

*Disclaimer: This brief is the verbatim transcription, without any editing, of an audio recording. The clerk proceeded with the recording on February 18, 2022.*

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**Interviewer:** Alright. So, do you agree—are you okay with the fact that I'm recording you?

**Interviewee:** Yes. I am.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Great. So, the recording is on.

**Interviewee:** Okay. Great.

**Interviewer:** So, I'll start the... Yes. You can go ahead.

**Interviewee:** Perfect. Okay. So, right now in Canada, at least in Ontario—I'm not sure if it's reached a Federal Level—policies regarding the placement or the shelters that women have the ability to go to have been restricted because of COVID, and so, what's ended up happening is COVID restrictions had made it impossible for a woman to relocate out of her community to a different shelter, if she chooses that route, which means that she only has the option of going to a shelter within her community. It is statistically proven that it's high-risk for a woman to be anywhere near her abuser in the aftermath of her leaving. It's actually the highest probability for being murdered, and so, that policy that's been put in place needs to be eradicated because women need the ability to relocate. So, you don't want to trap a woman in a small town and she only has one shelter she can go to in the same community as her abuser. She has the potential to be murdered six months later, one year later, doesn't matter. So, we have to get rid of that policy. So, that's the first thing. Check that off. Second thing: we don't have any paid advocates, and the people that we do have as advocates in things such as victim services or through charitable organizations and things as such that are paid have absolutely no financial resources to help, and they do not take you on. They're not case managers. They don't help you. So, every single time a woman has to reach out for help, she's talking to someone new. She has to reiterate her story, which is very triggering and traumatizing and frustrating because there's nobody keeping up with you. So, we need to get paid advocates, a whole new sector of society paid through the federal or provincial level government, and they are to have resources which at their own power can dispose of how they see fit through approval process or whatever. So, that's that. Third thing: we need an integrated data bank to record our abuse in secret. Currently, right now, it's very well known that every single time a woman is seeking help, she has to prove her abuse. She has to come up with times and dates. It is absolutely impossible for a woman who's being abused to do so safely on her own, and so, when she calls to a crisis line, that crisis line should have a website in front of them, and that paid advocate that she now as a case manager will give her a code and that code she will provide to the crisis line. So, if she's been beaten that night, but doesn't feel—but doesn't go to the police. She goes to a crisis line and says, "this is my number," and they type it into this website. It's either... There's different ways to do it, so you can have a website or you can have like a different server, like how financial institutions do, and each charity or organization or crisis line would have their own four-digit code to enter into it. When they type in the code of the woman, all of everything she's ever reported in a confidential manner is reported there. The person on the other end is listening to her and also helping her to record. When the moment comes and she needs to apply for such priority housing and they request that this information about the abuse times and dates need to be provided, that information will already be recorded in a data bank, and she'll be able to access that with ease. There won't be any stress having to go through all the abuse and triggering moments and things as such. Currently, right now, in Canada—I actually have personal experience with this. Calling every single shelter for 11 months and every organization I possibly could trying to have them help me get on a priority list, I was told, "no." I've even had people come to my

home, outreach services, and said that I need to live in a shelter in order to be placed on the priority housing list. Now, the priority housing list sounds great, but it's 6 to 18 months long. The other housing list is 10 years. Six to 18 months of abuse is a lot. So, to say, "no," to somebody for 11 months or to say, "no," to them permanently, like you can't get on the list unless you decide to give up everything you own and go live in a shelter is, well, wrong. We shouldn't be allowing this. So, integrated data bank, paid advocates, priority housing list, all kind of flows really well with each other. Now, there's no regulations on shelters regarding Internet, food, how they dispense it. There is really not too much in the way of rehab. Currently, in a city like Hamilton, there is 8 beds that are federally funded in the hospital, and there is a minor outreach program into the shelters that are out there. I can give you an example. There's one particular shelter out there that has a bed of 20—20 beds for women. They are being... Outreach, now, is a new thing, new process that's just happened in Hamilton, but they only have 8 beds. Those twenty women—I'm going to tell you right now that I feel confident in stating that at least 18 of them have serious drug addiction problems. So, we don't even have enough beds for that. So, we need more federal rehab for women because these women are abused, seriously, and they need help getting out of the drugs, so that they can escape the cycle of trauma. We also need job help, whether it be funding for clothing—there's a variety of different organizations. However, their ability and capacity to outreach via lack of funding is nonexistent, so we need to find a way to literally outreach to these places, give employers incentives to hire women in this demographic. There's also no housing help, mostly because we're in the middle of a housing crisis in these housing lists, so I am suggesting that the government offer, through the shelter systems, landlords tax breaks, and things, incentives, to specifically rent out to women safely. So, have a process for that. Okay. We need financial assistance for women who decide to lay charges and recoup from their abuser, and there's a big reason for that. So, we have women currently, right now, who were in marriages, who have children, homes that they own, and everything. They are financially dependent on their abusers, but not just them, so are their children, and so, to ask women to make the concession to get rid of their husband and go down below the poverty line with their children because they're being abused, once again, is wrong. So, we need to make it known to our abusers that if they decide to beat the living crap out of you and the cops come and you're covered in cuts and bruises that they're going to take you away, and the money that you're paying for your home is going to be paid by the government, and during your charge, in your process of whatever happens to you, the government is going to recoup that back from your paycheck. So, there's already FRO and all these kinds of programs already set in place. They need to be somewhat redirected regarding domestic violence, so that women know that they will not lose when they decide to report their abuse, because that's why most women don't. Seventh thing: moving assistance for women who want to leave. So, whether there be children or no children or depending on the circumstance of the house, whether it's owned, leased, whatever, everybody's circumstance is different. There is a company based out of Ottawa called Shelter Movers. They're a charity. From what I can tell, they're a really good company. However, they do not have the support structure for the entire country, so, but I think they're a good model, and I think you should look them up. What they do is they assist women into moving into shelters, but I think, you know, we could take it a step further. I'll get to my next point here is that when women are moving to an actual new home, they should still be able to obtain that assistance. One of my ideas regarding this is asking the military or out-of-uniform military people who are, you know, finished their tours. They're on break. They can volunteer—not volunteer. I want them to be paid, but they can, in their off time from their duties—same with police officers, firefighters and anybody in the community that the woman lives. They can build together teams to assist women who are trying to leave domestic violence situations. To have people there means it's safer for the woman. So, packing up boxes and putting them in a truck by yourself, that's a very dangerous thing to do, and so, we need to have some sort of team within our communities to make that safe. So, eighth thing: we need a priority relocation program. Currently, right now in Canada, there is only one relocation program. It's the NJC Relocation

Directive. There is another company that does exist. It's called BGRS. This is only for government employees regarding employment. So, the idea of a relocation program isn't that far fetched because it's obviously needed for people because relocating is very difficult. Some women, they come out from out east, right? They come here. They end up in a domestic violence situation, and they don't have the financial means to get back to the province that they're from, where their family is, or they've fallen into drugs or anything like this. So, we need—or even extenuating circumstances, such as your spouse tries to have you murdered or you believe that they are going to kill you and you're in fear for your life. Again, going back to this data bank that's going to help us record. We will be able to see a pattern here that will qualify a woman for a relocation program in immediate assistance, so that they become priority. We've got to get them out of there, and this is what we're going to do. So, I ask that you look into the NJC Relocation Directive. BGRS, look at their services, see how they do it, and then implicate it or implement it for women facing domestic violence. So, another thing. So, our municipalities, you know, our town councillors, our mayors, all these things, they have not a single mandate to help the women in their community. Nothing. I've talked to them all in my community, and so, I don't think it's that far fetched, and I don't think Canadians will mind, that if private communities decide to invest the public's money into real estate and own homes and grow it based off need. So, you buy a home through your community. You allocate every single room to a woman who's trying to escape domestic violence, so she doesn't have to go into a shelter. She can go and rent. Not all women. We don't need shelters in every circumstance, right? So, sometimes we just need to move. If our municipalities own them, they can have property management. They're not going to be coming into the house or doing any of these things, but they could be offering other services, teaching about community projects and programs to help them, you know, beat the cycle of abuse. I believe that Canadian citizens would be more than interested in investing in this hot real estate market as opposed to providing subsidy to private owners. Our money is going out the window that way. This way, we are actually investing not only in our people, but in our own financial needs as well. Now, some of the things that—some of the reasons why women are... or don't leave. It's preventing them from leaving. There is a stigma of abuse. For some reason our society, doesn't matter what a man does, he is always respected the moment he walks into a room. He could be a monster, and this is in the mindset of everyone, that I've come across anyway. Very few people are not—if you say you're an abused woman or you've endured abuse, you immediately get this stigma of crying wolf, and we all know this, and people avoid you like the plague, and so, it's enough to keep women quiet, hiding the abuse that they're enduring as they're enduring it, you know, from all aspects, whether it be coercive control, physical abuse, sexual assault, doesn't matter. Women hide it because people do not accept women or people who are abused as strong and they see us as the weakest link. I've already spoke about this, but financial ties to the abuser. It's a matter of survival. So, yeah, he's hurting you, but he's paying the bills. He's paying his portion of the bills. To get rid of him would be a downfall in your own life at a larger extent than just what the abuse is giving you. So, it's a really, really hard decision to make to have somebody charged. Again, that's where you go back to the financial assistance for women who decide to lay charges, so that they can actually keep their home. I've spoken to women who've been beaten by their husbands, had children, lost everything, the house, all their furniture, ended up in a shelter and had to live there for two years. Makes no sense. Why didn't the government just supplement her rent and then go after the man for restitution, right? I think that's appropriate. So, another thing is the lack of dignity that is in the help that's being offered. Shelters are all different, and you don't really know what you're going into, and this is why I said we need to have it regulated so that they're all the same because some shelters are really bad, where you don't get to eat if you're out looking for a job because all the food's gone. There's no Internet service. There's no computers. You can't resource within the walls of the shelter. You have to go out to the private sector, whether it be the library or someone's house or sit at a coffee shop and try to get the Wi-Fi. It makes it very difficult to set a plan in motion when you don't have these amenities, and a lot of shelters are

receiving funding from the government and they are not providing it. One of which is Mary's Place - Good Shepherd. They don't provide any Internet service, any resources to those women. Just recently, there is, I think, eight beds. They do a little bit of outreach, but again, it's not big enough to handle the problem at hand.

**Interviewer:** You've reached 15 minutes, just so you know.

**Interviewee:** Okay. Perfect. I'm almost finished.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Interviewee:** And so, asking us to leave what we've worked for to our abusers and run to a shelter to save our lives or to protect ourselves essentially is enabling our abuse and our abusers are aware of this. They know that there is nothing out there for us, and they're getting away with abusing us because we are not provided with options. We are only provided with concessions. So, what I am asking this committee is to take all these things and realize that these things are within our rights under the Charter. So, I want you to go into that House of Commons, and don't ask for this, don't request it, demand it. Under Section 7, we have the right to our life, our liberty, and the security of our person, and currently, right now in Canada, there isn't a single provincial or federal level policy or mandate regarding domestic violence that reflects our Charter of Rights, our Section 7. There is nothing out there ensuring that the security of our person is being implemented through policy, and because of such every two and a half days there is a woman murdered in Canada. We can change that by simply following our Charter and creating policies and mandates that are a perfect reflection, mirror image, of what is already written. I'm finished.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Thank you. I'll just stop the recording.