

43rd Parliament, 2nd Session (September 23, 2020 – Present)
Controlling or Coercive Conduct Within Intimate Relationships

Submission for Bill C-247

Survivor's Brief
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February 27, 2021

Dear Justice Minister Lametti,

Dear Honorable Members of Parliament,

Today I bravely come out from behind the shadows and come forward to say I have been a victim of coercive control from 2002 to present. I am also a SURVIVOR. As Maya Angelou said, "I come as one, I stand as ten thousand." I read Federal Ombudsman Ms Heidi Illingworth's call for Justice Lametti to add Coercive Control to the Criminal Code of Canada and was brought forth to this Justice Committee studying Bill C-247. A special thank you to Honorable Member Randall Garrison for bringing light to such a tragic crime that permanently damages women through repeated traumas, like myself. And a special thank you to the witnesses who have provided evidence during the House of Commons Parliamentary committee meetings I have been watching anxiously. It is so important that Bill C-247 be added to the Criminal Code of Canada, as it has been in our Commonwealth Countries. Canada is supposed to be considered the land of the Free; however, I agree with the witnesses who have called this a Liberty Crime, as I have experienced all too well within the relationship with my legal spouse. I left him five and a half years ago, under tragic circumstances and yet he refuses to divorce me, separate our assets and provide me a penny towards my necessities of life. I will begin by introducing myself, will continue into the story with my ABUSER including the post separation abuse I have painfully been enduring, continue with my recommendations and finish with a Victim's Impact Statement in hopes it may help other survivors. All I ask is that you please read my story and hold onto it in the back of your mind as you proceed with all that is involved with this Parliamentary committee and moving it forward in the direction of having Bill C-247 passed.

I was born in the mid seventies to dysfunctional parents who were of the belief that you stay married through thick and thin. As a child I had three responsibilities, one to be the fixer or responsible one, two, to keep secrets and three, to keep a smile on my face. Despite the challenges I grew up with, I overcame my obstacles and graduated in 2000 from a top-notch Canadian University with my Bachelor of Arts Degree in Sociology and Psychology with a concentration in Criminology. After graduation I sought out after my dreams. I graduated debt free from both hard work and scholarships and had just moved into my own place with my best friend and had a large circle of friends. I was going to conquer the world, hoping to focus on my career while becoming a mother and traveling the world. I became a writer for my large Metropolitan Police Service and maintained my position from 2000 – 2008. Clearly, Justice & Truth are my two strongest convictions and it is MY time to take MY power back from my abuser and have MY voice heard. It is an honor to share my story with you as I hope you will see that not only is this a Liberty Crime, but also shows a distinct pattern of oppression and subjugation. It is also one that raises questions as to why I, as well as many others I am sure, have fallen through the cracks as a victim of Coercive Control in Canada, home of the free, having left my partner in 2015, on permanent disability with Depression and Complex Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, toppled with the post separation abuse I have endured the last five and a half years. All I want is my freedom to move forward in my life. However, sadly, to put it best, this man is like a virus living in my brain that will not go away, the lawyers did not help but hindered the situation and slowly the abuse chips away at my physical and mental health, my life and my relationships daily. I cannot express enough how much coercive control, from my experience, is a predatory crime. Weak men taught to suppress their emotions and the notion that boys "Do Not Cry" who grow up to seek out and oppress good, kind and often vulnerable women through power to make themselves feel better about themselves. In my case, this entire relationship has been a scam and a game from day one; one I never knew anything about until it was much too late. I have been privately documenting the abuse from approximately 2009 forward and have written literally hundreds of pages so please consider how difficult this has been for me to reduce this down to twelve pages. The details are excruciating and with twelve pages, I will spare you those details but provide you a basic framework of my relationship with a man who is coercive and controlling and maintains power over me to this day.

I would like to say right from the beginning, just over a year after I met my ex, after having moved in with him, my supervisor sent me to Psychological Services in 2004 after a performance review that lacked the luster I had carried with me the previous four years, having received numerous accolades from the Police Officers and municipal government I worked with. At the time I was training to become a Unit Supervisor and was heavy into studying other aspects of the Police Service. Prior to meeting my ex, I had no mental health concerns and had never seen a psychologist, never mind a psychiatrist. It was in 2004 I met whom I will refer to as Dr M, Former Police Staff Psychiatrist and Federal and Provincial Forensic Expert. I have had the privilege of maintaining my relationship of psychotherapy with him from 2004 to present. He has been my hero in disguise and has helped give me the support, trust, esteem and confidence to do what I am doing today. I have provided him a copy of Ms Illingworth's letter entitled Letter to Minister David Lametti on Canadian Legislation Recognizing Coercive Control As An Offence from June 5, 2020, as well as the research paper conducted by Professors Dr Carmen Gill and Dr Mary Aspinall submitted April 20, 2020 entitled Understanding Coercive Control In The Context Of Intimate Partner Violence In Canada: How To Address The Issue Through The Criminal Justice System? Dr M has read these papers and we are both confident I have a case to advance this very important social issue. It has been finding my voice that has been difficult, due to the self-silencing, shame and the fear of further harm; a fear he has instilled in me the last eighteen years. I will remind you I was a confident, independent, strong, educated woman when I met this man. I am now on permanent disability for Complex PTSD, Depression and I imagine brain damage as the literature suggests, I have been living in poverty, and am now living with a friend who has graciously taken me in, all while without current legal counsel. He, on the other hand, comes from a wealthy family and quit working with an earning potential of over \$100,000 per year to avoid paying me and maintains a life of luxury; yet, refuses to divorce me and has not provided me a cent towards my necessities of life, nor refuses to separate our assets. I will remind you, I left in 2015.

As Viktor Frankl said in *An Unheard Cry for Meaning*, one must find meaning from their suffering. This is my meaning. It is my belief that I want to take the sourest of lemons life has given me and more than make something that resembles lemonade but a pitcher of sweet lemonade. I want to be an agent of change. I want to help improve the lives of women and children. I imagine many of you have young daughters and family members whom you care about deeply. I have 21- & 23-year-old stepdaughters who have been significantly affected by this relationship and that with their biological mother, not to mention that with their grandparents and extended family, all victims of alienation. I cannot bare to witness another woman experience Intimate Partner Violence with such terrorizing psychological and emotional traumas like myself, nor can I bare to witness another woman in Canada fall through the cracks the way I have. Especially regarding the Family Law system with having hired and fired both a Legal Aid Lawyer and a private litigator who both failed me miserably the last four and a half years despite knowing of the Intimate Partner Violence I was continuing to experience to which I hope to take up with the Law Societies and the provincial Human Rights Commission. I truly believe that Coercive Control is a Human Rights Violation as recognized by the United Nations and I beg of you to consider this today.

I met my former partner in December 2002, three months after his ex moved out of their home, on a dating site where it is believed, in hindsight, he was shopping for a new mother for his children and someone to be a pillar of his community and really help him shine amongst his peers. Leaving him, in the matter I did, leaving him period, took away that pillar and shine and now he is out to punish me. He told me that his previous wife had mental illness and had abandoned their two daughters. I was horrified and felt sorry for him and the girls. He presented himself as an extremely charming owner of a successful company; however, indicated he struggled with the idea of how to handle the responsibility of being a single father and in hindsight, was drawn to me because of my love for children, having discussed my experience volunteering with numerous children's organizations and wanting to be a mother myself. He romanced me, taking me to fancy restaurants and expensive weekends away. He resembled who I believed to be my "Prince Charming" as he was so much different than any other man I had dated and my own father for that matter. Sadly, he lured me in quite easily;

however, ended up being far worse than any man I have ever encountered. He was a predator and I was young and apparently naïve, ignoring every red flag I had.

We had discussed relationship concerns I had such as me not wanting to live in his ex-wife's house and wanting to be a mother of my own, as he had had a vasectomy performed two years prior. He promised me the world. He took me out house shopping every other weekend and we even saw a urologist to have his vasectomy reversed. It was only less than four months after meeting him and only seven months after their biological mother moved out, in Spring 2003, that he insisted on introducing me to his girls, ages three and five. I conveyed to him that I was hesitant about meeting the girls as I did not believe it was good for them, potentially having women revolve in and out of their life, should things not work out between us. Shortly afterwards, he announced to me that he had told his girls, ages that "Daddy has a new special friend" and that we were all going to meet for dinner and bowling that evening. I panicked but went along with it. The younger one immediately latched onto me and from this point forward I will refer to them as "my girls" as I spent 24/7 raising them from the time I moved in a few months later until 2015.

After meeting the girls, everything changed. He told me that his ex had told him she did not love him and did not know if she ever had and that I better never do that to him. He also began threatening me that if I left the relationship, I would no longer be able to have a relationship with the girls. Well, by this point I had fallen in love with his girls. We married in the Virgin Islands in 2005. He made a million promises; none that came to fruition including having a child of my own and remaining in the house I did not want to be in. Over the years, the threats and abuse became more direct. Also, at the time things changed, he told me that at the age of 13 he had been sent off to a private military boarding school as his parents felt he had become a juvenile delinquent, drinking, smoking pot and stealing cars with his friends. He shared that during his four years there, he tested "positive" for being a "psychopath" and bragged that when he lived in St Catherine's, Ontario, he lived on the same street as Paul Bernardo and when we traveled to the area, he would drive us past this said location, pointing it out. I did not know if it were true but you could imagine that this would create great fear in me and was something I always kept in the back of my mind. He retold the story over the years, to me and others and I thought it to be the strangest thing to brag about and associate himself with. Another reason I was kept afraid was because when he got angry his eyes would change from bright blue to black and I found it to be the strangest and scariest thing. Also, when he spoke to me his tone is very low, slow, cold and calculating which also creeped me out. During his time in private school, he became a Reservist and at 18, joined the Canadian Armed Forces. He did two tours with United Nations and in the end, had no mental health related consequences of his service. He was released on a physical disability pension and re-educated in Computer Engineering with a 3.99 GPA but eventually found himself in Sales. Not once in the time we were together was he willing to honor Remembrance Day, another thing I found to be extremely disturbing.

Much to my dismay, shortly after moving in together, I learned that he had been romancing me off a high limit line of credit and that his company, nor he, made any money. His business was a networking business where he would spend his afternoons and evenings at mixers, drinking, where I eventually learned he was an alcoholic as well. As time progressed, he told me he drank because of me but I now know that simply was not true but just another smokescreen for his abuse as he had been drinking since he was 13. I also later learned that his ex had signed away her dower rights and walked away from her life, her home and her children for \$15,000. He told me about two suicide notes that she had written, indicating that he would use them in court should she attempt to gain custody as it would show her as an unfit mother. Many ask, why did you not leave. It is unexplainable. By this point, he had already pushed many of my policing friends out of my life, had me living in a state of fear and I could not bare to think of never seeing the girls again. I felt they needed protection from him, having chased off their mother. I was terrorized by the thought.

It was my opinion that mental health issues were not a good reason for their mother to be apart from her daughters and as time passed, her and I became friends and I became a bridge between her (and her family)

and the girls to which he did NOT like and made life much more difficult for both of us, using one another against each other and manipulating the children to favor their “new” mother. I assured her that I did not want to replace her in any context, that I wanted to become a mother to my own child and we could be a parenting alliance that benefited the girls but by this point, her self-esteem had been battered. And I was not really sure of the man I was dealing with at this point as she did not appear to be the person he had made her out to be in his stories.

As mentioned, I had never experienced mental health issues prior to meeting this predator. Our relationship consisted of him cycling through idealizing and devaluing me. For the first couple years of our relationship, he spent his afternoons and evenings drinking while I balanced paying the bills, raising the girls and working in a 24/7, 365-day essential position with our Metropolitan Police Service. In the Fall of 2004, I had told him in marriage counselling, that if he did not get a real job, I was leaving. I was firm at this point. He swooned me and it was at this time he began working in retail sales where he had been quite successful up until 2018 when he quit working to avoid paying me any support or assets. In 2004 Dr M diagnosed me with depression and I had taken approximately six months sick leave.

In 2006, at seven, my younger daughter was experiencing extreme anxiety, at which time him and their mother met and agreed to a parenting order that allowed the children the choice to whom they lived with and that she would not pay any child support. That was another thing he enjoyed bragging about to family and friends, that as long as he declined any child support from her, she was not given any choice on how the children would be raised. This became a main source of contention between us. Every Christmas he also insisted on over spoiling the girls so that they would choose to spend Christmas with us and not their mother. I found this to be extremely heartbreaking. However, there was no arguing with him about major decisions involving the children. It was at this time of the parenting order we gained full physical custody of the younger one. A few years later we gained full physical custody of the older one. In the beginning, I entered into this relationship aware of my role as a stepmother but in NO way did I think, believe or conceptualize that I would be giving up my career and my life to become their full-time, stay at home mother, especially not having had a child of my own. I was career oriented and well on my way to success within the Service.

It was also at this time, while studying through Ottawa Police College to advance my career, I became “sick” again. I had begun to self-harm, something I had never done prior. At this time, my employer sent me to private DBT therapy. I did so for over two years, all while on long term disability. At this time, my ex felt that working in Policing was too hard on me emotionally and the hours were not conducive to a family life and because our younger daughter was experiencing extreme anxiety, he declared that it would be best for me to quit my job and raise his two girls 24/7 from 2008-2015. His mother had been a stay-at-home wife and that was the life he wanted to create for me, against my wishes. This was also against my DBT therapist’s advice and I had felt guilty about the money spent by my employer but he did not care, nor had any respect for authority. I became sicker and sicker and in 2012 I began receiving CPP Disability Pension.

At all costs and efforts, my ex made sure to attend my psychotherapy sessions after I left the Service as he was charming and would deflect issues about us and keep the focus on my extended family and me being “mentally ill,” all while presenting himself as my biggest supporter. He used to always say that my mental health problems were no one’s business and proceeded to continue calling me his Trophy Wife to the few friends we had and myself, having involved myself in every aspect of our daughters’ lives, their private school education and volunteering within our community. We reflected the image of a perfect family, living in the suburbs, stay-at-home mom, fancy SUV, private school education, frequent travel and the girls and I volunteered heavily in our community from the time they were very young because I always believed in giving back. Until it made me very sick, having to put a fake smile on everyday, while living with depression and continuing to run from this fundraising meeting to that committee meeting, entertaining family and friends and maintaining that pillar of community and family he so desperately sought; to look good and shine. By this point he had

pushed out all my closest friendships and I had become isolated, outside of the relationships I made within the school and community and of course, the next-door neighbors whom he had become enamoured with and we became over enmeshed with, sharing every aspect of lives together, except he refused for anything to be said about mental health problems, and partying continued from 2009 to 2015. They liked to party and I did not fit in so often I was excluded or chose not to partake. Eventually, I conceded as I was lonely and felt neglected in every aspect by him. I became best friends with the wife but anytime there was an issue, he always sided with her and caused trouble between the two of us. I felt all alone, outside of my daughters and the demons living in my head. The last year I chose to forego many activities with them. As well, I am choosing to use the word house because it was not a home, but a house of horrors and I had become the perfect smokescreen for the terror and damage going on inside. I was isolated, I knew how to keep secrets but what I was best at, was putting on that deceiving smile everyday despite the pain and abuse I was enduring for what I felt at the time was for my daughters' sake, in protecting them. From the time I met his girls up until 2015, he consistently reminded me of his threat that should I choose to leave our relationship, I would never see the girls again. This left me extremely trapped. He did; however, believe it was important to discuss mental illness with the girls from a young age as both their mothers had mental illness but told them not to tell anyone, which was just another smokescreen for his abuse.

I have heard the witnesses speak so much about the current stay at home orders regarding the pandemic and that the home is often NOT the safest place for many women and I understand this all too well. In 2013 he took a position where he worked from home two to three days a week, plus his usual two days off and had broken me down so slowly and insidiously over the years that he was pushing me around, having me believe I was not even capable of boiling water. I had become extremely dependant on him. I doubted every action I made. Over the years, going to the grocery store once a week to get away from his constant presence was a luxury. As the years went by, when he was in the workplace, he made it his practice to call me constantly to check in and when he was at home, he was brainwashing, manipulating, lying, gaslighting and stonewalling me, under the guise he was helping "Fix Me" because he always said, "When you're better, we'll be better" and "then we could have a baby." However, prior to even becoming sick, he had spent three times the cost of the vasectomy reversal on a large, fancy Trexx deck. After every session with Dr M, while walking out the building, he would ask me "I wonder what Dr M thinks of me!?" and I would respond, "Probably a Saint for putting up with me" to which he would always reply, "Maybe!" It was almost as if he knew he was playing a game of cat and mouse with Dr M, the Forensic Expert. To this day I feel scarred and sorry by my inability over the years to express my experience to the one man I trusted most, but my ex would always say, he'll never believe you.

In Spring 2015 everything began to change. I began to fight for my independence. At this point the girls were nearly sixteen and eighteen and I felt that they were old enough to maintain a separate relationship with me should I leave. Him and I would fight constantly as I wanted to return to a career or upgrade my education and I wanted my own vehicle as we had been sharing, despite having a second vehicle that was not up to its best or safest performance. He would always tell me we needed the newest, most innovative appliances to which we already had new appliances. With regards to school, he made it very clear that he would become re-educated prior to me as he had a new dream of becoming an electrician and being that he made the money, he made the decisions. I believe by this point, he believed I had become a huge nuisance and thought it would be a good idea for me to travel abroad, while volunteering, like his mother had done. I would beg him for the answer to "I cannot keep telling people I am a stay-at-home mother to a sixteen- and eighteen-year-old" and he would yell at me "You tell them the truth! You are a stay-at-home wife." No, no I was not; this was not what I signed up for.

On April 13th I told him I wanted a divorce to which he cautiously reminded me of the consequences of my repeated requests and demanded that I am NOT to bring up divorce again. This was a "mistake" on my part as I now understand, it gave him five months to aggressively drive me to a mental breakdown where I attempted

to take my life, seeing this as the only way of escaping my marriage. For Spring Break, I took the girls to California and rented us a car and drove us around from one place to another and it was at this time, I KNEW I had the confidence to be independent again, I was extremely proud of myself and knew I had to insist on a divorce. Within eight hours of our after midnight return to Canada, he took me aside and told me that he was very proud of me and that as a result, he had placed a gift in my drawer. He proceeded to tell me that he had found one of ex wife's bras in the basement, from many, many years prior, and thought I would enjoy it. I fainted and to this day, I do not believe the bra ever existed, especially considering our bra size differences, but it was clearly done to knock me straight off my high horse of independence and confidence. He told me he had gotten rid of it and apologized profusely; the only apology I ever received from that man in almost nineteen years. It was his modus operandi to stonewall me, crazy make and refuse to accept any responsibility for anything, ever.

A couple of days later, he was banned from coming to my sessions by Dr M for admitting to committing such a sadistic act towards me and it was very understood that this was a situation of domestic violence. This made him very angry as he had lost control and I was free to speak with Dr M about my truths which took time. At this time, I stayed with Dr M and the two of us began to see a Family Psychiatrist whom he was keen on charming over, like a new toy to play with.

At this point I had lost 90 lbs in a short course of time to which he admitted on audio that it was from emotional and psychological turmoil between us but that he did not care, nor show any concern for my health. There were days I was up three days straight with no sleep and I was the only parent the girls had to rely on. Years prior, him and the girls' biological mother gave me legal guardianship through the courts. I had a responsibility to the girls but I could not get out of the relationship and I became unable to be the best mother I could be. On July 25, 2015 I have an audio recording of me crying, indicating to him that I was going crazy and needed to get away from him. It is very clear that he had become completely negligent with my mental, emotional and physical health as he did nothing.

In private, he would constantly and consistently remind me that I would not get away from him as I love the girls too much. By this time, I had lost half my body weight and was quickly losing my mind. Despite my efforts to compromise with him and leave quietly, on September 29, 2015, he came home from the neighbors drunk, a nightly occasion, and I told him I was suicidal and he coldly looked me in the eyes and said, "I suggest you live, but if you leave, take the dog with you." At this time, I realized how much he hated me and how much I hated the person I had become, and within five minutes, I left the house in our vehicle parked on the street below the bedroom window where he "supposedly" fell fast asleep as he "supposedly" didn't hear me leave, with my dog and I attempted to take my life a few blocks away, by overdose, at a local church, where I begged God to let my spirit fly free in my next lifetime. By this point he had destroyed me psychologically, emotionally, physically and spiritually. I had on many occasions attempted to call him out on his abuse but between April and September he continued to brainwash me to believe that I was the abuser and in that desperate moment, I believed nobody would believe me because I had already been holding onto the secret for so long and he was the most charming guy ever who could literally talk anyone into believing anything which made him so successful in sales. Many times, over the years, I had threatened to leave but because I was extremely afraid and he always love bombed me and the cycle of violence would repeat and he would remind me of his threat of keeping me from the girls which heavily increased over 2015, when the girls were 16 & 18, his abuse nearly killed me. But I survived for a reason and that reason was to speak my truth.

After my suicide attempt, I was admitted to hospital by EMS. It took this man over eight hours to advise my parents of my suicide attempt which gave him time to come up with a "story." The moment my parents arrived at the hospital, he blamed my mother and this experience has left her personally traumatized to this day. She remembers him acting extremely suspicious and agitated while he was at the hospital. He demanded that if she did not tell the family I was mentally ill, he would do it himself. My mother was horrified. He told

the people in our life I was mentally ill and because of that, he had asked me for a divorce and because of that, I attempted to take my life. As audio will show, this was clearly not the case. Also, as I learned later from my younger daughter, he immediately shared all the details of my suicide attempt with our daughters and told me while in hospital, I am NOT to contact the girls, period. The warned consequences became true and he immediately turned the girls against me. Dr M had me transferred to his area hospital where my ex attempted to have me committed for mental illness. His behavior was strange. When I was being transferred, I called him as I was feeling afraid; however, he told me he was having drinks with the neighbor and not to bother him. He refused to bring me a warm jacket or warm shoes. He cancelled our bank account. He only visited me twice while in hospital, but only would see me if I came to our vehicle, which he would drive off property which was against the rules but he did not care. The psychiatrists in the hospital advised me all I needed to do was stay away from him and I was released five days later. My ex advised me I was not to come home. The psychiatric team advised me to take a taxi home as it was my home to heal and if he and the girls did not like it, they were welcome to stay elsewhere. I was too afraid of him to risk doing so. He picked me up from the hospital an hour late, after which I realized he had pillaged through my stuff at the hospital, taking my phone (transferring my password notebook from my phone to his phone via iMessage) and my suicide notes which sadly I wrote just prior to my attempt when I was feeling self-contempt. He dropped me off at my parents' home with two suitcases he told me my older daughter packed, my dog, my phone and my purse with no credit cards, debit cards, vehicle keys or housekeys. Approximately a few weeks after dropping me off, I was admitted to hospital for a second breakdown as all my accounts had been hacked with the passwords changed, my laptop was being hacked and the wheels on the vehicle I was borrowing from my mother were being flattened. I was truly afraid for my life in thinking he was coming after me for beginning to speak my truth. He would always yell at me, asking what I was telling Dr M. When I was admitted, Dr M said to me, "You have been living in fear for a very long time." Again, I was released from hospital five days later. A humbling experience, but not one I care to ever experience again. I have not been hospitalized since and am forever grateful to my psychotherapist who has helped me heal many of my traumas but I still have a long way to go. This was only the beginning of the hell my ex would put me through from that time to present.

At this time, the girls began to see the same Psychiatrist we had been seeing for "our" marital problems where he continued to paint me very negatively and like with me, he sat in on my daughters' appointments, with his passive abusive presence. My ex neglected my daughters' mental health needs and concerns and fast forward to today, both girls have immense struggles in their lives. The effort I have put into reconnecting with them with unsuccessful results has left me completely heartbroken.

I have many audio recordings (approximately thirty hours; six prior to my suicide attempt and dozens afterwards) which clearly illustrates coercive control, crazy making and threats. Audio recordings will show that he spent between November 20, 2015 and April 11, 2017 threatening that if I hire a lawyer, I will never see a penny more than \$25,000k. That was inflation from his first wife. In the beginning, he changed the locks on the house and refused to allow me to collect any personal items. Approximately eighteen months later he allowed me to come to the house once, with my mother, for an hour, under his direct supervision while following me around, directing me as to what I was and was NOT allowed to have. It was an extremely intimidating experience and, in the end, he did not allow me to take ANY sentimental items. These items included my photographs and family videos, childhood belongings, birthday gifts from others which he demanded were part of his home décor, anything relating to my dog, my income tax files, my intellectual property and basically anything that he knew meant something to me. He kept all marital property. I was afraid to involve Police as I felt so much shame and embarrassment for the situation I had landed in, considering my personality, my education and my work experience. This is where he has me caught; it is his hope that I stay silent out of shame for having worked for my local Police Service.

One of the two reasons I began to record our conversations to begin with; one, because he started recording us for a "learning experience" but he would always immediately delete them afterwards and two, to listen back

and understand what I was experiencing and that I was NOT crazy and what I was experiencing was extreme abuse. In the last few months, my psychotherapist has listened to some of the recordings or read their briefs and has concurred.

I went completely no contact with him in Spring 2017 under the advice of Dr M as he felt continuing to communicate with him was greatly hindering me further. It was very difficult for me as I had become trauma bonded to him over the past thirteen years, having lost all of who I was at my core, my personal agency and my independence. I had become mentally disabled and was dependant on him. From the time of our separation to the time of this writing, he has not provided me with one penny towards my necessities of life, nor a penny from our assets. He told me on many occasions that if I were to hire a lawyer, I would never see a penny more than \$25,000. He has had me living in a state of FEAR for five and a half years and it has left me deeply scarred.

As a side note, as this will relate to what I speak to at a later point, at Christmas 2015 this predator told me he would only bring the girls by to see my parents if I left their premises. It was the most heartbreaking moment of my life, as I sat in my parents' cold garage, eating shortbread cookies from the one and only friend I had outside of him, for over four hours, forty feet from my daughters whom I had not seen or spoken to since that fateful night, as he sat with my immediate and extended family while the girls celebrated Christmas with their grandparents, as they had every year since 2003. I wanted this experience for my daughters and my parents so I conceded. First, he alienated my daughters from me and eventually alienated them from my family, their closest family growing up. I have not spoke with my older daughter since my suicide attempt and I began a relationship with my younger daughter after approximately 18 months but it has been patchy at best. She was always my little snuggling love bug who I have not heard the words I love you from in five and a half years. They were my whole world and my heart has been shattered.

I hired a Legal Aid Family Law Lawyer in summer 2016 at which point the threats amped up as I was going against his directives. I supplied her with a 31-page document outlining the abuse and after fifteen months of him stalling and her taking lots of sick time and vacation, in the end she only offered mediation which the Canadian Government has indicated in their own documents, during Divorce Proceedings, mediation should never be used in cases of domestic violence. She told me that domestic violence did not matter in divorce as there are no minor children. In this case my younger one was still a minor and her needs went ignored and abusing her mother is abuse by proxy. I was against sitting down with the man who was holding all the power and had become deathly afraid of him. This was ignored and led me to firing her and hiring a private litigator in Late Fall 2017 who indicated she would have this in a Domestic Special in the Spring. The Legal Aid Lawyer sent me back the 31- page extremely confidential document through regular Canada Post. My second lawyer was not only fully aware of the abuse I was enduring but made negligent error after negligent error, always handing him back the power. I sent many offers, all which went ignored. I have been especially traumatized by my second lawyer who I fired in Fall 2020 after not a single thing had been accomplished on my file in nearly three years and shortly afterwards, was accepted to the provincial Income Support program as my condition had been worsened by being involved with this lawyer.

In Spring 2018 my lawyer had a DRO scheduled (not sure why as she had told me when I hired her, she would be taking it to a domestic special in the Spring and both my stepdaughters were of legal age at this point) to which I attended the courthouse, scared to death, meanwhile she was late, leaving me in the small waiting room at the courthouse alone with my mother, scared to death, waiting for him and his counsel to show up. I was in the meeting room for approximately ten minutes while my lawyer spoke with the DRO officer about the weather and they quickly caught up on their lives, which I truly felt could have been better spent discussing the Threats and Intimate Partner Violence I was experiencing prior to her stating she forgot to notify his counsel about the hearing but that I had fulfilled my duty and quickly left the courthouse. She then advised his counsel in writing "as two competent counsel, we should be able to work this out." Apparently not.

Also, in Spring 2018 my ex walked into TD Canada Trust and without my consent or knowledge, both while under counsel, knowing we were divorcing and separating assets, with neither of us working and resigned a 60- month term on our mortgage. He then in another sadistic attack against me, sent my youngest daughter and her boyfriend who were visiting me with an open box full of framed wedding photos, leftover wine bottle wedding invitations, gifts I had given him and sentimental items between the two of us and she said, "Dad said you wanted this stuff back." I was in shock. The following week, when she returned our dog, I said, "I don't know why Dad sent that stuff back because it all went in the garbage" and this has been the ONLY time I have said anything negative about him to her since leaving. I refused to allow him to have my daughter believe I wanted this "stuff" back two and a half years later as if I was pining for him.

Again, he never responded to a single offer my lawyer sent and sent me only ONE offer, December 13, 2019, valid for ten days, as promised, for \$25,000 and not a penny more, again ruining my Christmas. My lawyer, whom I was under the false presumption was my advocate, told my aunt and I in the Spring of 2019 that the best way to get back at a narcissist is to NOT divorce him, hanging spousal support and remarriage over his head until he agrees to place nice; a game I am not interested in, and is in direct contradiction to the reason I hired her; Divorce, Division of Assets and Spousal Support and when asked by my aunt why a separation agreement was never drawn up to protect my assets, she indicated they are archaic and were important fifty years ago.

Prior to this I had pushed for a court ordered sale of our house and my lawyer made not a single term or condition on my behalf with regards to him buying me out, just before court on May 17, 2019, where I swore in my affidavit that I suffer Complex PTSD due to his continued narcissistic abuse. He was then able to manipulate dates, mortgage amounts and home values which were completely WRONG and during the historical appraisal I received, he had strategically placed my personal items in the photographs throughout the house. Then he was able to provide his opinion as to the value of our home, some \$65,000 lower than what he had disclosed through the courts a year prior and both counsel accepted it at face value. I was then informed by a junior law associate of my lawyer's by email saying essentially that if I do not drop spousal support, he will refuse to sign divorce papers. I asked if this was not blackmail to which I did not receive a response. I sent my lawyer an article entitled Divorcing a Narcissist and she boldly replied, "I am quite aware of how to deal with a narcissist as I have been in family law for twenty-eight years." Clearly, she did not.

My lawyer then told me in a later meeting that sometimes we just need to cut our losses and in an unprofessional manner told me about her sad divorce thirty years prior and explained that after you cut your losses, you can rise through the ashes like she did, joining law school when her daughter was in grade one, all while wasting my time and my money. She also indicated in writing when questioned as to why she made me investigate all this proof of when I moved in, including having to embarrassingly reach out to my old landlord and roommate to get a letter for her meanwhile having to explain why all this was necessary, that if I had not done so, his claim may as well be worth \$25,000. The last offer was sent out April 2020 which went ignored and I did not hear from my lawyer until August 2020 pushing trial or mediation. There are other complicating details I cannot simply get into in a short brief; however, I fired her in September 2020. After not accomplishing a single thing on my behalf, dragging this out nearly three years, all while living in poverty, in Canada, and after making major errors and not being forthcoming about them, my lawyer refuses to release my file to get a divorce as she holds a solicitors' lien on my home, one which she easily got me to sign, despite my cognitive challenges and despite the Federal Code of Conduct indicating that prior to doing so, a lawyer MUST instruct the client to seek separate legal advice regarding the lien to which she did NOT. My lawyer has been a complete let down to pursuing my best interests. Because of my cognitive disability I brought a witness to each of the few meetings we had. In nearly three years my lawyer sent me eighteen emails with three simple letters, FYI with an attachment and no further explanation. She allowed almost three years of my life to drag on, worsening my symptoms and how she treated me is simply not acceptable.

Nearly five years and two lawyers who knew about the domestic violence and threats and I am now without counsel and on permanent CPP-Disability and Provincial Income Support. He inherited over a million dollars in 2020 and is set to inherit much more and he gets what he wants, to stay separated and never having to give me a penny. I have no money to fight against him. It is my belief that my lawyer took advantage of me knowing I had a mental disability. It is also irreprehensible that his counsel has continued to represent him for four and a half years. Crimes and human rights violations have taken place and my freedom continues to be stolen from me to this day.

My ex is refusing to let me go. Despite not changing his profile picture on Facebook in over three years, thirteen days after I fired my lawyer, he changed his profile photo to a photo of him in a fancy black-tie tuxedo with a smirk on his face and it is my opinion that he is sending me the message (knowing I would check his Facebook to see if he is working) of Power, Wealth and Triumph. He has also got me smeared all over his Facebook photos as if we are still happily married. I have since learned, through listening to the witness' testimonies regarding social media, that keeping me smeared on his photos is sending me the message that he still owns me. This is Canada and I am not a piece of property.

These are all small examples from a very exhaustive story I have closely detailed over the last eight years. At bare minimum I believe he can be charged with Failure to Provide the Necessities of Life and Threats. But this is a much bigger case of Coercive Control. I believe my evidence is tight. Not only do I have an expert witness, I also have over thirty hours of audio (six leading up to my suicide attempt and all the rest threats and head games should I hire a lawyer), plus journals and many writings dating back to 2012. The audios with him will clearly and certainly ascertain the coercive control and power inequality. I recorded these conversations under my consent under Section 184 of the Criminal Code.

Since late Fall I have reached out to the S/Sgt and Sgt of my Metropolitan Police Service Domestic Conflict Unit a handful of times, as extremely difficult it was for me to do so and have been unable to get the Sgt to have a detective interview me. On January 4, 2021, I made the S/Sgt (who unfortunately relayed to me was transferred out of the unit) and Sgt aware via email of my complicated domestic situation and of my intentions to help Justice Lametti and Members of Parliament see that Coercive Control MUST be added to the Criminal Code of Canada to protect many women who share a similar story as mine and future generations of young women. It has taken me many years to understand my experience and find my voice. I really hope you will hear it! I no longer know what to do or how to move forward, nor do I know how to take my full freedom (including Legal and Financial) back and be released as his prisoner. I feel paralyzed and live-in constant fear; yet remind myself I live in Canada and do NOT have to continue being married to this monster anymore. So why am I being forced to?

Today, here I am, again, doing one of the hardest things I have ever done by reaching out to yourselves, the Federal Government and I feel honored and encouraged to share my story of Coercive Control in Intimate Relationships with you if it helps bring about change for woman and children, especially those enduring such atrocities during this pandemic and to bring about a better, safer Canada. I am extremely proud of myself. I may have setbacks but I will continue to rise!!

I was hoping if any of the Members of Parliament or Parliamentary Witnesses who have read this brief who have any questions or could direct me as I prepare for the fight of my life, for seeking FREEDOM from my abuser, you do so through the Clerk of the Committee who has my contact information. I have been preparing duplicate binders of evidence the last number of months. My two objectives are one, family law lawyers must be trained in domestic violence and two, to have coercive control added to the Criminal Code of Canada. Again, I ask that you please consider my voice and my story at this very important time.

Honestly, finding my voice has been the hardest part of my whole journey and as mentioned, I hope someone hears me. I have literally lost everything, first my career. Secondly, my mind which thankfully has been healing the last five plus years with my psychotherapist but has also suffered the lasting affects of Complex PTSD, not to mention the further trauma caused by my lawyers who made it much worse over the last four and a half years. Every possible hurdle has been placed in front of me but I promise, I will rise! I believe in Truth! I believe in Justice! After my suicide attempt, he stole my possessions, our possessions, our assets, our home, our daughters, our friends and my dignity. He and the lawyers involved have also stolen my trust for the family law system. However, I have been healing and am ready for the fight of my life. I am ready to write the next chapter of my journey. I am ready to make sweet lemonade. Having Coercive Control added to the Criminal Code of Canada, like our Commonwealth countries, will put a stop to the silent violence that plagues and destroys women and I ask that you please let me help you accomplish this very important task. Please hear my voice.

I offer the following recommendations, based on my experience:

- 1) One of the witnesses stated that our learning begins in Kindergarten. I could not agree more. It is imperative that our Education System be reformed to include early intervention for generations down the line. A Holistic approach providing curriculum for grades K-12 that includes time designed to teach children about mindfulness, coping mechanisms, self-esteem, how to handle stress, feelings, communication and many other topics could be explored. There must be a fundamental mind shift starting from the earliest ages no matter what background one comes from. These are the tools needed to attempt to attack a systematic change between men and women.
- 2) Funding for Police Departments to build and support a network of Domestic Conflict Unit personnel including teams of officers attached to social workers and influenced by domestic violence specialists. I live in an area of Canada with over a million people; yet I believe our Domestic Conflict Unit consists of only eight teams of an investigator and social worker to investigate the most serious domestic violence situations. We also need better training in intimate partner violence and coercive and controlling behavior to Patrol Personnel, who are the ones on the front lines dealing daily with domestic conflict situations within the Service. Dr Gill has mentioned working with Police Departments across Canada and the various scenarios are presented to teach officers about this type of violence. However, she is only one woman and needs help reforming Policing. I am happy to see that the three Chief of Police who spoke during the proceedings were in favor of passing such a bill and training their officers to see the red flags of a much bigger issue.
- 3) No ifs, ands or buts, all Family Law attorneys must receive accreditation for domestic violence training or at bare minimum, have exclusive training available for those who would like to be accredited as such and be proud and available to advertise as such. Both my lawyers knew about the Intimate Partner Violence and Threats, yet neither addressed it, nor did anything to help me or support me. In fact, they very much hindered the situation by abuse of power, theirs and his. I believe when it comes to domestic violence, complacency is complicity. This is simply NOT acceptable.

I always told my ex that one day the truth would set me free. I thank you kindly for taking the time to read my story and for being a part of my journey.

Victim Impact Statement ~ Praying by Kesha Rose Sebert

Well, you almost had me fooled
Told me that I was nothing without you
Oh, but after everything you've done
I can thank you for how strong I have become
'Cause you brought the flames and you put me through hell
I had to learn how to fight for myself
And we both know all the truth I could tell
I'll just say this, I wish you farewell
I hope you're somewhere praying, praying
I hope your soul is changing, changing
I hope you find your peace
Falling on your knees, praying
I'm proud of who I am
No more monsters, I can breathe again
And you said that I was done
Well, you were wrong and now the best is yet to come
'Cause I can make it on my own
And I don't need you, I found a strength I've never known
I'll bring thunder, I've been burned
When I'm finished, they won't even know your name
You brought the flames and you put me through hell
I had to learn how to fight for myself
And we both know all the truth I could tell
I'll just say this, I wish you farewell
I hope you're somewhere praying, praying
I hope your soul is changing, changing
I hope you find your peace
Falling on your knees, praying
Oh, sometimes, I pray for you at night
Someday, maybe you'll see the light
Oh, some say, in life, you're gonna get what you give
But some things, only God can forgive
I hope you're somewhere praying, praying
I hope your soul is changing, changing
I hope you find your peace
Falling on your knees, praying