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Chair

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc

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•(1105)

[Translation]

The Chair (Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP)): Good morning.

Welcome to the 45th meeting of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

Today, we are resuming our study on promising practices to prevent violence against women.

It is our pleasure to welcome Ms. Michèle Audette—who will be here a little later—President of the Native Women's Association of Canada, and Ms. Dumont-Smith, who is the Director General.

We also welcome Ms. Lana Wells, of the Brenda Strafford Chair in the Prevention of Domestic Violence, of the Faculty of Social Work of the University of Calgary.

[English]

By video conference from Halifax, Nova Scotia, we have from Immigration Services Association of Nova Scotia, Ms. Gerry Mills and Ms. Nanok Cha on the left-hand screen. From Toronto, Ontario, we have from the South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario, Ms. Deepa Mattoo, who's a staff lawyer.

[Translation]

Welcome to all of you.

The witnesses have 10 minutes to make their presentations.

Ms. Wells, you may begin.

[English]

Professor Lana Wells (Brenda Strafford Chair in the Prevention of Domestic Violence, Faculty of Social Work, University of Calgary): Thank you.

[Translation]

The Chair: Ms. Crockatt, did you want to say something?

[English]

Ms. Joan Crockatt (Calgary Centre, CPC): Would you be able to just identify for us which of the witnesses is which because usually the name cards are—

The Chair: The two ladies from Nova Scotia are Ms. Gerry Mills and Ms. Nanok Cha, and the person who is alone is Ms. Deepa Mattoo.

[Translation]

Does that suit you, Ms. Crockatt?

Ms. Joan Crockatt: Yes, thank you very much.

The Chair: Very well.

Ms. Wells, you have the floor. You have 10 minutes.

[English]

Ms. Lana Wells: Thank you Madam Chair and committee members for inviting me here today.

As stated, I am currently the Brenda Strafford Chair in the Prevention of Domestic Violence in the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Calgary, where I'm also leading an initiative called "Shift: The Project to End Domestic Violence".

For the past four and a half years, our research focus has been on identifying, designing, and implementing primary prevention strategies; that is, trying to stop the violence before it starts. In preparation for today, I reviewed many of your past meetings and was struck by the amount of research that you've already been presented regarding the prevalence and root causes of violence against women.

With that in mind, today my presentation is going to focus on 10 commitments that the Government of Canada can make that will prevent violence against women.

Number one, the Government of Canada must develop, implement, and evaluate a national action plan to address violence against women and children in partnership with provincial and territorial governments. The plan needs to focus on primary prevention strategies using a lifespan approach, and most importantly, it cannot be created in isolation. It needs to be developed in partnership with the key research centres, the private sector, and civil society. This plan must also be customized to meet the unique risk factors and protective factors associated with different populations like the aboriginal, LGBTQ, and immigrant and refugee communities.

Number two is to invest in a national child care strategy, one that is based on the principles of affordability, accessibility and high-quality care. This national strategy would support healthy child development and improve opportunities for women who wish to go back to the workforce, or get out of unhealthy or abusive relationships.

Number three is to invest in the prevention of child maltreatment. Children who are abused often grow up to become abusers. We can prevent physical abuse, emotional abuse and neglect by doing the following things. First, implement a guaranteed income supplement to low-income families with children. We know that increasing household income lowers the risk of child maltreatment. Second, prohibit corporal punishment by repealing section 43 in the Criminal Code. Research shows that corporal punishment has detrimental effects on children and is associated with later violence perpetration. Third, prevent young parenting and unplanned pregnancies. Young parents and parents of unplanned children are more likely to abuse their children. Therefore, the Government of Canada needs to consider universal access to sexual health education starting in grade 4, no-cost birth control, and universal access to abortion. Health Canada should immediately approve the medical abortion drug Mifepristone. Fourth, an effective way to prevent child maltreatment is to invest in a national parenting strategy to build the capacity and skills of all parents including an investment in programs targeted to those at risk. Some examples include: triple P, the positive parenting program; the strengthening families program, which you've heard about; the incredible years program; and I know already you're investing in the nurse-family partnership in two provinces. They should be accessible across Canada.

Number four is to invest in a national housing strategy, so that women do not have to choose between being in an abusive relationship and being homeless. I echo the recommendations from the YWCA of Canada that was here with respect to the housing first strategy and add that increasing funds to short-term transitional housing is critical in stopping violence against women.

Number five is to develop and implement a comprehensive strategy to engage men and boys as allies, partners, and violence disruptors to end violence against women. We've been researching this area for quite some time and have identified five key leverage areas. The first is supporting men's mental health and emotional well-being. Second is leveraging sports, recreation and workplace settings to influence healthy norms and behaviours, and I know that Status of Women has already started to invest in some of these types of initiatives across Canada. Third is supporting healthy male peer relationships and networks. Fourth is supporting men to heal from past trauma; and fifth is building and promoting positive fatherhood.

The last point, building and promoting positive fatherhood, is especially important as fathers are assuming a greater role in child rearing. Studies indicate that fathers are just as important as mothers in children's development. We are now learning about the best kinds of programming and policies to support young men and at-risk dads to be good fathers. The caring dads program developed by Dr. Katreena Scott and the supporting father involvement program developed by Drs. Kyle Pruett and Marsha Pruett, are just two promising practices, and currently in Calgary we are testing two promising programs with partners who serve teen mothers. We will know more soon about what works with young at-risk dads.

• (1110)

Number six is to invest in trauma-informed care with allied professionals. Those include teachers, social workers, lawyers, and doctors. Studies have shown that adverse childhood experiences such as sexual assault, witnessing domestic violence, child

maltreatment, and living in poverty can lead to serious social, economic, and health risks in adulthood. To reduce the impact of trauma, the Government of Canada can invest in training that would support professional faculties, professionals in the field, and their organizations, to better understand the widespread impact of trauma and the way to respond to it in order to help people heal.

Number seven is to develop, implement, and evaluate a gender-equality plan. The plan must include a comprehensive strategy to ensure women have access to reproductive health care, including abortions; policies that facilitate wage parity and a living wage that are enforceable across Canada; a parental-leave policy similar to Sweden's, which gives families up to 18 months of parental leave and makes a minimum six-week parental leave mandatory for fathers; stronger pornography laws similar to David Cameron's family-friendly Internet filters that prevent children from seeing pornographic images; and a substantive increase in funding for Status of Women Canada, both for the department itself and for the funds that go to community-based organizations.

We need to reinvest in women's organizations across this country to better support leadership, build momentum, and ensure there is capacity to implement best and promising practices. Finally, we need stronger policies and strategies that foster women's leadership in all sectors of society. Research shows start-ups led by women are more likely to succeed; innovative firms with more women in top management are more likely to be profitable; and companies with more gender diversity usually have more revenue, customers, market share, and profits. Investing in women's leadership in all sectors is crucial to achieving gender equality.

Number eight is to reduce dating violence by leveraging schools and school systems. Implementing evidence-based practices with grades 7, 8, and 9 students is shown to reduce dating violence. Longitudinal research demonstrates the effectiveness of programs like the fourth R, which is already in 4,000 schools in Canada—some funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada and Health Canada—in reducing dating violence, which may lead to reduction in violence in relationships later on in life. Our teachers and school systems need increased and better training to support children and youth to be in healthy relationships.

Number nine is to invest in a substantive and comprehensive long-term social marketing strategy aimed at changing norms and behaviours that directly or subtly support violence against women. Recent events on university campuses tell us that even after all the progress we've made, these kinds of ideas are still prevalent in our society.

Number 10 is to provide sustainable funding focused on long-term initiatives. Short-term one-off funding will not get underneath a serious issue, and moving to long-term funding and investing in research and evaluation will support better solutions.

It is a privilege and an honour to present these ideas to the committee today. Thank you for listening and for your commitment to ending violence against women.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Wells.

I now invite the representative of the Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia to make her presentation.

[*English*]

You have 10 minutes.

Ms. Gerry Mills (Director of Operations, Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia): Thank you.

Good morning. My name is Gerry Mills, and this is my colleague, Nanok Cha. We're from ISANS, Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia. ISANS is the only multi-service settlement agency for immigrants in Nova Scotia and the largest immigrant settlement agency in the Atlantic region. We have five offices across Nova Scotia, and this year we're celebrating 35 years of delivering services to immigrants.

We will put an immigrant lens over some of the points Lana just brought up.

First of all, what do we know? We know that immigrant women are generally much less likely than non-immigrant women to be victimized outside a spousal or family relationship. We know that many immigrant—

• (1115)

The Chair: Ms. Mills, I'm sorry to interrupt you. I will just ask you to slow down a little bit so we can have the interpretation. I know you have a lot to share with us, but just slow down a little bit so we can have interpretation.

Thank you very much.

Ms. Gerry Mills: I apologize. When the interpreters are not in the room, they're not very evident. I will slow down.

So we also know that, generally, immigrant women want to be free of their abuse, not of the abuser. They come here and they're very vulnerable. They don't know people outside their immediate family, and that's a challenge.

We also know that our immigration and refugee sponsorship processes often put one partner over the other. There are some major examples of this. The conditional permanent residence status for sponsored spouses has become a huge issue for us in the settlement sector. This puts newcomer women at greatly increased risk of violence and abuse. It's a form of abuse uniquely faced by immigrant women: the threat of reporting them to immigration authorities and having them deported. This particular policy has had an extremely serious impact on the lives of many women, and we have seen it again and again. It's feeding family violence.

Our best practices here at ISANS, of education, workshops, information in different languages, no longer work. We used to be able to say, "Don't worry, nothing is going to happen," but something can happen now. It's not true, but many women fear deportation much more than they fear spousal violence. So here is a real and desperate need, a desperate need to reconsider this policy. Review the impact, look through the gender lens of policy with this one in particular to identify how it compromises women's personal and economic security.

As for isolation, and Lana talked about it as well, immigrant women are extremely likely to confront isolation as part of the immigration experience. This can be exacerbated by being prevented, for example, from going to English classes or French classes, or from working. It can take the form of alienation from the cultural community, by saying, "You're a bad wife. You're a bad mother," or accusations of leaving or failing their culture, of being made to lose face in the community.

The challenge here as well is eligibility for services. There are many women in our communities, for example, the spouses of temporary foreign workers, or even temporary foreign workers themselves, and also refugee claimants, who are ineligible for many of the services that the immigrant settlement sector provides.

I'm glad that Lana brought up housing. Housing is a significant issue for any woman who is in an unsafe situation, especially with children, and how they get out of that situation. So a housing strategy is a desperate need.

Threatening to take away the children is a challenge for many women in this situation, but it's faced by immigrant women who don't know their rights. They have no other contacts or support and a very limited understanding of the Canadian process and laws. We can't talk about any of this without considering the impact of cultural and religious practice, and it's really complex.

So as for best practices, what can we do? Education, education, education; it's family orientation. Do the workshops in groups. People feel much more comfortable when talking about taboo topics. Make sure there are programs for only women. Make sure there are programs for only men. But at ISANS, our most successful programs are when men and women are together. We have managed to break many of the assumptions about immigrant men, by having family programs that in fact very often have more men in them than they do women.

Our starting point is not that we need to protect women, the violence against women, although we understand that is a critical issue and there are times when we need to do that. Our starting point is that parents want to do their best for their families. We don't start with violence; we start with, "You're a good father. You're a good mother. You want what's best for your family." Our approach is to look at families holistically, at how people can live their best lives in Canada, through all our programs.

But we need accessible programs with trained interpreters and information in different languages. Whatever your status is in Canada, you need to be able to access these services.

• (1120)

At ISANS we work in partnership with hospitals, women's organizations, and a number of family resource centres.

Finally, the immigrant victims of violence often encounter bias when they turn to the justice system for help in domestic violence, family, and criminal law cases. These biases undermine immigrant women's ability to obtain effective protection orders, legal custody of their children, child support, and cooperation in the criminal prosecution occasionally of their abusers. We need to provide training to improve the justice system's response to immigrant victims of violence.

Beyond that, we need to make sure that family doctors, other health care personnel, social services, police, child protection agencies, and immigration authorities understand the complexities but also understand the culture in which these actions are taking place, and that they understand immigrant victims' legal rights. There are often so many incorrect assumptions about culture, about rights, and about standards in Canada that people get very different and very confusing advice.

Immigrant women in this dialogue are one of the most vulnerable groups. We certainly welcome this opportunity to be able to speak to the standing committee today and look forward to the actions and tasks that come out of it.

Thank you.

I'd like to pass you over now to my colleague, Madam Cha.

Ms. Nanok Cha (Coordinator, Young Immigrant Women's Leadership Project, Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia): Hi.

The young immigrant women's leadership project is a two-year project funded by Status of Women Canada. The objective of the project is to build their leadership skills, to make a positive change in the community, and to put a supportive system among the population.

The project activities have been designed to build self-esteem, strengthen their leadership skills, negotiate the social system and gain community resources, and address social issues from their standpoint. Young immigrant women are one of the most vulnerable populations and they have less community support for them to build the capacity to challenge critical social issues such as domestic violence, bullying, and being victims of sexism and racism in the community.

While working with the young immigrant women leaders, the project has realized how crucial it is for them to have a safe space to build support from each other and to share their personal struggles as a safe way of preventing violence against women and building a healthy and vibrant new life in Canada. The project has offered peer mentorship opportunities to build self-esteem and create a social and political space to share issues such as intergenerational conflicts, unequal gender roles and decision-making in the family, domestic violence, and discrimination against young immigrant women in the community, in the streets, and in the schools. These leaders have built a safer environment to build support among themselves, and it

should decrease their vulnerability to violence and isolation in their families and in the community.

With holistic approaches, through their leadership building and creating a safer space, they have been leading the community for positive changes. For instance, the group obtained a young immigrant women's health and wellness grant from Nova Scotia Capital Health and have created workshops regarding gender-specific issues including violence against women such as self-defence training, sexual health, healthy relationship-building workshops, and yoga. They are also developing a community health resource brochure for young immigrant women to reduce their isolation and vulnerability by looking for support in the community. Two leaders from the group are also participating in a YWCA project addressing cyber-violence.

In conclusion, the young immigrant women leaders and the project at ISANS have been building stronger networks to share their experiences and to support each other. They have enhanced their individual and group leadership abilities to challenge inequalities and the power relationships and build resilience regarding violence against women. This valuable two-year project will be terminated at the end of March 2015. We hope to have this opportunity to work with these amazing, promising, young immigrant women again in the future.

Thank you for your time.

• (1125)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

We will now go to Ms. Mattoo.

You have 10 minutes, Ms. Mattoo.

[*English*]

Ms. Deepa Mattoo (Staff Lawyer, South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario): Madam Chair and honourable members, I want to thank you for the invitation to appear before the committee today.

I would like to start with a quote from a research paper that I was part of a couple of years back—namely, that violence against women is a citizenship issue that fundamentally affects a woman's bodily integrity and personhood; it also affects her right to dignity, security, and freedom from discrimination. The previous two speakers spoke to this very eloquently. Simply speaking, what I'm trying to say is that education programs, social programs, and policies in Canada for preventing violence against women need to be framed in a way that is inclusive of all women irrespective of their culture, religion, background, race, or orientation.

My submission will be focused on three points today: sustainable and consistent education and social programs, peer-based and survivor-led programs, and the need for cross-sectoral policies and a national strategy. Most of these points were touched on by the previous speakers in one way or another, so I'll try to keep my comments as brief as possible.

In terms of the first point, sustainable and consistent education and social programs, in our experience over the last 10 years we have seen many innovative educational and social programs that have been launched and delivered in the field of violence against women. These education tools and programs are pertinent to the prevention of gender violence of various kinds, both interpersonal and systemic. Some examples of these tools are the South Asian Legal Clinic's own forced marriage tool kit; the Canadian Council of Muslim Women's resources, such as resources for teachers, family law materials, marriage contracts, and many more; the Community Legal Education Ontario's, or CLEO's, handbook entitled "Do you know a woman who is being abused? A Legal Rights Handbook", which is accessed by thousands every year; Barbra Schlifer's resources on safety planning, risk assessment, and a graphic novel that was created by the survivors themselves; METRAC's legal education program; and the South Asian Women's Centre's grassroots training materials.

The list is long, and the work produced and the innovative programming done by some of these and many more agencies all across Canada are brilliant, but most of this work is dependent on piecemeal project funding. While the social programming sector is always thankful for the funding, it is continuously struggling. Even when their successful programs could have long-term impact, they do not even get a chance to do a complete feasibility study of the impact of these programs.

My colleague on the panel just before me spoke of a brilliant program that she is leading. That's one of my points about the peer-based and survivor-led programs. While these programs are really important for addressing violence against women, unfortunately they are spread out all across different departments of the government. They are not sustainable and consistent. They are very band-aid in nature. The constant pressure on the agencies for innovative programming without meaningful analysis of some of the existing resources speaks to the lack of interdepartmental knowledge on these issues. It also speaks to the fact that some of these programs are not even given enough chance to look at the real impact of the program in the communities.

In terms of the peer-based and survivor-led programs, which is my second point, my experience at SALCO, and the agency's experience itself, speaks to the fact that when we partner with agencies that have these kinds of programs, or when we connect our clients who are surviving violence with these programs, they work really well, and have a great and positive impact on the lives of survivors. Many agencies all across Canada—we heard from one today—have successfully run these kinds of programs and continue to run them. We have been doing this kind of education and prevention program work ourselves.

It is very important to have women and girls who are survivors lead the discussion on prevention, protection, and empowerment. It is important to note that when programs are led by survivors, it also adds a dimension to the service provision, which adds to their skill set, which adds to their employability, which adds to their own personal empowerment. Leading the discussion themselves on prevention also gives a true reflection of what the assumptions are about their cultures, what the assumptions are about their communities. As these are stories of resilience, where they

themselves become the leaders, it definitely brings a new leadership community to the forefront as well.

● (1130)

In terms of the need for cross-sectoral policy, an all-inclusive national strategy, it is imperative for prevention of all forms of violence against women that the policies that are created be cross-sectoral and consistent in every sphere of service delivery, be it law and justice or be it health, education, immigration, and employment.

My colleague spoke before me about the condition of permanent residency that has been created recently by Immigration and about how the impact of that policy among immigrant women has been really harsh. What is important to remember is that violence against women is not one department's issue. It is not one political agenda. It is something that spreads across sectors, and the reason that policies need to be uniform is that they need to be sensitive and alive to the specific needs of women from marginalized communities, such as aboriginal women, Muslim women, South Asian women, and immigrant women.

A couple of points raised before are really important to note. One is programming with the men. Although we see that there is a shift, unfortunately all the programs I spoke about or the educational materials that have been put forward have been very women-centric until now. We haven't seen a lot of funding being given to education programs for men so far.

Another really important point, which I want to reiterate, concerns education among young people from the school system and leveraging curriculums in the school systems all across Canada.

The last point concerns not considering immigrant women as people who need to be saved, but rather treating them as allies, as leaders and people who can educate us about how prevention and protection work can happen successfully.

In conclusion, I just want to say that for prevention of violence against women it is important, moving forward, that the services and programming and policies for survivors shift away from their being held responsible for their own protection and for the crimes committed against them and from conditions such as "leave", "report", "decide". They should be more about saying we will support you because we believe you. I think that is the culture shift we need at this point for a national strategy to prevent violence against women in a more meaningful way.

Thank you.

[*Translation*]

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We will start with the question—

[*Translation*]

My apologies, Ms. Dumont-Smith; I am going to give you 10 minutes also. When Ms. Audette arrives, she will be able to take part in the discussion by replying to the questions of committee members.

You have the floor.

[English]

Ms. Claudette Dumont-Smith (Executive Director, Native Women's Association of Canada): *Kwe. Hello. Bonjour.*

My name is Claudette Dumont-Smith. I'm Algonquin from Kitigan Zibi. Welcome to Algonquin territory.

Michèle Audette is our president, and her flight was delayed. We all know we can't really depend on the weather in Canada. She is flying in from Quebec, but she could pop up at any moment.

I'm the executive director of the Native Women's Association of Canada. I've held that position since 2010. Today I was to be accompanied as well by Gail Gallagher, who is the senior manager of the violence prevention division at NWAC, but she came down with a case of the flu, so I guess I was meant to be here.

Thank you very much for inviting the Native Women's Association of Canada to speak to the committee on the issue of promising practices to prevent violence against women. This issue is important to Canada's aboriginal women. It is important to our children, our families, and our communities.

The Native Women's Association of Canada is the national representative political organization, which is composed of 12 provincial and territorial member associations, known as PTMAs. They are located in two of the territories and all of the provinces. Nunavut is not part of NWAC because they have their own organization. All of us, the PTMAs and NWAC of course are dedicated to improving the social, economic, health, and political well-being of first nations and Métis women in Canada.

We are the national voice of aboriginal women in Canada. We were incorporated in 1974, so we have well over 40 years of experience working with aboriginal women. During these 40 years, we have heard from many women. We have heard their stories of violence, exploitation, pain and suffering, and it is these stories that inform the position that NWAC takes today, especially on the topic we will be addressing today.

We thought we would take this opportunity to speak with you on a number of promising practices to prevent violence against our first nation and Métis women and families. As most of you are aware, NWAC's research has revealed that aboriginal women and girls are more vulnerable to violence than anyone else in Canada. I know it's not a competition, but we are the most vulnerable. We are more likely to be victimized and less likely to have the supports needed to cope with such victimization because of where many of our communities are located, because of language barriers, cultural barriers, etc.

Indigenous women and girls are five times more likely to experience violence than any other population in Canada. Often the violence goes unreported, in particular, spousal assault and other family-related abuse. The actual rates are likely higher.

NWAC's research has revealed that aboriginal women and girls are more vulnerable to violence due to impacts of past and current state policies. The Indian Act, for example, the residential school policy, the sixties scoop, and the current child welfare system are all connected to poverty, racism, and violence against our women. The RCMP revealed just last May that 1,181 indigenous women and girls

in Canada have gone missing or have been murdered over the last two decades. Many of these cases remain unsolved.

Any rate and form of violence is not acceptable and must end. The AFN, NWAC, first nations and indigenous women's organizations, and families of murdered and missing indigenous women have long been advocating for a national public inquiry on violence against indigenous women and girls, including the circumstances around those who have been murdered or are missing. We need a national public inquiry to examine this issue from all angles and develop solutions to address this in a comprehensive manner. Nothing else will do.

For the purposes of this presentation, we have applied this category to service provision. Additionally, when it comes to programs and services on violence against aboriginal woman, it is possible to categorize it into two major areas: shelters for women leaving family violence, and shelter services for women and girls leaving sex trafficking and prostitution. We will address the issue here first in terms of shelters for aboriginal women escaping family violence, and then address shelter, safety, and security from the perspective of those either escaping sexual violence or those escaping violence in the home as youths.

• (1135)

For family violence shelters, of which there are very few and not enough, we draw heavily from Anita Olsen Harper's research in many shelters in several provinces—Ontario, B.C., Manitoba, Alberta, Quebec, Saskatchewan, Newfoundland and Labrador, and Nova Scotia—with the focus of collecting best practices for addressing family violence in aboriginal communities.

Her document contains a very thorough list of recommendations as well as disturbing findings. A complete recounting of her recommendations is beyond the scope of this presentation. However, we wish to draw attention to her principal findings and some of the recommendations reflective of the principles of the best practices that emerged from discussions with those working in the field of intervention and prevention on aboriginal family violence.

In terms of safety and security, our discussions with shelter staff across Canada led to the following list for best practices. The need for fences and other security measures, such as window and door alarms and security cameras, are a wise investment. The need for the above security measures are all the more relevant in small communities where the location of a shelter is eventually common knowledge. Areas for children to play should be fenced and require constant supervision, and shelters should consider coded security locks for client rooms. They are easier to change than traditional locking mechanisms when clients leave. This is from Harper's research.

Within administrative practices, she recommended the following operational practices: keep a non-judgmental attitude that promotes feelings of equality; be clear on rules of confidentiality; and consider placing a shortened list of these rules in multiple places in the shelter for a thorough reminder.

In terms of education, the Native Women's Association of Canada put out a report in 2011 entitled "Collaboration to End Violence: National Aboriginal Women's Forum". It features several recommendations that fall under education. They summarize the theme of those recommendations into the following: develop and implement a national campaign that focuses on a message of zero tolerance for domestic violence; as individuals and organizations take action to educate the media about violence against aboriginal women and girls; encourage media to report responsibly and respectfully about aboriginal peoples, culture, and history, and acknowledge and honour them when they do; use social media and other web platforms for campaigns focused on women and youth to educate and share information and resources; address root causes and prevention of abuse; and draw on traditions and a holistic approach to violence.

Byrne and Abbott identified a series of recommendations that were intended to improve aboriginal women's education success by decreasing their vulnerability to root causes to violence, such as poverty. Overall, they advocated for increased accessible, affordable educational opportunities, and increased financial resources. In particular, this effort would be supported by the following two focuses: connecting girls and young women to educational aspirations, and providing support for young mothers so that they can finish school. Additionally, the report by Byrne and Abbott provides recommendations from a literature review of which education and learning make up a key component.

Aboriginal women need accessible and affordable education opportunities, complemented with financial supports. The authors call for large-scale collaboration between government at all levels and aboriginal organizations to develop a lifelong learning strategy to support aboriginal women and girls' educational success. This strategy should focus on the following areas: early childhood development; primary, secondary, post-secondary education; and skills development.

Continuing, the authors recommend that such lifelong learning include the following: funding for aboriginal-led research into first nations, Métis, and Inuit cultures and history; after-school programming aimed at children 6 to 12 years old; and rewriting of history books to reflect the aboriginal experience and view of colonization. The authors include the recommendations that federal, provincial, and territorial governments need to review current school systems to evaluate their preparation of aboriginal women for continued education at the college and university level, as well as preparing them for employment.

As part of this review of school systems and refocusing preparation, the authors urge for three major components: a greater priority on the trades, increased access to online learning and distance education opportunities, and a review of and action to remove the child care barriers aboriginal women face in pursuing employment and ongoing education.

An additional education measure was a recommendation for all levels of government to work with aboriginal organizations to create a lifelong strategy in key areas of childhood development; primary, secondary, post-secondary education; and skills development, which addresses the unique circumstances of aboriginal women.

• (1140)

They recommended funding to be set aside for aboriginal—

• (1145)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Pardon me, Ms. Smith; could you conclude briefly, please?

[*English*]

Ms. Claudette Dumont-Smith: The best practices they put forward for improving aboriginal women's education preparation.... I think something happened here. I got my pages mixed up. I'm sorry.

Finally, they recommended a national strategy for increasing aboriginal women's graduation rates to grade 12, as well as supporting further engagement in post-secondary education. Promoting educational success was seen as just as essential among aboriginal women and girls facing sexual exploitation.

Approaches to successful programming related to violence against aboriginal women and girls reflect the complex root causes and a need for serious and thorough initiatives to promote change. Programming ranges from prevention to intervention, to targeting familial abuse, to helping aboriginal women and girls facing violence from sexual exploitation. Culture is also added in there—

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Smith. During the conversation you'll probably be able to flesh out some of the points that you may not have had time to elaborate on, and that's the same for all the witnesses.

We'll start with the questions.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Truppe, you have the floor. You have seven minutes.

[*English*]

Mrs. Susan Truppe (London North Centre, CPC): Thank you, Madame Chair.

Welcome, and thank you for being here for our study. It's very important that we get best practices, which is the purpose of this study, to gain information from you on what has worked in the past so that we can perhaps share it with other organizations.

I think I'll start with the immigration services. I believe that Nanok—I hope I'm saying that correctly—said that she received some funding from Status of Women Canada, but I couldn't hear what the name of the project was. I was just wondering if you could repeat the name of the project from Status of Women, how much funding you received, and what the project was again.

Ms. Nanok Cha: It is the young immigrant women's leadership project. It is a two-year project. The objective of the project is to build their leadership skills and make positive changes in the community. Then they created a community project to make those positive changes. It also builds support among young immigrant women in the community.

Ms. Gerry Mills: In terms of the amount of funding, it's under \$200,000. I would just like to bring up what one of the other witnesses said. It's like many of the projects that NGOs provide across the country. This one, in particular, has a two-year span. At the end of two years, it will finish and that will be the end of the project. It's just the way that the funding works. It's impossible to go after the same funding for the same project.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: So that's unsustainable.

Sorry, did you just start the project, then, or is it just finishing?

Ms. Gerry Mills: No, it's just finishing.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Okay.

This question would probably be for you, then, Gerry. What other funding do you receive? Do you receive any other funding from any other federal departments, or the province?

Ms. Gerry Mills: Yes, we do.

We receive funding from Citizenship and Immigration Canada and ESDC—that's federal funding—and then we receive provincial funding as well.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: What type of project did you do with the Citizen and Immigration funding? What was the project for that one?

Ms. Gerry Mills: We have 120 staff, so about half of our funding is federal and half of it is provincial. With federal funding, we provide services to refugees. So, literally, it's picking people up at the airport, giving them temporary accommodation, permanent accommodation, getting the kids in school. We also provide settlement orientation, language, employment. Also, the other part of the coin is the volunteer...the community capacity-building.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Thank you.

I think I read somewhere that you obviously do a lot of partnering with some other organizations. I come from a riding with a fairly high number of immigrants in my area in London. We have some great organizations there and they do a lot of partnering, and they have a lot of great things that they do too.

I was just wondering with maybe some of the initiatives that you've partnered with, do you have a best practice? Do you have something that you've done, some program.... Because you sound like you have so much experience, is there some program that you did that you think has worked really well and would maybe help someone else?

• (1150)

Ms. Gerry Mills: I can talk about the work we've done with foreign credential recognition. We have, I think, 11 or 12 multi-stakeholder tables. I'll just give you one example. There's a multi-stakeholder table for internationally educated pharmacists. Around that table will sit the educational institution—so the university—the regulatory body, the professional association, ISANS, the provincial government, the federal government, plus the internationally

educated pharmacists, and they will determine, first of all, the barriers and the pathway to becoming a pharmacist in Nova Scotia.

Once we've determined the pathway and the barriers, then from all the stakeholders around the table we determine who can affect this. When we're determining who is responsible, it takes a lot of time for that trust to build. When we started these, probably eight or nine years ago, there were a lot of trust issues, but we've made huge systemic changes in processes. In Nova Scotia right now our pass rate is 93%—in the rest of the country for pharmacists, for examinations, it's about 48% or 49%—because we have the processes in place and all the stakeholders around the table. I appreciate that in somewhere like Nova Scotia that's much easier, because first of all, we know the stakeholders, and secondly, we can say, "Next Thursday, can you meet?"

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Thank you very much. That's wonderful.

I have a question for Claudette from NWAC. Can you tell me about the funding you receive from Status of Women Canada? I know you've done some great work with a lot of the women there. Can you tell me a bit about how much funding you had and what it was used for? What's your favourite program that you felt helped women and girls?

Ms. Claudette Dumont-Smith: When I got to NWAC, they were finalizing the Sisters in Spirit project, which ended March 31, 2010. That was when they conducted secondary research into the number of missing and murdered aboriginal women and developed that database. Following that, the Evidence to Action I and II kicked in from the Status of Women, and tools were developed to help families when someone goes missing. There were awareness programs and information. Family members were included in gatherings to explain their needs to NWAC. So Evidence to Action was a lot of that work. Recently we got funding from Status of Women, and we're working on Project PEACE. The PEACE project, which will be for the next two and a half years, will be more focused on prevention of violence. We'll be working with men and boys and women and girls. The project started just a month ago.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: That's great. Thanks.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Madame Truppe.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Freeman, or rather Ms. Freeman, you have the floor for seven minutes.

Ms. Mylène Freeman (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, NDP): Thank you, Madam Chair.

[*English*]

Thanks to all our witnesses for being here.

My questions are for Deepa Mattoo.

Thank you so much for being here. I've been looking at your research and I'm really impressed with the work, so I really appreciate the opportunity to speak with you today. I'd like to start off by asking you what this committee can learn from your work with women fighting violence and addressing its causes. What can we learn from these women?

Ms. Deepa Mattoo: Most of the work the South Asian Legal Clinic has been recognized as leading is on the issue around forced marriages and the voice we have given to that issue. We also work with a lot of women with immigration law issues, conditional permanent residency, and sometimes when they are themselves considered to be committing a fraud while they are facing violence and not committing a fraud with immigration.

Our experiences have taught us that violence against women is not something that is specific to the community. That's something we are struggling with because we know that a lot of discourse around violence against women and violence against women of colour suddenly becomes about who they are rather than what they have experienced. I think that's what we have learned. It's not about their background. It's not about their religion. It's not about their culture. It's about their individual stories. Unfortunately, when we are trying to look at a policy, we're trying to bring in law reform, we get caught in the fact that they are Muslim women, or we get caught in the fact that they are South Asian women, but unfortunately that's not what it is about. It is about everyone's individual experience and the lack of sensitivity in the system around trying to learn what that individual experience is.

My colleagues from Nova Scotia here are talking about the leadership program they have and I'm a big fan of those programs. When you let the women who have survived and women who have lived experiences lead education and lead these programs, it actually adds a different dimension. It informs you differently and you will think above and beyond what their religion is or what their background is or what their colour is.

• (1155)

Ms. Mylène Freeman: I think that's a really important point you're making, that violence against women is something that all women face in Canada or around the world, regardless of country of origin or immigration status or religion. I feel like that's what you're saying to us, in other words.

Ms. Deepa Mattoo: Yes, definitely.

Ms. Mylène Freeman: I have the report "The Incidence of Forced Marriage in Ontario", which you participated in. The final recommendation, number 9, is to not criminalize forced marriage as a separate Criminal Code offence. Could you speak to that?

Ms. Deepa Mattoo: Most definitely.

When we started working on the issue of forced marriages we were very much being informed by the women who are experiencing this form of violence. Just to clarify, when we started working on this issue, right from the beginning—I'm talking about since 2005—one thing that we have been clear about is that it is part of the continuum of violence against women and nothing else. It should be dealt with within that same framework. We were never wanting it to be dealt with any differently.

Again, we wanted the systems to be sensitive and alive to the issue of the distinct experiences of the women who faced this form of violence, but we wanted it to be included in the violence against women framework. But unfortunately it has been somehow discussed in a way...and we know there's Bill S-7 that is on the table at this point as well.

There is an assumption that is coming that somehow the current legal system does not have enough in it to address this issue, whereas our education from our clients, the survivors, and our education from the communities, very much tells us that the existing systems and the structures are enough to serve the needs of the population if they want to access the law and justice in that way.

Unfortunately, I think we haven't learned enough from what we see, that women don't necessarily want to report. My colleague on the panel from Nova Scotia also spoke to that briefly, that women don't necessarily want to leave their families. Women don't necessarily want to leave their... I'm not saying that they shouldn't or they should, but the point is that the choice should be theirs. It should be a decision made by them. The system shouldn't expect them to make the decision because it wants them to, and the criminalization most definitely is a path towards that, where we are trying to put responsibility again on them to protect themselves rather than accepting that we are responsible for preventing any form of violence against women.

Ms. Mylène Freeman: So it doesn't make sense—

Ms. Deepa Mattoo: I'm sorry, am I clear?

Ms. Mylène Freeman: Yes, very clear. It doesn't make sense to fight violence against women by amending the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, like Bill S-7 does.

To be clear for the rest of the committee, we're talking about the zero tolerance for barbaric cultural practices act.

That's basically what you're saying, that it's not helpful to the women you work with.

Ms. Deepa Mattoo: Yes, it is not. I think we have spoken to that eloquently when we have found the opportunity.

I want to say that this recommendation is based on our experience with the people who have lived this. It's not based on just the data; it is based on the interviews and information we have gotten from the people who have experienced this form of violence.

Ms. Mylène Freeman: One recommendation you make, recommendation 8, is for better protection for permanent residents and persons without status.

Could you speak a little bit to that?

• (1200)

Ms. Deepa Mattoo: Most definitely I can.

Women, when they face violence and are in a precarious immigrant status, which sometimes does not give them a substantial connection to Canada, definitely have less protection within the systems available to them. They sometimes are threatened with deportation by the abusers. Also, the system is built in such a way that they can actually face, as a consequence of that violence, being deported. Irrespective of whether or not they reported it, they can face the consequences of being deported because they were violated or because they chose to report abuse. That's something that we see with various provisions, whether they be for conditional permanent residency or for misrepresentation or for a domestic charge against their co-applicant. We see all that happen in various areas of immigration provisions, and this is something that needs to be changed.

Again, there needs to be a cultural shift within the immigration policies to be more sensitive to the violence that women experience while being precarious. Unfortunately, it is as though they are in some kind of invisible chains that are put around them through these immigration policies. Those invisible chains need to be taken care of. At this point, the changes we are proposing through this committee are that our policies shouldn't be there to basically bind them into violence; our policies should be to free them from violence.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[Translation]

Thank you, Ms. Freeman.

Ms. O'Neill Gordon, you have the floor.

[English]

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon (Miramichi, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you all for being with us today. You continue to add a lot of information to our study, which we find important.

My first question is addressed to Lana Wells. I want to say how important it was to hear the 10 points your association deals with and puts in place and that they give a lot of food for thought as we go along.

I want to assure you that, over the last few weeks, one key message we've heard along the way in many of our meetings is how important it is to start this fight opposing violence against women at an early age; that it isn't just at age 18 that we should start bringing men and women together; that it must start at a much earlier age, reaching into the first decade in life, if at all possible.

In your opinion, what can we do to prevent violence against women at any time, and where do you think we should start this?

Ms. Lana Wells: Thank you for your question.

Right now, the federal government is investing in the nurse-family partnership, which is a home visitation program for women who are pregnant and all the way up to when their children are two years old. It's an evidence-based program that has been studied for decades. You're funding some of it in B.C. and Ontario. Home visitation is one of the most critical places for prevention. That program reduces

child maltreatment, it reduces family violence, and it gets families jobs.

If I were to recommend something, it would be starting with a comprehensive, universal approach. What happens is that right now you fund each province, and they put it into various programs that they feel make the most sense. These are not all evidence-based. What I wanted to bring to the committee today is that there are myriad evidence-based programs.

Earlier, you had your staff present information about the portal, with about 80 best-practice programs and policies. We know a lot. You had somebody talk about early childhood development and the brain science around toxic stress at very young ages in children experiencing adversity and what happens later on when they move into relationships. We know a lot.

I think the federal government's role is to ensure that there are national standards, that there are appropriate investments that are actually hitting the ground where the money is supposed to go, and that there is high accountability to the federal government concerning outcomes and the delivery of those outcomes.

My colleagues in Nova Scotia and Ontario have talked about there not being long-term sustainable funding right now. That's the other issue. You put out ads through Status of Women Canada, requests for proposals. People apply; they get two years to prove.... It can take up to 10 to 15 years to develop an evidence-based practice, and you need heavy research and evaluation for it. I have colleagues whom I work with out of the University of Western Ontario's CAMH Centre for Prevention Science who have invested in the fourth R, as one example; the fourth R standing for "Relationship". So reading, writing, arithmetic, and relationship are the four core elements.

What is your role in education? We know that education is a provincial jurisdiction, but you provide transfers. There should be social emotional learning. Teachers need to have skills around understanding trauma and should be able to transmit skills to kids. If they're not getting it in the family, the next best prevention site is the school. I don't think we're leveraging the schools or school systems enough.

• (1205)

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon: Are you going into some of the schools, and what age do you target?

Ms. Lana Wells: Yes. Right now in Alberta there are several programs.

In Alberta with my particular project, we're scaling up the best practice called the fourth R with CAMH in partnership with Western and the University of Calgary. We've had 17,000 Alberta youth go through it and we're targeting 50,000 in five years. We think that, within seven to 10 years, we're going to reduce dating violence, which should reduce intimate partner violence and violence against women later on.

We have a targeted strategy where we're working with 14 school jurisdictions, and they're partners in it. The program is not just about a program, it's a whole-school approach. That means everybody gets trained, teachers get trained, and those teachers deliver this program. This also means that schools are safe and caring communities and it ensures that all students are receiving the care that they need.

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon: I'd like to ask that same question to Ms. Mills from Nova Scotia. I'd like to ask her the same type of question as to where and when you think this should start. At what age are we looking at for boys to start this means of preventing violence against women?

Ms. Gerry Mills: I absolutely agree with Lana. I think it needs to start really early.

The issue of stable funding and continuous funding is a big issue. We have some great projects, and they all end after either a year or two years. ISANS has 120 staff, but not one staff member has a contract beyond a year. We only have a contract for a year. That means we can't continue; we can't even look at really short-term outcomes until the following year, and then it's just a cycle.

I think we need to look at the whole issue holistically as well. I really appreciated what all my colleagues said around...just the rhetoric around let's protect women. I think we need to make women the leaders. We need to put the women out to the front, and by women I mean girls as well, so start that really early. But I think we also need to look at it in family units, because for immigrant women, as we've said, immigrant women for the most part do not want to leave the family and they don't want to leave the abuser. They just want the abuse to stop. There may be situations where some may consider that it's not the best thing for them, but as you so eloquently said, it's up to the women to make that decision. I think we have to look at all of this through the lens of different cultures. It may not be what other people think is appropriate, but it may be okay in different cultures.

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon: My next question is—

The Chair: Thank you. I'm sorry.

[Translation]

I will now yield the floor to you, Ms. Duncan. You have seven minutes.

[English]

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Thank you, Madame Chair.

I'd like to thank all of you for coming, for presenting, and for the life-changing work you do. You've given us so much to think about. I'm going to try to ask questions of all of you.

Ms. Dumont-Smith at NWAC, were you formally consulted on the action plan to address family violence?

Ms. Claudette Dumont-Smith: The one that was put out by the Status of Women last year?

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Yes. Did they come and say they were thinking about creating a plan and ask if you had ideas for that plan?

Ms. Claudette Dumont-Smith: From my recollection of that, we wanted to be fully included in the whole research, because it was sort of research like you're doing now, and what happened is that we

were invited to present, as we are doing today, a 15-minute presentation. We felt that we should have been more involved throughout the process.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: There was only a 15-minute presentation?

Ms. Claudette Dumont-Smith: Yes.

• (1210)

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: There was no follow-up? That was it. Thank you.

To the South Asian Legal Clinic, we've talked a bit about Bill S-7. If you could make a recommendation to this committee, what would the recommendation be?

Ms. Deepa Mattoo: My recommendation to the committee—and I think I speak for Bill S-7 and all other policies, which sometimes do not meaningfully engage with the communities and the survivors. When I use the word “community” I'm not talking about the South Asian community; I am talking about communities of students, lawyers, or settlement workers. I'm not talking about an ethno-specific community. I think meaningful consultation and meaningful engagement are really important and unfortunately they haven't happened with Bill S-7.

Moving forward I think it is important that any policy or any change in the framework this committee undertakes have the voice of the survivors at the centre. Voices of survivors are not monolithic either but are multi-dimensional. They say, “We don't need you to save us; we can save ourselves”. They say, “We don't necessarily want to report; we just want to feel safe”. They say, “I don't want to leave; I want to negotiate my violence while being resilient in the situation where I am located. I am an immigrant woman. I don't need you to tell me that I am not civilized and I'm barbaric. I want you to tell me that you respect me for who I am. I'm not a discounted human being. I'm a full citizen of this country as I come here”.

I think that's my recommendation, to please treat women in their full capacity, because we are doing a disservice to our own country if we do not take them as who they are and do not take them as our leaders. They can teach us how to do this. They have been doing it and they have been fighting this fight and they can teach us and lead us.

I'm sorry—it's very broad but I think what I am saying is that we need their voices.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Thank you. I appreciate that.

Again to Ms. Dumont-Smith, there was the loss of Sisters in Spirit funding. Can you tell us why that funding ended and whether there is more work to be done?

Ms. Claudette Dumont-Smith: After Sisters in Spirit ended, of course NWAC applied to continue to update or keep up the data. New criteria were put out. We were told that there was not to be any more research or advocacy, so any project to do with research or advocacy that was funded by Status of Women following that Sisters in Spirit five-year phase would not be funded.

Evidence to Action I and II did not do any of its research. However, we do have volunteers who assist the work of NWAC, and they have maintained their own separate database, so to speak. We know that the numbers are always increasing, and that was confirmed when the RCMP did its own research and put out the report in May. But we were not allowed to do more research.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: There was no funding for research?

Ms. Claudette Dumont-Smith: No.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Okay.

Ms. Wells—

[*Translation*]

The Chair: We are going to stop the clock, please.

Ms. Crockatt, you have the floor.

[*English*]

Ms. Joan Crockatt: We wanted to have a broad-based conversation. We generally leave the questioning completely to people, but I do think the member is straying quite considerably away in all of her questions recently from promising practices to prevent violence against women. So I would just encourage you to bring it back to the topic.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Crockatt.

I find research and evidence, and some of the programs that are and were funded quite relevant to our study, so I will allow it.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I believe we always want to have evidence.

•(1215)

The Chair: Ms. Duncan, I will just let you know that you have a minute and a half.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Thank you.

Ms. Wells, I just wanted to pick up on something you had talked about. You talked about a national parenting strategy and you also talked about corporal punishment. I wondered if you would like the opportunity to talk about both.

Ms. Lana Wells: Sure. I know lots of Canadian studies have been done on this, but there is no evidence to suggest that any kind of physical punishment actually does children good. There is an opportunity to repeal section 43 to prohibit corporal punishment in Canada. I would encourage the federal government to make that change in legislation and then to support a parenting strategy so people can understand positive discipline and how to parent. It's not just to change and repeal the section but also to ensure that there are supports to go with families.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Those are two recommendations.

Ms. Lana Wells: Absolutely.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Ms. Dumont-Smith, could you talk about the unique needs of shelters that would be serving aboriginal women?

Ms. Claudette Dumont-Smith: I do work with our colleagues at Pauktuutit, for example, and there's a grave shortage of shelters up north. I also know that in our first nations communities, there's also a shortage. As to the shelters that are not on reserve, many are not culturally appropriate and the women that live in urban centres—52% of the population now live off communities—do not feel that the shelters in the mainstream address their needs.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you.

I will now yield the floor to Mr. Barlow for five minutes.

[*English*]

Mr. John Barlow (MacLeod, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

My first question would be to Ms. Mattoo. I appreciate what you're talking about on changing the narrative from saving the women who have been victims of violence and making them leaders. That's a great position to take and a good message for us to put out there. But you talked about the success that you've had with peer-based and survivor-based programs.

I'm just curious. Do you have men participate in some of these programs as peers, as well with other men and even as people who have perpetrated violence in the past?

Ms. Deepa Mattoo: Unfortunately, I have not been part of any of the projects where men have participated in a mentor capacity, if they have perpetrated violence or if they have had experience with family violence in their family unit. But I definitely feel that could be potentially a good model. We haven't seen that. It does happen informally. We know that.

In the men's support groups or in the mandated programs—counselling programs where they're supposed to go for long-term counselling when they are perpetrators—I know that those relationships are built among them in those settings. It is happening informally for sure, but I haven't come across any programs so far.

Mr. John Barlow: You talked about, maybe informally, leaders in the community that are doing those kinds of things, acting as mentors to new Canadians or new immigrants to Canada then.

Ms. Deepa Mattoo: Absolutely, there are lots of programs, which are led by mainstream as well as ethno-specific agencies, here in the greater Toronto area that I know of. Punjabi Community Health Services is one of those programs. The CEO of that agency is Mr. Baldev Mutta and he has been leading some really cutting-edge programs in the community to educate men.

Again, as my colleague from Nova Scotia was talking about, sometimes these programs don't have to be named or titled as violence against women or violence programs. They're sometimes just about drugs. They're sometimes about gambling. They're sometimes about behavioural issues or anger management issues. They're not necessarily meant for violence against women structures, but the messaging is definite and the mentorship is definite to make sure that men understand, and are basically assisted through this process and the conditions that violence creates.

Mr. John Barlow: I think it's a good idea, I guess, even if it's informal that new people to Canada understand Canadian culture. They feel welcome just by having that interaction with other people.

For Ms. Wells, thank you for coming all the way from Calgary. I appreciate that. Sorry about the weather.

• (1220)

Ms. Lana Wells: It is cold here.

Mr. John Barlow: I'm still not used to this Eastern Canada winter.

Ms. Lana Wells: There's salt everywhere.

Mr. John Barlow: Yes, exactly. I hope you brought leg galoshes or something. If I would have known you were coming, I would have told you to bring me some snow pants.

You talked about a national parenting strategy. I thought that was interesting, but also about the importance of building positive fatherhood. One of the messages that we've really been hearing through this process is putting more of a focus on men and the role that they play in this issue.

You talked about a program called "Caring Dads". I'm just wondering how successful that is. You said it was pretty successful. Would you mind explaining a little bit about that?

Ms. Lana Wells: Sure. That's by my colleague, Dr. Katreena Scott. I'm not sure if you've called her as a witness, but I would encourage you to because she's been studying this issue for some time. It's a best practice program and it's offered in Alberta. Just to take you back a bit I'm currently working with the Government of Alberta to build a new investment and policy framework for dads and fatherhood.

When you look at the majority of parenting programs in Canada they are mostly focused on the mom as the parent. So we're thinking about the family unit that my colleagues have talked about and the need to reflect on the fact that some programs that work for women may not work for men. There are nuances and different delivery mechanisms that need to be thought of. There's some great research happening. I'm not sure if you know about the Alberta family wellness initiative that the Norlien Foundation has heavily influenced in their partnering with the Government of Alberta and the Harvard Center on the Developing Child, where they're doing some amazing work in terms of bringing the best neuroscientists, behavioural scientists, and social workers together to build best-practice programs from early childhood development on. Right now there are three organizations in Alberta that are implementing the positive father involvement program and it's a best practice.

We're now trying to look at how we scale these. I don't think the issue is whether there are some great best-practice programs. It's how do you scale it? How do you get it to where you're actually changing population change? It takes money for implementation to ensure fidelity and to ensure the people who are delivering a program have the skills and capacities to deliver it in the way that it was designed.

The other issue is that, for example, with something that's been designed in California coming to Alberta, you have to ensure that the context reflects and it's in the program. It takes time to iron that out. So Norlien has funded this and the research has been part of the project for the last five years and ongoing, to keep evolving the

program so that it makes the best sense for the parents in Alberta versus if it was in Ontario or B.C. The context is so important.

The Chair: Thank you.

[Translation]

I thank both of you very much.

I now yield the floor to Ms. Freeman for five minutes.

[English]

Ms. Mylène Freeman: I'm going to go back to where I was with Dr. Deepa Mattoo.

You've been clear that current policies and bills like S-7 are only serving to further marginalize women. Is that what you're saying?

Ms. Deepa Mattoo: Absolutely. I wanted to say it's not only marginalizing women, it's also marginalizing the communities they come from and targeting certain communities more so. I think it takes us away from the discourse and the reality that violence against women happens across cultures and across people's historical backgrounds, and more so when there has been a history of colonization and there has been a history of marginalization of other kinds.

Not considering violence against women a holistic issue and coming up with the discourse that there is some kind of barbaric culture in certain communities and new immigrants are necessarily more violent than people living here in Canada I think is very problematic. As I said before, the programming and the service delivery needs to be sensitive and aligned to people's distinct needs, but framing an issue and homogenizing communities, saying that they need it because they are less cultured than we are living here in Canada, is a problematic discourse and framework.

Ms. Mylène Freeman: What you were just saying makes me think. I came across an article this morning. There's a new U of T study that's coming out called "Gender equity in Canada's newly growing religious minorities" looking at workforce participation rates and the difference between Muslim women and other groups—I think Hindu and Sikh are specifically cited. It was saying that there is a perception that Muslim women are more repressed and less available to the workforce, but in fact there is no difference between these groups and that, tellingly, second generation women are just as active in the workforce.

Does that speak to some of the work that you've been doing? Does that make sense to you?

•(1225)

Ms. Deepa Mattoo: Absolutely. I think that's the assumption that we are fighting, primarily. Part of the problem is that because of the service delivery model and from the perspective of the services we need out there, we keep on asking for services that are culturally and linguistically sensitive, but that ask doesn't mean that we are saying that these communities are not civilized enough. We are not saying that these communities don't have capacity and leadership skills. I think that's where the disconnect has been, unfortunately, because we have asked for culturally and linguistically sensitive services.

So while my colleagues from Nova Scotia or my colleagues from London work in the specific Muslim communities, and while they talk about how there needs to be language sensitivity and cultural sensitivity, they are not necessarily saying that these communities are not capable and these communities are not active members of the employment and equity framework. I think that's where the disconnect is and it's really important that we keep both those things together while we're talking about it.

Ms. Mylène Freeman: All right.

I am going to ask you to describe how you would see a federally mandated national action plan to end violence against women.

Ms. Deepa Mattoo: As I said before, I think it needs to be a lot more inclusive in terms of how we envision a violence-free Canada and a more protective Canada for women, where women don't feel obligated to leave, report, or that you need to basically make a decision right now. We need to have an action plan that provides sensitivity in health, in employment, in other structures of education, where women don't have to necessarily go by the dominant cultural framework of how you can be violence free.

It has to be an inclusive framework, and it has to be cross-sectoral.

Ms. Mylène Freeman: Thank you.

Could I ask how much time I have left?

The Chair: You have 30 seconds.

Ms. Mylène Freeman: Oh, that's tough.

I'm going to move quickly to NWAC.

I feel as though I need to ask you this. As long as we don't address the legacy of residential schools, the history of colonization, the systemic oppression that is ongoing, and as long as we don't radically shift the way we do things to work on a nation-to-nation basis, can we really address violence against women, specifically aboriginal women in this country?

Ms. Claudette Dumont-Smith: That's the underpinning of why we're calling for a national public inquiry, to really get at the root of the problem. It's true that a lot of things have been put in place in my lifetime, and the rates are not going down; the murders are still there. They're even increasing in some situations. Until we do that, I think we're just going to be spinning our wheels, again.

The Chair: Thank you for being very brief on a very difficult question.

We'll continue.

[Translation]

Ms. Perkins, you have the floor for five minutes.

[English]

Mrs. Pat Perkins (Whitby—Oshawa, CPC): Thank you very much.

I thank you all for participating today. It certainly has been a tremendously worthwhile exchange of information.

I find there's much to have a dialogue about throughout the entire country. We certainly can understand that there are very specific challenges in very specific areas.

I would like to focus my comment and my questions to Lana in particular, if I could, with respect to the fact that we are trying to come up with promising practices that can be brought forward for the reduction and prevention of violence to women and children. You were speaking about it in terms of an evidence-based approach and that there should be national standards and accountability frameworks that are built in.

If there were national standards that were to take into account all of the variables that are brought forward, how would you see that roll out? What type of accountability framework do you think would be doable, if you will, in terms of everybody having their own program end of things? Who would the accountability be from, and how could that be structured to give us some sense of the successes and the challenges?

•(1230)

Ms. Lana Wells: Great.

First I want to echo the need for a national action plan. I think you've heard that in every meeting. But it can't be designed in isolation, and I don't think it's just up to the federal government to solve this issue. I think the inclusivity piece, the customization to ensure we're reflecting all of the different populations in Canada, is clear.

I think that needs to have a process attached to it, so that everyone is building their capacity to understand the root causes, the solutions, the risks and protective factors, and to understand the solutions. As my colleagues have pointed out, there's a lot of great and amazing work happening in community, getting it captured so it does move into evidence-based portals and so forth. I'm really talking about evidence-informed because things change over time.

I think the inclusivity, the process, is as important as the plan. I monitor all of the government plans all around the world. We have 80. We analyze them. We try to understand what our government is doing, why they are doing it, the evidence on which it is based, and the accountability.

Interestingly, two governments in the world actually monitor and have an accountability framework, where there are actually indicators and measures for which they're responsible. So often we have these wonderful plans that governments put out, but nobody is doing the implementation or is responsible for the implementation, and then nobody is doing the accountability measurement piece.

Mrs. Pat Perkins: Which are those two countries?

Ms. Lana Wells: You have New Zealand and Sweden. I'm happy to send you all this research we've been analyzing.

Many governments talk about outcomes. The Government of Alberta has created a set of outcomes. It's the monitoring, implementation, and then the evaluation piece that often gets dropped. I understand political cycles, but we need a long-term sustainable plan that is committed over decades. This is an issue that is going to take decades, not two years to solve, so that would be my recommendation.

I know the long-form census that was lost is politically on the table right now; we've lost a lot of good data and surveillance data and we need it. We need to be able to oversample in provinces so that we can have good numbers in provinces as well. I think the surveillance data is critical.

Mrs. Pat Perkins: What do you think the accountability piece would look like?

Ms. Lana Wells: I think it should be a shared responsibility with the Government of Canada, the provinces and territories, and community groups. I think that together everybody needs to be accountable for pieces. Ministries and departments need to be written into that plan versus just writing in what needs to get done, who is going to do it, what's the timeline, how it's going to be achieved, and how we are going to know if success has been achieved.

Mrs. Pat Perkins: Thank you very much. I appreciate it.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[Translation]

I now yield the floor to Ms. Crockatt, who has five minutes.

[English]

Ms. Joan Crockatt: Thank you so much and thank you to all our witnesses for coming.

One of the things that I was struck by in the testimony, and all of you have had some really good points that I have been madly trying to take down, is that we have hundreds, maybe thousands of programs out there to try to curb violence against women. We've been at it in Canada since I think 1965 when we started these shelters. I think most of us in this room have been involved in that endeavour in some way, shape, or form, and poured quite a bit of blood, sweat, and tears into it. What we are trying to get at here is where are we as far as the cutting edge? Where is it moving?

I thought Lana made some excellent points about needing measurement and needing to figure out what is working because we could sit at these tables and go to conferences for years and still not get to what is working.

I liked it, Claudette, when you said it is true that a lot of things have been put in place but the rates are not going down. We obviously need to find some new ways of tackling some of these problems.

I think what I heard today is that championing women's leadership—Deepa made that point very well—educating men and boys, these look like cutting edge things that are starting to show results, also educating people about cultural things, especially our new

immigrants. It looks as if I'm hearing from you that our two most vulnerable populations are aboriginal women and immigrant women.

It's funny, I was just talking to Jason Kenney yesterday about what kind of expectations we can set up for our new immigrants so they understand that it is not acceptable in Canada to beat your wife or sell your daughter or give your daughter away to someone in a forced marriage.

Calgary Immigrant Women's Association, I wanted to point out by the way, have some really good monitoring. I thought Gerry Mills from Nova Scotia might want to connect with them because they have had great success in getting ongoing funding for programs because they build a monitoring component into every program so they can tell which is the most effective.

Lana, do you have any research on the programs that are working for immigrant women in particular?

Sorry for the long question.

• (1235)

Ms. Lana Wells: I would turn to my colleagues. I think they are both experts in best and promising practices in the immigrant women's sector.

Ms. Joan Crockatt: You're the research person.

Ms. Lana Wells: I haven't studied the immigrant sector. My area is primary prevention and looking at promising policies and practices that support people to not engage in unhealthy or abusive relationships. So I think my colleagues had better respond to that.

Ms. Joan Crockatt: Okay, let's go to Nanok.

Can I ask you that same question then, please?

Then we will go to Deepa.

Ms. Nanok Cha: Sure.

My project is not research, but we had a needs assessment among young immigrant women. By the way most of them came here as refugees. By having this needs assessment of their challenges, we had identified a lot of social issues such as the lack of community resources, educational opportunities, employment opportunities, intergenerational conflicts, some domestic violence, and language supports. Some of them were very general settlement issues but they are really related to young immigrant women's position in Canadian society.

Ms. Joan Crockatt: Because my time is short, if I could ask you, what is actually working? What would you say is the one thing that is critically working for you with immigrant women?

Ms. Nanok Cha: Creating a safe space is the most valuable lesson we learned. When they go out, they are judged as young and as immigrant women who came here as refugees. They are being bullied, and they become disconnected because of that. But having that space for themselves, that really opens up their conversations to talk about social issues, and make sure it's not your fault and that it's not only your personal struggle. Opening up the conversation led them to really see themselves as leaders and to challenge those social issues as a group.

So building strong group support and peer mentorship has been successful.

The Chair: Thank you.

Could I have Ms. Mattoo just briefly answer Mrs. Crockett's question?

Ms. Deepa Mattoo: Yes, definitely.

I think there are three programs that work really well, in our experience: the art-based programs, the parenting-based programs, and the peer-based programs. All three of them work really well with immigrant women.

What is really important is to remember when you're looking at the success of these programs is that programs where they have an experience of sharing their knowledge and expertise...because they do come with a lot of expertise and knowledge. They are also witnesses to violence against women and they know the survival tactics that sometimes you and I don't know. We are not leveraging that expertise; we are not getting that information from them and learning from them and including them in that leadership. So I think these three programs work to...[Inaudible—Editor]...that voice.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[Translation]

Ms. Duncan, you have the floor for five minutes.

[English]

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: I'm going to come back to Ms. Wells.

We've heard repeatedly "sustainable funding", but you also talked about the substantial increase to Status of Women. Could you talk to that, and then tell us what would sustainable funding look like as opposed to project funding?

•(1240)

Ms. Lana Wells: I think funding mechanisms are part of the problem. I think we need to rethink our funding approach. I talked about funding projects for the long term, recognizing that new, innovative programs take about 18 months to two years to get designed and even start to be tested. Then there's the attachment of evaluation and research dollars to the program to ensure that it's being captured in a way that can then be tested, and potentially going through maybe a randomized control trial and so forth.

There needs to be extensive dollars long term and guaranteed funding for five, seven, or 10 years. My colleagues in Nova Scotia spoke about how their employees have one-year contracts. They're year to year. That does not give people in the human service sector stability, the ability to plan, or the desire to stay in this sector because there's no job security.

I think those are significant issues and that the federal government and provincial governments could be doing some major changes around the funding mechanisms and approaches. Just those in themselves could make a significant difference to the women's community and agencies that are serving women and children.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Thank you.

Ms. Dumont-Smith, could you talk about what cuts to funding have meant to your organization? If there hadn't been those cuts what could have been done?

Ms. Claudette Dumont-Smith: In all sectors?

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Yes.

Ms. Claudette Dumont-Smith: The Native Women's Association had different departments.

One, for example, was health. In April 2012 we had word from Health Canada that all our funding was cut. We couldn't do anything in the health sector for aboriginal women. Eight of our staff were laid off, and we never brought them back on because we were not successful in getting any more funds from Health Canada. That was one major cut.

Other cutbacks were, of course, with the Status of Women funding. During the Sisters in Spirit, the Native Women's Association of Canada was receiving about \$1 million, which is public information. It has decreased steadily since then. We're getting much less than we had then, than we had last year. We have even less this year than what we had last year. Again, it has to be in relation to our staff. We have fewer staff in that department as well.

Core funding was decreased, as well, for all NAOs and aboriginal regional organizations across the board last year. In order to get funds to do work in various areas, we had to apply to a \$20-million pot with the other four NAOs and all the aboriginal regional organizations across Canada. It was a very competitive process.

We entered the process. We submitted our 10 proposals on February 20, or something like that, of last year, which was the due date of each proposal, and we had word only in October, November, that some of our projects had been funded. Right now we're doing work that has to be completed by March 31. It's one year of work that has to be completed by March 31, in three or four months.

It's very difficult for me and for our staff to work under those conditions. Of course, as my colleague was saying here, it is hard to keep a dedicated staff, where they want to work, where they want to be in the workforce, and where they like their job. But we can't offer stability. That's the situation I, along with all the other NAOs and ROs, am in right now in terms of funding.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Duncan.

We will now hear from Ms. Bateman.

You have the floor; you have seven minutes.

Ms. Joyce Bateman (Winnipeg South Centre, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

[English]

I really want to thank all of our witnesses today. It's so important that we hear what you have to say. I have a lot of scribbles from the various comments that so many of you made. I'm going to try to make sure I get around to all of you.

The first place I'd really like to start is near and dear to me. We won't have the full seven minutes. I was a school trustee before I became a member of Parliament. It was something I took such pride in, because that is where we can make a difference.

A number of you have spoken of the need to engage children when they are young and help them mould.... If the family model isn't there for them, I think it was Ms. Wells who said that school is the second best thing. It's a valuable tool to use.

How do you see this engagement happening? We certainly did a lot of it when I was in my school division.

• (1245)

Ms. Lana Wells: I think a lot of schools and school jurisdictions are committed.

Again, I think you need the funding that goes to the provinces and then supports ministries of education.

Ms. Joyce Bateman: This actually ties in to my other question.

I happen to be a chartered accountant. You have consistently spoken of the accountability structure. You have consistently spoken, Ms. Wells, of the accountability required to achieve positive outcomes on transfer payments.

As you know, transfer payments under this government, from 2006 to where we are today, have never increased at this rate. But I'm hearing from you that we could do a better job on demanding accountability. I'd love to hear that, on both fronts.

Ms. Lana Wells: Yes, absolutely, and I think it's consistency of outcomes and demanding accountability back to the reporting-in on those outcomes.

I think school systems have a significant place in terms of policies and practices. Universities need to be training teachers in terms of curriculum. I think something came out today on lawyers. Lawyers today—just a switch—in Ontario are not being trained around domestic violence. Professional faculties need to have training around trauma, around family violence, violence against women, and so forth.

I think training needs to take place in professional faculties. I think school systems need to be looking at social and emotional intelligence and learning. We know IQ does not mean success.

Ms. Joyce Bateman: It does not mean EQ.

Ms. Lana Wells: That's right. So where are the measures in that? We don't have a report card in Canada on social and emotional. When you talk about the promising best practices I think that really putting an enormous amount of energy into teaching kids around healthy relationships, reducing trauma and its impact, and using the school system as a safe place for kids to learn how to be in healthy relationships is a critical strategy.

Ms. Joyce Bateman: You've read the British North America Act and you are very well versed on our Constitution. How do we do that?

A voice: It's not federal.

Ms. Lana Wells: This is the dilemma. Who has the responsibility and the accountability; where does the accountability lie?

I think teachers and school systems have a responsibility, but the federal government has a role to play in universal standards and measures.

Ms. Joyce Bateman: You've consistently said in your remarks, Ms. Wells, that you would like greater accountability from the federal government when we give transfers to the provinces and territories. How? Give an example.

Ms. Lana Wells: Yes, you need contracts.

If I even think about contracts and how you even negotiate the terms of the contracts, when I think about the Government of Alberta giving money to all the school systems—and let's say, to the universities—within that, why can't there be a policy around sexual violence and ensuring there is support for people experiencing sexual violence, and also ensuring dating violence programming is offered throughout the university? Why can't we build it into our expectations around a contract? If you want to get at true change it's not just the programs for problems model, we need to have policies and legislation and guidance and measures and accountability, but we need support and people being able to measure that and collect that.

Ms. Joyce Bateman: You've given me a lot of food for thought and hopefully we can come back to that.

[Translation]

Ms. Dumont-Smith, thank you for your comment.

[English]

You specifically spoke to housing as an issue. Bill S-2 was quite frankly my proudest moment on this committee. I was incredulous when I learned that aboriginal women did not have matrimonial property rights, and hopefully that will address some of the issues, certainly for women in the case of marriage breakdown. I refer to my experience as a school trustee in the City of Winnipeg, where about 25% of our students were aboriginal, and there were many young women who were thrown out of their home because the marriage had broken down. They came to the city with a number of children and it's a very tough situation. I'm grateful that we've addressed Bill S-2.

But your group represents women. I think it was very courageous of Mr. Bellegarde to speak out—it was very recently on the front page of *The Globe and Mail*—saying that every member of his community has a role in this. Clearly he was looking to men and women.

What advice would you give him to engage the men and boys in the community in solving violence against women, because it's so crucial?

• (1250)

Ms. Claudette Dumont-Smith: I don't think I have to give advice because the Native Women's Association of Canada is working hand in hand with all the other NAOs: the AFN, the ITK, the Métis National Council, and Pauktuutit. We're working together to try to address violence from all our populations because we realize it's a situation where we all have to hold hands and we have to look at solutions broadly. The Congress of Aboriginal Peoples is part of our group as well.

We are engaged with the provinces and territories to come together at a round table, and to invite the federal government, and all of us can sit down to talk about how we address the situation. It's not getting better.

Ms. Joyce Bateman: You've mentioned that several times, that it's not getting better.

Ms. Claudette Dumont-Smith: No, it's not.

The Chair: I would like to let you finish, Ms. Dumont-Smith, and that will be all.

Ms. Claudette Dumont-Smith: I wouldn't have any advice to give Mr. Bellegarde because we're working together on the situation to improve....

Ms. Joyce Bateman: His comments were seen as a radical concept, a great departure.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Bateman.

[English]

Ms. Claudette Dumont-Smith: No, we're all working together.

Ms. Joyce Bateman: That is wonderful to hear. Thank you very much.

The Chair: So it's a cooperative thing at the same level.

[Translation]

Thank you, Ms. Bateman.

[English]

Madam Smith, thank you.

[Translation]

Ms. Freeman, you have the floor for seven minutes.

[English]

Ms. Mylène Freeman: I'm going to continue with Claudette Dumont-Smith.

You spoke about first nations education as being key to ending violence against aboriginal women. There's a huge discrepancy in funding. I think first nations schools are funded at about a third of regular schools. Can you explain how this gap came about? What is causing this?

Ms. Claudette Dumont-Smith: Wow, well....

[Translation]

Ms. Joyce Bateman: Please, Madam Chair, it would be very important that I be able to clarify something.

The Chair: Yes, we are listening.

Ms. Joyce Bateman: That is not the case.

[English]

We don't assess a child. The community I represented had 25% aboriginal students, 25% new Canadians, and we never made funding decisions based on who that child was. We made funding decisions based on a child requiring education. I take exception to those comments.

Ms. Mylène Freeman: Ms. Bateman, I apologize, but overall it's statistically shown that first nations education funded by the federal

government is at a third of what provincial schools overall offer their children. Unfortunately I don't have tonnes of reports in front of me, but it is recognized as a statistic. Unfortunately your specific example does not apply to the entire country.

The Chair: Thank you very much for the clarification, Ms. Freeman.

Could you address your question regarding best practices, please? Thank you.

Ms. Mylène Freeman: What's causing this gap? Where is this coming from?

Ms. Claudette Dumont-Smith: I think it began in the 1970s when aboriginal people wanted to have schools on the reserves and to control their education systems. I think that was put in place. I think that the funding was never matched by provincial funding.

You're right, the funding for schools on reserve is... The schools are much less funded. That's a fact; that's the way it is.

Talking about violence against women and domestic violence, I know about the fourth R program, because I was part of that group way back. We don't have that in first nations communities. The system is different, either the community runs the education system or Indian Affairs funds it but not at a level equal to that of the provinces, so we have to look at a lot of gaps. There's no equity.

• (1255)

Ms. Mylène Freeman: Yes.

Can you speak to the importance of evidence-based policy, making sure we have comprehensive data that informs how we make policy. Does that make a huge difference in your experience?

Ms. Claudette Dumont-Smith: I think we do need more evidence because I don't know who's doing research in the aboriginal communities. We're getting piecemeal data. We do need more evidence-based data, more research to be up to date, I think. We're relying on sources that I don't think are comprehensive.

The short answer would be, yes, we do need more.

Ms. Mylène Freeman: Do bills like S-2 make a difference when the funding for housing needs doesn't follow, and where communities have not been able to settle their land claims, and therefore, do not have the physical space they need.

Does it make a difference in that case, or is it just a piece of the puzzle?

Ms. Joan Crockatt: Madame Chair, I have to ask for a point of order here, please.

I appreciate that Madame Freeman is new on the committee. When she mischaracterizes a bill like S-2, and it's going on the record, I think we have to clarify the fact that Bill S-2 enables women to be able to stay in their homes who are in a matrimonial relationship where they are the object of violence. It has nothing to do with the funding arrangement that she....

Ms. Mylène Freeman: Could you not cut into my time, please?

This isn't a point of order. This is interrupting me and my questioning because you don't agree with my—

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Freeman.

Ms. Joan Crockatt: [*Inaudible—Editor*]...chair?

The Chair: Ms. Crockatt, please.

Ms. Mylène Freeman: No, it's to question accuracy in the questioning to the witness.

The Chair: Order, please.

Thank you, Ms. Crockatt. Please let the member finish before having the back and forth. It's too difficult for me.

Time stops when we have a point of order, so it doesn't affect your time.

Thank you for the clarification.

Ms. Freeman, would you like to direct your question about best practice, and how housing can help?

Ms. Mylène Freeman: Sitting down and treating the communities seriously and having the funding following, how important is that in making sure that we address violence against women?

Ms. Claudette Dumont-Smith: It is very important, and housing is a very big problem in aboriginal communities. It is broadcast widely across all the news channels and the media. There is overcrowding. In terms of matrimonial.... Communities are small. Everybody knows one another.

If you take out the man and the woman gets the house, where does the man go? Everyone is contained in a small community. There are no shelters for the women. It's problem after problem.

That's why NWAC is calling for a national public inquiry. It is calling for all levels of government and NAOs to sit down together and to start to look at these problems, because we're just bouncing them around and looking at them through one lens. That's not what is needed.

Putting in things like Bill S-2 may do a little bit of good, or it may not.

Ms. Mylène Freeman: It's not the whole picture.

Ms. Claudette Dumont-Smith: The judges and lawyers are not even familiar with aboriginal culture. That's a whole other issue. Are they trained in aboriginal culture?

These are all little pieces that are being put forward in good faith, but I don't think it's enough.

Ms. Mylène Freeman: Is Michèle Audette your acting president?

Ms. Claudette Dumont-Smith: Michèle Audette is our president, and we have a first vice-president, Dawn Harvard.

Ms. Mylène Freeman: Unfortunately, she couldn't make it.

My understanding is she has been declared as a Liberal candidate.

NWAC does amazing advocacy work. Is there concern around looking like you're taking partisan sides and being able to continue your work?

The Chair: Ms. Freeman, I would like to comment.

You don't have to answer this question. It's not related to our study.

Thank you very much.

Ms. Mylène Freeman: Do I have any time left? I do have other questions.

The Chair: No, the time has expired, but we have made sure that the time was....

First of all, I would like very much to thank all of our witnesses today. Thank you for having brought forward a lot of recommendations, which we will take a very important look at in our study.

Thank you, all members. We'll see one another after the week spent in our ridings.

The meeting is adjourned.

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