCourt, since it was a hammer that was used, did she die by the actions of the hammer or of the person wielding the weapon?

**Hon. Gary Anandasangaree:** I would say that in many cases of intimate partner violence, it is the individual who is responsible. There are different weapons that are used in that context, and I would say that it is a combination of the individual who is using the weapon to cause harm on an individual.

**Connie Cody:** Then you agree that a hammer is an inanimate tool and can do harm only through the person who intends to use it to do harm. Is that correct?

**Hon. Gary Anandasangaree:** Look, I'm not an expert, Ms. Cody. I would say that I'm here to talk to you generally about the work we're doing to ensure that—

**Connie Cody:** I understand that, but can you answer my question? It's a simple question.

**Hon. Gary Anandasangaree:** If I may, I appreciate where you're going with this, and what I would suggest is that—

**Connie Cody:** Can you answer the question, though, Minister, with all due respect?

It's my time and I'm asking a question. Can you answer it? Is it the hammer that does the killing or is it the person behind the hammer?

**Hon. Gary Anandasangaree:** It is a combination of both.

**Connie Cody:** Can the hammer act on its own?

**Hon. Gary Anandasangaree:** It is a combination of both.

**Connie Cody:** So the hammer can come off the shelf and kill someone.

**Hon. Gary Anandasangaree:** It is the individual who has the hammer, who can use the hammer in a way that can be very harmful.

**Connie Cody:** So it's the person.

**Hon. Gary Anandasangaree:** It is a combination of both.

**Connie Cody:** But the person wields the hammer. That's what I'm asking you about, which is what you're telling me.

**Hon. Gary Anandasangaree:** Madam Chair, I've answered that question.

**Connie Cody:** Okay.

Given that the Liberal policy in response to firearm-related violence has been to ban the tool itself, by that logic, as Minister of Public Safety, will you be confiscating hammers next?

**Hon. Gary Anandasangaree:** Again, I'm not here to talk about the compensation program, Ms. Cody. I'm here to talk to you in a broader sense—

**Connie Cody:** It has to do with public safety, sir.

**Hon. Gary Anandasangaree:** I believe this issue has been litigated a number of times, and I believe that this conversation, the discussion that's taking place here—

**Connie Cody:** That's not answering my question, Minister, with all due respect.

I'll continue with the next one.

Will your Liberal government admit that getting dangerous offenders off the street is a priority—instead of going after law-abiding Canadians with a gun confiscation scam—to protect not just women but all Canadians, yes or no?

**Hon. Gary Anandasangaree:** I want to thank the over 22,000 people who registered the 22,000 firearms that were registered within the first week—

**Connie Cody:** My question is for you, sir.

Are you willing to protect the women and all Canadians by going after dangerous offenders, yes or no?

**Hon. Gary Anandasangaree:** It is part of the job we have.

**Connie Cody:** Okay.

Minister, a repeat offender who was convicted on child pornography was released early and rearrested for breaking his parole conditions, not once but twice. He was then arrested a few weeks ago on historic sexual assault, and then was granted bail again two days ago. This person was well known in Port Colborne. He played the

organ in church. He played Santa Claus in community events, and he was a predator.

Minister, in what world does the Liberal soft-on-crime revolving-door justice system protect the public or our children? Do you believe criminals have rights when they are committing the crime?

• (1600)

**Hon. Gary Anandasangaree:** I appreciate the concerns you express.

Frankly, there are bills before the House that, if your party stops impeding them, can correct some of those examples.

**Connie Cody:** If I could correct you, Minister—

**Hon. Gary Anandasangaree:** Frankly, I would say that it is a bit disingenuous.

**The Chair:** I'm sorry. With all respect, that's the end of your time.

We now go to Madame Ménard for five minutes.

[*Translation*]

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

Thank you, Minister, for being here. I also want to thank the officials who are with you.

Your presence here shows your sensitivity to the subjects we are studying. In fact, the magnificent flaw of this committee is our overwhelming enthusiasm. Sometimes we get a little off topic.

We're studying bail and sentencing here. We've heard from a number of witnesses about this effective but imperfect solution. Let's talk about your and the department's views on electronic monitoring. We've heard a lot about it from survivors of domestic violence.

Thank you for clarifying your views to the committee.

[*English*]

**Hon. Gary Anandasangaree:** Electronic monitoring has very important utility, but it's not without its flaws. According to a number of law enforcement personnel and leaders I've spoken to, whether it concerns parole or other circumstances, it works; however, there are limitations. Sometimes the battery runs out. Sometimes it's defective. It is not a perfect solution, but it is, I think, one of a number of tools that are used.

I would say that one of the more effective tools I have seen was developed by the Toronto Police Service, and I believe it is now being expanded across Canada. It relates directly to monitoring. It's basically a bail dashboard that enables local police agencies to track those who are on bail, for example, and enables police officers to go to their houses or to do random checks, which was not possible given the volume. This, in fact, gives a really good sense of what's happening across the city. If law enforcement is in a particular area, they can go and check on two or three houses where there may be people who are on bail.

[Translation]

**Marie-Gabrielle Ménard:** Based on your answer, it seems that this is one of the ways in which public safety officials are trying to protect people. It's not the only way, but it's part of an arsenal of tools available.

[English]

**Hon. Gary Anandasangaree:** I believe that we need to be creative, enhance our tools and look at alternate ways of doing things. Law enforcement has been driving a lot of the work, and, as I said, the work of the Toronto Police Service is one example. I've had the privilege of meeting with many law enforcement agencies across Canada, and they're quite agile and creative in terms of the work they're doing.

[Translation]

**Marie-Gabrielle Ménard:** Mr. Larkin, you mentioned this, but I'd like to hear from the minister about it.

Every witness who came here to inform the committee talked about it, including Mr. Auger, the detective lieutenant from the Service de police de la Ville de Montréal. We heard the same thing from the deputy chief of the Waterloo Regional Police Service and from detectives. Prevention is part of public safety.

Can you tell us more about your view of this method for protecting survivors of violence?

**Bryan Larkin:** Thank you.

[English]

It's a little bit unique from an RCMP perspective. As I alluded to, our geography and the land mass that we police are very different from the Service de police de la Ville de Montréal and the Waterloo Regional Police Service. I know that service very well. They have an intimate partner violence prevention centre that focuses on upstream prevention, wraparound service and social services.

As I alluded to in my previous comments, one of the challenges in the work that we're doing is enhancing training. When RCMP cadets come out of Depot, they have a much more victim-centric, trauma-informed approach. Then, when we go into isolated communities, there's relationship building. The reflection of the community that we're providing services to is key because, obviously, prevention and upstream services, recreation and leisure are all factors in a healthy community. If we were also to focus on social determinants of health, we'd have a much healthier outcome that will reduce, quite frankly, the demand on policing.

I think that, as we look to strengthen section 810 and look at the work that this amazing committee is doing, we also have to look at

other mechanisms around cultural sensitivities, cultural responses and social and health responses for a complete wraparound approach. This simply will not be resolved through policing, through public safety. It needs a much stronger approach. We certainly have a role to play.

• (1605)

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Your time is up, Ms. Ménard.

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

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

I have a couple of quick questions, Minister, so I'll try to be brief so that you can answer them as quickly as possible.

I'll go back to the regulations announced in March 2025. Women's groups, including the National Association of Women and the Law and PolySeSouvient, have been waiting for over two years for these measures to be implemented. Meanwhile, women and children continue to be murdered in their homes.

When will the regulations be strengthened? When will you speed things up?

[English]

**Hon. Gary Anandasangaree:** I would say, Madame Larouche, that we have brought forward new regulations. As you're aware, we have a March 2025 regulation that is now in effect, and another one from April 2025, and we're in the consultation stages on another. As soon as the consultation is complete, we will be able to implement those regulations.

[Translation]

**Andréanne Larouche:** Okay.

Now I'm going to talk about the principle of restraint.

Minister, do you believe that no one should be released on bail for domestic violence crimes? If not, should electronic monitoring be required in the most serious cases? These are potential solutions to look at in terms of the principle of restraint.

[English]

**Hon. Gary Anandasangaree:** With respect to bail, we have legislation that's now going through the House. I think the justice committee passed Bill C-14 yesterday, and it will be going to the House of Commons for debate and third reading. There are some very important measures there that strengthen bail and give greater authority for enforcement on bail as well.

[*Translation*]

**Andréanne Larouche:** It seems that much remains to be studied, Minister. Groups such as PolySeSouvient are advocating for a ban on assault weapons. There was also a group of government experts who wanted to further study the issue of SKS rifles.

What do you say to the victims who are waiting to see what happens with these requests?

[*English*]

**Hon. Gary Anandasangaree:** A fair amount of work has been undertaken. We have a very divided issue, as you can appreciate. The comments from the two previous Conservative MPs speak to the toxic nature of this issue.

**The Chair:** I'm sorry, but that's your time.

**Hon. Gary Anandasangaree:** Notwithstanding that, we are moving forward—

**The Chair:** I'm sorry, Minister.

We're going to move to Mr. Brock for five minutes. Thank you.

**Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant South—Six Nations, CPC):** Thank you, Chair.

Minister, Deputy Minister, department officials, Deputy Commissioner, thank you for your attendance. Good afternoon.

Minister, you took exception to my colleague Ms. Vien's characterization of your communication with your tenant. You said, essentially, that it was taken out of context, without allowing her to continue that line of questioning.

I'm going to correct the record, and maybe refresh your memory, because I have a transcript.

You had a conversation with your tenant, and your tenant reminds you:

Tenant: But we're not the problem Gary.

Gary: I realize that... [If I were to redo this from the beginning, like I'm picking up where it was left off... Listen, I told you, if I were to redo this from scratch, I would have a very different approach to this.

Then he says:

Tenant: We're talking about Canada, it's a federal, it's not provincial.

Gary: I get it. Quebec is in a different place than other parts of Canada, right? And this is something that very much a big, big, big deal for many of the Quebec electorate that voted for us, right? And that's one of the major things. I think it's, I saw, I'm sure you've seen these articles where people said, you know, this is one of the things we should not execute, like as a change from Trudeau's policies, but we've made the decision to go ahead.

This was all political, Minister. This has nothing to do with public safety.

Law enforcement has consistently told you, from coast to coast to coast—and I would dare say, probably in private discussions with the RCMP, they have told you this—that the problem facing Canadians and victims, particularly women, is not lawful gun holders, but those criminals, those thugs, who have easy access to illegal, stolen firearms that are pouring into our country.

You knew that. You explained that to your tenant. Don't lecture my colleague for saying something out of context. This is some-

thing you said, and your points are well taken that this was a political manoeuvre. This is not going to make people safe.

Now, if I were talking to a victim, a woman in particular, who basically lived under a rock for the last 10 years and listened to your five-minute opening statement, she would awaken and she would say, "Wow! Am I ever blessed to live in one of the safest countries in the world, if not the safest." But you know, Minister, statistically it does not bear that out.

Do you have a comment about the fact that your rhetoric does not match the statistics that have been growing literally every single year since the Liberals took power in 2015? What are you going to tell those victims?

• (1610)

**Hon. Gary Anandasangaree:** Let me first, at the outset, Mr. Brock, tell you that when I indicated that I would have done it differently, it did not mean I would have scrapped the program. I would have designed it differently. It's a very different set of facts that you are putting forward.

Having said that, look, there is a real issue of intimate partner violence in Canada. I'm not underplaying that. I recognize this. I've been to funerals. I've had people in my community who have died because of intimate partner violence. I continue to monitor and see the deep impact that intimate partner violence has in our society.

My responsibility, Mr. Brock, and our responsibility collectively, is to ensure the safety and security of Canadians, not rhetoric, so essentially—

**Larry Brock:** Victims don't want—

**Hon. Gary Anandasangaree:** If I may—

**Larry Brock:** No, it is my time, Minister.

**Hon. Gary Anandasangaree:** Mr. Brock, you had quite a bit of time. Let me just finish.

**Larry Brock:** Minister, it is my time.

**The Chair:** Excuse me—

**Larry Brock:** It is my time, Minister.

**The Chair:** It was quite a long question. I'll give the minister 15 seconds to finish.

**Hon. Gary Anandasangaree:** Let's work together. That is my point here. Let us work together.

I think you're misconstruing my opening statement. You're not reflecting the other work that we're doing in order to address intimate partner violence.

**Larry Brock:** Thank you, Minister.

Minister, I'm moving on.

Another theme that you brought up in response to Ms. Cody, which your government consistently brings up day after day after day, is accusing the Conservative Party of obstructing criminal bail and sentencing legislation. I don't know where you were at 1:30 this morning, but I was in this building, passing Bill C-14. We sat for nine and a half consecutive hours to make this a priority.

I then wanted to make a priority of Bill C-16, to get rid of the Jordan issue, to deal with mandatory minimum penalties, to strengthen offences dealing with intimate partner violence, but with every attempt—we brought motion after motion to deal with Bill C-16 as a priority—your government voted it down, so let's set the record straight on who is really obstructing their own legislation. It is not the Conservative Party of Canada.

You had seven and a half months to bring forward critical legislation, to make a difference in the lives of intimate partner violence victims, and you waited, literally, until the last minute to introduce legislation, and now you're delaying it. That's shameful.

**The Chair:** That's your time.

We go to Mr. Chen for five minutes.

• (1615)

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

Thank you to the minister, the RCMP, and department officials for being here today.

We are here because we are all concerned about intimate partner, gender-based and domestic violence. I also want to provide a quote from the Halifax Regional Police Chief Don MacLean, who said, in fact, this week, “As Police Chief, I believe I have a duty to victims, survivors and all citizens...to support any initiative that can reduce the presence of firearms in our communities.”

We know that violence comes in many forms. Weapons of all kinds are used in such cases, but fatal cases, more often than not, involve serious firearms.

Minister, what do you have to say in response to comments like those of Chief MacLean and other law enforcement agencies and police officers, who are working hard on the front lines each and every day to stop these horrible incidents from happening?

**Hon. Gary Anandasangaree:** I want to thank the chief in Halifax. I also want to note that many police leaders and frontline law enforcement across Canada have been working very hard, under very difficult circumstances, especially when they're dealing with families and individuals who are impacted by intimate partner violence.

It comes in many forms, like coercive control. There are so many different layers to the impacts of it, and also to the approach that individuals use to hurt others. When we look at firearms, as an example, it is one of many issues that contribute to intimate partner violence. When we have direct evidence on certain types of firearms, based on evidence and expert conclusions from the RCMP, we take advice from them. As we continue to strengthen our laws, it will ensure greater safety and security.

The issues around intimate partner violence are also much deeper. It goes to issues around income insecurity and dependency, the fact that women often make far less than their male counterparts, and a lot of underlying social issues that, frankly, as a government we've been trying to close the gap on. However, there's still a lot more work to do. It is much more of a holistic approach that we need to take toward addressing intimate partner violence. I believe we've taken some very important steps in that direction, but there's still more to be done.

**Shaun Chen:** Thank you.

Minister, I appreciate your raising the issue of social and economic factors. Our committee has, in fact, heard from witnesses about the need for education and prevention, as they are key to raising awareness about intimate partner, domestic and gender-based violence. However, in addition to that, it's also about what is being done to support survivors. What actions is the government taking to increase community safety, to reduce violent offending and to support survivors of these crimes?

**Hon. Gary Anandasangaree:** I think the issues around victims' rights and support for victims are very important. I spoke about Bill C-16.

Let me just ask the deputy minister to elaborate on some of the programs that we have supporting victims directly.

**Tricia Geddes (Deputy Minister, Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness):** Yes, indeed, we have made some significant investments, at our national office, to support victims and public safety. The question was also about offenders and support to offenders' programs to make sure that the victims are well supported through that programming as well. There are a number of programs that have been implemented by the Correctional Service of Canada to ensure that offenders there are provided with programmatic supports to ensure that they are being addressed, but also to ensure that victims of those offenders have also been given those same types of rights and supports that they require.

**Shaun Chen:** Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** I think we have just enough time for each party to have three minutes to ask questions.

We'll start with Mr. Brock for three minutes, then we'll go to Ms. Nathan, and then we'll go to Madame Larouche.

• (1620)

**Larry Brock:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Minister, in response to Ms. Cody's questions regarding the lack of effectiveness of section 810 orders and breaches of section 810 orders, I believe your commentary—correct me if I'm wrong—was something to the effect that we have a problem not only with enforcement but also with the process in terms of whether the prosecution will continue a prosecution. I agree with you. If the Crown proceeds by indictment, the penalty is four years.

In light of that, have you taken the opportunity—and I think the opportunity exists—to have regular meetings with your provincial and territorial counterparts? Do you do that, and how often do you do that?

**Hon. Gary Anandasangaree:** I do that very regularly.

First off, the group as a whole had an FPT meeting back in October in Kananaskis.

With respect to my provincial counterparts, I have regular conversations. For example, I had a conversation with Mr. Kerzner today, and I'm meeting Minister Ellis next Friday. It's very regular, I would say, with most of the provinces, although not all. However, there are certainly ongoing conversations.

**Larry Brock:** As you know, I'm a former Crown attorney. One of the biggest problems I had was talking to my counterparts across Canada and seeing major differences in terms of the priority and the process by which offences that should have not only local but also national importance, particularly in the context of this committee, protecting women at risk.... There are often either police services that just simply don't have an interest in charging under section 811 or prosecutors who do not want to spend the time to continue a prosecution.

Do you think, as a general rule, that there would be some merit in establishing national standards for the way Crown prosecutors right across this country deal with IPV offences generally—specifically as relates to terminology in section 810 orders and enforcement—and for how they proceed, depending on the facts scenario with the prosecution? Do you see merit, and will you commit today to making that a priority when you have your next general meeting?

**Hon. Gary Anandasangaree:** I do see merit in it, and I'd be glad to look at it further and more deeply, Mr. Brock.

I will say that this particular issue would be led by the Minister of Justice. I know he's appearing in a few minutes, so I would pose that question to him.

**Larry Brock:** He's listening behind you, and he's shaking his head.

**The Chair:** We're closing up here, Minister, so I'm going to turn to Ms. Nathan for three minutes.

**Juanita Nathan:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Minister, I want to ask if you could highlight all the bills that are stuck in committees and not moving forward, some of them for eight months. The bill they are saying they helped pass was obstructed for six hours straight.

Can you please talk a little bit about Bill C-2, Bill C-8, Bill C-9, Bill C-12 and Bill C-14, which could have actually helped Canadians?

**Hon. Gary Anandasangaree:** First of all, with regard to the previous point that Mr. Brock made, I want to thank the justice committee for the work on Bill C-14 and for concluding that. Let me also say that there is a need in Canada right now for greater collaboration and greater ability for people to work together. Former prime minister Stephen Harper—be surprised, because I don't quote him often—underscored that point this week.

What I would say is that there's no party that has exclusivity on the safety and security of Canadians and on public safety overall. My responsibility, my task as Minister of Public Safety, is to ensure that law enforcement has the right tools to be able to do its job. Bill C-2 is still in the House. I would implore all parties to come together on the passage of Bill C-2 because that lawful access is, in my opinion—and every law enforcement agency I've spoken to has said this—the single most important tool that law enforcement needs to be able to do its job.

Again, I will end by saying that we have opportunities to work in greater collaboration, and I look forward to that bearing fruit in the coming weeks and months.

• (1625)

**Juanita Nathan:** I want to take the last 30 seconds to thank the staff who are here and the minister for making it to the committee and addressing all our questions.

Thank you so much.

**The Chair:** Excellent.

[*Translation*]

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

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

Minister, the reason I asked questions earlier on behalf of women's groups is that in Quebec, six women lost their lives at the hands of their partners in January 2026 alone. That's a statistic that doesn't bode well for the coming year. There is an alarming rise in domestic violence that requires an urgent response from your government.

The fourth femicide took place in my riding, Shefford. I want to reiterate my condolences to the loved ones of Véronic Champagne, the mother who was killed. It's horrible. An entire community is traumatized.

Minister, we need to find solutions. Do you acknowledge that section 810 of the Criminal Code is often used too late? Based on the comments made by Mélanie Lavoie, a friend of the victim, Véronic Champagne, femicides are the most predictable crimes. Do you acknowledge that section 810 is being used too late, when the risk of femicide is already high?

Does the RCMP have staff to effectively monitor compliance with domestic violence conditions? Why are there still long response times when a woman reports a breach of conditions?

[English]

**Hon. Gary Anandasangaree:** Thank you, Madame Larouche.

Let me just say that it's horrifying to see the numbers that have come out, especially from Quebec, in the last several weeks. It's truly heartbreaking, and it makes me both sad and angry at the same time.

There are some legislative responses that are in front of the House. I don't want to repeat that, but I would say we need to have greater enforcement and greater co-operation as issues evolve.

With respect to section 810, enforcement is a key part of it. If there is a sense that it is being used too late in the process, perhaps that's something we need to look at deeply. I know the justice minister will be able to answer and probably commit a bit more than I am able to, but let me extend my condolences to all those who were impacted by these horrendous losses.

**The Chair:** Thank you so much, Minister.

On behalf of the committee, thank you for appearing.

That finishes our first panel. I'll suspend briefly while we bring in the second panel.

• (1625) \_\_\_\_\_ (Pause) \_\_\_\_\_

• (1630)

**The Chair:** We're back.

I would like to welcome the Minister of Justice, the Honourable Sean Fraser.

Thank you, Minister, for being here.

This is a very important topic. We know women are dying from femicide nearly every day in Canada, and sexual assault is at an all-time high, so we appreciate your being here.

We also have, from the Department of Justice, Matthew Taylor, who is senior general counsel and director general, criminal law policy section; and Chelsea Moore, who is senior counsel, criminal law policy section.

Minister, you'll get five minutes for your opening remarks, after which we will proceed to our rounds of questions.

The floor is yours for five minutes.

**Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada):** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

[Translation]

It's a pleasure to be here to discuss a very important issue for our country.

[English]

Public safety is obviously a major priority for Canadians. It's become a major priority for the government and, in fact, that was clearly demonstrated during the recent federal election campaign with a series of commitments around public safety.

It's clear that within public safety there are certain issues that demand we all, as Canadians, pay distinct attention to them. The scourge of gender-based violence we've seen in our communities needs to be addressed.

[Translation]

I heard the announcement of a sixth femicide in Quebec this year. That's hard to believe. We need to take action to address violence against women on a daily basis in communities across the country.

[English]

Before we get into the specific questions you may have—and I'll endeavour to be under time so that we can save time for those questions—I just want to situate this conversation within the public safety strategy that the Government of Canada has adopted, which rests on three key pillars.

The first is to adopt stronger criminal laws to combat hate, to reform bail and sentencing, to take action on intimate partner violence and to protect our kids against exploitation online and in the real world. In addition to these pieces of legislation, we're taking a broader approach to how we combat crime and enhance public safety.

The second pillar in the strategy, in that regard, is to make investments in the front line, whether those are new RCMP officers, new officers at the border or additional supports for community organizations, including organizations that support victims of crime and including support for women's organizations that support victims of sexual violence and gender-based violence.

The third pillar of the strategy, which I view to be the most important in the long term, is to make the upstream investments to help build healthier people and healthier communities, which will translate into safer communities. This involves a series of investments in affordable housing, in supportive housing and in mental health and addictions. It involves programs that target at-risk youth. In the longer term, it involves investments in infrastructure that allow people to live in, and enjoy, safe communities with access to the recreational and cultural infrastructure that allows them to fully participate in life in their communities.

There are a number of bills before the House of Commons. I've had the opportunity to appear before different committees, to an extent, in particular on Bill C-16, which I expect will go to the justice committee. If this committee is interested in having me appear again to discuss the minutia of that particular piece of legislation, please know that I would be grateful to do that.

In closing, Madam Chair, the first two and a half years of my career as a parliamentarian—as you know well, having chaired capably during that time—were spent on this committee. It was an enormous professional honour for me to be able to work across partisan lines to establish recommendations that were in fact adopted into government policy to help combat gender-based violence in particular. We've relied on some of those recommendations to inform the legislation that I've just described.

I'm happy to hear what recommendations this committee may have in respect of those pieces of legislation and on the important issue of gender-based violence more broadly.

• (1635)

[*Translation*]

Thank you, everyone. It's a great pleasure to be here. I look forward to your questions.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you so much, Minister.

There is just a word of advice from the interpreters for you to speak more slowly, please.

We're going to start our first round of six minutes with Mr. Brock.

**Larry Brock:** Thank you, Chair.

Good afternoon, Minister. Good afternoon, Mr. Taylor. Good afternoon, Ms. Moore.

Mr. Taylor, it feels like it has only been a few hours since we last saw each other. Nevertheless, I am happy to get Bill C-14 over that finish line.

Minister, you highlighted an important aspect: Public safety is a priority for this government, which is led by the Prime Minister. I have often said, at many town halls across this country, that the number one responsibility of the federal government is to keep Canadians safe.

You also referenced how you've been listening to Canadians. Even in your year-end interview with a national press representative, you talked about how the government has been listening very carefully to what victims and Canadians have been asking for, and, clearly, what stakeholders have been asking for.

You would agree with me, Minister, that this is not a recent phenomenon. We have known that crime across the whole spectrum has been rising steadily since 2015. I will throw out some stats: Violent crime is up nearly 55%; homicides are up 30%; sexual assaults are up 76%; firearms crime is up 131%; and extortion is up 330%. Canadians are fearful. Female victims are fearful. Intimate partner violence is on the rise. They are asking themselves why they even trust law enforcement or the criminal justice system.

That's near and dear to my heart, Minister, because, as a former Crown attorney, I took great pride in trying to establish that bond and rapport with a victim in order to give them hope that they were part of team justice, and to give them confidence that the justice system is fair and responsive to their needs and would provide a just result. They did not always get that, but at least they felt they were heard.

This is something that's not a recent phenomenon. The government, since 2015, has been hearing this repeatedly every year. Since my election in 2021, it has been a common theme the government has been hearing, so I was very grateful to hear, in the throne speech, that there was going to be a priority to introduce appropriate crime legislation.

The only frustration I have, Minister, is with the stats. You'd agree with me, because these stats would not lie. We had the election on April 28. The House opened on May 26. The throne speech was on May 27. The first reading of your first crime bill, Bill C-9, was on September 19, 2025. Bill C-14 had its first reading on October 23, 2025. Bill C-16's was on December 9, 2025. We are now, to this date, literally 225 days removed from the election, and we have passed only one bill at second reading. It has gone through the justice committee. That is Bill C-14.

My question for you is very simple: Why did you prioritize Bill C-9 over Bill C-14 and Bill C-16 when issues with sentencing, bail and IPV have been prevalent for the last 10 years?

**Hon. Sean Fraser:** Thank you, Mr. Brock, for the question.

First, I will more fully inform the record in terms of the crime rates you suggested. We did see an increase in crime, which peaked in 2023, but we have seen those rates start to come down. The numbers from 2024 were encouraging. Though there is some data yet to be reported nationwide for 2025, the numbers I'm seeing coming in from our largest urban centres are encouraging. This gives me some sense of hope that some of the challenges we've seen play out in communities can be addressed. That is why we not only campaigned on commitments to adopt stronger criminal laws but also have been working, over the course of our time since the election, to advance laws that are fully informed by those who work in law enforcement and those who administer the justice system.

To answer your question on the order of priority, it was not determined that there was one particular piece of legislation that was more politically important than the others. If you look at the complexity of the various bills, Bill C-9 is a fairly straightforward bill and was ready when we came back to Parliament after the House of Commons rose for the summer.

I spent my summer engaging deeply with experts—people who have dedicated their lives and careers to this, as you have in your role as a Crown prosecutor—in order to understand the solutions to criminal justice reform that will lead to safer communities. We wanted to get these right, and the endorsements we've seen on the various bills we've advanced since then indicate that we have largely hit the mark when it comes to bail and sentencing reform, and gender-based violence.

I see you're seeking to get in.

• (1640)

**Larry Brock:** Thank you. I have one further question before my time is up.

Bill C-9, as introduced by this government, did not seek to remove the religious defence. That has now been a central issue at the justice committee, brought by the Bloc Québécois. You indicated that it was the justice committee members who supported that. I can tell you, Minister, that your Liberal members did not pursue any line of questioning in support of that particular amendment.

Why did you, at that point in time several months ago, decide to support the Bloc amendment, which essentially has stalled the passage of Bill C-9?

**Hon. Sean Fraser:** Madam Chair, I saw about 30 seconds ago that you gave the 30-second warning. How much time do I have?

**The Chair:** I'll be gracious with you. I'll give you 15 seconds.

**Hon. Sean Fraser:** The core of Bill C-9 that was most important to me was to establish the protections we campaigned on about intimidation and obstruction. Through consultation, it was clear that communities facing hate wanted a stand-alone hate crime to recognize that the harm can reverberate through an entire community. In particular, communities have expressed interest in the role of symbols when it comes to the wilful promotion of hate.

It appeared to me there was not a path for those core protections to be adopted without having discussions with other colleagues. There has been some confusion and, I would say, misinformation around the role of the proposed religious exemption. I would entertain further conversations to make it clear that we do not wish to criminalize people reading holy texts and scriptures or attending church services. We simply want to protect Canadians against hate.

**The Chair:** We'll go to Ms. Nathan now for six minutes.

**Juanita Nathan:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to the minister for being here.

Minister, do you want to finish up that question? I could give you some time.

**Hon. Sean Fraser:** I communicated the essence. I'm happy to take your questions. Thank you.

**Juanita Nathan:** Minister, at the status of women committee, we've heard from women's shelters, frontline organizations and survivors that serious offences, such as intimate partner violence, have been stayed due to delays under the Supreme Court's Jordan framework. Many witnesses expressed concern that victims are left seeing their abusers returned to the community because of under-resourced provincial court systems that continue to delay.

How do the alternate remedies introduced in Bill C-16 respect victims and ensure accountability while still respecting the accused's charter right to a trial within a reasonable time?

**Hon. Sean Fraser:** It's easy to get lost in the statistics on some of these conversations when you look at nearly 10,000 cases being thrown out for delay, and when you see cases that sometimes are taking years between charge and conviction. Delays in the justice system serve no one's interests—not the victim's, not the accused's, not society's—and they need to be addressed. When you actually talk to somebody who has been victimized, particularly by a sexual crime, and who sees their assailant released—not because the charges were advanced and came to trial and the person was found not guilty, but because the clock ran out—that doesn't feel like justice. I've sat down with people who have moved away from their home province to escape the need to actually live in the same community as their assailant, who is walking freely, despite the fact that there was an evidentiary record being established that may well have led to a conviction.

To address this problem, we want to cure the injustice that results in a person going free in those circumstances without having the opportunity to have the case fully prosecuted and come to its natural conclusion. The strategy that we've used has a few different planks.

First of all, we want to directly address these circumstances in Jordan, because delays were always a problem, but the consequence of cases being thrown out is a more recent phenomenon that followed the Jordan decision. We want to insist that courts consider alternative remedies, other than a stay of proceedings, that may be appropriate in those circumstances. The facts of individual cases may vary, but we want to preserve some discretion for what those remedies may be.

We also want to address the underlying challenge when it comes to delays in the justice system, particularly for complex investigations involving major organized crime and drug offences, but also cases involving sexual assault. In particular, one of the things we want to do is not just increase the timeline by classifying certain cases as complex, but actually streamline the procedures, for example, of how you may adduce evidence in a sexual assault trial, to ensure that the time-consuming applications that are leading to massive delays are diminished as part of the trial process so we can have more cases come to their natural conclusion more quickly.

This will have a positive impact and will result in far fewer cases being thrown out for delay.

• (1645)

**Juanita Nathan:** Thank you so much for that answer.

Some witnesses in our study have emphasized a role for the federal government in bringing together various jurisdictions to discuss best practices relating to both criminal law reform and the administration of justice, which is predominantly in provincial jurisdiction. In the context of domestic and intimate partner violence, including improvements to legislative provisions and supports for complainants and survivors in the Criminal Code with peace bonds and bail reform, how often do you engage in bilateral or federal-provincial-territorial discussions on ways to strengthen the practical applications of the Criminal Code and associated supports to enhance the safety of women, girls and gender-diverse people?

**Hon. Sean Fraser:** The answer to your question is “frequently”, but with specificity it would vary depending on the initiatives that we’re pursuing as a federal government, or on scheduled annual meetings, or on an issue-by-issue basis as things come up that demand a response.

I heard the very end of the testimony of my counterpart in public safety. I was at the same federal-provincial-territorial meeting that took place last fall in Kananaskis. In addition, as we were developing, in particular, Bill C-14 and Bill C-16, given the breadth of material covered in those two pieces of legislation, we engaged extensively and repeatedly with each of my provincial counterparts. The feedback they’ve provided was directly implemented in the bill. I could give examples if more time is allowed.

In addition to those conversations that we engage in as part of developing new legislative efforts, I will frequently have a touch point with different colleagues. If I happen to be visiting a particular province, I’ll often, as a matter of course, set up an opportunity to engage with my counterpart. It’s not as though it’s a rigid schedule for each counterpart; it’s more driven by what issues we’re seeking to deal with collectively.

**Juanita Nathan:** Thank you.

I don’t have a lot of time here.

Can you talk a little bit about the federal government providing funding for the provinces for the administration of justice, policing and public safety, including transfer payments, cost-sharing agreements, grants and contributions, and targeted justice programs?

**Hon. Sean Fraser:** In the few seconds that remain, I will say that there are certainly ways we can contribute to the overall costs. One thing that I think is very important in the federation is that we each understand what our responsibilities are, and we make good on those responsibilities, so the citizens of respective jurisdictions can hold the appropriate level of government to account when it comes time to cast their vote.

We all have a job to do, and in a federation it’s important that we each take care of the responsibilities with which the Constitution charges us.

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** Excellent.

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

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

It’s true that the question was cut a bit short in the last discussion.

Yes, the Criminal Code falls under federal jurisdiction. Right now, we’re debating a lot of things that could be amended in the Criminal Code, but it’s true that the administration of justice falls under Quebec’s jurisdiction.

As for Bill C-16 in particular, I know that my colleague, the member for Rivière-du-Nord, who is the Bloc Québécois justice critic, expressed major reservations. According to him, it’s all well and good to pass legislation here, but it’s not enough if we don’t resolve the fiscal imbalance issue so that Quebec and the provinces can then have the means and resources to administer their justice system in accordance with the legislation. If all we do is amend legislation, but at the end of the day, the provinces responsible for administering the justice system don’t have the means to do so, things will change very slowly, or it will be difficult to implement all these new measures.

Minister, will you commit to looking at how you can ensure that the provinces, which are responsible for the administration of justice, can have the funding required to implement the new legislation we will be passing?

• (1650)

**Hon. Sean Fraser:** It is essential to understand the federal government’s role in making changes to the Criminal Code, for example, and the role of the provinces and territories in ensuring the administration of justice in their jurisdictions.

It’s very interesting because there was a lot of conversation around Bill C-14 and Bill C-16. My provincial counterparts are asking me to make changes to federal legislation. If the provinces call on me to make changes to the legislation, I expect the provinces to co-operate to ensure that they have a system of resources in place to implement the changes.

Some files also create opportunities for collaboration. There are many examples. In the case of Bill C-16, Quebec raised the issue of recruiting young people to commit an offence. Coercive control has also been discussed, for example. These are all topics that lead to conversations.

In my opinion, it is essential for the federal government to invest in federal jurisdictions, including the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, borders and programs to support young people.

**Andréanne Larouche:** You touched on the issue of coercive control. That was one of our requests. We talked about that when we did this study. In fact, at the committee, I had proposed a study solely on the issue of criminalizing coercive control.

Why is the framework of section 810, in spite of everything, still largely blind to the coercive control dynamics recognized by experts? We hope there will be an opportunity in Bill C-16 to cover coercive control, so that we can perhaps resolve this issue.

Why, Minister?

**Hon. Sean Fraser:** I'm sorry, I had trouble hearing the last word in the interpretation.

**Andréanne Larouche:** Can we stop the clock, Madam Chair? I'll repeat my question.

**The Chair:** Yes, I'll add time to the clock. You can repeat your question.

**Andréanne Larouche:** Okay. I'll repeat my question, and then you can restart the clock.

We were talking about coercive control. Why is the current framework of section 810 largely blind to the coercive control dynamics recognized by a number of experts?

**Hon. Sean Fraser:** Thank you for the question. I'll give you an answer in English, as it's hard for me to go into detail with my limited vocabulary.

[English]

I actually think there is interplay between the new offence of coercive control that we're seeking to establish and the peace bonds. I expect it's because so many of the circumstances that would traditionally result in a peace bond are actually preceded by a pattern of coercive and controlling behaviour. By creating a stand-alone offence, my hope is not simply that peace bonds will look at coercive control as a factor, but that the justice system will actually start charging people with the criminal offence that we're seeking to create for coercive control.

Let me make an offer to members of Parliament, not only in this committee but others, that to the extent that the collective wisdom of Parliament informs potential amendments to the bills we have put forward, I'm open to them. I want to consider them in good faith. If this is an area where parliamentary study should reveal that there is a better way to solve these problems, I would welcome your feedback in that regard.

[Translation]

**Andréanne Larouche:** Okay, that's perfect.

Minister, with regard to the length of the recognizance, would it be possible to consider amending the legislation to extend the length of protection beyond the 12-month period in a context of domestic violence?

**Hon. Sean Fraser:** It's possible. A bill recently introduced in the Senate—I think it's Bill S-205—creates the possibility of developing such a measure. I think it's a good idea for this committee or other committees to study that issue. You don't have to wait for a formal review by the Government of Canada. It is possible for a parliamentary committee to study this issue and make recommendations. This issue is of great interest to my office. If you have any recommendations to make, this is a good opportunity for collaboration.

• (1655)

[English]

There are some constitutional concerns, depending on the potential length you may look at, but if this is an area that's a priority for this committee, I would invite you to decide to study the issue in detail and provide recommendations informed by expert testimony.

[Translation]

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

I will now give the floor to Mrs. Vien for five minutes.

**Dominique Vien:** There is a good chance that we will follow up on that, Minister.

Good afternoon, Minister. Welcome to you and your team.

I would like to begin by congratulating you on your excellent French. It's good to hear that in this sea of anglophones. Thank you very much. It's great.

Minister, could you tell me what the homicide rate was in Canada between 2006 and 2015? Actually, could you tell me by how many percentage points it decreased between 2006 and 2015?

[English]

**Hon. Sean Fraser:** I'd have to review the statistics.

[Translation]

**Dominique Vien:** Do you not know?

[English]

**Hon. Sean Fraser:** I haven't memorized them in advance of the committee appearance.

[Translation]

**Dominique Vien:** I'll tell you. It decreased by 10%. At that time, the total number of vehicle thefts dropped by 54%. Aggravated sexual assaults were down by 36%. Cases of forcible confinement and kidnapping decreased by 97%, Minister. That was under the era of our distinguished Prime Minister, Mr. Harper, who was just quoted by Mr. Anandasangaree, who just appeared before you at this committee.

Unfortunately, under the Liberals, we see that the situation has deteriorated a great deal, probably because of the laws you've passed. I'll come back to that a little later. As a reminder, I would like to tell you that the homicide rate has skyrocketed by 30%, motor vehicle thefts have increased by 20%, sexual assaults have increased by 76% and extortion cases by 330%.

Minister, would you be able to tell me how often a Canadian woman is killed, right now?

**Hon. Sean Fraser:** A tragedy occurs every 48 hours.

**Dominique Vien:** You're absolutely right, Minister. Every 48 hours, a Canadian woman is murdered in this country right now.

My question is very simple: Do you not think that Bill C-5, which dealt with minimum sentences and which you passed, and Bill C-75, which dealt with this kind of principle of restraint that is resulting in the least severe sentence, were lax actions that have led to the chaotic situation we find ourselves in today, especially for women? Let me remind you. Last year in Quebec, 16 femicides were committed. Some 240 Canadian women were murdered. So far this year, in one month, six women have been murdered in Quebec.

Don't you think it's a bit embarrassing to introduce Bill C-14 and Bill C-16 and to strut around, as if everything was fine and dandy? It took you 10 years to take action and to realize that it was because of what you had failed to do that we are now facing a catastrophic situation for women. I often say this: I walk the streets and I'm nervous. We're hypervigilant all the time. Isn't that a bit embarrassing?

[*English*]

**Hon. Sean Fraser:** I expect that you and I agree on the severity of the problem and our desire to advance a solution. Conservatives, Liberals and every other party represented in the House of Commons—to a person, I would suggest—recognize that every femicide is a tragedy and we need to reform our laws, but I think it would be a mistake to point to any particular law or even to criminal law reform as a singular issue that would be driving some of the changes you've cited.

Now, I would note that we've seen a positive trend when it comes to a reduction in homicides over the course of the past two years in Canada, but I look to one of the laws you've cited, which actually created more difficult circumstances for a person who has been charged with intimate partner violence to be released on bail.

There are areas of improvement that I think you and I agree on, based on your particular question. You mentioned Bill C-5. I know that Mr. Brock in particular has been arguing for reform on the principle of restraint. Repealing this, in my view, would not significantly change the law that exists as a result of Supreme Court decisions, but I think we should work together to figure out how we can direct the court to interpret that principle in a way that prioritizes public safety.

• (1700)

[*Translation*]

To the extent that we can work together to find solutions to protect women and to address violence against women across our country, that's a good idea, and I invite you to participate in the process.

**Dominique Vien:** I'm out of time.

Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

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

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

Minister, thank you for being with us today.

I really appreciate your curiosity and your commitment. I would invite you to open your eyes and ears, since the committee is study-

ing the rise of antifeminist ideology and its consequences on our society.

I would start by saying this: Contrary to what my Conservative colleagues are saying, all the experts agree that gender-based violence did not start 10 years ago, but that it is woven into the fabric of human history. That is extremely deplorable and a sad realization, and it is our collective duty to continue to work to eliminate it.

Minister, what you're proposing in your Bill C-16 stems in part from consultations that the Department of Justice conducted with the Department for Women and Gender Equality. This was commended in particular by women's rights groups because it does indeed show a way to strengthen the legislation, which is definitely necessary, but we are also moving forward in the area of prevention. When femicides are committed, it's too late; those women are already lost. We are losing women who will not contribute to society, who will not return to work and who leave their children bereaved.

What could you tell us about this collaboration that you found essential and that called on both the expertise of the Department for Women and Gender Equality and the expertise of the Department of Justice?

**Hon. Sean Fraser:** First of all, you're right, the bill is the outcome of many conversations with experts. We considered those individuals' opinions and work experiences to find the best solutions to prevent and address violence against women.

[*English*]

We didn't sit behind closed doors and talk among elected officials; we listened to experts in their field. Many of the measures that are included in Bill C-16 follow precisely the recommendations of the Renfrew County inquest, the Mass Casualty Commission—the largest casualty in the history of my province just a few years ago—and the national action plan to end gender-based violence. Each of these various sets of recommendations was built upon the same kind of expertise that my department and, in many instances, I personally engaged with to fully understand the wealth of expertise that exists within Canada on how to address some of these challenges.

One thing we heard is that criminal law has a natural limit. It typically intervenes only after harm has taken place, so you need to mirror the criminal reforms with investments that offer protections, which is why it's so important to situate this conversation in the broader context of the strategy on public safety.

[*Translation*]

One example of an outcome we've had as a result of conversations with experts is the new offence targeting coercive control.

It is possible for the justice system to intervene before acts of violence take place, before the person dies. We can't create a new life for that person, but we can create new offences that will enable us to intervene before permanent problems occur.

[*English*]

This is so important. When you listen to people who've dedicated their lives to identifying solutions, you don't have to reinvent the wheel. You don't have to be the smartest person in the room, but you have to talk to the person who is. That's the approach that we've tried to take to advance these bills.

[*Translation*]

**Marie-Gabrielle Ménard:** Yes. In any case, in this committee, the criminalization of coercive control is really what has been called for in unison. It was expected and also welcomed. We assume that this will have a major impact on the future and that, ideally, it will save lives. We hope so.

Minister, words are important because they guide our thinking. Bill C-16 explicitly uses the term “femicide”. In a few words, what can you tell us about that? What difference will it make to have this term explicitly mentioned in the bill?

• (1705)

[*English*]

**Hon. Sean Fraser:** First, I think it recognizes the severity of the problem. Our Conservative colleague pointed out that there's a woman killed every 48 hours in this country. We need to intervene and have the law reflect the severity of the social problem that we are witnessing in Canada.

The inclusion of a constructive first-degree murder charge for cases of femicide would include murder that is motivated by virtue of someone's hatred toward the victim, including because they are a woman. It would include murder that is committed in the context of a sexual offence. It would include murder that is committed following a pattern of coercive control. It's so important that we twin this new femicide approach to the stand-alone crime of coercive control.

It is important that we punish people who commit very serious and fatal crimes, but it's more important that we do everything we can to prevent innocent people from being killed in the first place. If we can have the law intervene to deal with the circumstances before a relationship becomes violent and before violence becomes fatal, we have the opportunity to save lives. I think that's something that it behooves every member of Parliament to support regardless of party.

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We're back to you, Ms. Larouche. You have the floor for two and a half minutes.

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

Minister, I want to go back to some of the things you've already been asked about.

Let's start with minimum sentences. We are very pleased with Bill C-16 because the Bloc Québécois's position is to restore minimum sentences for serious crimes. That's what we want.

I would like to hear you tell us what effect the abolition of certain minimum sentences has had on recidivism in domestic violence cases, especially when firearms are involved.

**Hon. Sean Fraser:** There are a few minimum sentences for which the Supreme Court stated that it was not possible to apply this piece of legislation, as it would violate the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

I'll continue in English because it's difficult for me in French.

[*English*]

One reason we moved forward with the precise solution we've advanced is not only that it follows, precisely, the direction of the Supreme Court on how one could restore mandatory minimums by providing a safety valve, but that it also reflects exactly the argument that our Bloc colleagues—Monsieur Fortin in particular—have advocated for in the House. One of our Conservative colleagues, Frank Caputo, has repeatedly implored members of all parties to adopt this restoration of mandatory minimums with a safety valve.

When we saw cross-partisan support, with clear direction from the Supreme Court about how one could address that issue, we decided to take action. With those laws having been struck down, they have no force and effect today. With the adoption of the measures in Bill C-16, we can restore serious penalties for serious crimes.

[*Translation*]

**Andréanne Larouche:** I would like to come back to another point that was raised earlier: the principle of restraint.

Earlier, I asked the Minister of Public Safety the question, and now I'm asking you: Do you believe that no release should be allowed for crimes involving domestic violence, or that an electronic bracelet should be required in the most serious cases, for the most serious crimes?

[*English*]

**Hon. Sean Fraser:** Generally speaking, I think the expansion of electronic monitoring is a very good idea that can promote public safety. There are two concerns I have with making it mandatory in all circumstances, whether that's mandatory incarceration or mandatory electronic monitoring.

The Supreme Court jurisprudence raises serious concern about any mandatory provisions where incarceration results. You're potentially going to be adopting a law that will be struck down, and I want the laws that we put in place to actually have effect.

The second concern around electronic monitoring is actually a very practical one that came from conversations I've had with provincial counterparts. There's a very real resource question about having the Criminal Code mandate policy in an area that falls within the jurisdiction of another level of government. To determine whether a province actually has the capacity to procure and operate, in significant numbers, the number of devices they would need in order to apply them in every circumstance is something that provinces raised concerns about during our conversations. To the extent that we could be a good partner to expand them, I would be supportive.

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

Now we go to Ms. Cody for five minutes.

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

Welcome, Minister, to the status of women committee. I appreciate your coming here today.

You stated that there's a reduction in homicide and that rates are coming down. I mean no offence, Minister, but unless the rates are below 2015 levels, that's not something to be proud of. I don't think women living in violent situations see it that way or appreciate the delays. Is that why the Liberals keep on filibustering and delaying advancing the laws that would protect women, and are continuously putting all these opportunities on the back burner? What timeline do the Liberals feel is sufficient to wait while, each day, women are being killed every 48 hours?

• (1710)

**Hon. Sean Fraser:** First, I have a comment, and then a question. It's a good thing that crime rates are coming down, but don't take this as my saying that the job is done. We have work to do, and I'm going to do everything I can so people can live safely and feel safe in their communities.

However, just as a point of clarification.... You mentioned a filibuster. Which filibuster are you referring to?

**Connie Cody:** Last night, the justice committee.... The Liberals were there until 1:30 in the morning. They keep accusing Conservatives of obstruction, when in fact the Liberals are blocking their own bills. In the justice committee, it was the Liberals who blocked Bill C-16, a Liberal bill that's supposed to amend the Criminal Code, acts and statutes to address child protection, gender-based—

**Hon. Sean Fraser:** Bill C-16 hasn't gone to the committee yet. It couldn't be filibustered. It's only been referred by the House.

**Connie Cody:** It's at committee.

**Hon. Sean Fraser:** But it's just within the last few days.

**Connie Cody:** It was yesterday, last night.

**Hon. Sean Fraser:** I'm sorry. I'm legitimately trying to get clarity.

**Connie Cody:** I'm asking the questions here, Minister, if I might—

**Hon. Sean Fraser:** But the question wasn't clear. I'm trying to get clarity on what you're trying to get at. There has been no filibuster that you're referring to. Perhaps you could tell me which meeting was filibustered over Bill C-16.

**Connie Cody:** You keep on bringing Bill C-9 to the forefront, when we have other things that we want to bring forward. The Conservatives want to work with the Liberals to ensure that we are bringing forward bills and laws so that we can protect women, but they keep on getting put on the back burner.

I'm asking you, what timeline do you see as sufficient for the Liberals to move forward so that women can feel safe? Currently, right now, women are dying every 48 hours. What timeline are you prepared to offer us today to ensure that you're going to move forward on the bills to protect women?

**Hon. Sean Fraser:** If you were to give me unanimous consent in the House to advance each of these bills through all proceedings, I would absolutely take it. The problem is that this hasn't happened.

With great respect, when I see your colleague Mr. Lawton, whom I quite enjoy personally, on the justice committee spending hours talking about whether he and his wife prefer puppies or kittens—

**Connie Cody:** Minister, this is my time.

**Hon. Sean Fraser:** You're interrupting every time it becomes uncomfortable, when I'm exposing the fact that the Conservatives have been filibustering the committee—

**Connie Cody:** I don't appreciate your talking out the clock on my time.

**Hon. Sean Fraser:** —and delaying the commitments that we've made.

**Juanita Nathan:** I have a point of order.

**Connie Cody:** Can I please take over my time and ask the question?

**The Chair:** We have a point of order from Ms. Nathan, and then I'll make a comment.

**Juanita Nathan:** I would really like to hear what the minister has to say. I can't hear with all the commotion.

**The Chair:** Yes.

I would like to reiterate what I said in the first session. Traditionally, the amount of time it takes to ask the question is the amount of time we would have in the answer. The question was fairly long, so I would offer another 20 seconds, generously, to the minister.

**Hon. Sean Fraser:** Thank you.

Look, it's ironic that we're even receiving questions about a filibuster rather than questions about how we can better protect women against crime and combat gender-based violence. If you actually go back and look at the videos, you'll see that it was the Conservatives who were talking about whether they prefer puppies or kittens.

That said, I think there's a broad base of agreement on gender-based violence and on bail and sentencing reform. I think we should let other issues where there's disagreement go to a vote, so that we can all practise democracy rather than interfere with the agenda Canadians are looking for.

**The Chair:** All right.

We will go back to Ms. Cody.

**Connie Cody:** Minister, I'm going to ask a question that I asked the Minister of Public Safety. He wasn't able to answer.

A repeat offender who was convicted on child pornography was released early. He was rearrested for breaking his parole conditions—not once, but twice. He was then arrested a few weeks ago on a historic sexual assault, and then he was granted bail again two days ago. This person was well known in Port Colborne. He played the organ in church; he played Santa Claus in community events, and he was a predator.

Minister, in what world does the Liberal soft-on-crime, revolving-door justice system protect the public or our children? I'm asking you this: Do you believe criminals have rights when they're committing crimes?

**Hon. Sean Fraser:** Look, I'm struck by the incredulous nature of that question. Rights exist in this country, but we can also agree that dangerous people who commit serious crimes should be incarcerated. We are literally changing the law, as we speak, to make it harder for violent repeat offenders to be released on bail and to ensure they face tougher sentences. I think that's something we agree on.

The combative nature of this exchange, and frankly the position of parties in the House on matters where we should be finding common ground to advance policy, is a reflection of the sorry state of Canadian politics, in a lot of ways. I'm not going to stand here and say that I support the egregious behaviour of a predator who's committing crimes. No, that's someone who should face real consequences for very serious infractions. But we can't just bluster at the committee with aggressive talking points. We need to identify solutions, debate them and advance them so that we can actually offer protections to people and communities.

• (1715)

**Connie Cody:** Minister, I believe your time is up by now.

**Hon. Sean Fraser:** If you want to see that outcome as well, I would welcome your collaboration.

**The Chair:** Actually, all of your time is up.

**Connie Cody:** Okay.

**The Chair:** We'll go to Mr. Chen for five minutes.

**Shaun Chen:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

We're all very alarmed by the statistic that every 48 hours a woman or girl is murdered in this country as a result of gender-based violence. Femicide, as the minister knows, is rarely a random act. It is most often the culmination of patterns of control, coercion and violence against women.

Minister, how does recognizing these murders as first-degree murders potentially better reflect the realities of gender-based violence?

**Hon. Sean Fraser:** Symbolically, it places it among the most serious crimes that can be recognized in the Criminal Code. Practically speaking, dealing with life sentences without a chance of parole has a substantive impact on the actual sentence an offender is going to receive.

I think the additional value it provides is in demonstrating an understanding of how gender-based violence takes place in an intimate partner violence context in particular, and in society more broadly. You're right to point out that it's not as often that there are just random acts of violence—though this may happen, sometimes at a scale that is tragic and beyond imagination. If you don't believe me, talk to our colleague Minister Provost in this regard. When we listen to those who've studied these issues their entire lives or who sometimes have lived experience that can shed a light on them, we can understand that IPV often follows a pattern of predictive behaviour that allows us to intervene before a person is killed.

When we see that there are a significant number of murders committed that are motivated by hatred toward women, we need to take action. When we see that murder too often takes place during the commission of a sexual offence, we need to take action. When we see that murder takes place, often, following a predictable pattern of coercion and control within an intimate partner relationship, we need to take action. It's not enough to simply change the law to offer more severe penalties after the murder has taken place. We have to do what we can to prevent that harm in the first place as well. I heard that loud and clear during my consultations.

That's part of the reason we included a stand-alone offence of coercive control in the bill. It's part of the reason we remain committed to the national action plan to end gender-based violence and want to put systemic investments in place to help ensure that people have protection in their communities and that we build healthier people in the long term, in order to reduce violent crime as Canada's history marches forward.

**Shaun Chen:** It would be fair to say that Bill C-16 seeks not only to punish the most serious crimes more appropriately but also to name and confront the systemic nature of violence against women.

Minister, in November 2025, this committee published a report on coercive control following extensive testimony from survivors, experts and law enforcement. We welcomed Bill C-16 shortly after, in December 2025, as a direct response to that work. During that study, witnesses at this committee told us that coercive control is often the most dangerous phase of intimate partner violence, yet it is frequently invisible to the criminal law until physical violence occurs.

How does Bill C-16 allow the justice system to intervene earlier, before harm escalates?

**Hon. Sean Fraser:** At the risk of repeating a point I made previously, a stand-alone offence of coercive control gives us the opportunity to intervene after a pattern of behaviour—one we know has predictive value—that's more likely to result in a person being killed. If we can establish an offence that allows the law to intervene before physical violence takes place, or perhaps before violence turns into deadly violence, we have a responsibility to offer those protections to people.

In addition, there are a number of other changes we've made that are not just about coercive control but nevertheless reflect a very serious trend in crimes committed against women and communities that often have lasting and traumatic experiences. Look at the modernization of the criminal harassment provisions, which allow us to more easily charge people. This is also, often, a behaviour that precedes more serious physical violence.

With 30 seconds left, I'll point only to one other measure. We're seeing modern technologies being used in ways that were not imagined when the existing rules were written. I'm thinking not only about the changes to criminal harassment using new technology, but also about the non-consensual sharing of intimate images and the use of AI deepfakes. We need to continue to recognize the lived reality of women who are facing violence in this country, and continually update our laws as practices and technologies change.

• (1720)

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

I think we have enough time to do what we did on the last panel and have three minutes for each party for their final questions.

Mr. Brock, it's over to you for three minutes.

**Larry Brock:** Thank you, Chair.

Minister, you were in the back of the room when your colleague was questioned by this committee. I raised questions regarding your meetings with provincial and territorial counterparts.

The question I'm going to put up front, with the justification to follow, is this: What steps are you and your government taking to restore the trust and confidence, which is sadly lacking, of victims of intimate partner violence in this country, particularly women, who feel that we don't have a justice system but that we have a legal system?

There's a lack of trust and confidence in policing. When substantive charges under section 810, in a domestic context—whether they be assault-, threats- or mischief-related—are simply withdrawn, with an urging to accept a section 810 resolution, with zero enforcement and zero consequences, it contributes to that lack of trust.

Will you commit to ensuring that there are national standards, right across this country, with the provincial and territorial attorneys general? Will you ensure that their Crown policy manuals set out a basic direction as to how to handle domestic-related cases, a direction with respect to the circumstances under which a charge will be withdrawn in favour of a section 810 charge, and instructions that you will give for enforcement under section 811?

**Hon. Sean Fraser:** I have less than one minute, so I won't have time to answer the systemic trust preamble you've put to me.

On the specific question of provincial collaboration on section 810 and violations under section 811, it strikes me as a good idea, but I would need to have conversations with my provincial counterparts. I would need to do a deeper study, having only had this put to me when my colleague received the question.

One caveat I would add is this. I would want to insist, when dealing with criminal remedies—as you would well appreciate, Larry, they're highly fact-dependent and individualistic—that we ensure, to the extent that we can, the ability of the court to have remedies that would fit the facts of a given case and that would adjust. I do think guidelines and consistency across the country are generally a good thing. However, I would certainly demand the opportunity to engage with my provincial counterparts before I broadcast, in a live meeting, that I'm going to do something I have not consulted on.

**Larry Brock:** Thank you, Minister.

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

[*Translation*]

Ms. Ménard, go ahead for three minutes.

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

Minister, this is our last round.

When you developed Bill C-16 in collaboration with judicial, socio-judicial and community stakeholders, you gave significant consideration to the distressing testimony of victims—survivors—who said that their experience with the justice system left them with other scars. You decided to propose measures that take into account the courage these survivors must embrace in order to come forward.

What have you implemented in Bill C-16 to prevent survivors from reliving trauma?

[*English*]

**Hon. Sean Fraser:** First, there is not a measure in Bill C-16 where I haven't spoken to a person who's lived through the reality and who would have benefited from that protection. These are the most human set of policies you can imagine, particularly when you're dealing with sexual crimes, where a person's bodily integrity has been violated by an assailant.

The point you're making on retraumatization is very real. Just think about a person's experience. You may talk to your friends, in the first instance when something happened, which can be difficult. You may report it to police, who may or may not believe you. You then have to go to a Crown prosecutor and potentially have to tell the same story again. You may have to be cross-examined in court. You may continually be faced with people who question, very deliberately, your integrity and your version of events. It can be very traumatizing for the person.

In particular, we wanted to address clarity in the changes to the Canadian Victims Bill of Rights to minimize the traumatization a person goes through. This can include testimonial aids a person can benefit from. It can include information they're entitled to. It can include the right to participate through different parts of the trial process, which could be with a victim impact statement. It could even be after a person has been convicted and might be transferred from one level of security prison to another.

We've done everything we can to listen to folks who have studied these issues and have come up with recommendations, not only to promote public safety but also to improve the experience of a person who has gone through life-changing and traumatic circumstances as they seek to see justice done in their individual set of facts.

• (1725)

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Ménard.

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

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

Minister, thank you once again for coming to see us today.

As I mentioned to your colleague, and as others have also pointed out, the numbers are staggering. Action must absolutely be taken.

The concern about court delays has already been raised by survivors who have testified over a number of studies. The issue of court delays in the Jordan decision has come up a lot. In the last Parliament, the Bloc Québécois introduced a bill to provide a framework for the use of the Jordan decision.

Do you think the measures set out in Bill C-16 in relation to court delays will be enough to prevent violent offenders from being released solely because of court delays?

**Hon. Sean Fraser:** This bill has an opportunity to improve the situation and be a complete game changer. It is possible for a case to be an exception, but, in general, it is a good thing to improve the situation.

[English]

Specifically, there are two distinct issues. One is delays generally, which are an injustice to the victim, to the accused and to soci-

ety. The second is the consequences of the Jordan decision, which result in those delayed cases being thrown out when the time runs out. We want to address both of those challenges with procedural changes that are going to improve the pace at which cases move through to trial and, potentially, a conviction where warranted.

Also, in the intervening period, before that delay is fully addressed, we want to change how courts deal with circumstances that exceed the recommended timelines in the Jordan decision. Specifically, we want them to consider remedies other than a stay, to have fewer people be released without their charges coming to a conviction. We want to ensure that we more clearly define complex cases to understand when certain kinds of cases should be treated as more complex, benefiting from a longer period of time.

[Translation]

**Andréanne Larouche:** Quickly—

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you so much. I'm sorry. That's the end of the time.

Minister, on behalf of the committee, thank you so much for appearing today. You can hear the urgency of these issues for women.

Before we leave, folks, the minister mentioned Frank Caputo's bill, which is coming here. You received the budget for \$16,050.

Is it the pleasure of the committee to adopt that budget?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Very good.

Madame Ménard has one more thing.

[Translation]

**Marie-Gabrielle Ménard:** Madam Chair, I would just like to put to the committee the possibility of setting February 20 as the deadline for recommendations for amendments instead. That's just to give everyone more time to respond. Right now, they're due on February 25, and we're meeting on February 26, which I think is a very tight time frame.

I suggest that committee members rather send their comments by February 20. That would give us more time to respond, instead of having barely 24 hours.

[English]

**The Chair:** Is it the pleasure of the committee to extend the deadline for recommendations to the 20th?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Very good.

With that, I'll adjourn the meeting.





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