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• (1100)

[English]

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

Welcome to meeting number 24 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

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

I'd like to make a few statements for the benefit of the witnesses. For interpretation, here in the room you can choose English, French or floor, which gives you both. On Zoom, you will see the same choice at the bottom of your screen. If you want to speak, raise your hand. All comments should be addressed through the chair.

Thanks for your co-operation.

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

Before we welcome our witnesses, I want to provide a trigger warning.

We will be discussing themes and experiences related to anti-feminist ideology. This may be triggering to viewers with similar experiences. If participants feel distressed or need help, please advise the clerk. For all witnesses or members of Parliament, it's important to recognize that these are difficult conversations, so let's try to be compassionate.

Now, I'd like to welcome our witnesses.

As individuals, we have Esli Chan, a doctoral candidate at McGill University.

[Translation]

We also welcome Michel Dorais, professor emeritus at Université Laval.

[English]

From Informed Perspectives, we have Shari Graydon, catalyst and chief executive officer.

[Translation]

From the Centre pour l'intelligence émotionnelle en ligne, we have co-founder and executive director Emmanuelle Parent.

[English]

Welcome.

We'll begin with opening remarks from our witnesses.

Ms. Chan, you have the floor for the first five minutes.

Esli Chan (Doctoral Candidate, McGill University, As an Individual): Thank you, Madam Chair and committee members, for the invitation to appear before this committee.

At its core, anti-feminism is a belief system that rejects gender equality, positioning women's rights as a threat and normalizing hostility towards women and feminist movements. While this ideology has historical roots, it has found particular prominence in our digital ecosystem.

Today, I want to highlight two dynamics that accelerate this crisis: how social media platforms and AI can amplify harm. I note that my expertise focuses on the social and political dimensions rather than on the technical background.

First, social media platforms are designed to maximize engagement. A 2023 research report by Lucina Di Meco demonstrates that misogynistic content often goes viral precisely due to its inflammatory nature. Algorithmic systems are designed to maximize attention and facilitate widespread distribution. The more controversial content is, the more it provokes reactions, views and shares. This drives profits for platforms while incentivizing users to generate hateful and misogynistic content. The result is a self-reinforcing cycle where platforms profit from controversy, users are rewarded for posting toxic content, and anti-feminism thus becomes pervasive. Controversy drives clicks; the clicks drive revenue, and women and girls pay the price.

Studies show that one in five women experience online harassment in Canada. Beyond social media, UN Women reports how generative AI can facilitate gender abuse. More specifically, I want to address AI chatbot companions. Research from Harvard shows that young boys face early pressures to conform to norms of emotional toughness, limiting emotional literacy and contributing to isolation. AI chatbot companions exploit this vulnerability by simulating human connections and emotional support.

A 2025 survey conducted by the Media Ecosystem Observatory at McGill found that while 67% of Canadians view frequent AI chatbot interaction as harmful to youth development, 32% also believe that these tools can help reduce loneliness. Chatbots can indeed feel responsive and validating, but they are fundamentally frictionless, mirroring back what users want to hear without challenging harmful ideas.

For young boys navigating spaces saturated with anti-feminist messaging and hypermasculine expectations, AI companions can affirm and amplify harmful misogynistic beliefs and even encourage gendered forms of violence. While social media and AI are not inherently harmful, it requires intentional guardrails.

First, there needs to be a clear legal recognition of AI-facilitated gendered violence accompanied with gender-aware enforcement measures. This includes streamlined content removal processes that prioritize victim safety and dedicated training for regulators, law enforcement and social services to recognize and understand the gender dynamics of digital abuse.

Second, online platforms must specifically be required to establish safeguards against gendered harm, including gender impact assessments and examining how their algorithms and platform design features can amplify misogyny. This requires robust oversight through independent bodies staffed with gender experts empowered to issue compliance orders, investigate complaints and review regulatory decisions. However, the challenge extends beyond regulation.

The virality of harmful anti-feminist content online stems from underlying demand. For example, while AI tools such as Grok were used to non-consensually undress people online, the harm originated from the individual user who sought to violate women's dignity.

Fundamentally, we need cultural change. This includes funding mental health programs starting in elementary education, enhancing community support programs for young boys and men and strengthening education on digital literacy that connects digital behaviour to real-world gender-based violence.

Anti-feminism, amplified by platform design and AI tools, is actively shaping young Canadians' beliefs and lives. Now is the time to break this cycle.

Thank you, and I welcome your questions.

• (1105)

The Chair: Thank you so much.

[*Translation*]

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

Michel Dorais (Professor Emeritus, Laval University, As an individual): I thank the committee for the invitation.

The committee has heard very good assessments of the situation. Ms. Chan just gave one. It was very well summarized, so I'm going to skip that.

I'll talk to you about prevention. I work a lot in prevention. I also taught prevention for 45 years. I also work a lot with young men, because I believe we need to spread the message of positive mas-

culinity. Currently, anti-feminist propaganda is affecting many young men. It needs to stop. There are concrete solutions. We need to be able to talk about it.

This offensive is almost unchecked. By the way, I apologize to the interpreters, because I'm not reading my text; I'm summarizing it. I believe you received my brief and my presentation notes, which I refer you to. I'll continue. This reaction is somewhat of an attachment to the pre-feminist era. Many young men and immensely popular online male influencers oppose women's rights, and the advancement of women's rights and the rights of sexual and gender minorities. It often goes hand in hand: when some advance, others advance too.

Thus, it's a very alarmist view. Many men feel they're losing their power and privileges. They definitely do not want to share them. In that sense, it could even be described as male supremacism. They even go so far as to blame women, which, as we know very well, leads to violence. Women are blamed for what they experience at the hands of these violent and short-tempered men. Words fail me. Obviously, this return to tradition that many men are calling for involves contempt for women. Respecting traditions that discriminate and ostracize is to have contempt for their victims.

We cannot go back there. Awareness needs to be raised among men. We need to go where the boys are. Where are they? They're in schools, and many are involved in sports. In recent years, I've worked with sports teams. I'll talk about it to conclude my presentation later, and I'll give very concrete examples. We need to reach boys. Yes, they're online, but they're also in schools, in sports and in youth centres. We can therefore convey the message in those settings. Later I'll provide some quite extraordinary examples of initiatives by women and men who engage with these boys to raise their awareness, educate them and, above all, change their behaviour. It's very good to raise awareness and educate, but behaviours and conduct need to be changed, which is much more complicated. It requires being well organized. It's the behaviours, not the people, that are toxic. People can change. I have a background in sociology and social work, so I'm well positioned to know that people can change. In another life, as a social worker, I worked in youth protection for about twelve years. I can therefore say that people change. Even boys who have done very bad things can become very good boys.

There's hope, but it's important to recognize that there's a problem, and that action can and must be taken. Above all, the right tools are needed.

I prepared three examples that I wanted to give you. In Quebec, an organization called Sport'Aide has an agreement with a wide range of sports teams to work with the teams and train not only the youth, but also the coaches. Coaches are role models. We often talk about negative role models when discussing influencers, but coaches are positive role models. There's also an initiative in the French schools in New Brunswick, workshops on positive masculinity for young boys. I have one last example. In Quebec City, I live very close to the YWCA, where there are workshops for boys. There's an online program that's actually funded by the federal government.

In conclusion, I'd say that there are things to do. We can no longer wait; we must act now.

• (1110)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[*English*]

Ms. Graydon, you now have the floor for five minutes.

Shari Graydon (Catalyst and Chief Executive Officer, Informed Perspectives): Thank you.

Immediately after Donald Trump's re-election in 2024, anti-feminist online influencer Nick Fuentes posted on X, "Your body, my choice. Forever." His boast went viral.

A few months later, the hate-inducing Andrew Tate, accused of human trafficking and rape in Romania, was given sanctuary in the U.S. Why did Tate base his anti-feminist empire in Romania? He did it because it's the worst-performing country for gender equality in Europe. Eighty per cent of Romanians believe the lie that women belong at home. Why did Tate return to America? He knew his misogyny would be welcome.

The U.S. ranks 81st internationally for women's representation in politics. That's a shocking status for a country which until recently was considered a beacon of democracy.

However, Canada, in its representation of women in politics, is only a few points ahead of the U.S. This committee has a chance to help change that. In doing so, you can decisively counter the anti-feminist rhetoric authoritarians are weaponizing. Informed Perspectives has a concrete, low-cost proposal to oppose the trends you've already heard so much about.

As you know, anti-feminist lies claim that advancing women's equality weakens society, that our role is to be subservient and that we deserve to be violated. Those lies threaten our freedom, our economy and our democracy. The best way to combat them is to ensure that women's contributions are equitable, visible, celebrated and recognized as essential. Your very presence in this Parliament helps, but passively permitting men to retain 70% of the power implicitly reinforces the lies being spread.

We're living next door to a terrifying case study, watching the catastrophic impact that normalized misogyny can have on destroying decades of progress seemingly overnight. When the U.S. began rolling back abortion rights, the only option many American women had to end an unwanted pregnancy was to turn to feminist networks in one of the most Catholic countries in the world: Mexico.

How did that happen? A dozen years ago, Mexico required all parties to run as many women as men in their national elections. They achieved gender parity, and women quickly used their political power to make access to abortion better there than it is in the U.S. Ensuring women hold half the seats and are visibly exercising authority makes equality the expected standard. It challenges the myths that misogyny spreads, including the notion that you don't belong here and aren't capable of wielding power.

At the turn of the century, Canada ranked 28th for women in politics. Today, we are 73rd, much closer to the U.S. than to Mexico, which is fifth. We accepted incremental change while Mexico and dozens of other nations said no to the status quo and transformed their systems.

We have studied the measures successful elsewhere, and here's what we know would work here: Require parties to run equal numbers of men and women, including in winnable ridings, and those that fail to comply forfeit their right to compete, period. It's not complicated, and it's not costly. It's not even controversial. Eighty-six per cent of Canadians believe women should hold a balance of power.

All of you, as MPs appointed to this body, could choose to collectively champion this change. In the process, you would challenge anti-feminist ideology, dramatically amplify women's visibility and impact and secure not only gender parity in politics but also your place in history for having done so.

• (1115)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you.

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

Emmanuelle Parent (co-founder and CEO, Centre pour l'intelligence émotionnelle en ligne): Thank you for having me.

My name is Emmanuelle Parent. I have a Ph.D. in communication, I'm a teacher at Université de Montréal, and I'm the executive director of the Centre pour l'intelligence émotionnelle en ligne, or CIEL.

The mission of CIEL is to raise awareness among young people in elementary and secondary schools about the challenges of the digital world. By June 2026, we will have reached over 100,000 children and adolescents with our message to promote digital well-being and critical thinking regarding the content viewed on screens.

To complement the other evidence you've heard, my remarks will be qualitative in nature. What are we hearing in classrooms? I'll answer four questions for you.

First, why are young people online?

They go online to socialize. Talking with friends is the reason they use Instagram and Snapchat, but not Facebook, why they gather on Discord to play video games. When they socialize, young people are at risk of being exposed to misogyny.

They go online for entertainment, for pleasure; they go online to learn about themselves, to discover who they are. Children are greatly influenced by influencers and YouTubers, and look up to them as role models. When they're having fun online, they're exposed to misogyny.

Ultimately, they go online to build their identity and to express themselves. There are few spaces where the voices of young people are heard. Online, they can have a voice by posting what they want to say about themselves, but when they express themselves, they are exposed to misogyny.

Secondly, what are the health concerns regarding young people?

Not all screen time is inherently bad. As has been well said, in terms of health, we're particularly concerned that the business model of social networks, which is designed to capture and retain our attention, can interfere with young people's healthy habits.

There is also a lot of concern about exposure to inappropriate content, which can affect mood and shape how young people see the world, their peers and themselves. The business model of social networks promotes echo chambers, and recommendation algorithms exacerbate content that provokes reactions.

Thirdly, what does the experience of young people with online anti-feminism look like? I want to mention that most of the content you're hearing about today is produced by adults, on platforms designed by adults, where children are exposed to misogyny through no fault of their own. Here are some concrete testimonies from young people, collected in classrooms.

"I see lots of sexist content, and I don't watch it. For example, they [points to another group in the class] do, and they're annoying."

"The videos that make me feel good are when I see women getting beaten."

"If you post, you have to expect to be insulted. It comes with the risk of putting yourself out there."

"Those who comment insults have no life. You have to ignore them. There's nothing you can do."

"I've reported a sexist comment and Instagram told me it followed their community guidelines."

"I'm regularly asked for my Insta and phone when I'm gaming because they hear a girl's voice. I turn off my mike."

"A girl with a high Snapscore is a slut."

"Girls just post for attention."

"How can I see less sexist content? It's annoying."

"Thanks to Instagram, I'm subscribed to many feminist pages and I learn a lot."

"Why are these platforms, these guys, so rich if we don't pay?"

Fourthly, how should we intervene?

I will be brief about social media bans. I strongly believe that will not solve the problem before us today.

I will also be brief about education and prevention, although they are at the heart of our mission. This may surprise you. There is no doubt that we are making a difference in young people's lives and in classrooms, but we need more. We need to educate and inform young people, and we must stop putting everything on their shoulders letting them take on all the hate that is circulating right now.

You may have noticed, I am pregnant. I'm six months along. It's a boy. If our solutions do not involve regulating platforms, I am convinced I will have the same conversations with him as I am having now with children, apologizing on behalf of adults who did not have the courage to regulate the platforms. I'll have to apologize that he's being pushed towards misogynistic content because of his gender, content we will then have to discuss.

I don't want to hear that it's unrealistic to regulate the platforms, because there are countries that do it and have real results. I'll be happy to talk about that with you. The United Kingdom and Australia each have their own Online Safety Act. In Europe, there's the Digital Services Act, and in California, there's the Age-Appropriate Design Code Act. These laws have default settings that protect minors and support children. They provide for independent bodies that enforce the laws and hold platforms accountable.

• (1120)

The Chair: Thank you very much and congratulations.

[English]

We will begin our first round of questions.

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

[Translation]

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

I thank each of the witnesses for being available today.

So much has been said that it's pretty certain we're going to run out of time.

I'll start right away with you, Ms. Parent, since you just gave us your presentation.

I understand that you've engaged with 100,000 young people as part of your conversations with them. Are they all in Quebec?

Emmanuelle Parent: Yes, we've engaged with youth in Quebec, in urban areas and in the regions, in elementary and high schools.

Dominique Vien: Did you say elementary and high schools?

Emmanuelle Parent: Yes, exactly. We're primarily talking about screens, particularly about our well-being, but the issue of hate content comes up on its own as young people talk, because it's part of their daily experience.

Dominique Vien: What do you say when you meet with them? Mr. Dorais will surely be interested in your work because he was talking about initiatives earlier. Specifically, what does this discussion you have with them involve?

Emmanuelle Parent: The first step is to put words to emotions. We open the dialogue with them, because young people don't necessarily talk to one another about the content they see. Being critical about this reaffirms that these are unacceptable comments in face-to-face interactions, unlike what they may see online.

Then, they often ask us what they can do to see less of it. At that point, we suggest tools to them, such as hiding content, reporting posts and trying to train their algorithm so that their personalized content is less likely to show hateful content. We also try to provide them with concrete tools to regulate their emotions and have some resilience when they encounter such content, because currently, even if they report hateful content, we've seen that the platforms leave it online.

Dominique Vien: It's quite concerning. Earlier, Ms. Chan was saying that the platforms also make money from that. I'm looking for the name, because I don't know anything about it.

Emmanuelle Parent: Hatred is very profitable.

Dominique Vien: I'm not very knowledgeable about technology, but every click brings them money.

I'll conclude this exchange with one last question. In general, do young people say that you're right and that they hadn't realized?

Emmanuelle Parent: They are so ready to have these conversations. When we come in with a moralistic attitude, saying that social media is bad for them, they become defensive and cite the reasons I mentioned to you. That's why I started by listing the reasons why young people go on social media. There are benefits, and especially in recent years, it irritates them to see unmoderated content when they're enjoying these social and entertainment benefits.

Dominique Vien: I don't have a lot of time. Thank you.

Hello, Ms. Chan. Thank you for being with us today.

You were telling us earlier that getting clicks is profitable or at least that it generates revenue. Are you worried that the situation will take a turn for the worse?

I'll ask you the question too, Mr. Dorais, if you'd like to think about it.

Are we being alarmist, or could this despicable phenomenon actually lead to violent outbursts, where, for instance, people to take to the streets? In other words, is what we see on social media a prelude? If we don't intervene and we do nothing, could it escalate at some point?

• (1125)

[English]

Esli Chan: I don't think it's particularly alarmist. There's the recent Grok incident which happened on X, formerly Twitter, where people were able to essentially use AI to undress women, predominantly women, and within a span of just over a week there were more than three million images that were created without the consent of women. I don't believe these things are alarmist in that sense. It's happening, and there are people behind those screens requesting to see these kinds of images online. In that sense, I think it's very real. There's very much a demand for that kind of content online.

In terms of the devolution of political violence, I think it's often quite limiting to conceptualize violence as either off-line or online. I think those worlds are blurring over time. A lot of youth take their online cultures, their online conversations, their socialization, and that bleeds into how they behave in schools as well. I would not want to say that violence is imminent, but....

[Translation]

Dominique Vien: Thank you very much. As I told you, I have very little time.

Mr. Dorais, thank you for being with us today. We're very pleased to have you here.

Maybe before addressing this turn for the worse that I'm concerned about—maybe I'm being too negative—you said we need to acknowledge that there's a problem. You said that in prevention, the first step is recognizing that there's a problem. Are you saying that because we don't acknowledge that there's a problem?

Michel Dorais: Absolutely. There's a problem in terms of the male condition. There's nothing countering this violent, contemptuous, misogynistic and sexist discourse. The mentors that young people find, especially online, are negative mentors, so there's a need to counter what's out there. Interdepartmental programs are perhaps needed. I don't know. That's your job, not mine.

Dominique Vien: I had written a question in my notes: What should the education ministries do? We talked about parents. There's certainly a role to play at home, but there's also certainly a role to play in education.

Michel Dorais: Yes, we need to involve parents and youth, because if what happens at home undermines what happens at school, in sports venues or in youth centres, it won't work. It needs to be coordinated.

Dominique Vien: I've often asked this question. I'll be honest and transparent: The answer has often been that it didn't change anything. However, I still want to hear your perspective: Is it possible that there are not enough positive men in important roles in our schools and day care centres? The men aren't there, so there are no male figures. I'm not saying that women in the field of education don't do a great job. That's not what I'm saying. What I'm saying is that the guys aren't there.

[English]

The Chair: Give a brief response.

[Translation]

Michel Dorais: We don't show them and we don't value them. There need to be mentors and positive role models. I completely agree with you that there aren't enough. On one hand, the women's movement has highlighted inspiring women who are so caring and positive. I know plenty. On the other hand, we have a hard time naming such men. You're right. No effort has been made on that front. Among men, including young people who are growing up, things are a generation, even two, behind.

When we see the outcomes of masculinist ideology and the anti-feminist reaction, we must absolutely respond. Guys need to speak up and inspire others.

The Chair: Thank you.

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

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

Mr. Dorais, Ms. Chan, Ms. Graydon and Ms. Parent, thank you for enriching the work of this committee. Please know that, since the start of this study, 20 witnesses have come to offer their expertise and shed light on the situation. The diagnosis is quite unanimous. During this study, as far as I remember, we have not heard any discordant voices. The comments are really consistent.

In recent weeks, we've learned that the anti-feminist movement, for troubling reasons, is still able to come together and engage communities.

Ms. Graydon, can a segment of the population that has adopted an anti-feminist ideology be co-opted by politicians? Is it beneficial for certain politicians to look for support among those who are part of the anti-feminist movement?

• (1130)

[English]

Shari Graydon: I would say that anti-feminist ideology is not going to be solved by the proposal that we're making, but it's absolutely clear that the big-picture societal environment enables, empowers and gives oxygen to anti-feminist ideology.

What we're witnessing in the U.S. is not an accident. The willingness of the current administration to engage in the kinds of actions they're doing is underpinned, empowered and amplified by an online network and ethos of authoritarian attitudes that are reflected in the kinds of things that have been described by my colleagues here.

The visibility of women exercising power, being present and demonstrably making clear that women deserve to be in these spaces and are necessary to democracy helps, at a macro level, to challenge and undercut those conversations.

[Translation]

Marie-Gabrielle Ménard: Your answer is very clear. Anti-feminism seeks to restrict gender equality and undermines our democracy. As you've already mentioned, the voices of women, women experts and women in leadership positions are under-represented in the public space.

What's your take on the situation? We are in 2026.

[English]

Shari Graydon: It's mixed. Here we are in Canada, where women enjoy incredible rights and opportunities, but the fact is we trail 72 other countries that have taken more seriously the necessity of, in a democracy, a representative democracy, advancing women in systemic ways. The fact that we think of ourselves as models of equality and yet we are now outliers around the world by virtue of our failure to address this, I think, is a discouraging issue on its own, and because we are next door to the U.S., and we are watching what is happening there, it feels even more of a threat than it did before.

[Translation]

Marie-Gabrielle Ménard: I have a few minutes left, or probably a few seconds.

Ms. Parent, your comments are unequivocal. You say that the government has a role to play in regulating platforms. Platforms often say that they're not content producers, so they're untouchable and cannot be considered at fault.

How do you respond to that?

Emmanuelle Parent: Certainly, for the platforms, making hate content pay-per-view is not in their interest, so legal controls are needed.

The good news is that in Europe and Australia, they're co-operating. Concrete changes have been made through a series of laws, such as the Online Safety Act. More resources are being put in the hands of young people, transparency reports are being issued at the end of the year to show exactly how much content has been reported by young people and exactly how much has been removed from the platform, and platforms are being held accountable. They're co-operating, even if they say they're not interested, which we understand well, because their profits are elsewhere.

I want you to remember that it's possible. The platforms comply with these laws.

Marie-Gabrielle Ménard: That's great. Thank you very much.

Mr. Dorais, you spoke about the impact of positive role models in the real world. We've reached the point of discussing the virtual world on one hand and the real world on the other. That seems a bit counterintuitive to me, but that's how it is.

Platforms greatly amplify the reach of hate speech. How do we counterbalance that? In the real world, reaching 5,000 people at once is still quite a challenge.

Michel Dorais: Absolutely. We must not only take things away. It's good to take some away, but they need to be replaced with other things. Guys need role models. These influencers have millions of followers, even though they have terrible thoughts, including, as we know, thoughts of sexual assault. They're successful at engaging young males and those who identify as male, so we need to offer them something else.

Marie-Gabrielle Ménard: Do you mean that we need to offer something else online and have positive male role models online?

Michel Dorais: Yes, absolutely. There are none. Name a positive male influencer.

Marie-Gabrielle Ménard: There's Alexandre Champagne.

• (1135)

Michel Dorais: You know, there are very few. There aren't many people countering those ideas, and that's why we need to do more.

For my part, I really like what the YWCA is doing in Quebec City. That association offers guys games and fun activities to show them that there are other options, that you can be a pro-feminist guy and that feminism is good for everyone.

Guys need to understand that. They need to think critically, and indeed, they need to learn that in daily life, at school, in sports, at home. Wherever there are guys, we have to be there.

Marie-Gabrielle Ménard: It takes money.

Michel Dorais: Indeed, it takes money, but it also takes smart, passionate people. It takes determined people. It will also take men who are public figures to step into the spotlight.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

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

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

I thank the four witnesses, Mr. Dorais, Ms. Chan, Ms. Graydon and Ms. Parent, for being with us for this study, which proves to be increasingly essential and necessary at each meeting.

Ms. Parent, congratulations on the little boy that you've been carrying for six months. For my part, on Friday, we're going to celebrate my daughter's fourth birthday. You're worried about your boy, and I'm worried about my girl. What does the future hold for them, given this rise of masculinist ideology? By the way, I'm going to start with you. You said something that was music to my ears.

Two years ago, I invited Léa Clermont-Dion and Guylaine Maroist to show their documentary *Backlash* to celebrate International Women's Day. Their request was clear. They had called on the Quebec government, but also on the federal government, to do something, but they realized that the regulation of online hate falls more under the Criminal Code and federal jurisdiction. They were therefore asking for cyber-violence controls and the regulation of online controls.

We could talk about education, particularly the issue of cell-phones in schools, but that's not under federal jurisdiction. For my part, then, in the context of this study, I really want to focus on the control the federal government has over the regulation of platforms. Furthermore, as you said, it's a matter of political will. You provided plenty of examples of places that have done it, Europe, Australia, Great Britain and many others.

What's missing here to implement this regulation and control of cyber-violence?

Emmanuelle Parent: First, the former Bill C-36, which addressed online hate speech, was the subject of many discussions in Canada before being shelved, as they say. I think it should be

brought back to give the effort teeth and make progress on the issue, but I'm not a legal expert.

Then, often, when countries pass a law like the Online Safety Act, they establish an independent regulator that's responsible for enforcing the law, in order to punish platforms if they don't remove hate speech, for example, or if they don't provide accountability by reporting on transparency measures. The eSafety Commissioner in Australia and Ofcom in the United Kingdom are responsible for that. I think such a body would be a good option for Canada. It would monitor children and have a mandate to protect them.

Indeed, even if we educate them neighbourhood by neighbourhood, there are still children who won't be reached because of inequalities. Canada is a vast territory, so as we've seen in countries that have implemented such laws, if we tackle the source, namely the platforms, it will be not only children who benefit, but also adults. I contacted some platforms, and they told me that as long as there was no law, they would not co-operate. TikTok complies with the laws in Europe. Why comply with them here? The platform will be at a disadvantage in relation to other platforms. That's why your role with respect to the platforms is very important. Even though I speak to the provincial government, you rightfully mentioned that it's really at the federal level where you can make a difference for everyone.

Andréanne Larouche: Ms. Graydon, you can add your comments. I was just about to turn to you.

As for the role of women in the political sphere, please know that I'm a member of the interparliamentary union and that I represent my party within that group. I've participated in international meetings on how to foster more diversity in parliaments and create more space for women.

The issue of cyber-violence and violence discourages women, because no matter how hard we try to apply quotas and attract women, we're regressing, as you mentioned. We're regressing because women won't want to expose themselves or expose their families and children to this violence. The worst part is that it's not just men who are responsible. In politics, we're in a boys' club, but women themselves spread misinformation, circulate incorrect information and attack other female politicians, saying, for example, that they're against a bill when they've voted in favour of it. I find this kind of bullying among women and between groups of women unacceptable. It discourages women from taking their place in politics.

What's missing for us to have positive role models, to stop regressing and to allow women to take their place in politics, not against men, but alongside men?

• (1140)

[English]

Shari Graydon: That kind of targeting of women online and in political spaces happens all around the world. Canada is not unique in that.

The fact that we are 73rd and that there are 72 other countries that are doing better than we are and the fact that you, as women, are sitting in this chamber, have chosen to run, have been elected and are operating in these spaces.... There are a lot of women and men who will never run for politics for all sorts of reasons. There are a lot of women in this country and in many other countries who are stepping forward. In Mexico, they have fifty-fifty. In many other countries, they have many women willing to run.

One of the things the research suggests is that the more women are present in political life, the more influence they have over the nature and tenor of the conversation. It improves as a result.

I would also say that I was so struck that all of the countries, the parliaments, that have implemented the preventative measures, working with the platforms, have many more women in their legislatures than we do.

The presence of women in decision-making places and their proclivity for protecting women and children is likely to help everything at the same time.

[*Translation*]

Andréanne Larouche: Sometimes it feels as though we can't fight the misinformation and fake news going around, so that certainly contributes to this problem as well.

Thank you very much.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

Now we will go into our second round of questions.

We'll start with Ms. Cody for five minutes.

Connie Cody (Cambridge, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair, and through you, I want to thank all the witnesses for coming today.

There's a lot to discuss. I'll start with Monsieur Dorais, if I may.

You said you wanted to focus on prevention, so I'm going to ask you some questions around that.

In your letter, you stated, "One person's rights do not detract from another's." With that logic, should a credible prevention strategy also acknowledge and address generalized male bashing directed at boys and men, including from antagonistic female online influencers, when that messaging contributes to resentment and withdrawal among young men? Could that be the catalyst pushing some boys to these extreme spaces?

[*Translation*]

Michel Dorais: Can you repeat the question? The interpretation isn't working.

[*English*]

Connie Cody: It was based on your letter about—

[*Translation*]

Andréanne Larouche: Can we suspend the meeting? There are technical difficulties.

Michel Dorais: It's just the last sentence I didn't hear.

[*English*]

Connie Cody: Okay.

Would you say that antagonistic female online influencers contribute to resentment and withdrawal among young men and boys? Could that be the catalyst that's pushing them to extreme spaces?

[*Translation*]

Michel Dorais: As I said earlier, nature abhors a vacuum. It needs to be filled. Boys are looking for role models and seeking discussions about the male condition, and much of what they hear comes from influencers and is often negative. As mentioned earlier, it even comes from political figures, who receive a lot of attention and are closely followed.

When I talk about prevention, I talk about a counter narrative. Boys need to develop critical thinking and understand that feminism is good for everyone because it's about gender equality and everyone benefits from gender equality. Until we do that, until we do it more, I'll be very worried. I'm a man, as you can see, but I'm just as worried as the women who are here. I have a son. He's a grown-up now, as you can tell from my age, but I might have grandchildren one day. I'm very worried about the impact this is having. This reactionary men's movement is having many negative effects. That's why we need to be everywhere. That's why I mentioned interdepartmental committees earlier. In Ottawa, you deal with justice, but you also deal somewhat with health, and you fund things.

[*English*]

Connie Cody: There's a lot of male bashing going on online as well. There's the possibility that boys perceive that messaging as presuming that all of them are aggressors. Fairness in messaging is crucial to keeping them engaged.

Should government support initiatives that explicitly reject harmful narratives that are targeting boys and men as well, just as they reject misogyny, to prevent this alienation?

• (1145)

[*Translation*]

Michel Dorais: Boys must be protected from themselves. That's what I would say. I think my colleagues mentioned it earlier. This discourse is so negative. Since there's no alternative discourse, the boys jump right in. There's nothing else. We talk a lot about protecting women, but we need to protect young men from themselves.

I'm not sure I fully understood your question, but I believe it was along those lines.

[*English*]

Connie Cody: That's okay. I'll continue with Ms. Chan.

According to a 2025 Public Health Agency of Canada report, 54% of girls in grades 9 and 10 are on social media almost all the time throughout the day, as compared with 39% of boys. Based on that difference in usage, would you observe that girls and boys experience different or disproportionate patterns of online harm?

Esli Chan: I want to add to the previous point as well. I think with online and working with young boys, the difference is confronting toxic masculinity and not masculinity in itself. There are many ways to express very healthy masculinities. The root of the issue really is this toxic nature, this warped understanding of how to express masculinity and what that constructs around visions of feminism.

On the second point, about what girls experience online being different from what boys experience, I think there definitely is a difference. I think algorithmic tendencies push different content to different demographics. I think about the social expectations of women and young girls online to look a certain way or to perform a certain way. These things inform how young girls develop and have an impact on their mental health.

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

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

I want to thank each and every one of you for being here. Thank you for being here today and for spending your time answering these questions.

Ms. Graydon, I've been listening to you talk about the politics, where we are in the world and things like that. Do you feel that political leaders play a role in the normalization of this rhetoric? When politicians state that women should be worried about their biological clocks, or that diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives are racism, would you agree that these anti-feminist statements are deterring women from entering this sphere and having that equal space?

Shari Graydon: It doesn't help. I don't know that you could blame those statements alone, clearly. However, statements by public officials who have power, who are seen, admired, respected and understood to be wielding power, clearly have a disproportionate impact on attitudes more broadly. With what we're witnessing in the U.S. and the normalization of behaviour that a year ago we would have been shocked and unable to predict, the fact that that is now so normalized and is infecting not just that nation but the rest of the world, those pronouncements by politicians absolutely have an impact, are heard, internalized and then expressed in all sorts of ways by boys, girls, adult men and women.

Juanita Nathan: I want to ask you about the movement #Men-GoingTheirOwnWay. This comes out of the online anti-feminist manosphere. In fact, the Leader of the Opposition was caught using these hashtags in the YouTube videos.

Can you explain the origin of these hashtags and what they represent within the manosphere and what it signals when language like this enters mainstream political spaces?

Shari Graydon: I can answer the last question. I don't know about the origins of the Men Going Their Own Way movement, or if any of my colleagues do. Maybe as a group, we could start.

• (1150)

Juanita Nathan: Maybe somebody who knows could answer that part of the question.

Yes, go ahead.

Esli Chan: I think Men Going Their Own Way is part of this larger manosphere subculture that you had established. Another part of that is incels, involuntary celibates, men's rights activists or pickup artists. There are all these different subcultures that are fundamentally under this category of manosphere.

What we see is that a lot of that language is being normalized within regular everyday conversation. I think of words like "looks-maxxing" that originated from this kind of incel community, but we see it being used by young boys and potentially girls in their everyday parlance. We see that kind of online language that is more associated with these ideologies becoming part of the everyday conversation now.

Juanita Nathan: Thank you, Ms. Chan.

I have a question about AI for you.

Based on your research, how are social media algorithms or recommended systems and influencers and economies actively shaping young Canadians exposed to these anti-feminist ideologies, particularly by normalizing misogyny and pushing users toward increasingly extreme content? How does this play out in AI and how it influences young people?

Esli Chan: I think ultimately what algorithms do is push content that is going viral. They often will rank content based on their views, their shares, and push that more towards other individuals to capture their attention. Inherently that often can lead to very misogynistic beliefs being pushed because of this virality. Someone might share it not necessarily because they believe it, but they find that it's an interesting take, is controversial, and so that kind of content will be pushed forward.

It's also an issue of structural design. I think about cases like Reddit where people can upvote and people can be anonymous online. These are different ways that platform design itself, apart from algorithms, can also contribute to harm.

Juanita Nathan: Thank you so much for that answer.

Did you want to add to that, Emmanuelle?

[Translation]

Emmanuelle Parent: Absolutely. I'd add something about young boys. I talk to a lot of boys who are into more radical movements on social media.

It's important to understand something: when they're in a school setting and they express masculinist or hateful views, they'll immediately be silenced, from their perspective, by the teachers. Online, they'll be encouraged to open up. They're given words for their feelings. They'll be told things like "You're a teenager, you don't think you're good-looking, you're not getting girls, you don't see yourself in the future, but there are people who are here for you."

That's why I bring up the fact that young people need this sense of community. Unfortunately, as was explained here, the algorithms will push them toward extreme content rather than inspiring models, as Mr. Dorais has pointed out time and time again.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

[Translation]

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

Andréanne Larouche: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Where should I begin? There are so many questions to ask.

I'll turn to you, Mr. Dorais, because I want to note that there's misinformation. Seeking to regulate social media and the online giants isn't about stifling anyone's freedom of expression; it's about drawing a line to indicate how far you can go without it becoming an attack. If I threaten someone in person, it's considered an assault under the Criminal Code. If such a direct attack occurs online, it should also be considered criminal. It's not to stifle freedom of expression.

Once again, the other question is what falls under federal jurisdiction. We're talking about education. We're also talking, for example, about family courts, which are more under Quebec's jurisdiction. Sport'Aide is a great organization in Quebec that I discovered following the sexual assault scandals at Hockey Canada. Those scandals led us, at the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, to conduct a study on toxic masculinity in sports. It was a very revealing study. Moreover, there have been some great initiatives put in place. For example, Léa Clermont-Dion was able to speak to young players in the major junior hockey league about positive masculinity and the fact that, even as hockey players, they can embody positive masculinity.

I'd like to hear your comments. I think it requires a cultural change in sports in general. The minister Kirsty Duncan passed away recently. I read an article saying that a good way to pay tribute to Kirsty Duncan and her memory was to hold an independent public inquiry to shed light on toxic masculinity in sports. What do you think?

Michel Dorais: The problem is that it's very poorly funded. The extraordinary Sport'Aide program *Demain un homme* is ending in a few weeks because there's no funding. Like Ms. Clermont-Dion, I've worked in the sports field, especially with hockey people. If Sport Canada, for example, required that 1% of the money spent on our youth....

I can say something, but I won't name anyone. I offered to give, almost for free, a training course that cost \$10 per youth. It wasn't that much, but people told me it was way too expensive. I asked them how much it cost when a young person committed a sexual

assault. They told me it cost a million dollars or more, so I asked them, "Don't you think \$10 per young person is a good investment?" They replied no, because they have insurance and the insurance pays. You see? That's it. It's terrible. We need to change the mentality that money is what drives everything.

The lives of women who are the victims of violence are very important. There are many young men who are stars in their sport—I won't name anyone in particular—and who take advantage of it. These young people are leaders in their community. They're models. We need to intervene there. There should be funding for that. Sports federations should be forced—because I think we have no choice at this point—to say that they will do something and take steps. We need to train young people and train coaches, because the coaches have a lot of power.

I conducted a survey of nearly 500 young people in semi-professional sports. When asked who has the most power to influence them, they don't say online influencers. They say their coach, so I gave a day-long intensive training course to coaches in one federation. That effort needs to be multiplied, but there's no money. Teams don't want to spend money on that. It's good the government subsidizes it—I'm really happy about that—but I think sports federations and people who own teams, who are often very wealthy, should contribute more as well.

• (1155)

[English]

The Chair: *Merci beaucoup.*

I want to thank all of our witnesses today. You have given us great information. Thank you so much for your time.

We're going to suspend briefly to change over for our second panel.

• (1155)

(Pause)

• (1200)

The Chair: We are back for the second panel.

I want to welcome our witnesses who are appearing by video conference.

From the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, we have Witness 1—this is to protect their identities—director general, counterterrorism, and Luc, director general, assessments, at the Integrated Threat Assessment Centre.

Thank you both for being here today.

The witnesses will share their time for the opening statement. Together, they have five minutes.

You may begin.

[Translation]

Witness-Témoïn 1 (Director General, Counter Terrorism, Canadian Security Intelligence Service): Good afternoon, chair and members of the committee.

I am here on behalf of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, CSIS. My name is Jean-Pierre, and I am the director general for counterterrorism.

[English]

I would like first to thank the committee for inviting CSIS to appear on this very important issue.

I will take this opportunity to situate anti-feminist rhetoric within the current threat landscape and discuss the pathways to violent extremism and CSIS's efforts to counter these threats.

CSIS takes ideological, religious and political extremist violence very seriously. It continues to analyze, investigate and mitigate threats of violence directed at women, as well as at the 2SLGBTQIA+ community in Canada.

[Translation]

Gender and identity-driven violent extremism is a distinct category of ideologically motivated violent extremism, or IMVE. While it continues to pose a significant threat to Canada's national security, much of what happens in the broader threat landscape is criminal, but not related to national security. It can be awful but lawful, meaning that it falls below the threshold to be considered a criminal act or a threat to national security.

CSIS is mandated to investigate and counter threats that meet the national security threshold, as defined in section 2(c) of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service Act. CSIS assesses whether threat actors have intent and capability to use serious violence, or encourage or inspire others to engage in serious violence. It assesses whether they are motivated in whole or in part by an ideology, and have the objective of affecting societal change outside the political process.

[English]

The violent extremist landscape in Canada is complex and there is no one-size-fits-all world view. Not everyone's path of radicalization is the same, nor is it linear.

Extreme anti-feminist rhetoric is a national security issue only when associated with ideological, religious and political extremists who engage in violence in support of anti-gender identity beliefs. These beliefs could stem from misogyny, homophobia, transphobia, religious interpretations, conspiracy theories or a generalized fear of socio-cultural change.

To counter these threats and protect public safety, CSIS continues to vigorously investigate and disrupt threat activities in collaboration with foreign and domestic security intelligence and law enforcement partners.

I will conclude by noting that while CSIS cannot publicly comment on its operational activities or ongoing investigations, I welcome this opportunity for a frank and transparent discussion on the

threat that Canada's youth may be facing. I will be happy to answer your questions.

● (1205)

[Translation]

Luc M. (Director General, Assessments, Integrated Threat Assessment Centre, Canadian Security Intelligence Service): Thank you, Jean-Pierre.

[English]

Madam Chair and honourable members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today.

My name is Luc, and I am the director general of assessments at Canada's Integrated Threat Assessment Centre, or ITAC.

ITAC is a fusion centre that brings together experts from across the Canadian security and intelligence community. Our mandate is analytic. We provide decision-makers and security partners with rigorous, all-source threat assessments to help safeguard Canadians and advance Canadian interests. We do not conduct investigations or enforcement activities.

ITAC assesses national security threats to Canada and Canadians, including the likelihood of violent extremist attacks. These assessments inform the national terrorism threat level. Our focus is on threats that have progressed to the violent extremism end of the spectrum, where we assess ideology alongside indicators of intent, capability and a willingness to use lethal violence.

[Translation]

From this perspective, anti-feminist ideology is increasingly relevant to Canada's national security landscape.

I want to be clear that ITAC does not assess ideology in isolation, nor do we consider the expression of beliefs—however controversial—to constitute a national security threat. The vast majority of individuals who hold anti-feminist views will never engage in or support violence.

However, our assessments indicate that, in certain contexts, anti-feminist ideology can function as an enabling factor along pathways to violent extremism. These narratives can provide grievance frameworks that legitimize hostility toward women and gender equality, and elements of them are consistent with those observed in ideologically motivated violent extremism.

[English]

In some cases, anti-feminist narratives serve as early points of engagement, particularly in online environments, and may intersect with other extremist ideologies, including violent extremist interpretations of religion that promote rigid gender hierarchies. These assessments do not concern religious belief broadly, but rather the use of ideology to justify serious violence.

From a national security perspective, anti-feminist ideology warrants attention when it appears alongside indicators of violent intent. Women, including elected officials, journalists and educators, may be portrayed as undermining social order, which can contribute to environments where harassment, threats and, in rare cases, violence become more likely.

In closing, ITAC will continue to work with its partners across the intelligence, law enforcement, policy and prevention communities to assess emerging trends and provide early warning of violent extremist threats.

Thank you for the time today. We are happy to take your questions.

The Chair: Thank you so much.

The interpreters have asked me to remind everyone, before we go into our questions, that if you're on Zoom, if you could put yourself on mute when you're not speaking, it would be helpful to them.

We're going to begin our round of questioning with six minutes for Madam Vien.

[Translation]

Dominique Vien: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Hello, Jean-Pierre and Luc. It makes me a little uncomfortable to call you by your first names. We're very pleased to have you with us today. Our study is coming to an end. I believe you're providing us with a new perspective, one we haven't had since the beginning of our meetings on this topic.

I'm having a bit of trouble understanding something. I don't know which of you two is going to answer me.

How does CSIS work? You monitor, you keep watch, you observe the phenomena happening. When you see something that's concerning, you inform the police. Is that correct? Can you explain that to us quickly, so that we understand it properly? How are you actors in this phenomenon of anti-feminism?

Witness-Témoïn 1: I'm Jean-Pierre. First of all, I'm responsible for the counterterrorism program at CSIS. Essentially, CSIS, as compared with ITAC, which I will let Luc speak about, is responsible for investigating, analyzing and then communicating its analyses concerning threats to Canadian security. Mainly in the field of terrorism, the vast majority of the time, our investigations are of interest to law enforcement agencies, primarily the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. We work with all municipal and provincial law enforcement agencies across the country, as well as with international law enforcement agencies.

• (1210)

Dominique Vien: Perfect.

Of course, all this has ramifications. Information in the media and on platforms travels. It has no borders.

What are you currently observing when it comes to anti-feminism? Is this a phenomenon that's new to you? Do you say to yourself, "My God, there wasn't that much of it before, the phenomenon was somewhat isolated, whereas now, it's something more serious"? You seem to want or be able to draw links to extremism and terrorism. Did I understand correctly?

Luc M.: Thank you for the question.

I'm Luc. In my opinion, anti-feminist ideology has existed for a long time. I think you've heard experts in the past who explained the history of all this.

In my opinion, the big change in recent years is really the merging of anti-feminist ideology with other ideologies. Essentially, we've noticed the trends that have emerged in recent years. It's really the merging of different ideologies.

Dominique Vien: What are the other ideologies?

Luc M.: There are xenophobic ideologies or anti-government ideologies, for example. All these ideologies blend together to become what's called a "merged" ideology, which ultimately leads to the extremist attacks we see being—

Dominique Vien: Thank you. Excuse me for interrupting, but I have very little time.

So far, have you referred many cases and files to law enforcement agencies? Does it represent 10%, 50%, 60% of your agents' workload? Are your men and women well trained to understand the phenomenon of anti-feminism?

Witness-Témoïn 1: Thank you for the question.

Yes, I'd say that, over the last 15 years, there have been more and more cases that we're referring to police. However, as I initially mentioned, the vast majority of these activities don't fall under our mandate; rather, they fall in the criminal realm. As soon as we have information that reaches the threshold of criminality, we ensure that the RCMP or the appropriate police department is informed.

With respect to training, yes, our staff receives training, but, as I mentioned, it's not like we're conducting a criminal investigation into violence against women. It's part of a mixed ideology that, to a certain extent, has increased in recent years and that motivates our targets with respect to religious or ideological extremism.

Dominique Vien: I'd like you to tell me one thing, gentlemen. I asked the previous panel this; I don't know whether you heard it. This phenomenon may be bigger than we think—

Witness-Témoïn 1: I apologize for interrupting. Unfortunately, we didn't hear that.

Dominique Vien: It's okay. In fact, the question I asked is this: People are on social media, on the platforms, so should parliamentarians, intelligence experts and police consider that the next step could be physical violence in the streets?

This morning, we're discussing the issue of terrorism, among other things. Could we fear a certain violent outbreak? Is that something you foresee?

[English]

The Chair: Give a brief response, because we're at the end of the member's time.

Witness-Témoïn 1: Yes.

[Translation]

There are only a few cases. It's important to understand that the vast majority of Canadians are not individuals of interest to the service. We're talking about a small number of individuals in the country who are willing to act based on ideology.

Dominique Vien: Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

Now we have Mr. Chen for six minutes.

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

First I would like to thank the witnesses.

I'd also like to thank the people at CSIS for the great work they do each and every day to protect Canada and uphold our national security.

Today we heard from other witnesses who talked about the rise of anti-feminist ideology globally. To what extent is gender-based violence in Canada inspired by transnational networks? How does CSIS collaborate with security and intelligence agencies in other countries to counter gender identity-driven violence and other forms of ideologically motivated violent extremism with a transnational nexus?

• (1215)

Witness-Témoïn 1: Madam Chair, from a CSIS perspective, certainly we work with allies, not only in the Five Eyes but allies all over the world in combatting this threat. Perhaps my colleague Luc wants to add something to this.

Luc M.: Certainly. From an ITAC perspective, we work collaboratively on the international sphere with Five Eyes as well as the far broader global sister agencies that ITAC has. We work domestically very closely with a variety of partners to really understand the issue of anti-feminism. That is one of the issues of IMVE, ideologically motivated violent extremism. There are many other factors that we look to understand with our partners.

Through our mandate, which is to do the assessments of threats, threats of a violent extremist nature, we're able to inform those partners—prevention and operational partners—by working very closely with them.

Shaun Chen: As a member representing Toronto, I can tell you that my constituents and the people of our city were shocked, as indeed were Canadians across the country, to see the Toronto van attack in 2018 and the Toronto spa attack in 2020. We all know about the École Polytechnique attack in 1989. These are extremist attacks, and witnesses in our study have described the links between such events and the rise in anti-feminist ideology. The spa attack case represented the first prosecution in Canada involving incel ideology. The accused young person pleaded guilty to first-degree murder and attempted murder. The judge found that these offences met the definition of terrorism under the Criminal Code and sentenced him as an adult to a term of life imprisonment.

In cases of gender identity-driven violent extremism, has CSIS observed common factors or warning signs, including behaviours or indicators, leading up to an attack?

Witness-Témoïn 1: Essentially, each case is different within the terrorism landscape, unlike, I would say, 15 to 20 years ago. Individuals are influenced by a multitude of different factors, a lot of them personalized. As my colleague referenced, it's a merged influence that motivates them to conduct an attack. There's not really one specific common trait amongst all these attacks, except a deep hatred, obviously, of women.

Luc, did you want to add something?

Luc M.: Very quickly, in terms of indicators, there are definitely some indicators we look for. These are not specific to anti-feminist ideology. They are much broader and extend to violent extremism writ large. They are really indicators of mobilization to violence.

It could be increasing rhetoric verging on violence on social media or amongst discussions with their friends and their groups. It could be the posting of certain types of documents that seem to indicate they're going towards violence. It could be the selling off of assets, etc. There are numerous indicators we could definitely go into, but I know you are pressed for time.

Shaun Chen: I have one quick question.

When CSIS assesses a threat and it is deemed not to meet the threshold of national security, how do you work with partners across the country to make sure those threats are addressed accordingly?

• (1220)

Witness-Témoïn 1: We have a framework to guide our interactions and our exchange of information with the police of jurisdiction. The framework [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] on a daily basis to ensure that there are no gaps.

Shaun Chen: Okay.

Thank you very much.

[Translation]

The Chair: Ms. Larouche, you have the floor for six minutes.

Andréanne Larouche: Thank you, Madam Chair.

It's interesting to hear the perspective of Luc and Jean-Pierre, who confirm that anti-feminist ideology is not a trivial matter and is taken seriously nonetheless.

I'd like to talk about possible solutions. The committee is seeking recommendations as to what we can do to better combat these movements. We heard from researchers from Université de Sherbrooke, David Morin and Marie-Ève Carignan, who are very interested in violent extremism and radicalization. They came to talk to us about the lack of data on the anti-feminist movement.

Are you also concerned about the lack of data on this phenomenon? Would it be good to try to get more?

Luc M.: Thank you for the question.

As far as we're concerned, our mandate is focused on violent extremism, meaning violent attacks that result in death or significant bodily harm. Ultimately, we do look at the available data, but as a government representative, I don't have an answer for you regarding data on anti-feminism.

Andréanne Larouche: Do you have anything to add, Jean-Pierre? Otherwise, I'll move on to my next question.

Witness-Témoïn 1: No, I have nothing to add.

Andréanne Larouche: The two researchers, particularly Mr. Morin, discussed the intersectionality of these movements. We're talking about xenophobia, homophobia, racist ideas, colonialism and transphobia, among others.

Why is it concerning to see all these extremist movements interconnecting, and how do they add to the threat?

Luc M.: Thank you for the question.

We need to be careful when we say that the movements are all interconnected. It's true that intersectionality exists, but I don't think the movements are actively doing that. It's instead the individuals, their own desires, their own fears and their own beliefs that motivate them. They're the ones who will subscribe to different ideologies to support their own beliefs and grievances. That's what is important when we examine this issue, and that's what we're looking for.

Andréanne Larouche: What legislative tools would help you intervene against these threats?

Luc M.: As for legislative tools, we use the current legislation. ITAC produces threat assessments that inform politicians and the government, so they can make informed decisions. As for decisions on new laws or new regulatory frameworks, I don't think ITAC or CSIS can give you an answer.

Andréanne Larouche: Okay.

New legislative measures could help you be more effective, but you can't provide an answer on that right now.

You talked about social networks. How is the research on the dark web going? We know that, on the dark web, groups are radicalizing and young men are making threatening statements while seeking the support of peers. Do you have all the legislative tools you need to intervene in that space?

• (1225)

Witness-Témoïn 1: I believe that Parliament is currently looking into proposals on the matter. The Department of Public Safety is probably in the best position to tell you the status of those proposals. Otherwise, we have all the necessary tools.

That said, given the increase in the threat and the number of individuals in Canada seeking to commit a terrorist attack, I certainly wouldn't be opposed to having more resources to counter these activities.

Andréanne Larouche: Can you provide us with more information on the additional resources that might be helpful to you?

Witness-Témoïn 1: We could have more staff.

Andréanne Larouche: That means investments in public safety are needed, so there are more financial resources and therefore more human resources. Is that what you're implying?

Witness-Témoïn 1: Yes.

The Chair: Thank you.

[English]

We're going to Ms. Cody for five minutes.

Connie Cody: Thank you, Chair.

Thank you for coming here today and helping us by answering our questions.

For the record, does CSIS have a formal definition of anti-feminism or do you only assess the issues we're discussing under your IMVE category for gender-driven violence?

Luc M.: In terms of how we look at things and what we look at in particular at ITAC, it is really focused on if it's anti-feminist ideology, it has to be framed within the violent extremism context. It has to have an application of serious violence. It has to have an application towards...and by "serious violence" here, I mean lethal violence or violence intended to cause bodily harm.

It also has to have a desire for social change. When an individual is looking to conduct an attack, whether it's based on anti-feminist ideology or other ideologies, they are always looking to do a much broader thing. This is an attack which is the national security nexus that CSIS and ITAC look at.

Connie Cody: Okay.

We often speak of the online male commentators. If an online female commentator made similar antagonistic and hostile statements about men, would CSIS view that as falling within your gender-based extremist rhetoric?

Witness-Témoïn 1: Irrelevant of the sex of the individual, we would investigate.

Connie Cody: Okay.

A CSIS report states that there is a link between general fatigue and frustration with COVID-19 social isolation and an increase in ideologically motivated violent extremism. Many teachers have expressed concerns that childhood has changed from this isolation.

Based on your assessment, does CSIS believe that the younger generation being forced online during those formative years contributed to increased vulnerability to online radicalization? Has that trend continued or worsened?

Luc M.: Could you repeat the question? You broke up a little bit there. I'm sorry.

Connie Cody: I'm saying that many teachers have expressed concerns about the children in their classrooms today. Do you believe that the younger generations being forced online during those formative years contributed to the increased vulnerability to online radicalization? I'm wondering if that trend has continued or even worsened.

Luc M.: From ITAC's perspective on this, certainly the online environment has expedited the exposure to violent extremist beliefs. This has continued, I think, and has definitely not been reduced. It has likely increased in the last few years.

Whether it's youth, young men or anyone in any age bracket, really, the exposure to violent extremist messages is easily accessible. In fact, in some cases, it is promulgated by algorithms that make it easier for people to essentially be in an echo chamber where their beliefs and belief systems are reinforced. That's essentially where we think it currently stands.

• (1230)

Connie Cody: Terms like “anti-feminism,” “toxic masculinity” and “harmful ideology” lack standardized federal definitions. Do you think the federal government should clearly define these terms before acting to avoid subjective or overly broad applications?

Luc M.: In terms of what the government should and shouldn't do, our perspective at ITAC is that it is our role to provide those assessments and to let government make the decisions based on our assessments. We do not make recommendations per se. We only provide those assessments, which can be used for informed decision-making.

Connie Cody: What distinguishes organized anti-feminist movements from legitimate policy critique?

Luc M.: To us, the fact that you're an anti-feminist does not necessarily mean you're inherently violent or a violent extremist. I do think that, as abhorrent as it is, there is a need to distinguish between controversial speech and violent behaviour, and I think that's what CSIS and ITAC are in the business of doing here.

The Chair: Thank you.

[Translation]

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

Marie-Gabrielle Ménard: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you, Luc and Jean-Pierre. I agree with my colleague, Mrs. Vien; it feels very strange to call you by your first names, given your backgrounds and expertise.

I'll first address you, Luc, but I invite Jean-Pierre to respond as well.

Given your roles, I understand that you're very cautious about discussing cause and effect relationships, but I still encourage you to weigh in a bit. Can we completely rule out the possibility that the

rise of anti-feminism could someday have consequences for national security?

Luc M.: That's a good question.

In itself, anti-feminism can have an effect on national security, but as previously explained, it would really need to verge on violent extremism. The anti-feminist ideology, in itself, is not necessarily something that will undermine national security. I can't make predictions, but based on what we've observed over the last 10 years, most attacks are related to a mix of [*Technical difficulty—Editor*], so it's very rare [*Technical difficulty—Editor*].

Marie-Gabrielle Ménard: We're losing you a bit, so I'm going to continue with your colleague.

Jean-Pierre, in your duties, you also need to look at international trends. Recently, we learned from other experts who came to testify that platforms play an important role in misinformation. They do not produce the content, but they amplify it. It's noted that countries that have adopted legislation to regulate digital platforms are countries where political parity is more prevalent than in others; these are places where gender equality, to use the term “equal”, exists, to a certain extent.

Returning to the question of national security, I'd like to know whether countries that don't legislate in relation to major digital platforms can become a breeding ground for threats to national security.

Witness-Témoin 1: Thank you for the question.

Social media platforms are certainly the means used by all extremists, not only to influence and recruit people, but also to spread information that influences the vast majority of our subjects of investigation. Specifically, I'm talking about influencing people to contemplate perpetrating a terrorist act. According to our experience over the past few years, our allies in the Five Eyes and NATO all have the same [*Technical difficulty—Editor*].

• (1235)

[English]

The Chair: We're having some technical difficulties.

My advice, Luc, is to turn your camera off so that we can get as much from you as we can.

Jean-Pierre, I think we'll just try again.

We'll add some time for Madam Ménard.

[Translation]

Marie-Gabrielle Ménard: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I don't know whether you're still with us, Jean-Pierre, but I'd like to let you continue what you were saying. You were making a comparison with our NATO allies.

Witness-Témoin 1: Could you repeat your question?

Marie-Gabrielle Ménard: Yes. You were in the process of responding, but we got cut off when you were talking about comparable countries in the Five Eyes and NATO.

Witness-Témoign 1: Essentially, the situation is the same everywhere. The vast majority of extremist activities take place on social media and the Internet, or on the dark web. There's really no difference.

Marie-Gabrielle Ménard: Luc, if you're still with us, do you have anything to add to Jean-Pierre's observation?

Luc M.: No, I have nothing to add.

Marie-Gabrielle Ménard: Thank you, gentlemen.

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

Andréanne Larouche: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Gentlemen, with respect to threats, you've clearly explained your co-operation with the other members of the Five Eyes group, among others. We can see that it's a concern on the international level. There have been examples right here, such as the attack that occurred on Yonge Street in Toronto in 2018 or the one that happened in a massage parlour in 2020. Internationally, in Norway, there was also the attack by the Utoya shooter in 2011, which he committed because he received a feminist upbringing from his mother. The figures show that Canada is the second most affected jurisdiction, after the United States, by ideology-driven misogynistic violence, so international co-operation is needed.

How important is that international co-operation in the fight against anti-feminist ideology?

Witness-Témoign 1: I'll come back to my initial comments. The vast majority of these activities do not meet the threshold for our investigations, firstly. It's more in the realm of criminal matters, so it's a question you should ask my colleagues at the RCMP.

Andréanne Larouche: Is it the same when we talk about the members of the Alliance des femmes de la francophonie canadi-

enne, for example, who've been victims of bullying or violence and who've received suspicious packages or threatening handwritten notes making them fear for their safety?

In the same vein, you believe that this also falls under criminal matters and that the RCMP could intervene. Is that correct?

Witness-Témoign 1: Mainly, yes.

For CSIS to initiate an investigation, it really must suspect that a serious act of violence or terrorism is likely to occur.

Andréanne Larouche: As you mentioned earlier, for the time being, in your opinion, the link between anti-feminist ideology and violent extremism or threats of terrorist attacks has not yet been demonstrated. I believe you gave a similar answer to a question from my colleague Ms. Ménard earlier.

Is that correct?

Witness-Témoign 1: I'm sorry, but it seems there are technical issues preventing us from hearing you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Send your answer to the clerk, if you can. The question was about whether there's a link between anti-feminist ideology and terrorism. The clerk can receive that from you.

I want to thank our witnesses for being with us today.

Thank you to CSIS for the incredible work you do to keep our nation safe. Thank you so much.

The committee will now turn to some in camera business.

At this point, I would ask the public to clear the room.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]

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