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Chair

Ms. Marilyn Gladu

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• (1555)

[Translation]

The Chair (Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC)):
Good afternoon, everyone.

Welcome, ladies and gentlemen.

[English]

I call the meeting to order.

We're going to start. We have an exciting panel with us today. We're very pleased to have the Department of Justice, the Department of Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, the Public Health Agency of Canada, and the Department of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada.

Welcome to all of you, and thank you for taking your time to be with us today.

We're going to begin with opening remarks in the order of preference you have expressed. We'll start with Gillian Blackwell, from the Department of Justice.

[Translation]

Ms. Gillian Blackwell (Senior Counsel and Acting Director, Policy Centre for Victim Issues, Policy Sector, Department of Justice): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Good afternoon, everyone. Thank you for inviting the Department of Justice to appear before you today.

I am senior counsel and acting director of the Policy Centre for Victim Issues. I am joined today by my colleague Nathalie Levman, counsel with the Criminal Law Policy Section.

We will be focusing our remarks on the relevant criminal law, the federal victims strategy and the Justice Canada component of the federal family violence initiative.

[English]

The issues you are examining today cover a wide range of behaviour, from inappropriate comments, harassment, and bullying, some of which fall short of the criminal threshold, to conduct that is clearly captured by the criminal law. We will focus exclusively on the latter.

Canada's criminal laws include substantive, procedural, and sentencing measures that provide a comprehensive response to violence against women and girls. The Criminal Code includes prohibitions on specific forms of violence, such as assault, sexual assault, uttering threats, criminal harassment, human trafficking, and

homicide. There are also a number of child-specific offences in the Criminal Code.

To specifically address the issue of cyberbullying, the Protecting Canadians from Online Crime Act created a new Criminal Code offence of non-consensual distribution of intimate images, which prohibits the sharing or distribution of nude or sexual images without the consent of the person depicted.

It also included amendments to authorize the removal of such images from the Internet, the recovery of expenses incurred to obtain the removal of such images, and a recognizance order, or peace bond, to prevent the further distribution of the images.

The Criminal Code sexual assault provisions, both substantive offences and procedural rules, have also evolved significantly over time in response to concerns about the treatment of sexual assault complainants in the criminal justice system.

For example, the Criminal Code defines consent, for the purposes of the sexual assault provisions, as the voluntary agreement of the complainant to engage in the sexual activity in question, and it provides a list of circumstances in which no consent is obtained.

The code limits the accused's ability to advance a defence of mistaken belief in consent. For example, it's not available in the cases of self-induced intoxication or failure to take reasonable steps to ascertain consent.

It limits the accused's ability to bring forward evidence of the complainant's past sexual activity or sexual reputation in order to put into question her credibility. This is known as the "rape shield law".

It creates a special regime in cases where the accused wishes to admit the complainant's private records as evidence. This is known as "third party records regime".

In addition, testimonial aids and other protective tools make it easier for women and girls who have experienced violence to meaningfully participate in the criminal justice system. For instance, victims and witnesses may testify behind a screen or outside the courtroom by closed-circuit television so they do not have to see the accused; they may have a support person close by when they testify; they can request the appointment of counsel to conduct cross-examination when the accused is self-represented, particularly, in cases of criminal harassment, sexual offences, and offences against children; they may request a publication ban on information that could identify them if they are under the age of 18 years or a victim of sexual offences; and they can request the exclusion of the public from the courtroom for all or part of the proceedings in exceptional circumstances, including the context of sexual offences.

Moreover, the Criminal Code instructs courts to treat offences more seriously for sentencing purposes when there is evidence that the crimes were motivated by bias, prejudice, or hate, based upon age or sex, or when the offence involved the abuse of a spouse, a child, or a position of trust or authority.

Victims of crime can also present a victim impact statement at the time of sentencing to describe the impact the crime has had upon them.

In addition to the criminal law, the recent Canadian victims bill of rights establishes victims' rights to information, protection, and participation, and to seek restitution, along with the right to make a complaint, if they believe that a federal department or agency has violated these rights.

These legislative responses are also supplemented by a range of programs, policies, and other initiatives. For instance, the federal victims strategy includes the victims fund, which currently has \$21.5 million a year available to fund activities and projects. The victims fund is divided into three components: the provincial and territorial component that helps support victim assistance programs across the country; the projects and activities component that provides funding to NGOs and other agencies, including funding for families of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls; and the financial assistance component that provides direct limited financial assistance to certain victims of crime in order to, for example, attend parole hearings.

The victims fund has funded many activities or projects of relevance to the topics being examined by this committee. For example, in 2016-2017, a partnership of NGOs in B.C. was funded for a two-day symposium on preventing and responding to sexual assault on post-secondary campuses.

In this same fiscal year, Algonquin College, in partnership with other post-secondary institutions, the Ottawa Police Service, and NGOs, was funded for a project entitled "Free to learn: confronting sexual violence on campus", including a series of workshops and training sessions.

Another relevant initiative is the Department of Justice's work under the federal family violence initiative. Through its family violence fund, the department supports projects to improve the system's response to family violence. One example is the recently funded pan-Canadian initiative led by the Girls Action Foundation. This initiative was designed to improve access to justice for marginalized young women who are at risk of, or victims of, intimate partner violence, by offering workshops on their legal rights, the justice system, and supports available to them when they are faced with dating violence.

Another example involved multi-year funding to Ending Violence Association BC for the initiative "Be More Than a Bystander", which is education on violence against women and awareness for men and boys. The project, which was completed last year, involved men and boys in raising awareness about violence against women and girls by examining their own attitudes and behaviour, by speaking about violence and abuse to their peers, and by becoming part of the solution.

In addition, the Department of Justice has produced a series of family violence public legal education and information materials. For example, there is the multilingual "Abuse is Wrong in any Language" booklet, which is available in 12 languages and is distributed to community organizations across Canada. It includes information about family violence, safety, and gender equality in Canada.

Similarly, "Abuse is Wrong in any Culture: Inuit" and "Abuse Is Wrong In Any Culture: for First Nations and Métis People" are also written for indigenous people who experience violence in their relationships. I can leave copies of these documents with the clerk.

The Department of Justice also works with federal-provincial-territorial partners to address violence against indigenous women and girls. For example, in January of this year, FPT ministers of justice and public safety approved a justice framework for violence against indigenous women and girls. This is to guide the work of officials.

The Department of Justice also worked with the Aboriginal Research Institute to produce an online compendium of promising practices to reduce violence and increase safety of aboriginal women in Canada. This provides a tool for indigenous communities to access information about promising practices to reduce violence and improve safety for indigenous women and girls.

● (1600)

[Translation]

We would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Blackell.

[English]

Now we're going to turn to the Department of Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, and Paula Isaak.

Ms. Paula Isaak (Assistant Deputy Minister, Education and Social Development Programs and Partnerships, Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Thank you, Madam Chair and honourable members. I thank you for inviting Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada to appear before this committee. My name is Paula Isaak, and I am the assistant deputy minister responsible for education and social development programs and partnerships.

I just want to say at the outset that I would also like to acknowledge that we are gathered today on traditional Algonquin territory.

We are pleased that this committee made the decision to study violence against women and girls. It is, sadly, still a prevalent issue, and more so for indigenous women and girls.

As you heard from colleagues previously during Stats Canada's presentation on April 12, indigenous women and girls in Canada are three times more likely to be victims of violence than are non-indigenous women.

[Translation]

Violence against indigenous women and girls has a devastating impact on individuals, families and communities.

[English]

Preventing and addressing violence against indigenous women and girls is complex and requires that all partners work together.

Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada continues to participate in the federal family violence initiative, which gathers 15 federal departments and agencies with the same goal of reducing family violence in Canada. The Government of Canada is deeply concerned about the high level of family violence faced by indigenous people and is fully committed to addressing this issue.

INAC plays a key role in the prevention of family violence. The department's family violence prevention program provides funding to assist first nations in providing access to family violence shelter services and prevention activities to women, children, and families ordinarily resident on reserve.

There are two components to the program. One is operational funding, which covers salaries, direct client costs, and the administration costs for an existing network of 41 shelters in the provinces and Yukon territory. The other is proposal-based prevention projects. Currently the family violence prevention program invests \$31.7 million on an ongoing basis to provide support to these 41 shelters and the family violence prevention activities on and off reserve.

Between 2010 and 2014, the department invested a total of \$163.6 million in the family violence prevention program, providing shelter services for more than 10,500 children and about 12,300 women, and funded more than 1,100 prevention and awareness activities. These activities include public outreach and awareness, conferences, seminars, workshops, support groups, and community needs assessments.

• (1605)

[Translation]

Through its funding, the family violence prevention program enhances the safety and security of women, children and families living on reserve.

Minister Bennett was mandated to ensure that no one fleeing domestic violence is left without a place to turn by growing and maintaining Canada's network of shelters and transition houses.

[English]

To support the renovation and construction of new shelters for victims of family violence in first nation communities, budget 2016 proposes to provide \$10.4 million over three years, starting in 2016-17. Budget 2016 also proposes up to \$33.6 million over five years, beginning this fiscal year, and up to \$8.3 million ongoing in additional funding to better support the shelters serving victims of family violence in first nation communities.

[Translation]

These additional investments will allow the Government of Canada to continue to protect indigenous women, children and families on reserve.

In addition, under the first nations child and family services program, the department supports the delivery of appropriate prevention and protection services for first nations children and families.

[English]

Budget 2016 investments of \$634.8 million over five years would support critically needed program stability, address key cost drivers, and increase funding for prevention services across the country. Immediate investments would support front-line service providers and ensure continued availability of services to first nation children and families as the government moves to engage with its partners on how to address child welfare issues in first nation communities.

The goal is to ensure that programming emphasizes prevention through supports to families, so INAC provides funding to support the efforts of agencies in early intervention and to create tools such as parenting skills programs to allow parents to better care for their children before a situation becomes a matter of protection. Ultimately, prevention-based programming aims at improving the services that children and families need and deserve.

Budget 2016 investments represent a concrete first step. Much-needed program reform will be developed in partnership with first nations stakeholders.

This government has been clear on its commitment to establish a "new fiscal relationship that provides sufficient, predictable and sustained funding for First Nations communities". Overall, in March 2016, the Government of Canada proposed investments of \$8.4 billion over five years in first nations families, youth, and children as part of budget 2016. Through these investments, Canada will work in partnership with indigenous peoples to improve the socio-economic conditions of indigenous children, families, and communities.

Minister Bennett was also mandated to develop, in collaboration with the Minister of Justice, and supported by the Minister of Status of Women, an approach to and a mandate for an inquiry into murdered and missing indigenous women and girls in Canada. In December 2015, Canada launched a national pre-inquiry engagement process to inform the design of a national inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women and girls.

Our minister and the Ministers of Status of Women and Justice met with over 2,100 survivors, families, and loved ones. The ministers also heard from front-line and national organizations. They were told first-hand about the devastating effects of violence against indigenous women and girls and about the negative impacts on the families of victims and their communities.

The importance of involving survivors, families, and loved ones in all stages of the inquiry process was expressed at these sessions, as was the need to examine the origins of violence. Participants also shared their experiences with various institutions, such as child protection and policing, and expressed that they would like to see the inquiry lead to improvements in these areas.

Throughout the pre-inquiry process, the ministers heard from young women who were survivors, family members, or loved ones. They provided many focused suggestions, including a recommendation that the inquiry look at ways to support the children of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. Several submissions recommended that youth be represented at all levels of the inquiry.

We also received over 4,100 submissions via an online survey and approximately 300 pieces of correspondence and submissions by email, mail, or phone between December and February. All the input received will help inform the design of the national inquiry. Minister Bennett has publicly expressed the desire to have the inquiry begin its work by this summer.

• (1610)

[Translation]

Recent commitments were made by all participants at the second national roundtable on missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, held in Winnipeg in February 2016.

[English]

Participants in the 2016 National Roundtable on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls agreed to work with families and local partners to continue to collaborate to address violence, participate in the national inquiry, build on the current iteration and activities of the Aboriginal Affairs Working Group, support indigenous-led anti-racist and anti-sexist training programs for all public servants, create and implement common performance measures, improve liaison with families, and launch a pan-Canadian awareness campaign.

We will continue to collaborate with federal colleagues, provinces, and territories, as well as with national aboriginal organizations to address this important and challenging issue.

[Translation]

Thank you again for making this issue an important part of your work.

[English]

I'd be pleased to answer any questions.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you.

Meegwetch.

[English]

Now we are going to turn to Kimberly Elmslie, who is the assistant deputy minister at the Public Health Agency of Canada.

[Translation]

Ms. Kimberly Elmslie (Assistant Deputy Minister, Health Promotion and Chronic Disease Prevention Branch, Public Health Agency of Canada): Madam Chair, honourable members of the committee, thank you for the invitation to address this committee regarding its study on violence against young women and girls in Canada.

The Public Health Agency of Canada has a mandate to address family violence, which includes intimate partner violence and child maltreatment. We see family violence as a serious public health issue, and I would like to provide this important context to you as you undertake your study.

I am here today to speak with you about the significant and long-term physical and mental health impacts of violence on women and girls, and the role of the health system in preventing and addressing them.

[English]

Research clearly shows that women who have experienced intimate partner violence face high rates of injury, chronic pain, sleep disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder, and substance use problems.

Children who have been abused or witnessed abuse in the family have a higher risk of developing chronic illnesses such as heart disease, and mental health problems such as depression, anxiety, and self-harm, both immediately and throughout their lives. Boys who have been victimized or raised in violent homes are at an increased risk of becoming perpetrators of violence as adults. Girls exposed to violence in the home are at increased risk of being victimized as adults, thus continuing the cycle of violence.

The Public Health Agency of Canada's focus on family violence is very closely aligned with the subject of your study, because women and girls represent the majority, almost 70%, of victims of family violence.

Considering intimate partner violence specifically, including dating violence, 80% of this form of violence is against women, according to police-reported data. Looked at another way, the most common perpetrators of police-reported violence against women are their intimate partners.

As you have heard, intimate partner violence affects many women and girls in Canada. One in five women experience intimate partner violence in their lifetime. Certain populations, again as you've heard, are more affected. Aboriginal women, for example, experience intimate partner violence at a rate three times higher than non-aboriginal women.

The way women experience family violence differs from the experience of men. Female victims of intimate partner violence are twice as likely as male victims to be sexually assaulted, beaten, choked, or threatened with a weapon, three times more likely to experience disruptions in their daily life, and almost seven times more likely to fear for their life. Men are more likely than women to be kicked, bitten, or hit with something. Importantly, intimate partner violence that involves high levels of coercion, degradation, and control is perpetrated almost exclusively by men toward their female partners.

At the Public Health Agency, we address family violence clearly from a public health perspective, which means our focus is on encouraging collaboration across sectors to bring together expertise, knowledge, and experience to help prevent violence, and also to help survivors improve their mental and physical well-being.

We do this in four areas: we coordinate the federal family violence initiative, which has been mentioned by both my colleagues who spoke previously; we conduct surveillance and research; we support community-based maternal and child health programs that promote healthy relationships and positive parenting; and we invest in initiatives that are designed to support the health of survivors of intimate partner violence and child maltreatment.

Let me briefly expand on each of those areas.

The first area of agency action is our coordination of the federal family violence initiative, with our 15 colleague departments across the Government of Canada.

• (1615)

This approach addresses violence from multiple perspectives, including healthy relationships and empowering women and girls, supporting survivors, ensuring that the justice response is appropriate to deter offenders and is sensitive to the needs of victims, enhancing the availability of shelter beds and services, and tracking and analyzing data on the nature and extent of family violence. This just gives you a flavour of the scope.

The federal family violence initiative is the forum that ensures our federal activities complement each other. Through the federal family violence initiative, we meet regularly; share new research and evaluation findings; discuss new program design and project ideas, policy initiatives, and stakeholder networks; and ensure that knowledge is applied across sectors. Working together in this way helps improve both the relevance and the impact of our collective federal work.

As an example, we support a one-stop knowledge exchange initiative through the Stop Family Violence web pages, which serve as a source of information for both professionals and the public.

The second area of agency action is surveillance and analysis. We conduct national surveillance of child abuse and neglect, including children's exposure to intimate-partner violence. This work provides important information on the characteristics of child maltreatment, including neglect and exposure to intimate-partner violence, the circumstances that accompany it, and the physical and mental harm that can result.

Third, we make an important contribution to reducing risk factors for family violence through our community-based maternal and child health programs. We recognize the importance of creating supportive, healthy family environments at the earliest age. Positive parenting, parental involvement, attachment, resilience, and healthy relationships are all protective factors that are associated with a reduced risk of family violence.

These programs—the community action program for children, the Canada prenatal nutrition program, and aboriginal head start in urban and northern communities—reaches 278,000 at-risk children and parents in over 3,000 communities across the country each year.

Many women served by our programs are currently exposed to violence or have had exposure to violence in the past. In fact, 75 projects are currently delivered out of shelters for women and children leaving abusive situations. The programs also serve as important points of access, places where women living in situations of abuse and violence may be referred to more specialized intervention services.

As we all know, supporting victims and survivors of family violence is complex and requires collaboration across sectors. That's why, in February of last year, the agency launched a new investment of \$7 million per year to address the needs of survivors of violence. This investment is supporting community-based projects that are developing and testing health promotion approaches to improve the physical and mental health of those who have experienced child maltreatment or intimate-partner violence.

Health promotion that is specifically geared to the needs of survivors of violence is a new and innovative field of practice. To help build the evidence base for these types of interventions and share them widely, we have invested in a knowledge hub led by the Centre for Research and Education on Violence Against Women and Children at the University of Western Ontario. This research and knowledge hub is connecting experts working in the field and developing common ways to measure progress and share emerging findings with researchers and professionals.

Our support for front-line professionals and other service providers with the skills and knowledge required to support survivors of violence safely and effectively is a priority. Right now, a major project is under way, working with national health and social service professional organizations to develop guidance and education that will help health professionals work in a sensitive and trauma-informed way to better support the needs of victims of violence.

In addition to work in Canada, there is growing momentum internationally that recognizes violence as a health issue as well as the important role the health system should play in addressing it. Canada is part of the World Health Organization's development of a global plan of action that is focused on strengthening the role of the health system to address violence against women and girls.

•(1620)

The action plan provides evidence-based direction on how the system can respond to violence against women and girls through leadership, capacity-building, prevention, programming, and improved health on a national and international basis.

This plan will be endorsed at the World Health Assembly this May.

[Translation]

When violence occurs in families, it has far-reaching and tragic effects. Communities and community organizations across the country are doing impressive work, and the investment we are making aims to increase the reach and impacts of these efforts.

Thank you for your attention. I would be pleased to answer any questions you have.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

Now we are fortunate to have Fraser Valentine, from the Department of Citizenship and Immigration.

Go ahead, sir.

Mr. Fraser Valentine (Director General, Strategic Policy and Planning, Department of Citizenship and Immigration): Thank you, Madam Chair, and thanks very much for the invitation to be here with you today.

As you say, my name is Fraser Valentine. I'm the director general of strategic policy and planning at Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada. I am joined by my colleague Ümit Kiziltan, who is the director general of research and evaluation in the department.

I understand that your study will examine several very specific areas of violence, including cyberviolence, street harassment, and hyper-sexualization.

While the programs and services offered by my department do not directly touch on these areas, with our federal partners, as well as with provinces and territories and community organizations, we do work to combat and prevent violence in the lives of women and young girls.

To begin, let me just say that IRCC is committed to gender-based analysis or, as it's commonly referred to, GBA. As required by the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, IRCC is in fact the only federal department with the legislative requirement to conduct GBA and to report to Parliament on an annual basis.

I understand that officials from IRCC have been invited to return to this committee at a later date to talk in more detail with you about that, and we look forward to that. I suspect it will be me.

•(1625)

[Translation]

Within the department, we have both a focal point for gender-based analysis, ensuring adherence to the policy and providing guidance, as well as a champion to promote gender-based analysis.

[English]

In addition, the department collects and generates sex-disaggregated data and disseminates research to support policy and program development.

As you are probably aware, for the past 10 years Canada has welcomed approximately 255,000 new permanent residents each year. Over one-half of all immigrants who arrived in Canada in 2014 as permanent residents were female, of which around 20% were under the age of 15. The majority of all women, approximately 60%, were admitted through our economic category, and more than half of those women were principal applicants. The remaining immigrant women arrived through the family class, at around 30%, and as refugees, at just under 10%. Of note, about half of all refugees who arrived in 2014 were women.

As you know, research tells us that immigrant women face a range of challenges in integrating into society after they arrive in Canada, such as difficulty adjusting to changing family roles and relationships after migration, including gendered roles and intergenerational tensions.

They also face economic, employment, and educational challenges after migration, and generally we're finding that they report poorer economic outcomes than immigrant men. IRCC does have programming and funding in place to help close some of these gaps.

Through the settlement program, the Government of Canada, through my department, provides significant funding to over 400 service provider organizations across the country to deliver both pre-arrival and post-arrival settlement services to newcomers, of which more than half are women.

Services and resources to immigrant women, youth, and their families include such things as pre-arrival orientation sessions on issues related to equality, family dynamics, and abuse; women-only programming on employment; activities aimed at fostering social connections within communities; skills development; and financial literacy.

In addition, there are a range of women-only language classes offered, with themes that include topics such as spousal abuse, women's rights, legal rights and responsibilities, and health care.

In recognition that newcomer youth face distinct settlement and integration challenges in comparison with other newcomers, the department also funds targeted programs aimed at empowering and engaging young girls and youth. Activities in this range include mentorships, in-school support, social and cultural activities, leadership development, and employment and skills support.

As I have noted, we know that immigrant women face particular challenges for social integration compared with Canadian-born women and immigrant men. This is one reason the department has taken several measures to help reduce the vulnerability of women and to address violence against women and family violence. Measures in place since 2010 have included combatting human trafficking, protecting foreign workers, stopping those with a history of family violence from sponsoring family members, and protecting vulnerable refugees.

While the overall incidence is low, as Minister McCallum has said, marriage fraud remains a concern. Visa officers are trained to detect and deal with suspected cases of marriage fraud while processing applications both abroad and in Canada.

In order to contribute to the federal anti-trafficking efforts, which affect women in a majority of cases, IRCC introduced guidelines in 2006 for immigration officers to help identify potential victims of human trafficking and to provide them with protection by issuing a temporary residence permit to give them temporary resident status in Canada.

IRCC's involvement usually begins when a person self-identifies or is referred by a non-governmental organization or a law enforcement agency. The department is working actively with stakeholders to raise awareness on this issue and to ensure good communication with partners and proper assistance to potential victims. For instance, information sessions are provided by the department to the RCMP, to the Canada Border Services Agency, and to immigration officers, who are those meeting with potential victims.

IRCC also plays a key role in identifying marriages of convenience or, as they're commonly referred to, forced marriages. As you know, Minister McCallum has been asked by the Prime Minister in his mandate letter to bring forward a proposal regarding permanent residency for new spouses in Canada, including exploring an approach to end the current two-year waiting period to obtain permanent resident status.

Furthermore, in 2015 the department implemented changes to raise the minimum age of eligibility from 16 to 18 to immigrate to Canada as an accompanying spouse or partner or to be sponsored as a spouse or partner of a Canadian citizen or permanent resident. This amendment has decreased the number of potentially vulnerable young spouses immigrating to Canada who have not yet reached full maturity or who do not yet possess the ability to act in their own self-interest, and it could potentially prevent a forced marriage from occurring. In addition, the department has developed operational guidelines for our visa officers to better respond to and track forced marriage cases.

• (1630)

[Translation]

Finally, the department has resources to help newcomers and citizenship applicants through the citizenship study guide *Discover Canada* and the *Welcome to Canada* orientation guide.

[English]

These publications include information on gender equality, family violence, and Canadian laws and reinforce the fact that gender-based violence is not tolerated in Canada, as was recommended in a report published by this committee in the previous Parliament. These publications are provided directly to newcomers and citizenship applicants and are published in both official languages, as well as made available in a number of online formats. They are also used by schools, libraries, and settlement organizations to educate Canadians and newcomers about Canadian values.

Overseas, newcomers can access programs that help them understand their rights and responsibilities in Canada and provide

detailed labour market information so that they can make informed decisions upon their arrival to support their economic integration. Once in Canada, women also have access to a range of employment-related supports that help them build their skills to enter the workforce and/or to advance their careers.

In conclusion, Madam Chair, IRCC plays an important role with respect to addressing women and protecting them against violence. Of course, as I said at the beginning, we work closely with our partners in the federal government and with provinces and territories and community organizations, including the family violence initiative, as my colleagues have also noted.

[Translation]

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you, and we look forward to the findings of your study.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Valentine.

Let me also extend the welcome to Ümit Kiziltan and Nathalie Levman, who will help us by answering questions.

[English]

We'll begin our first round with Ms. Damoff.

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Thank you.

I noticed that a lot of the focus of what you were providing us was on the general programming you have for violence against women, but not a lot about violence against young women and girls, which is the focus of what we want this study to be about. I suspect it's because there's a lack of specific programming for that specific demographic.

I want to focus on cyberbullying first of all. You mentioned that you were going to speak to legislation that was in place. Where do you see the gaps, in particular for young women and girls, when it comes to cyberbullying? Are there things we could and should be doing to protect young women and girls?

Ms. Gillian Blackell: Thank you very much.

Just in terms of the issue about funding for projects related to young women and girls, I did forget to mention that we do have a component of the victims fund that's dedicated to developing and enhancing the child advocacy centres across the country. They work specifically with child victims, particularly victims of sexual abuse, many of whom are girls. That is a large component.

In terms of cyberbullying, the federal jurisdiction relates to the Criminal Code, and therefore the reforms that were recently introduced—the new offences in the Criminal Code—were within the context of what would be within our jurisdiction. Clearly provinces and territories are also looking at enhancing that in order to complement other forms that fall short of the criminal threshold. In Nova Scotia, as you know, there is legislation that they're now re-examining.

I'll hand it over to my colleague.

•(1635)

Ms. Nathalie Levman (Counsel, Criminal Law Policy Section, Policy Sector, Department of Justice): I'll make just a quick comment on the new offence that my colleague referenced, section 162.1, the non-consensual distribution of intimate images offence. That is a very useful tool in the sexting context in particular.

We heard from prosecutors and investigators that the only tool they had to address that kind of behaviour was the child pornography offences related to images of youth under the age of 18. That was considered to be quite a heavy hammer in the context of sexting, which usually involves two teens who are certainly engaging in behaviour that is undesirable but probably doesn't reach the level of child pornography, pedophilia, etc.

That offence allows criminal justice officials to exercise discretion and use section 162.1 in cases that are more akin to what we might see adults doing when there is a breakup and intimate images taken in private context are shared inappropriately. That has assisted immensely, we're told by prosecutors, in these types of cases, which are so common to the cyberbullying context.

Ms. Pam Damoff: I'm sharing my time with Ms. Nassif, so I'll pass it over to her now.

[*Translation*]

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

My thanks to all the witnesses for their presentations.

My first question is for you, Mr. Valentine.

Could you elaborate on the women at risk program? I would like more information about the way it works, its effectiveness and the indicators of its success.

Mr. Fraser Valentine: Thank you very much for the question.

Most programs in my department are settlement programs.

[*English*]

We provide the funding to organizations through grants and contribution agreements, and then they are delivered at the local level. The department and the Government of Canada aren't actually delivering those services to those young girls at risk. Instead, we provide the funding so that those organizations can do that.

I'm happy to share with the clerk some concrete examples of programming that are happening at the local level. For instance, in Saskatoon there is a program that's being run through the International Women of Saskatoon that's targeting girls age 13 to 15. It's working with the Saskatoon police department to provide these young women with self-defence training so they can take control if they're in a situation in which they feel threatened. It's also providing them with knowledge on rights and responsibilities with respect to bullying in particular. I don't know, from what I've been given, if this includes things like cyberbullying, but I'm certain we could help the committee with exploring that further if that's helpful.

Mrs. Eva Nassif: Thank you.

I would like to have another question.

•(1640)

The Chair: You have one minute.

Mrs. Eva Nassif: My question is to Mrs. Blackell.

In order to achieve justice, crimes must be reported. Have there ever been any programs, or are there any currently, designed to encourage women to seek help and report incidents of violence and crimes? Often intimidation and fear prevent women from getting some help. What can we do to help address the situation?

Ms. Gillian Blackell: Thank you for the question.

The provinces and territories all are responsible primarily for the investigation and prosecution of criminal offences, sexual offences. There are victim services across the country, which we do support through the victims fund, and a number of them do a number of outreach projects with victims.

One of the challenges, of course, is that if victims are not going to contact the authorities, the authorities are not going to necessarily find out, so there are a number of different inter-agency models across the country. Around the table, there are representatives from the government and from shelters, etc. There are different models providing more outreach at that local level, but the federal role is rather removed. We do, through grants and contributions and through our transfers to the provinces, influence it through the directors of victim services primarily.

The Chair: That's your time.

We are going over to Ms. Harder from the Conservatives for seven minutes.

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

I suppose in some ways this doesn't directly relate to our study, but while I have you here I need to ask, and perhaps it will lead in.

Mr. Valentine, I'm wondering if you can comment with respect to human trafficking. Would you happen to know the prevalence rate at which we see human trafficking taking place in Canada? Also, what are the common venues that are used to perpetuate it?

Mr. Fraser Valentine: Getting a firm number on rates of human trafficking, as you probably know, is very challenging. The measures we've put in place with respect to human trafficking are relatively new, so I think it's probably too soon to say at this point what those numbers are, even from a trend perspective. I'll defer to Ümit as well in a moment. He may have some views on that.

In terms of sites, my colleagues in the operations sector, who are really on the front lines here, I'm sure would say that there are particular geographic regions in the globe where there is a higher prevalence of human trafficking rates than in other areas. I know that the operational guidance and the training that the department provides to those visa officers are targeted in that geospecific way, and they use different techniques depending on where they're located in the globe, as the techniques that are used vary.

Ümit, did you have anything to add?

Mr. Ümit Kiziltan (Director General, Research and Evaluation, Department of Citizenship and Immigration): No, I don't have any statistics with me, but we will definitely look into it and we'll get back to the committee for sure.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Thank you.

Ms. Blackell, can you outline for me some of the biggest requests that victims have that remain unaddressed by federal policy right now? Help me understand the gaps that exist with regard to victims' rights and taking a stand for their rehabilitation.

Ms. Gillian Blackell: Thank you.

I'm not sure I understand exactly, because federal policy is somewhat removed in some ways. Apart from our funding to the provinces and territories for victims' services, we don't generally provide direct services to victims. We do have a couple of specific funds available, one funding pot for victims to attend parole hearings and another for Canadian victims of crime abroad. If they do have concerns, there's a complaint mechanism in place at the federal Department of Justice as per the requirements under the Canadian victims bill of rights.

We have heard from our provincial and territorial counterparts who deliver victims' services across the country that victims are often mostly interested in information, and that is a key piece. That's one of the reasons we work with them in the implementation of the Canadian victims bill of rights to help them at the provincial level to enhance their means of providing information to victims at different stages in the process.

Certainly we do at the federal level. The direct contact will be primarily through correctional services, so victims can register. They can register with the Correctional Service of Canada and the Parole Board if they are a victim of a federal offender, so there are mechanisms by which they can then receive information.

•(1645)

Ms. Rachael Harder: To be a little clearer, hopefully, when victims come through the justice system, based on your experience and what you're hearing, are they happy with the level of participation they have in the process or are there gaps there? Would they like to be more involved, more engaged, in the sentencing process, the information process, the parole process, all of those things? Are victims wanting a voice to a greater extent, or are they content with the way things are?

Ms. Gillian Blackell: I think it varies enormously, depending on victims. I think victims don't all look the same and they don't all want the same thing from the system. It depends on the context within which the crime occurs and, of course, their individual experience with it.

If we ask victims generally about their satisfaction, there's a difference between their satisfaction with the way in which they were treated by players within the system and the results, because the results are based on a standard of proof, and in a lot of ways that's beyond the control of the players they have direct contact with.

The more information victims have, even if the information is that were not be provided with this information for various privacy reasons, that is already better than nothing, and I think victims appreciate just being informed so that they can understand the

situation. The more they have the sense of how to navigate, the more their levels of satisfaction go up.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Do I have a little bit more time?

The Chair: You have one minute.

Ms. Rachael Harder: I'm not exactly sure where I should be directing this question. It has a little more to do with what happens on the ground.

I recently met with the director of our YWCA in Lethbridge, Alberta, which is my constituency, and one of the things she talked about with me, which was of grave concern to her, was the accessibility that victims of sexual assault have to the justice system and the health care system. A victim might stay in the shelter that is available through the YWCA. They know to do that much, but when it comes to knowing how to go to the hospital, do a report, find a lawyer, pursue justice of some sort, they're finding it really difficult to navigate and do that on their own, and they're not necessarily provided with on-the-ground services from someone who could help them navigate that system.

The Chair: That's your time. Hold that thought until we get back around.

Next we're going to hear from Ms. Malcolmson for seven minutes.

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

Thanks to all the witnesses. I appreciate your time and your work. I have a very limited questioning time, so I hope you can answer my questions really quickly.

I would appreciate hearing from both the Department of Justice and the Public Health Agency to help me reconcile the Public Health Agency saying that a prime directive is to ensure the justice system is appropriate to deter offenders and is sensitive to the needs of victims, with having the justice department saying the prosecution is in the hands of the provinces and the federal role is more in programming.

The corollary we've expressed around the table is our concern about under-reporting of domestic violence. If it's so in the headlines for grown-up women, young women, and girls, and if they experience sexual violence, how on earth are they ever going to feel confident about coming forward and reporting?

I'm hoping you'll tell me that your respective departments are internally talking about what you can do to further encourage victims to come forward, what kinds of reforms you might be contemplating through the criminal justice system to better accommodate victims of sexual crimes, and what a national action plan to fight violence against women might do to connect the provincial response and our national response.

Any insight there?

•(1650)

Ms. Gillian Blackell: Thank you for your question. I'm sorry if I was misleading.

PHAC is the coordinator of the family violence initiative, and the component that refers to the justice system relates to the Department of Justice's role within that initiative in the federal family violence initiative.

The justice role in the federal family violence initiative involves programming through the family violence fund in terms of criminal justice reforms and the criminal law policy in particular. We also work with the provinces and territories regularly, talking with them about prosecuting and investigating intimate partner violence. There is an ongoing dialogue. We are always interested in hearing from the victim services providers about what's missing and what we can do to assist in terms of providing more information and helping victims navigate and understand what their rights are and what their role is in going through the process. That is something that we're constantly doing.

We're always in touch with our partners at the federal level, through the federal family violence initiative and through other FPT and interdepartmental organizations.

Ms. Kimberly Elmslie: One gap we are trying to fill is from a public health perspective with regard to further supporting victims in coming forward. We're coming at this through the public health system. The work we're doing now, and the funding led by a team of qualified researchers and professionals at McMaster University, is to equip front-line health professionals with the skills they need to better relate to victims of violence and make them feel comfortable in the context of the health care experience so that they can help them come forward.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: What I'm getting at is this: as part of this national dialogue and after some front-page headlines on some colossal failures of prosecutions, if we educate young women and girls to stand up for themselves, to know what is violence and what is wrong, to the point that they want to turn to the justice system to prosecute, what's going to be different for them, as a result of some of the very high-profile collapses of cases?

Is there work happening internally that might give us hope around a different approach to prosecuting sexual violence crimes?

Ms. Nathalie Levman: Thank you for that question. As my colleague has indicated, we are responsible for the criminal law and we know what the platform commitments have been in terms of this government wanting to ensure that the criminal law framework is robust when it comes to dealing with domestic violence and sexual assaults. That work is, of course, ongoing.

In terms of its relationship with the collapse of cases, I assume you're referring to cases in the context of sexual violence, perhaps the Wagar case. There are others as well, but I'm not sure which ones in particular. That goes back to my colleague's comment about the importance of working with provinces and territories as they administer justice in Canada.

For example, just taking the sexual assault framework, we have an extremely comprehensive legislative framework that addresses

sexual assault. That doesn't mean that there can't be tweaks to improve it. I just want to direct your attention to the fact that there have been significant reforms since 1983, and quite comprehensive ones, that have addressed the stereotypes of sexual assault victims that have been so prevalent traditionally in our criminal justice system.

Throughout the 1990s, quite an important dialogue occurred between the courts and Parliament that resulted in strengthening the substantive offences, as well as the evidentiary and procedural provisions that protect complainants.

We can see an evolution of the law here that has resulted in abrogation of very unfortunate provisions that required corroboration of victims' testimony in a sexual assault case before they would be believed, that allowed husbands to sexually assault their wives with impunity, that said that somebody who didn't come forward right away or didn't make the complaint immediately wasn't to be believed, etc.

All of that has been dealt with and has been abrogated, and it's clear in the criminal law that it no longer applies.

That said, and despite the procedural provisions we have—the rape shield provisions, etc.—we still have judges who are coming out with quite unfortunate decisions. However, I would just like to draw your attention to the Alberta Court of Appeal case in Wagar that overturned Justice Camp's unfortunate decision. He said:

...we are satisfied that the trial judge's comments throughout the proceedings and in his reasons gave rise to doubts about the trial judge's understanding of the law governing sexual assaults and in particular, the meaning of consent and restrictions on evidence of the complainant's sexual activity imposed by section 276—

—which is the rape shield provision—

—of the Criminal Code. We are also persuaded that sexual stereotypes and stereotypical myths, which have long since been discredited, may have found their way into the trial judge's judgment.

They overturned that decision. Of course, the fact that the decision occurred, the fact that reasoning of that kind is there, discourages victims from coming forward, but then appeal courts do apply the law, and professors like Elizabeth Sheehy have said that they are not applying the law when these types of decisions are made.

I just wanted to emphasize that we do have a robust legislative framework.

•(1655)

The Chair: Now we'll go over to my Liberal colleague, Ms. Sahota.

Ms. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair. I'll be sharing my time with Ms. Dhillon.

My question goes back to some of the things we learned last week. We had Stats Canada in. It seemed to most of us on this committee that maybe there was under-reporting and that maybe we didn't have all the accurate numbers we could have in order to assist in this area federally.

After hearing all your great presentations, I am finding that the federal government's role from a lot of the departments is to fund, and it's channelled down to the provinces and different organizations.

How do we do a good job at targeting our funding and making sure that it provides the services that are needed if we don't have accurate numbers because we may have under-reporting in certain communities?

This question goes to you, Mr. Valentine. We were learning that in immigrant populations the numbers are quite low for abuse. That's what Stats Canada was telling me. I'm not sure if that's because of under-reporting or if that's truly accurate.

How can we do a better job at getting the numbers from these organizations on the numbers of people who are walking through their doors with different concerns, and having that come back to the federal government without actually initiating a case in court? Those numbers are a lot easier to obtain, but some people don't take it to that extent. They don't go to the court. They stop at counselling or a neighbour or wherever their door ends.

How do we get those numbers? How do we figure out which direction to head in, and if what we're doing is right or wrong?

Mr. Fraser Valentine: Thank you for the question. It's an excellent question. It's a complex question and a complex answer.

From an immigration perspective, I think what we recognize as one of the most critical things to do is to ensure that women, particularly the young women, understand their rights under the law when they arrive in the country so that if they're subject to activities that are not appropriate when they're here and in their communities, they understand that they have the ability under the law to take some action.

We do that both overseas before the family and the individual arrive through pre-settlement work with the International Organization for Migration as well as, and I think more profoundly, with our settlement organizations located in communities across the country.

• (1700)

Ms. Ruby Sahota: If I may get back to that for a moment—

Mr. Fraser Valentine: Yes.

Ms. Ruby Sahota: —is it all immigrants across the board, regardless of category, who get this education, or is it certain categories?

Mr. Fraser Valentine: Correct.

Canada is quite unique in the world. We provide settlement programming to all newcomers in the country. As long as you are a permanent resident in Canada, you can receive settlement services, which include things like language training and employment supports, but also quite specific programming that could be targeted

through certain organizations in relation to violence and understanding your rights under the law.

The moment at which those services no longer become available is when you become a Canadian citizen, if you choose to do that.

Ms. Ruby Sahota: If you choose to...?

Mr. Fraser Valentine: We have the highest naturalization rate in the world at over 80%, but not all permanent residents choose to become Canadian citizens. That is a choice.

The Chair: You have three minutes.

Ms. Ruby Sahota: That's okay. I'll pass my time over, then.

Ms. Anju Dhillon (Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle, Lib.): I have a very brief question, and, if there's time, Ms. Sahota will continue.

You mentioned that the officers are trained to detect and deal with suspected cases of marriage fraud. In what context do you put that in your report concerning women?

Mr. Fraser Valentine: Sorry, in what context...?

Ms. Anju Dhillon: You mentioned that marriage fraud is still a concern and officers are trained to detect it.

How does this—

Mr. Fraser Valentine: How does that happen?

Ms. Anju Dhillon: Yes.

Mr. Fraser Valentine: It happens with visa officers.

This is the spousal sponsorship class or the family reunification class. We know that fraud is an ongoing concern overall. The incident rates are low, but it happens. Visa officers, who are the decision-makers on those files—it's a delegated authority from the minister in the legislative framework—have specific training to detect if this might be a case of marriage fraud.

How they do that is a bit science and art. A lot of this is their own experience in looking at files. When you work with visa officers and you see them going through immigration files, they can detect patterns. If they suspect that this might be a fraudulent relationship, they ask more questions. They ask for more documents. They'll talk with enforcement agencies, such as the Canada Border Services Agency, and they could choose to bring the applicant in for a face-to-face interview to ask further questions.

Ms. Anju Dhillon: Okay, perfect.

I'll let it go back to Ms. Sahota.

Ms. Ruby Sahota: Going back to the line of questioning that I had for all of the different departments, are you receiving data from the various sources that you provide funding to and that have programs and services in their communities...for the aboriginal communities as well?

I thought some of the numbers seemed a little surprising when I heard from Stats Canada as well last week. Is there input and information that you're receiving after—?

The Chair: Sorry, that's your time.

We're going to go for our second round.

We will start with Ms. Vecchio, for five minutes.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Thank you very much for appearing today.

This may be a difficult question to ask because it may be more statistical, and I assume this would go to the justice department. I am wondering whether you know what the conviction rate for sexual assault and rape would be, as well as intimate partner crime. Is there any way of getting information on conviction rates when it comes to that kind of data?

Ms. Nathalie Levman: There's no doubt that the attrition rate is significant for sexual assault cases, and I assume that is what you're getting at, but I would prefer to defer to Statistics Canada, because they're the people we turn to when we look at conviction rates. I imagine that my colleague has their deck here and is looking for what they provided to you last week.

Generally, in terms of what statistics are available on these different types of offences that fall within the violence against women and girls parameter, I would like to mention.... I'm not sure whether you're hearing from the RCMP, but the Human Trafficking National Coordination Centre keeps some data that I think you might find very interesting concerning the prevalence of human trafficking as well as the types of venues in which it occurs. We know that it's predominantly sexual exploitation of young women and girls in Canada, but they can provide you with more information on it as well.

• (1705)

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: That's fantastic.

Were you able to find anything? I didn't think there was anything in the deck.

No? That's all good.

Given the request from my great colleague, is there a way we can request that kind of data through you, or do you want us to go directly to Statistics Canada? We can do that as well.

Ms. Nathalie Levman: We can follow up with Statistics Canada.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: That would be wonderful.

There you go, my friend—any time.

Going on to public health, the committee has heard that when kids are exposed to gender-based violence, they are more likely to be re-victimized. In 2014 the Public Health Agency, PHAC, reported that they had allocated \$112 million each year to 250,000 children's programs. Has that money been seen to have a measurable impact upon reducing re-victimization of young women and girls?

Ms. Kimberly Elmslie: Thank you very much for that question.

I believe you're referring to the investment in the three children's programs I talked about earlier, just to confirm the figure of \$112 million annually.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Yes.

Ms. Kimberly Elmslie: Okay.

The data we gather on those programs, because they are for very young and vulnerable children, have not in fact looked at victimization and violence in terms of longer-term impacts.

It's a good question that you're asking, and it's a timely one, because at this point in the evolution of our children's programs we are looking at what data we need to be collecting in the future, and since we know that many of the women coming into these programs are the victims of violence and that therefore their children are being exposed to violence, we're looking at that data collection.

Thank you for that comment. We'll definitely incorporate it into the work we're doing now.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: That's wonderful. Thank you very much.

This is to INAC. In 2014 it was reported to the committee that between 2008 and 2014 there was an investment of \$261.1 million in the family violence prevention program to provide shelter services and fund prevention activities.

As a committee, we recognize the importance of this funding for women leaving violent situations, but how can we ensure that the women are not re-victimized? Are there any aspects of the shelter funding or work that aid in preventing re-victimization of these women and children?

Ms. Paula Isaak: Thank you for your question.

Yes, our family violence prevention programming has a couple of aspects. There is the shelters piece, but there's also prevention programming. That's proposal-driven: communities and organizations give us proposals for prevention programs—exactly the type of thing you're talking about—in order to create culturally relevant programs in their communities, both on and off reserve, so that they can try to prevent the victimization and the re-victimization of indigenous women and girls.

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll go over to Ms. Vandenbeld for five minutes.

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Thank you very much to all of the witnesses. Especially I thank you, Ms. Blackell, for talking about the various Criminal Code provisions there are, especially section 162.1 on the non-consensual distribution of intimate images, and also about criminal harassment and the definition of consent.

My question is this: to what extent are young women, especially girls—I'm thinking of 13- or 14-year-old girls—aware of these criminal provisions?

I'm very pleased that Mr. Valentine said that new immigrants are being given, through the settlement programs, awareness training about their rights and the legal rights that they have. I think there was also a mention that under the victims' fund there are workshops for young women on campuses. I'm especially pleased that one of those campuses is Algonquin College, which is in my riding of Ottawa West—Nepean.

What about young women who are not new Canadians and are not on campus, especially high school students who might not realize that if somebody is following them home from school or texting them with threatening texts they can find some kind of redress through the Criminal Code? Particularly to do with the section 162.1, is there an attempt to create awareness among those young women?

•(1710)

Ms. Gillian Blackell: Thank you for that question.

Like our colleagues at INAC, our grants and contributions fund is also application-based. We do fund a number of organizations that work in this area, such as the Canadian Centre for Child Protection and Kids Help Phone. A number of different organizations are well situated to conduct this kind of outreach to this particular target group to raise awareness. We are regularly in touch with them for ideas for projects. They often come to us for funding for specific projects in terms of raising awareness among young people.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: I guess I'll ask the same question of the indigenous affairs department. Are there programs that would raise awareness of legal rights, and what kind of redress is available?

Ms. Paula Isaak: In the last few years, that has been a preoccupation not only in the federal government department but in the provinces and territories as well. Last year there was funding to the National Association of Friendship Centres to do a pan-Canadian awareness mobile platform. It was designed to provide, through a mobile platform, information targeted to indigenous women and girls, but largely to a younger audience. That's still evolving, but they did create a mobile platform.

At the latest round table, as I mentioned in my remarks, all the provinces and territories did agree on the need to create a pan-Canadian awareness strategy. Right now, in fact, that's a very live discussion among the federal government and provinces and territories around developing that strategy going forward, and around what that looks like. It's very much top of mind right now.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: For both on reserve and off reserve?

Ms. Paula Isaak: That's right.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: Okay. Good.

Would these kinds of programs, in all the departments, include things like the definition of consent? Are these the kinds of things that are included? I know that cyberbullying is an area where there really hasn't been a lot of study, but is there an attempt to talk about cyberbullying, to have an awareness on that, and to gather information back through the research on what's actually happening?

Ms. Paula Isaak: For the pieces identified for indigenous women and girls, the content for a pan-Canadian awareness strategy has not yet been designed. That remains to be seen. There'll be more discussions with the national aboriginal organizations on that.

Right now the mobile platform that the NAFC has up is a little less legally based. It's focused on a lot of sharing of information. The idea is that it will evolve: where do you get services, how do you get help, and those kinds of pieces. It's not quite there yet.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: In the immigration and refugee settlement, is there anything targeting the younger ones, the minors?

Mr. Fraser Valentine: As I was saying, there are programs offered pre-arrival that are done by the International Organization for Migration. They have sites across the globe. They have a workbook they offer to do this training. In that workbook, there is a specific unit on what they call cultural adaptation. It includes things like the roles and responsibility of the family, but there is also what they call "rules for teens"—having a boyfriend or a girlfriend, going to parties, the kinds of cultural practices that are and are not acceptable

in the context of an overall rights framework in the Canadian context. That's provided to those families and young girls before they arrive in the country.

The Chair: Thank you.

Now we'll go to Ms. Harder for another five minutes.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Thank you very much.

In summary—to finish off my question here—how do we make it accessible for young women and girls to come forward with the abuses that are taking place? How do we provide access to the justice system, access to legal advice or guidance, and access to the health care system in a way that will not perhaps wrongfully expose them or make them feel more vulnerable than they already are? As well, how do we give them access to protective services?

•(1715)

Ms. Kimberly Elmslie: I'll jump in on the issue of the health system and the role it can play.

One thing that is important to note is that this area of work continues to mature and evolve in the health system. For many years, these issues of violence against women and girls were really considered justice issues.

The health system has increasingly started to come to the realization that these are very important public health issues, and you see it on the international stage with resolutions going to the World Health Assembly. From a public health perspective, the way to increase access and to bring young girls and women into the health system more appropriately is through the awareness-raising and the reduction of the stigma.

As we all know around this table, those things are longer-term societal issues that we address by working across sectors. We work in the health sector and we work in the community sector. It is in the community sector that most of the conversations with the appropriate cultural groups and the appropriate leadership and peers take place to start to reduce that stigma and then allow the health system to activate its role.

Ms. Gillian Blackell: We at the justice department also work with victim services at the provincial and territorial level. Some of them are delivered through the police services; others are court-based or NGO-based. We work in particular on trauma-informed and culturally relevant services. That is really important.

It is a key approach for victims' services to be able to assist the victims in bringing forward this information and to help them navigate the system without telling them what they should choose to do. Some victims may choose not to continue with the criminal justice system. As long as they have the information in front of them about a range of choices, that's the idea: to give them someone to help guide them in their journey.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Just to clarify, are you saying that there is someone on the ground, consistently, in communities to help these young girls and women navigate the system?

Ms. Kimberly Elmslie: In the case of health, it will differ by community, but there are many community organizations that we are funding federally to play just that kind of role.

Just to build on the trauma-informed concept, that's something that... Through the funding programs that many of us are administering, we are supporting community-based organizations to expand their ability to work in a trauma-informed way. That will attract young people into community organizations and allow them to get on a track of being guided through either the health system or the justice system, or both—or many others, depending on what their needs are.

In terms of our funding programs, our focus from a Public Health Agency perspective is to get our money into communities so they can expand their reach and their impact. We see many communities across the country doing this work, but they need to have more resources to scale up their efforts.

Ms. Gillian Blackell: The responsibility, though, for the delivery of those services is provincial. We are supplementing it through transfers to the provinces and territories, and through funds, grants, and contributions to organizations. It will vary depending on the jurisdiction.

Ms. Rachael Harder: I have 20 seconds. Okay.

Can you make a comment with regard to the dramatic increase in the violence against—

I am just going to fold right there.

The Chair: Well done. It's over to Mr. Fraser for five minutes.

Mr. Sean Fraser (Central Nova, Lib.): Thank you very much to all the witnesses. I found your testimony to be excellent and important.

The first question is for Mr. Valentine. In my prior career, I did a bit of work with people who had come to Canada through the caregiver program and were victims of violence in that context, with their employer or whomever they were working for.

My understanding of the program is that there is no longer a live-in requirement, but that you don't get permanent residency. You explained earlier that there are certain settlement services that are available to people who obtain permanent residency. Do you see this as a barrier or maybe a potential cause of increasing incidence of violence against women who come through the caregiver program?

Mr. Fraser Valentine: Thanks very much for your question.

Certainly the government was well aware that there were challenges with respect to the live-in requirement of the live-in caregiver program. As a result, the previous government changed that program, and that program ended.

There are, however, two new caregiver streams that have been created. Those programs still exist. The live-in requirement, as you said, is no longer a requirement. They do have a pathway to permanent residency, though. It is not the case that an applicant through that stream is not eligible for permanent residency. That is still the case.

● (1720)

Mr. Sean Fraser: Do you think, one way or the other, that creating or tinkering with the program to give permanent residency to people on arrival would be possible, and would it reduce the risk that these women face?

Mr. Fraser Valentine: It's difficult for me to hypothesize if granting permanent residency on landing would address that issue specifically. What we know from the research is that the live-in requirement and the power imbalance of that relationship in living in the home with the employer was one of the critical factors, and that was the one that was addressed through the reforms.

Mr. Sean Fraser: Thank you.

Turning to Ms. Isaak, thanks very much for being here. One of the stats you threw out was the fact that indigenous women were three times more likely to experience violence than the average Canadian woman. Can you discuss a bit the role that poverty plays in developing that statistic?

Ms. Paula Isaak: Thank you. Both Kim and I referred to that because it's a fairly shocking statistic, and it's a complex question.

I think poverty and some of the other social determinants do play a role in the vulnerability of women and girls and therefore their vulnerability to violence. I would say part of the strategy at INAC is to ensure we're investing in all those pieces that underlie those social determinants of health. That means education, housing, infrastructure, child and family services, and prevention services. The view is that all of those will support communities and increase the resiliency of these communities, families, and women, so that those statistics can ultimately be reduced.

Mr. Sean Fraser: Thanks very much.

Building on that—and this may be a question that impacts justice as well—I know the rates of incarceration for our indigenous population in Canada are sky-high, as we see when we look at the percentage of the Canadian population they make up, but when I see the statistic that they're three times more likely to be victims of violence, I might suggest that from the perspective of an indigenous woman they may not be over-policed but under-policed. Do you think there are any challenges with policing and the access to that form of social protection that indigenous women lack in Canada?

Ms. Paula Isaak: The policing services are provided by a mix of provincial and federal—through the RCMP—services across Canada, so it's difficult to generalize to say whether that is in fact a factor.

What we heard in the pre-consultation process for the national inquiry is that communities have very different circumstances across the country in the relationship between policing services and women who have been victims or survivors of violence, so I think it varies quite a bit. It's hard to give a concrete answer. I don't have the data for that.

Mr. Sean Fraser: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

The Chair: The final three minutes are for Ms. Malcolmson.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Going back to Ms. Isaak, I appreciated your reflecting that the origins of violence echo very much the special committee's work in 2014 around the root causes of violence: human trafficking, prostitution, drug addiction, inadequate mental health supports, systemic racism, and the ongoing legacy of residential schools.

Is the funding that we now have announced adequate to overcome all those root causes of violence?

Ms. Paula Isaak: I guess I would say the overall funding of \$8.4 billion that the government announced is a start to that.

Is it adequate? It's difficult to say whether it's adequate. The demands are very high. I think certainly the funding will be able to address a lot of the housing and infrastructure situations across the country, K-12 education, child and family services. It's an important start and a significant investment.

Hopefully we'll see a decline over time in incidences of those factors that we're talking about that can lead to violence. It's a long-term process, and some of the outcomes of those intergenerational impacts of residential schools and other things will take some time to be resolved.

• (1725)

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: For the inquiry, has your department committed to fully fund participation by survivors and their families?

Ms. Paula Isaak: The budget announced \$40 million over two years for an inquiry. Once the inquiry is launched, they will determine how they fund participants, depending upon the design of that inquiry. That remains to be seen.

I think we certainly heard that it's important that survivors and victims continue to be supported. They were supported through the pre-inquiry process to come to meetings and tell their stories. The intention would be to continue that type of support. They would be supported to do that.

The Chair: You have 45 seconds.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Thank you very much for your tremendous work. We will be talking with you again, I'm sure. We have a lot of work to do here.

Ms. Paula Isaak: Thank you.

The Chair: I would echo my colleague's comments.

I want to thank all of our panel participants for doing an amazing job for us today and for everything you do. I encourage you to continue to do whatever you can to help eradicate violence against women in Canada.

I want to remind the rest of our team members that at Thursday's meeting we will have the RCMP and Public Safety visiting us. We'll be looking at budget approval for our GBA study and talking about the press release and letters, so you'll get some previews on that.

Also, it's come to my attention that the National Trade Contractors Coalition is in town. They're having a reception tonight and would like to invite our committee. They would like to chat about women in trades. It's from 5:30 to 7:30 in room 160-S, Centre Block.

I'll see you on Thursday. Have a wonderful night.

This meeting is adjourned.

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