

Dear Ms. Labelle

Thank you for giving all survivors an opportunity to comment on the Study on Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada. As a survivor who is currently in the legal system since 2016, I have some suggestions that I hope will be helpful:

- Make transcripts and access to watch legal proceedings barrier-free. It is in the public interest for anyone to be able to watch or read about what happened in a taxpayer-funded legal process. [This mother should not have to 'ask permission'](#) for her transcripts, nor should [Zoom court be capped or difficult to access](#). (I want to clarify that I do NOT agree with the 'Freedom convoy' occupation but I agree that the bail hearings should have been on a much friendlier platform and the transcripts / decisions should be easy to acquire).

In my particular case I had a bilingual trial and when I requested and paid for the transcripts they were in English only as the transcriptionist was unilingual. I was shocked as I live in Ottawa and my file was flagged as 'bilingual' This could have easily been solved with a recording that could have been made available to all parties. Also, why did the transcriptionist not feel comfortable coming forward to say that she didn't understand what was being said?

- Criminalise coercive control. This has been done in a number of countries and should be done in Canada as well.
- Do away with any family law legislation that involves 'promotion of the child's relationship with the other parent'. This automatically gets weaponized by men's rights groups as parental alienation and removing these provisions will disincentivize lawyers from using this language as well.
- There was a [recent decision that allowed for a tort for a domestic violence victim](#) in family law. This is an excellent step forward. I cannot tell you how many job interviews, professional development opportunities I've had to turn down because of my abusive ex husband and our subsequent legal proceedings. Dealing with the last 6 years this has affected my mental health, my physical health, my finances, and affected relationships with family and friends and caused me inordinate amounts of stress. If this were any other kind of legal proceedings (say, an accident on a job site) I would be entitled to compensation.
- Better complaint mechanism at the provincial law societies. Lawyers should not be overseeing the process of investigating their peers and potential future judges that might be adjudicating future cases. For example, there should be a person who helps to walk you through the process and not just [an online form](#).
- More studies and funding for family law / violence against women research. There is a lack of information to help inform judges / legal advocates that would be easily rectified by having longitudinal studies done on outcomes of family law proceedings

and participants. Currently there is no family law research centre at any post secondary institution in Canada.

- Better education about violence, coercive control, financial abuse and impacts of legal proceedings for judges. It astounds me in 2022 that we are still relying on old tropes of 'Why didn't she leave?' or 'It could not have been that bad' by members of the Bench. In this recent case a mother's credibility was questioned because she went shopping ([Para 63](#)) after she testified the father of her child assaulted her. The father in this situation, a Russian oligarch, proceeded to hire a lawyer in Washington to print [all kinds of salacious information online](#) including the mother's home address, her email, the grandmother's personal information, etc. How is this legal?
- Listen to survivors and the family and friends trying to help them. Listen to shelter workers. Listen to the children who are affected by violence. Their words and experience should be the compass to any legal reforms going forward. Do not listen to the people who *profit* off their experiences unless it's from a pro bono or legal aid perspective.

Thanks and I look forward to your findings.

Stéphanie Plante