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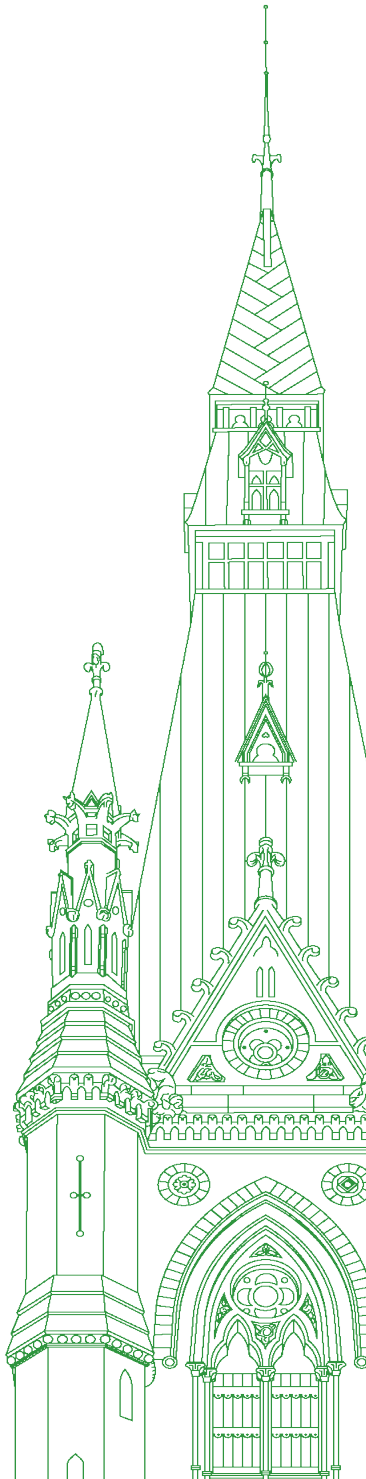
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Chair: Dominique Vien

Standing Committee on the Status of Women

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● (1100)

[*Translation*]

The Chair (Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC)): I call this meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting No. 53 of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women. We are resuming our study on the impact of artificial intelligence on women, girls and 2SLGBTQIA+ people.

As usual, this meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the Standing Orders.

To ensure an orderly meeting, here are a few rules to follow.

[*English*]

I would like to remind witnesses that committee members may ask questions in either French or English. If you will need interpretation, please take a moment now to prepare your earpiece and select the listening channel required in order to take full advantage of the time allotted for questions and answers.

[*Translation*]

For those participating by videoconference, click on the microphone icon to activate your mic. Please mute yourself when you are not speaking.

For members in the room, if you wish to speak, please raise your hand. For members on Zoom, please use the “raise hand” function.

Before we welcome our witnesses, I would like to provide a trigger warning. We discuss subjects that can disturb, offend and bring back painful memories. Committee members and panellists, please let us know if you need help. The clerk will be in a position to support you.

[*English*]

I will now welcome our witnesses.

As an individual, we have Emily Laidlaw, Canada research chair in cybersecurity law and professor, faculty of law, University of Calgary. From the Canadian Centre for Child Protection, we have Lloyd Richardson, director, technology. From Open Digital Literacy and Access Network, we have Vivian Lee, director, education and strategy.

Welcome. We will begin with opening statements.

Dr. Laidlaw, the floor is yours for five minutes. Thank you.

Dr. Emily Laidlaw (Canada Research Chair in Cybersecurity Law and Professor, Faculty of Law, University of Calgary, As an Individual): Thank you for inviting me to speak with you.

AI holds extraordinary promise, but the focus of my remarks today will be on AI safety. We are at a keen inflection point where AI is now embedded in every facet of society. However, trust in AI is low, and very little is being invested by the public and private sectors into safety. This is a problem. The buzz term is “trustworthy AI”, but this term is often used strategically. It sounds like safety, but it isn't. Thereby, it becomes a way to avoid implementing meaningful safety measures. The focus is on end-of-the-world scenarios rather than on the everyday ways that AI is already causing harm.

For the purpose of today, I want to emphasize one key message: AI does not merely reproduce existing inequality; it makes it worse. This is because AI can be used to create, scale, personalize and conceal discrimination, and it can be a tool for violence. The safety culture needs to be flipped so that AI safety, at least, is designed up front into the system, based on understanding the people and social practices at play. I do not believe this paradigm shift can be achieved through corporate governance alone, and existing laws are insufficient to meet the moment.

Let me situate this by explaining the AI harm pathway.

First is inputs and data training, and I'll offer two examples. Generative engine optimization, GEO, is the practice of creating and shaping online content so that it's attractive to generative AI systems and more likely to then inform AI outputs. It may be as simple as convincing the AI to recommend your company's mascara, to reproduce false and damaging information about a political opponent, or to reinforce negative stereotypes about women, 2SLGBTQI+ individuals and other marginalized groups.

Sometimes that discrimination in the inputs and outputs becomes the basis of decision-making harm, such as relying on AI as a recruiting tool. We all know the story of Amazon's AI tool being scrapped because it trained on old résumés, which were mostly from men, and taught itself that male candidates were preferable.

A key feature of both of these scenarios is that the bias was buried into the system.

Second is system design and operation. This is particularly acute on social media. The platforms are designed to keep users engaged in using their products and services. That's how they make their money. A few things happen here that lead to amplification of harmful content and of fuel-targeted harassment and self-harm. The platforms collect enormous amounts of information about user habits that inform the inferences made about them and that inform what algorithms and advertisers push to them. People are responsive to emotional and rage-filled content, so this pushes the most extreme content to the top of our feeds. Bad actors have figured out that they can monetize hate, and it has become a lucrative industry, fuelling discrimination and gender-based violence.

Design features make the problem worse. Children are being pushed beauty filters and are being encouraged to get plastic surgery, reinforcing unrealistic social expectations. It's an unbearable burden for children, and it's one that crosses gender lines.

Third is AI misuse. Deepfake and synthetic image abuse illustrate the problem particularly clearly. It's now easy, using AI, to create nude and nearly nude images, audio or video content. Some of this is illegal under criminal and civil law, particularly if it depicts children.

Grok is illustrative of the broader risks. It's an AI tool that was used to nudify images of mostly women, but it was also used to create other degrading images, such as women covered in bruises, tied up and gagged. Grok is integrated into X, so X's algorithm fuelled distribution of these images to wide audiences. Experiences like this send a message to women that they must be silent and invisible and that if they dare to exist in public, they will be punished and humiliated. The constant threat of sexual violence and the lack of available remedies chills meaningful participation in public life.

I'll close with the question about a federal response.

As it stands, Canadian law is fragmented and disproportionately places the burden on individuals to manage these harms. Canada does not presently have a comprehensive federal AI statute. Existing laws address parts of the problem, as will the digital safety act in Bill C-34.

A federal response should focus on shifting the burden for safety from victims to the actors in the AI supply chain: AI developers, AI platforms, and organizations that integrate AI into their products and services.

I'll close with this: The federal government should not treat innovation and safety as opposing objectives.

● (1105)

Thank you.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: That was five minutes on the dot. Thank you, Ms. Laidlaw.

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

[*English*]

Lloyd Richardson (Director, Technology, Canadian Centre for Child Protection): Good morning, everyone.

My name is Lloyd Richardson. I'm the director of technology at the Canadian Centre for Child Protection. We operate Cybertip.ca, which is Canada's national tip line for reporting the online sexual exploitation of children, as well as Project Arachnid, which is a global tool designed to curb the distribution of child sexual abuse material on the Internet.

Our organization has witnessed first-hand the impact AI is having on children, particularly girls, across our country.

The development of AI has definitely delivered some societal benefits, but it has also exposed some significant safety, regulatory and ethical gaps that disproportionately affect women and girls. I think everyone here is aware of the existence of deepfake apps and websites that market the ability to nudify—creating non-consensual intimate images of people—in exchange for money or tokens. These websites offer nudification services advertised with gendered language in the interface for their customers. For example, one particular website has an action button in the interface labelled “reveal her”. This leaves very little doubt as to who this targets and what the intent is.

Additionally, all of the sample imagery on these websites features women as models for the deepfake features. While the language on these sites speaks of women, we know it's not just adult women. It's also adolescent and younger girls, based on the images we have reported to us by victims and what we encounter online.

While interventions such as removal notices can be made with websites and apps that offer deepfake or nudification services, a more challenging issue is the open-weight AI models that we see that can be freely downloaded from the Internet. On their own, some of these AI models have safeguards to prevent the creation of sexualized material. However, they can be paired with low-rank adaptations, often referred to in short as LoRAs. These LoRAs are essentially plug-ins for AI models that add new features or allow the model to create content related to a specific individual, an object or an artistic style.

Within communities of individuals with a sexual interest in children, we see requests made for the creation of these LoRAs for specific victims or survivors of child sexual abuse. This horrific use of the technology allows offenders to generate new abuse imagery depicting previously identified and rescued victims. The same technology allows someone to create child sexual abuse material of any child they're able to download, capture a picture of or take a picture of in public.

We've catalogued and issued removal notices on 100 of these unique LoRAs, and I can tell you that the overwhelming majority of the individuals represented in them are prepubescent girls.

The harms associated with these services and offender communities are reflected in what we see reported to us through the tip line or what we've detected through the tip line. Back in 2023, we assessed about 4,000 deepfake images. In 2024, it was 9,000. In 2025, we went up to 61,000. This year, we're on track for about 100,000 that we've tagged. This only represents the imagery we're able to label, and as you can see, the problem is only getting worse.

Lastly, we also see harm in the datasets used to train some of these large models. Back in 2023, we assisted Stanford research in identifying over 1,000 known child sexual abuse images in the public LAION-5B dataset. This dataset has been used to train popular models for most image generation tools out there as it's one of the largest. Once again, the overwhelming majority of these victims were girls.

In conclusion, whether it's a commercial deepfake service, freely available AI models or the datasets used to train them, we're seeing a consistent lack of guardrails in the development and deployment of generative AI. Across each of these examples, the impact falls disproportionately on women and girls.

Thank you.

● (1110)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Richardson.

[*English*]

Madam Lee, the floor is yours for five minutes.

Vivian Lee (Director, Education and Strategy, Open Digital Literacy and Access Network): Good morning.

I am appearing today on behalf of the Open Digital Literacy and Access Network, or ODLAN, in my role as director of education and strategy. Our non-profit's vision is to help Canadian 2SLGBTQIA+ communities grow and thrive in the digital age through safe, accessible and inclusive digital spaces. ODLAN creates resources, hosts training sessions and conducts research to work towards a more equitable online experience for 2SLGBTQIA+ people. We collaborate with dozens of grassroots organizations that serve community groups from large-scale systems like Fierté Canada Pride to kitchen table-size organizations that provide space in rural and remote communities. Essentially, we help queer and trans folks stay safe on the Internet.

Professionally, I am positioned to speak to the impact of artificial intelligence on underserved communities because I've been building curricula on generative artificial intelligence, large-scale data infrastructure, data privacy and sovereignty, and open source intelligence systems for over 10 years, with over a dozen published courses for post-secondary education institutions. My doctoral research on digital citizenship education policy has allowed me to publish on the relationship between policy and the practical implementation of technical literacy in the classroom.

I also teach an original curriculum on digital citizenship education at York. This was designed to reflect digital literacy standards in alignment with the Council of Europe and was published through their databases as an example of Canadian parallels to their digital citizenship education standards. This background has given me the opportunity to see the impact of AI at both the macro international scale and the micro classroom scale.

With my academic and educational hat on, I can confidently tell you that the majority of first-year university students are using AI multiple times a day, every day. They've been doing it since the pandemic. LLMs like ChatGPT, Gemini and Claude have been adopted by youth with the same velocity that we adopted the Internet in the 1990s—with great enthusiasm and minimal instruction, to the detriment of their mental health and critical thinking skills, atrophying their neurological pathways. This has been the equivalent of giving a toddler the keys to a Ferrari and letting them figure out how to drive it on their own. Most students know how to use AI, but very few have any technical knowledge of how it works, how the output is built on datasets heavily biased towards straight white men and how their personal data is being bought and sold on a secondary market for profit.

In my work with ODLAN, I see the implementation of AI at an organizational level. There is the same lack of foundational knowledge among its users of how data is collected, analyzed and regurgitated by these AI systems they have to adopt. Many organizations serving communities like these have no choice but to work with Google G Suite or Microsoft Office 365 licences, both of which come with mandatory artificial intelligence embedded. There's no opt-out feature, yet these two American tech giants provide the only free licence options—a necessity for a non-profit's tight budget. Queer and trans folks organizations are very concerned about their data privacy and data retention. There is no affordable, Canadian-owned and -operated alternative to cloud-based systems such as G Suite and Microsoft 365.

Google and Microsoft require consent to collect and track all user data associated with your email, cloud drives, desktop hard drives and bio data surrounding those datasets. They then sell this data on the resellers market to third party companies, beyond the user's control and knowledge, as much as they want to and for as long as they want to. These two companies also require consent to have access to all organizational data uploaded to their clouds, including the ability to review and delete anything they want, whenever they want, without prior notice to the organization. An example of this happened in October to JusticeTrans, which had their entire archival database erased by Microsoft without warning. Microsoft deleted over a decade of carefully collected primary health research.

Google and Microsoft have been quietly surveilling and erasing queer and trans datasets from non-profits globally over the past few years, without options for recovery or recourse. Why are companies like Google, Microsoft and Meta able to have absolute control over Canadian, government-funded, non-profit research and 2SLGBTQIA+ community work? We know their artificial intelligence systems screen for risky or inappropriate content and consider queer and trans people and their identities as inherently sexualized. This means that trans-inclusive mental health groups that are regularly censored or filtered as inappropriate for the general public are quietly being deleted from Facebook and Instagram.

What's the solution? How can we move towards rebalancing women and gender equity with artificial intelligence and other digital infrastructure systems? The answer lies in consent-first, self-sovereign data systems that are hosted locally in Canada. People need to be able to retain ownership of their personal identities and should have to give explicit consent for what and with whom they are sharing their personal information.

This concept already exists in our federal and provincial systems of data collection for medical health data. We could extend it to include our personal data. Canada could also implement policies similar to the European GDPR, which has the right to be forgotten. This would allow Canadians to revoke their consent of data sharing with these tech giants at any time. This premise also needs to be applied to the generative AI companies.

● (1115)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Lee. That's all the time you had for your opening remarks. You will certainly have a chance to come back to what you said.

I would like to inform my colleagues that Ms. Laidlaw has to leave us at 11:50 a.m. If you have any questions for her, please keep that in mind.

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

Kelly DeRidder (Kitchener Centre, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

[*English*]

I'm going to ask each of our guests a question today.

Thank you for joining us. This is a really important topic.

Through you, Chair, Dr. Laidlaw, you mentioned that tech companies need to be held accountable. I completely agree. I think that, if tech companies can design into their software algorithms things for people to stay online and continually scroll, they also have the ability to build safety into their software. They are choosing not to do so for profitability.

What measures do you think the government needs to put in place so the tech companies are accountable for the safety of their platforms?

Dr. Emily Laidlaw: That's a great question.

The gold standard that's emerging is the idea of safety by design. That is that the companies need to assess the risks up front, put in place risk mitigation measures and then they need to assess them on an ongoing basis. The controversy is precisely where you locate that law and responsibility. Right now, some of this will, if Bill C-34 passes, be put under the role of the digital safety commission. That only addresses, though, parts of the problem that we're talking about.

I think Vivian mentions a really key point, which is over-moderation through AI of content, in particular of 2SLGBTQI+ communities and individuals. That's often because of how these AI systems are designed and how it plays out.

What I would recommend first is that we need to get a digital safety commission off the ground that would address some parts of deepfakes, some parts of child sexual abuse material and some parts of chatbots. It is still under-inclusive for the types of harms that we're talking about here, and that's really a policy decision. Do you get going now and add more later, or are we looking for tweaks at this stage?

Kelly DeRidder: You mentioned Bill C-34 and the commission. One thing that I personally see in Bill C-34 is that it leaves open a definition of harm and safe content. As this legislation moves to committee, how important is it that we get this right?

● (1120)

Dr. Emily Laidlaw: It's incredibly important that we get it right.

There are two things. I think it's a solid piece of legislation, but there are small tweaks that could be made that are incredibly meaningful. There is a risk that, if too much is added to its plate at the beginning, it makes it difficult to get it off the ground.

I would recommend a few things. One is that there would be accountability for the companies to comply with their own terms and conditions. Most of them already have policies in place; they're just not complying with them. Europe has that legislation.

I also think companies need to, as part of what they do, assess and mitigate impacts on equality, freedom of expression and privacy. We don't have that provision in this. It is also in the European one. That would address some of the concerns that Vivian raises.

Kelly DeRidder: Thank you very much.

Lloyd, first off, I'd like to thank you for the work you're doing to protect children. It's incredibly important. Thank you so very much.

Human trafficking in Canada is at a crisis level. How are these platforms contributing to this horrible industry? What can the government do to further protect children from trafficking in Canada with regard to online safety?

Lloyd Richardson: A lot of my response is going to be pretty similar to what Emily said. She was spot-on.

When we see trafficking, particularly in images related to children, it's related to a wide spectrum of actors on the Internet. We're really stumbling over how we take action in these cases.

It's not going to be one overarching set of legislation that's going to instantly solve this problem. Bill C-34 is a massive step forward. I always say that this legislation should have been around over a decade ago. The problem is that we're working backwards from a problem that has existed forever that we haven't really taken action on. Getting this into place will sort of bootstrap us into a place where we can start dealing with the wider issue here.

When I look at the Internet in general before the advent of AI, it was already very toxic to women and children. We have never solved that problem previously. We look at generative AI specifically as basically an amplifier of all of that. It's made the problem even worse. From our organization's perspective, it's getting this legislation off the ground to start and looking at how we can adapt the regulations, because that's going to be a lot of the detail as we go forward. I think you're going to see a lot of creative ways to solve some of these problems in the regulation. It really has to be flexible in what we can do going forward, because we need regulation to be able to move at close to the speed of tech. We're trying to solve the problems of 10 years ago today, and we need to adapt a process so we're able to do that quickly.

Kelly DeRidder: Thank you so very much.

The Chair: You still have 30 seconds.

Kelly DeRidder: Vivian, very quickly, you mentioned that Canada doesn't have a competitive cloud. I completely agree that we absolutely need a sovereign cloud in Canada to protect our data that's Canadian owned and Canadian headquartered. Otherwise, the U.S. CLOUD Act comes into play, and I'm sure you know all these things.

Considering we're so far behind, how do you suggest the government move forward to get a cloud?

Vivian Lee: I think it's important that our government invest in sovereign—

The Chair: That's all the time. Thank you so much.

[*Translation*]

You can elaborate on that in another round.

Ms. Ménard, you have the floor.

Marie-Gabrielle Ménard (Hochelaga—Rosemont-Est, Lib.): Witnesses, thank you for joining us today, and I appreciate the sensitivity you showed to this committee in your opening remarks. You clearly understood that this is the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, and you applied that lens.

You should know that there are currently seven committees in Ottawa looking into the development of artificial intelligence. Here, we're trying to apply that specific lens.

I'm going to try to ask all three of you a question.

First, Ms. Lee, I'd like to give you a few seconds to finish your answer, because my colleague's question was very interesting.

[*English*]

Vivian Lee: I believe that we should follow the European example that's currently being implemented. The EU has started the implementation of LibreOffice in lieu of Microsoft products, and Canada would benefit from a similar effort. This would allow us to have regulation and storage locally and would require artificial intelligence systems to recentre Canadian sovereignty. It also is based on open source software, which provides transparency and improvements that we could make without having to consult a corporate overlord.

[*Translation*]

Marie-Gabrielle Ménard: Thank you.

I'll turn to you, Ms. Laidlaw.

Now that we're talking about digital sovereignty, particularly when it comes to artificial intelligence, we can be proud as Canadians to have one of the founding fathers of artificial intelligence here, researcher Yoshua Bengio. Perhaps we can hope to have safer next steps than what other nations have.

What would you like to add? We're looking for recommendations. We'll have to take them back to the government. What can you add about digital security and sovereignty?

● (1125)

[*English*]

Dr. Emily Laidlaw: I will say that I struggle with sovereignty because we are so integrated within other jurisdictions. The questions are really what can be extracted as sovereign within Canada and where trusted partners are. We're seeing development of some of those relationships with the EU. I think that one of the key steps—I always talk about it from a legal perspective—is interoperability of laws with similar countries so that together you can find some strengths to be able to investigate the conduct of the companies.

One thing we need up front is better controls about the input that is informing the output by AI. That means you need to be able to lift the lid on what the companies are doing, and that requires researcher access and investigator access. Some of these companies are located in other jurisdictions, so we can focus on developing our own more sanitized sovereign cloud. I don't think “sanitized” is the right word, but I guess I mean better and stronger AI inputs that inform the system.

Realistically, what we might be looking at then is interoperability amongst our laws with, say, the EU, Australia and New Zealand. We could all be working together to enforce that type of accountability, better understanding and changes.

[*Translation*]

Marie-Gabrielle Ménard: I'm hearing that there are potential international allies and that alliances might be a good idea.

Mr. Richardson, in your opening remarks, you talked about harm to children, and you said that it particularly concerns young girls.

Does artificial intelligence put young girls' development at risk? If so, in what respect?

[*English*]

Lloyd Richardson: Yes, definitely, in many ways.

Specifically about what I was referring to, when we talk about young women, is that the deepfake side of things is absolutely huge. It's traumatic and crushing when these images are created and distributed, particularly on the same platforms used to create the material in the first place, and they're so widely distributed on social media platforms, which coincidentally are also the platforms that are using AI to feed certain things related to them to advertising and other harmful things. We're being attacked in so many different ways by the technology being leveraged against us.

[*Translation*]

Marie-Gabrielle Ménard: Mr. Richardson, if young girls' development is affected, is there a risk to democracy?

[*English*]

Lloyd Richardson: That's an interesting take on it.

You can probably see that through some of what we see in terms of women being gravitated to the 1950s lifestyle, right? The tradwife stuff that you see on the Internet has that bent to it in terms of having women participate in democracy. We're seeing an algorithmic push towards having women put back in that place, which is also damaging.

That's a really interesting take on it as well.

[*Translation*]

Marie-Gabrielle Ménard: Thank you.

Ms. Lee, your presentation seems to have sparked a fear in me.

Could we face a public health crisis based on the current development of artificial intelligence?

[*English*]

Vivian Lee: Yes. We are already dealing with it.

Community groups, especially in local, small, rural and remote communities, are especially impacted. Their resources are extremely limited. They are forced to work within systems that they may not agree with, but they have no other option. A lot of the small community health groups that are collecting and supporting trans and gender-diverse health data and are doing primary data collection—

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Lee. I'm sorry—

[*English*]

Vivian Lee: —often funded through the government—

[*Translation*]

The Chair: —but I have to cut you off. That brings us to the end of Ms. Ménard's time. Sadly, it always happens to you. My apologies.

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

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

Thank you, Ms. Borrelli, Ms. Laidlaw and Mr. Richardson, for being with us today.

This is a fascinating discussion. Listening to you, I remember a study we did previously on the mental health of women and girls. Several months ago, we were already talking about how undue pressure on young girls about their bodies can have an impact on their mental health. We have seen this coming for a long time now. Now we find ourselves facing a crisis and we are wondering what to do next.

I'm going to start with you, Ms. Laidlaw, because your opening remarks stem from a report on the TV program *Enquête*. A while back, there was a report on the monetization of housing, which enraged everyone, but last week's show featured a report on the monetization of anger and rage, of hate content, particularly on TikTok. It showed the extent to which TikTok and TikTok influencers are fuelled by hate content.

Can you tell us what you're seeing in that regard?

● (1130)

[*English*]

Dr. Emily Laidlaw: Yes. This is a complicated space. I would say that if an intervention is sought on Bill C-34, it actually would be to more directly address the monetization structure of social media.

Influencers make money because of views on their videos. They then form a contractual relationship with TikTok or Instagram and push more content to these users. It slowly becomes a way to push more extreme views and start shifting minds, but often it then becomes a platform where they hop to some other one. It might be that they say, “Come and check out my pseudoscience site over here and sign up for my subscription” or “Come over here and sign up for my newsletter” or whatever it is. The monetization structure doesn't necessarily stay within that particular social media.

One of the challenges is that, embedded within many of these communities, they're making money off pushing videos that tend to be extremist content that might be hate content about particular groups, but what we're also seeing increasingly is hatred towards women, that pushing of the subservience of women and girls, and that push with the incel movement that we're seeing that has led to real-world violence.

Monetization underlies it, and we should be looking a lot closer at what that structure is and the contractual relationships between the social media and the individuals who are making money off it.

[*Translation*]

Andréanne Larouche: Absolutely. In the report, there were even live scenes of domestic violence.

I'm going to read you the summary of the report, which is entitled “Drama Qc”:

> On TikTok in Quebec, live “drama” has the feel of reality TV, where creators expose their private lives in exchange for virtual gifts. In 2023, all eyes were on Florence and her troll. Their daily life, full of bickering and paid karaoke sessions, was followed live by thousands of people. When self-proclaimed vigilante Alex Wilson called out what many perceived as the violence of Florence's spouse, he rallied a large community of followers. But the story took a different turn, leading to allegations of harassment and doxxing. [Reporters] explore the consequences of the court of public opinion and the toxic spiral that can suck in those looking to call people out, sometimes feeling abandoned by the justice system.

Bill C-34 seeks to provide more tools to address this type of situation. However, we wonder about the much-touted digital safety commission that would be set up and that would supposedly be independent.

What role will elected officials play, and what reporting will be done so that parliamentarians know whether the act is effective and whether anything can be improved?

Ms. Laidlaw, do you have anything to add about what could be improved?

[*English*]

Dr. Emily Laidlaw: Yes, the independence of the digital safety commission is a real priority for me as well. I think it needs to be strengthened. For the most part, right now it is cabinet appointments to the commission. That is consistent with what historically was the Competition Bureau and the CRTC. That is what it has been. The individuals cannot be fired unless it's for cause. I think there is a real risk of pressure when it comes to what the focus of their investigations are.

I'm actually taking a closer look at that. I don't have a good answer for you right now, but I'm looking at all the different powers of the Governor in Council to be directing some of the activities of the commission.

I think it's going to be small changes to shore up that independence. We want to make sure that industry doesn't have the ear of politicians, who are then pushing this commission and shaping their investigations. They need to be able to hold the companies accountable, and we know how strong their lobbying is.

● (1135)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Larouche's time is up.

We will now begin the second round. Each member will have five minutes.

You have the floor for five minutes, Ms. Borrelli.

[*English*]

Kathy Borrelli (Windsor—Tecumseh—Lakeshore, CPC): Thank you to all of the witnesses for being here. I'm certainly gaining a lot of information and more knowledge from your responses to our questions.

My first question is for Mr. Richardson.

Can an AI system identify and correct discrimination on its own, without the need for human-in-the-loop intervention?

Lloyd Richardson: That's a tricky question. I think I would reframe it as it's probably not in all cases. I think this really underlies a point about how these AI systems are used, where human intervention is and where accountability is for an organization that leverages AI in a certain way. The issue we have right now is that there's a lack of accountability when something goes wrong with AI or there are biases related to what we're seeing.

For example, on TikTok and some of the recommended things, when you're typing something out and you're looking for something, we've witnessed circumstances where if you type out certain things related to known identified victims, they will suggest for you who you're looking for based on words you're typing in. There are circumstances where we've given feedback saying that this is happening, yet the problem doesn't get fixed. There's clearly an accountability problem in that the bias is baked in. There's no accountability for that happening in the first place, and the ability to redirect things and fix the problem is far too slow, because there seems to be very little consequence in this space.

Kathy Borrelli: What evidence currently exists in Canada about AI-powered recruitment, résumé screening systems and the error that comes from unintentional discrimination against qualified applicants?

Lloyd Richardson: I don't know that I'd have the right information to answer that given my area of focus, though I wouldn't be surprised. I mean, it's bad data in, bad data out. That's essentially the way it works with AI, so I wouldn't be surprised. I'd defer to one of the folks on the panel here to respond to that.

Kathy Borrelli: Thank you, but I have one last question for you.

If you could, please recommend the most important action for the federal government to take to ensure AI is developed fairly. What would it be and how should success be measured?

Lloyd Richardson: As I said before, I think the starting place is getting Bill C-34 across the finish line. While that's not going to explicitly address the issues we've talked about, it gives a foundation for us to build towards something where we're catching up to address this issue. That's how I would answer that.

Kathy Borrelli: Thank you.

I'd like to ask the same question of Dr. Laidlaw.

Dr. Laidlaw, I know you've spoken to this already. You've already made some recommendations for the government. What, in your mind, is the number one top priority that the government needs to get right?

Dr. Emily Laidlaw: I agree with Lloyd on Bill C-34. How about I mention one other one? I think we both agree on that one.

It is that there is a real push for AI innovation. We're seeing it with the AI council that's advising the Prime Minister, and we saw it with the advisory group last year, but there isn't a lot of focus on AI safety as part of that. It's seen as secondary to innovation.

Given how much private industry is focused on the development of innovation and not on AI safety in their own pursuits, it's really important that this is developed in a particular way through governance and oversight.

● (1140)

Kathy Borrelli: Thank you.

Vivian Lee, I'm going to ask you the same question.

What, in your opinion, is the most important thing the government needs to get right with this AI strategy?

Vivian Lee: I would agree with Emily and Lloyd on this. Regulation is the standard, and guardrails to prevent harm are noticeably absent from the current bill recommendations and from the current committee.

Also, representation on that committee is a major concern for a considerable percentage of folks who would fall under the WAGE category of gender equity.

Kathy Borrelli: Thank you so very much.

Chair, I believe I'm almost out of time.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: You have four seconds. That's just enough time for me to ask Ms. Gladu to take over.

Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton—Bkejwanong, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

[*English*]

Thank you to all the witnesses for being with us today.

Before you have to leave, Dr. Laidlaw, I have a question for you. Then I'm going to ask Lloyd Richardson the same question.

You've mentioned that AI safety is important and that we should be putting in place safety measures in system design and operation and also do assessments on an ongoing basis. I'm concerned that the horse has already left the barn, with AI being in place with bad designs and biased operational concerns. What do you believe the federal government could or should do to back things up so that we can get it right?

Dr. Emily Laidlaw: That's a great question.

The answer is yes, we're behind. We're behind right now.

I would say the number one thing is to move quickly in putting into place oversight through something like the digital safety commission. Also, right now, I think we also need to move forward with some more strategic steps about digital safety by design for AI, period, up front. Canada is lacking that, and Bill C-34 is not going to address that at all. That should be a top priority, and consultation should be undertaken right away.

Marilyn Gladu: Mr. Richardson, it's the same question.

Lloyd Richardson: If I could personally have my way, I think it would be to re-envision the rules and regs. It seems like we threw away the rules and regs when large models were being trained in the first place.

A lot of these large models were essentially predicated on a lot of illegal activity to start with. Whether it be training on child sexual abuse material, non-consensual intimate images or simply copyright material, it proliferates in all of these large models. It was illegal to start. Now we're in this bad position. I would argue that we need to take a step back and say, “The rules we had in place weren't adhered to. Are we now just accepting that this is the new reality?” I take issue with that.

I'll go back to what I said earlier relating to accountability. You have to be accountable. The way these AI models work, it's not like you can seek to have everything fit under section 230 in the U.S. In terms of the outputs of these, we accept that no one's responsible for them, because it's not an individual. It needs to be attributed to the companies using them. There was an Air Canada example where one of their agents was discussing a flight with a customer: Here's the price. Air Canada went back on it. Well, no, that's not acceptable. If you're going to use AI in this way, you need to be responsible for the actions that come out of them.

I think both are actually important. One is probably a little more likely than the other in terms of the genie being out of the bottle, but there you have it.

Marilyn Gladu: Thank you for that.

Ms. Lee, a question was asked about whether children's mental health is being affected because of the situation. You said it's already here. I was astounded to hear, when I was in debate on Bill C-34, that the number of child exploitations that the police were investigating was 19,591 last year, up 500% from 2014. Postpandemic, depression amongst the youth has doubled, anxiety has tripled and suicide has quadrupled.

You seem to know something about practices in other parts of the world. What best practices that other countries are doing would you suggest we put in place here in Canada?

● (1145)

Vivian Lee: I would recommend, first off, looking toward Switzerland. They've recently produced the brand new Euria LLM. It is artificial intelligence that is self-sovereign, localized and environmentally flat, with no impact on their environment. It is owned and operated by the federal government of the country. It has the guardrails and community safety supports that they believe match their local sovereignty standards.

There are countries that are actively already building systems like this. We should follow suit. China has also implemented local sovereign systems. I believe we are so far behind that we need to jump forward and start looking at predictive options.

In terms of mental health in our youth communities, I'd say that was an under-reported dataset for what you mentioned earlier. I believe that number to be much higher. As we know, only a fraction of incidents are actually reported. I don't believe students have the capacity right now to access resources or even know how to ask for help.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Lee.

I now give the floor to Ms. Larouche for two and a half minutes.

Andréanne Larouche: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Once again, witnesses, thank you for being with us today. It's extremely informative to hear you speak, Mr. Richardson, Ms. Lee and Ms. Laidlaw. You all seem to agree that Bill C-34 must be passed.

Ms. Laidlaw, you talked about interoperability between Canada and other countries. As we know, artificial intelligence has no borders, but what about interoperability between the federal government, which would pass Bill C-34, and the provinces and Quebec, which have areas of jurisdiction that are affected by this issue? These include youth protection and education, in particular.

The Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage even recommended that the Government of Canada, in addressing the impact of influencers and social media on children and teenagers, recognize the jurisdiction and primacy of provincial authority over social problems and youth protection by adopting an asymmetrical and flexible approach.

Do you think Bill C-34 is sufficiently asymmetrical and flexible?

[*English*]

Dr. Emily Laidlaw: I think that Bill C-34 is only the start.

Because of the division of powers, there's a really important role for provinces to play, in particular when it comes to health and education, and also, some of the more specific civil-type harms that are normally within the jurisdiction of a province.

If I could fast forward five years, what I would imagine that we should have in place is we'd have a federal digital safety commission, and we're going to have provincial digital safety commissions as well. We have similar models in existence right now with our privacy commissioners, who often collaborate on different dimensions of these problems. I think this is the way we're going to have to look at this going forward, because there's no way that we can fully address the impacts of AI and the really acute on-the-ground harms that we're seeing without collaboration between the federal government and provincial partners.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Laidlaw.

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

[*English*]

Anna Roberts (King—Vaughan, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the witnesses.

I'd like to start off with Mr. Richardson.

You mentioned deepfakes, and I'm a little concerned about those. They've gone up to 100,000 so far this year. My concern is images of children.

As a mother and a grandmother, I am concerned about the future of our children. One of my main priorities while I'm here on the Hill is combatting human trafficking. We know that many predators use the Internet to source their victims. Do you feel that AI potentially has a role to play in finding these traffickers, bringing them to justice and keeping children safe from them, or do you feel that AI being used in this way would do more harm than good?

● (1150)

Lloyd Richardson: It's a good question.

It's a very similar answer to how I'd talk about technology in general. These things tend to be double-edged swords. While we talked about many of the harms related to artificial intelligence and the specific harms related to women and children, there are also utilities for it. For example, AI is at the heart of many facial matching things, which again is a double-edged sword. It's good for identification of victims and potentially offenders. However, it also has some privacy implications to it.

I would weigh in that the harms that have been brought along by AI definitely outweigh the good things, but it's good for us to be focusing, certainly, on the sides of AI that are absolutely useful to help protect any sort of marginalized community.

Anna Roberts: I want to go back to that for a minute. Twenty-two per cent of individuals who are trafficked are children under the age of 18. Ninety-three per cent are women. Out of that 93%, 22% are children. Human trafficking in general is an industry that is in excess of $200 billion U.S. It's becoming one of the largest criminal activities in the world.

Do you not feel that the AI companies and the high-tech companies that create the AI should be regulated to ensure that our children's safety comes first?

Lloyd Richardson: Absolutely. I think they should be regulated beyond that. The child safety aspect is the lowest bar that we're looking for here. When we see harm exacted on children in ways that these companies could have and should have known better—or in some cases we see just outright negligence—that's the lowest bar we should look at for these companies, outside of the other harms related to the use of these technologies that we're seeing.

Anna Roberts: I'm going to ask you a personal question. Do you feel that predators should be sentenced to the maximum sentence of the law?

Lloyd Richardson: Generally speaking? It's a very nuanced question. Do I think that sentencing is adequate in all cases? Absolutely not. I think, when we look at abuse, particularly related to children, we need to look at what.... The punishment is an important thing, but I think the side question there is, we're looking for the public safety and further harm to children that can be caused by someone like that. If incarceration is the partial answer to that, I think that, yes, it absolutely needs to be looked at, because public safety, in particular child safety, is the paramount thing that we're talking about here.

Anna Roberts: The reason I'm asking that is I recently met with a mother of a child with Asperger's. The child was groomed through social media. She finally found her after five years, and she's now on suicide watch.

That perpetrator, in my view, has destroyed a human being. That perpetrator should never be allowed out of jail. What are your thoughts on that?

Lloyd Richardson: There's a mix of things there. I will put the jail thing aside. Edging back to my previous comment about what we look at in terms of the safeguards going forward, knowing that we can't, with our current system, necessarily keep someone like that in jail forever, we need to look at how there is no harm going forward.

The particular example you gave relates to someone having Internet access. There are failures there. If we presume that the person is getting out of jail at some point, what are those factors we're looking at after the fact, where we can prevent harm. I think that's important.

There's also the tech-facilitated nature of that particular—

The Chair: Thank you, sir.

[*Translation*]

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

Emmanuella Lambropoulos (Saint-Laurent, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

[*English*]

I'd like to begin by thanking our witnesses for being here, for speaking to such an important issue today, for raising awareness and for helping us come up with good recommendations for this study.

I'm going to begin with Mr. Richardson.

You spoke about how victims of sexual violence are often retraumatized and that often their photos are the ones that are then turned into deepfakes. It's predators who are looking at these photos, and obviously social media companies are allowing this to happen.

Some members of Parliament here have asked and insinuated what some of the risks to the children are. I'm hoping that you can share with us, through what you've witnessed, what the consequences actually are once a child has had this happen. If government doesn't act and doesn't put the necessary tools in place, where does this end up going for these kids?

● (1155)

Lloyd Richardson: There's a whole range of examples that we see in this space.

In the most egregious examples, it's not just the imagery. It's that the imagery gets into communities of individuals who want to know more about the victims in terms of where they live, where they work and all of those things. It turns into an unwanted celebrity status amongst some of these women, which is very gendered and targeted. We see that behaviour far more directed toward adolescent girls.

We also see it going forward into life. It's not just a temporary thing where you see the abuse now. We'll get people coming in to us 10 years after this has happened, because they're looking for a job and all of a sudden their results are coming up in a search engine. There are images of them as a child with...child sexual abuse that an employer might come across. That's a sort of reality, because of the amplification of these things when they're shared in some of these communities.

The harms here are off the charts in terms of what these victims have to endure.

Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Thank you very much for that answer.

I'm going to ask both of the witnesses who are still with us today to respond to the next question. I'll start with Mr. Richardson and then move to Ms. Lee.

You've spoken a lot in favour of Bill C-34, which would require social media companies to make harmful content, including child sexual abuse material and non-consensual intimate images, inaccessible. What will it take for these companies to listen? How can countries work together to entice companies to act or have them at least comply with the policies that are already in place?

Lloyd Richardson: That's a good question. I might highlight some behaviours of some of these companies that we've seen historically, which really point in the direction of them not wanting to do it, or doing a half job of it.

For example, X and Elon Musk, etc., were ordered to remove materials that the B.C. tribunal suggested were non-consensual intimate images. Essentially, all X did was restrict Canadians' access. The rest of the world can see these illegal images, but they're restricted in Canada. We have some real cross-jurisdictional issues with this.

We touched earlier on the notion of Canada being bold. Let's talk about sovereign law. These tech companies are not bigger than Canada, and we have mechanisms that we can put in place whereby we say, “No, you cannot do this and there are going to be consequences within Canada”, whether that looks like financial penalties or even just the restriction of use within the country.

There are other countries that are getting to the same page on this, but we have to acknowledge that there will be corners of the Internet that aren't going to adhere to Canadian sovereign law. We need to think about how we, as a country, bulk up our law so that it's adhered to by some of these unscrupulous companies.

Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Thank you.

Vivian, would you like to add to that?

Vivian Lee: I believe there should be financial penalties for these tech companies that are excessive enough so that they pay attention.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Lee. I'm sorry, but that's all the time we have. As the disciplinarian, I have to follow procedure, because we have another group of witnesses coming in.

Witnesses, thank you from the bottom of my heart for giving us your time today. It was very informative. I think all of my colleagues have really enjoyed our discussions.

We will suspend for a few moments.

● (1155)

_____(Pause)_____

● (1200)

The Chair: I call the meeting back to order.

[*English*]

I'd like to remind witnesses that committee members may ask questions in either French or English. If you will need interpretation, please take a moment now to prepare your earpiece and select the listening channel required in order to take full advantage of the time allotted for questions and answers.

[*Translation*]

Please click on the microphone icon to activate your mic and mute yourself when you are not speaking.

If you wish to speak, simply indicate as such or use the “raise hand” function.

[*English*]

I will now welcome our witnesses.

From the Community-Based Research Centre, we have Jad Sinno, director of research. From the Information and Communications Technology Council, we have Lissa Matyas, vice-president of capacity building and innovation. From the Women’s Legal Education and Action Fund, we have Rosel Kim, senior staff lawyer.

Welcome. We will begin with opening statements.

Dr. Sinno, the floor is yours for five minutes, please.

Dr. Jad Sinno (Director, Research, Community-Based Research Centre):

Good afternoon, Madam Chair and members of the committee. Thank you so much for inviting me.

My name is Dr. Jad Sinno. I am the director of research at CBRC, the Community-Based Research Centre, which is a non-profit organization that advances the health and well-being of queer adults, us LGBTQIA people, across Canada. I am also an assistant professor at the Dalla Lana School of Public Health, University of Toronto.

A central pillar of my research examines how technology and society and, in particular, how digital platforms are shaping queer people's identities, their relationships and health and particularly how our communities are taking up these technologies and how they might be resisting them.

I would like to raise four interconnected issues.

The first is that we are facing a serious evidence gap. AI is evolving and entering everyday life much faster than we're able to determine its immediate consequences, let alone its long-term effects. We're already seeing evidence of algorithmic bias in AI and possible opportunities for its support of our communities, but we cannot yet say with confidence how different forms of AI are affecting the mental health, sexual, social or economic well-being of queer people across Canada, nor can we assume that, when people are using AI, it necessarily means that they either trust or welcome it. Therefore, I'm urging the federal government to fund independent, community-led social science and public health research into AI's human consequences, including disaggregated and longitudinal data, in order to study the effects over time.

The investment in understanding AI's human impact needs to keep up with the investment that we are seeing in developing these technologies. Until we have this evidence, the use of AI in essential services must proceed cautiously.

Additionally, AI is compromising our ability to produce reliable evidence as researchers. We are seeing an increase in AI bots producing convincingly fraudulent survey responses in our online research. This means that we have a limited ability to engage research participants in general but also that we're no longer able to reach our hard-to-reach populations, for example, queer people living in rural and remote communities.

At the same time, AI is being embedded into the very platforms and tools that researchers are depending on, and these are raising urgent questions about participants' informed consent, issues of data governance and the secondary use of sensitive data within research.

Second, what we must do is protect against the social, cultural and political harms that are facilitated by and through AI. Early evidence has documented various harms across generative AI systems, including the misgendering and stereotyping of queer and trans people, enabling non-consensual sexual imagery and contributing to discrimination, surveillance and misinformation.

We know from the tragedy at Tumbler Ridge in February of this year that these protections are absolutely necessary and urgent. The tragedy highlights the potential misuse and impact of unregulated AI.

Third, people need to have meaningful autonomy, including the right to opt out of AI. An individual should not have to engage with a chatbot, submit to automated profiling or disclose sensitive information in order to access health care, education, employment or public services. This requires the transparent disclosure of AI and providing human alternatives to AI services. Given the ethical concerns with the use of AI, particularly around the harms to queer communities, alternatives to AI must be protected by the federal government and made widely available.

Finally, queer people should help determine the research, standards, safeguards and limits of AI deployment.

We need to be resourcing community leadership through compensated roles, data protections and sovereignty as well as independent oversight and enforceable accountability. We need to ensure that our communities have the evidence, resources and ability to decide when these technologies can serve our well-being and when they have no place within our lives.

Thank you.

● (1205)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Sinno.

[*English*]

Madam Matyas, the floor is yours for five minutes, please.

[*Translation*]

Lissa Matyas (Vice-President, Capacity Building and Innovation, Information and Communications Technology Council): Madam Chair, honourable members of the committee, thank you for inviting me to testify today.

[*English*]

Thank you for your very important work.

I'm Lissa Matyas, vice-president of capacity building and innovation at the Information and Communications Technology Council, or ICTC. ICTC is a neutral, not-for-profit national centre of expertise with the mission of strengthening Canada's digital advantage in the global economy. We specialize in digital labour market research, workforce development and helping Canadian businesses adopt emerging technologies. Our goal is to ensure that technology is utilized to drive economic growth and innovation and that Canada's workforce remains competitive on a global scale.

I would like to approach today's discussion through the lens of Canadian economic prosperity and global competitiveness. Artificial intelligence represents an extraordinary opportunity to improve Canada's productivity, strengthen our industries and create new sources of economic growth. However, Canada cannot realize its full potential if we fail to mobilize the talents and entrepreneurial capacity of half our population.

Women are not simply beneficiaries of Canadian AI transformation; they are essential to driving it. The stakes are increasing. ICTC's latest research examines AI exposure across 505 occupations, covering the vast majority of Canadian employment. By June 2026, AI appeared in 26.5% of digital economy job postings, more than four times the proportion just one year earlier, and yet our research reveals important gaps in how women are positioned to participate in this transformation.

First, Canada risks undermining its overall workforce effectiveness if we fail to prepare workers for AI-driven change. Women hold 62.7% of employment in the 10% of occupations with the highest AI task exposure. These roles include bookkeeping, payroll administration and data entry, where AI could increasingly automate routine tasks. However, this exposure does not inherently mean job losses. Rather, it represents a critical opportunity to augment the capability of these workers by equipping them with AI, thereby driving higher-value output and ensuring that Canada's broader economic potential is realized.

Young women deserve particular attention. Our research finds that 64.3 % of employed women aged 15 to 24 work in occupations where AI is far more likely to automate and substitute their core tasks entirely rather than augment or support their work, and yet women are the highest-educated segment of the demographic in Canada. Because this systemic displacement disproportionately targets early career roles, we must ensure that young Canadians continue developing the skills and experience needed to become tomorrow's professionals and leaders.

Second, Canada cannot afford to leave significant pools of talent on the sideline. Women represent only 32.9% of Canada's digital economy workforce in the second quarter of 2026. When it comes to leadership roles, this percentage drops to 30%. This number has not increased in the last 20 years. Among 55 digital occupations studied, women held just 10.6% of jobs combining high AI exposure with greater potential for AI to complement human work.

Women entrepreneurs face greater barriers to financing, investment networks and resources needed to grow and scale their businesses. Historically, only about 4% of venture capital funding has gone to women-founded companies, compared with the overwhelming majority going to teams founded by males or mixed genders. Women are experiencing unequal access to AI training and opportunities. Women often receive less encouragement and support to develop AI skills, potentially limiting their ability to benefit from emerging technologies.

This is not simply a representation gap. It signals an economic opportunity that Canada has yet to fully capture. At ICTC we're working across the entire talent and business development pipeline. We introduce girls to digital skills and hands-on technology experiences, strengthening Canada's future talent pipeline. We also have a program for advancing women's leadership to help Canadian businesses develop and retain leadership talent. We also help women entrepreneurs build networks, access expertise and funding—

● (1210)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Ms. Matyas, I have to interrupt you because your time is up, but you will certainly have a chance to come back to certain points in response to my colleagues' questions.

[*English*]

Ms. Kim, the floor is yours for five minutes.

Rosel Kim (Senior Staff Lawyer, Women's Legal Education and Action Fund): Good afternoon.

My name is Rosel Kim. I'm a senior staff lawyer at the Women's Legal Education and Action Fund, or LEAF. LEAF is a national charitable organization that uses the law to advocate for the equality of women, girls, trans and non-binary people in Canada.

Thank you for inviting me to speak today about the impact of artificial intelligence on women, girls and 2SLGBTQIA+ people.

My remarks are based on the written brief that will be submitted to the committee, which itself is based on a longer submission to the People's Consultation on AI, which was co-written by me, Professor Jane Bailey and Dr. Nasreen Rajani.

I want to make three main points today.

First, we must resist treating AI as human or superhuman by using specific language to describe what the technology does and the harms that occur. As professors Emily Bender and Nanna Inie point out, anthropomorphizing automated systems like AI over-promises what the system can do and obscures the human responsibilities of people in charge. Endowing human qualities to technology also devalues our own humanity. For this reason, legislative or policy initiatives about AI should be specific and descriptive about the technology's function they aim to address, like automated review of hiring applications or chatbot messages that encourage self-harm or violent behaviour. They must also be specific about the harms that result from the technology, such as violation of privacy and equality rights, among others.

Second, Parliament must enact legislative and policy responses that focus on preventing harms before they occur. The technology industry has shown over and over again that it prioritizes profits over all else, including the safety and fundamental rights of its users or accountability to the public.

Canada's national AI strategy assumes that AI is a net good whose universal adoption will benefit all people in Canada. This assumption benefits the industry, because people are unlikely to adopt a system that is considered harmful, but there are known and documented harms of AI that disproportionately target and impact women, girls, trans and non-binary people.

The Office of the Privacy Commissioner's investigation into Grok found that between December 29, 2025 and January 6, 2026, users generated approximately three million sexualized deepfakes, including more than 23,000 images of children, using Grok. Another investigation of Grok-generated deepfakes by a European nonprofit called AI Forensics found that, of all the images generated by Grok that had minimal clothing, 81% presented as women.

Despite admission from Grok's account on X/Twitter that generating sexualized deepfakes of girls was illegal and wrong, many such images remained online and accessible. This shows that we need a strong government response through new legislation and the enforcement of existing legislation to prevent platforms from perpetuating harm and profiting from them too.

One example of such legislative or policy response is articulating clear no-go zones prohibiting development, use and deployment of AI systems in specific situations, including the use of facial recognition technology for mass surveillance and the use of generative AI technology to create non-consensual deepfakes. Bills like Bill C-34 are a good start, but we need to ensure that any regulatory body that will be created has adequate resources and relevant expertise, including expertise on human rights, gender-based violence and equity, for it to succeed.

Last, any legislative and policy changes must be driven by and centre people and communities who are most directly impacted by the AI industry and the technology. LEAF was a signatory among 160 advocates and civil society organizations that expressed concerns about the rushed consultation process by the federal government before it established the national AI strategy.

A democratic process requires openness and transparency to enable meaningful participation from everyone, particularly those who are the most marginalized. This can only happen with sustained funding and resources to those communities.

Thank you very much. I look forward to answering any questions you may have.

● (1215)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you so much to our valued panellist.

We hear things that are not always easy to hear.

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

[*English*]

Anna Roberts: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to all the witnesses. I'm really learning a lot today, so thank you for educating me.

My first question is going to go to Ms. Kim.

I was quite interested when you said that there were three million deepfakes and that a lot of children were in those deepfakes. I'm concerned about that because of the situation of children being exploited with AI. Do you think we need legislation to protect children and women?

Rosel Kim: Of course, we need legislation to protect children and women. I think we need to also use our existing legislation effectively to protect children and women, as well.

Anna Roberts: Would you say that the tech companies should also take responsibility and be accountable for any of this contact that's going to impact women and children, especially?

● (1220)

Rosel Kim: That's what we are advocating for, and that has been in my remarks, as well.

Anna Roberts: For me, it's very important because I've been studying human trafficking for the last four-plus years, and one of the things I'm finding is that a lot of these children, without parental supervision, get groomed into these platforms and have no way out.

What would you advise? What type of research have you done, and what safeguards could we put in place to ensure these children are not groomed through social media and AI?

Rosel Kim: There will need to be a multipronged response to address the additional vulnerabilities and marginalization that people face. That requires having accountabilities for platforms that allow the facilitation of those harms, as well as funding resources and supports that people and children can turn to so they don't face the marginalization and vulnerabilities that make them more susceptible to being exploited in the first place.

That also requires funding our social support system, so they're not in situations of vulnerability.

Anna Roberts: Thank you.

Mrs. Matyas, my concern is how we implement rules and regulations so that children aren't exploited.

Right now, children use AI and social media. This brings to my mind Amanda Todd, who unfortunately was bullied and scrutinized online and eventually committed suicide.

How do we ensure that children are protected and that tech companies make an effort to stop this type of behaviour?

Lissa Matyas: I don't pretend to be an expert in that area. Certainly, in our research and programming, that's not our area of expertise.

However, I think that digital training, cybersecurity, exposing kids in the classroom, not necessarily creating a fear that AI is bad holistically but rather having AI safety online at a very young age, even before kindergarten, is important so that kids, parents, guardians, school systems and school boards really understand some of the safety issues, and it can really equip kids to understand what some of the opportunities and some of the risks will be.

Anna Roberts: Do you think anyone under the age of 16 should have ID before going into certain platforms?

Lissa Matyas: As a parent, I would really encourage that.

Anna Roberts: Thank you for that.

Dr. Sinno, I'll direct the same question to you.

I know there are benefits of AI and advancing, but we also need to have safeguards. Do you feel that children under the age of 16 should be able to produce identification so they're not caught in that trap?

Dr. Jad Sinno: Thank you for the important question.

It is also a double-edged sword, whereby the identity protections of minors is just as important as ensuring their safety.

Queer populations and queer youth, in particular, are specifically placed in precarious situations. Requiring online identification can place them in material harms, particularly if they live within communities that do not accept them or with families who may not support them. It might place them at risk of targeted attacks from negative actors.

This is not to say that folks should be able to have access to all the harms that are made available online. Similar to Rosel's note, we need to have a multipronged approach that includes regulations that we are able to enforce meaningfully and, then, bolster the capacity of youth, minors and service providers through sustained funding and engagement, so they can address these issues.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Sinno. That's all the time we have with Ms. Roberts.

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

● (1225)

Chi Nguyen (Spadina—Harbourfront, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

[*English*]

Thank you very much to the witnesses for being here today. It's already been such a fascinating round of testimony, so let's dig right in.

I was hoping to speak to Rosel Kim from LEAF.

We have Bill C-16, which has criminalized deepfakes. We have Bill C-34 as well as Bill C-36 that is coming up in front of us as legislation to deal with this.

I was wondering if you could talk a little bit about what you'd like to see in terms of the legislative responses, regulatory considerations, as we move to try and get tech companies to work in a way that's more responsible and safe for our communities and particularly for women.

Rosel Kim: I gave one example of having clear no-go zones for AI use in certain situations that would implicate the fundamental rights of people who would be targeted. Another thing we advocate for, which I think is really important, is for survivors who are experiencing harm to have direct support when they find out that there's a deepfake of them online and need to understand what their options are. That kind of support would include having a place where survivors can go and ask about options, and also providing guidance that allows them to choose the option that works best for them.

We have some examples in provinces like B.C. where we have service providers, legal supports and legislation, and a tribunal for deepfakes and intimate image abuse more generally. I think that's a really important piece that survivors need, to see the kind of redress that works for them.

Chi Nguyen: Thank you very much, Ms. Kim.

This is a question for all three of the witnesses. I would ask each of you to take a couple seconds to respond.

In the last panel, we talked about the need for digital sovereignty and our own capacity in Canada to build some of that. If we were to do this in a way that was centred on the lived experience of users, women and gender-diverse folks, what are some considerations that we should have as we try and build out that capacity domestically?

I'll start with Ms. Kim, and then I'll ask the other two to weigh in.

Rosel Kim: I think that having a strong legislative response starts with having a really robust consultation process that allows everyone from the community to participate and weigh in. That requires having multiple modes of participation, funding and resources for people to participate, centred on human rights, equality and the safety of people, when considering legislative responses.

I had a chance to listen to some of the earlier sessions. I think something that the speakers brought up was that we focus on innovation before really asking ourselves whether we should move forward with this, without putting the safeguards and guardrails in place. I think these are some of the issues that we need to think about and consider responses from the people who are impacted and not just from the industry that is sort of pushing the technology.

Chi Nguyen: Dr. Sinno, would you like to add to this?

Dr. Jad Sinno: Yes. Beyond this, we need to ensure that the folks who are most impacted are the ones who have the voice, the authority and the decision-making capacity to inform the sort of safety mechanisms and uses of these platforms. I also want to particularly highlight that queer populations are using these technologies in ways that serve our unique needs.

Online platforms can provide opportunities for community support, connection and sexual health information and so on and so forth. The response needs to embolden the positive aspects of using these platforms and also provide the capacity for them to shape how it might mitigate the harms associated with them.

Lissa Matyas: I don't think it's possible for any one country to be completely data sovereign, not even the U.S. I think that we need to look at priorities, perhaps how the data is routed and who touches your data. To my colleague's point, we need to make sure that the people whose data is going to be included are consulted about how their data is stored, routed, used, etc. I think a top priority for the federal government is to really understand the routing process, the telecom and the cloud computing resources.

There's the infrastructure piece, the telecom piece and other sorts of data security pieces that I think we need to really dive into, being realistic about the fact that completely managing the full AI tech stack is probably unrealistic.

● (1230)

Chi Nguyen: Thank you.

I think I have time for one more question.

The Chair: Ask it very quickly.

Chi Nguyen: Ms. Matyas, on the numbers you talked about in terms of women and the impact on the workforce, where are young women right now? Is there a fear around the role that AI is going to play in terms of potentially taking away jobs? You talked about the pivot to being more efficient, but where are young people today on this and young women in particular?

Lissa Matyas: I think there's a real fear because Canada's youth unemployment is at precariously high levels, higher than in many decades, the last several decades. I think we really need to focus on training programs and equipping young women with the opportunity—

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Matyas. I'm sorry to have to cut you off.

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

Andréanne Larouche: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'm taking copious notes. Thank you to the witnesses, Jad Sinno, Rosel Kim and Lissa Matyas, for being with us today.

Ms. Matsyas, what you just said is true. We had a discussion in the House last week about the report of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities regarding its study on the youth unemployment rate. One of the things the federal government should be concerned about is the risks posed by artificial intelligence, as well as the link between AI and the problem of youth employment. I mentioned it in my speech in the House. Thank you for raising it.

My first question is for Ms. Kim.

We talked about the fact that the legislation stemming from Bill C-16 opened the door to criminalizing deepfakes. It covers that issue. Even so, we see that the numbers are increasing. Is it because the new act is not well enough known? Is it because it lacks teeth? What is missing from the legislation that would allow it to address deepfakes? Does it just take time for the new legislation to become known?

[*English*]

Rosel Kim: I think it's a bit of both.

We need to see how the law in Bill C-16 is interpreted and applied by the judges to see what will be caught under Bill C-16. I think some of the questions we might have are about a deepfake of someone that has an obvious feature that makes it very obvious it's not a depiction of them, so that it's not likely to be mistaken as their image—like if a third eye was added—but it's still a sexualized deepfake. What would happen?

I think we still have some questions, and we will need to see how it is applied.

In terms of other responses, I talked about the direct support for survivors that some, but not all, provinces have. Having that kind of direct support would be really important for survivors. Also, it's just about making sure that the technology is not so widely available or that there is a quick takedown of these images when they do surface. I think those are some of the responses.

Some of this is in Bill C-34 as well, under the companies' responsibilities to respond to certain content, including non-consensually shared intimate images. I think it's a question of time, but we always need more support and other kinds of remedies outside of the criminal realm, including the civil realm, and we need easy takedowns that don't require always going to the legal system, which can be very slow.

[*Translation*]

Andréanne Larouche: My next question is also for you, Ms. Kim.

In your opening remarks, you also said that adequate resources and expertise would be needed to implement Bill C-34. The Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, which studied the bill, was also concerned about expertise.

You just talked about the importance of victim support. We know that the administration of justice, for one, falls under the jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces. Community organizations that help victims are also under Quebec's responsibility.

After Bill C-34 is passed, how will we be able to work together to ensure that people have the proper resources and the necessary expertise on the ground, given that there are shared jurisdictions?

Education is one example. How can the different levels of government work together in terms of what each can and should do?

● (1235)

[*English*]

Rosel Kim: Yes. I think there will need to be co-operation and collaboration between the provinces and the federal government. The mandate of the digital safety commission is very broad and it's tackling a lot of different issues. There's the need for the commission itself to be well resourced and also to represent the different expertise needed, especially expertise on human rights, inequality, gender-based violence and what counts as gender-based violence.

I heard Professor Emily Laidlaw speak about this. We have the model of provincial privacy commissioners working with a federal privacy commissioner. I think a similar kind of a collaborative relationship would need to exist to tackle the really big issues and harms we are seeing.

[*Translation*]

Andréanne Larouche: There are only 35 seconds left. I'll quickly go to you, Mr. Sinno.

What initiative related to the impact on communities can the government put forward, particularly to help the organizations that support them?

[*English*]

Dr. Jad Sinno: Yes, absolutely. Thank you for this question.

I think the first thing is to ensure that there is meaningful integration with a seat at the table that includes authority and decision-making power—

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Sir, I must cruelly interrupt you.

[*English*]

Dr. Jad Sinno: Thank you. No worries.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Ms. Borrelli, the floor is yours for five minutes.

[*English*]

Kathy Borrelli: Witnesses, I'd like to thank you for your time today. I appreciate your expert testimony.

My first question is for Lissa Matyas.

What are the particular sectors, industries or jobs where women face greater risks of unequal treatment because of AI?

Lissa Matyas: They are very exposed to AI adoption.

On the point of training, we need to train people who are in areas like bookkeeping, payroll administration and other areas where generative AI is increasing productivity and eliminating these jobs. Also, entry-level positions are being greatly affected by AI.

I think programs like work-integrated learning activities for recent graduates and current students are really important, so they can actually expand beyond their current set of skills and responsibilities in their current jobs. It's not necessarily eliminating the job altogether, but it's changing the nature of work. Without upskilling and re-skilling people to be able to take on new tasks within their current role, or potentially having AI creating whole new business lines that these current employees can move into, then women can be disproportionately affected.

Kathy Borrelli: Are women disproportionately represented in occupations that are more vulnerable to AI? What measures could be implemented to mitigate the effects?

Lissa Matyas: They certainly are.

A lot of these roles are disproportionately represented by women. The ones that I gave examples of are bookkeeping, payroll administration or other areas like that. They are really the first line of attack for AI.

I think employers have to be part of the conversation about how we can upskill and how AI adoption can be done in a way that actually can create more jobs for the company rather than eliminating the jobs of their current employees. Upskilling and re-skilling will be an important part of the national AI strategy, from my perspective.

As I mentioned, I think this is an opportunity to bring in universities and experts to look at business lines. Rather than just increasing individual productivity, really look at how the company can grow, how we can create more jobs and more anchor companies in Canada. Rather than being a branch-plant economy, we can really scale up companies and use AI in a positive way rather than eliminate these current jobs.

● (1240)

Kathy Borrelli: Ms. Matyas, how can the government and industry collect the proper data that shows evidence about discrimination outcomes while protecting personal privacy?

Lissa Matyas: I think that's a really important issue.

I think some of my colleagues have pointed to the data gaps. There is a really important role to play for gender-diverse individuals and others, like indigenous populations, to be included in how the data will be collected. It's really important that there's consultation in terms of how the information will be gathered and who will manage and own the data.

We have to start within communities and really have these conversations now. They're very difficult conversations to have, sometimes. I think we need to arrive at an area where, potentially, the data is owned not by the government and shared more nationally, but by these communities.

Kathy Borrelli: Yes.

Who do you think should be responsible for implementing these safeguards and guardrails?

Lissa Matyas: I think it's a collective effort. I don't think it's one organization or one individual. We've talked a lot about provincial versus federal, but I think the communities really have a major role to play. They really understand their own concerns and their own priorities. We need to find a way to work together.

AI is affecting everybody on the planet. I think there's even a more global international element in terms of responsible AI.

Kathy Borrelli: Thank you.

Ms. Kim, how can a policy-maker distinguish between discrimination arising from AI use and discrimination that is not supported by AI use?

Rosel Kim: This also points to some of the risks of AI systems being so embedded into some of our systems. That often is then used as a justification or an excuse for the companies that have these AI systems to not reveal who made that decision—

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Kim. I have to stop you there. Ms. Borrelli's time is up.

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

[*English*]

Marilyn Gladu: Thank you, Chair, and thank you to the witnesses for being with us today.

My first question will be for Rosel Kim.

This year, I have been the subject of an unbelievable number of deepfakes and huge online harassment. Sadly, there was nothing to be done about it, so I'm very happy that our government has put in place Bill C-16 to make deepfakes illegal and to address chatbots, and also Bill C-34, which is going to address online harms, and Bill C-36, which will give the individual the ability to ask to have something taken down.

That said, I had no idea what software was being used to generate these images, and if the platforms don't comply, then I'm not sure we are any further ahead.

You mentioned something about supports that would help people in this situation, as well as preventive legislation to prevent the harm. Could you elaborate on what you'd like to see?

Rosel Kim: I think I've spoken about the supports. One of the pieces in Bill C-34 would enable the survivor to contact the commission to lodge complaints. That's a good start.

We also have some provincial initiatives. Certain provinces, such as B.C. or Nova Scotia, have hotlines or government supports that survivors can contact to have their images taken down. I believe this exists in Quebec as well. Those are some of the direct supports that survivors need, as well as independent legal advice as they go through the options that work for them.

In terms of legislation, I've talked about identifying no-go zones, but I think it's important that we specify the harm that we're trying to address so that the legislation doesn't go out of date and we stay neutral about the technology. If we're specific about the functions and harms that we're trying to address, then the legislation can endure and can address the types of harms that we are trying to address.

We also have to think about worker protections. We've heard testimony about jobs being affected and about having stronger worker protections, as well as environmental protections for any impact of AI on the indigenous communities in terms of sovereignty. I think those are all important elements in legislative and policy responses to the harms that AI causes.

● (1245)

Marilyn Gladu: That's excellent, Ms. Kim.

We also had some testimony that talked about making sure the legislation leaves enough room for the regulations to be agile and keep up with technology. What do you think about that?

Rosel Kim: I see the benefit of that, since the technology is developing so fast.

There is one concern that I might note with regulation: I hope that the consultations and studies that happen will be as open and robust as some of the studies on bills in parliamentary sessions. Any kind of regulation that happens will require meaningful input and decision-making from the communities, as Dr. Sinno has said.

Marilyn Gladu: That's excellent. Thank you very much.

Ms. Matyas, you mentioned that women entrepreneurs receive only 4% of venture capital, and I wondered if they are showing initiative in becoming trained in AI.

Also, do we think that the training that's currently available is suitable for women entrepreneurs?

Lissa Matyas: Yes, we have specific programs in this area. We've seen that it's important not to lump all female entrepreneurs together. They need to be coached, mentored and supported based on the type of company they have, the size of the business and how long they've been in business.

Having specialized training for female entrepreneurs is important. They're really working hard to keep the lights on. For additional training on AI adoption, they need to have special programs where they and their staff can be involved in a way that's not going to interrupt their core business. That's something that we're really excited about rolling out nationally.

Marilyn Gladu: Finally, what evidence should employers be required to provide to show that AI-assisted hiring and advancement decisions are fair? Do you think they should keep special data for that?

Lissa Matyas: Transparency is very key, so we need to understand how AI is being used and deployed, and we need to know that it is not creating intentional or unintentional biases.

Marilyn Gladu: Thank you very much.

I think that's my time.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Gladu.

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

Andréanne Larouche: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Mr. Sinno, I'll let you finish, in 30 seconds, what you were going to say about the need for your organization and other organizations that help the LGBTQ+ community on this issue to have a seat at the table.

[*English*]

Dr. Jad Sinno: Thank you for the additional time to provide that notice.

I think we need diverse intersectional voices at the table and the ability to have decision-making power that shapes our unique needs and our emerging needs. The solutions cannot be a one-size-fits-all, and our organizations are doing this work on the ground. It would be important to ensure that our voices are meaningfully represented in these decision-making capacities.

[*Translation*]

Andréanne Larouche: Thank you.

My last question is for Ms. Matyas.

You touched on the international scope of artificial intelligence. We can't ignore the fact that it crosses borders. Right now, there are bills we are working on here, but in my meetings with members of the Canadian Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, we mentioned the need to have an international perspective on the issue. I would like you to tell us more about that.

How do you see artificial intelligence's international scope in relation to the laws we pass here and what is happening elsewhere?

Can you also tell us about your workplace expertise in particular?

You have less than a minute.

[*English*]

Lissa Matyas: We're so privileged to have people like Dr. Yoshua Bengio and others who are experts in responsible AI. I think that Canada can play an important role, a role model, in terms of advancing responsible AI and in terms of having foreign governments all commit to certain policies that are transversal.

We are leading the way in terms of AI research and responsible AI research. There are other countries that are really dedicated to this type of work. The Global Partnership on AI is a really good example. It's based in Canada, in Montreal, as well as in Paris and has many different international partners. I think that Canada should be a strong global superpower.

● (1250)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Matyas. If you have any other information or data to share with us, you can always send it to us in writing. You can email it to our analysts or the clerk, for example.

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

[*English*]

Kelly DeRidder: Thank you, everybody, for being here today. I appreciate your time and your insight very much.

Lissa, I'll start with you.

We agree very much on supporting Canadian innovation, monetization and growth within Canada. As I say, globally competitive companies headquartered in Canada is very important.

You mentioned in your beginning speech that we need to prepare businesses for the global change, and I agree with that 100%. Part of it is business adoption and upskilling. Just like in the previous Industrial Revolution, we upskilled, and businesses adapted. We need to do the same thing here with AI.

You also mentioned that 64% of women are in roles that could potentially be replaced by AI and entry-level roles as well. You also mentioned that we can protect and adopt roles at the same time.

Could you expand on that for me, please?

Lissa Matyas: Rather than focusing on which jobs are going to be eliminated by AI, Canada has to be very careful not to be left behind in the global AI revolution.

If we're adopting at a much slower pace than many other G20 countries, as we are now, we will not have globally competitive companies, and we don't have a big enough domestic market to sustain those companies to become larger anchor companies. I feel strongly that we need to train leaders across Canada—business leaders, men and women—in AI adoption and make sure that there are opportunities. Women have much less opportunity for AI skills training than men and are not encouraged to learn AI skills as quickly as men are.

We need to be conscious of who we're training to be AI champions within our Canadian companies—small, medium-sized and large companies—and help them to become champions who can create whole new business lines and focus on revenue centres within the business so that we can create larger companies, diversify markets away from the U.S. and diversify away from being a resource-based economy to being a much higher-value economy.

Kelly DeRidder: Thank you very much for that. As we move into the next era, the intangibles are where the money is, so we have to really focus on that.

Dr. Sinno, you mentioned Tumbler Ridge and the need for better protections to ensure that tragedies like this never happen again. In your opinion, what level of accountability should these platforms have for the duty to report imminent harm?

Dr. Jad Sinno: Certainly the companies need to be held accountable for the harms that are facilitated and promoted by their large language models and their platforms. As I said, this needs to work together with the communities that are most impacted in order to identify the best way to implement these regulations without undue harms.

As I mentioned, our communities and marginalized communities are using these technologies in innovative ways to serve their unique needs. A full stop or a full criminalization process would actually do more harm than good. The approach needs to be one that holds these companies accountable, educates and emboldens our youth and our communities and ensures that our intersectional voices are able to inform decision-making changes at those levels.

Kelly DeRidder: When I debated on Bill C-34, one thing that I wanted to keep in mind was that if ID needs to be shown, how is that data going to be protected? I want to make sure that in protecting our children, we're not inadvertently harming our children at the same time, so yes, I agree wholeheartedly with what you're saying.

I have one last question. It's to Lissa.

You mentioned that only 4% of venture capitalist dollars go to women founders. I have actually experienced that in learning about the technology field and seeing that women are definitely...under-evaluated. I don't know what word to use there.

Four per cent of venture capital dollars is so low. How can we drive more venture capital money towards women founders?

Lissa Matyas: Women founders have a much higher success rate, so I think it's ironic that we're still in this situation in 2026.

I think it would be educating venture capitalists about how successful women founders have been in growing businesses in Canada and in international jurisdictions. Also, just in terms of the networks and in the way venture capital systems work, I think we have to address it more holistically, rather than forcing women-based venture capital funds.

● (1255)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Matyas. That's all the time we have for Ms. DeRidder's questions.

Ms. Ménard, you will be closing things off.

Marie-Gabrielle Ménard: Thank you, Madam Chair. However, I will be sharing my time with my colleague Ms. Idlout. She would like to address aspects of the issue that may not yet have been explored. I will give her the floor first.

[*English*]

Lori Idlout (Nunavut, Lib.): *Qujannamiik*. Thank you so much for sharing your time, and thank you to the witnesses.

It's such a pleasure to be at this committee. It's my first time here. I've learned so much as well.

As an indigenous woman, I tend to have a focus on indigenous populations. I know, for example, that in Canada, social indicators for indigenous women or indigenous peoples are much lower. They are not as positive. For example, we have lower education attainment.

I'm wondering if any of the three of you could respond to this: With the potential of AI to be used more frequently by indigenous women, and since their literacy is not as high as it needs to be, do you think that there need to be better protections for indigenous women because the AI information that they might be receiving might not actually be good information that they would want to use for themselves?

Lissa Matyas: I'm happy to start.

I think there are a few layers to that question: access to broadband, access to computers, etc. There are a lot of areas in the north that don't actually have the resources to be able to fully optimize their usage of AI. In terms of cybersecurity and digital literacy, I think there are things we can do to customize and not assume that we know how indigenous girls and women would like to be taught. We partner with a lot of communities in the north and in other indigenous communities across Canada to ensure that it's taught and engaged with in a way that's meaningful. There's a lot of good that can be done.

There are a lot of indigenous women who have created LLMs to preserve indigenous languages that otherwise would have been lost. I think finding real-life examples that are meaningful to the daily lives of indigenous girls and women would be an important place to start.

Rosel Kim: I would like to add a couple of remarks.

That question really depends on how the system is built and how it uses certain resources, including resources from indigenous communities, including their lands that many AI data centres require. So much of AI was built by people who are privileged, many of them being white men. The way that the systems were trained was based on a lot of bias that has still persisted. I think the question really is, then, whether indigenous people can actually build a system that can work and that reflects their reality and not so much how the existing system—we have seen how it harms marginalized communities—can fit to work, which I'm not sure it does at this time.

Lori Idlout: Thank you so much.

Would you like to answer?

Dr. Jad Sinno: Yes.

It raises a particular important issue around the lack of evidence or understanding of how two-spirit and indigiqueer people are interacting with these online platforms and of these online platforms' unique impact on them.

You mentioned that indigenous and two-spirit populations are disproportionately and negatively impacted health-wise and economic-wise and how they experience social precarity and marginalization. This possibly makes these communities even more precarious and experience disproportionate harm, depending on the embedded harms within AI. I think that, similar to the way we conduct research with OCAP and CARE principles, ensuring indigenous data sovereignty and oversight, the move forward should also similarly require nation-specific and indigenous community-specific approaches to embolden and bolster these communities however they see fit.

● (1300)

Lori Idlout: Finally, could the three of you respond with what kinds of recommendations you have for more resources? Do there need to be, for example, targeted resources for indigenous peoples to make sure they do get the resources they need?

[*Translation*]

The Chair: That's a question that will remain unanswered.

Ms. Idlout, we were very pleased to welcome you today.

Witnesses, thank you so much. Your testimony was highly educational and informative. I wish you safe travels home.

The meeting is adjourned.

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