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Chair

Ms. Marilyn Gladu

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• (1530)

[English]

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

We'll start off with a notice of motion that was received and sent out on Monday, from Ms. Harder.

Over to you, Ms. Harder.

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

There was a notice of motion given on Monday, to do with Yazidi women being relocated to Canada. As you all know, the government has agreed to bring over a certain number of Yazidi women and girls. In order to prepare for that, I do believe it would be in the best interest of those women and girls but also our country as a whole to prepare for them well.

The motion is as follows:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and given the government committed to resettling Yazidi survivors in Canada, (i) that the Committee study the potential actions the government can undertake to treat trauma for Yazidi women and girls who survived sexual enslavement; (ii) that this study examine the German program for Yazidi women and girls to determine best practices when dealing with their trauma; (iii) that this study be comprised of no less than two (2) meetings prior to the end of the 120 day deadline; and that the Committee report its findings to the House.

The Chair: Very good.

Mr. Fraser.

Mr. Sean Fraser (Central Nova, Lib.): I know that we did set an agenda very recently. I also believe that the immigration committee is studying something very similar to this.

With respect to our witnesses and wanting to get on with the meeting, I move that the question now be put.

The Chair: If there's no further discussion, we'll put the question.

All in favour?

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): On a point of order, there is a speaking list.

The Chair: We'll go to the speaking list, and then we'll call the question.

Ms. Malcolmson.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): This is a motion that I supported in the House, but I don't see that this committee has expertise to study it. I understand that immigration is

studying it. If anything, the subcommittee on human rights could study it.

Having had the committee vote down my motion to study funding for violence against women's shelters, I would much rather prioritize that than take on this work for which we do not have expertise and other more suitable groups do.

Notwithstanding that, I absolutely support bringing Yazidi women, but I don't think we're the ones to weigh in on it, with respect.

The Chair: Ms. Vecchio.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Thank you very much.

Thank you for the comments that have been made. Just to set the record straight about the citizenship and immigration committee, it is not their priority to study this. I think for us, dealing with the sexual assault that we're dealing with even today, it's very important that we recognize this. I know when I looked at making this motion originally, looking at it as immigration as a whole, I brought it forward, and it was denied with the forethought that citizenship and immigration was doing so. I did review that and I spoke to members of the citizenship and immigration committee, where it is not being studied. I think for us to think that other people are doing the work is inaccurate.

It's dealing with exactly the issue we are dealing with today, which is sexual assault. We have to recognize that these victims are coming over from another country. They have already been victims, worse than we can even imagine. This should be a priority of ours. By taking a day or two to study this, I think it would be really worth the wait and really worth the effort.

Plus, we're bringing them over here, and yet we're not going to be providing the necessary items for them. I believe we need to make sure that every single thing the government can do is in place so that we can properly assess them and get them the help they need.

The Chair: The motion is before us. We're calling the question.

All in favour?

(Motion negated)

The Chair: We move now to our witnesses today.

It's my pleasure to welcome, from Covenant House in Toronto, Julie Neubauer, and from the DisAbled Women's Network Canada, Bonnie Brayton.

Ladies, you'll each have ten minutes to bring your comments. Then we'll begin our round of questioning.

We'll start with you, Julie.

Ms. Julie Neubauer (Manager of Human Trafficking Services, Covenant House Toronto): Thank you very much. I'm honoured to be here this afternoon and to have this opportunity to address the Standing Committee on the Status of Women on behalf of Covenant House Toronto. My name is Julie Neubauer, and I am the manager of human trafficking services with the agency.

Covenant House is Canada's largest homeless youth-serving agency. It changes lives by providing the widest range of services and support under one roof. It's a national leader. We educate and advocate for change to help at-risk, homeless, and trafficked youth by influencing public policy and delivering prevention and awareness programs. More than just a place to stay, Covenant House provides as many as 250 young people daily with 24/7 crisis shelter, transitional housing, and comprehensive services, which include education, counselling, health care, employment assistance, job training, and aftercare.

The youth who turn to us are between the ages of 16 and 24, and come from a wide variety of cultural and socio-economic backgrounds. Most have fled or have been forced out of their homes due to physical, sexual, or emotional abuse or neglect.

Many of the young women we are supporting have suffered sexual violence at home or on the street. Increasingly we are seeing young women who have been victims of sexual exploitation and sex trafficking. While homeless youth are at a higher risk of being trafficked, unsuspecting women and girls are being lured from malls, schoolyards, and even online.

As many of you may be aware, sex trafficking is the most common type of human trafficking in Canada, and it's largely a domestic crime. Research in Ontario has shown that 90% of victims are female and most are Canadian girls as young as 13 and on average 17 years of age. The road back from their nightmare of violence and degradation for these young women is a long and challenging journey.

At Covenant House, we will often hear a young girl in our care recount how she was convinced or coerced by her boyfriend to sell herself for sex. Soon he trades the romance for violence, and she is terrified to leave. Traffickers follow a very similar pattern of psychological manipulation and control that includes luring, seducing, grooming, and then terrorizing their victims.

A recent study found that over a third of victims were recruited by men who they considered to be their boyfriends. Another 25% were lured through friends, most often victims themselves.

Over the past four years, Covenant House has enhanced its services for these victims and taken on a stronger advocacy role to combat this terrible crime. In 2015 we launched a comprehensive anti-trafficking plan that we call our "urban response model" to respond to the issue of sexual trafficking. It consists of three different pillars: prevention and early intervention, direct services to the survivors, and learning and transfer of knowledge.

Our prevention and early intervention pillar is focused on delivering programs directly to the at-risk girls and to organizations and businesses who may come in contact with them, such as the hotel and taxi industries. This is a wide-ranging plan and includes community training, education, and a multimedia awareness program that is supported by online resources and tool kits.

Our urban response model also includes comprehensive trauma-informed programming and services for victims of sex trafficking, focusing on the stages of recovery—from crisis intervention to stabilization to transition to independent living.

Within our crisis shelter we have opened two designated beds for female victims of sex trafficking with our municipal funding, a first in Toronto. Further, in September, we were very proud to open the city's first transitional housing program for female survivors of sex trafficking. It's called the Rogers Home. It is an innovative program that will provide seven residents with stable housing for up to two years. We provide life skills training, community-based trauma counselling, and other wraparound services to support these young women on their road to recovery.

Despite being a pressing social concern for some time, human trafficking, and particularly sex trafficking, has only recently drawn increased attention from the public, government, and research communities. To date very little research has been done to determine promising practices for working with the young survivors. That is why "learning and knowledge transfer" is the third pillar of our model. Covenant House will be embarking on a five-year evaluation and research and assessment initiatives that will determine what's working and what's not, what partnerships are necessary to provide a coordinated set of services, and whether our model is actually even making a difference. We will also be building an online centre of excellence so that we can share our findings very broadly.

● (1535)

Collaboration is a key success factor in combatting sex trafficking and providing high-quality services and supports to the victims. That is why Covenant House has developed strong partnerships with the Toronto police services, mental health and addictions service providers, victims' services, the City of Toronto, the Province of Ontario, and the indigenous community in the delivery of our urban response model.

Covenant House commends this standing committee for studying the pressing concern of violence against young women and girls. In doing so, we encourage you to also consider the issue of sex trafficking in your deliberations and to identify measures that can be implemented across the country to combat this crime. It is important that the response to sex trafficking be comprehensive in nature and include initiatives to prevent girls and young women from even being lured in the first place, services and supports for the survivors and victims, training and education for community partners, and strengthened tools for law enforcement and the justice system to combat these crimes.

Once again, I thank you very much for this opportunity to share the work that Covenant House is doing to put an end to sex trafficking and to provide enhanced supports and services for the victims. We're committed to working closely with the Government of Canada in addressing needs and in providing support to at-risk, homeless, and trafficked youth.

I look forward to hearing your questions.

• (1540)

The Chair: Excellent. Thank you very much.

Now we'll go to Bonnie Brayton, the national executive director for DisAbleD Women's Network Canada.

You have 10 minutes.

Ms. Bonnie Brayton (National Executive Director, DisAbleD Women's Network Canada): Good afternoon, everyone.

I would like to begin today by recognizing that we are in a time of truth and reconciliation here in Canada with our indigenous sisters and brothers and acknowledge that we are gathered today on the territory of the Algonquin Nation.

I would also like to thank the committee for bringing us here today and for undertaking this important study on violence against women and girls. DAWN Canada is a pan-Canadian feminist disability organization and continues to be the only organization, for more than 30 years now, that is focused on addressing their experiences of violence.

It is so important to acknowledge that despite all our wishes to the contrary, it is girls who are the most at risk of violence—yes, girls, and sometimes young girls. If I may remind the committee, the most at risk among young women and girls are those who live with a disability or are deaf, up to three times more at risk, something DAWN Canada and this committee must find unacceptable and must address with the same urgency with which we have finally begun to address the deplorable situation faced by indigenous women.

As always, DAWN Canada comes to this committee from an intersectional perspective that encompasses all disabilities, both visible and invisible, but with a clear understanding that while all young women and girls are at risk, there are some factors that greatly increase risk, including type of disability, being indigenous, being black—being differently abled.

Although our data collection on these issues will soon be improved and is being addressed by Minister Hajdu under her national strategy, we have to work with very limited data—for example, about our cohort and about indigenous women and girls. We know that the rates of disability are the highest with indigenous women and sit somewhere between 25% and 35% at a minimum.

We wish to express our deep disappointment and concern that there has been no meaningful effort to include indigenous women and girls with disabilities in the inquiry, despite the fact that, again, a minimum of one third of these women would have been living with a disability, whether acknowledged, diagnosed, or not. We urge the committee to address this in your recommendations.

Ableism is, in and of itself, a form of violence against women, as is racism. Systemic ableism abounds, as does systemic racism. It is

not deliberate, it is not intended, but it is highly pervasive, and our organization is working very hard to address this.

Sarah Stott died just a few months ago. We do not know for certain what her cause of death was, but we can assume that an ableist society that places less value on those who are differently abled almost certainly had something to do with why and how this young woman died after surviving being hit by a train, being nearly frozen, and then being supported by a loving family and community who helped raise funds for her to have her own adapted apartment and her own car. We can only surmise that, despite all this, Sarah simply did not feel valued. Despite all that love and support from her community, the world beyond was not ready for her, the same world that so many young women with disabilities aspire to be part of.

Our newest project, funded by Status of Women Canada, is called “Legislation, Policy and Service Responses to Violence Against Women with Disabilities and Deaf Women”. It is the result of three years of community consultations with women with disabilities in 13 communities across Canada. They are tired of sharing their stories and repeating over and over that they are not getting the support they need.

We have undertaken this project in Quebec, Ontario, and British Columbia and have already begun to see strong evidence that affirms the enormous gaps in policies and program delivery for women and girls with disabilities. Policies tend to be reactive, if they exist at all; legislation specific to disability—we have 10 years with the AODA in Ontario—is not applied from a gendered perspective; and any policies that appear to have merit are generally just that: well-written policies with no champions, no funding, and therefore no programs, no services, or none specifically for our needs, and no results.

In today's high-tech and social media world, the most at risk of being bullied or of being exploited online are girls with disabilities. Despite the incredible opportunities technology represents in supporting women and girls with disabilities, again there is no legislation or policy in place to protect our young women in this rapidly changing environment that dominates youth culture today.

Coming back to my opening remarks, the rates of sexual violence, physical violence, verbal violence, and systemic violence are at least three times higher for young women and girls with disabilities. If we had the courage as a country to really look at childhood sexual abuse and to gather that data, we would again be looking at the alarmingly high rates of sexual abuse among girl children with disabilities.

• (1545)

Last year CBC broke a story that got very little national attention: a young woman with an intellectual disability sexually assaulted on a public bus in Winnipeg while her support worker sat two seats ahead of her listening to music on her iPod. Our work with young women with intellectual disabilities has a strong correlation with this. What they have told us repeatedly is that they need to receive appropriate information about their sexual and reproductive rights and the supports they require to protect themselves and those rights.

From a recent study of women in prisons in Ontario, there are two important pieces of data to share with you today. What two things did all these women have in common? Again, 40% of all women incarcerated in prisons in Ontario have a history of childhood sexual abuse and a traumatic brain injury.

What are we doing at DAWN Canada? I'm very proud to share with all of you today a recent and exciting partnership that we have with the Girls Action Foundation, funded by a grant from the Canadian Women's Foundation, for the next four years. Focused on their nine- to thirteen-year-old girls programming, Girls Action Foundation and DAWN Canada will begin collaborating for the next four years to see the inclusion of girls with disabilities and deaf girls in these mainstream girls' programs. This is the most exciting "pay it forward" and positive project we will have done yet, and it means so much, because it is about our future, about girls with disabilities as confident leaders.

This kind of uptake of leadership, of accepting responsibility for all girls, is sadly lacking elsewhere. As I stand before you today, there is but a handful—and I really do mean a handful—of peer support groups for women with disabilities, and nothing for girls or young women with disabilities, nothing for those who are experiencing violence at the highest rates. How can this be?

All of us gathered here today and all of us in Canada must do better. This is about the collective responsibility each of us has. This is not DAWN Canada's job, my friend; it belongs to all of us.

I stand before you today without a brief because my organization is already pushing itself well beyond its capacity day in and day out, for more than 30 years now. A brief and more facts should not be what is required to move you today. Every human rights instrument, including the CEDAW, the CESC, and the CRPD, and every review of Canada's performance under its human rights treaties affirms that Canada is failing women and girls with disabilities. According to the World Health Organization, we are the largest minority group in the world. According to the most recent human rights commission report for 2015, nearly 60% of all complaints received were disability-related.

Minister Qualtrough has been charged with developing national accessibility legislation, together with all of you in the coming two years. She and I and the millions of young women and girls with disabilities in Canada need your support, need your commitment.

I could not be more proud of the fact that Canada has finally stood up and taken real and meaningful collective responsibility for the exclusion and harm done to our indigenous peoples. I stand before you today to urge FEWO and all of its members to do the same for young women and girls with disabilities.

Thank you. *Merci*.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll now go to our questions section. We'll be hearing questions in both English and French, so if you need the translation devices, I'd invite you to put them on.

[*Translation*]

I'd like to welcome Mr. Arseneault, who is joining us today.

We'll begin with Ms. Nassif.

Ms. Nassif, you have seven minutes. Please go ahead.

[*English*]

Mrs. Eva Nassif (Vimy, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair. I will be addressing my questions in English this time. I know you did this for me, because I usually ask in French.

I would like to thank both our witnesses for sharing their work with us today, but my first question goes to Ms. Brayton.

You mentioned that it's estimated that 40% of women enter prison with a traumatic brain injury. Half of these women, apparently, sustained their TBI before committing their first crime.

• (1550)

Ms. Bonnie Brayton: That's right.

Mrs. Eva Nassif: I'll read a quick quote from the study, and I want to ask you two quick questions. Julie could add to this, if she wants.

I would ask, Chairman, if I have time left, to share it with Mr. Fraser.

Half of these women apparently sustained their TBI before committing their first crime. I will read the quote, and then I will ask my question. You said:

In our research we observed a striking gender difference. Female inmates with a TBI, compared to males, were much more likely to have suffered physical or sexual abuse as children...Right now we don't know very much about how brain injuries affect women in the correctional system. This study indicates a need for more research, and for programs that address TBI and mental health programs among people at risk of incarceration.

That was in 2014. I was hoping you might give us some comments to say what kinds of services are currently available to these individuals, if there are any; what kinds of services they should be getting; and how difficult it is for these women to return to society and not only function normally but not become repeat victims of abuse because of their histories, and now the possibility of disability.

Ms. Bonnie Brayton: I appreciate that you've taken the time to look carefully at that study. It's a very important piece of work, and I'm glad you've asked these questions.

To be really clear, we are criminalizing women with disabilities. We are doing this in terms of the homeless population. Again, the same researcher who did that study, Dr. Angela Colantonio, did an interesting study on the homeless population in Toronto. In terms of recent work done by Dr. Colantonio and her colleagues, I think it's important to share another statistic with you, because I think it plays into the same questions. Between 35% and 80% of women who are going into shelters and transition houses have a traumatic brain injury. That's right: between 35% and 80% of all women. It's not diagnosed and it's not screened. A lot of women are walking around with brain injuries without a diagnosis.

I think when we go right back to where the source is, it's to understand that the rates of violence against women speak to why this is so. Women are choked. They are slapped. They are beaten. They sustain injuries. Again, these are not injuries that they get screened for. They go to the hospital. Screening for a traumatic brain injury is expensive. It's not something they're going to do as a standard of practice unless the government and Parliament support the idea that we need to get much more proactive, not just around sports brain injuries but around the kinds of brain injuries that women are experiencing because of the high rates of violence against women in this country. It's an epidemic in terms of what we're talking about.

If I were to show you the data around brain injury versus every other disability.... Again, DAWN is cross-disability; I am not advocating more for brain injury. However, in the very context of what we're talking about here, specifically women in prisons, women who are homeless, and indeed women who are in the sex trade, we are often talking about women with an undiagnosed brain injury.

I see my colleague Julie nodding her head, because I know she sees this in the people who are coming through her wonderful resource.

In terms of what needs to happen, we need to get right at the core issue. We need to make sure that some of the funding that's now going to brain injury around sports and so on is redirected, or that additional funding is put forward. Again, the largest problem we have in this country is violence against women. Upwards of 50% of women going through transition houses and shelters are going through that system without the supports they need.

I am not pointing to the transition houses and shelters. I'm talking about a failed system at the very highest level. We have not understood how big this problem is. I would say further that one of the things we really begin to see—and this is something revealed through Dr. Colantonio's research—is that there are correlations between the high incidence of Alzheimer's in women and violence.

This is the kind of research that's going to require longitudinal studies that begin to follow women with brain injuries throughout their life course. I understand there's been research done in other countries. There's certainly other research that I can point to. I would be happy to provide the committee with additional research and

formal recommendations, and with a panel of experts, who should be part of this discussion.

I thank you very much for raising this question. It's extremely important that we focus on where the systemic issues are and where the systemic solutions lie.

Mrs. Eva Nassif: You mentioned the high percentage, 35% to 80%, of women who suffer with TBI. I was about to ask you the question about whether there are any programs elsewhere in the world that have done well to integrate women with traumatic brain injury and provide them with adequate services. Would you have any information to share on that?

● (1555)

Ms. Bonnie Brayton: There aren't any that I'm aware of. There's certainly research going on, as I said. I think that's where Canadians and the Government of Canada have an opportunity to lead on this. We have been leading on the issue of addressing violence against women, and I think this is an important area that needs to be looked at much more closely. There needs to be more resources put into the research to take this from qualitative to quantitative data, to the point where we can assign the appropriate level of resources to it.

It's much bigger than has been understood. The research I'm sharing about transition houses and shelters is very recent. It's a further affirmation of the other evidence that we're not really addressing brain injury at the place where it begins, whether it's a car accident or it's through violence. I've encountered women with disabilities at my office, who have come through my door. One woman I know had a car accident. From there she lost her job, lost her relationship, and eventually ended up homeless and in a terrible situation. It was because there was no catching this woman at the first stage. And she had a diagnosis.

The Chair: All right. That's your time.

We'll go now to Ms. Vecchio for seven minutes.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Thank you very much.

I'll start with Covenant House Toronto. Being from the city of London area, I know there's been a lot of work done there with Megan Walker and the London Abused Women's Centre and with a previous member of Parliament, Joy Smith, who did a lot of work on the issue of sex trafficking.

I think part of the issue is that we believe it's something that's overseas, although it does happen here in Canada. I'm wondering to what degree sex trafficking actually occurs in Canada and if you have some statistics on that. In terms of sex trafficking as a problem, to what scale is the sex trade in Canada? Perhaps we can look at that and compare it to other countries.

I'll let you continue on this roll, because both Marilyn Gladu, the chair, and I were with the U.S. ambassador at the U.S. embassy about two weeks ago looking at the sex trafficking studies that were being done by Homeland Security.

Just go ahead and speak openly on those topics, if you don't mind.

Ms. Julie Neubauer: First, I'll address the fact that it is a misunderstood myth that it is an overseas issue that happens in Thailand and places of that sort. Certainly that doesn't negate the fact that it does occur in those places, but I believe 90% of the cases that we see at Covenant House Toronto are domestic. They are young people from London, for example. Megan and I share a lot of the same views and do a lot of the same work. They're young people coming from Sault Ste. Marie. They're coming from Nova Scotia.

Anecdotally, I can give you a number of stories. Out of our 86 different cases that we're working with right now, there may be only four people who were not born in Canada, and those tend to be women who have arrived from abroad and are involved in forced-marriage circumstances or honour-based violence.

The young women who we see are moved throughout Canada. As I said, they may begin their trafficking experience in Barrie, and be moved around to St. Catharines, to Windsor, through the various strip clubs to the hotels and to the condominiums across Ontario. We have found an increase in young women coming from Quebec, from Nova Scotia, and there is an increasing involvement in gang-related activity in both of those provinces, as well as in Ontario.

Again, I think Laurie Scott and a lot of the programs and campaigns that are identifying this are using the terminology of "right under our noses" and "just like a girl next door", and those are absolutely accurate. At Covenant House, because we are an agency that has been serving the at-risk, vulnerable sector for 34 years, most of our experience up until the past six years has been predominantly with that population of young women who were coming to us from atypical, non-intact families. We are finding increasing numbers of women and their parents who are calling us for either consultation or seeking shelter. They are coming from situations where there are two parents with a modest earning in the home; the young women are enrolled in university, in high school. To stun even further, these young women are connected to their communities. They are involved in dance. I'm trying to protect the confidentiality, but there was one case where she was a professional dancer and had gone abroad on a scholarship.

Again, there's a vulnerability that crosses over all the young women who are involved, but there is a larger systemic issue around gender equality in Canada and across the world. For these types of young women who are living at home, they look to forms of income, and they don't want to work at a lower-income, minimum-wage job.

● (1600)

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: I just wanted to add, if we could talk about this, that a lot of times when we look at the perpetrators we look at them as male, especially when we're talking about sexual assault. But in this situation, are there females involved as well as part of the perpetrators who are getting the young women involved? Just recently in the House of Commons, we've been talking about mandatory minimum sentences, things of that sort. I think it's important that we look at the entire issue.

In a situation like this, of course, the majority are men, but are there women also involved in getting people hooked into this trafficking?

Ms. Julie Neubauer: [*Inaudible—Editor*] numbers of women. It's important to remember that these women are also survivors and also

victims. The traffickers themselves are becoming much more astute and clever in their attempts to evade detection. They're recognizing that it's often in their best interest to have someone else do the luring and be actively involved on paper and in those types of activities, so when the police do come they are further removed from the activities.

In a lot of these cases where the females are the active recruiters, they themselves have been trafficked by these exact traffickers for years prior, and so it is a matter of self-preservation that they make that choice, they make that decision. There's a pecking order in a lot of the trafficking circles. If someone comes to them and says, "If you do this, you will have to sleep with fewer men", they then become the bottom bitch, which means that they are then given a higher power within the group. For these young women who are struggling to maintain control and power and a sense of identification within their desperate situation, when someone offers them even that glimmer or glimpse of some sort of control, they will grab onto that desperately.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: When we talk about victims coming forward, we had the opportunity to actually hear from a victim. It was really great, because she actually said she didn't want to be revictimized by going out and being the face of that campaign. We have to recognize that when victims come forward they expect results. What do we see when it comes to sentencing? I don't want to just look at that, but the correlation between people coming forward and not coming forward, and the end results when people are actually charged and sentenced. Do you have any information on that?

Ms. Julie Neubauer: I can tell you that I was recently at a presentation with Toronto's human trafficking enforcement team, and they have a lot of really good stats. When we began back in 2013, there was one conviction. Please don't quote me—I can provide this for you—I think there are six convictions on human trafficking-related issues. That could be in living off the avails, violence-related, transporting in person. There's a variety of different convictions they can acquire under the umbrella of human trafficking. When the police and the crown try to seek a conviction, they'll do so in a number of different ways.

You talked about survivors looking for results in their coming forward and being witnesses in these cases. So much of the work we do, that the police do, and a lot of the NGOs do, is the relationship and the engagement. Because their trusting attachments to normal, healthy patterns of engagement with other human beings has been skewed, it takes an enormous amount of time—

The Chair: I'm sorry, but that's your time on that question.

We'll go now to Ms. Malcolmson for seven minutes.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Thanks, Chair.

Thanks to both the witnesses for your work. It's hard, and it's vital, and we are going to rely on your testimony.

Because I only have a short amount of time, I'll start with a couple of yes-no answers. I'll start with Ms. Brayton. I appreciate some of my fellow committee members asking some of the questions I was going to ask, so that's good. We can save our time.

Ms. Brayton, do you have sufficient operational funding to do the work that the country is asking you to do?

Ms. Bonnie Brayton: No.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: We had earlier reports that indicated that domestic violence shelters are not sufficiently equipped to provide access for women with disabilities. Is that hampering access to domestic violence shelters for women who are vulnerable to violence?

•(1605)

Ms. Bonnie Brayton: Absolutely.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: I'm going to ask you a couple more, then we can get a bit more broad.

Do police stations and the justice system provide sufficient access for women with disabilities, such that they're able to get access to justice when they're victims of violence?

Ms. Bonnie Brayton: No.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: I'll maybe just point back to the one report we were able to find from February 2011 that the Vecova Centre for Disability Services and Research did. They described 75% of shelters having at least one building entrance that was wheelchair-accessible, and 66% provided wheelchair-accessible bathrooms, but the funding that was available was not sufficient to actually bring shelters up to full access, and this was one of the crunch points.

Has anything changed on that since 2011?

Ms. Bonnie Brayton: No; no meaningful change.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Thanks.

There was also a characterization in this report, which I thought was important to say. Maybe I'll just read the section:

Many women with intellectual disabilities, notably, have lived in institutional settings which segregate and exclude them from their family and community life. Being isolated and restricted from developing natural supports in the community only enhances women's vulnerability to violence.

Has anything changed since then?

Ms. Bonnie Brayton: No. There's a huge problem with housing and institutionalization of women and girls with disabilities.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Thanks.

Maybe I can switch over to Ms. Neubauer from Covenant House.

I live really close to where you provide your services, and for decades I've known you've been doing this vital work. Just last week the first national survey on youth homelessness was released. Because we haven't had any testimony on that side of things, can you describe for us a little bit more the link between domestic violence and homelessness? To what extent is escaping domestic violence sending victims into homelessness and in need of extra support?

Ms. Julie Neubauer: I apologize that I don't have the exact numbers of young people within that survey who report being forced from their homes as a result of domestic violence. I can tell you anecdotally that on any given night in our shelter, out of the 94 young people, I would hazard a guess that 85% of them would identify some sort of domestic violence, gender based or otherwise, that they've experienced in some form or another.

As I said, we have those stats. We collect data from our varying youth surveys throughout their time there, and that's something that I could provide to the committee, all the stats available, at your request.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: That would be great. We can use that in our final report writing. Thank you so much.

Ms. Julie Neubauer: What also happens is just the mere vulnerability of having them engaged and living in shelter environments continues to perpetuate that domestic violence, or makes them prey and vulnerable to the people who circle. As you know, because you live in the neighbourhood, the people who prey on the young people in the streets make them vulnerable to trafficking and other situations.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Yes. Thanks.

Perhaps I could finish with a question for Ms. Brayton. It doesn't have to be a yes-no answer. Thank you for working with me, though.

I so recognize that of the vulnerable women in the country, the disabled women's support community has been especially pressed to get that voice and to be invited into processes. Thank you for flagging that this is sorely lacking in the murdered and missing indigenous women and girls inquiry. I hadn't thought of it that way before, so thank you.

You have a voice here now. What would you like to see reflected in our final report? We'd love to echo the experience of your advocacy.

Ms. Bonnie Brayton: I can't state it strongly enough: it begins with recognizing that the resources simply aren't there.

The work we're doing through our current project on legislation, policy, and service responses affirms what we've known for a long time at DAWN Canada, and further affirms what women told us in the research we did from 2011 to 2014, that the systemic problems are part of how you can begin to address it, because women with disabilities will continue to experience violence at higher rates than any other women. That's a given. That's not going to change, in all likelihood, ever.

Given that they experience it at higher rates, I'm really urging you to understand that it must be a priority to assign resources to addressing this, and to addressing it at a systemic level back to the discussion we had at the beginning of the question period, about the fact that disability is this huge tsunami underlying what we're talking about in terms of violence against women.

In a study in 2014 on sex work in British Columbia, a qualitative research of 3,500 women sex workers who participated in this research, 35% of them self-identified as having a long-term disability before they became sex workers.

Again, I don't want to over-focus on one cohort or another. To be really clear, young women with intellectual disabilities, young women who are in institutions, are extremely vulnerable to abuse, through their caregivers or the fact that they're in transportation, or there are so many other things I could have covered. I tried really hard to focus today on what needs to be heard, which is how large in scale this problem is, to make clear that we are the largest minority group in the world.

In this country, disability is finally hitting the radar of everyone, but to be really clear, it has been a huge problem for a very long time, and there has been only one organization, my organization, focused on this work. You have seen us over and over again on this panel, and in all the years that I've come here, I haven't seen a single change. My funding has been reduced, year over year, since 2007. Year over year, my funding has been reduced, not increased.

I am here only because women with disabilities, despite our vulnerability, are the most resilient women in this country. I urge you all to hear me and to hear what I'm asking you to do, to be our champion, because we can't continue to do it alone.

• (1610)

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll now go to Ms. Ludwig, for seven minutes.

Ms. Karen Ludwig (New Brunswick Southwest, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you both for your excellent presentations and for the work you're doing to make such a difference in the communities.

My questions are varied, more so in terms of the research side, because so much of funding and programming is based on the research that is collected. You have both mentioned research studies. Could you tell me who has been funding those studies?

Ms. Brayton, you mentioned one study. Was that funded by the federal government, by a university and NSERC grant?

Ms. Bonnie Brayton: Are you talking about the sex work study?

Ms. Karen Ludwig: Yes.

Ms. Bonnie Brayton: I don't know for sure. It was done by a group in British Columbia. I could certainly find out. It was probably the provincial government in British Columbia, since it was a B.C.-based study.

Ms. Karen Ludwig: Okay. Thank you.

Ms. Bonnie Brayton: Largely what is happening, and from most of what I've picked up—I think this is a really important point to make, and it's a piece of work DAWN is working on now—is that lots and lots of research gets done and the disability lens is either not applied or the disability research is not extracted and not understood to be significant.

Going back to that study in British Columbia, that data I shared with you wasn't found by the researchers to be significant. They weren't looking for it, so they didn't find it. That's the point I want to make to everybody. If you're not looking for the information, you won't find it. We are the most invisible population in this country, but one in five women in this country has a disability—one in five—and that's a low number. That's based on the fact that with stigma, we don't have people really coming forward. Lots and lots of brain-injured women who don't know they have a brain injury instead think that there's something wrong with them. They develop mental health problems. They develop addictions.

All of those things stem from the fact that they weren't supported from the outset or that it's not understood that when they experience violence, they are experiencing more than physical violence. Women are becoming disabled through violence in the country at alarming rates.

Ms. Karen Ludwig: Thank you.

Ms. Neubauer, can you talk in terms of the research that you're working on with Covenant House?

Ms. Julie Neubauer: We have specific funders for specific areas of research, and they are private funders. The Gooder Foundation provides money for some of our research as well as the Public Health Agency of Canada and the Trillium Foundation. The overall commitment to research and development comes out of our annual operating budget, when we hired on three different staff in 2015 to spearhead research. That comes out of our general operating budget, and then it's focused research from those specific places that I mentioned.

Ms. Karen Ludwig: To continue, I'll put a researcher's hat on. So often with research we're asked to produce measurable outcomes. Then those measurable outcomes are used to look at whether or not there's an increase in funding, if the program should be changed. Again, that's a significant area that takes expertise.

Are there measurable outcomes that your donors or your funders are looking for in terms of measuring what is success?

• (1615)

Ms. Julie Neubauer: Absolutely. For the the Rogers Home, we have funding specific to that, and we are looking at a variety of different things. We're looking at, at the beginning of their stay, where they see themselves in terms of engagement with the staff. What are their post-traumatic stress symptoms? We are looking at their resiliency scale and at their mastery scale. Then, because we have them for two years, over that period of time, we work with them and provide that intervention tool at six months, a year, and then two years. We measure those exact same things over again to find out whether the dosage of our program is, in fact, taking them along the spectrum of those different tools.

In addition, at Covenant House we employ something called the Empowerment Star. We look at engagement. We have nine domains from education to safety to, again, mastery. We speak with the young people again at three months, a year, and at the end of their stay, looking at whether they measure themselves. It's one thing to administer a task or a tool onto somebody, but to have them self-evaluate, where they feel they have moved along the spectrum of change.... Our urban response model also looks from crisis to independence, and we overlay it on the stage of change. As I said before, this is a very long process, and the engagement in the relationship is critical. It's not a linear process, so it's not from start to finish; it's that they bounce back from contemplation to action, etc. A lot of our activities try to measure their movement through those different changes as well.

Ms. Karen Ludwig: Thank you.

What is the average duration of someone who would stay at Covenant House? How often might that person return in terms of a revolving door?

Ms. Julie Neubauer: That's a very interesting question. We're noticing over the past two years that our primary transient population is no longer so, in fact so much so that we're having conversations about the use of the word "crisis" in our name. We're finding that a lot of young people are less transient and coming in and out. The average length of stay, I think, is 21 days, whereas in the past it was three days. A lot of our young people who were using it as crisis in the past are now using it as transitional housing. They're engaging with our staff. They're recognizing that housing in the GTA is not viable, that they can't afford the rent. They're recognizing also that their needs are so profound that in order to get a leg up on education and employment, they need to remain in a stable, constant space.

Does that answer your question?

Ms. Karen Ludwig: It really does. We've heard from other witnesses looking at violence against women that so often housing is an issue, as Ms. Malcolmson has talked about at this committee, and housing is often temporary. In order to really break that cycle, they are looking at much longer-term housing and helping with that transition.

Not giving any case details, but how would Covenant House work with someone who is transgendered?

Ms. Julie Neubauer: Outside of their specific needs that they identified, like what floor they sleep on and what bathrooms they use, we have done renovations on some of our spaces. We have done changes to our policy to absolutely embrace and include. My initial response is that in every way we work with them like every other client, but there are some specifics around designated bedrooms on the floor of their identified gender.

At the Rogers Home, it's either female or female-identified and they have their own bedroom and their own bathroom, so it kind of precludes that conversation.

In our other transitional housing programs, the Rights of Passage one, they reside on the floor in which they identify.

Ms. Karen Ludwig: Okay. Thank you.

Thank you both very much.

The Chair: We go now to Ms. Harder for five minutes.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Thank you very much.

My first question is also for Covenant House Toronto.

To what extent do you think the porn industry might have an impact on trafficking and the violence that we see taking place with young women and girls?

Ms. Julie Neubauer: I made the statement earlier about the whole foundation of gender inequality and opportunity equity across the world. I think the pornography industry and the demand for all these things play a massive role in trafficking. The things that Bonnie was talking about, that make our young women vulnerable; not to pontificate, but it's an overarching attitude of our society that allows these types of activities to continue and that the commodification of the female body is an acceptable occurrence.

Many of our young women aren't actively engaged in pornography in the ways that we used to understand it, so not in the California Valley of skin flicks, but much more in terms of exotic dancing and escorting. There's the whole notion of sugar daddies and sugar babies. I would make a direct connection to that kind of acceptance and understanding that when I'm a young woman and I look to ways in which I can feel valuable or make money, I look to my own body. That's an unfortunate place to begin. We do have young women who do sex-cam work, but most of our stuff is directly related to sex acts, providing sex for service.

I would wholeheartedly agree with the suggestion that there is a direct link to pornography and the sex industry.

• (1620)

Ms. Rachael Harder: Thank you very much.

I have another question for you, just because this is making headlines right now. In the province of Ontario there was a 15-year-old who was sexually assaulted by a 50-year-old man. This 50-year-old man was given a sentence of seven months and two years of probation. This is counter to the minimum sentencing that he should have been given, which is one year.

I'm just looking for your reflections on this. In my estimation, when we go this route or we allow this judge to make this decision, it actually seems like we're sending a message to society that it's increasingly okay to take advantage of women, rather than taking a stand for them and advocating on behalf of the vulnerable.

I'm wondering if you can reflect on that a little bit.

Ms. Julie Neubauer: We have just five to seven minutes....

You just need to look to the south and look at the activities of recent events down there, at the language that was allowed to happen, at all the conversations that ensued around the candidates and their gender, and then the fact that there are instances where our judiciary system responds in the way they do.

In this case, this is unfortunately what you get. The age difference was 15 to 50, but those types of decisions happen daily, whether it's a wife to a husband or a father to a daughter. This just happened to be a 15-year-old girl to a 50-year-old man, and they didn't have any familial connection. Sadly, it's just those ones that get brought to light, but you know that these occurrences happen daily. Again, it goes back to that general acceptance of women as property and people not being comfortable in making a grander stand against something that is a basic human right.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Thank you very much.

I have one last quick question, and it goes to you, Ms. Brayton. It is with regard to pornography and the impact that you might see it having on those who have disabilities.

Ms. Bonnie Brayton: I think it's important to remember that there's an awful lot of women out there with invisible disabilities. Coming back to some of the data I've shared, this is quantitative data that needs to be deepened by properly attacking these questions from a longitudinal perspective and so on. I think that with 35% of sex workers in British Columbia and 40% of women in prisons, we're talking about women with disabilities when we're talking about any of these issues. We're not acknowledging that they're women with disabilities, perhaps, but that's what we're talking about. It's one third of indigenous women, and I have no hesitation in saying that if the data was there, then I know it would affirm what I'm saying.

You talked about the cross-border sex trafficking. I know that's happening among young indigenous women, young women with disabilities included. When we're talking about any of these issues, we need to add the disability lens and the intersectional lens at all times. The most vulnerable women in this country—

The Chair: I'm sorry. That's the end of your time.

We'll go to our last five minutes with Ms. Vandenberg.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): To start, if you wanted to finish your thought, go ahead.

Ms. Bonnie Brayton: I just wanted to affirm what Julie said and remind everyone that based on some of the information I've shared already, it's quite clear that while we haven't been talking about it, and perhaps you haven't been hearing it from any of the other witnesses—it's not a reflection on them, but is a gap in important knowledge and research that needs to be addressed—that really is who we are talking about. At least one third of those women, wherever we're talking about them, are women with disabilities when we're talking about women who are being exploited, about women who have been marginalized or vulnerable-ized.

• (1625)

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: Thank you very much.

I want to thank both of you for your incredibly compelling testimony and for bringing to light some of the things and especially some of the statistics that we haven't heard previously. We're here, of course, as federal legislators. A lot of what we hear we're going to have to bring back into recommendations in terms of what the federal government can do and what legislation is needed.

I heard you say, Ms. Brayton, that disability legislation right now is not gendered.

Ms. Neubauer, you mentioned things like strengthened tools for the justice system.

Perhaps I could ask both of you to elaborate specifically on what we can recommend as a committee in terms of federal legislative changes.

Ms. Julie Neubauer: Go ahead, Bonnie.

Ms. Bonnie Brayton: Thank you.

In terms of the legislative side of things, I'll remind everyone here that Minister Qualtrough will be bringing forward accessibility legislation, and I know she is committed to women and girls as well. It's really important to work with her and to collaborate with her unit and her department around making sure that this legislation is supported as it comes forward, including any ways that it can be specifically used to address gender issues. Of course, an intersectional approach is critical.

I think one of the things that's most exciting about our current Parliament is that we have a strong focus and a cross-ministerial strategy that is talking about looking across departments. Rather than thinking of me as the person who needs to meet with Minister Bennett, Minister Qualtrough, Minister Hajdu, Minister Philpott, and all of the folks who need to be made more aware of the kind of information I'm sharing with you, it's really important that all of you walk out of this room feeling a collective responsibility, because that's what I'm asking you to do. This is not work that DAWN Canada can continue to sustain by itself. It is about you thinking about this at every point when you look at legislation and at every point when you look at an issue. Ask yourself, have we applied the intersectional lens, and are we looking at this in a fulsome way, so that we include everybody in our society?

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: Ms. Neubauer, did you want to comment?

Ms. Julie Neubauer: Thank you.

As a starting point, and with the things Bonnie has spoken about in terms of the needs of her client base, it's just addressing the basic vulnerability on a systemic level of women, full stop, whether they have ABI, whether they're coming from homelessness, or whether they're coming from intact families and looking around the world at how they are perceived and how they are addressed.

Very specifically, it's looking at training and raising awareness of people who are making the decisions. It's looking at judiciary training for judges across the supreme courts and making sure they have a fulsome understanding of domestic violence and the impacts of vulnerability and sexual exploitation. In Ontario, through the Ministry of the Attorney General, we need dedicated crown attorneys who will prosecute and have a really good understanding of what the issues are with the trauma these young women are enduring, and what criminal sentences will really mean in setting a precedent for that. Then there are police forces in terms of law enforcement.

There's a very large scale in terms of education. Ontario has just recently adapted a different sex education curriculum to include the notion of gender, inequality, vulnerabilities, and all those types of things. We need that larger systemic approach and then have it trickle down to the smaller units.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: I think Ms. Ludwig had a follow-on question, so I'll pass the time to her.

Ms. Karen Ludwig: Thank you.

My question is to both of you personally. Are services available for staff working front line and also coping with the circumstances, with the frustration, the hurt, and the anguish that you hear every day, and also your own debriefing? Or do you need services?

Ms. Bonnie Brayton: Julie, you go first.

Ms. Julie Neubauer: Our self-care and our recognition of vicarious trauma is at the forefront of all the work we do. I support my front-line advocates, and we debrief on a daily basis. We talk very openly about the circumstances and the situations we hear, and we acknowledge how vicarious trauma enters our lives.

As an agency, Covenant House also recognizes that. Outside our EAP and supports for our staff, we also have numerous opportunities and training for our staff to understand how the trauma affects them.

• (1630)

The Chair: I'm sorry, that's the end of your time. I'm really sorry to have to cut it off, but we're at end of our panel.

To both of our witnesses, thank you for coming today. You've heard the questions. If there are things you want to send on to the clerk, I would invite you to do so. We would love to see those and be able to review them.

We'll suspend, after which Ms. Malcolmson will be taking over as your chair.

• (1630)

(Pause)

• (1635)

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Sheila Malcolmson): Welcome to our witnesses.

This is the second hour of testimony of this afternoon's status of women committee meeting. We're investigating the impact of violence against young women and girls.

I'm Sheila Malcolmson, and I'm the vice-chair of the committee. I represent the NDP. We have seven Liberal members and two Conservative members. We'll be asking you questions.

We'll begin with SAVIS of Halton, who will have ten minutes for testimony. They also have a bilingual power point.

Then we'll move to a ten-minute presentation from the White Ribbon Campaign. Chi Nguyen is on the video conference. After that we'll move to questions.

With thanks for your work, we'll start with SAVIS of Halton.

Mr. Walter Henry (Project Coordinator, Male Ally Network, SAVIS of Halton): Good afternoon. My name is Walter Henry, and I'm the male ally coordinator for SAVIS of Halton.

I'm very passionate about my role. I'm not scared to admit that I'm flawed, because I was born into an imperfect world where women and female-identified individuals are still unfortunately seen as "lesser than" by a large number of my male counterparts, given the patriarchal, misogynistic nature of the societies in which we live.

Why is it important to have men as allies in a feminist organization? The truth is that a 2013 Statistics Canada report highlights that men are described as 99% of the perpetrators of sexual violence. As a result, the consensus has emerged that reducing and preventing violence against women requires the participation of men who can model non-violent behaviour and hold their male counterparts accountable. Men identify with other men.

The SAVIS of Halton male ally network program, or MAN program, is modelled after the above premise, where men and individuals identified as male become allies and start the discussion about the taboo topic of sexual violence from as early as age 10. However, given my experience in the field, I am of the fervent opinion that this conversation could be started at a much younger age. Boys are born into a toxic masculine culture that has an indoctrinating grasp and far-reaching impact, given the development of technology, especially in the previous 30 years.

On the impact of toxic masculinity on society, the male ally network of SAVIS of Halton is of the opinion that we must unlearn this toxic masculine ideology, which is one of the ways in which patriarchy is harmful to men. It refers to the socially constructed attitudes that describe the masculine gender role as violent, unemotional, and sexually aggressive.

In many ways, this toxic ideology is learned unknowingly through music, television, social media, family members, language, and peers. This contributes to the cyber-violence, street harassment, misguided understanding of consent, and rape culture faced by women and female-identified individuals daily.

Further, the traditional and modern media hyper-sexualizes the feminine gender and portrays women as weak and only able to be saved by a man. Perfect examples of this include the stories of Snow White and Sleeping Beauty. Men, however, are portrayed as gods and conquerors with little emotional intelligence and disregard for anyone or anything that represents weakness. We are taught not to cry, to be tough, and not to show weakness. This ideology dominates all spaces where men can be found.

How does MAN engage men? The male ally network understands that most sexual violence cases are perpetrated by men. However, most men are not perpetrators of sexual violence. Further, we admit that society is patriarchal and that men currently possess the most privilege. However, the primary aim of MAN, even before becoming an ally, is having that conversation about our privilege, being honest with ourselves that misogyny exists within our society, and that we are responsible for the way our female and female-identified folks are treated.

MAN's first engagement strategy is to go into male-dominated spaces like gyms, classrooms, community centres, game shops, and prisons to start the conversation about sexual violence and to recruit possible male allies for our network. We have developed partnerships with other male ally organizations, school boards, correctional facilities, colleges and universities, and agencies and businesses in Halton and surrounding communities. Through these connections, we're able to give presentations to male and male-identified individuals from age 10 and above. We participate in community events like Take Back the Night, Hope in High Heels, Sisters in Spirit vigil, Sheridan College frosh week, community fairs, and various networking events within the community. At these events, we have our male ally recruitment booth and distribute our outreach material—for example, stress balls and bumper stickers—and we make our presence known by further displaying the MAN banner.

MAN has an active Internet and social media presence on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat through which we advertise our events and recruit volunteers. MAN has developed a 14-hour training session to train our allies. The session covers redefining manhood, boys in solidarity, understanding violence in Canada, Male Allyship 101, be a man, and understanding masculinity. Thus far we have recruited and trained 10 males as allies. We have a further 15 individuals scheduled for training in early December 2016.

• (1640)

We use our maleness as our advantage to reach other men and develop a space where men could feel safe to express their opinions, which we respect. We come from a place where we seek to prevent violence from ever happening and dare to dream of a world without it. We seek to use men and boys as role models to start the conversation with their children, their peers, and within their everyday environment.

We identify strength in weakness and see the importance of exposing men to the stories of survivors of violence and sexual violence. Unlearning our misogynistic beliefs is the key to ending misogyny. Starting the conversation and being an active bystander may change the trajectory of life for many people, because we are all unknowingly intricately connected regardless of gender, cultural background, ethnicity, and socio-economic position.

Speaking of the challenges MAN faces, as a male ally giving a presentation, I always first admit that I am inherently flawed, because I live in a world where misogyny is cultural and embedded into every fabric of society. Therefore, for a male ally the challenges are many. Speaking about sexual violence with men is a taboo topic, and men are very skeptical and sensitive and would want to refrain from even starting the conversation about sexual violence against women and female-identified individuals. Therefore, it is important for men to engage other men and boys and begin that conversation, because many factors play a role in preventing the message from being heard and eventually received.

Some individuals do not agree with the message, for the same reason that the message should be heard: the misogynistic nature of society. In other instances, some individuals do not believe in the preventive ideology of MAN, and therefore subscribe to harsher penalties for sexually violent crimes.

Given recent developments in the world, patriarchy seems to be always winning, because for males there are many examples of individuals who are extremely successful by promoting misogynistic ideals.

Finally, our motivations and commitment are sometimes rightly questioned by females and female-identified individuals. However, through our actions and commitment, we hope to gain the confidence of everyone.

Thank you for allowing me and SAVIS to participate in these important presentations.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Sheila Malcolmson): Thank you so much.

We will move now to Chi Nguyen, who is on video conference, representing the White Ribbon Campaign.

Thank you for coming.

Ms. Chi Nguyen (Managing Director, Parker P. Consulting, White Ribbon Campaign): Thank you very much.

Hi, everyone. This is the first time I've used this kind of technology. I'm hoping it's all working well on your end.

I want to start by thanking the committee for exploring this question and taking a look at the challenge of violence against young women. I specifically want to thank you for having included an approach that takes into consideration how we engage men and boys. I think it's an extremely important piece of this puzzle.

There are two things I would like to accomplish over the next few moments with you. One is to tell you a little bit about the work of the White Ribbon Campaign, and the other is to share some lessons from our 25 years of practice doing this work.

We are the only national organization that is working on the prevention of violence against women by positively engaging men and boys. This movement actually began as a response to the Montreal massacre. It started in 1991, as many good feminist conversations do, around a kitchen table, in the home of former NDP leader Jack Layton. Several men were sitting around asking what they could be doing to ally with feminists and women in stopping the violence that was happening in our communities. Twenty-five years later, we continue with a strong vision of a future with no violence against women, and our mission is to continue to engage men and boys in the prevention of violence against women and girls.

What started in 1991 with 100,000 men taking part across Canada has now become an annual campaign, which kicks off this Friday, November 25, and continues through December 6.

We ask those who wear the white ribbon to make a pledge, and we ask them never to commit, condone, or remain silent about violence against women. This really simple concept has now spread around the world, first to Europe, then on to Australia and Asia, and then to Latin America and Africa. Today we are the world's largest movement of men and boys working to end violence against women and girls, to promote gender equality and healthy relationships, and to create a new vision of masculinity, with our activities taking place in more than 60 countries worldwide.

When we talk about violence prevention, there are several intervention points. You can tackle it from before the problems begin; you can respond as the problems start; or you can respond at the tertiary level, following an incidence of violence. Our work at White Ribbon really focuses on lessening the chances that men and boys will use violence and that women and girls will suffer from violence. We focus on primary prevention, and we think that is where we can have the most impact.

The way we do our work at White Ribbon has four very strong principles, and these are absolute non-negotiables for us. We work from a human rights position, and we advocate for gender equality. That's the sort of framework and basis from which we begin.

We believe it is crucial not to compete with or divert resources from the support interventions or transition efforts for women and families leaving violent situations.

We also believe that our work has to be gender transformative. It's about challenging the often violent aspects of masculinities, as Walter described in his presentation.

Finally, we do work that is always informed by best practices and a strong evidence base. For us, that is really rooted in a strength-based approach.

The current ways we are working in this field are about education and training, research and best practices, as well as providing technical assistance to our community partners in civil society, in government, as well as community organizations. We also have a social enterprise arm that we recently established. We're taking this kind of work and bringing it to the corporate sector. We worked with Barrick Gold as well as with the University of Regina and McGill University.

My colleague and executive director Todd Minerson serves on both the Status of Women Canada advisory council on the federal strategy against gender-based violence as well as the Ontario round table on violence against women.

We are a really small but effective team of 10 people out of Toronto, and we are currently doing work in Kenya, Vietnam, and Cambodia. We are seeing impacts around the world, so we have a lot of experience globally and locally to draw from. Over the last 25 years we have gained some insights that we hope you will take into consideration as you consider the steps forward for this really important topic.

• (1645)

First, we believe that work with men is necessary. We believe that, as primary perpetrators, as well as our key audience for primary prevention, men have the ability to influence other men and can be

engaged in the conversation on how to reduce and prevent gender-based violence. We've seen this really effectively in our partnership with the Toronto Argonauts on a project we did with them called "Huddle Up and Make the Call", where we saw male athletes come into the classroom and work with students to actually have the conversation about what the leadership could look like.

We know that working with men can be effective. We're trying to gather more of an evidence base and ensure that there's rich data that tells us what looks like best practice, what some of the insights are, and we have just recently wrapped a really incredible initiative with nine other organizations, called a community of practice, with agencies working across the country on this question.

We know that this kind of work also has a positive and transformative impact on the lives of women and girls, but also for men and boys. Every year we have a huge event that starts on Yonge-Dundas Square, where we have about 800 people walk a mile in high heels. It's very interesting to see how men have the experience of kind of asking the question of what it feels like to be a woman in that sense. It's an opportunity to kind of reflect.

Finally, we think there are really interesting innovations and new avenues for asking this question. We know that men want to be allies and want to support and end this violence in their lives. We believe there are interesting entry points around fatherhood, athletics and sports, workplaces and schools, and faith and cultural communities. These all offer up interesting moments for men to step back and think about how they can be part of the solution.

We hear daily about everyday sexism that is faced by people in our communities. Yesterday a statement by MLA Sandra Jensen raised the misogyny and harassment that she faced as a public leader, as another reminder of why we need to do this work and challenge this violence.

I have a little toddler at home, whom I hope to raise to be a strong ally and feminist. We're working to give him the tools to intervene, to name and call out acts of violence. I'm teaching him about consent, to name his body parts, and to enjoy twirling in a dress, but the barrage of toxic gendered stereotypes and the images that are already being thrown at him are stunning. He's already been told that pink is for girls, and to stop with his tears and toughen up. He turns two on Wednesday next week.

We know that this work is needed now, more than ever, and we applaud the efforts of the committee in reviewing and consulting with civil society and experts. We look forward to your next steps and recommendations.

Thank you for letting us speak to this question.

•(1650)

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Sheila Malcolmson): Thank you so much, to both of the witnesses.

We'll begin our questions now from committee members, and we're starting with Mr. Serré for seven minutes.

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

Thank you to the witnesses for your presentations and your hard work and commitment. I wish there were more SAVIS and more White Ribbon Campaign functions across Ontario and across Canada. I think we need to find ways.

The White Ribbon Campaign did a survey in 2012 that looked at men's attitudes and behaviours. Can you expand a bit on some of the recommendations in that report?

Ms. Chi Nguyen: It predated my time at White Ribbon, but the report is publicly available. I can say that one of the things we learned out of the insights from that survey was that men are willing to be allies and to step up. They know that this is a problem and are ready to acknowledge that they want to do something. What we've been working on as a response to that is finding ways to give men tools to be part of that response, to help to intervene, and to support women.

Mr. Marc Serré: We've heard from other witnesses about a lack of research and data, especially related to women and girls specifically, but do you have any data or research that relates to men? You could either briefly discuss that now or to send it to the clerk, but do you have any data you want to share on the attitudes?

Ms. Alma Arguello (Executive Director, SAVIS of Halton): For SAVIS of Halton, when Walter, who's the front-line public educator, goes out in the community, we have noticed that the community itself wants the education. We are working on collecting data. The types of questions and the types of responses we're getting from the "guerilla survey" we're doing, both in correctional...because we are the sexual assault centre that goes into Maplehurst, which is the male correctional facility. They want information that also reflects the cultural diversity from their own community. That's very important, especially in Halton. It is a community, a region, that is starting to show cultural diversity. Targeted proper material that reflects their background and cultural diversity is very important, because that will make it easier for parents, youth groups, or communities to give that information out.

We're working on that, and we'd be more than happy to share that with the committee.

Mr. Marc Serré: Mr. Henry, you talked about your target group of 10 years and older. As you know, there is Ontario government Bill 132. Was there any input from your group to the Ontario bill to make sure that it looks at specifically targeting men or young boys, either elementary or high school or college and university?

•(1655)

Ms. Alma Arguello: We didn't have an impact.

The reason we think this is...and we have noticed that this is very important. Children are telling us at the youth groups that they have either participated in an act that violated the sexual rights of a woman or young girl or they think it's funny. One of the examples

one of them gave us was credit carding. I thought, what is that? Credit carding is when a young man goes behind a young girl and swipes his hand on her bum. This is an issue that victims services in our community are saying should stop. The education is very important. We at SAVIS have been aggressively trying to put questions together, and trying to see how we could start at a much younger age, because acts of sexual violence are beginning to start at that age.

When we talk to correctional services, the guys say, "We want to be better fathers, but this is what we saw. These were our examples." In correctional facilities, we are working on how to teach them better parenting. We started a program where men record their voices on a CD, and they mail that CD to their kid. That's a way for the kid to know there is a father, there's love, and for a child to hear the father's voice. We're trying to also target the family unit.

Again, it goes back to the whole notion of diversity. Some cultures are more sexual.

Mr. Walter Henry: Some are more accepting of sexual violence. It can be close-knit; they don't talk about it a lot.

Ms. Alma Arguello: Specific education is very important, and that is something we are not seeing.

Mr. Walter Henry: What we find is that even in terms of family members where the family is close, the youth are exposed through school. That's why I think it needs to be started at a very young age, because they are exposed, and a lot of times parents do not know. Front-line workers, like me and teachers, are exposed to that. It's very important for the work to start at a very young age.

Ms. Chi Nguyen: If you don't mind my interjecting, we are currently doing some work with the Ontario government as part of the action plan. We've been funded for a multi-year, three-year initiative, as part of a joint consortium of community groups, including the Ottawa Rape Crisis Centre, to do a project called Draw the Line. As part of Draw the Line, we are bringing our materials and education around consent. We're starting work this fall to develop and tweak these materials to be appropriate for the elementary school audience. We know that this is an age cohort that we need to start reaching out to now. This is part of a piece of work that we hope to see start to make a difference in the coming years.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Sheila Malcolmson): Thank you so much. That's your time. We'll now move to Ms. Harder.

You have seven minutes.

Ms. Rachael Harder: I'll address the same question to each of you, but I will start with SAVIS.

I want you to reflect a little on how seeing pornography and violent images impacts the way that men and boys think about and treat women. Can you reflect on that a little, and on what you're seeing in the work you do?

Mr. Walter Henry: In terms of what I've seen, the boys sometimes don't want to talk about it. But it's there. It's underlying. It's kind of taboo. When you go into classrooms or the community centres, you listen to the underlying stuff, like "we see this". You hear the conversations if you're at the back of the room. Sometimes you hear a murmur.

Given the space you're in, they don't talk about it a lot. You know it's an impact because they have the technology available to them. That's the important thing. It's the simple fact that you can ask a question and, right away, you see them go to their phones. You know that it's available. You know that they do it.

We're finding that they're not forthright about that right now, but it's there. By being very observant and, sometimes, by being at the back of the room and listening, you can hear it. They don't talk about it directly, but it's there. You know it's an impact.

• (1700)

Ms. Rachael Harder: I just have a really quick question for you, and then I'll move over to White Ribbon.

Have you ever asked the men or the boys you work with where their attitudes came from, or what directs their views of women? If you have, what do they say? What do they report as being the deciding factor?

Mr. Walter Henry: Their family.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Okay.

Mr. Walter Henry: Their family, friends, cousins—the people they interact with daily.

Ms. Rachael Harder: It's basically whatever they've had as a role model.

Mr. Walter Henry: Yes, and that's the premise the program is based on. Family members impact a lot of what they think about. For example, I might ask, "Who's the person you most admire?" They answer, "Dad." "What does your dad say about women?" Sometimes little things come out. It always varies with individuals.

It's not all bad. There are examples that are very good examples of where misogyny is not as bad. One of the things I realize is that language plays a very important role in society. For example, in Toronto we hear figures about the "number of teenage girls" who are pregnant. You listen to that, and the man is forgotten. The man's role is forgotten.

It's connected. It's all connected. You listen to them. What I've been doing is actively listening to what is not said.

Ms. Rachael Harder: That's very good. Thank you.

I have the same question for the White Ribbon Campaign. What would you say in terms of reflecting on the impact that pornography or violent images might have with regard to men's view of women?

Ms. Chi Nguyen: We've certainly seen the hyper-exposure of pornography and the objectification of women's bodies as being a real challenge for this question. We do a lot of work in high schools, as well as at universities, as we try to help groups of students figure out and make sense of gender identity and gender roles, and what they're being asked to be—what it means to be a man, what it means to be a young woman.

We're seeing women with ideas and concepts about having to please their partners or boyfriends, and about being seen as really feeling objectified. At the same time, young men are getting really mixed signals about what it means to be a man: does that mean being macho and sexually promiscuous? They're also wrestling with whether or not that's comfortable for them.

There's really a whole mixed set of emotions and experiences as young people try to navigate what it means. The level of access to these images makes it very challenging for young people to make sense of what is actually normal and what partners actually want from each other. Getting to the questions around healthy relationships and actually talking to each other, intimately, is challenging for adults to do, let alone young people. We really want to focus on giving people the tools to start those conversations.

Ms. Rachael Harder: If you were to ask the young men or boys who you work with on a regular basis, or interact with, where they get their perception of women from, what would they say? What are you hearing?

• (1705)

Ms. Chi Nguyen: That is some of the work my colleagues are doing on the ground.

They would tell me a different thing than they would tell a male colleague. They would probably say that they see it in magazines, they see it in videos, they see it in pop culture references, and those are some of the images—what athletes are doing, what athletes aren't doing. Popular culture is an important influence, but also the people close to home, how they see women treated in their lives and how they themselves want to treat women. It all has an effect on their perception of their ability to be a sensitive, responsible, and honourable young person.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Thank you very much.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Sheila Malcolmson): Thank you. That's your time.

Now I'm going to time myself and ask some questions of both witnesses.

To the White Ribbon Campaign, I really thank you for starting out with a reference to Jack Layton being a founder, to have the movement start in his son's bedroom office, as I understand, and then move now to 70 countries around the world. This is an example of a male leader using his voice for better. I love this quote from him: "Always have a dream that will outlast your lifetime," which it has.

For this next chapter, for both organizations, what strategies have you found to be effective around how to inspire men to use their voice and to take that leadership role? How are you recruiting the next wave of male leaders into this movement to end violence against women?

Ms. Chi Nguyen: I can start.

Thank you for those reflections on Jack's leadership. We use those as a calling card all the time in thinking about where we want to take the work.

As I mentioned, we work from a strengths-based approach. We don't think it's particularly useful to shame men, to make them feel bad about all the misogyny that already exists in the world. We work from a place of positivity, and that means for men and women to think about why all the really challenging ideas about gender norms exist and to start to challenge those individually in their own lives and in their workplace, and extend that out into the larger ecosystem.

For us, in terms of some areas of intervention and ways that we focus on addressing on this, we don't do one set of interventions. We tend to do work both from a policy and legislative perspective and on the education, prevention, and promotion side. We do a host of activities and programs, and we want to see how we can challenge and innovate in this space.

I would argue that the work we're doing on the social enterprise side, trying to get organizations to think differently about these questions and to have their male leadership be invested in inclusive workplaces and environments, is a new way of working that we're really excited about.

At the same time, we know that the work we're doing in each and every classroom in Ontario and in different places around the country is really powerful as well, but we're trying to find, at the same time, approaches that have more system impact. Obviously we can't be everywhere, so we're trying to figure out some best practice approaches as we do this work. We use social media.

At the same time, we don't want to overstep into the space of other feminist organizations. We do a lot of amplification work and signal boosting of other fantastic initiatives and partners, but we're there to support and be part of a holistic approach to ending gender violence.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Sheila Malcolmson): Thank you so much.

Mr. Walter Henry: The first thing I think about in what I do is about being an example. I admit that I am flawed in any presentation I give. I have spoken to a number of male allies around Ontario, and that's one of the first things I do. We go into all the male-dominated spaces. I try to go into gyms, places where there are game rooms, the parks. The premise of our program is to go where males are, as you said, and from that you go to the campuses. We have relationships at the Sheridan campus and we are trying to go further and have more relationships at some other campuses even outside the Halton community.

As the last speaker said, we use social media. It's a very important aspect because even when we go to the community centres and give presentations, for example, on healthy relationships, one lovely thing that some of the centres do is put it on Instagram and Twitter. We offer pizza, so they come and we have that conversation. We make it a space where the youth and other males would want to come to have that conversation.

But most important is just being that example, building up our network where we have men all over in every sphere of society. Being at Sheridan, I communicated and connected with the dean, who indicated that he might come to be part of our volunteer training in two weeks. Having an individual like that says a lot. So we're having training where we have a dean and a 14-year-old kid in the same space who are discussing about ending misogyny. That's what we do.

•(1710)

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Sheila Malcolmson): I have a second question.

I'd love some advice from the Halton group. When we post anything on social media about ending violence against women, inevitably we get someone weighing in with, "What about violence against men? Why don't you care?"

Do you have a short and sweet answer we can use to that question? How would you answer it?

Mr. Walter Henry: How would I answer that? Men are the number one perpetrators of sexual violence—99%. That's the strongest answer. Men are the individuals who are doing it 99% of the time.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Sheila Malcolmson): I'm running out of time, so if you do have suggestions, please send them into the committee. Thank you.

Now we're going to Mr. Fraser for seven minutes.

Mr. Sean Fraser: Thank you very much, Ms. Malcolmson.

It's a pleasure to see you in the chair, and your questions were a pleasure, as always.

Just before I begin, I think it's not customary for the chair to ask questions, but given the single NDP slot, I think it's allowed in these circumstances.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Sheila Malcolmson): Thank you. I accept it on that basis. You're right.

Mr. Sean Fraser: My first question is to the White Ribbon Campaign, a bit of a topical question. We've seen, with Alberta MLA Sandra Jansen, some truly explosive and misogynistic comments that she read aloud in one of her member statements in the Alberta provincial legislature.

All public officials take a little additional heat or criticism, I think, because we make decisions and take stands on controversial issues all the time. As a male member of Parliament, I've never been told to go back to the kitchen. I don't anticipate I ever will. I'm thankful. I recognize that it's a privilege not to be treated the same way Ms. Jansen has been.

As a male elected official, what can I do to make public life and the public sphere more accepting to women so they can join the realm of public life?

Ms. Chi Nguyen: Thank you very much for the question. You're right that you're probably not going to be asked to go back to the kitchen very often, but you certainly are ripe for criticism within the public sphere, as all officials are.

I would suggest that you speak out when you see these incidents happen, both as they're happening, if you can in a way that's safe, but also follow up after. If it isn't going to be constructive to do it in that moment, you could speak to the person, after what was perhaps a live incident, and follow up with them. If it's happening online, it becomes a bit of a challenge.

Your job as a male ally is to help call this out and to suggest new ways and new language. You can be upset with a politician for their particular decisions, but attacking them on the basis of their gender, their race, or their ethnicity is absolutely unacceptable. On any of those fronts, you have a special role and an opportunity to speak out, support, and check in with that female leader to make sure she's doing okay, to see if there's anything she might need as support. Also, actively try to find more women leaders and voices to sit around you and inform you so you can understand their experience.

• (1715)

Mr. Sean Fraser: Thank you all.

I guess I'll take this opportunity, on behalf of men everywhere, to let Ms. Jansen know that she does have allies who reject in the most violent terms the misogyny she has faced in recent days.

Continuing on to one of the themes you touched on in your remarks, you mentioned that you're seeing some impact and that you promote evidence-based decisions. One of the things we've heard precious few comments about during the course of this study is how to measure the success of initiatives that seem to tackle violence against women. For the life of me, I don't know how to do it. It seems the more research we do, the more widely spread the problem appears to be, and it makes it very difficult to measure the success of individual programs. What is it you're doing to see success, so to speak?

Ms. Chi Nguyen: There are always challenges within all community interventions to seeing cause and effect and the impact. What we do really effectively, I think, is evaluate our programs for the experience of participants prior to and following.

I can speak to one particular initiative that we did in Zambia where we helped to create what we think is the world's first gender transformative financial literacy program. We found in a particular mining community in Zambia that incidents of violence were happening because men and women were talking about money, and then violence would erupt in a household. By creating this training program, we were able to see within that community a significant decrease in reported incidents of gender violence at this work site. We started with a baseline with the participants in our program. We checked in as the program was happening, and then a couple years out, we checked back to see what the incidence levels were. Those were some of the measures that we were able to do in that context.

That was a specific initiative that we had some parameters around, but it is certainly a challenge for all social scientists and all community programmers to figure out how to measure the impact of the work they're doing, especially if it's in the primary prevention space where you're not just counting numbers and doing the response pieces. It continues to be a challenge and a big question for everyone, but we're able to measure our programming at that level.

Mr. Sean Fraser: Mr. Henry, you mentioned the importance of getting into male-dominated spaces. One of the problems we've discussed on the committee with a few witnesses is how so much programming is directed essentially toward pre-sold audiences, people who already recognize that this is a problem, and the message isn't necessarily getting to all young men and boys who might be at risk of becoming perpetrators.

What can the federal government do? What could we recommend to the federal government to help organizations like yours? What initiatives could the government launch on its own to help spread the message of non-violence into the broader population so all men and boys understand the importance of standing up for women?

Mr. Walter Henry: One is to have more funding for organizations like ours and to make it easier for us to go into the schools. Sometimes there's a lot of red tape before we can get into the schools. Also, incorporate this into the curriculum so that it's both ways. Once you make it easier for organizations like ours to go into the schools, it will be much easier. From the information we heard, catching it at a young age, from even before age 10, is important. If organizations like ours can go into the schools, we can spread the message.

The other thing is that I believe individuals like you could start a revolution in terms of being that voice, and it will spread. Once when I was trying to advertise to get into the schools, one of the things I said was to start a revolution. Individuals like you are in a perfect position to be that voice. If more individuals like you could speak up, more male-identified individuals like you would speak up.

• (1720)

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Sheila Malcolmson): Thank you. That's a good way to end it.

We'll move now to Mrs. Vecchio for five minutes.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: I thank all of you for coming today. It's really important and a great discussion.

Last week, a group of us from all parties joined together to do Shine the Light here on Parliament Hill. It was the first time it had been highlighted on Parliament Hill, and the Peace Tower was turned purple. It was wonderful to see not just female but also so many male MPs engaged in something even as simple as getting their photo taken in front of the tower, just to show that they too stood up.

I trust the words that you said today, Walter. They are exactly the same words that my husband has said as well about how important it is to get men engaged, and that you have to live as the example. He lives as the example to my three sons, and that is very important, as well as to my daughters who have to recognize that they cannot allow this to happen to themselves.

Starting with that—and this goes for both the White Ribbon campaign and for Halton—we have heard about the extreme importance of getting men and young boys involved. We have heard you talk about going into the schools and some of the red-tape issues you have.

What is the best thing for us to do to get men inspired? Getting into schools is one thing, but what other functions do you hold, or what other events do you hold to get more men involved? I am going to continue with this one, because I recognize I have only a few minutes, and you guys can speak freely. I know, for instance, that the White Ribbon Campaign runs from November 25 to December 6. What is done outside of that calendar period so that we can make sure this is not just a two-week event but something that is looked at 365 days a year? I think sometimes that when it is front of mind, it's there, and we always need to be make sure that it's front of mind.

Walter and Alma, maybe you could start, and then we'll move over.

Mr. Walter Henry: One of the things we are having next year is a MAN conference. We'll deal with all the issues related to sexual violence, misogyny, and learning about misogyny in a patriarchal society. There is a speaker I'm in connection with by the name of Jackson Katz who speaks about it. I think he's the godfather for ending misogyny. He's a Harvard grad.

It's also just networking in the various men-dominated spaces. I'm willing to give a presentation in a coffee shop or a bar, where men are. I think it's doing that grassroots work, where you go into a park and have the conversation.

Sometimes it's not all about the power point presentation, but it's just about having a conversation. I learned that right away when I did my first presentation at Take Back the Night for SAVIS. I gave a power point presentation, and the men were like, "Let's have a conversation". So It's about having a conversation in male-dominated spaces. That's the most important thing.

Ms. Alma Arguello: Something that also sometimes is missing, and that we are hoping here at SAVIS to change, is also to have cultural relevancy in our community. That means teaching young men in that community, in that sphere, in their own safe environment, whether it's a mosque or a synagogue or a church or a temple, and talking to them about how being a male ally helps in their own community. Having that conversation sometimes in their own language—in Hebrew, in Spanish, in Arabic—is very important.

I think that's a part of the education that in some of the programs we have seen is also missing. Having that cultural and diversity piece is very important, because children will hear it at home, in the place of worship, or within their own community-specific youth group, and at school. So far, that's not happening. All we hear is that we have it at bigger events, but we're targeting the places where the kids go to play. That's just as important.

• (1725)

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: And White Ribbon...?

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Sheila Malcolmson): You have 20 seconds.

Ms. Chi Nguyen: Thank you very much for that question, Karen.

There are a couple of things we think about when we do our work, given that we know we can't be everywhere in the country. We also host large-scale conferences of about 200 people, called "What Makes a Man". We host conferences in partnership with the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario and the Toronto District

School Board, so we're able to connect into the school system. We also are doing work across the universities and colleges, specifically around building the capacity of student leadership on these issues so that they can understand how to create action plans and programming that can address these questions.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Sheila Malcolmson): My apologies, but we have to end it there.

We'll move to our final questioner, who is Ms. Vandenberg, for five minutes.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: Thank you.

Actually, Ms. Nguyen, do you want to continue that thought?

Ms. Chi Nguyen: Sure. I'll just wrap up by saying that we know there is also a hunger for new resources and tools and ways to connect in diverse communities. We've been working with the Canadian Council of Muslim Women to create a tool kit on engaging men in the Muslim community, as well as with the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples. Those are materials that are currently in development, and we hope to have these out for 2017.

Another important piece to acknowledge in this conversation is that men and boys also can end up being victims of violence within households and families, and acknowledging that as part of any of the work you're doing is important. There's a whole host of strategies and tools and intervention points that can all add to the approach, but sadly, there isn't a singular magic bullet, and there's a whole host of things that we can be doing.

The thing that I think will be really exciting in the next couple of years, given increased awareness and understanding about these issues, is to see men step up and actively speak out on this. I think we're at a pivotal moment at which we've seen the detrimental, devastating impacts and the cost for organizations, whether it's the RCMP or the Canadian Armed Forces, and we need to address these questions with some real urgency.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: Thank you very much.

I want to thank all of you.

Mr. Henry, you talked about a culture of misogyny, and there is no way that we can actually make a cultural shift without including half of the population. It's absolutely necessary to have male allies and to work with men, so thank you very much.

I noted, Mr. Henry, that you talked about the concept of "toxic masculinity". We've heard in this committee of some programs working with young men about not being a bystander.

Ms. Nguyen, you talked about bystanders having to name and call it out. I think this goes to the normalization of misogyny, and I applaud the work you're doing; unfortunately, it's only affecting a certain percentage of the population.

My question is to both of you, and in particular to Ms. Nguyen, about the community of practice that you mentioned—I think you said there are eight organizations. How do we scale this up? If the messages are coming so strongly from such a wide array of places, how do we take what you're doing—take those lessons learned, take those best practices—and is there a role for the federal government in taking those lessons and applying them across the country?

I'll start with Ms. Nguyen, and then I'll turn to you, Mr. Henry.

Ms. Chi Nguyen: Thank you for that question.

Part of it is capacity and reach and scope. We know some of the pieces that are working in each of these organizations that we had as part of our community of practice. The tool kit that's just been launched is quite extensive. It has an incredible evaluation framework as well, so it grounds it in some really strong research and indicators.

It's really about ensuring that we get those materials out to as many organizations as possible, and extending it out so that it's not just within the sector of folks who deal with this issue. Anyone who is faced with social service interventions—the health sector, nurses, librarians, anyone who has a touch point with community—should get some supports and understanding around gender violence, responding to disclosure, supporting victims, but also on how to help intervene and to help name some of these challenges.

A lot of those sectors I just named are often caring professions, but there are also roles that men can play in very masculine environments, in masculine work environments, whether it's mining or the extractive sectors, where there are women. They can do their part in terms of naming and identifying when they see gender violence. That includes harassment and toxic workplaces.

Along that whole spectrum, we have so much work to do, and I'm glad to be able to share some of our insights with you.

• (1730)

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: Thank you.

Ms. Arguello.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Sheila Malcolmson): Just a couple of seconds. It's very close.

Ms. Alma Arguello: Okay.

For us, it would have to be funding. We are two of us, and we reach Hamilton, Peel, Niagara, St. Catharines, Hagersville. At the end of the day, the community really wants it. The community is reaching out to us and asking us things. Can you come and talk to us? Can you translate this? Can you talk to this? Can you talk to our kids? Can you come and talk to a gym full of kids about what a bystander is and the responsibilities of a bystander?

If these children are not being taught what are the bystander responsibilities they have, they will grow up as adults and continue to feed the misogynistic society we are currently in.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Sheila Malcolmson): Thank you so much.

I'm very grateful to our witnesses from both White Ribbon and SAVIS. On the committee's behalf, many thanks to both of you for your community work and for assisting us today in our study. If you have any final thoughts or things you wish you'd been able to say, please send them to the clerk and we'll include them in our evidence.

With the committee's acceptance, I'll just end with a fantastic social media campaign that the government has just launched, #actionsmatter. It has these calls to action, and how to name and respond to misogyny when we hear it, which is very effective. It would be great if we could all use it, take our leadership role, and see if we can talk afterwards about whether we thought it made some impact.

Thanks to the whole group. We'll say goodbye to the witnesses. Thanks so much.

We are now adjourned.

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