

## Standing Committee on the Status of Women

### Study on Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence

March 15, 2022

I am a first Generation Canadian; I am the first in my family to Graduate high school, accumulating fourteen years of post secondary education including my Masters Degree. I work in Public Libraries and frequently interact with women and children experiencing Intimate Partner Violence. I am also a survivor of Intimate Partner Violence from both my ex-husband and my ex-parents-in-law. My children are also survivors of this same violence.

The violence only began after I had my first child and intensified as my ex-husband's diagnosed psychosis and delusions remained untreated. When he finally consented to treatment every medical professional we reached out to identify him as a safety risk to me and my children, yet at the same time expected me to be responsible for his medication compliance and ensuring he attended his medical appointments. When the children's school contact CAS with concerns regarding his parenting ability the CAS workers only suggestion was that I quit my employment to supervise his parenting time, despite knowing that I was the sole income provider for our family of five. My father-in-law's violence towards me was dismissed, as there were no witnesses except the children and it did not fit the stereotype of IPV.

I was unable to leave as my husband and his father controlled our family finances, forcing me to take out large loans solely in my name but then keeping the money for themselves. When I enquired about subsidised housing, I was told the waitlist in Halton was 18 years. I was working, but with three children, I could not find childcare that was less than my income, and Ontario Works would not have covered the rent on a one or two bedroom apartment.

After finally leaving my husband, a long and very difficult process in which I had to be very conscious of my safety the entire time, the abuse and harassment escalated. When I left my husband, I had a serious medical condition that resulted in me requiring a blood transfusion and then eight months of bed rest. I was supposed to be in hospital for care but I had to check myself out against doctor's orders (and sign papers to that effect) as there was no one to care for our children. As I had no income, was supporting the three children by myself, and their father was working full-time I applied through the courts for basic child support a year after we separated. I deliberately did not apply for the section seven expenses, spousal support, or the equalisation I was entitled to as I knew it would increase the risk of me being killed. Applying for child support resulted in: many threats of violence; actual violence; my father-in-law stealing my identity documents and my mother-in-law using that ID to empty my bank account; my utilities being cancelled multiple times through impersonation; multiple frivolous calls to CAS by my in-laws (each which had to be investigated fully); multiple frivolous calls to police; an abduction attempt at my child's school that resulted in her being too afraid to go to school for a year – a month after returning to school (at a different school but one I legally had to disclose to her father) there was

another abduction attempt that resulted in her not returning to school; stalking; multiple contacts at my workplace where embarrassing untrue information was spread about me; my manager was contacted and encouraged to fire me; written threats against me and our children; breaking into my house multiple times; physical violence and threats at the courthouse. When I involved the police in criminal actions against me they said the Family Court would deal with the crimes as it was between family members, the Family Law Courts said it was a police matter. When the police repeatedly "cautioned" the abusers the message the abusers received was that they could continue with no consequences. Each time the abusers were contacted by police but no charges I would get threatening texts saying "see, even the police do not believe you, no one will protect you or the children". Showing these messages to the police resulted in them saying the Family Law Court would sort it out. The court process to obtain child support was a four year ordeal that required approximately thirty appearances. My ex quit his full time job in to not pay child support and then refused to disclose his paycheques and other financial information. I represented myself the entire time as the four Senior Lawyers I consulted said it was obvious my ex would use the courts to drain me of money through endless adjournments; self-representing with limited guidance was the most financially prudent way to go. Each of those lawyers saw the documented abuse and warned me that Judges believe it is always a false cry from a parent attempting to keep the children from the other parent - to never bring it up, even though in my case custody was never in dispute.

I filed for a restraining order with all of the medical, legal, police and CAS documentation but the Honourable Justice MacPherson in Newmarket dismissed my application and said I would sit down and have a nice dinner with my ex once the child support case was settled (this was in year three of the case for child support). My ex had said he would never pay what he owed me and told Honourable Justice Douglas that his goal in court was to see me and our children homeless.

My recommendations would be:

- Mandatory on-going education on IPV for Judges in Family Court
- Case-management of Family Law cases with alleged IPV so that the courts do not allow the court process itself to be used as a tool of abuse
- Restraining Order Applications to be heard by specially-trained Judges with extensive experience in IPV and recognizing coercive control