

In the words of Margaret Atwood: Men are afraid that women will laugh at them; women are afraid that men will kill them. The Standing Committee on the Status of Women possesses all the statistical evidence that proves this statement to be appallingly true, meaning that more than half of Canada's population live in some state of deep anxiety. For far too many, the fear becomes actual as they suffer intimidation and violence at the hands of their partners. I am writing as a privileged white male who wants a better country, one in which those who perpetrate violence upon the innocent are held accountable for their actions and in which those who work to bring perpetrators to justice are rewarded. I have witnessed a case in my own community where a family member had to suffer not only domestic violence but also, owing to the incompetence or malfeasance of the police, the family court system, and the child care system, had to endure punishment from the very system that was supposed to protect her. On that family's behalf, I have written countless letters to the Prime Minister, the Minister of Justice, the Minister of Public Safety, the Commissioner of the RCMP, and many others – to no avail. Canadian legislation and the operating ethos of the system allows perpetrators of domestic violence to hide behind the system itself. Until the Canadian justice system acknowledges that its framework for dealing with this issue is aggravated by systemic issues of misogyny, racism, colonialism, cronyism (covering up misconduct and incompetence) and introduces meaningful change, the suffering will continue and likely escalate. We need a system that holds everyone accountable while at the same time has modalities for healing – for both the victim and the perpetrator. All of this can be done in the spirit of implementing positive change through education and dialogue. We must do this in order to protect the innocent. If we do not make these changes, then we condemn further generations to the needless suffering that comes from their encounter with trauma for which we, through our inaction, are complicit.

The following identification of issues and subsequent recommendations constitutes the whole of my brief:

- 1. Issue:** Lack of recognition of the signs of domestic violence (DV) and coercive control (CC) by victims, third-party observers, and agents of the police, judicial and government institutions. **Recommendation:** Develop and implement a strategy to educate every Canadian on how to identify signs of DV and CC in our communities, workplaces, institutions. This strategy needs to be developed by qualified experts with input from stakeholders.
- 2. Issue:** Lack of standardized screening for the identification of DV and CC in the judicial system, law enforcement, child welfare, health service professions. Evidence is collected and dealt with in an entirely arbitrary manner, depending upon the jurisdiction. **Recommendation:** Develop a standardized set of screening criteria of the identification of DV and CC, again with under the auspices of qualified professionals and experts in these areas, as well as stakeholders. These criteria should include safe and appropriate collection and storing of evidence as well as robust due-diligence checks of relevant parties to ensure an absence of conflict-of-interest.
- 3. Issue:** Nothing developed in 1 and 2 above will matter if the criteria and procedures are not implemented in a meaningful way. **Recommendation:** Require all actors in relevant government institutions and the justice/law enforcement system to complete training in the

recognition of DV and CC and the proper procedures to deal with occurrences; implement regular systemic audits to ensure effectiveness and accountability.

4. **Issue:** Lack of information sharing among the courts, law enforcement, child welfare, schools and health care systems compromises everyone's ability to properly assess and address DV and CC. **Recommendation:** Develop and implement a mandatory information and evidence sharing protocol for all of the actors and agencies involved in the DV and CC strategy.

5. **Issue:** There is a lack of independent oversight of the conduct of the various actors within law enforcement, the judicial system (especially family courts) and government institutions. Court appoint appointed experts regulate themselves and law enforcement agencies protect their reputations before they ever admit misconduct. All of this undermines public confidence in the system, making it harder for victims to come forward. **Recommendation:** Amend all statutes relating to actors in law enforcement, the judicial system system, and government agencies to compel meaningful accountability and transparency, through independent oversight and regular audits.

6. **Issue:** Systemic issues of misogyny and tolerance for sexual abuse and domestic violence with Canada's law enforcement agencies has been well documented and researched. Victims know that they can only expect further suffering if they report their problems to the police. This state of affairs should not be tolerated by any Canadian. **Recommendation:** Implement independent and timely oversight of police conduct. Amend statutes and regulations to compel meaningful accountability and transparency. Require mandatory ongoing education and training of all police personnel in the identification and proper response to DV and CC. Require regular competency audits of all active law enforcement officers.

7. **Issue:** Perpetrators often hide behind the legislation that is, weakly unfortunately, intended to protect the citizens of Canada. **Recommendation:** Review all federal and provincial legislation to identify, draft and implement amendments to ensure legal consequences for coercive control or abuse of other members of Canadian society. Review all federal and provincial legislation to identify and amend omissions or criteria that may be abused by the perpetrators of DV and CC.