

Brief for The Standing Committee on the Status of Women

Study on Intimate Partner Violence and Domestic Violence in Canada

The SHADE Board, based on front-line experience, respectfully submits recommendations for the above committee's upcoming study, focusing on two areas:

1. Identify ways to eliminate barriers facing women and girls seeking to leave unsafe environments, such as financial, social, and other factors preventing them from leaving:

Recommendations:

- Educate and mentor a trained, culturally-sensitive police response for 911-Domestic Violence (DV) calls (only 8 police officers on the Winnipeg DV team, but most 911 calls are DV*) to ensure safety of the victim and her child(ren) + provide the victim with a written Incident Number.
- Provide more funding to charitable non-profits such as S.H.A.D.E. (Safe Housing And Directed Empowerment) Inc. in Winnipeg (www.shadewinnipeg.org) doing front-line work.
- Offer small grants for front-line staff to assist victims of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) to pay the security/damage deposit + several months rent and basic move-in necessities as incentives for leaving IPV.¹
- Offer grants for charitable non-profits in this line of service to access legal funding to help victims get and stay connected with professional lawyers who are informed about IPV as an alternative option to Legal Aid Manitoba lawyers who are overworked and understaffed.²
- Develop and spread a public campaign, in different languages, pointing victims of IPV / GBV to local organizations that can help them with support services.

2. Consider various international legislative experiences regarding the criminalization of coercive and manipulative behaviours between intimate partners as well as consider the use of other public policy tools to eliminate these behaviours.

Recommendations:

- Legislate that Crown Prosecutors of charges and trials involving death threats and physical assaults on (immigrant) women communicate with Family Law lawyers. This lack of communication is causing further revictimization, complete with severe PTSD of immigrant women and their children who now fear these husbands / fathers may be successful in their legal bid for Joint Custody, Child Access, and access to the children's passports and ability to

¹ <https://www.ourcommons.ca/DocumentViewer/en/42-1/FEWO/report-15/>

² <https://www.lawtimesnews.com/news/general/trauma-informed-legal-and-court-services-can-improve-the-experiences-of-domestic-violence-survivors/359591>

leave Canada with the children. Perpetrators of abuse use the Canadian legal system to perpetuate their power and control over their wives/common-law partners/girlfriends.

- Develop and enforce stricter Permanent Residence (PR) eligibility for anyone involved in a charge of IPV / GBV. Cross-check denied applications and under what status. There are increasing numbers of women victims of intimate partner violence who, whether they were the person with Canadian status or PR status, are discovering that the only reason their spouse agreed to enter into marriage with them was as a means to gain PR status. Some men, in fact, have attempted to gain entry to Canada through Study or Work Permits, and been denied. Later, they show up married. Marriages, sometimes in collusion with the man's parents, were seen as a last resort ticket to enter Canada. Once landed in Canada and either granted PR status immediately or with the hope to apply for PR status upon completing the required wait period, gender-based violence became their *Modis operandi*.
- Front-line workers are hearing more often about dowry fraud. In such cases, there is collusion between the groom, his parents, and sometimes even his relatives, especially when the bride's family is known for their wealth, including property. Financially helping their daughter to support herself and / or pay for professional legal representation in Canada becomes a burden when they invested heavily in a dowry.
- Education is critical. IPV may have begun in the home country and continue in Canada. In fact, it often escalates since now there are settlement/acclimatization adjustments for the entire family unit. Women with children are more confined and therefore, less able to get out and learn their rights and about services available to them, not to mention their feelings of deep shame and fear about an impending divorce which is taboo in many cultures.³
- Enforce sponsorship when it has been promised. There are men who have gained Canadian citizenship who still seek to marry a woman from their home countries. The girlfriend may come to Canada on precarious status (Visitor Visa or Study or Work Permit), may even give birth to a Canadian child. The woman gives up much, fully expecting sponsorship, only to discover her partner had no intention of sponsoring her and finds herself in a vulnerable situation.

S.H.A.D.E. (Safe Housing And Directed Empowerment) Inc. or SHADE for short, is a charitable non-profit organization in Winnipeg, MB supporting immigrant and refugee women and their children who have been impacted by domestic abuse / family violence / gender-based violence. SHADE provides psychosocial support services and practical support services.

³ <https://refugeeresearch.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Alaggia-et-al-2009-Intimate-partner-violence-and-immigration-laws-in-Canada.pdf>