HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

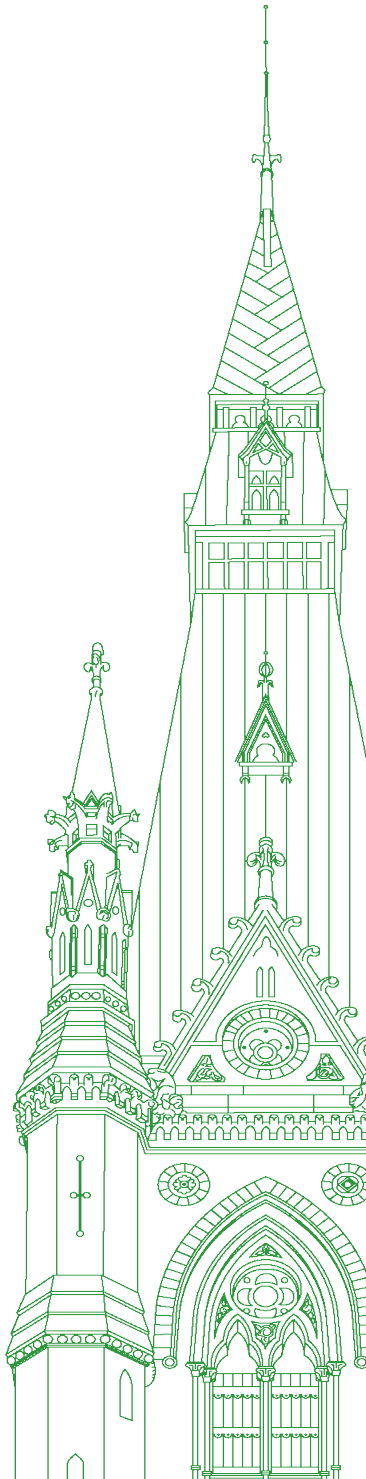
45th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

Standing Committee on the Status of Women

EVIDENCE

NUMBER 055

Monday, November 16, 2026



Chair: Dominique Vien

Standing Committee on the Status of Women

Monday, November 16, 2026

● (1100)

[*Translation*]

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

Welcome to meeting number 55 of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women. I hope you have a good start to the week.

We are resuming our study on the impact of artificial intelligence on women, girls and 2SLGBTQIA+ people.

I would like to remind you that, as usual, our proceedings may take place in a hybrid format. To ensure the meeting runs smoothly, I have a few brief instructions.

You may ask your questions in French or English. If you require interpretation, please adjust your headset now and select the correct channel so that you do not lose a single second when it is time for discussions.

If you are joining via video conference, you can click on the microphone icon to turn it on. If you are not speaking, please keep it muted. It's just like at school here: If you want to speak, simply raise your hand.

We will be discussing topics that may be delicate or sensitive. Of course, if any of our colleagues or guests feel the need to have a chat or are not feeling well, they should simply inform our kind clerk, who will take the necessary action.

I would now like to welcome the witnesses. From the Association féministe d'éducation et d'action sociale—feminist association for education and social action—we welcome Ms. Lise Courteau, chair. She is accompanied by Marianne Pertuiset-Ferland, executive director. From Women's Shelters Canada, we welcome Anuradha Dugal, chief executive.

Ladies, I welcome you. We shall begin with the opening statements.

[*English*]

Ms. Dugal, the floor is yours for five minutes, please.

Anuradha Dugal (Executive Director, Women's Shelters Canada): Thank you.

I thank the committee for the invitation to present today.

My name is Anuradha Dugal. I'm the executive director of Women's Shelters Canada. Our members are 16 territorial and provincial shelter associations. We are connected to more than 600 violence against women shelters across the country. We run sheltersafe.ca, which helps anyone in Canada find a shelter near them. We also run Tech Safety Canada, which trains shelter workers to use technology more safely and to help survivors do the same.

When we talk about AI, we're talking about what frontline workers are seeing right now. From a survey of shelters and transition houses in 2022-23, we know that 95% supported a survivor who disclosed some form of tech-facilitated gender-based violence, which is a broad category, including AI use. The most common forms were harassment, at 95%, threats, at 87%, and location tracking, at 82%. Only 12% of workers felt confident helping survivors with online monitoring or surveillance, and 65% of staff reported limited digital literacy or training on tech-facilitated gender-based violence.

AI learns from our legal, social and economic systems, and it reproduces the biases built into them, including those that contribute to conditions underlying gender-based violence. Within this context, gender-based violence, which I will refer to from now on as GBV, is being used in two very different ways.

First, AI is being used by survivors of GBV. Survivors may turn to chatbots for psychological support to make sense of their experiences. They may also turn to generative AI for legal advice, as many survivors represent themselves because they cannot afford legal counsel and are often also above the income range for receiving free legal advice. AI gives them advice on how to represent themselves in court. Survivors use this technology as a reference for laws and statutes, and to write and create documents for various authorities, including court documents like briefs and submissions.

Second, AI is being used by abusers to multiply their abuse. Perpetrators of GBV can seek advice on how to control their partners, for example, and also legal advice on how to use laws and statutes to increase or exert more control. They can create fake recordings of the survivors saying or doing things that may implicate them as bad mothers, and they can generate tech-facilitated sexual violence, which may include generating sexual images. They might also falsify official documentation and use it against survivors, affecting their reputation, economic security, jobs, relationships and housing opportunities.

We welcome recent federal changes to the Criminal Code via Bill C-16 that outlaw the production of sexual deepfakes, but the criminal law is applied after harm is already done. We ask the federal government to fund tech safety capacity in shelters so that we can use AI safely and help survivors protect themselves. Frontline workers and organizations require more training and resources that fit their needs. That means varied formats and specialist training for particular survivor experiences.

We also ask the federal government to ensure that law enforcement and justice systems provide more training and policy reviews so that they support survivors better. This includes understanding the impact of AI in tech-facilitated GBV and responding in proportion to the threat it offers.

Shelters and services also use AI to support their work. Some use chatbots or digital administrative assistants. They use generative AI to write applications or help draft reports, and some use AI to create communications materials. We are adapting to this technology every day. However, we need the federal government to make sure that it is safe for the women and children we save.

Thank you.

● (1105)

[*Translation*]

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

We will take a short break while one of our guests carries out a technical test. It shouldn't take very long.

● (1105)

_____(Pause)_____

● (1105)

The Chair: We shall now resume our proceedings.

I understand that the technical test has not yet been entirely successful.

We welcome two representatives from the Association féministe d'éducation et d'action sociale. We shall begin quite simply with Ms. Marianne Pertuiset-Ferland.

Madam Executive Director, you have the floor for five minutes, or for two and a half minutes if you are sharing your speaking time with your colleague. You can sort that out with her.

Thank you.

● (1110)

Marianne Pertuiset-Ferland (Executive Director, Association féministe d'éducation et d'action sociale): I'll be delivering the entire speech.

Madam Chair, ladies and gentlemen of the committee, thank you for inviting me to speak here today.

The use of artificial intelligence is growing at a staggering rate and is rapidly transforming the way we work, communicate and function as a society. Yet this technology is far from neutral.

On behalf of the Association féministe d'éducation et d'action sociale, or Afeas, we wish to draw your attention to three major risks that threaten the equity and safety of women in Canada.

Firstly, artificial intelligence reproduces and amplifies sexist biases. Algorithms learn from human data, which is often biased. Furthermore, when data on women or minorities is missing, these realities become invisible. Artificial intelligence thus risks reinforcing, or even exacerbating, the historical inequalities we have been fighting for decades.

Secondly, women face double economic discrimination. On the one hand, they are massively under-represented in the artificial intelligence sector; they make up only 22% of the workforce and hold fewer than 14% of management positions. This dynamic contributes to an increased risk that gender bias and blind spots will go unnoticed. On the other hand, jobs predominantly held by women are twice as likely to be automated by generative artificial intelligence as those held by men, which disproportionately puts women at risk of potential job loss.

Thirdly, artificial intelligence increases the scale, speed and severity of violence against women in digital spaces. In particular, this technology enables the large-scale production and dissemination of doctored sexual content and non-consensual intimate images, making them readily accessible free of charge. Against the backdrop of rising misogynistic rhetoric online, artificial intelligence is becoming a weapon of harassment and humiliation specifically targeting women.

In response to these challenges, Afeas presents four concrete recommendations.

Firstly, we recommend that the digital literacy training programs provided for in Canada's national artificial intelligence strategy, AI for all, must be designed from an intersectional perspective, as defined by gender-based analysis plus (GBA+). It is not merely a matter of learning how to use a tool; it is also about understanding how artificial intelligence can influence choices, behaviours and access to information by reproducing discriminatory biases. Given the rise of violent masculinist rhetoric, particularly among teenagers, these training programs must be adapted for young people from secondary school onwards in order to counter the indoctrination of hate speech before it takes root.

The second recommendation concerns economic justice. We cannot allow women workers to bear the cost of the technological transition alone. We call for the establishment of an appropriate safety net. This includes algorithmic transparency. Employers must inform employees when artificial intelligence is used to assess their performance or decide on a dismissal. The process must include a right of human appeal, modelled on California's No Robo Bosses Act of 2026, a law that prohibits fully automated dismissals. Furthermore, the employment insurance regime must no longer penalize people who undertake further training while unemployed, so as to enable workers in at-risk sectors to retrain without losing their benefits.

The third recommendation aims to treat gender-based digital violence as a serious and priority offence. We call for the explicit criminalization of the creation, possession and dissemination of non-consensual sexual content, whether real or generated by artificial intelligence. A preventive regulatory framework must also be adopted, requiring developers of artificial intelligence tools to implement robust automated mechanisms capable of detecting and blocking the creation of such content at the point of request. It is also imperative to impose a duty of care on platforms that host these images of violence and to provide sustainable funding for legal, financial and psychological support for victims.

Fourthly, we recommend the creation of an advisory body bringing together scientists, civil society and social partners to monitor developments and issue recommendations as artificial intelligence practices evolve, in particular to prevent unfair dismissals resulting from the automation of tasks. Artificial intelligence must be governed in a fair, equitable, intersectional and participatory manner, including those who experience its effects on the ground.

Madam Chair, ladies and gentlemen of the committee, artificial intelligence presents an opportunity to be seized, but it is our duty to ensure that it does not exacerbate inequalities affecting women and all those from minority groups.

● (1115)

Thank you for listening.

The Chair: That makes exactly five minutes. Thank you very much, Ms. Pertuiset-Ferland, for having, at short notice, summarized all your group's preliminary remarks.

We shall now begin the discussion.

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

[*English*]

Kathy Borrelli (Windsor—Tecumseh—Lakeshore, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to our witnesses for being here today.

My first question is for Ms. Dugal.

What barriers prevent women from accessing AI tools and developing the skills necessary to remain competitive in an increasingly AI-driven workforce?

Anuradha Dugal: One of the first barriers I would mention is simply that for some women, especially those who are newcomers or who have an experience of domestic violence, being surveilled or having their devices commonly used and watched by others will limit their ability to learn and freely experience all sorts of online services, including AI. They are often monitored for exactly what they're doing on AI, and therefore, it may not be in their best interest.

Domestic violence is a barrier to the full use of technology. For example, somebody might want to use AI to look for a new job. If their partner doesn't think they should have that job, then they will not be able to do that.

Kathy Borrelli: A lot of women who are experiencing violence against them may, as you mentioned, go to chat boxes to get advice and to look for legal advice, for example. How can Canadian women be protected adequately against the unauthorized collection of their personal information by AI systems? When they go to these chat boxes or online resources, how can we prevent their information from being collected?

Anuradha Dugal: Many survivors do not know that their information is collected when they put it into AI chat boxes or any of the generative AI tools. Many of them also don't know that it is discoverable through legal processes, and they may not realize that it can be called into evidence if they're in a divorce situation or if they're in a separation or some sort of custody battle. That's one of the first information pieces that women must know: They are not confidential sources of information. In fact, I don't know that AI can be made confidential at the stage we're currently at, because it is using all of the conversations it's having with us as a learning environment.

What we advise survivors to do right now is not to enter personal details and, if they are asking for advice, to enter it as a hypothetical, to enter it as “What if I were in this situation?” or “If somebody were in this situation, what would they do?”, and avoid putting in any names, locations or direct information that is traceable to them.

I think AI should be providing spaces. If they want to offer generative opportunities for people to use AI for their personal advice, they need to offer free confidential spaces where you can have the wall brought down between you and any learning environment.

Kathy Borrelli: Can that be done?

Anuradha Dugal: I believe it can be done, yes. I think it's done for some of those who pay for a certain level of AI membership.

Kathy Borrelli: Should we have to pay for it?

Anuradha Dugal: I don't believe we should have to pay for it considering that it's learning from all of our data all the time.

Kathy Borrelli: Yes, exactly.

You mentioned some recommendations that you have for the government. Which do you think is the most immediate measure to protect young women and girls from harmful uses of AI?

Anuradha Dugal: I would underline one of the recommendations that my colleague on the committee, a witness here, from AFEAS, suggested, which is that current AI policy include a requirement for an intersectional analysis from the beginning. That would already make that policy a bit more responsive to all of the situations we're describing where AI will discriminate against women and potentially create harm for those who are experiencing violence.

I also believe that putting a pause on how it's used—particularly in government, in our workplaces and in our public lives—while we learn more about how it can be used safely would be a huge step forward. I'm not sure I know how to put that pause on the process, but I think we need more information or more data about the effects it's having before we continue to invest in expanding its use.

● (1120)

Kathy Borrelli: Personally, I've only been looking at, learning about and using AI for a short period of time—a handful of months—but it seems to be galloping and expanding so quickly.

How is my time, Chair?

The Chair: You have 17 seconds.

Kathy Borrelli: I'll forfeit them. Thank you.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mrs. Borrelli.

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

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

I would like to thank the witnesses who are with us this morning.

[*English*]

My first question will go to Ms. Dugal.

You spoke positively about Bill C-34, as it would help improve safety when it comes to tech. However, I'm wondering if there's anything that you or frontline workers have seen on the ground that is not included in this bill—and in other bills or acts that have gone forward at the federal level—that could protect women and the population in general against the harms of technology. What further action do you think is required?

Anuradha Dugal: One thing we often see missing in the implementation process and in the frameworks for follow-up and measurement is not enough attention being paid to unexpected outcomes. What happened that we weren't counting on, and is there a robust enough measurement framework to capture that?

There's also the involvement of survivors in the direct review of how this is helping them. Are survivors themselves telling us that the bills we're putting in place are making a difference for them? We often hear from frontline workers, if we're consulted, and we might hear from justice systems, legal authorities or law enforcement, but we don't always hear from survivors. That has to be an essential part of any review process.

Emmanuella Lambropoulos: All right. It's about more consultation with survivors after the fact.

Anuradha Dugal: That's correct.

Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Of course, it's also about dealing with unintended consequences of the bill. That's what you meant.

Anuradha Dugal: Absolutely, 100%.

Emmanuella Lambropoulos: I don't know how much you went into this, but I know that Women's Shelters Canada has done significant work with Tech Safety Canada to help survivors navigate technology-facilitated abuse.

I know you spoke to this a bit, but could you go into further detail on how these new technologies are changing the risks for these women, specifically when they show up after having had this kind of abuse done to them? What are the risks of this?

Anuradha Dugal: First of all, tech-facilitated gender-based violence often co-occurs with coercive control and financial abuse. AI can be used as a further way of deepening the capacity to commit financial abuse against a survivor, such as credit card fraud or the falsification of official documents, which then leads to somebody being in debt for longer.

We have 140-odd tools available through Tech Safety Canada and the British Columbia Society of Transition Houses. They have a tech safety clinic where survivors can go directly and ask for advice and support. The non-consensual sharing of intimate images and the creation of fake intimate imagery through AI are extremely concerning to the extent that they are used to perpetrate and demonstrate forms of sexual violence. This is something we should be extremely concerned about because of the potential to create unrealistic and, I'd say, dangerous attitudes towards women, both sexually and in their relationships.

Those are certainly some of the things we're seeing.

● (1125)

Emmanuella Lambropoulos: I have a final question for you.

You spoke about law enforcement and the justice system getting more training. As you know, these are not necessarily under federal jurisdiction. They're more provincial.

How can we work with our counterparts to ensure that this happens? How can we encourage them to implement this kind of training?

Anuradha Dugal: Any law enforcement agency should feel compelled to learn about implementation and the way to use new criminal statutes that are potentially going to support survivors. I think the provincial governments and the territorial governments have a moral responsibility to do that. The FPT is one place where they can discuss how they are going to implement it. That's at the meetings on justice between the federal, provincial and territorial governments.

For Bill C-16, we have a two-year process to adopt it. For all of these new bills, if we have an implementation period, it gives everybody time to catch up and gives shelters time to learn how they should advise survivors, because we also enter into this.

I'll give you an example. The red flag laws on gun control are very important laws. Many shelter workers—two or three years on now since they were adopted—don't know what to say to survivors if they find out there's a gun in the home when they're trying to give advice. These are things they need to be constantly reminded of.

You can give universities money. You can give organizations like us money. You can give the provinces money. That training needs to happen on multiple levels, and unfortunately it does cost money, so people need to invest in it.

Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Thank you very much for all of those great answers.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Pertuiset-Ferland, you touched briefly on the fact that women are doubly affected by artificial intelligence in the workplace. Could you elaborate on this a little further? How are women affected and—

The Chair: I'm really sorry, Ms. Lambropoulos, but your speaking time is up.

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

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

Firstly, I would like to thank the witnesses who are here today. It really is extremely interesting.

Ms. Dugal, you have clearly explained the impact on women who find themselves in situations of violence and in women's shelters. I hope to have time to come back to you a little later.

Ms. Pertuiset-Ferland, you made several points in your opening remarks that are extremely interesting. You spoke about female-dominated occupations and the future implications of artificial intelligence, which could have a disproportionate impact on certain occupations predominantly held by women. I would ask you to tell us a little more about that.

First, I'll give you the opportunity to explain the Californian example, and perhaps to talk about employment insurance. We have a truly major reform proposal for employment insurance. Among the key points, we want to end the exclusion from entitlement to standard employment insurance benefits for people who leave their jobs to return to education or to take on family responsibilities.

This may be in line with your recommendations. I'll give you a little more time to explain the situation in California to us first, and then to tell us what you think of our proposal regarding employment insurance.

Marianne Pertuiset-Ferland: Perfect, thank you.

In California, the law prohibits employers from relying exclusively on artificial intelligence or other automated decision-making systems to take disciplinary action against their employees, dismiss them or assess their performance. There is a clear requirement for thorough human review when decisions of this kind need to be made. There is also a requirement to provide employees with a written notice when these tools play a significant role in such decisions. So that is California's No Robo Bosses Act of 2026, which I mentioned.

As regards biases relating to the presence of women in these fields, women are under-represented in the field of artificial intelligence, as I said. I think there is certainly work to be done. It's a matter of raising awareness, among other things, regarding how women are encouraged to get involved in science and technology and so on. I think work needs to be done from a young age to encourage women to get involved in these fields so that there can be a more diverse representation of all people in the fields of artificial intelligence technology.

What was the other topic you were asking about?

● (1130)

Andréanne Larouche: It was about employment insurance.

Marianne Pertuiset-Ferland: With regard to employment insurance, as I was saying, women are at risk of being twice as likely to be affected by job losses linked to the automation of tasks by artificial intelligence. It is therefore very important that they have the opportunity to retrain and benefit from training programs so that they are not left behind in the event of redundancy.

We are also discussing, as I mentioned at the end of my speech, the possibility of a monitoring committee, which could also propose further measures to limit the scope for redundancies and to establish certain criteria to regulate these practices.

In this way, women and all those at risk of redundancy due to artificial intelligence will be able to claim employment insurance benefits while undertaking training to change careers.

Furthermore, we believe that support should be provided for those made redundant, not only to enable them to undertake training, but to genuinely assist them in retraining or changing careers so that they are not unduly penalized by this situation.

Andréanne Larouche: Thank you.

I'm sorry. I have too many questions. I realize I've asked all my questions at once, but you've answered them very well.

I have little speaking time left. However, you also mentioned the issue of new technologies, which you have both addressed.

You may answer first, Ms. Pertuiset-Ferland. Then I will ask my other questions in the second round.

The question concerns the responsibility of companies and platforms in this regard. I do not know whether you have had the opportunity to consult Bill C-16. In what way is it sufficient? You mentioned receiving significantly more requests.

I'll let you answer.

Marianne Pertuiset-Ferland: In fact, what is missing from Bill C-16is the criminalization of the dissemination of such content, but what we recommend—

The Chair: I'm sorry, madam. I must interrupt you. It's rather cruel, really.

[*English*]

Ms. Roberts, you have five minutes, please.

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

I would like to start with Madam Dugal.

I did some research, and I know you have spoken to Bill S-235. It's an important topic for me, and I know that AI is going to impact this situation a great deal, but I want to mention something that happened last week.

In Durham region, police arrested 12 people. It was called Project Firebird. Fifty-five charges were laid. The ages of the perpetrators were between 22 and 64. From January 1 to October 31 of this year, the number of victims of human trafficking went up by 55%. The majority of them were children under the age of 18.

I'm a little concerned, because I have presented a bill in the House and I'm waiting for second reading. Human trafficking is a huge issue in our country. Ontario is the second-worst province in the country. I'm really concerned about this. I'm concerned about our children, because if we don't protect them today, this country has no future tomorrow.

I'm also concerned about how AI is going to help us catch these perpetrators. I've investigated this matter over the last four years. I've spoken to shelter staff, I've spoken to police officers and I've spoken to survivors, and I know that human trafficking is escalating at a pace that we can't even imagine.

Is AI going to help us arrest these perpetrators and put them behind bars? Do you think that we need to amend the law and increase the fines so we can save our children?

● (1135)

Anuradha Dugal: I will start by saying that anti-trafficking, as we understand it, is a form of gender-based violence. We know many shelters receive and help survivors of trafficking offences within the shelter movement, but it's not necessarily a specialty.

I'm not speaking necessarily from an expert position as I answer these questions.

I agree that AI and all forms of information technology, honestly, are offering perpetrators opportunities to increase violence and abuse online, including grooming, exploitation and financial fraud related to human trafficking. I do not know how AI is going to help us stop that, and I don't think most law enforcement or justice systems know that either right now.

If it is an interest of the government, it has to be considered within both the national action plan on gender-based violence, which should have a section on tech-facilitated GBV, and the safety commission. If and when Bill C-34 is adopted, there would be a safety commissioner for online safety. It should also be part of their responsibility to measure and consider that.

Anna Roberts: As you know, the most recent stats that have come out about intimate partner violence show that it's up 79%. My concern with AI growing so rapidly is, how can we hold these tech companies accountable to ensure that the exploitation of children and intimate partner violence don't get out there?

Anuradha Dugal: They should be responsible for immediately blocking any example, even suggested, of exploitation online while investigations happen. It should not be up to only survivors to name it and ask for it to be blocked. Tech companies themselves should have a responsibility for looking at the content on their platforms and making decisions to block things while investigations are happening.

Anna Roberts: I've been talking to some parents, and they're very concerned about Bill C-34 because, let's be honest, we raise our children to the best of our ability, but unfortunately these criminals are a lot smarter than some of us. Parents are asking for protection.

Would you agree that tech companies need to ensure that children aren't exploited? How do we do that—

The Chair: I'm sorry, Ms. Roberts. That's all the time we have.

Anna Roberts: Me too.

[*Translation*]

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

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

Ms. Courteau, Ms. Pertuiset-Ferland and Ms. Dugal, it is a pleasure to welcome you. For most of you, this marks a return to our committee. Thank you for continuing to enrich our work.

Many interesting questions have already been raised by my colleagues. I shall take on the role of a keen observer. Certain details regarding the topics discussed deserve further examination.

I shall begin with you, Ms. Pertuiset-Ferland. I'd like to give you the opportunity to take a critical look at Bill C-16. You seemed to welcome it favourably, but are there any relevant points you'd like to add? I'd therefore like to offer you the chance to expand on your thoughts.

Marianne Pertuiset-Ferland: Thank you.

Bill C-16 criminalizes the distribution of intimate images. However, we believe there should also be regulations to prohibit the creation of such content. We therefore need to better regulate artificial intelligence by putting in place preventative safeguards to block requests to create this type of content. At present, the measures are mainly reactive, whereas what we want are preventative measures.

As Ms. Dugal mentioned, platforms must be held accountable for monitoring and preventing the publication of this type of content, and for removing it promptly if it is published.

● (1140)

Marie-Gabrielle Ménard: That is enlightening. Your points are already very relevant. The government is striving to put in place solutions both proactively and reactively, as all scenarios are possible in 2026. You spoke about the labour market and highlighted the potential consequences of generative artificial intelligence, which will lead to job losses, perhaps disproportionately affecting female workers.

Have you identified any specific sectors to which we should pay particular attention? You mentioned large communities at risk, but are there any sectors we should focus on?

Marianne Pertuiset-Ferland: I think it concerns anything administrative and all jobs that may be a bit more repetitive.

Hang on; I know the sectors concerned. I just need to find them. I don't know if Ms. Courteau can lend me a hand.

It seems to me that this also concerns telemedicine and nursing. However, I'm not certain about what I'm saying. Please excuse me.

The Chair: Ms. Courteau, if you want to add your two cents, that's fine. You just need to turn on your mic.

Marianne Pertuiset-Ferland: If not, we will provide you with the answers to that in writing. I'm sorry. I can't seem to find them.

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

Ms. Courteau, I see you nodding. Do you already have something to add? If not, we would indeed be interested to hear from you at a later date.

The Chair: Please turn on your mic, Ms. Courteau.

Lise Courteau (President, Association féministe d'éducation et d'action sociale): [*Technical difficulty—Editor*]

Marianne Pertuiset-Ferland: I apologize for my colleague's technical difficulties.

Ms. Courteau just wrote to tell me that it is mainly the health and administrative fields that would be most at risk of being replaced by artificial intelligence.

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

I imagine I have only a few seconds left.

Ms. Dugal, you talked about the importance of raising awareness about technology, specifically tech-facilitated gender-based violence. In your experience, are there any tools that are more effective than others?

I also have a follow-up question: Are there any groups that we still have trouble reaching in terms of awareness? What do you think are the best paths forward?

Anuradha Dugal: Thank you for the question.

First, I think youth are particularly at risk, especially because the teachers, the parents, many of the people who are supposed to be helping youth don't have the information either. That means that the people who work with youth need to have this information to help them.

Second is female newcomers. Many of these people who are here may have a smart phone, but they aren't necessarily comfortable in English or French, hence the need to provide the information in their language—

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

Anuradha Dugal: It also affects indigenous people.

The Chair: You're very kind, Ms. Dugal.

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

Andréanne Larouche: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Really, it's cruel today. Our guests are regularly being cut off. We're clearly running out of time. That means that the witnesses are excellent.

I'd like to thank Ms. Dugal and Ms. Pertuiset-Ferland again for being here. I would also like to thank Ms. Courteau, who has joined us, and say hello to her.

The witnesses had the opportunity to explain a bit more about what we may be missing in Bill C-16, particularly in terms of guardrails. I will now move beyond administrative jobs and nursing.

My question is for the representatives of the Association féministe d'éducation et d'action sociale.

We know that Egalya is very interested in the impact on women's political and public participation. This is another topic that's very close to your hearts. We know that artificial intelligence tools—including sexual deepfakes, automated harassment and harassment campaigns—are causing growing concerns specifically about women's participation in public life.

I have always said that women are now wondering why they would enter the public sphere, why they would expose themselves to this violence, why they would expose their children to this violence.

We know that there are technologies that can be used to discredit, intimidate or silence women in visible positions or roles in public, political, professional or community spheres. We have discussed that.

What are your observations on women's participation in public life when artificial intelligence technologies are used as harassment or intimidation tools? To what extent does the threat of deepfakes contribute to reducing women's social or professional political participation?

● (1145)

Marianne Pertuiset-Ferland: Yes, I think it plays a big role.

I would direct you to Léa Clermont-Dion's documentary *Backlash: Misogyny in the Digital Age* on the subject. It doesn't necessarily talk about artificial intelligence specifically, but it discusses the impact of cyber-violence and online hate on women in the public sphere.

Yes, I think it's an additional tool. I believe artificial intelligence is increasing the scope and intensity of this violence that already existed and that can now be carried out even more convincingly and harmfully. As I was saying, it would be a matter of putting guardrails in place and—

The Chair: That will be the closing remark, Ms. Pertuiset-Ferland. My apologies.

[*English*]

We'll go to Ms. Borrelli for five minutes, please.

Kathy Borrelli: Thank you, Chair.

Can Ms. Courteau hear me now? Wonderful.

I have a question for you.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Ms. Courteau, your equipment is not working well enough.

[*English*]

Can you direct your question to another witness, please?

Kathy Borrelli: Then I will direct my questions to Marianne.

Through your ongoing advocacy and training sessions, have you observed an increase in the number of women raising concerns about gender disparities resulting from the use of AI tools?

[*Translation*]

Marianne Pertuiset-Ferland: The people who take part in our workshops express a lot of concerns about the potential consequences of artificial intelligence, but these people aren't necessarily the ones who are experts in artificial intelligence or use it a great deal.

We have a large number of members aged 60 and over who are less comfortable with or less inclined to use the technology. We hear about serious fears and concerns during our workshops and information sessions. We aim to develop content, training and recommendations to address them.

[*English*]

Kathy Borrelli: We often discuss how AI can reinforce the invisibility of women's contributions. However, I believe AI has the potential to create new opportunities for women in spaces where they have been historically under-represented.

Could you speak to how AI may either challenge or reinforce existing institutional biases in health care, education and technology, for example?

[*Translation*]

Marianne Pertuiset-Ferland: A lot of data is simply not taken into account by artificial intelligence because of the unequal representation of genders and various minorities in that field.

When it comes to working in the care sector, it's interesting to see just how much certain dynamics can contribute to perpetuating that kind of inequality. In that way, voice assistants with female voices are often programmed to serve people. That may be an example of reinforcing this dynamic or custom whereby women are always available, serve others and have the role of looking after people's needs. That's just one example.

As for the positive impacts of artificial intelligence, I believe that if women learn to use it and be more represented in those fields, they will be able to take a more active role. That could certainly have a positive impact on their skills development, among other things. That means they can also develop their abilities and acquire skills using artificial intelligence.

However, again, it's important to ensure that it's used ethically and responsibly. That brings us back to the digital literacy training we were discussing at the start of the speech. This training must be offered from a gender-based analysis plus perspective; it must be accessible to women, and women must be encouraged to take it. They also need to be encouraged, more generally, to be more invested in artificial intelligence communities and fields.

● (1150)

[*English*]

Kathy Borrelli: Thank you.

Ms. Dugal, do you believe AI has the potential to create new opportunities for women?

Anuradha Dugal: I do, with certain limitations, echoing what Madame Pertuiset-Ferland said. It has to be used ethically and responsibly. There must be training, and digital citizenship issues must always be at the forefront.

[*Translation*]

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

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

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

[*English*]

I give a huge thank you to both of our witnesses for being here today.

I would like to start with Madame Dugal.

I want to ask a bit more about the work you're doing on the tech safety platform. Are there data trends or patterns you're seeing that can help us understand the impact of technology on gendered violence?

Anuradha Dugal: We're certainly seeing that many survivors are using AI, as I mentioned. We work closely with NNEDV, which is the National Network to End Domestic Violence; WESNET Australia; and Chayn, which is a global network. In all cases, they have told us that Canada is behind its normal partners in this area—Australia, the U.S. and the U.K. This is why we created Tech Safety. In fact, we need a lot more attention to be paid to knowing how AI is used, what it can be used for and then what safeties and protections need to be in place.

Chi Nguyen: When you shared some of the statistics about location tracking and some of those other numbers, it was really shocking to me. I'm curious if you're able to engage with, inform and brief law enforcement so they understand what you're seeing from the perspective of GBV folks.

Anuradha Dugal: Law enforcement generally doesn't always understand how AI and tech-facilitated violence happens. Because it's not necessarily obvious, physical, tangible or in the real world, they do not feel they always have tools to know how to respond to it.

Some of these tools will emerge with the legislation that's currently coming into place. We look forward to seeing how they will support survivors.

Chi Nguyen: I took a quick peek at the platform. A lot of things in there are very practical for all of us in terms of good guidance, safety and tips. I encourage folks to do that if they have an opportunity. It's especially for employers in terms of disseminating that information.

You talked a bit about upcoming legislation. Bill C-36 in particular is about protecting privacy and personal data. One of the pieces there that we're looking forward to seeing activated is the right to deletion. It's an opportunity for Canadians to ensure that deepfakes that are posted can come down. It's also an opportunity to have more transparency in how these things will work.

As that legislation goes through our parliamentary process, I wonder if you could share a bit about what you think we should be thinking about or considerations that can strengthen that work.

Anuradha Dugal: Usually when we talk about how survivors have to advocate for their own protection and their own safety, a few things always come up.

One is that the resources they reach out to—the people who are running the help desks or the interaction they have to have with tech companies—must always be trauma-informed, ideally with a specialized group that knows exactly what they're talking about. Women can't be made responsible for their own safety all the time. They need protections, and tech companies have a responsibility to provide those protections.

The protection of their own evidence is extremely hard for most women to find, to produce and to prove. They constantly, in fact, have to repeat the same story over and over again. Any way you can help women manage their evidence in a way that is also trauma-informed should be included in those bills.

● (1155)

Chi Nguyen: Thank you very much.

Madame Pertuiset-Ferland, you talked a bit about consequences and implications for the workforce. I'm wondering if there are other practices we can look at to support women as automation, AI and technology implications start to emerge as considerations for us all.

[*Translation*]

Marianne Pertuiset-Ferland: Employers should also be made aware. Of course, they can't be prevented from using artificial intelligence to automate certain tasks, but it would be best to explore how they could do so more ethically. There is also a concern about automating certain tasks, particularly when it comes to mental health and collective well-being.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Pertuiset-Ferland.

That concludes our hour with our first panel of witnesses.

Ladies, thank you so much. There is obviously a great deal to cover. If you would like to send us any additional information, please feel free to contact our clerk.

I will suspend the meeting for a few minutes so that we can welcome the other witnesses.

● (1155)

_____(Pause)_____

● (1200)

The Chair: I call the meeting back to order.

I'd like to outline a few rules for the witnesses.

[*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, to take full advantage of the time allotted for questions and answers.

[*Translation*]

For those participating in the meeting via Zoom, please click on the microphone icon to activate your mic. When you are not speaking, please put it on mute. For members in the room, please raise your hand if you wish to speak.

● (1205)

[*English*]

I will now welcome our witnesses.

As an individual, we have Moira Aikenhead, lecturer, the Peter A. Allard School of Law, from the University of British Columbia. From PaiSLEY, we have Tom Heiber, co-founder and chief executive officer, and Barbara Shackleton, co-founder and chief marketing officer. From 2 Spirits in Motion Society, we have Paulete Poitras, executive director, and Angelina Lamy, supervisor.

Welcome.

We will now begin with opening remarks.

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

Moira Aikenhead (Lecturer, Peter A. Allard School of Law, University of British Columbia, As an Individual): Thank you for inviting me here to speak today.

I am a lecturer at the Peter A. Allard School of Law at the University of British Columbia. My research focuses on feminist legal scholarship around the Canadian criminal justice response to technology-facilitated gender violence, and particularly tech-facilitated intimate partner violence. That's the perspective I'm bringing to this conversation today. That's why I will be focusing on the harms of sexual deepfakes, also called non-consensual synthetic intimate images, which is a more accurate term, I would say, but “sexual deepfakes” is a bit easier to say, so I will be using that term for this short presentation.

The proliferation of sexual deepfakes is a pressing social issue. We have estimates from 2023 indicating that about 99% of sexual deepfakes online depict women. Obviously, this is a difficult thing to measure, and those statistics, being from 2023, are already out of date given how quickly this technology proliferates.

However, it's clearly a growing issue, and that is because technological expertise is no longer required to create hyperrealistic sexual deepfakes. Nudifying applications are widely available online, and this means that all you need now to create a sexual deepfake is a single image of a person and proper prompting, and then a convincing, realistic deepfake can be produced. There has been media reporting in recent months that these applications are very popular among high school students, where the images being produced would technically be child sex abuse and exploitation material, as they depict girls under the age of 18.

The federal government has responded to this issue by criminalizing the distribution of non-consensual sexual deepfakes through Bill C-16. This is a positive step, but it's insufficient to deal with this issue, one reason being that the revised definition of “intimate image” under the Criminal Code in relation to sexual deepfakes requires that images be “likely to be mistaken for a visual recording of that person.” This means that any sexual deepfake that bears a watermark indicating it is a deepfake or bears some aspect that indicates it's not a true video would not, in my view, meet the definition.

That mis-characterizes the harm of this behaviour and the distribution of sexual deepfakes. It's not just about people maybe thinking that the image is real. It's instead about a person's bodily autonomy and sexual integrity being violated and shared with others.

Further, Bill C-16 left the creation of sexual deepfakes unaddressed, despite the creation of this material having very similar harms to voyeurism in that it's an unconsented-to sexual observation. Most crucially, criminalization leaves the root causes of the widespread proliferation of sexual deepfakes unaddressed. The widespread views of women and girls in society as sexual objects are exacerbated in online contexts and communities where these images are created, traded and commented upon by large numbers of men, and there has been a failure to target the individuals and companies that produce and profit from the tools that allow this ability to so easily create and share sexual deepfakes.

If there were not the technological capability to create sexual deepfakes, this would not be such a pressing social issue. Regulating the companies that create these products would prevent the harm a lot more than the criminalization of those who share the images. The right of women and girls to equal participation in Canadian society is seriously undermined when technology that allows them to be converted to sexual objects and to be viewed and traded by others online is allowed to proliferate.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you so much.

Ms. Shackleton and Mr. Heiber, the floor is yours for five minutes, please.

Barbara Shackleton (Co-Founder and Chief Marketing Officer, PaiSLEY): Thanks so much.

Good afternoon, Madam Chair and committee members. My name is Barbara Shackleton. I'm the co-founder and chief marketing officer of PaiSLEYHR.ai, the Canadian AI hiring platform that helps teams screen faster, improve consistency and keep the final hiring decision in human hands. Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to your study on the impact of artificial intelligence on women and girls and under-represented people.

For over 20 years, I have held global leadership roles with technology industry leaders that have included Microsoft, Citrix Systems and BlackBerry, where I have personally driven product innovation and marketing through AI, data and design thinking. When Mr. Heiber showed me a demo of PaiSLEY, I knew immediately that this innovative technology would be a game-changer for companies that want to hire, leveraging speed, fairness and control to reduce bias. I knew then that I wanted to be part of this journey. PaiSLEY is a made-in-Canada technology based in Cambridge. Our data is sovereign and resides in Canada.

I want to begin with a straightforward premise: AI can either narrow opportunity or expand it. The difference is not the technology itself; it is the design, governance and skills that surround it. At PaiSLEY, we build technology for small and medium-sized businesses. Our platform analyzes résumés, generates structured screening questions and provides evidence-based recommendations, but ultimately, everything around the hiring decision remains with a person.

AI can help employers review large volumes of applications consistently, but it must never replace human accountability. This matters, because bias does not disappear when a process becomes digital. For women, girls and under-represented individuals, the policy question should not simply be how we protect people from AI. It should be how we equip people to participate confidently in an AI-enabled economy. Canada's prosperity depends on that participation. I believe AI literacy should be treated as a practical economic skill, much like financial and digital literacy.

Thank you.

I'll now turn it over to my colleague Tom Heiber.

● (1210)

Tom Heiber (Co-Founder and Chief Executive Officer, PaiSLEY): Madam Chair, I'm Tom Heiber, co-founder and chief executive officer of PaiSLEY.

Ms. Shackleton said that bias doesn't disappear when a process becomes digital, but testing can find it and it can be reduced. We built PaiSLEY with the goal that it should be free from bias. We keep improving it and testing the results so that it treats every applicant fairly and without discrimination, as human rights law requires.

We tested PaiSLEY by changing one thing at a time—name, pronouns, age, 2SLGBTQI+ volunteering or a caregiving gap, which falls hardest on mothers. We've run over 5,000 tests on two AI models each and are testing others. We found issues and worked on fixing them. With those fixes, in our main test every score comparison met our pass mark. No group was clearly disadvantaged by the AI recommendations, though about a third of those comparisons were inconclusive. We keep testing.

As Ms. Shackleton said, every final hiring decision remains with a person. That's necessary but not enough. In one study, people followed a biased AI's hiring recommendation up to 90% of the time. No Canadian law requires private sector and hiring tools to be tested.

We have three recommendations. First, require testing in Bill C-36 so that hiring tools are tested before use and every year for federally regulated employers. Second, put the weight on vendors that test each version once for every customer. Small employers should get lighter paperwork, not weaker protection. Third, make testing cheap. Fund an open Canadian test kit with intersectional indigenous, disability and 2SLGBTQI+ cases. If a small Canadian company can do this, Canada can require it. Measure it. Fix it. Measure it again.

Thank you. We're ready for your questions.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Heiber.

[*English*]

Ms. Lamy, the floor is yours for five minutes, please.

Angelina Lamy (Supervisor, 2 Spirits in Motion Society): Good afternoon, everybody. As mentioned, my name is Angelina Lamy. I'm a two-spirit Afro-indigenous person living in Treaty No. 1 territory. I'm a supervisor at the 2 Spirits in Motion Society. I want to thank the committee for inviting me to speak about an issue that is very important to us.

I want to raise five areas that I believe deserve attention.

The first is the impact of AI on personal safety, sexual violence and body image. We are already living in a society where women, girls and gender-diverse people face enormous pressure to look and present themselves a certain way. AI is making these pressures even more complicated. It is becoming increasingly easy to manipulate photographs, create unrealistic beauty standards and generate images or videos of people doing things they've never done.

One of my biggest concerns is the creation and distribution of sexually explicit images without someone's consent. A person no longer needs to take or share an intimate photograph for someone to create one using AI. For example, a teacher here in Winnipeg had AI-generated nude images using her face created by a student of hers this summer.

The second area is employment, economic opportunities and discrimination. AI has the potential to significantly change the workforce. I have seen these changes happening first-hand. Someone I know had to teach AI how to do her job, and she lost her job shortly after.

Two-spirit and gender-diverse people already face significant discrimination and barriers to employment and economic advancement. If AI systems are being used to screen résumés, evaluate job applicants, conduct interviews or make decisions about who receives opportunities, we need to ask whether they are reproducing the same biases that already exist in our society. We can't allow discrimination to become automated. Technology should not create additional barriers for people who are already marginalized.

The third area is mental health and the loss of human connection. I'm concerned about 2SLGBTQIA+ people turning to AI chatbots for emotional support during moments of crisis. For example, someone experiencing suicidal thoughts, domestic violence or a mental health emergency might turn to an AI chatbot because they feel they have nowhere else to go. While AI may provide information or a sense of conversation, it doesn't replace trained crisis workers, human connection or culturally appropriate support.

For two-spirit people, accessing affirming and culturally safe mental health services can already be difficult, particularly in remote and northern communities. We need to ensure that AI doesn't replace human services. People experiencing crisis deserve real human support, not just an automated response.

The fourth area is the environmental impact of AI. As you know, large AI data centres consume anywhere from one million to five million gallons of water per day. Many of us, as indigenous people, are taught to think about our responsibilities to the land, the water and the generations that will come after us. We cannot talk about building a better future through technology without considering the future of our water, our land and our children.

Finally, the fifth area is indigenous representation, data sovereignty and meaningful inclusion. AI systems are developed using information, images, language and knowledge gathered from many different sources. For indigenous communities, there are concerns about our traditional knowledge being collected or reproduced without consent, our indigenous languages being misrepresented and AI reinforcing colonial stereotypes about our people. Our knowledge, identities, languages and cultural teachings should not simply become another resource to be extracted and commercialized.

Thank you for your time and for allowing me to share my perspective.

● (1215)

[*Translation*]

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

[*English*]

Ms. Roberts, there are six minutes for you.

Anna Roberts: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses. I think all of us have something to learn from this.

I'm going to ask my first question of both Barbara and Tom.

According to the C.D. Howe Institute, reports have found that 30% of unemployed university graduates between the ages of 20 and 24 have been searching for work for six months or more in 2026, which is a record high. Is AI going to reduce opportunities for individuals graduating from university?

Tom Heiber: I don't believe so. What AI will accomplish is to allow candidates to find a better match for their position. Assuming that their résumé accurately reflects their skills and qualifications, AI will be able to find a position within an organization or within a sector that is most suitable for their qualifications.

● (1220)

Anna Roberts: With the increased levels of immigration that the Liberal government has brought forward, do you think that number is going to increase or decrease?

Tom Heiber: Artificial intelligence is a technology unlike anything we have experienced in the history of humanity. It is very difficult to project how it's going to affect us, but it is conceivable that AI will eliminate far more jobs than it will create. By extension, you could say that there will be a higher risk of unemployment than somebody landing a job. I guess the only safe, real sector to be looking at jobs is in the AI world, at least as long as we are still working on understanding the capabilities of AI and its impact on our society.

Anna Roberts: Thank you for that.

My next question is going to Angelina Lamy. Thank you very much for being here today.

You mentioned something about body image. AI is making this issue more complicated with sexual images. I'll direct this question to you and to our panel members, Tom and Barbara. How do we hold tech companies accountable to ensure that children are protected from these types of activities?

Angelina Lamy: That's a very good question. I feel like there should be a way to block these images from being created.

I will allow them to answer.

Anna Roberts: Can I maybe get your input on that?

Barbara Shackleton: It is an issue that I trust could be nipped in the bud from the start of the creation of an image. Take into consideration that platforms can be created anywhere in the world. We're not just referring to Canadian AI platforms in this regard.

Based on my experience with AI and technology, there is the capability to do this using computer vision and AI. There is no question. The question then becomes how it is framed from a government policy perspective to implement and ultimately enforce it.

I know of technologies, particularly technologies based in Kitchener, Ontario, that work with global policing systems around this very thing. I'm not here to represent them in particular, but what I can say is that there are solutions. There are many problems, but ultimately, as a problem-solver myself, I would say there is an opportunity to leverage Canadian innovation to identify these problems and ultimately bring that to legislation to deliver those solutions, because enforcement is ultimately the solution for such scenarios.

Anna Roberts: The reason I'm so concerned about this is that on November 5, a Durham police task force arrested 12 individuals between the ages of 22 and 64 on charges related to the human trafficking of children under the age of 18. One of the concerns I have is how we ensure that the images these perpetrators advertise are removed. How do we stop them?

Through my research with survivors, I know they're always haunted knowing that these images will never come out of the system, out of the Internet. How do we protect them, and how do we help them move forward if we're not holding tech companies accountable?

Tom Heiber: It's very difficult to enforce against the creation of this type of content. You can run a model locally on your computer with no oversight whatsoever, but you can also implement AI in such a way that it can read this content. You could potentially automate the scanning of the Internet and have AI classify images based on certain criteria that have yet to be defined.

● (1225)

The Chair: Thank you so much, Mr. Heiber. That's all the time we have for Anna right now.

Juanita, the floor is yours for six minutes, please.

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

I want to thank all the witnesses for being here today.

My first question will go to Mr. Heiber.

PaiSLEY markets an AI hiring platform that screens résumés, with human oversight and an audit trail. Since historical hiring data often reflects systemic gender and racial disparities, how do you audit your algorithms to ensure that they do not filter out women, newcomers or 2SLGBTQIA+ applicants? I know you touched on that, but I want you to elaborate a bit. Would your industry support independent, third party bias audits?

Tom Heiber: That's a great question. Thank you for that.

We have used AI and automation to take a group of randomly chosen résumés from production data and perform over 12,000 tests by changing the name on the résumé, the gender or the pronouns. I added the phrase, for example, “as a mother of two” to see what the outcome of the AI résumé grading would be.

PaiSLEY returns two results. One is a score between zero and 100 on the applicants match to the job position. The other is a recommendation. The recommendation could be to reject, to review or to proceed. In all of our tests, based on the AI models we've tested, within a certain degree of variability, those have not changed.

Part of the challenge is that because the AI is non-deterministic—which basically means that if you ask it the same question 10 times, it will return 10 different results—there is a certain amount of variability to it, but our tests have proven that all of our permutations of all those résumés have stayed above that threshold.

Juanita Nathan: How does this compare to other jurisdictions in the world? Have you done any research as to what other countries are using to manage this?

Tom Heiber: We haven't. Part of the challenge is that because this is frontier technology, there is not a lot of information available that has yet been scrutinized. Because we're essentially a frontier firm ourselves, we're leading the way on this. To be frank, this conversation is actually what prompted us to start further digging into ensuring that our product is free from bias and to essentially write the book on fair hiring practices.

Juanita Nathan: Thank you for that answer.

For my next question, I will go to Dr. Aikenhead.

Where do our current criminal and civil laws fall short on AI-generated abuse? What legal tools do schools, parents and survivors need in order to quickly remove fake images and hold abusers accountable?

Moira Aikenhead: There are a lot of connected questions.

You've touched on the fact that what most survivors want when their images are shared online—doctored images depicting them that are not in fact theirs—is speedy removal. That is an area where legal protections almost inevitably fall short unless they're preventative. Anything in the criminal justice process takes so long that to go through it to get a conviction, if that has to happen before an image is removed, is essentially meaningless for the person whose image has been shared broadly online.

In British Columbia, the B.C. Civil Resolution Tribunal deals with intimate image complaints. This allows for much quicker legal responses and a quicker takedown order, but we're still talking about a couple of weeks. In talking about the Internet and how quickly things can spread, the slow nature of a fair justice process means inevitably that images can be shared broadly.

We need to focus on regulating online intermediaries and the tech companies themselves to try to prevent such images from being created in the first place and shared widely online, and to disincentivize any sort of commercial gain from, for example, a product that can be prompted to create a nude image.

Prevention is really the best way of attempting to address this. Anytime we're talking about a responsive legal remedy, it's going to inevitably.... With how fast things move online, there are bots that scrape pornography websites and immediately share the images broadly on multiple other websites as well. If your image is shared on Pornhub, for example, a real image or a sexual deepfake, it is immediately shared in many other places online, so getting it removed is very difficult.

Focusing on prevention and on the technologies that enable this type of abuse to occur is the best way to focus our legal responses.

● (1230)

Juanita Nathan: Thank you for that.

I also want to know about shelter workers. Abusers are using AI to clone voices, make fake intimate images and create evidence for family court at times. What is Women's Shelters Canada hearing about this from its shelters? Do frontline workers have enough resources to help survivors fight back?

[*Translation*]

The Chair: I'm sorry, Ms. Nathan. That's all the time we have for that discussion.

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

Andréanne Larouche: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I don't know if Ms. Poitras would like to speak, because I saw that she raised her hand earlier.

The Chair: That's fine. She can go ahead.

Andréanne Larouche: Ms. Poitras, I don't know if you remember what you wanted to say when you raised your hand, but since we haven't heard from you so far, I'll give you the opportunity to speak for a few moments.

[*English*]

Paulete Poitras (Executive Director, 2 Spirits in Motion Society): Thank you very much. I'm the executive director of 2 Spirits in Motion Society, the national not-for-profit two-spirit organization. My growing concerns are the extraction of indigenous practices and ongoing harm for indigenous people, the erasure of indigenous languages—

The Chair: Excuse me, Ms. Poitras. We don't have interpretation.

Paulete Poitras: Do you want me to just answer the question that I had my hand raised for, or am I going to get six minutes?

[*Translation*]

Andréanne Larouche: There's no interpretation. I don't know if there's a problem with the connection.

Madam Chair, I have stopped the clock while things get sorted out.

Ms. Poitras, you can speak again if we manage to resolve the problem.

[*English*]

The Chair: We'll see if we have interpretation.

Please go ahead, Ms. Poitras.

[*Translation*]

I'm being told that the sound isn't very good.

Ms. Larouche, could you ask your question to another witness?

Andréanne Larouche: I was hoping that Ms. Poitras could take a few moments to speak. There are clearly some technical issues.

Dr. Aikenhead, you mentioned the former Bill C-16, which has come up often since this study began. We haven't finished our work yet, but we have already heard from a number of witness panels. Witnesses often bring up the lack of guardrails in this legislation. It opens the door to deepfakes and the need to criminalize them.

What safeguards do you think would help improve the act that Bill C-16 became?

[*English*]

Moira Aikenhead: Bill C-16, as I noted, criminalized the distribution of sexual deepfakes by encompassing them within the non-consensual distribution provisions, which, as noted, misses the fact that the creation of these images is an independent harm and is essentially the same harm that we see with—

[*Translation*]

The Chair: I'm sorry for interrupting, Dr. Aikenhead.

Since we are parliamentarians, we are occasionally called to vote in the House of Commons.

There's a call for a vote right now, so the bells are going to ring for 30 minutes. Is there unanimous consent to continue the meeting?

Ms. Gladu, the floor is yours.

● (1235)

Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton—Bkejwanong, Lib.): I move that Ms. Larouche finish her questions and that we then adjourn the meeting.

Andréanne Larouche: There are barely 25 minutes left in the meeting, and the bells ring for 30 minutes. We could afford to finish the time allotted to this panel.

The Chair: It takes unanimous consent, Ms. Larouche. Please continue.

Andréanne Larouche: Okay. I will finish my speaking time, then. This is a strange round of questions with several interruptions.

Dr. Aikenhead, I'm sorry. I invite you to return to the issue of guardrails and what you propose to improve the legislation that resulted from Bill C-16.

[*English*]

Moira Aikenhead: Thank you.

Essentially, there are two main concerns with how Bill C-16 addressed sexual deepfakes. One is not focusing on the creation of sexual deepfakes. Whether that needs to be criminalized or we need to simply have another form of legal remedy under privacy legislation or civilly is a matter for debate, but if we find that voyeurism is a harmful activity—looking at someone in a sexualized context without their consent—surely creating wholesale an image or a video of them in a sexual context should similarly be criminalized.

Further, in the way that Parliament chose to define a sexual deepfake that can fall within the non-consensual distribution provisions, it essentially requires that the image look as though it is a video recording. The wording is "likely to be mistaken for a visual recording". In my view, that presents a very easy workaround, in that any sexual deepfakes that are clearly not actual videos will not attract any sort of liability. If I had a very explicit sexual video of me created and shared widely online, my concern wouldn't be that people would think it is me, but rather that someone appropriated my identity in this way and violated my sexual integrity.

I think those are the two areas in relation to criminalization where the mark was missed.

Otherwise, I think the regulation really needs to be focusing on the technologies that allow these types of images to be created in the first place, any companies that are profiting off of them and any that are widely available in app stores. The government really needs to be focusing on getting those shut down and on not allowing them to be sold and profited from within Canada.

[*Translation*]

Andréanne Larouche: Thank you very much, Dr. Aikenhead.

Thank you again to the witnesses for being here today.

I will now turn to you, Mr. Heiber.

So far in this study, we have mainly heard about Bill C-16 and Bill C-34. When you talked about your recommendations, I noted that you mentioned Bill C-36. From what I understand, you addressed it in your first recommendation regarding hiring tools. I would like you to elaborate on that first recommendation.

[*English*]

Tom Heiber: Artificial intelligence is an evolving field. More often than not, the laws and policies we pass are effects or after-effects. We're already starting to see how AI is being misused, both in hiring and, obviously, in part of this conversation about misuse for sexual images. In this case, it's about putting policies in place to start regulating what we already know and what we've already seen.

In this case, because we're focusing on the hiring aspects of it, it's about how to regulate the use of AI in hiring—for example, not using AI to make the final decision, but perhaps using AI to present a recommendation and the reasoning for the recommendation, and ultimately the final decision ends up with a real person.

This is just the start of the frameworks. We need to start having these conversations. Bill C-36 seems like the place where we can start having these discussions and start implementing some of these regulations and policies.

● (1240)

[*Translation*]

Andréanne Larouche: Thank you, Mr. Heiber.

Ms. Lamy, COP is in full swing, so thank you for raising the issue of the environmental impact of artificial intelligence.

I'll give you about 15 seconds to add something to that.

[*English*]

Angelina Lamy: Thanks [*Technical difficulty—Editor*].

[*Translation*]

The Chair: It clearly isn't going to work.

Ladies, the bells are ringing for a vote. I asked for the committee's unanimous consent to continue, and it has obviously given it. However, Ms. Gladu proposed that we finish after Ms. Larouche's remarks.

The clerk told me what we traditionally do: The committee can decide to continue for about 10 minutes so that the time can be adjusted. That would give you enough time to go and vote. Would that satisfy you?

There are 23 minutes left.

[*English*]

Kelly DeRidder (Kitchener Centre, CPC): They're my witnesses. Can I have five minutes for my own witnesses? I need five minutes for my witnesses, who came all the way to Ottawa.

Marilyn Gladu: They can send things to the clerk.

Kelly DeRidder: Well, you don't have to stay.

We still have a quorum here if Marilyn needs to go. Who else needs to go?

[*Translation*]

The Chair: The committee can decide to continue for a few minutes, but I have to give you time to go vote.

Is the committee in agreement to continue?

Andréanne Larouche: I'm perfectly happy to continue.

[*English*]

Chi Nguyen: I can stay for five minutes.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Do the members on the other side of the table agree to continue?

You're indicating yes. That's fine.

We'll continue.

Mrs. Borrelli, the floor is yours.

[*English*]

Kelly DeRidder: I'm going to take Ms. Borrelli's round.

The Chair: That's no problem at all.

You have five minutes. Go ahead.

Kelly DeRidder: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you, everybody, for giving me five minutes.

Barbara and Tom, thank you for being here today from Canada's innovation capital.

We are the problem-solvers of Canada, and we have a problem with the hiring process as it stands today, in that there's human bias in hiring.

This one is for you, Tom. How does PaiSLEY HR remove bias in the first steps of the hiring process?

Tom Heiber: We filter out all the information in the résumé that could contribute to bias. I would argue that, essentially, because AI is a calculator—it's a machine—it has less bias than a typical person would. It isn't affected by a bad day, a bad week, sickness, health or any sort of external circumstances.

Assuming that the model has been trained properly, it would inherently be a better judge of an applicant and produce less variability than a person would.

Kelly DeRidder: With this particular platform, there is no assumption that the algorithm is built.... I think there's been lots of testing done to ensure that the bias has been removed. Can you explain how that works within this platform to ensure that bias is removed from the application process?

Tom Heiber: We have extensive testing processes. We created an entire automated harness so that we could audit and look at the results—the interim results, not just the final results—to ensure that testing is complete. However, for every résumé we run through the test, it creates multiple permutations based on gender and based on, for example, graduation year, and it verifies whether the final recommendation from the AI, or the score, is affected by those changes.

Kelly DeRidder: Are you basically saying, then, that the score would not be changed based on gender, maternal leave or something like that? Is it genuinely scored on skill set? Are all of those bias pieces eliminated? Is that what this platform does?

● (1245)

Tom Heiber: That's correct.

As part of the testing, we created a placebo platform, a test, where we tested the same résumé several times with the same model. We've tested several models. There is certain variability within those scores, but in our testing of the PaiSLEY platform, the scores fall below the variability of the placebo, which tells us that it is more fair and more free from bias than the benchmark.

Kelly DeRidder: That's amazing.

My second question will go to Barbara.

Woman to woman, HR roles are typically filled by women. How is this platform like a tool in the tool box as opposed to a replacement for the HR role? Can you explain how it will help and not hinder the HR role?

Barbara Shackleton: I will say that there are men in HR, but you're absolutely right that the vast majority of people who fill the roles in HR are women, and they are typically overwhelmed. They're overwhelmed with their day-to-day. To be productive, to be professional, to deliver on, for instance, an HR person's output and to do their job well, PaiSLEY is meant to help them.

In the case of bias and being able to ingest hundreds of résumés, what used to take 20 to 25 minutes is now going to take two to three minutes. Providing HR with a tool so they're able to not only hire the best, but also hire the best without bias and level the playing field out of the gate for women and under-represented people is a great opportunity, just as it is, ultimately, for people who want to go into HR.

The question from the previous committee was how AI will affect certain industries. In terms of HR, having tools to stack your bench with people who can do a great job and fit that culture is something that PaiSLEY can help achieve, and we're very proud of that. The fact that it's a Canadian technology based in Kitchener is fantastic.

[*Translation*]

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

Ms. Gladu, you have the floor for five minutes. We'll wrap up after you.

[*English*]

Marilyn Gladu: Thank you so much, Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses for being here today.

On a point of procedure for the future, when there's a unanimous consent motion and somebody objects—anybody, such as me—the motion cannot go forward. The purpose of stopping early is so that people can exercise their parliamentary duty to vote. Some of us just had a knee replacement and have to take the bus, which takes longer.

With that, I move to adjourn.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Ms. Gladu, from what I understand, you are moving a motion to adjourn.

Is it the will of the committee to adjourn?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Thank you to all the witnesses for making themselves available today.

Thank you to my colleagues.

Have a good afternoon.

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