



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

Standing Committee on the Status of Women

FEWO • NUMBER 121 • 1st SESSION • 42nd PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Wednesday, November 7, 2018

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Chair

Mrs. Karen Vecchio

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• (1625)

[English]

The Chair (Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC)): Good afternoon, everyone, and welcome to the 121st meeting of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women. This meeting is public.

Today, we'll be continuing our study on the system of shelters and transition houses serving women and children affected by violence against women and intimate partner violence.

Because of the time needed for votes and the apology in the House, we'll be condensing this into an hour and five minutes. Each panellist will have seven minutes as normal, but I will be cutting you off right at the seven minutes.

I would like to welcome the panellists we have today. From Halton Women's Place, we have Diane Beaulieu, executive director. We also have Boyd Thomas, executive director of the Aboriginal Housing Society. Joanne Baker is the executive director of the BC Society of Transition Houses, and we'll find her via video conference. From the Canadian Women's Foundation we have Ann Decter, director of community initiatives. From Horizon Women's Centre we have Linda Lafantaisie Renaud, director.

You'll see on the screen that we also have additional panellists.

We'll start here with Diane for seven minutes, and as I said, I'm knocking you off at seven minutes.

Thanks so much.

Ms. Diane Beaulieu (Executive Director, Halton Women's Place): I would like to begin by thanking the committee for the invitation.

My name is Diane Beaulieu, and I have the privilege of being the executive director of Halton Women's Place, the only women's shelter in Halton region. I've come today to speak to you about shelter and transition houses in general but will focus my discussion on the Halton region in particular.

This year, Halton Women's Place commemorated its 40th anniversary of providing services to women and children. Given this milestone anniversary, and because I've been around for a long time, I'm often asked if things have changed. They have, definitely, with some good changes and some not-so-good changes.

The way we do the work has changed significantly. Our work is trauma-informed, and we work from a harm-reduction model of

service delivery. We know that every woman's story of abuse is different, and we cater our services accordingly.

The issues facing abused women today are complex, and professional staff are required to meet the needs of this ever-changing population. Staffing existing shelters is an important consideration, perhaps not so much for this committee, but it is one that every executive director is concerned about. If you were to ask, you would be told that many shelters are single-staffed at night, on weekends, and in some cases, during all shifts. It's a serious problem waiting to happen.

In addition, we have greater awareness, and we have created that by engaging men in the process of ending violence against women. However, our shelters are full. This isn't specific to Halton. It is the same across Ontario and Canada.

We incorporated in 1978 as a 12-bed shelter located in Milton, Ontario, that ran primarily with volunteers. Today Halton Women's Place has 52 beds in two facilities. We have 30 beds that opened in 1994 in Burlington and a 22-bed shelter in Milton, which opened as a new facility in 2002. In total, we employ 50 staff. In addition to the two shelters, we also have one transitional unit.

Our capacity runs at between 95% and 105% at all times. In 2017-18, Halton Women's Place provided services to 730 women through our residential and community outreach programs, and we responded to over 2,500 crisis calls. Unfortunately, we were forced to refer, or turn away, as I prefer to call it, 400 women to facilities outside their region because of a lack of space.

Halton Women's Place offers a variety of programs, and we work with many community partners to provide the best wraparound service possible. We offer vital, life-serving services and resources that help women and children recover from the abuse they have experienced.

In addition to shelter and transitional services, Halton Women's Place employs four Ontario-certified teachers to deliver a curriculum on healthy relationships in schools across Halton. We believe that education is key to ending violence. Our goal is to talk about healthy relationships in every school in Halton.

Women coming from other shelters in different regions tell us that the services received in those shelters is different. Some is better and some left them wanting and needing more. Women across the country are left with varying levels of services. This is not equity. In Canada in 2018, every woman should have access to comparable services, no matter where she lives.

Equal funding for shelters and for our services is paramount in the struggle to raise awareness and put an end to violence against women. Federal funding for capacity is one thing, but of greater concern to me are provincial operating dollars, which force us to live on tight budgets and fundraise to build capacity, fundraising that increases annually. Currently, Halton Women's Place is fundraising \$1 million to meet our budget and provide much-needed services and education.

For as many strides as we make in the field of gender-based violence, we take two steps back. I believe that this is one of the most dangerous times in history to be a woman. The backlash we are experiencing and the hate rhetoric coming out of the United States spreads far and wide.

Let's not be complacent. Violence against women is an epidemic, affecting women in every community in our country, regardless of age, economic status, race, ability, nationality or educational background. Each one of us in this room today knows someone who is or will be impacted by physical or sexual abuse. It may be your neighbour, your mother, your best friend, your sister or you.

● (1630)

Shelters are an essential service and must be recognized as such. Failure to do so places women at risk of death.

It is widely recognized that the impacts of abuse are complex and extend in all directions and are destabilizing in their wake. Women and children in a home where intimate partner abuse is occurring are deeply affected. Their trust is eroded and their ability to focus is undermined, sometimes irreparably. Sometimes they die.

In the first eight months of this year, 106 women and girls died in Canada. Could we have helped those women?

In terms of gaps in service or the number of beds provided, I will say that if more shelters are built, they will be filled. Before taking the step to build them, operating dollars must be guaranteed. Expecting shelters to fundraise a third or more of their budget is untenable and a recipe for disaster. Sooner or later the funds will run out, and women and children will suffer.

Transitional second-stage housing in every community could help reduce the number of women turned away or referred elsewhere. Again, the operating dollars must be guaranteed.

Education is key to ending violence against women. Every child in Canada should receive information on what a healthy relationship is. This should happen over the course of their education, not just once. It is as important as math, English and science. They have to learn about healthy relationships.

Social media plays a large role in our children's lives today. Government must focus on a strategy to find a way to use this tool to change the content our children are exposed to, including the objectification of women and the normalization and acceptance of the violence that goes along with it.

I will end by saying thank you once again for the opportunity to speak to you today. I would ask that you give conscious thought to the fact that it is every woman's fundamental right to live in safety

and security in her home and community, free from the threat of violence.

The Chair: Thank you so much.

We're now going to switch over to video conference.

From Horizon Women's Centre, we have Linda Lafantaisie Renaud. You have the floor for seven minutes.

Ms. Linda Lafantaisie Renaud (Director, Horizon Women's Centre): Thank you.

I would first like to thank you for having me here today. I would like to note that I have been working at the Horizon Women's Centre/Centre Horizon pour femmes in Sturgeon Falls for 28 years. I by no means consider myself an expert but I do have extensive knowledge about running a shelter and helping women who have been in an abusive situation.

I would like to state that it is very important work that you as a committee are doing, and we appreciate that you are asking for our opinions and recommendations.

As a rural shelter situated between Sudbury and North Bay, we face struggles, as do other rural shelters, but mostly because we do not have public transportation available to our residents and we lack services for women in our town. We must travel to North Bay or Sudbury for client accompaniment to lawyer appointments, court, legal aid, etc. We also face difficulty in recruiting bilingual and educated front-line workers since our shelter is designated under the French Language Services Act. We are one of the few shelters in Ontario that are fully bilingual 100% of the time.

My suggestions today will be focused on my experiences and on those of my staff and my sister-shelter colleagues.

In the past five years we have had an extreme increase in the number of women we are serving who are struggling with addictions. We do take in women who suffer from addictions, but we are not equipped to deal with such severe addictions as those to heroine, opiates, etc. The women do not always divulge addictions to us upon admission.

Most of these women have suffered violence in their lives through childhood and adulthood, which makes it even more of a challenge for them to reach out for help due to the complexity surrounding their addiction. Most of these women have suffered extreme trauma, and our shelter has a women's counsellor only once a week to help these women deal with trauma.

Addiction is a whole different area of expertise. My recommendation to this committee is to fund shelters to hire a concurring disorder counsellor, who can help women who suffer from mental health issues and addictions up to two times a week, for our residents or past residents, and guide them to where they wish to go in their journey which can be either coping skills, referrals to treatment centres, or counselling after they end treatment. This counsellor would also be able to guide shelter staff to lead in policy changes within a shelter. I would also like to add that more than 50% of our clients who utilize our shelter services suffer from addictions. This is a huge problem that shelters in our surrounding areas are also facing.

Over-occupancy in the North Bay and Sudbury region is a very common occurrence. As per the 2016 Statistics Canada census, there is a population of 50,396 in North Bay and we have three shelters—a coed shelter, a transition house, and an aboriginal women's shelter, which are mostly at capacity. There are also two women's shelters in the outlying areas which are 45 minutes away.

For Sudbury, as per the Statistics Canada 2016 census, there is a population of 88 thousand and there are only two women's shelters and none in the outlying areas of Sudbury. These two shelters are mostly at capacity and refer women frequently to our shelter.

My recommendation is to either add more beds in these Sudbury shelters, if possible, or to open a new fully bilingual shelter in Sudbury or a close outlying area since, for 17,265 of Sudbury residents, French is their official language, as per the 2016 Statistics Canada census.

Yes, running a fully bilingual shelter does cost more and it does have its challenges, but being able to help a woman in her official language of French is of utmost importance to her and her needs. Another suggestion might be to open a harm-reduction shelter for women in Sudbury or North Bay where staff can be trained in harm reduction and addictions.

Shelters in the north region are very accustomed to partnering for different initiatives, and I'm sure we could help with solutions and a successful solution to the shortage of beds in that area and the issue of addictions.

I know you are also focusing on funding for shelters and transition houses. I personally appreciate very much the increase in our base budget that we received this year. It was much needed since shelters across Canada are underfunded and we hadn't received base funding in approximately 10 years, which posed a great deal of budget pressures for our programs and our ability to maintain our staff due to low wages. There is a great deal of danger in working in a shelter, and it is imperative that staff be recognized.

• (1635)

This year alone, our town specifically suffered the loss of one woman, and another woman was seriously injured, and her adult child killed in an act of partner violence. Annual funding of the increase we received this year for our shelters is imperative if we are to run our agencies efficiently.

Thank you for listening to me. As you are well aware, shelters are saving women's lives and helping them rebuild a safer life for themselves and their children.

The Chair: That's excellent. Thank you very much.

Continuing with the video conference, from the BC Society of Transition Houses we have Joanne Baker. Joanne, you have the floor.

Ms. Joanne Baker (Executive Director, BC Society of Transition Houses): Thank you.

Thank you for the work of this committee and the invitation to present today.

The BC Society of Transition Houses is a provincial umbrella organization. That means we provide support, training, resources and

advocacy to the network of 100 transition houses, safe homes and second-stage homes across the province. We exist to support the vital, direct service they provide, and to ensure their experience and expertise informs government legislation, policy and resource allocation.

We are a founding member of Women's Shelters Canada, who testified to the committee at an earlier session.

Violence against women is an ongoing public health and safety crisis. At its worst, it ends lives. I also want to acknowledge the important work of the Canadian Femicide Observatory, which is tracking the murders of women and girls in Canada. Up to August 31 this year, 106 have been killed.

I also want to acknowledge the work of those who have been campaigning to highlight the disproportionate violence against indigenous women and girls, and those who are testifying to the national inquiry into those who are missing and murdered.

Specialist violence against women's shelters and transition houses, as distinct from shelters whose primary focus is on the issue of homelessness, are a specific and crucial part of the response to address men's violence against women. As this committee has heard, how we refer to shelters that respond to violence against women varies greatly across Canada. In British Columbia, they are referred to as transition houses, safe homes, and second-stage homes.

Transition houses provide first response emergency safe shelter to women and children. Safe homes in rural and remote locations provide short-term shelter. Second stage homes provide longer-term accommodation, typically up to 18 months, to women who may not be fleeing immediate abuse, but who still require continued support and safety.

As you are hearing today, transition houses provide much more than a safe place to stay, as important and life-saving as that is. They provide vital services and resources that enable women and their children to recover from their experiences of violence, and to rebuild safe, self-determined and meaningful lives. For example, anti-violence staff provide emotional support, safety planning, assistance with navigating the legal, health and social assistance systems, and support in planning for their future housing needs. They were practising trauma-informed work before that became a widely recognized term, and they provide a range of sensitive, thoughtful and innovative programming. Trauma-informed yoga classes are one example. They also initiate research into traumatic brain injuries from intimate partner violence, for instance. Many are also involved in awareness raising and education activities to prevent future violence.

This is specialized, complex work, which has its foundation in a grassroots feminist movement, inspired and informed by the lived experience of women themselves.

BC Housing funds the women's transition housing and supports program in British Columbia to a total of \$34.6 million annually. BC Housing has recently concluded a detailed review of these programs, and will be releasing its report shortly.

These programs have not received an increase in their recurrent operational funding for a decade. In recognition of the impact of the crisis in affordable housing on women fleeing violence, there has been some recent much-needed and appreciated investment in new second-stage housing by the Province of B.C. However, this sits alongside the static funding—which is, in effect, declining funding—of the existing ongoing programs providing emergency responses to violence against women.

There is a clear gap in transition houses' capacity to meet the demand for their services. Around 75% of requests for services cannot be accommodated, according to the annual snapshot surveys carried out by Women's Shelters Canada. Furthermore, the gap exceeds the simple calculation of fewer beds than needed. The level of need experienced by women accessing transition houses is frequently acute and complex because of the co-occurrence of substance use, mental health concerns, immigration status, poverty and a range of additional health issues.

• (1640)

These issues are commonly a result of, or exacerbated by, the violence and abuse perpetrated against them. Transition house staff are doing complex work with limited resources in buildings of diverse sizes that are in various states of repair, and with assorted facilities.

For transition houses in rural and northern communities, the complexity of their work is compounded by limited community resources and referral options. Such communities are also heavily impacted by poor public transportation, made worse by the discontinued Greyhound bus service. Without safe and affordable transportation, women may have little choice but to remain with their abuser. The absence of affordable transportation also increases the risk that women may use less safe ways of travelling, such as hitchhiking. This can result in horrific outcomes, as we know from the fate of so many missing and murdered indigenous women and girls along the Highway of Tears in northern British Columbia.

As a result of deficiencies in operational funding and because the nature of this complicated cross-sectoral work, which is widely misunderstood or confused with that of other sectors, the largely female workforce doing this work is significantly underpaid in comparison to those working in allied sectors.

In line with the stated objectives of this committee's study, BCSTH makes the following recommendations. First, the federal government has a leadership role to play in addressing violence against women, which includes the work of VAW shelters and transition houses. This should extend beyond the scope of its current strategy to prevent and address gender-based violence, which has no timelines or objectives. The development of a whole-of-government national action plan that addresses the root causes of men's violence against women and includes the—

• (1645)

The Chair: Doctor.

Ms. Joanne Baker:—provincial and territorial governments is overdue.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I have to reduce your time now. We must continue with the panel, and I'm now going to move over to the Aboriginal Housing Society, with Boyd Thomas.

Mr. Boyd Thomas (Executive Director, Aboriginal Housing Society): Thank you. My name is Boyd Thomas. I am the executive director of the Aboriginal Housing Society in Lethbridge, Alberta. I have held that position since January 2008.

What we have basically done is to have used a grant that we received to build a 29-unit complex of affordable housing. We've been dealing specifically with aboriginal and first nation people living in the Lethbridge area.

I'd like to point out that since that time, as a non-profit society, we have not received any operational dollars year to year. Anything we do as far as revenue goes is on the basis of what I call "social enterprise", namely, and how we are able to generate our own resources and funding through our rental properties.

One of the interesting things about it is that every day in my office, I deal with people coming in looking for answers to their housing issues. Right now I have 53 units and over 300 applications for housing units. These are in high demand; people are waiting for them.

Probably the best thing I can do is to tell you a story about how this works, because I believe in a housing continuum. We have no-choice homelessness all the way up to home ownership. We've been able to connect the dots between every segment.

I'll talk about a woman I'll just call Sandy. Sandy was a native woman. She was married, working for a rancher with her husband. They had three kids. The situation turned for her. She had to deal with very much the same thing we're talking about at this committee. She had to leave in order to protect her children and herself from the trauma she was experiencing. At the time, she was going to school, and she became a legal secretary. Her only source of income and shelter had diminished because she had to choose between those and her own safety.

She came to the Aboriginal Housing Society when we first built the complex. We made a big splash so that people would know it was there. She came in. Our rent at the time was about 40% below fair market value. She did well. We worked with her on a budget, and helped her with some of her needs. She was able to do so well that she finished her education and started working with other agencies in the city.

As we progressed, we also increased our portfolio, and had higher-level housing available—still below fair market value, but a little higher level, with air conditioning, a little more room and a little more privacy. Because of how well she did in our low-level housing complex, what we call *Koh Koonoon*, which is Blackfoot for Our Home, she managed to go on to higher-level housing and was able to do quite well.

Further yet, she got so involved that I had no choice but to hire her because she had lived experience, and she knew what she was talking about. She kept drawing and drawing and drawing. She had a motivation there because she could see something that she could actually do. She started to step into that. As a result, Sandy is now a homeowner. We have a tenant home-ownership program that she was able to come into. Within three years, she'll be able to have the title and deed to her own home, based on where she started until now.

I step into the housing continuum model after the social housing aspect of it. As I said, I don't receive any operational dollars. We just use social enterprise to keep things going. I have one property that is fair market value, and we use that to help finance the rest of what we're doing. The nice thing about that is that when government changes and budgets change, I don't need to. I can keep on going. I just have to adjust with the market and see what's happening as far as that goes.

I want to tell you that there's so much more I can say about people like her, but let me just get on to the crux of the ultimate idea of women being able to become homeowners through our program, and to be able to do it on their own.

We had a partnership in the private sector with a property developer. This developer built up a condo project. He had a whole big project that he needed done and he needed to sell some of his condos. I said, "Let's make a deal." I know if I go to the bank, it will be really expensive. I said, "Listen, I have grant money left over from a previous home ownership program that did not pan out the way everybody thought it would. Let me purchase some condos from you at a really good price. You have to give me a good price."

That's what he did. I bought six condos at a really good price. I took a look at all the portfolios of our clientele. I now have three women in very similar situations to Sandy's, who are now in a potential position to own their own house.

• (1650)

He vendor-financed me. I took my down payment and vendor-financed it, and now that I've been able to establish with the bank over a year of financials to show that we're in a surplus mode, I can go to the bank, negotiate and get an even better deal. He gets his money, and it works. It was "you scratch my back and I'll scratch your back".

The most beautiful thing is how these people come into my office, sit down and say, "I came to you with nothing and you"—me and my staff—"sat down and worked with us." I don't have a desk that people who come in sit in front of—we have a living room. We were able to sit down and talk to them to find out what they needed.

Their needs are as diverse as what you've heard here today. I don't even need to repeat or reiterate what has already been said.

I have a solution. We're working that solution. It is a pebble, but it's creating waves, you know. I know it can expand because this solution is duplicable. It's the same money that is used to purchase these houses where the appreciation continues.

I'll give you an example of how we do this: principal, interest and tax. When people come in and they're eligible for home ownership

after we've gone through our housing program, we take all the principal portion of what they pay and accumulate that for them. We carry the title on the house until they can carry the mortgage themselves. We credit that back to them with an accumulated down payment. We also ask each one of them to put skin in the game once they get to that level where they're able to do it. They have to put in about \$5,000, which will also be held for them, and we credit that to them as well as the down payment.

Then, when you take a period of five years, which is what the program runs—I purchased those houses at a pretty good price—I agree with them that if I can sell these houses again to them at a certain price, then any appreciation—equity—that results from the sale of that home gets credited towards them as well. This helps me with the bank a bit.

The bank is very familiar with what I'm doing. I already have six people that are successful and done. When these people are ready and they go to the bank, I can give them five years of financials. I can give them exactly what the bank needs in order to complete this. Then they get their own mortgage and they get established.

That is our story.

The Chair: That's awesome. Thank you so much.

Finally, from the Canadian Women's Foundation, we have Ann Decter.

You have seven minutes, please.

Ms. Ann Decter (Director, Community Initiatives, Canadian Women's Foundation): Good afternoon.

I am Ann Decter of the Canadian Women's Foundation. Thank you for the invitation to speak to you today on closing gaps in shelters and transition houses serving women and children escaping violence. I'd like to acknowledge the Algonquin peoples as the traditional custodians of the unceded land on which we are gathered today.

With the support of donors and corporate partners, the Canadian Women's Foundation has raised more than \$80 million and funded over 1,500 programs for women and girls across the country since its founding in 1991. The foundation works to achieve systemic change and strengthen the women's sector by bringing together service providers to share knowledge and solutions. We provide funds to over 450 shelters and transition houses and support innovative programs that address gaps in services.

A study of this nature needs to take into account the history of gendered violence in Canada, including the legacy of residential schools; and that black, indigenous, and racialized women, and women with disabilities are those most seriously affected by this violence. The foundation acknowledges our role as settlers and that through colonization, gendered violence and intergenerational trauma intersect in the lives of first nations, Métis and Inuit women who experience some of the highest levels of violence in our country.

The first gap the federal government can address directly and immediately is the funding gap for shelters on reserve, which receive up to 30% less than provincially funded shelters, as noted by the National Aboriginal Circle Against Family Violence. This creates a services gap that includes fewer beds, fewer staff, staff burnout and consequent turnover. We support the call of the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters to fund aboriginal shelters at the same level as all other shelters in Canada. This apparent discrimination is not acceptable.

The foundation has supported innovative approaches like partnering with the Native Women's Association of Canada on "You Are Not Alone: A Toolkit for Aboriginal Women Escaping Domestic Violence". This workbook, available to all shelters in Canada, provides first nations, Métis and Inuit women with community safety planning resources. The tool kit includes a domestic violence resource guide of services available to indigenous women in every province and territory, and it is updated annually.

Another innovative approach was funding to a shelter to engage elders to provide a space appropriate for ceremony, spiritual guidance, and ongoing culturally safe work to make the shelter more welcoming and safer for women.

The Canada Revenue Agency's guidelines for public foundations cause a gap in our ability to fund more of these types of innovations in shelters serving first nations women. As a public foundation, we are restricted to providing grants to shelters with qualified donee status. There are very few shelters in first nation communities with this designation. We have been supporting the work of the aboriginal circle on philanthropy to change this, but without a resolution from CRA, this remains a barrier to our funding women's shelters on first nations' territories.

There is a gap in funding for low-barrier shelter models that welcome women with diverse experiences, including women who have experienced trafficking, trans women and gender non-conforming, women with disabilities, and women coping with mental health concerns. These shelters have significant, evidence-based training and extensive experience in violence and trauma. With financial support they can extend their services, for example, to serve women who have been trafficked, rather than setting up a parallel system. Funding needs to reflect women with increasingly complex needs who require longer stays, as many have suggested here, with smaller staff-to-resident ratios and easier access to legal and immigration advice.

Gaps that bar women from shelters include lack of transportation to a distant shelter, insufficient accommodations for women with disabilities, and insufficient space. Bottlenecks occur and women are turned away when women in a shelter can't find safe affordable housing in the community and leave the shelter. Access to long-term safe affordable housing, with supports where needed, is a major gap, as is second-stage housing, where women live in self-contained apartments with access to staff for a fixed time period. These can be an important step to stability for families and need to be followed by access to permanent, safe, affordable housing.

Women in shelters and transition houses have lost their housing to preserve their safety, and are homeless. Anova in London, Ontario is piloting a model to address this, in which women would retain their

home post-violence. This is what applying a housing first lens could look like for women living with abuse.

Shelters do more than offer women safety, as you've heard. They provide consent education for teen healthy relationships in schools. They provide outreach to communities distant from the shelter. They provide liaison to schools for children in the shelter. They provide counselling, parenting advice and supports to children who witness violence.

● (1655)

A safe space is essential to survival, but access to programs for children, self-esteem, financial stability, housing support and legal support are critical to success post-shelter. As one woman described her shelter stay:

I had the impression that shelters were scary places but that changed once I began to meet other women and children who also faced abuse. My son adjusted and began to play with the other kids; I made strong friendships with some of the other moms. Since the shelter provided me my own room, and I no longer had to face daily arguments, I had the security and space I needed to think: What were we going to do? How would I support myself and my son?

Shelters and transition houses are one essential response to violence against women and girls, but only one. We would draw your attention to one more gap. We need a comprehensive national action plan on violence against women and girls as called for by Women's Shelters Canada.

Thank you for your time today.

The Chair: Excellent. Thank you very much.

It's come to our attention that the votes in the House have now been postponed until seven o'clock tonight, so—speaking to the vice-chairs—we will be extending our committee for a minimum of one more round of questioning. We'll have enough time to go through another round with the CPC and LPC.

We're going to start with our seven minutes.

Pam Damoff, you have the floor.

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Thank you to all of our witnesses for being here today.

I want to talk a little bit about home ownership.

Mr. Thomas, I applaud what you've been able to do in Lethbridge. I really do.

The community of Oakville North—Burlington is my riding, but I come from Halton region. I was doing a little math. If we are lucky to get a good deal on a condo, it would cost \$500,000 for one bedroom plus a den. For an organization like Halton Women's Place to buy those, that would be \$3 million. The mortgage would be \$3,000 a month. Condo fees would be about \$500, and taxes would be \$250. So, it would cost \$3,750 a month to get someone into a one-bedroom-plus-den condo.

I recognize that in some communities that's very doable for organizations, but I have question for you, Diane. You've been doing this for a long time. How many women coming through Halton Women's Place would be able to afford that? The average rent in Burlington is \$1,329 a month. What are the opportunities to rent, let alone get into home ownership, in an area like Halton, just outside of Toronto?

● (1700)

Ms. Diane Beaulieu: Many, many women come to the shelter, and there are some women who perhaps could afford to buy, but they would be women who had resources before they came. I've had the wife of a judge in our shelter. I've had a few nurses in our shelter. When I say that abuse can happen to anyone, it can. Those women might, perhaps, be able to afford to buy, but 99% of the women who come to our shelter would not be able to afford to buy. They cannot afford to rent in Halton. Many of them, if they can't get subsidized housing through Halton Region, have to go to Hamilton to find housing, and even then it's difficult.

If you're on OW or ODSP, there is no way that you can afford to live in Halton, whether you're renting or buying.

Ms. Pam Damoff: What kinds of challenges does that present in terms of employment? If these women are working in the area, having to move to another community means having to either give up their jobs or try to figure out some kind of transportation—and schooling for their kids as well.

Ms. Diane Beaulieu: Exactly. All of the above.

Ms. Pam Damoff: We had John Gerrard from Habitat for Humanity here. He talked about the partnership that he's had with Halton Women's Place. Can you talk about how important those types of strategic partnerships are to an organization like yours?

Ms. Diane Beaulieu: Absolutely.

John Gerrard and I got together a couple years ago to talk about what we could do to make a difference for women. John is the chief executive officer of Habitat for Humanity Halton-Mississauga. Their model was such that you rented to own. I wanted transitional housing for women, so a space where women could go for up to a year or longer—we needed to decide what that would be—once they left the shelter. We decided to have a trial on that model. John built a brand new unit, and Halton Women's Place took it over. I currently have a client in there. She's been there for eight months, and she is succeeding very, very well. The way that it works is that John builds the unit, the region pays for it, and Halton Women's Place has the client and provides the support. My staff are in there once a week, offering her whatever support she needs. Her rent is subsidized through Halton Region, and it's just a perfect solution to transitional housing. It isn't all in one place. The way that John and I are looking

at it is to have units all over Halton. Wherever he builds, we will have a unit.

Ms. Pam Damoff: That's fantastic. Thank you.

The other question I have—and I can put this to all of you, but I'll start with you, Diane, because I know your program—is how important is it to have male allyship in order to prevent the violence in the first place, so that the women don't need to come to a shelter? You run a fantastic program.

If I have time, I'll turn it to some of the other organizations as well.

Ms. Diane Beaulieu: It's extremely important to have male allyship. I've been around for a long time. I'm an old feminist, and back in the day, I did not think that men would ever be part of the solution to ending violence against women. Today I believe they are the solution to ending violence against women.

I believe we're one of the only shelters who has hired a male. I currently have three males working for us. They are in our education program. They are out in the schools teaching young men how to be good men, which I believe is important. Beyond that, we engage men in other ways, in fundraising for example.

Some of you around this table might know Jerry Dias. Jerry is the head of the Unifor union. He walks every year in our Hope in High Heels walk. To date, Jerry has raised around \$300,000 for Halton Women's Place. He's not only raising awareness, but helping us raise funds, not being the bystander, being the guy who says, “That's not okay”. That's the awareness that I'm trying to raise with men in our community.

● (1705)

Ms. Pam Damoff: Thank you for doing Hope in High Heels on the Hill yesterday.

Ms. Diane Beaulieu: Thank you.

Ms. Pam Damoff: To the ladies via video conference and to the witnesses here, does anyone have anything to add to that?

Ms. Joanne Baker: Hello. I'm so happy to say that, of course, men need to be part of the movement to end violence against women. It is men's violence against women that we're seeking to prevent, and it absolutely makes sense that men would be as concerned about this as women and children would be. So, yes, I endorse the sentiment of your question.

Ms. Pam Damoff: I have about 20 seconds left.

Ann, do you want to add something?

Ms. Ann Decter: Just quickly, the Canadian Women's Foundation does a lot work on healthy teen relationships, which is about learning what a healthy relationship is at a young age for both girls and boys, and we think that's key.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Thank you.

The Chair: Excellent. Thank you.

We're now going to move over to Rachael Harder for seven minutes.

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): Thank you so much.

Thank you to all of the witnesses for taking the time to be here and share with us today.

My first question, of course, will be for Mr. Thomas, at the Aboriginal Housing Society.

Boyd, I'm wondering if you can share with us a little bit more with regard to social enterprise. That was one of the lines you used in your opening remarks. Can you talk a little bit more about what that means in the context of aboriginal housing and how that's facilitating secure housing for those individuals who need it?

Mr. Boyd Thomas: I have a really hard time sitting down with a bunch of organizations and applying for grant funding for things when you have a certain pocket of money and then you have everybody fighting to get that money and competing with each other. It makes it really difficult, especially when you have so many services that are doing good things that the community needs. I thought that if I could make money by doing it and was able to use that as my resource, then I could manage that. I can budget for it and I can account for it.

As an example, what I did is that we saw a duplex that was being built. I heard a realtor friend of mine say that the builder was having a hard time with that. We went in and offered to purchase the building right at the stage it was at—about 50% done. We offered to purchase it at that price. Then they had a builder come in afterwards to finish it, and we paid him to do that. We're allowing equity to build in that particular house. We're renting it out at fair market value. The revenue we get from that is surplus. There is a surplus coming out of it. Then we're able to turn that around and put it right back into other fair market value-type projects that will finance our welfare market value housing.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Do you have a series of fair market value properties that you're renting out that then help make up for the gap that's left when you're choosing to rent other properties at less than market value?

Mr. Boyd Thomas: That is part of it. We're doing well, but it also helps, too, when you receive capital grant funding. That cuts the bank and the interest rates out, and that's where a large part of the money is. If we're able to build something and then turn around and have a grant that accomplishes that, we're able to recycle that money. That money doesn't get lost in operational funding; it can be recycled again and again as we grow our portfolio.

In everything we do there is a surplus. It doesn't have to be a drastic surplus, but there is a surplus that will help meet even maintenance costs, the consumable items. Any time a good deal comes along, we work at it. Definitely our real estate market here is a little different from those in other places of the country, but at the same time, there are businesses that are really willing if they can realize something that comes from it, for example, the condo. The guy needed to finish his complex. I helped him out, he helped me out, and it was of mutual benefit to both of us.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Thank you.

The Aboriginal Housing Society also puts a key emphasis on mentorship and helping people, not only to move into affordable housing, but also to be able to steward the opportunity for renting and then ownership.

Can you talk a little bit about why that's important and what that looks like.

Mr. Boyd Thomas: I used to say common sense was common. It's not. Common sense comes from being in relationship and sharing experience. Basically, it's the native tradition of the elders talking to somebody else who's coming up. In aboriginal culture, one of the things that an elder has spoken to me about is that it takes seven elk to build a teepee. In order to get those seven elk, you need the entire village to go out there to hunt the animals, you need the entire village to process them, to tan the hides, to distribute the meat, to use the bones. So housing really is a community effort.

It's the same approach with this organization. When people come in, they don't know how to talk to the utilities. They say, I'm going to be a little overdrawn, can I make payment arrangements, or my furnace isn't working, what do I do? You go over there and say, this is this the switch way up here and you turn that on. Somebody thought it was a light switch. There are basic things like that that would be common if you've been taught them.

What we do is this. I mentioned that in my office I have a living room. I take out the administrative portion and I allow people to come into the living room where we can have coffee; the kids can watch a little bit of TV, Netflix, and we can sit and talk. That way, we can take advantage of that whole mentorship process that I call "housing college", so that people can receive the knowledge they need. That step-by-step approach, in the housing continuum, actually gets people from the social housing that we have on through to home ownership, because they then get interested in education. I've got several people who have gotten their journeyman's ticket and they now own their own electrical company and plumbing company. Where they have been able to get to from where they were before is all part of my being able to speak with them. It's people whom I know, the board members who have professional designations and letting people know they can do it, that they've just got to learn how to do it and that we will help them with it.

• (1710)

Ms. Rachael Harder: Thank you.

Madam Chair, I would like to take this opportunity to move a motion. I'm hoping that we can do it fairly quickly as a committee in order to get back to hearing from witnesses. I move as follows:

Given that Status of Women Canada is changing to Department of Women and Gender Equality, the Standing Committee on the Status of Women invite the Minister to brief the Committee on her new mandate no later than Wednesday, December 5, 2018, and that this meeting be no less than one hour in length.

The Chair: Thank you.

I'll open it up for debate and, Pam, you've got the floor.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Thank you, Chair.

Out of respect for our witnesses here, I'm going to move that we adjourn debate.

The Chair: We'll go directly to a vote.

All those in favour of the minister appearing on—

Ms. Pam Damoff: No, we should vote on adjourning debate.

The Chair: Golly gee. We're voting on adjournment of the debate.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: We'll continue.

You've got 30 seconds left, Rachael, in questioning.

Ms. Rachael Harder: I will ask the same question, then, of the B. C. housing society. You also mentioned something, and you used the word, "re-establish", to help women re-establish and using a trauma-informed approach to that. Can you talk a little bit more about that and what it looks like to help women re-establish their lives.

Ms. Joanne Baker: Yes, it's the BC Society of Transition Houses. The nature of the work that takes place in transition houses is very much focused on the crisis that has brought the women and children to that place. As they stay there longer, there is a focus on next steps, including navigating the legal system, health issues, schooling for children, social assistance, and housing. I see that this committee has spent a lot of time talking about the continuum of housing.

The Chair: Dr. Baker—

Ms. Joanne Baker: Someone stepping into housing following violence is assisted greatly by the work done within transition houses.

The Chair: Dr. Baker, thank you very much.

We're now going to move to our next round of questioning and we have Sheila Malcolmson for seven minutes.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Thank you, Chair.

I heard Halton Women's Place refer in their introduction to the lack of comparable access to services for women fleeing violence across the country. We also heard comments about the lack of a national action plan from both the Canadian Women's Foundation and the BC Society of Transition Houses. I'm hoping that you can add to that.

Maybe I'll direct my questions to Joanne Baker from British Columbia—as I am. Can you tell us more about the consequences of the federal government's decision not to fulfill its United Nations commitment to do a national action plan, which would coordinate...? Actually, in the words of the blueprint for a national action plan, it said "in the absence of a national action plan, responses to violence against women in Canada are largely fragmented, often inaccessible, and can work to impede rather than improve women's safety."

Can you give the committee a little bit more of a sense of the impact on the ground of the federal governments having chosen to work on StatsCan and federal agencies rather than taking that leadership at a national level, as we had hoped, to coordinate responses and assure a consistent level of safety across the country?

• (1715)

Ms. Joanne Baker: You've summarized the position of the United Nations beautifully. I think it's a terribly missed opportunity for this government not to have taken, as you say, a strong position of leadership on the issue of violence against women in all its forms,

and to have delivered a national action plan with the broad scope and a whole-of-government approach that it could have.

Within that, I think they could have done the work that we were told they needed to do federally to get their own house in order. That could have been part of the action plan. It's important for leadership at the federal level to bring together the territorial and provincial governments, because as we've heard in today's testimony and in previous sessions, women and children fleeing violence in Canada receive varying levels of service depending on where they are living and fleeing to. I think that's a cause of shame for Canadians.

One of the things that could address that is a national approach that would compel, at the very least, comparable levels of service in each province and territory.

My sense of this being a real missed opportunity is also informed by the fact that globally, this is a period when people are paying attention to issues of violence against women. Wouldn't it have been fantastic to have our national government standing up with its own national plan at that time?

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Can you give us a little bit more on the impact you're seeing in the context of your network, in terms of the reality women are facing when they're in a rural area versus an urban area, or in different provinces and territories? What might they experience from that disparity in access to safety?

Ms. Joanne Baker: The disparity can be in terms of whether there is a large enough transition house to meet their needs. If you're a woman living in a rural or remote location, there may be a safe home that can provide service to you. That may be a room in someone's private house, for a few nights, and some coordinated support by a community organization, which helps them take the next step. That's a life-saving service, but it is not a long or deep enough level of service for women in that situation.

The referral points for anti-violence workers in smaller communities mean they try to be all things to all people. That is amazing, well-intentioned work, but it means that women and children seeking service in those communities have fewer options. As I indicated in my statement, lack of transportation in those kinds of communities can mean that they literally cannot get to communities that have the services they need—often vital services such as legal and health appointments.

This is having a very real impact on the ground. When I'm speaking about these issues, I'm not only thinking about the women and children who are fleeing violence. I'm also thinking about the members of the anti-violence workforce who are doing this very undervalued work for very, very poor pay and in incredibly difficult situations.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Would any of the four witnesses representing domestic violence shelters want to add a few words on the risk to workers' safety, when there are so few people working in such difficult conditions? I know that in my own community, when I see some of the shelters, it looks like they're unsafe for the workers, as well as for the women in some cases. Maybe we could have just a couple of words on that from anybody.

• (1720)

Ms. Diane Beaulieu: Very often in my shelter—well, everyday in my shelter—at night my staff are single-shifted. As I said, I have 30 beds in one and 22 in the other. I worry every night about the woman who is there alone being okay. The danger to my staff is not from outside; it's from inside. As we've heard today, many of our clients come in with mental health issues. We're sometimes not sure how bad these issues are until the woman has been with us for a few days or weeks. I would say that the danger is from within, not from without.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Diane, if you were able to secure federal core operational funding to add more staff, would that make it safer for workers?

Ms. Diane Beaulieu: It would make it safer. It wouldn't make it safe; it would make it safer.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Thank you, Chair.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We're now moving on to Marc Serré, for seven minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc Serré (Nickel Belt, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

My thanks to all the witnesses for the work they are doing in this area and the time they have spent preparing their presentations. Their appearance will help us greatly as we come up with our recommendations at the end of this study.

Ms. Lafantaisie Renaud, my first question goes to you, I am very familiar with the centre that you have been running for all these years. Once again, your work is important and we thank you for it.

I want to go back to your recommendations. They deal specifically with the problem of shelters in rural areas, since your centre is located between the cities of Sudbury and North Bay. You have described an operational model using networks and I feel that the model could be used all across Canada. Do you have any specific recommendations on the number of beds? Should the model include additional temporary beds or transition beds, and should that addition be made in rural or urban areas? What would be your priorities?

[*English*]

Ms. Linda Lafantaisie Renaud: That could be one suggestion. One of the suggestions I made was to maybe add temporary beds to the shelters that are already in existence. I'll take, for example, Geneva House, in Sudbury. It's already a 32-bed shelter. I do not know if it has the capacity to increase its number of beds. That is why I'm also suggesting maybe opening a new shelter that could be either central for North Bay and Sudbury or, better, for the Sudbury area, because as we know, the population is larger and they have fewer shelters. They do not have a francophone shelter.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc Serré: Ms. Lafantaisie Renaud, you also mentioned problems with drug addiction. We have heard a lot of witnesses working in the field of health talking about issues of mental health and addiction. You have certainly observed an increased number of women suffering from severe addiction problems in recent years. As

a result, you would like to be able to hire more qualified staff or have access to specialized detox centres for severe cases of addiction.

What are your recommendations on that subject?

[*English*]

Ms. Linda Lafantaisie Renaud: My ultimate recommendation would be to open a harm reduction shelter specifically for women dealing with addictions who have suffered abuse and are leaving violent situations.

The existing shelters need training dollars for very intense education for their staff who are dealing with these serious addictions to know how to help these women. We know that they're there only on a temporary basis. If we try to refer them to detox or a treatment centre, there's a long wait for them as well. There's at least a two- or three-month wait for them to get into treatment. We need an immediate solution. I believe that if we help our shelters be able to help these women who are suffering from addictions, we can probably find a solution.

• (1725)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc Serré: Thank you.

[*English*]

My next question is for Madam Beaulieu regarding the work you're doing on educating men and boys. Congratulations, and thank you so much for that.

I know fundraising \$1 million be very hard to do. As part of those dollars, you said you hired three men to go into schools. You also mentioned the president of Unifor, Mr. Dias, doing the fundraising.

We've heard from other witnesses that focusing on men and boys in their 20s or earlier was very important, but they said that educating men over 40 was hopeless. It was a pretty strong statement.

Do you have programs that focus on the workplace and the important work unions are doing to educate men in their forties and fifties?

Ms. Diane Beaulieu: We do. We actually train neighbours, friends and family. We are trained professionals who can do that training. We do it in workplaces.

I don't believe men over 40 are hopeless. I truly believe that if somebody wants to change their behaviour, they will change their behaviour. It's an issue of power and control. It's about giving up the power and maintaining your own control.

Mr. Marc Serré: Well said.

I wanted to ask also about the role of municipalities. Obviously this is within the jurisdiction of municipalities, and the federal and provincial governments provide some of the funding.

Do you have any experience with municipalities? What could municipalities across the country do better to support shelters and transitional and affordable housing?

Ms. Diane Beaulieu: I have some experience with the regional municipality of Halton, in particular.

We have a wonderful working relationship with the housing department. I will speak specifically to Andrew Balahura, who heads up the department. His staff think outside the box. We have never had such a great working relationship as we do right now with these people. They help us find housing for women.

Women stay in the shelter longer, but it's all about relationships. Somebody said that earlier. It's about building trust with the people you work with. We're all working for the same people. We're all trying to help that same woman. If all of us together—the police, the region, the shelter and the government—think about that woman and wrap her in service, we will find solutions.

The Chair: Thank you so much.

As a little aside, I keep checking my phone here. Bells are now at 6:15, with votes at 6:45. We're just going to keep this rolling.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Chair, may I just interrupt for a second?

The Chair: Of course.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: I have to leave as we had originally scheduled, ending at 5:30.

Thanks to the witnesses, and no disrespect to you. I'll read the transcript. I'm sure you won't be doing having surprise motions or anything I'm going to miss.

Thank you, Chair.

The Chair: I'll just close my eyes.

Thank you very much.

I know some people had House duty and there are things going on. We'll continue at reduced quorum. Reduced quorum means there needs to be at least two government members and one opposition member. That's how we'll continue.

We're going to start the next round, and we have Kellie Leitch for five minutes.

Hon. K. Kellie Leitch (Simcoe—Grey, CPC): Thank you very much to all the witnesses for taking the time to present to us.

I have some questions for you, Mr. Thomas, with respect to the Aboriginal Housing Society. You spoke about your capacity for creating these opportunities for below-market offerings to enable women to access homes for themselves.

Do you have some recommendations, not just for us but also for the other organizations, on how to develop relationships with the private sector that can be beneficial to creating these kinds of opportunities?

Mr. Boyd Thomas: We're just nice with them.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Hon. K. Kellie Leitch: You seem like a lovely gentleman.

Mr. Boyd Thomas: It's realizing that the business people are also experiencing the effects of what's happening in the economy. I had one gentleman put it to me like this: "I don't necessarily need to have the big piece of the pie; I just need to have small pieces of several pies." There are times when you just have to do what you can to weather the storm, so you can prosper later. That's what I do. I look for those opportunities.

I say listen, instead of you making a big profit margin this time, why don't we do this, so that we can point to you and say, "Thank you very much, this is what you've done." They've added to the quality of the community, and people remember that. People remember this is a company or organization they can trust, and they say, "Maybe I'll work with them for my next project, because they're trustworthy."

It really is a symbiotic relationship that needs to be developed.

• (1730)

Hon. K. Kellie Leitch: What are some of those things that you do to promote those private sector individuals who are good enough to step forward to be able to...?

Mr. Boyd Thomas: Call the media and have open houses and get our MLA and MP to show up.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Boyd Thomas: Have good news pieces. I'm not kidding about the media. Just have good news pieces, because there's so much bad news that it's good to see.

Hon. K. Kellie Leitch: I think it's commendable.

I also have a question for you, Ms. Baker. You offer a program called PEACE, the prevention, education, advocacy, counselling and empowerment program for children and youth who are experiencing violence. I was wondering if you could give our committee a more fulsome and thorough understanding of what that is. What are the component parts of that program in preventing these ongoing cycles of violence?

It sounds like a unique program. I think it would be helpful for us to have a bit more detail with respect to it.

Ms. Joanne Baker: Thank you. I'm very happy to provide more information about the PEACE program.

To give the committee a sense of where the program has come from, it was called the children who witness abuse program. Its roots are in the observations that were made in women's shelters decades ago, that not only were women obviously negatively impacted by violence but their children were, too, and that there was a need for specialized, focused, tailored programming for children and youth as well.

Twenty-six years ago in B.C., transition houses lobbied government for that program to come into existence. As you say, there are now 86 of those programs across the province. I don't believe that any other province or territory has a comparable program with such scope. We're very pleased and proud of that in B.C.

The work is psycho-educational in nature. PEACE program counsellors work with children and youth to help them understand and put words to their experience of living with violence and abuse and how to integrate that into their understanding of their lives and their choices about how they behave in the future. It does have a component that focuses on understanding what healthy, nurturing relationships look like and, of course, the impacts of violence in relationships that are not healthy.

I should say those programs do really challenging work, especially those in rural and remote locations, which can be providing service in areas of up to 500 kilometres in distance.

Hon. K. Kellie Leitch: Right.

Do I have time for one short question?

The Chair: You have 12 seconds.

Hon. K. Kellie Leitch: This is for Linda Renaud.

You've talked about having short-term shelters. I wanted to find out how long that short term is. Also, how and where are these women then transitioning to? I ask just so that we will have some idea of the scope of what you're providing at the Horizon Women's Centre.

Ms. Linda Lafantaisie Renaud: In our shelter, the women usually stay for around two months. They can stay longer if they need to, but that is usually our quota. We usually are able to help them get into affordable housing by that time. If not, we usually do keep them at our shelter, but I know that a lot of shelters in the outlying areas are keeping women longer because there is not enough affordable housing for them.

The Chair: Thank you so much.

We're now moving to Emmanuella Lambropoulos.

You have the floor.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos (Saint-Laurent, Lib.): Good afternoon.

I would like to thank all the witnesses for being here with us today to answer our questions. My first question is for Madam Beaulieu.

As a former teacher, I know the importance of teaching our youth, especially young kids and teens, about healthy relationships, boundaries and healthy friendships, because that's how these things begin. I did that as an ethics teacher. That was one of the courses I taught. I was able to teach it, but it was really up to the teacher to decide what curriculum they would teach. It was very broad.

Obviously, education is a provincial jurisdiction. What do you think the federal government could do to help to promote these types of programs even though they are under provincial jurisdiction? Also, what other types of preventive programs would you suggest that the federal government develop to prevent violence against women?

• (1735)

Ms. Diane Beaulieu: Those are interesting questions.

Definitely, I know there isn't a lot of influence by the federal government over the curriculum. That it is a provincial duty. I believe there needs to be, all the way through government, whether it's federal or provincial, some basis of education that is mandated so that healthy relationships and common sense, and just those life skills that children need to learn, are taught from kindergarten through to university.

I'm sure you probably recognized when you were teaching that some parents do not always want us to speak. We have parents who don't want us to speak in school to the issue of healthy relationships, and particularly in grade schools. We don't talk about sex in grade

schools. We talk about safety and friendships and good touches or bad touches.

Those kinds of things come later on in education. However, certainly I think that all levels of governments need to be involved.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Do you have any specific recommendation? I'd love this type of thing to be recommended so that we can actually move on something like this.

Would you be able to word some kind of recommendation? I know we can't tell provincial governments what to do, but how can we have some kind of an influence? Usually, it's funding related.

Ms. Diane Beaulieu: Yes.

I guess the only thing that I can think of is what I spoke about earlier when I read my notes to you. Perhaps it would be something coming out of the federal government that would encapsulate, on video or TV, something like TV ads....

I think back to the day when everybody smoked. My dad smoked and everybody in my house smoked. They just did. However, through government and televised ads, it became an issue that if you smoked, it wasn't so good, right?

I think that needs to happen, as well, with violence against women and healthy relationships for kids. I think there needs to be something that comes out of government that shows it's not acceptable.

Sorry, I know I'm not answering your question. I'm all over the place with it.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: You did answer it in one way.

Does anyone else have any recommendations along those lines, or should I move to my next question?

Ms. Linda Lafantaisie Renaud: I think it's imperative to teach young school-aged children what healthy relationships are. A lot of young boys and young girls do not know what a healthy relationship is because they are not living in a healthy relationship.

I think it would be very important for the school boards to initiate programs on healthy relationships and what they are, and at a very young age.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Thank you very much. That's what I'm actually doing my master's on. Hopefully, in Quebec, I'll be able to help with implementation of that type of education soon enough.

We thank you very much for your testimony.

The Chair: Excellent.

Thank you very much.

Does anybody have a final question? We have some panellists here.

Eva?

I'm going to throw the floor open to you, Eva, Kellie, if you have questions.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Eva Nassif (Vimy, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Ms. Lafantaisie Renaud, your shelter provides services... Do you understand French? Are you hearing the interpretation?

• (1740)

Mr. Marc Serré: She understands French.

[*English*]

Ms. Linda Lafantaisie Renaud: I'm hearing the interpreter's voice, but I'm having a hard time. I see your lips going in French, but I'm not really hearing—

Mrs. Eva Nassif: Okay.

Ms. Linda Lafantaisie Renaud: —what's happening in English.

Mrs. Eva Nassif: You said your shelter has senior women.

Can you talk about what brings them to you for help? Also, do you have accessible, adapted places for seniors and the handicapped in your shelter?

Ms. Linda Lafantaisie Renaud: Are you asking me if we take senior women? We absolutely do. We take any woman who is 16 years of age or older.

We have had women in the past who have been abused by their children, and women abused by their elderly spouse.

We actually have what we call an accessible room on our main floor, and it's mostly for women who have disabilities. We have only one, so sometimes we cannot take women if they have physical disabilities, because we have only that one room available. Our shelter was built in 1985, and we have an upper floor and that's where our five bedrooms are. On the main floor we have only one accessible room.

We take women of any age and we would refer them to any agency that can help them.

Mrs. Eva Nassif: How long can they stay at your shelter?

Ms. Linda Lafantaisie Renaud: We were called “family resources” before and our mandate was for up to eight weeks, but now with the new shelter standards we can take them longer, so we do if we need to.

The Chair: Excellent. Thank you.

Ms. Linda Lafantaisie Renaud: We are an emergency shelter.

The Chair: Excellent.

I'm just going to pass the floor over to Dr. Leitch. She has one more question for you.

Hon. K. Kellie Leitch: I have one question and just one comment with regard to something Emmanuella mentioned earlier.

I completely agree with your approach—I think, Diane, you were mentioning it—with respect to social behavioural change for children. I think that's the language we should all be using. It is about social behavioural change.

We've seen that in Canadian society many times for things as basic as garbage and recycling. I know that when I litter now I actually feel

very uncomfortable. I hope no one saw it and I pick it up and I put it in the garbage can.

I do believe that whether it's issues around recycling or issues that are much more paramount to Canadian society, like violence against women, those social behavioural changes are things that children need to learn before the age of 10. We see that all the time in their education, and the more we can do, whether as parliamentarians or you in what you're doing as activists and others, I think will really drive that change. Those education programs are not for someone like me.... I'm a pediatric orthopaedic surgeon and it's not my field of expertise, but maybe it is for Emmanuella and her colleagues, and it is that social behavioural change that we have to focus on.

My apologies for my diatribe.

My quick question, though, is for Linda, coming back to letting you finish the answer to the question I asked of you before about transition. You had commented that you have a two-month time frame for having women resident in your shelter and then transitioning them out. But for how many and for what percentage of women can you actually meet that time frame, or do you really struggle in trying to provide that opportunity for women to transition at the two-month mark?

Should we be looking at supports for organizations like your own, or on the transition end, where is that bottleneck, for lack of a better term, so that we can help these women?

Ms. Linda Lafantaisie Renaud: I would say that in the past five years we've had to take the women for longer times because we do not have second-stage housing in our area. If a woman is there for two months and finds an apartment available, say, for two months, we will keep her because we're not going to let her go to find a market rent for two months. She would have to give her two months' notice, so we would keep her longer. We do keep women longer than the two months. We have to, because there is no second-stage housing in our area. That would be a real help.

Hon. K. Kellie Leitch: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I'd really like to thank Diane Beaulieu, Boyd Thomas, Dr. Joanne Baker, Ann Decter and Linda Lafantaisie Renaud. Thank you very much for the excellent panels, and sorry about all of our scheduling complexity today.

Here are just a few reminders. We have a couple of deadlines coming up. November 9 is the deadline for the briefs, just as a reminder. Witness lists for our next study are due next Wednesday, November 14. Also, draft recommendations for the barriers to women in politics study are due on November 21.

Thanks very much.

Oh, yes, go ahead, Pam.

• (1745)

Ms. Pam Damoff: I have a question, Chair.

I asked my assistant earlier this week when we are getting the draft of the barriers to women in politics study, because I thought it was on Monday.

The Chair: I'll have Dominique address that.

Yes, go ahead.

Ms. Dominique Montpetit (Committee Researcher): The report should be distributed by the end of the week.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Okay, and we need recommendations on it when?

The Chair: By November 21.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Okay, that's fine.

The Chair: Yes, those are the recommendations.

Yes, go ahead, Kellie.

Hon. K. Kellie Leitch: I know the motion was tabled before, but I just have a comment. Having served in the role of minister of status of women, I think it would be very beneficial for us to hear from the minister on what her new mandate may be and the direction she would like to take.

Obviously, that could colour what studies we choose to follow here. I wasn't able to comment on it before, but having sat in her shoes, I think there may be some substantive value for all of us, let alone the minister, in terms of what things we focus on.

The Chair: Okay.

I recognize that the person who put forward the motion is not here.

I appreciate your comments but

I think we can continue that conversation, that debate, with all of us in the room.

I recognize that Sheila had asked before she left that we don't do anything crazy in her absence.

Thank you once again, everybody. What a wonderful meeting today.

The meeting is adjourned.

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