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TOWARDS A VIOLENCE-FREE CANADA: ADDRESSING AND ELIMINATING INTIMATE PARTNER AND FAMILY VIOLENCE

Report of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women

Karen Vecchio, Chair

**JUNE 2022
44th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION**

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the Status of Women**

**Karen Vecchio
Chair**

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44th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

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Reports from committees presented to the House of Commons

Presenting a report to the House is the way a committee makes public its findings and recommendations on a particular topic. Substantive reports on a subject-matter study usually contain a synopsis of the testimony heard, the recommendations made by the committee, as well as the reasons for those recommendations.

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THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

has the honour to present its

FOURTH REPORT

Pursuant to its mandate under Standing Order 108(2), the committee has studied intimate partner and family violence in Canada and has agreed to report the following:

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SUMMARY

Intimate partner violence (IPV) and family violence continue to be problems in Canada. Women and girls are more likely than men and boys to be affected by this violence. In contrast, men are more likely to be perpetrators of violence. Causes of IPV and family violence include gender inequality and patriarchal values. IPV and family violence are often rooted in power and control. Levels of IPV and family violence have increased during the COVID-19 pandemic.

IPV and family violence can have significant negative mental and physical health consequences, and in extreme cases the consequences can be deadly. In addition, IPV and family violence can contribute to other negative effects such as poverty and homelessness.

While research exists on the causes and effects of IPV and family violence in Canada, some gaps in data remain. There are gaps in data on experiences of IPV and family violence for individuals with intersecting identity factors. For example, there are not many data on the experiences of IPV and family violence among racialized women and girls in Canada.

For individuals fleeing IPV and family violence, access to support services like shelters and transition homes are important. In Canada, some individuals face challenges in accessing these services. These challenges include a lack of available shelter spaces and other services, economic insecurity, living in rural and remote geographic locations, lack of public transportation, and a reluctance to report or seek help from authorities. Some survivors with intersecting identities, like survivors who are immigrants, Indigenous individuals, or survivors with disabilities, may face additional barriers in accessing services. Witnesses said that survivors need services that meet their needs and that are trauma-informed. These services should also be culturally sensitive and should be offered in Indigenous languages, as well as languages other than French and English.

Changes to certain aspects of Canada's justice system could be helpful in addressing IPV and family violence. For example, the possibility of criminalizing coercive control, as well as providing IPV and family violence education and training to professionals in the justice system, including judges, lawyers and law enforcement, were suggested by witnesses. Witnesses also suggested that new legal initiatives could be beneficial. These new initiatives include specialized courts, alternative and restorative justice approaches, enacting legislation like *Clare's Law* and Bill C-233, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and the Judges Act (violence against an intimate partner) as well as legal efforts to

address financial and economic abuse. Finally, witnesses said that survivors involved in the justice system need services, like legal aid and support, in addressing parental alienation claims.

Preventing IPV and family violence is essential. For example, efforts to raise awareness about IPV and family violence are important for all individuals in Canada, including individuals who are newcomers to the country. As well, education for youth about healthy relationships and IPV and family violence is vital for all children and youth in Canada. Engaging men and boys is crucial in preventing IPV and family violence. Finally, witnesses underlined the importance of implementing the *National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence* as well as the Calls for Justice from the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

As a result of their deliberations committees may make recommendations which they include in their reports for the consideration of the House of Commons or the Government. Recommendations related to this study are listed below.

Recommendation 1

That the Government of Canada, through relevant federal departments, research the prevalence and impact of intimate partner violence in relation to teen dating..... 26

Recommendation 2

That the Government of Canada, through relevant federal departments, research intimate partner violence to examine the ways in which experiencing abuse during childhood may affect the intimate relationships of a person later in life..... 26

Recommendation 3

That the Government of Canada increase funding to organizations, such as Statistics Canada, that are collecting data on intimate partner and family violence, to expand the capacity of these organizations to collect disaggregated data on:

- experiences of intimate partner and family violence for racialized and Indigenous individuals; and**
- experiences of intimate partner and family violence for individuals with diverse gender and sexual identities. 26**

Recommendation 4

That, to remove as many barriers preventing all individuals seeking to flee abusive environments as possible, the Government of Canada, respecting the jurisdictions of the provinces and territories, through funding support for shelters and allocations in the National Housing Strategy, continue to develop and expand safe and affordable housing options for Indigenous women, including 24-hour 7 day per week low-barrier safe spaces, transition homes, and housing with rent geared to income..... 41

Recommendation 5

That the Government of Canada, through relevant federal departments, respecting the jurisdictions of provinces and territories, provide sufficient and sustained multi-year capacity funding for women and gender equality organizations that advocate and provide frontline supports and resources for individuals fleeing violence..... 41

Recommendation 6

That the Government of Canada, in collaboration with provinces and territories, implement sexual assault policies and accessible services for counselling in post-secondary institutions. 42

Recommendation 7

That the Government of Canada support individuals experiencing and attempting to leave situations of intimate partner and family violence by implementing measures to reduce poverty and ensure economic security, such as:

- expanding income guarantee programs in Canada; ensuring they are livable while assisting populations that currently fall outside of Canada’s social safety net;**
- providing universally accessible and affordable childcare, in collaboration with provinces and territories;**
- funding programs that provide financial counselling and financial literacy training, reflective of diverse linguistic and social contexts;**

- funding organizations that facilitate women’s access to education, training and employment;
- implementing a livable disability benefit that accounts for regional differences in the cost of living, in addition to current programs and supports meant to meet specific needs; and
- providing financial compensation for survivors of intimate partner violence. 42

Recommendation 8

That the Government of Canada provide funding to organizations offering supports and services for survivors of intimate partner and family violence, to ensure that older women who are survivors receive supports that meet both their needs as survivors of violence, as well as their aging-related needs. 42

Recommendation 9

That the Government of Canada, through relevant federal departments and respecting the jurisdictions of provinces and territories, ensure that children who have witnessed family and intimate partner violence are provided immediate mental health and trauma support services. 43

Recommendation 10

That the Government of Canada, in partnership with provinces, territories, and Indigenous nations, implement a plan to respond to the root causes of intimate partner violence in Canada, including:

- eliminating the barriers in accessing the justice systems for individuals working in criminalized or under-the-table economies such as sex work; and
- implementing culturally based programming that reflect diverse communities by providing sustainable funding for Elders, knowledge keepers, traditional healing centres, ethnic community associations, and newcomer and refugee service centres. 43

Recommendation 11

That the Government of Canada review programs dedicated to providing care for the pets of survivors of intimate partner violence, to:

- **ensure education for all stakeholders like police services and shelters to ensure they have the information they need to refer women to services that can foster their pets when they leave an abusive relationship; and**
- **explore funding for the care of companion pets and shelter of survivors of abuse when they leave an abusive relationship..... 43**

Recommendation 12

That the Government of Canada provide funding to research the prevalence of traumatic brain injuries and their life altering effects on survivors of intimate partner violence. 50

Recommendation 13

That the Government of Canada develop, in collaboration with Indigenous survivors, including women, individuals of diverse genders, a national action plan based on the 231 Calls for Justice from the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls that addresses violence against Indigenous women and girls. 50

Recommendation 14

That the Government of Canada explore methods to enhance judicial education on intimate partner violence and coercive control, including by providing more funding to the Canada Judicial Council to develop, improve and modernize training for judges on intimate partner violence and coercive control, in collaboration and informed by survivors of intimate partner violence and frontline organizations..... 66

Recommendation 15

That the Government of Canada develop a comprehensive strategy to address financial and economic abuse as a facet of family and intimate partner violence, reviewing existing legislative and policy structures available to support victims, including the *Federal Divorce Act*, the *Civil Marriage Act*, and the *Criminal Code*; encouraging coordination of enhanced trauma-informed policies for relevant sectors across Canada in partnership with provinces and territories, and investing in funding to develop educational materials and training for the incidence of economic abuse, as well as for organizations providing financial counselling and financial literacy training, in various languages..... 66

Recommendation 16

That the Government of Canada conduct a review of all federally regulated financial institutions, including their governing acts, to inform the development of a federal system designed to detect signs of economic abuse and provide support to survivors; considering similar frameworks as observed in the United Kingdom, and with attention to complicating circumstances preventing complete severance from financial abuse, such as for splitting jointly held debt and removing an account holder’s name if family violence has occurred. 67

Recommendation 17

That the Government of Canada, modeling the Safe Centre Peel model, explore ways of encouraging integration and cooperation among the various resource agencies in communities, and respecting the jurisdictions of provinces and territories, encourage police services to implement victim-centric practices informed by survivors, the Calls for Justice from the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and frontline organizations. 67

Recommendation 18

That the Government of Canada provide investment in the expansion of intimate partner and gender-based violence research, including disaggregated data for Black, Indigenous, racialized, disabled, and 2SLGBTQ+ communities as it relates to economic and financial abuse, including funding for the increased research capacity of organizations currently studying economic abuse, and the revision of metrics used by Statistics Canada to collect economic and financial abuse data. 67

Recommendation 19

That the Government of Canada study the possibility of introducing electronic monitoring devices to protect victims of family violence, including the gaps in infrastructure and accessibility of services, based on the Government of Quebec’s pilot study..... 67

Recommendation 20

That the Government of Canada work with provinces and territories to commit to exploring the feasibility of implementing *Clare’s Law* in Canada. 67

Recommendation 21

That the Government of Canada, in collaboration with provinces and territories, with the goal of ensuring that survivors with low incomes have access to adequate legal representation, increase funding for organizations providing legal support to survivors of intimate partner and family violence..... 68

Recommendation 22

That the Government of Canada work with provinces and territories to continue to prioritize the implementation of the *National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence* and the *Federal Strategy to Prevent and Address Gender-Based Violence*, ensuring that:

- **the National Action Plan is intersectional, responsive to the needs of individuals made most vulnerable by systems and takes a holistic approach to include resources and supports for violence prevention, intervention and healing strategies;**

- investments are made in early intervention strategies to address family violence and to prevent engagement with the criminal justice system;
- investments are made in preventative programming to bring about and maintain lasting change; and
- the National Action Plan includes commitments to funding for organizations serving women, to contribute to their long-term stability and lasting impact for vulnerable communities..... 79

Recommendation 23

That the Government of Canada, in collaboration with provinces, territories and communities, develop violence prevention, intervention and healing strategies that respond to the unique cultural, social, economic, and historic context of the communities it serves. 80

Recommendation 24

That the Government of Canada, respecting the jurisdictions of provinces and territories, develop educational tools regarding bodily autonomy and consent for children and youth using an intersectional lens and informed by social context, for public availability and distribution, to support Canadian parents, and continue to fund organizations who provide these services, as well as implement early prevention campaigns in relation to intimate partner violence, adolescent relationships, healthy relationships, and mental health in high schools and post-secondary institutions. 80

Recommendation 25

That, to ensure that groups of people who may be vulnerable to, or who are experiencing intimate partner and family violence, are equipped with knowledge and resource information, the Government of Canada:

- invest in and promote efficient communication strategies, with attention to accessibility by reaching women in often-frequented locations, such as hair salons and women’s washrooms;

- **implement culturally sensitive, locally informed and community-oriented awareness campaigns and education programs for various groups including young people, men and boys, women, gender diverse individuals and those living in Indigenous and northern communities in relation to intimate partner violence; and**
- **work with cultural community services and immigration settlement services to raise awareness of the signs of intimate partner violence and of local support resources in Indigenous languages and languages other than English and French, among the communities they serve. 80**

Recommendation 26

That the Government of Canada, through relevant departments, provide funding for support and educational programs that raise awareness and that address cultures of toxic masculinity and empower men and boys to take part in ending intimate partner violence and family violence and that promote healthy relationships, through the implementation of programs and services that support violence prevention and healing..... 81

Recommendation 27

That the Government of Canada, in its work with organizations providing cultural community services and immigration settlement services, raise awareness of the signs of intimate partner violence and of local support resources and ensure services in Indigenous languages and languages other than English and French are available among the communities these organizations serve. 81

Recommendation 28

That the Government of Canada, in partnership with community organizations and ethnic community associations, offer support and fund services for newcomers, and provide pathways for women with precarious immigration status who might be vulnerable to exploitation and abuse, as offered through language resources and settlement supports, temporary resident status, and open work permits, in a way that is consistent with the cultural and social context of these communities and implementing culturally based programming that reflect diverse communities by providing sustainable funding for Elders, knowledge keepers, traditional healing centres, ethnic community associations, and newcomer and refugee service centres..... 81



TOWARDS A VIOLENCE-FREE CANADA: ADDRESSING AND ELIMINATING INTIMATE PARTNER AND FAMILY VIOLENCE

INTRODUCTION

Women in Canada continue to experience intimate partner and family violence at higher rates compared to men. This violence can lead to devastating mental, physical spiritual and emotional effects for women and girls and gender diverse people. The House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women (the Committee) recognizes that gender equality cannot be achieved while intimate partner and family violence persist and acknowledges the importance of addressing and preventing this violence against women and girls in Canada. The Committee heard from 74 witnesses and received 137 written briefs between 4 February 2022 and 8 April 2022. The Committee received many informative anonymous and confidential written submissions. To ensure the safety of these survivors,¹ confidential submissions have been referenced throughout the report in a general manner. The Committee would like to provide a trigger warning for this report. This report discusses intimate partner and family violence and provides examples of personal experiences. Therefore, some readers may experience difficulties when reading this report.

The Committee heard about women's diverse experiences of intimate partner and family violence in Canada, as well as the causes and consequences of this violence. In addition, the Committee heard about the ways in which the COVID-19 pandemic affected intimate partner and family violence. Witnesses also informed the Committee about the services survivors need to heal and rebuild their lives, as well as the various barriers many women face when attempting to access these supports and services. Finally, the Committee was told about problems in the justice system that relate to intimate partner and family violence, as well as prevention strategies. The Committee has provided recommendations, based on witness testimony, related to the federal government's role in supporting women who experience intimate partner and family violence in Canada, as well as in preventing this violence. The Committee was honoured and greatly humbled to receive such valuable testimony and written briefs. The Committee wishes to extend its sincere gratitude to all the survivors and witnesses who contributed their time and

1 While this report focusses on women, the Committee recognizes that everyone can experience intimate partner violence and family violence, regardless of their gender identity.



energy and bravely offered their experiences and knowledge to the Committee during its study.

OVERVIEW: INTIMATE PARTNER AND FAMILY VIOLENCE IN CANADA

Intimate partner violence (IPV), family violence and gender-based violence (GBV)² are non-partisan issues and anyone can be a victim or perpetrator of these kinds of violence.³ IPV is rooted in power and control and refers to behaviours causing physical, sexual or psychological harm by a previous or current intimate partner. IPV can include aggression, coercion and other controlling behaviours, such as the control of finances,⁴ which may be difficult to identify.⁵ The Committee received many briefs describing personal experiences of IPV and its devastating life-long effects.⁶ The briefs provided accounts of financial abuse,⁷ coercive control, manipulation and gaslighting,⁸ and of witnessing IPV as a child.⁹ For example, an anonymous brief recounted:

-
- 2 The term [gender-based violence](#) refers to experiences of violence because of someone's gender, gender expression, gender identity or perceived gender. The term [intimate partner violence](#) refers to physical, sexual, or psychological harm, including coercive control, by a current or former partner or spouse. Finally, [family violence](#) is violence occurring between any members of a family, and can also include intimate partner violence.
 - 3 House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women (FEWO), [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 5 April 2022, 1545 (Marjolaine Montminy, Director, Centre-Femmes de Bellechasse); Laura Luketa, [Written Brief on Considerations & Recommendations for Addressing Intimate Partner & Domestic Violence in Canada](#), Brief; WoodGreen Community Services, [Brief](#).
 - 4 Anonymous Author (Author 37), [Brief](#); Armagh House, [Ending Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada](#), Brief; Shalom Wiebe, [Written Brief for the Study on Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada](#), Brief.
 - 5 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 4 March 2022, 1450 (Kimberley Greenwood, Co-Chair, Victims of Crime Committee, Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 5 April 2022, 1545 (Marjolaine Montminy); Statistics Canada, [Brief: Statistical profile of intimate partner violence in Canada](#), Brief; Sagesse Domestic Violence Prevention Society, [Coercive Control Brief](#), Brief.
 - 6 See for example: Anonymous Author (Author 19), [Brief](#); Anonymous Author (Author 20), [Brief](#); Stéphanie Plante, [Brief](#); Anonymous Author (Author 15), [Brief](#); Anonymous Author (Author 27), [Brief](#).
 - 7 See for example: Judy Coey, [Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada](#), Brief; Anonymous Author (Author 12), [Brief](#); Anonymous Author (Author 10), [Brief](#); Anonymous Author (Author 48), [Brief](#); Anonymous Author (Author 37), [Brief](#).
 - 8 See for example: Anonymous Author (Author 18), [Brief](#); Anonymous Author (Author 13), [Brief](#); Anonymous Author (Author 48), [Brief](#); Anita Archambault, [Brief](#); Anonymous Author (Author 37), [Brief](#); RESPECT Society for Women.
 - 9 Anonymous Author (Author 19), [Brief](#); Anonymous Author (Author 13), [Brief](#); Anonymous Author (Author 12), [Brief](#); Anonymous Author (Author 9), [Brief](#).

I am a shell of the person I was due to the unrelenting emotional abuse and coercive controlling behaviour I endured during my 15 year marriage which persists through the litigation abuse I am enduring in the family court system. I have no medical reports, no pictures of bruises, no radiographs of broken bones. These scars run deep regardless.¹⁰

Women and girls are more likely than men to be affected by this violence and men are more likely to be perpetrators compared to women.¹¹ While GBV is preventable, the Department for Women and Gender Equality (WAGE) notes that it is among the “most pervasive, deadly and deeply rooted human rights violations of our time.”¹² Its persistence remains a barrier to achieving gender equality.¹³ IPV is one of the most prevalent forms of GBV and remains underreported for various reasons.¹⁴ In Canada, 44% of women, representing approximately 6.2 million people, will experience some form of IPV in their lifetime.¹⁵ The most common form of IPV that women experience is psychological (43%), followed by physical (23%) and then sexual violence (12%). Among women who experienced psychological violence, 58% also experienced some form of physical and/or sexual violence.¹⁶

10 Anonymous Author (Author 17), [Brief](#).

11 See for example: FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 8 February 2022, 1545 (Lise Martin, Executive Director, Women’s Shelters Canada); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 4 March 2022, 1330 (Meseret Haileyesus, Executive Director, Canadian Center for Women’s Empowerment); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 4 March 2022, 1400 (Michael Jason Gyovai, Executive Director, BGC Peel); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 11 February 2022, 1310 (Witness-Témoins 1, Organization grouping sexual assault help centres in Quebec); Canadian Federation of University Women, [Brief Submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women for its Study on Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada](#), Brief.

12 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 4 February 2022, 1305 (Alia Butt).

13 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 4 February 2022, 1305 (Alia Butt); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 29 March 2022, 1550 (Nneka MacGregor, Executive Director, Women’s Centre for Social Justice); Canadian Federation of University Women, [Brief Submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women for its Study on Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada](#), Brief.

14 Armagh House, [Ending Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada](#), Brief.

15 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 4 February 2022, 1305 (Alia Butt); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 15 February 2022, 1545 (Lucie Léonard, Director, Canadian Centre for Justice and Community Safety Statistics, Statistics Canada); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 1 April 2022, 1300 (Hon. Marci Ien, P.C., M.P., Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Youth).

16 Statistics Canada, [Brief: Statistical profile of intimate partner violence in Canada](#), Brief.



Women between the ages of 15 and 44 years experience the highest levels of IPV. Indigenous women,¹⁷ racialized women, women living with disabilities, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and Two-Spirit (LGBTQ2) individuals, women living in the territories or in rural areas, as well as women living with low income, are more likely to experience IPV in their lifetime.¹⁸

Witnesses explained that immigrant women may face unique challenges related to IPV, due to various factors¹⁹ including racism, lack of access to housing and childcare, economic dependence, language barriers, and lack of awareness of and access to community resources. Witnesses also highlighted “immigration and refugee system rules related to spousal partnerships”²⁰ and immigration status as increasing the risk of IPV for immigrant women.²¹

Women’s likelihood of experiencing IPV and family violence are increased if they are living with one or multiple disabilities. Bonnie Brayton, National Executive Director of the DisAbled Women’s Network of Canada (DAWN) explained that according to Statistics Canada, the rate of disability for women in Canada is 24% and this rate increases to above 30% for both Black and Indigenous women.²² Over half of women with disabilities experienced some form of IPV in their lifetime.²³ According to Bonnie Brayton, among

17 Ibid.

18 See for example: FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 8 February 2022, 1545 (Lise Martin, Executive Director, Women’s Shelters Canada); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 15 February 2022, 1545 (Lucie Léonard, Director, Canadian Centre for Justice and Community Safety Statistics, Statistics Canada); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 4 March 2022, 1330 (Meseret Haileyesus); The Women’s Resource Centre, [Domestic Violence in Rural Settings: A Human Rights Issue](#), Brief; RESOLVE, RESOLVE Alberta, RESOLVE Manitoba and RESOLVE Saskatchewan, [Brief](#).

19 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 22 March 2022, 1610 (Kripa Sekhar, Executive Director, South Asian Women’s Centre); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 1 April 2022, 1400 (Mercy Lawlumi, Executive Director, Immigrant Women Services Ottawa).

20 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 11 February 2022, 1425 (Karen Campbell, Director, Community Initiatives and Policy, Canadian Women’s Foundation).

21 See for example: FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 22 March 2022, 1610 (Kripa Sekhar); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 5 April 2022, 1535 (Rekha Gadhia, Manager, Family Services Department, Calgary Immigrant Women’s Association); Immigrant Women Services Ottawa, [Brief to The Standing Committee on the Status of Women Study on Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada](#), Brief.

22 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 11 February 2022, 1305 (Bonnie Brayton, National Executive Director, DisAbled Women’s Network of Canada, DAWN Canada).

23 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 15 February 2022, 1545 (Lucie Léonard).

women with disabilities, 39% have experienced spousal violence, 46% of whom were physically injured by this violence.²⁴

Not only is disability a risk factor for violent victimization, but experiences of violence, including IPV, can lead to various kinds of disabilities. For example, according to Bonnie Brayton, new research has concluded that an estimated 276,000 women in Canada will experience a traumatic brain injury (TBI) as a result of IPV each year.²⁵ Nneka MacGregor, Executive Director of the Women’s Centre for Social Justice, added that research, public awareness and education on “strangulation and head trauma are inconsequential, whereas the impacts on the women who have experienced it are life altering.”²⁶ She explained that a significant risk associated with strangulation and TBI in the context of IPV and family violence, is that “strangulation and traumatic brain injury are cumulative....women are not strangled once, but multiple times” which leads to more harmful outcomes for these women.²⁷ Finally, Nneka MacGregor suggested the implementation of measures to increase awareness of the short, medium and long-term consequences of TBIs among survivors, frontline service providers, judges, lawyers and politicians.²⁸

Marjolaine Montminy, Director of the Centre-Femmes de Bellechasse, explained that women living with disabilities, as well as older women, may hesitate to report the violence they experience because the perpetrator may be their primary or sole caregiver; without the perpetrator, these women may have no other option for receiving necessary care.²⁹ DAWN suggested that to improve inclusivity in services for women with disabilities who experience violence, the definition of IPV should be updated to “interpersonal violence,” as the perpetrator could be a family member, a friend or a health care provider.³⁰

Witnesses provided briefs that asserted that cruelty toward animals can be an early indicator of IPV. Furthermore, research has found that a perpetrator may use a pet as a way to mistreat or threaten their partners. Many women may hesitate to leave violent

24 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 11 February 2022, 1305 (Bonnie Brayton).

25 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 11 February 2022, 1305 (Bonnie Brayton).

26 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 29 March 2022, 1605 (Nneka MacGregor).

27 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 29 March 2022, 1610 (Nneka MacGregor).

28 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 29 March 2022, 1610 (Nneka MacGregor).

29 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 5 April 2022, 1545 (Marjolaine Montminy).

30 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 11 February 2022, 1305 (Bonnie Brayton).



relationships if they fear for the safety and security of their pets.³¹ Written submissions suggested that to support survivors with pets, the government provide funding to GBV organizations and shelters to ensure that pets are allowed to accompany their owners to shelters.³²

Causes of Intimate Partner and Family Violence

“[D]omestic violence, intimate partner violence is rooted in gender inequality, power and privilege. It’s a manifestation of patriarchal violence and it intensely impacts the communities we live in.”³³

Farrah Khan
Executive Director, Possibility Seeds

Witnesses explained that power, control, gender inequality and patriarchal values, as well as racism, ableism and colonialism, intersect to create the root of GBV and IPV.³⁴ Angela Marie MacDougall, Executive Director of Battered Women’s Support Services, explained that IPV takes place in “a social context and within a world view that systemically reinforces the power of some people to oppress others.”³⁵ This worldview is

31 Humane Canada, *Humane Canada- Brief to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women on intimate partner and domestic violence in Canada*, Brief; Kelly Babchishin and Violence Link Consulting, *Brief*; FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 5 April 2022, 1735 (Shelina Jeshani, Director, Strategic Partnerships and Collaboration, Safe Centre of Peel).

32 Link Toronto and SafePet Ontario, *Re: Study on Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada*, Brief; Animal and Interpersonal Abuse Research Group, *Animal and Interpersonal Abuse Research Group Brief to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women for its Study on Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada*, Brief.

33 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 22 March 2022, 1600 (Farrah Khan, Executive Director, Possibility Seeds).

34 See for example: FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 11 February 2022, 1410 (Karen Campbell); FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 25 March 2022, 1410 (Yordanka Petrova, Senior Manager, Homeward Bound Program, WoodGreen Community Services); FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 1 March 2022, 1635 (Angie Hutchinson, Executive Director, Wahbung Abinoonjiiag Inc.); FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 11 February 2022, 1455 (Jane Stinson, Research Associate, Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women); South Asian Women’s Centre, *Brief to the Standing Committee on the Status of Women*, Brief.

35 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 22 March 2022, 1555 (Angela Marie MacDougall, Executive Director, Battered Women’s Support Services).

reinforced in society through cultural norms and the media.³⁶ In a written brief, the Vancouver Rape Relief Women’s Shelter stated that GBV, including IPV, is a “direct result of the social construction of masculinity that manifests in men’s entitlement and control over women’s bodies.”³⁷

David Stevenson of the Moose Hide Campaign explained that IPV is entirely preventable, but there is a set of values that must be shifted; men are brought up in a culture in Canada where “it is not obvious that you do not physically harm women and children.”³⁸ From a young age, girls and boys are exposed to “patriarchal and sexist messaging” through media, the Internet and social interactions.³⁹ Jennifer Dunn of the London Abused Women’s Centre explained that:

The media plays a powerful role in teaching girls that their primary worth comes from being sexually desirable to men, while boys seem to learn that it is acceptable for men to have and maintain power and control over young women.⁴⁰

These messages affect the ways that girls and boys understand and engage in relationships throughout their lives. In addition to this messaging, a history of maltreatment or exposure to violence at home as well as experiences of bullying are factors that may increase an adolescent’s risk of experiencing IPV in their relationships.⁴¹ Children who witness violence at home and/or experience its “aftermath” may face additional challenges, such as experiencing various psychological and behavioural

36 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 25 March 2022, 1405 (David Stevenson, Chief Executive Officer, Moose Hide Campaign); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 5 April 2022, 1555 (Marjolaine Montminy); Anonymous Author (Author 10), [Brief](#).

37 Vancouver Rape Relief and Women’s Shelter, [Brief](#).

38 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 25 March 2022, 1405 (David Stevenson).

39 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 8 February 2022, 1635 (Jennifer Dunn, Executive Director, London Abused Women’s Centre); see also Be The Peace Institute, [Brief on IPV/DV in Canada](#), Brief.

40 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 8 February 2022, 1635 (Jennifer Dunn).

41 See for example: FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 4 February 2022, 1425 (Karen McKinnon, Director General, Centre for Health Promotion, Public Health Agency of Canada); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 11 February 2022, 1440 (Sherilyn Bell, Psychologist, as an individual); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 15 February 2022, 1550 (Lana Wells, Associate Professor, Brenda Strafford Chair in Prevention of Domestic Violence, University of Calgary, as an individual); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 15 February 2022, 1645 (Kathy AuCoin, Chief of Analysis Unit, Canadian Centre for Justice and Community Safety Statistics, Statistics Canada); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 29 March 2022, 1640 (Mitch Bourbonniere, Outreach Worker, Ojijiita Pimatiswin Kinamatawin).



problems including, low self-esteem, depression and anxiety, an increased risk of violence and aggression, as well as delinquent and risk-taking behaviours.⁴²

Witnesses suggested investments in services for parents who have been exposed to childhood adversity and IPV, in order to support healthy parenting skills and healthy interactions to meet the needs of their children.⁴³ Witnesses also advocated for universal access to appropriate trauma counselling and specialized resources for children, teenagers and young adults who witness this violence, as well as proactive identification of youth who need these services.⁴⁴

Witnesses explained that with the Internet and social media, teenagers and young adults are at risk of being exposed to, as well as perpetrating, online violence in their interpersonal relationships. Online violence can have highly detrimental effects on young people, including humiliation, social withdrawal and increased risk of suicide. Parents and adults are often unaware that this violence is happening online.⁴⁵

Karen McKinnon from the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) explained that women ages 15 to 19 years are eight times more likely to have been sexually assaulted in the previous 12 months, compared to women over the age of 25 years.⁴⁶ According to self-reported survey data collected from school-aged young people:

[A]pproximately 30% of Canadian youth in grades 9 and 10 have reported being victimized at some point in their lifetime. About one in five have reported experiencing physical dating violence. About one in ten have experienced sexual dating violence.⁴⁷

42 See for example: FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 8 February 2022, 1550 (Lorie English, Executive Director, West Central Women’s Resource Centre); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 15 February 2022, 1630 (Katreena Scott, Professor, Centre for Research and Education on Violence Against Women and Children); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 29 March 2022, 1640 (Mitch Bourbonniere); Armagh House, [Ending Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada](#), Brief.

43 Anonymous Author (Author 38), [Brief](#).

44 See for example: FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 5 April 2022, 1730 (Peter Jaffe, Professor Emeritus, Western University, as an individual); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 5 April 2022, 1555 (Geneviève Lessard, Professor, Laval University, as an individual); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 5 April 2022, 1535 (Rekha Gadhia).

45 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 11 February 2022, 1400 (Sherilyn Bell); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 11 February 2022, 1410 (Karen Campbell).

46 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 4 February 2022, 1425 (Karen McKinnon); see also: FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 22 March 2022, 1600 (Farrah Khan).

47 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 4 February 2022, 1425 (Karen McKinnon).

Jennifer Dunn added that young women and girls between the ages of 12 and 21 years are at the “highest risk of being sexually exploited, groomed and lured into the sex industry,”⁴⁸ and witnesses agreed that their intimate partner was often responsible for this exploitation.⁴⁹

Witnesses spoke about the violence, including IPV, that Indigenous women and girls face, and explained that this violence is rooted in a history of colonialism in Canada. Angie Hutchinson, Executive Director of Wahbung Abinoonjiiag Inc., highlighted that Indigenous peoples and families continue to face significant violence in Canada:

The insidious impacts of the settler-colonial process across Turtle Island have been devastating for Indigenous families, communities and nations. The intentional and systematic destruction of Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination was undertaken through the destruction of families and communities through the removal of children through the residential schools, the sixties scoop era and the ongoing devastation of the child welfare system. These historical and ongoing systems of oppression are intended to strip away a sense of belonging and strength, disrupting families and communities, and they continue to have negative and damaging impacts on the well-being of [I]ndigenous communities.⁵⁰

Witnesses further explained that the root of IPV and violence against Indigenous women and girls is intersectional. Among the intersecting factors listed by witnesses as contributing to the disproportionate violence that Indigenous women and girls face are:⁵¹

- poverty;
- lack of housing, infrastructure and clean water;

48 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 8 February 2022, 1635 (Jennifer Dunn).

49 For example: FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 8 February 2022, 1635 (Jennifer Dunn); Michelle Abel, [Brief](#); Centre to End All Sexual Exploitation, [Brief submitted to the Standing Committee on Status of Women \(FEMO\) – Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada](#), Brief.

50 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 1 March 2022, 1635 (Angie Hutchinson).

51 See for example: FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 5 April 2022, 1745 (Julie McGregor, Director, Justice, Assembly of First Nations); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 22 March 2022, 1710 (Josie Nepinak, Executive Director, Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 1 March 2022, 1640 (Melanie Omeniho, President, Women of the Métis Nation - Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak); Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic, [Written Brief to Status Of Women Committee Study on Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada](#), Brief; Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres, [Written Submission to the Standing Committee on the Status of Women on the study of intimate partner and domestic violence in Canada](#), Brief.



- stereotypical sexualized and dehumanized media portrayals of Indigenous women and girls;
- toxic masculinity;
- imposed patriarchal values and norms;
- colonization;
- destruction of families; and
- ongoing genocide of Indigenous peoples in Canada.

Effects of Intimate Partner and Family Violence

Lorie English, Executive Director of the West Central Women’s Resource Centre, stated that “[g]ender-based violence is one of the most pervasive health risks to women and gender-diverse people in Canada.” She explained that GBV can negatively affect the social determinants of health, such as by increasing levels of poverty, housing and food insecurity, and job loss and unemployment.⁵² She described that GBV is among the “leading pathways for women and gender-diverse people into homelessness”,⁵³ which can contribute to women returning to violent situations.⁵⁴ This kind of violence is often repeated or ongoing for victims.⁵⁵ Witnesses pointed to the various negative effects of this type of violence, including that it can:⁵⁶

- lead to complex trauma;
- create an environment of constant fear for victims;
- pass negative consequences on to future generations; and

52 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 8 February 2022, 1550 (Lorie English).

53 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 8 February 2022, 1550 (Lorie English).

54 Woman Abuse Council of Toronto, [Re: Study on Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada](#), Brief.

55 Statistics Canada, [Brief: Statistical profile of intimate partner violence in Canada](#), Brief.

56 See for example: FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 4 February 2022, 1410 and 1425 (Karen McKinnon); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 8 February 2022, 1550 (Lorie English); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 8 February 2022, 1635 (Jennifer Dunn); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 1 April 2022, 1415 (Alice Czitrom, Coordinator, Victim Services, Peterborough Police Service); Anonymous Author (Author 37), [Brief](#).

- cause significant negative mental and physical health effects (such as, injury, chronic pain, sleep disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder, and substance use) throughout the lifecourse.

IPV and family violence, in extreme cases, can lead to fatal consequences. Society's understanding of the scope and severity of IPV and family violence are influenced by many factors, including choice of language, particularly in media coverage. As such, advocates have fought to introduce a difference between "homicide" and "femicide" when discussing IPV-related murders. Marjolaine Montminy explained that without this distinction, society cannot grasp the acute dangers related to IPV women face in their daily lives.⁵⁷

Data has indicated that in recent years, rates of femicides in Canada have increased; according to the Canadian Women's Foundation, Statistics Canada data from 2018 estimated that a woman was killed every 6 days by her intimate partner.⁵⁸ More recently, the Canadian Femicide Observatory estimated that a woman or girl was killed approximately every 2 days in 2020, with a similar rate in 2021.⁵⁹ According to Peter Jaffe, Professor Emeritus, Western University, over the last 10 years, there have been 815 domestic homicide victims in Canada, and women were the victims in 80% of these cases, whereas men were the perpetrators in 86% of cases.⁶⁰ According to written briefs, Indigenous women, girls and Two-Spirit individuals and women living in rural areas face a greater risk of femicide compared to women living in urban settings in Canada.⁶¹

Simon Lapierre, Full Professor, University of Ottawa, told the Committee that the period of time immediately following separation is one of the most dangerous times for women and children to experience severe violence or be killed by an ex-partner.⁶² In addition to

57 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 5 April 2022, 1545 (Marjolaine Montminy).

58 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 11 February 2022, 1410 (Karen Campbell).

59 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 11 February 2022, 1410 (Karen Campbell); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 1 April 2022, 1300 (Hon. Marci Ien).

60 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 5 April 2022, 1640 (Peter Jaffe).

61 Metro Interagency Restorative Conversations Committee on Family Violence, [Written Brief for the Study on Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada](#), Brief; Woman Abuse Council of Toronto, [Re: Study on Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada](#), Brief.

62 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 29 March 2022, 1615 (Simon Lapierre, Full Professor, University of Ottawa, as an individual); see also Family Dispute Resolution Institute of Ontario, [The Family Dispute Resolution Institute of Ontario Brief Regarding the Study of Intimate Partner Violence in Canada](#), Brief.



a recent separation, there are many “warning signs” and risk factors of IPV-related homicide, for example:⁶³

- a history of family violence;
- depression and suicidal ideation in the perpetrator;
- stalking;
- escalating violence;
- strangulation;
- threats to harm the victim; and
- the victim’s sense of fear.

In a written brief, Shannon Knight-Jones explained that the violence does not always end after separation from a violent partner:

On my 5th attempt, I succeeded at escaping it, only to discover the viciousness of Post-Separation Violence including: harassment; punitive financial abuse; counter-parenting; legal system abuse; chronic refusal to abide court orders; threats, [and] attempts to weaponize the children.⁶⁴

Peter Jaffe added that the ex-partner may also use the “murder of children as an act of revenge on women trying to end an abusive relationship.”⁶⁵

Intimate Partner and Family Violence Data Collection

There are certain gaps in the current understanding of IPV, due in part, to a lack of data.⁶⁶ For example, the Canadian Women’s Foundation underscored the lack of data available on Black and racialized women or gender diverse people’s experiences of IPV, as well as individuals with intersecting identities, such as Black trans women or racialized

63 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 5 April 2022, 1640 (Peter Jaffe).

64 Shannon Knight-Jones, [Brief](#).

65 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 5 April 2022, 1640 (Peter Jaffe).

66 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 4 March 2022, 1325 (Meseret Haileyesus).

women with disabilities.⁶⁷ Furthermore, several witnesses explained that survivors may be reluctant to report to police for various reasons.⁶⁸ For example, Gerri Sharpe, Interim President, Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, explained that “[r]eluctance to report domestic violence is further heightened by the Inuit language barrier, a lack of safe places or shelters, and a general mistrust of police.”⁶⁹

Witnesses stressed the need for data disaggregated by various identities to better understand how IPV affects women in Canada,⁷⁰ including forms of violence that might either be underreported to police services or that do not meet the criminal threshold to be collected by police services.⁷¹ Kathy AuCoin, Chief of Analysis Unit, Canadian Centre for Justice and Community Safety Statistics, Statistics Canada, explained that gaps in Statistics Canada data related to IPV exist for new immigrants who don’t speak English or French, as these individuals would likely not be captured in Statistics Canada’s household surveys.⁷² In addition, Katreena Scott, Professor, Centre for Research and Education on Violence Against Women and Children, acknowledged that there are “limits in self-report data” and stated that these data should be combined with qualitative information from communities and police.⁷³

Government of Canada officials indicated that funding for new Statistics Canada surveys has been provided since 2017, including for a “new national survey that provided [the] first comprehensive understanding of intimate partner violence”⁷⁴ and “three new national surveys establishing baselines on different forms of GBV and critical data gaps.”⁷⁵ Meseret Haileyesus, Executive Director, Canadian Center for Women’s Empowerment (CCFWE), advocated for improvements to the collection of “economic

67 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 11 February 2022, 1410 (Karen Campbell).

68 For example: FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 15 February 2022, 1610 (Kathy AuCoin); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 22 March 2022, 1735 (Josie Nepinak); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 1 March 2022, 1700 (Angie Hutchinson).

69 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 1 March 2022, 1540 (Gerri Sharpe, Interim President, Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada).

70 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 29 March 2022, 1705 (Kim Dolan, Executive Director, YWCA Peterborough Haliburton); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 22 March 2022, 1605 (Farrah Khan).

71 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 15 February 2022, 1545 (Lucie Léonard).

72 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 15 February 2022, 1610 (Kathy AuCoin).

73 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 15 February 2022, 1640 (Katreena Scott).

74 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 4 February 2022, 1310 (Alia Butt).

75 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 4 February 2022, 1345 (Alia Butt).



and financial data” by Statistics Canada, as these data would help women and service providers understand, identify and address financial abuse.⁷⁶

COVID-19 and Intimate Partner and Family Violence in Canada

Levels of GBV, including IPV, in Canada rose by an estimated 20–30% during the COVID-19 pandemic, with the increase in rates and severity of GBV being labelled a “shadow pandemic.”⁷⁷ Witnesses explained that this increase, in part, may be attributed to a rise in financial and mental strain on families due to the pandemic.⁷⁸ In addition, public health-related lockdown policies had additional unintended consequences for many women. For women experiencing IPV, lockdowns often forced them to remain at home with their abuser, with no escape or protection from the violence and control.⁷⁹

In the context of the pandemic, accessing support services and prevention programs became more challenging compared to pre-pandemic contexts. In order to comply with public health regulations, many service providers were forced to close completely or significantly adapt or reduce their services.⁸⁰ Nevertheless, some witnesses explained

76 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 4 March 2022, 1310 and 1325 (Meseret Haileyesus).

77 See for example: FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 4 February 2022, 1310 (Alia Butt); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 8 February 2022, 1540 (Giulia Carpenter, Executive Director, Sudbury Women’s Centre); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 11 February 2022, 1410 (Karen Campbell); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 25 March 2022, 1300 (Keri Lewis, Executive Director, Interval House of Ottawa); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 29 March 2022, 1650 (Lisa Crawford, Chief Executive Officer, Crawford Master Stylists, as an individual).

78 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 8 February 2022, 1540 (Giulia Carpenter); Immigrant Women Services Ottawa, [Brief to The Standing Committee on the Status of Women Study on Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada](#), Brief.

79 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 8 February 2022, 1540 (Giulia Carpenter); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 25 March 2022, 1300 (Keri Lewis); Canadian Women’s Foundation, [Presentation to the Standing Committee on Status of Women \(FEWO\) Study on Intimate Partner & Domestic Violence in Canada](#), Brief; Native Women’s Association of Canada, [Written Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women for its Study on Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada](#), Brief.

80 See for example: FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 4 February 2022, 1410 (Karen McKinnon); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 8 February 2022, 1550 (Lorie English); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 29 March 2022, 1710 (Kim Dolan); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 5 April 2022, 1530 (Geneviève Lessard); South Asian Women’s Centre, [Brief to the Standing Committee on the Status of Women](#), Brief.

that being forced to adapt services to a virtual environment, through online and text messaging services, may benefit victims and survivors beyond the pandemic.⁸¹

While witnesses acknowledged the importance of online IPV and family violence services, they also cited a lack of connectivity for many women living in rural and remote communities in Canada; the Committee heard that this lack of connectivity is a significant barrier to accessing online IPV and family violence services.⁸² Gerri Sharpe confirmed that a lack of Internet connectivity is a major challenge for Inuit women who are experiencing violence.⁸³ Under the federal government's Universal Broadband Fund, originally launched in 2019, \$2.75 billion has been allocated to address connectivity issues across Canada, including in rural and remote communities.⁸⁴

With the goal of supporting and meeting the needs of individuals experiencing GBV during the pandemic the Government of Canada has implemented various initiatives. For example, it provided approximately \$300 million in emergency COVID-19 funding to shelters and to community organizations supporting survivors of GBV since April 2020. These funds include "\$122 million that has already been provided to 1,300 women's shelters, sexual assault centres and other organizations providing critical supports and services."⁸⁵ According to the Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Youth, this funding has allowed organizations to hire new employees, extend their business hours and expand their programming.⁸⁶ WAGE worked with provincial and territorial counterparts to provide and distribute this emergency funding.⁸⁷ WAGE indicated that stakeholder organizations appreciated the speed of distribution, the funding's flexibility, as well as the reduced reporting requirements on the application process for the emergency funding.⁸⁸

81 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 8 February 2022, 1650 (Claudine Thibaudeau, Social Worker and Clinical and Training Supervisor, SOS violence conjugale); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 5 April 2022, 1620 (Geneviève Lessard).

82 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 5 April 2022, 1545 (Marjolaine Montminy); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 29 March 2022, 1715 (Lisa Crawford).

83 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 1 March 2022, 1545 (Gerri Sharpe).

84 Government of Canada, [Universal Broadband Fund](#).

85 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 1 April 2022, 1300 (Hon. Marci Ien).

86 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 1 April 2022, 1325 (Hon. Marci Ien).

87 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 4 February 2022, 1325 (Lisa Smylie, Director General, Research, Results and Delivery Branch, Department for Women and Gender Equality).

88 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 4 February 2022, 1330 (Alia Butt).



Chantal Arseneault, President, Regroupement des maisons pour femmes victimes de violence conjugale, explained that since the pandemic, organizations such as hers have seen increases in demand for their services. As such, she called for an increase in federal transfers to provinces and territories and a review of the programs offered by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, to ensure that IPV organizations and shelters are able to provide necessary services to women fleeing IPV.⁸⁹

Therefore, the Committee recommends:

Recommendation 1

That the Government of Canada, through relevant federal departments, research the prevalence and impact of intimate partner violence in relation to teen dating.

Recommendation 2

That the Government of Canada, through relevant federal departments, research intimate partner violence to examine the ways in which experiencing abuse during childhood may affect the intimate relationships of a person later in life.

Recommendation 3

That the Government of Canada increase funding to organizations, such as Statistics Canada, that are collecting data on intimate partner and family violence, to expand the capacity of these organizations to collect disaggregated data on:

- **experiences of intimate partner and family violence for racialized and Indigenous individuals; and**
- **experiences of intimate partner and family violence for individuals with diverse gender and sexual identities.**

89 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 15 February 2022, 1650 (Chantal Arseneault, President, Regroupement des maisons pour femmes victimes de violence conjugale).

SERVICES RELATED TO INTIMATE PARTNER AND FAMILY VIOLENCE

“Livable income, sustainable wage, housing, access to affordable child care and therapy and counselling... It’s a package of services that these women need. It’s never one specific issue.”⁹⁰

Yordanka Petrova
Senior Manager, WoodGreen Community

Community-based organizations work to address GBV and IPV and meet the multiple and complex needs of survivors in the community. There are certain services that all survivors of IPV and family violence may benefit from, including income and employment supports, shelter and transition housing services, as well as certain health-related services.

Experiences of GBV and IPV are diverse and unique for different women and groups. Yasmin Hussain, Manager, Public Education and Community Programs, Muslim Resource Centre for Social Support and Integration, explained that intervention and prevention work should consider the “the socio-cultural context and experiences and intersectional vulnerabilities” of individuals and communities, particularly survivors.⁹¹ As such, survivors of IPV, including those who are Indigenous, racialized, living with a disability, immigrants, or who belong to specific age groups may have unique needs when accessing support services. As well, witnesses suggested that perpetrators of IPV and family violence should have access to services that help them to address their violent behaviours.

90 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 25 March 2022, 1500 (Yordanka Petrova).

91 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 4 March 2022, 1340 (Yasmin Hussain, Manager, Public Education and Community Programs, Muslim Resource Centre for Social Support and Integration).



Services Supporting Survivors' Economic Stability and Security

“We also have to look at income security supports and social protection so that no one feels, again, that they have to think about, ‘If I have to pay my rent, pay my bills, there is no way I can leave this abusive situation.’ We keep women and girls and people inside abusive relationships by not addressing income security.”⁹²

Farrah Khan
Executive Director, Possibility Seeds

Experiences of IPV and poverty are intertwined; economic vulnerability can heighten the risk of both experiencing, and remaining in, an abusive relationship and the physical and mental effects of IPV may affect a woman’s ability to maintain employment. As well, financial abuse can lead to women’s economic dependence on their abuser.⁹³ Many witnesses identified financial constraints and economic instability as primary factors in preventing women, particularly women with children and older women, from leaving situations of IPV and family violence.⁹⁴ Furthermore, compensation and financial supports available to survivors vary across provinces and territories and are generally insufficient, according to witnesses.⁹⁵

For older women specifically, economic insecurity may be a significant barrier as they may not have pensions or sufficient incomes. This economic insecurity may be the result of the gender wage gap, precarious employment and dedicating years to unpaid care

92 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 22 March 2022, 1605 (Farrah Khan).

93 RESOLVE, RESOLVE Alberta, RESOLVE Manitoba and RESOLVE Saskatchewan, [Brief](#).

94 See for example: FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 15 February 2022, 1715 (Louise Riendeau, Co-responsible, Political Issues, Regroupement des maisons pour femmes victimes de violence conjugale); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 1 March 2022, 1605 (Sean Longboat, Director of Programs, Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres); Canadian Centre for Elder Law, [Brief](#); Karen Gosbee, [Brief to the Standing Committee on the Status of Women](#), [YWCA Toronto Recommendations for Addressing Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada](#), Brief.

95 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 1 April 2022, 1415 and 1445 (Alice Czitrom,); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 5 April 2022, 1655 (Sylvie Bernatchez, Director, La Jonction pour Elle inc.).

work. As a result, older women may be dependent on an abusive partner or family member in various ways, including for caregiving needs and financial support.⁹⁶

According to witnesses, employers have a role to play in supporting women who are experiencing IPV; as these experiences may have both physical and psychological effects on women, they may be unable to work at times. With the goal of fostering greater support for employees experiencing IPV, witnesses called on the federal government to ensure all federally regulated employees have access to 10 paid days of leave for GBV and to encourage all other employers to implement this leave.⁹⁷

Without adequate economic stability, women are often forced to return to the abusive environment and partner.⁹⁸ As such, many witnesses called for measures to reduce poverty and support economic security for all women, including:

- implementing a livable⁹⁹ and universal guaranteed basic income in Canada without reducing the provision of other social services;
- instating a federal disability benefit;¹⁰⁰
- providing support in securing meaningful employment;
- facilitating women’s access to education and skills training;
- increasing the availability of financial compensation for survivors of IPV and family violence; and

96 Canadian Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse, *To: The House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women Re: Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada*, Brief; Canadian Centre for Elder Law, *Brief*.

97 Canadian Labour Congress, *Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada*, Brief; FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 11 February 2022, 1345 (Witness-Témoins 1).

98 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 4 March 2022, 1310 (Meseret Haileyesus); FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 22 March 2022, 1605 (Farrah Khan); FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 11 February 2022, 1320 (Melpa Kamateros, Executive Director, Shield of Athena Family Services).

99 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 22 March 2022, 1640 (Kripa Sekhar).

100 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 11 February 2022, 1340 (Bonnie Brayton).



- implementing universally accessible and affordable childcare in Canada.¹⁰¹

Effects of Economic Abuse on Women's Economic Security

With the understanding that women tend to face disproportionate levels of economic insecurity compared to men, and that financial barriers are among the primary factors that prevent women from escaping situations of IPV and family violence, witnesses underscored the need to acknowledge the significant impacts of economic abuse on women's economic security and to recognize this abuse as a form of family violence, including under the *Divorce Act*, the *Civil Marriage Act* and the *Criminal Code*.¹⁰² The Canadian Centre for Women's Empowerment suggested funding to:

- increase research capacity of organizations, including Statistics Canada, that are collecting data on economic abuse; and
- develop educational materials about economic abuse that would be helpful in addressing this form of IPV.¹⁰³

Finally, several witnesses explained that with the implementation of proper policies and education for employees, financial institutions could be integral to early detection and prevention of economic abuse, as well as supporting women who are victims of this kind of IPV and family violence.¹⁰⁴

101 See for example: FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 5 April 2022, 1745 (Julie McGregor); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 5 April 2022, 1550 (Rekha Gadhia, Manager); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 25 March 2022, 1445 (Yordanka Petrova); Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes, [Brief submitted by Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes \(AOcVF\) : Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada](#), Brief; FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 1 March 2022, 1530 (Gertie Mai Muise); Vancouver Rape Relief and Women's Shelter, [Brief](#).

102 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 4 March 2022, 1310 (Meseret Haileyesus); Canadian Center for Women's Empowerment, [Economic Abuse Issue Brief](#), Brief.

103 Canadian Center for Women's Empowerment, [Economic Abuse Issue Brief](#), Brief, March 2022.

104 YWCA Toronto, [YWCA Toronto Recommendations for Addressing Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada](#), Brief; FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 4 March 2022, 1310 (Meseret Haileyesus); Canadian Center for Women's Empowerment, [Economic Abuse Issue Brief](#), Brief.

Shelters, Transition Homes and Affordable Housing for Survivors of Intimate Partner and Family Violence

“The first step to safety is having a safe place to move to. Without that, taking the next steps to rebuilding a life after violence is impossible.”¹⁰⁵

Keri Lewis
Executive Director, Interval House of Ottawa

GBV and emergency shelters provide a temporary housing solution for women experiencing IPV and family violence; often these women have complex and challenging needs that shelters and organizations are continually trying to meet.¹⁰⁶ Shelters often also offer, or coordinate access to, other services such as counselling, addiction services, employment, education and housing support and childcare.¹⁰⁷ The Committee heard that access to affordable and safe housing – including GBV shelters and transition homes – is integral to women’s decision to leave, and stay away from, an abusive environment.¹⁰⁸ Unfortunately, witnesses explained that shelter and transition home spaces are limited and do not meet the demands of survivors; this reality is exacerbated in remote and Northern communities.¹⁰⁹ Shelters and transition homes and other organizations serving individuals fleeing intimate partner violence, including small and medium sized GBV organizations, need adequate and sustained long-term funding to

105 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 25 March 2022, 1300 (Keri Lewis).

106 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 25 March 2022, 1330 (Keri Lewis).

107 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 4 February 2022, 1405 (Ian Kenney, Director General, Social Policy and Programs Branch, Department of Indigenous Services).

108 See for example: FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 15 February 2022, 1700 (Louise Riendeau); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 11 February 2022, 1410 (Karen Campbell); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 11 February 2022, 1435 (Jane Stinson); Metro Interagency Restorative Conversations Committee on Family Violence, [Written Brief for the Study on Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada](#), Brief.

109 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 1 March 2022, 1540 (Gerri Sharpe).



address this service gap, integrate harm reduction approaches into the shelter system and ensure that they can retain and support staff.¹¹⁰

Witnesses explained that if women are able to secure temporary spaces in a GBV shelter, they often have no housing options after the shelter. There is a large gap in availability of adequate and affordable housing, with 10-year waitlists for subsidized housing in some regions.¹¹¹ Many witnesses advocated for an increase in the availability of shelter spaces and transition homes but emphasized that to be effective in addressing IPV and family violence, increasing this supply must be accompanied by an increase in the supply of affordable, sustainable and safe housing options for women and their children.¹¹²

The lack of availability of transition homes and sustainable affordable housing means that either women and their children are staying in shelters for longer periods of time or returning to the violent environment.¹¹³ The temporary and uncertain nature of the available housing options for women and their children can be very disruptive and does not support rebuilding their lives or healing.¹¹⁴ In addition, women may face escalating levels and severity of violence when they return to their abuser.¹¹⁵ The Committee heard that it is essential to address the notion that victims are expected to flee abuse.¹¹⁶ To protect victims' rights to stay at home, witnesses indicated that the development of

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- 110 See for example: FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 1 March 2022, 1720 (Melanie Omeniho); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 22 March 2022, 1745 (Sabrina Lemeltier, President, Alliance des maisons d'hébergement de 2e étape pour femmes et enfants victimes de violence conjugale); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 15 February 2022, 1655 (Chantal Arseneault); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 8 February 2022, 1730 (Manon Monastesse, Executive Director, Fédération des maisons d'hébergement pour femmes); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 25 March 2022, 1410 (Yordanka Petrova).
- 111 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 1 April 2022, 1430 (Mercy Lawluvi); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 1 March 2022, 1655 (Angie Hutchinson); Anonymous Author (Author 3), [Brief](#).
- 112 See for example: FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 1 April 2022, 1440 (Mercy Lawluvi); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 1 March 2022, 1720 (Melanie Omeniho); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 29 March 2022, 1635 (Nneka MacGregor); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 25 March 2022, 1300 (Keri Lewis, Executive Director, Interval House of Ottawa); Armagh House, [Ending Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada](#), Brief.
- 113 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 15 February 2022, 1610 (Kathy AuCoin); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 8 February 2022, 1625 (Lorie English).
- 114 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 25 March 2022, 1315 (Keri Lewis).
- 115 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 25 March 2022, 1300 (Keri Lewis); Anonymous Author (Author 11), [Brief](#).
- 116 Amamor Women's Foundation, [Submission to the House Of Commons Standing Committee On The Status of Women for its Study on Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada](#), Brief.

policies to remove perpetrators of violence from their homes, not survivors, is necessary.¹¹⁷

Witnesses noted that accessibility of shelter spaces remains an issue. For survivors with disabilities, survivors who are older, or survivors with multiple children, shelter spaces or temporary housing solutions, such as hotels, do not meet their needs.¹¹⁸ Witnesses highlighted that the homelessness sector is often not equipped to adequately respond to GBV. Lorie English described the consequences of siloed social support systems:

When violence and housing insecurity intersect, our systems are woefully inadequate. Our homelessness sector is not equipped to deal with GBV. Much of our GBV sector is not equipped to deal with the complications of homelessness or of working with people who use substances or have complex mental health issues. Neither sector is adequately supporting members of the [Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Plus] community. The result is that those who are most vulnerable are often the most underserved and left with literally no safe options.¹¹⁹

The shelter system struggles to meet the needs of Indigenous women and girls who are survivors of IPV and family violence. For Indigenous women fleeing violence, shelters and transition homes can provide immediate crisis intervention. However, Sean Longboat, Director of Programs, Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres explained that the shelter system “can be a hostile environment for Indigenous individuals.”¹²⁰ He added that creating a national urban, rural and Northern Indigenous housing strategy to develop safe and affordable housing options for Indigenous individuals and families, including those who have experienced IPV and family violence, would be an effective solution.¹²¹ Officials from the Department of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs explained that there has been “a tremendous amount of

117 Amamor Women’s Foundation, *Submission to the House Of Commons Standing Committee On The Status of Women for its Study on Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada*, Brief; Be The Peace Institute, *Brief on IPV/DV in Canada*, Brief; Woman Abuse Council of Toronto, *Re: Study on Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada*, Brief.

118 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 25 March 2022, 1320 (Keri Lewis); FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 1 April 2022, 1440 (Mercy Lawluvi); FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 11 February 2022, 1335 (Bonnie Brayton).

119 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 8 February 2022, 1550 (Lorie English).

120 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 1 March 2022, 1620 (Sean Longboat).

121 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 1 March 2022, 1620 (Sean Longboat).



investment in Inuit housing as well as housing for the Métis nation and for self-governing communities” but that “a lot more needs to be done.”¹²²

Recent federal government initiatives have dedicated \$724 million toward expanding access to IPV and GVB supports and implementing 38 new shelters and 50 transition homes for First Nations, Inuit and Métis people across Canada, both on and off reserve in the North and in urban centres.¹²³ While witnesses noted that any increase in the supply of shelter and transition home spaces is important, they added that work is urgently needed to meet all the needs for Indigenous women and girls, particularly in the North.¹²⁴

Services Supporting Survivors’ Physical and Mental Health

Women who have experienced IPV may experience physical, psychological and/or emotional consequences, including a loss of confidence and self-esteem.¹²⁵ Family violence and IPV intersect with many of the social determinants of health, such as socioeconomic disadvantage, community violence, lack of social support, substance and alcohol use, precarious or unsafe housing and adverse early childhood experiences. As such, some witnesses argued that the prevention of IPV and family violence require a public health lens.¹²⁶

Lorie English explained that GBV can lead to complex trauma for survivors, and one of the ways in which women may cope with this trauma is increased substance use. As such, these women have complex needs that could be addressed through harm-reduction strategies and approaches.¹²⁷ Witnesses agreed that the overall lack of funding and resources in the GBV sector is a barrier to providing harm-reduction and trauma-informed services, and asked for increased funding to support workers in this sector.¹²⁸ Katreena Scott acknowledged that the trauma- and violence-informed lens

122 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 4 February 2022, 1430 (Chantal Marin-Comeau, Director General, Missing and Murdered Women and Girls Secretariat, Department of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs).

123 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 4 February 2022, 1405 (Ian Kenney).

124 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 4 February 2022, 1405 (Ian Kenney).

125 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 5 April 2022, 1655 (Sylvie Bernatchez); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 1 March 2022, 1540 (Gerri Sharpe).

126 Be The Peace Institute, [Brief on IPV/DV in Canada](#), Brief.

127 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 8 February 2022, 1630 (Lorie English).

128 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 8 February 2022, 1630 (Lorie English).

that shelters and IPV services apply is very important to effectively address the mental health problems that can result from IPV.¹²⁹

For older women who are survivors of IPV, accessing health services that meet their varied needs may be challenging. Older women who experience IPV may have existing complex health needs, and these women need healthcare services that can address their aging-related needs as well as their experiences of IPV; currently the GBV and healthcare sectors do not provide older women survivors with the support they need.¹³⁰

Services Supporting Individuals Who Committed Violence Against Their Intimate Partner

“The reality is that finding help to address abusive behaviour in Canada is really, really difficult.”¹³¹

Katreena Scott
Professor

Centre for Research and Education on Violence Against Women and Children

The Committee heard that it is important to provide support services for individuals who committed violence against their intimate partner to help them recognize the impacts of their behaviours and to be held accountable for them.¹³² Individuals who have committed violence against their intimate partner “need to know they can reach out for help.”¹³³ These types of support programs have proven to be successful at creating lasting change. Katreena Scott, indicated that the participation of perpetrators of violence in support programs is linked to a lower “engagement with systems afterwards—that could be any range of systems—” and to “less reassault.”¹³⁴ Mitch Bourbonniere, Outreach Worker at Ogijiita Pimatiswin Kinamatawin, added that there are no physical spaces for serving men who are perpetrators, or victims, of violence, as such, accessing support services can be difficult: “[w]hat we don’t have is physical space. There’s no shelter for men in Winnipeg in terms of domestic violence.

129 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 15 February 2022, 1610 (Katreena Scott).

130 Canadian Centre for Elder Law, *Brief*.

131 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 15 February 2022, 1555 (Katreena Scott).

132 Shalom Wiebe, *Written Brief for the Study on Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada*, Brief; FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 5 April 2022, 1605 (Geneviève Lessard).

133 Alice House, *Brief: Study on Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada*, Brief.

134 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 15 February 2022, 1630 (Katreena Scott).



We are on call. We are able to meet men where they're at physically, on their own time."¹³⁵ He described the wrap-around approach used by the organization to work with men who have committed violence:

It's based on a wraparound approach. When a man comes to us asking for and wanting and needing help, we establish a relationship. We do it in a non-judgmental way as we can in terms of the person. We certainly judge behaviour, though, because those are two different things. We let folks know early on our stance on the treatment of women and girls. That wraparound is based on relationships. It's based on accessibility. The men have access to us on a 24-hour basis. In rotating shifts we respond to men ... We are able to meet men where they're at physically, on their own time. We do land-based activities. In terms of using an [I]ndigenous lens, we use ceremony. We use lateral empathy and kindness, giving back to the community. We support women in their endeavours to bring justice to this issue.¹³⁶

However, witnesses explained that quality support programs for individuals who committed violence against their intimate partner are difficult to access in Canada:¹³⁷ in some cases, the only way to access them is if an individual is charged with a criminal offence.¹³⁸ When programs are available, they are often offered at specific times during the week and not on the weekends or at night.¹³⁹ Witnesses argued that access to these programs should be expanded and that individuals should be able to access them without having to be involved in the criminal justice system.¹⁴⁰ For example, Lana Wells described alternative justice approaches to sexual violence, which are "activities and interventions that are outside of the criminal legal system, that are survivor-centred and trauma-informed, and that promote prevention and healing with survivors and aggressors of sexual violence."¹⁴¹ She explained that these initiatives that integrate reparative and transformative principles have "the potential to meet survivors' needs, rehabilitate offenders, address injustice and prevent future acts of violence."¹⁴²

135 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 29 March 2022, 1715 (Mitch Bourbonniere).

136 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 29 March 2022, 1715 (Mitch Bourbonniere).

137 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 29 March 2022, 1625 (Simon Lapierre).

138 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 4 March 2022, 1415 (Tim Kelly, Executive Director, Changing Ways Inc.); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 15 February 2022, 1555 (Katreena Scott).

139 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 8 February 2022, 1700 (Claudine Thibaudeau).

140 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 8 February 2022, 1700 (Claudine Thibaudeau); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 4 March 2022, 1455 (Tim Kelly).

141 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 15 February 2022, 1550 (Lana Wells).

142 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 15 February 2022, 1550 (Lana Wells).

As with support services for survivors of violence, support services for individuals who have perpetrated violence need to be adapted to the social context and social norms of the individuals requiring these services.¹⁴³ Katreena Scott told the Committee that, currently, programs offered are “short-term, group-based, one-size-fits-all intervention[s]” and that in many rural communities, they are “offered once or twice a year.”¹⁴⁴

Part of the reason more specialized services are not available for perpetrators is because of a lack of qualified workforce.¹⁴⁵ The Committee heard that the Government of Canada could provide funding to organizations for the development of a specialized workforce and for the expansion of the access to programs for individuals who perpetrated violence.¹⁴⁶ This includes funding the development of prevention programs targeted to perpetrators of violence, including programs addressing the specific needs and barriers of distinct communities in Canada and disseminating best practices.¹⁴⁷

BARRIERS TO ACCESSING SUPPORTS AND SERVICES FOR SURVIVORS OF INTIMATE PARTNER AND FAMILY VIOLENCE

“Really, that’s the recommendation, looking holistically at the situation, because those women usually don’t face only one barrier.”¹⁴⁸

Yordanka Petrova
Senior Manager, WoodGreen Community Services

143 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 15 February 2022, 1640 (Lana Wells); Centre for Research and Education on Violence Against Women and Children, [Submission to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women: Centre for Research & Education on Violence Against Women & Children, Western University](#), Brief; FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 15 February 2022, 1555 (Katreena Scott).

144 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 15 February 2022, 1555 (Katreena Scott).

145 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 15 February 2022, 1555 (Katreena Scott).

146 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 15 February 2022, 1640 (Lana Wells); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 15 February 2022, 1555 (Katreena Scott).

147 Centre for Research and Education on Violence Against Women and Children, [Submission to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women: Centre for Research & Education on Violence Against Women & Children, Western University](#), Brief; FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 4 March 2022, 1420 and 1455 (Tim Kelly).

148 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 25 March 2022, 1425 (Yordanka Petrova).



Many survivors face multiple barriers when navigating often complex social services systems, including language barriers, fear of retaliation, precarious immigration status, economic insecurity and a lack of access to child care.¹⁴⁹ Witnesses emphasized the importance of inclusive, trauma-informed and culturally sensitive services, including financial counselling, that are provided in the survivor’s first language.¹⁵⁰

Funding for Gender-based Violence Service Sector

A major barrier to service provision, and survivors’ access to these services, is the long-standing chronic “under-fund[ing]” of the GBV sector in Canada.¹⁵¹ Burnout among workers in the GBV service sector is among the consequences of this sector’s underfunding. As a result, this burnout can create a strain on service provision, ultimately affecting survivors’ access to these services.¹⁵² Witnesses described conditions for workers in the GBV sector and explained that these conditions are the result of a lack of funding and “systemic devaluing of this form of labour.”¹⁵³ The Committee heard that workers in the GBV sector need more support, and that the situation has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.¹⁵⁴ While service provision became more challenging during COVID-19, workers in the sector faced complex and emotionally difficult work prior to the pandemic.¹⁵⁵ This work, which is predominantly performed by women, remains under-valued and precarious; workers lack access to

149 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 5 April 2022, 1645 (Shelina Jeshani); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 29 March 2022, 1730 (Jodi Heidinger, Coordinator, Family Violence Prevention Program, Fort Saskatchewan Families First Society).

150 See for example: FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 5 April 2022, 1625 (Rekha Gadhia); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 29 March 2022, 1655 (Jodi Heidinger); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 5 April 2022, 1535 (Rekha Gadhia); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 4 March 2022, 1355 (Meseret Haileyesus); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 11 February 2022, 1310 (Witness-Témoïn 1).

151 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 8 February 2022, 1550 (Lorie English).

152 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 11 February 2022, 1410 (Karen Campbell).

153 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 4 March 2022, 1305 (Erin Whitmore, Executive Director, Ending Violence Association of Canada).

154 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 11 February 2022, 1410 (Karen Campbell); Ending Violence Association of Canada, [Brief on Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada](#), Brief; FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 4 March 2022, 1305 (Erin Whitmore).

155 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 11 February 2022, 1410 (Karen Campbell).

competitive wages, healthcare benefits, pensions and career development opportunities.¹⁵⁶

Geographic Location and Accessing Gender-based Violence Services

Certain other factors may affect women’s abilities to access these services. For example, witnesses explained that women living in rural and remote regions are often geographically isolated from supports and services. In addition to the geographical isolation, these women may experience social isolation due to IPV and family violence, which in turn may affect their abilities to access support services.¹⁵⁷ Safe Housing and Directed Empowerment Inc. suggested that a public awareness campaign in various languages could be created to direct survivors of IPV and family violence toward local supports and services.¹⁵⁸ Women may also hesitate to seek services in small rural and remote communities as anonymity is very difficult to maintain.¹⁵⁹

Access to Public Transportation for Victims and Survivors of Intimate Partner and Family Violence

Witnesses spoke about the importance of access to public transportation in preventing, responding to and mitigating IPV and family violence.¹⁶⁰ Jane Stinson, Research Associate, Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women, explained that the public transportation system in Canada has worsened since 2019, and that the COVID-19 pandemic has had further negative effects on this system.¹⁶¹ She asserted that:

Women need transportation systems within their community, between communities and between provinces. It doesn’t exist now. The federal government needs to provide

156 Ending Violence Association of Canada, *Brief on Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada*, Brief; FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 4 March 2022, 1305 (Erin Whitmore,); FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 11 February 2022, 1410 (Karen Campbell).

157 The Women’s Resource Centre, *Domestic Violence in Rural Settings: A Human Rights Issue*, Brief; FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 15 February 2022, 1630 (Katreena Scott).

158 Safe Housing and Directed Empowerment Inc., *Brief for The Standing Committee on the Status of Women: Study on Intimate Partner Violence and Domestic Violence in Canada*, Brief.

159 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 5 April 2022, 1545 (Marjolaine Montminy); FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 1 April 2022, 1315 (Hon. Marci Ien).

160 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 11 February 2022, 1445 (Jane Stinson).

161 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 11 February 2022, 1405 (Jane Stinson).



leadership to both invest in transportation infrastructure and create the incentives for other levels of government to do so.¹⁶²

Witnesses explained that many rural and remote communities do not have public transportation, but sometimes volunteer-run community transportation services are established. COVID-19 has had a significant effect on these community services. Many of the volunteers who run them are older individuals who have withdrawn from their community roles to protect themselves from COVID-19.¹⁶³ The Committee heard recommendations to address the transportation gap in Canada, including a national action plan on a pan-Canadian accessible and affordable transportation system, as well as funding for organizations working on transportation and GBV.¹⁶⁴

Fear of Removal of Children when Reporting Intimate Partner and Family Violence

Survivors may fear the removal of their children if they report or leave an abusive relationship; women need to be reassured and confident that they will not lose their children if they leave an abusive relationship.¹⁶⁵ According to Angie Hutchinson, there is an important historical context for Indigenous families in this regard. She explained that the “insidious impacts of the settler-colonial process” have been devastating for Indigenous families and communities and that the removal of children through “the residential schools and the Sixties Scoop era and the ongoing devastation of the child welfare system” continue to have negative and damaging effects on Indigenous families and communities.¹⁶⁶ In an anonymous brief, the author called for federal leadership to encourage changes to provincial child protection systems that would ensure that mothers and their children are treated as a family unit when they seek GBV services.¹⁶⁷

A lack of cultural safety remains a significant barrier for many women’s abilities to access supports and to report incidences of IPV to police.¹⁶⁸ The Committee heard that survivors should be allowed to have a person with them for support when they provide statements to police officers and that police officers should also be properly trained to

162 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 11 February 2022, 1405 (Jane Stinson).

163 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 5 April 2022, 1545 (Marjolaine Montminy).

164 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 11 February 2022, 1405 (Jane Stinson).

165 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 29 March 2022, 1730 (Jodi Heidinger).

166 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 1 March 2022, 1635 (Angie Hutchinson).

167 Anonymous Author (Author 16), [Brief](#).

168 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 8 February 2022, 1550 (Lorie English).

conduct trauma-informed interviews.¹⁶⁹ Shelina Jeshani, Director, Strategic Partnerships and Collaboration, Safe Centre of Peel, emphasized the importance of integrated and coordinated wraparound services that are trauma-informed and culturally sensitive for victims of IPV:

when victims come in to the safe centre, they have a safe place for their children that is a child-friendly environment, where there is a full time child minder who supports the children in a place where they can play and be themselves while mommies get the information and the support that they need. They don't have to bring their children into a counselling room and have to worry about what their children are going to hear.¹⁷⁰

She explained that the centre's collaboration with 16 community partners ensure that survivors are supported throughout the reporting process in a way that is trauma-informed and culturally sensitive.¹⁷¹

Therefore, the Committee recommends:

Recommendation 4

That, to remove as many barriers preventing all individuals seeking to flee abusive environments as possible, the Government of Canada, respecting the jurisdictions of the provinces and territories, through funding support for shelters and allocations in the National Housing Strategy, continue to develop and expand safe and affordable housing options for Indigenous women, including 24-hour 7 day per week low-barrier safe spaces, transition homes, and housing with rent geared to income.

Recommendation 5

That the Government of Canada, through relevant federal departments, respecting the jurisdictions of provinces and territories, provide sufficient and sustained multi-year capacity funding for women and gender equality organizations that advocate and provide frontline supports and resources for individuals fleeing violence.

169 Vancouver Rape Relief and Women's Shelter, *Brief*.

170 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 5 April 2022, 1710 (Shelina Jeshani, Director).

171 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 5 April 2022, 1710 (Shelina Jeshani, Director).



Recommendation 6

That the Government of Canada, in collaboration with provinces and territories, implement sexual assault policies and accessible services for counselling in post-secondary institutions.

Recommendation 7

That the Government of Canada support individuals experiencing and attempting to leave situations of intimate partner and family violence by implementing measures to reduce poverty and ensure economic security, such as:

- **expanding income guarantee programs in Canada; ensuring they are livable while assisting populations that currently fall outside of Canada's social safety net;**
- **providing universally accessible and affordable childcare, in collaboration with provinces and territories;**
- **funding programs that provide financial counselling and financial literacy training, reflective of diverse linguistic and social contexts;**
- **funding organizations that facilitate women's access to education, training and employment;**
- **implementing a livable disability benefit that accounts for regional differences in the cost of living, in addition to current programs and supports meant to meet specific needs; and**
- **providing financial compensation for survivors of intimate partner violence.**

Recommendation 8

That the Government of Canada provide funding to organizations offering supports and services for survivors of intimate partner and family violence, to ensure that older women who are survivors receive supports that meet both their needs as survivors of violence, as well as their aging-related needs.

Recommendation 9

That the Government of Canada, through relevant federal departments and respecting the jurisdictions of provinces and territories, ensure that children who have witnessed family and intimate partner violence are provided immediate mental health and trauma support services.

Recommendation 10

That the Government of Canada, in partnership with provinces, territories, and Indigenous nations, implement a plan to respond to the root causes of intimate partner violence in Canada, including:

- **eliminating the barriers in accessing the justice systems for individuals working in criminalized or under-the-table economies such as sex work; and**
- **implementing culturally based programming that reflect diverse communities by providing sustainable funding for Elders, knowledge keepers, traditional healing centres, ethnic community associations, and newcomer and refugee service centres.**

Recommendation 11

That the Government of Canada review programs dedicated to providing care for the pets of survivors of intimate partner violence, to:

- **ensure education for all stakeholders like police services and shelters to ensure they have the information they need to refer women to services that can foster their pets when they leave an abusive relationship; and**
- **explore funding for the care of companion pets and shelter of survivors of abuse when they leave an abusive relationship.**



EXPERIENCES OF SURVIVORS BELONGING TO SPECIFIC GROUPS

“There are shared experiences, but even with groups, there are very unique experiences. Therefore, we always have to make space for those unique experiences and look for where the most vulnerable or where the marginalized are, even within collective community identities.”¹⁷²

Yasmin Hussain
Manager

Muslim Resource Centre for Social Support and Integration

Witnesses spoke about the diverse experiences of women and families in Canada, noting that while experiences of IPV and family violence are widespread, groups that are marginalized by systems, and who have intersecting identity factors, may have unique experiences.¹⁷³ People in Canada who are Indigenous, racialized, part of LGBTQ2 communities, living with disabilities and/or who experience marginalization through poverty, addictions or living in rural and remote communities are often the most vulnerable to experiences of IPV and family violence and may face additional challenges in healing from these experiences.¹⁷⁴

172 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 4 March 2022, 1345 (Yasmin Hussain).

173 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 1 April 2022, 1415 (Alice Czitrom).

174 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 1 April 2022, 1415 (Alice Czitrom); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 11 February 2022, 1325 (Bonnie Brayton); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 29 March 2022, 1620 (Nneka MacGregor); DisAbleD Women’s Network of Canada, [Women with Disabilities and Interpersonal Violence](#), Brief.

Experiences of Survivors Who Are Indigenous

“Indigenous ways of healing are holistic and inclusive. Wabhung Abinoonjiiag that participants are the experts in their own experiences and that understanding one’s healing journey is not a time bound nor a linear process but rather would be reflective, flexible and responsive to experiences. Healing requires humility, patience and wisdom.”¹⁷⁵

Angie Hutchinson
Executive Director, Wabhung Abinoonjiiag Inc.

The Committee heard that Indigenous women are over-represented as victims and survivors of IPV. For example, Gerri Sharpe stated that the rate of IPV for Inuit women is 14 times higher compared to other groups of women in Canada.¹⁷⁶ There are many contributing factors to Indigenous women’s experiences of IPV and hesitancy to report these experiences, including:

- lack of culturally and safe services;
- lack of access to shelters, particularly in the North;¹⁷⁷
- lack of transportation;
- lack of affordable and safe housing;
- language barriers;¹⁷⁸
- extreme poverty and income insecurity; and

175 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 1 March 2022, 1635 (Angie Hutchinson).

176 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 1 March 2022, 1540 (Gerri Sharpe).

177 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 4 February 2022, 1405 (Ian Kenney).

178 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 1 March 2022, 1540 (Gerri Sharpe).



- mistrust of “colonial systems, notably police, courts and child protection systems.”¹⁷⁹

For Indigenous women and girls experiencing IPV, a safe space may not be available in their communities. They may seek refuge from IPV in urban centres but face new dangers and challenges.¹⁸⁰ Gerri Sharpe explained that:

When they go to urban centres, women end up in Edmonton, Vancouver, Ottawa, Winnipeg, Montreal and Nova Scotia. This is where we lose our aunts, our sisters, our babies and our grandmothers because they’ve been completely removed from their support systems. They fall into this cycle of down-spiralling victimization.¹⁸¹

Witnesses spoke about Indigenous people healing by connecting to “who [they] are as Indigenous peoples.” They emphasized that land-based programming and knowledge sharing, particularly for Indigenous youth, is integral to this connection to culture, tradition and identity.¹⁸² Josie Nepinak, Executive Director, Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society, explained that Indigenous women express that when seeking IPV supports and services, they want to find a sense of community and to find people with common cultural experiences as their own.¹⁸³ She emphasized that community-based solutions must be developed and that Indigenous communities themselves must be embedded in developing these community-based solutions.¹⁸⁴ Angie Hutchinson added that the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action point to the need for culturally relevant services for addressing family violence.¹⁸⁵ However, she advocated for a holistic “wraparound” approach to healing because it “is not done on an individual basis; nor is it done on a specific trauma basis, such as [IPV].”¹⁸⁶

Ensuring that community organizations can work alongside “culturally specific and culturally led” organizations can provide survivors with “the best of both worlds” when it

179 RESOLVE, RESOLVE Alberta, RESOLVE Manitoba and RESOLVE Saskatchewan, [Brief](#).

180 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 5 April 2022, 1725 (Deputy Grand Chief Anna Betty Achneepineskum, Nishnawbe Aski Nation, Assembly of First Nations); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 25 March 2022, 1435 (Paul Lacerte, Co-Founder and National Ambassador, Moose Hide Campaign).

181 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 1 March 2022, 1630 (Gerri Sharpe).

182 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 1 March 2022, 1705 and 1710 (Angie Hutchinson); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 1 March 2022, 1705 (Angela Brass).

183 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 22 March 2022, 1710 (Josie Nepinak).

184 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 22 March 2022, 1740 (Josie Nepinak).

185 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 1 March 2022, 1635 (Angie Hutchinson).

186 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 1 March 2022, 1655 (Angie Hutchinson).

comes to support.¹⁸⁷ Gertie Mai Muise, Chief Executive Officer, Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres, added that the specific needs of urban Indigenous communities must be incorporated into service provision that is low-barrier and flexible. She explained that a national effort, with direct funding, to “ensure victims’ service workers are integrated with urban Indigenous community service provider networks” would improve support to urban Indigenous communities.¹⁸⁸

Experiences of Survivors Who Are Racialized

Racialized women often face discrimination in all aspects of their lives; witnesses explained that systemic racism and discrimination are embedded in all systems and structures in society, including healthcare, policing and child welfare systems.¹⁸⁹ Angela Marie MacDougall stated that “it is important to understand that racism exists and survivors experience it” including when trying to access IPV services.¹⁹⁰ According to Shelina Jeshani, Safe Centre of Peel works with “ethno-specific partners” to work with specific communities, to provide services in many languages and to ensure that the police understand important cultural nuances as well as other specific needs that the clients might have.¹⁹¹ Witnesses noted that GBV and IPV policies, services and supports must take an anti-racist approach and consider the realities of these women to meet their needs.¹⁹² Finally, providing resources directly to these communities to use as they see fit is an important avenue to ensure their unique needs are met.¹⁹³

187 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 15 February 2022, 1615 (Katreena Scott).

188 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 1 March 2022, 1530 and 1610 (Gertie Mai Muise).

189 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 29 March 2022, 1635 (Nneka MacGregor); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 15 February 2022, 1610 (Lana Wells).

190 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 22 March 2022, 1555 (Angela Marie MacDougall).

191 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 5 April 2022, 1715 (Shelina Jeshani).

192 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 22 March 2022, 1555 (Angela Marie MacDougall); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 15 February 2022, 1610 (Lana Wells).

193 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 22 March 2022, 1635 (Angela Marie MacDougall).



Experiences of Survivors Who Are Immigrants

“Belonging to diverse racial and ethnic communities, [immigrant] women often experienced violence and challenges that were often rooted in complex family, religious and cultural dynamics, and were compounded by systemic barriers. They encountered significant obstacles in disclosing and reporting abuse, including linguistic barriers, receiving culturally responsive support, and navigating complex legal and social systems.”¹⁹⁴

Immigrant Women Services

Immigrant women encounter unique barriers when attempting to leave an abusive relationship and/or access IPV services and supports. The most common barrier cited by witnesses for immigrant women fleeing IPV was a fear of deportation due to precarious immigration status often limiting women’s access to social support services, housing and employment.¹⁹⁵ In submitted briefs, witnesses advocated for changes to citizenship and permanent residency processes to ensure that immigrant women’s status is not dependent on her sponsor and to enforce “stricter eligibility for anyone involved in [perpetrating] IPV/GBV.”¹⁹⁶

Rekha Gadhia of the Calgary Immigrant Women’s Association added that in immigrant families, there are certain unique stressors and factors that may contribute to violence. For example, language and literacy barriers can be significant roadblocks for immigrant women wishing to escape situations of IPV and family violence, as these pose significant

194 Immigrant Women Services Ottawa, [Brief to The Standing Committee on the Status of Women Study on Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada](#), Brief.

195 See for example: FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 29 March 2022, 1545 (Mashooda-Lubna Syed, Government and Community Relations, Sakeenah Homes); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 25 March 2022, 1350 (Pamela Cross, Legal Director, Luke’s Place Support and Resource Centre for Women and Children); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 22 March 2022, 1615 (Kripa Sekhar); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 15 February 2022, 1650 (Chantal Arseneault).

196 Armagh House, [Ending Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada](#), Brief; Safe Housing and Directed Empowerment Inc., [Brief for The Standing Committee on the Status of Women: Study on Intimate Partner Violence and Domestic Violence in Canada](#), Brief.

challenges for securing employment and supports.¹⁹⁷ Melpa Kamateros, Executive Director, Shield of Athena Family Services, asserted that financial dependency is a major barrier to women leaving abusive situations and that women who are victims of violence should be granted a stipend. She specified that “for immigrant women who can’t speak the language, don’t have a social network and don’t have any means of support, this [stipend] really is a necessity.”¹⁹⁸ Furthermore, immigrant families may face significant barriers to settlement in Canada, which can, in turn, contribute to environments of violence in the family and in intimate partnerships. Examples of these barriers include the inability to meet a family’s basic needs, cultural barriers and stigmas, shifting roles in the family post-migration, pre-existing trauma and adverse experiences in home countries, and language barriers.¹⁹⁹ Witnesses emphasized the need for culturally appropriate social services, including English and French language classes for newcomer and immigrant women.²⁰⁰

Experiences of Survivors Who Are Living With Disabilities

DAWN asserted that women and girls with disabilities are disproportionately affected by GBV, including IPV, and that significant gaps remain in service access and provision for women and girls with disabilities, who often were “neither believed nor listened to” when they report violence and abuse.²⁰¹ Furthermore, certain groups of women and girls with disabilities who have intersecting identity factors may face additional challenges in leaving abusive situations, and in accessing supports and services when they do leave a situation of IPV or GBV.²⁰² Bonnie Brayton advocated that to meet the needs of women and girls with disabilities, there should be opportunities for peer support and access to services that are built by the people they are meant to serve.²⁰³

197 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 29 March 2022, 1545 (Mashooda-Lubna Syed); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 1 April 2022, 1400 (Mercy Lawluvi); and FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 22 March 2022, 1625 (Kripa Sekhar).

198 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 11 February 2022, 1315 (Melpa Kamateros).

199 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 5 April 2022, 1535 (Rekha Gadhia).

200 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 1 April 2022, 1430 (Mercy Lawluvi); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 22 March 2022, 1610 (Kripa Sekhar); South Asian Women’s Centre, [Brief to the Standing Committee on the Status of Women](#), Brief.

201 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 11 February 2022, 1350 (Bonnie Brayton).

202 DisAbleD Women’s Network of Canada, [Women with Disabilities and Interpersonal Violence](#), Brief; FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 11 February 2022, 1305 (Bonnie Brayton).

203 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 11 February 2022, 1305 (Bonnie Brayton).



IPV and GBV have many consequences, such as a TBI, which affects a woman’s life permanently in many ways. For example:

[TBI] impacts their ability to work and function and it also adversely impacts their ability to navigate the system that we’re talking about especially in the context of family court and trying to fight for custody of their children. The way that they are seen is that they are somehow unfit, not recognizing the fact that the health impacts are caused by the physical assault from the partner.²⁰⁴

Despite the significant impacts that TBIs have on individuals who suffer from them, research and public education about IPV, strangulation and head trauma is “inconsequential.”²⁰⁵ As there is little information and understanding of TBIs, women who are survivors of IPV may have a TBI but they may not know that they are suffering from this injury. As a result, they may not seek or receive appropriate supports and may blame themselves for their struggles.²⁰⁶

Diagnosing TBIs remains a significant challenge; women are typically not screened for TBI when they access social services, so these conditions often go untreated and undiagnosed. Bonnie Brayton suggested that screening for TBIs in IPV and GBV shelters and services should be incorporated into any national action plan on GBV.²⁰⁷

Therefore, the Committee recommends:

Recommendation 12

That the Government of Canada provide funding to research the prevalence of traumatic brain injuries and their life altering effects on survivors of intimate partner violence.

Recommendation 13

That the Government of Canada develop, in collaboration with Indigenous survivors, including women, individuals of diverse genders, a national action plan based on the 231 Calls for Justice from the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls that addresses violence against Indigenous women and girls.

204 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 29 March 2022, 1605 (Nneka MacGregor).

205 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 29 March 2022, 1605 (Nneka MacGregor).

206 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 29 March 2022, 1610 (Nneka MacGregor).

207 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 11 February 2022, 1330 (Bonnie Brayton).

ADDRESSING PROBLEMS WITHIN THE JUSTICE SYSTEM

“[S]urvivors who report IPV face punishing processes in criminal and family courts and child protection systems if they have children. Victim-blaming, mandatory charging policies that can criminalize victims, brutal cross examinations, manipulation of systems by an offending partner to further exert coercive control, accusations of parental alienation and fear of further violence toward them or their children, can dissuade women from reporting at all.”²⁰⁸

Be The Peace Institute

The Committee heard that IPV does not end when the relationship ends. Witnesses shared various examples of ways in which the justice system fails to protect survivors of IPV as well as ways in which perpetrators of violence use the justice system to continue to exercise control over their victims, which many called post-separation violence or litigation abuse.²⁰⁹ For instance, in a written brief, an anonymous author stated: “[s]ince our separation, the legal system has contributed to, allowed for, and participated in similar abusive behaviours that ultimately have been far more harmful to me than my time in our relationship was.”²¹⁰ The sections below describe ways in which witnesses suggested the justice system could be improved to be more responsive to the needs of survivors of IPV.

In addition to the elements detailed in this section of the report, the Committee was told that the Government of Canada can play a leadership role in ensuring that family law legislation be consistent across provinces and territories.²¹¹ In a joint written brief,

208 Be The Peace Institute, [Brief on IPV/DV in Canada](#), Brief.

209 See for example: Stephanie Kelford, [Brief on intimate partner-domestic violence](#), Brief; Anonymous Author (Author 30), [Brief](#); Anonymous Author (Author 33), [Brief](#); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 29 March 2022, 1615 (Simon Lapierre); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 22 March 2022, 1730 (Sabrina Lemeltier).

210 Anonymous Author (Author 24), [Brief](#).

211 Luke’s Place Support and Resource Centre for Women and Children, [Luke’s Place/National Association of Women and the Law – Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada: a Brief to the Status of Women Committee](#), Brief.



Jennifer Koshan, Janet Mosher and Wanda Wiegers urged decision-makers to review laws and policies in Canada to ensure “access to procedural and substantive justice that encompasses equal protection of the law, equal access to legal rights and remedies, and safety for women and children.”²¹²

Criminalizing Coercive Control

Coercive control is a “hidden” and hard to identify type of IPV that does not always include physical violence.²¹³ According to Simon Lapierre, who appeared as an individual, coercive control is “a dynamic of control and deprivation of freedom that is used on an everyday basis applying varying violent and non-violent strategies.”²¹⁴ It can include acts such as threats, humiliation and intimidation.²¹⁵ Pamela Cross, Legal Director at Luke’s Place Support and Resource Centre for Women and Children, explained:

In a relationship of coercive control, the woman loses her sense of self, her sense of agency. She has very little autonomy, because the abuser has created an atmosphere of such fear that she knows she needs to do what he expects of her or there will be dire consequences. Often the children are brought into that coercive control as weapons, unwittingly, of course.²¹⁶

An official from Statistics Canada said that coercive control can be measured through the Survey of Safety in Public and Private Spaces which included questions about sexual, emotional and psychological abuse and control.²¹⁷

The Committee was told that the concept of coercive control should be recognized in all areas of Canadian law, beyond the *Divorce Act*.²¹⁸ Acts of coercive control by themselves are not generally criminal offences;²¹⁹ therefore, survivors of violence are not necessarily

212 Jennifer Koshan, Janet Mosher and Wanda Wiegers, *Submission to the Standing Committee on the Status of Women for its Study on Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada: A Consideration of Laws and Policies Affecting Intimate Partner Violence Across Canada*, Brief.

213 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 25 March 2022, 1325 (Pamela Cross).

214 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 29 March 2022, 1610 (Simon Lapierre).

215 Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses, *Brief on Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada*, Brief; FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 4 March 2022, 1445 (Kimberley Greenwood).

216 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 25 March 2022, 1325 (Pamela Cross).

217 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 15 February 2022, 1620 (Kathy AuCoin).

218 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 15 February 2022, 1650 (Chantal Arseneault).

219 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 15 February 2022, 1710 (Louise Riendeau).

able to file police reports and get the assistance they need.²²⁰ Witnesses argued that categorizing coercive control as a criminal offence would have consequences beyond allowing survivors to report these acts to the police. They said it would recognize the severe negative impacts coercive control has on survivors and hold perpetrators accountable for their actions.²²¹ It could also allow survivors to access compensation for victims of crime.²²² Numerous witnesses supported the criminalization of coercive control in Canada.²²³ Jennifer Dunn stressed the importance for the *Criminal Code* to address violence against women, IPV and family violence as distinct forms of violence in order to “better protect victims and survivors.”²²⁴

Other jurisdictions criminalize coercive control, including the United Kingdom, Scotland, Ireland, Australia and some states in the United States of America.²²⁵ Witnesses indicated that the criminalization of coercive control in the United Kingdom and Scotland was followed by an increase in denunciations to the police.²²⁶ However, in a written brief, the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses indicated that research on the implementation of coercive control legislation in England and Wales found “low rates of charging and conviction in coercive control cases ... suggesting this type of offence is not supporting survivors and cannot easily be adapted to existing judicial

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- 220 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 15 February 2022, 1720 (Louise Riendeau).
- 221 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 15 February 2022, 1650 (Chantal Arseneault); Anonymous Author (Author 16), [Brief](#); Anonymous Author (Author 9), [Brief](#); Karen Gosbee, [Brief to the Standing Committee on the Status of Women](#), Brief.
- 222 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 15 February 2022, 1650 (Chantal Arseneault).
- 223 See for example: FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 15 February 2022, 1650 (Chantal Arseneault); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 8 February 2022, 1710 (Manon Monastesse); Leela Sharon Aheer, [Regarding Coercive Control](#), Brief; Peel Regional Police, [Brief on Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence](#), Brief; FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 4 March 2022, 1410 (Francis Lanouette, Co-Chair of the Crime Prevention, Community Safety and Well-being Committee, Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 22 March 2022, 1730 (Maud Pontel, General Coordinator, Alliance des maisons d’hébergement de 2e étape pour femmes et enfants victimes de violence conjugale).
- 224 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 8 February 2022, 1635 (Jennifer Dunn).
- 225 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 4 February 2022, 1350 (Nathalie Levman, Senior Counsel, Criminal Law Policy Section, Department of Justice); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 15 February 2022, 1650 (Chantal Arseneault); Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses, [Brief on Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada](#), Brief; Karen Gosbee, [Brief to the Standing Committee on the Status of Women](#), Brief.
- 226 Sagesse Domestic Violence Prevention Society, [Coercive Control Brief](#), Brief; FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 8 February 2022, 1710 (Manon Monastesse); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 15 February 2022, 1710 (Louise Riendeau).



systems.”²²⁷ Witnesses also raised concerns about the ability of the justice system to deal with this new criminal offence, when problems with existing criminal GBV-related offences have been identified.²²⁸

The Committee also heard words of caution from witnesses with regards to the criminalization of coercive control. Nneka MacGregor, Executive Director of the Women’s Centre for Social Justice, expressed her opposition to the criminalization of coercive control and said “that if the system is not nuanced enough to even understand physical violence—it can see broken arms and broken limbs—how can it understand the nuances of coercive control?”²²⁹ Witnesses also explained that there was a risk of women becoming the ones that are arrested,²³⁰ especially Black and Indigenous women who “are going to be the ones at the receiving end of the criminal legal system’s ‘one size fits all.’”²³¹

The Committee was told that any amendment adding coercive control to the *Criminal Code* needs to be accompanied by training for law enforcement and for individuals working in the justice system.²³² Pamela Cross explained that jurisdictions that paired the criminalization of coercive control with dedicated training programs and a high level of consultation with survivors and with those who work with survivors have enjoyed more success than jurisdictions who did not emphasize these actions.²³³

Finally, the Committee was told that if the Government of Canada goes ahead with the criminalization of coercive control, it should ensure the needs of diverse groups of women are considered, survivors and community organizations are consulted,²³⁴ and an intersectional perspective is applied to the development of legislation.²³⁵ Not all groups

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- 227 Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses, [Brief on Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada](#), Brief.
- 228 Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses, [Brief on Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada](#), Brief.
- 229 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 29 March 2022, 1630 (Nneka MacGregor).
- 230 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 25 March 2022, 1325 (Pamela Cross).
- 231 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 29 March 2022, 1630 (Nneka MacGregor).
- 232 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 4 March 2022, 1430 (Francis Lanouette); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 29 March 2022, 1540 (Simon Lapierre); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 15 February 2022, 1650 (Chantal Arseneault).
- 233 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 25 March 2022, 1345 (Pamela Cross).
- 234 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 4 March 2022, 1335 (Erin Whitmore); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 25 March 2022, 1325 (Pamela Cross).
- 235 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 15 February 2022, 1715 (Louise Riendeau).

of people in Canada are affected by law enforcement and legislation in the same way. For instance, witnesses indicated that mandatory charging policies have disproportionately affected marginalized groups, such as BIPOC and individuals who are LGBTQ2+. Such policies can “undermine rather than increase safety for survivors of violence.”²³⁶ Josie Nepinak described Indigenous women’s relationship with law enforcement:

The relationship we currently have with the police is severely fractured, and the atrocities that are happening to [I]ndigenous women within police services across the country are, in my opinion, an epidemic requiring immediate attention from the policy-makers and the legislators so that those actions are stopped immediately.²³⁷

Gerri Sharpe explained that “historically, there has been a breakdown in trust, resulting in fear of those in positions of power, such as police. Inuit women have expressed that they have felt revictimized after seeking help within the justice and policing systems.”²³⁸ Josie Nepinak advocated for the creation of safe spaces where Indigenous women can report incidents of violence they have experienced.²³⁹

For this reason, the Committee heard that the federal government should examine and address “the historical and ongoing impacts of colonialism, racism, ableism, and other forms of discrimination within the criminal justice system.”²⁴⁰ As well, witnesses indicated that the Government of Canada should examine existing offences to determine how the justice system responds to GBV and “how current offences could be better used to address manifestations of coercive control.”²⁴¹

236 Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic, *Written Brief to Status Of Women Committee Study on Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada*, Brief.

237 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 22 March 2022, 1735 (Josie Nepinak).

238 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 1 March 2022, 1540 (Gerri Sharpe).

239 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 22 March 2022, 1735 (Josie Nepinak).

240 Ending Violence Association of Canada, *Brief on Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada*, Brief.

241 Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses, *Brief on Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada*, Brief.



Training for Professionals Involved in the Justice System

“Changing the law is useless if you don’t back it up with education. It should be part of what every lawyer gets in law school, what every social worker, psychologist gets as part of their training.”²⁴²

Peter Jaffe
Professor, Western University

The Committee was told that professionals in law enforcement, the justice system and child protection services do not adequately understand and recognize the signs of abuse, trauma and IPV, especially of psychological violence.²⁴³ Survivors informed the Committee of instances that they felt blamed by police officers for what happened to them.²⁴⁴ In a written brief, an anonymous author explained: “I live in fear, not only of him, but of the ‘court professionals’ [...] who don’t understand the constant onslaught of abuse we’ve been subjected to, and who have the power to remove my children from my care and hand them to their abusive father.”²⁴⁵

The misunderstanding of the various forms of IPV by professionals can have severe consequences for survivors: it can put survivors and their children at risk of experiencing more violence and it can allow perpetrators of violence to continue controlling their victims.²⁴⁶ In a written brief, the Alberta Council of Women’s Shelters added that survivors from marginalized communities are most at risk in this situation:

BIPOC²⁴⁷ and 2SLGBTQ+²⁴⁸ survivors who do not conform to the stereotypical image of the survivor face an increased risk of being treated as aggressors instead of survivors, and of being dismissed or criminalized by the legal system. This risk of dismissal or criminalization is especially

242 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 5 April 2022, 1715 (Peter Jaffe).

243 Allan Gordon Bell, *Brief*; Carmen Wittmeier, *Written Submission for the Status of Women Committee: Study on Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada*, Brief.

244 Anonymous Author (Author 47), *Brief*.

245 Anonymous Author (Author 47), *Brief*.

246 Carmen Wittmeier, *Written Submission for the Status of Women Committee: Study on Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada*, Brief.

247 Black, Indigenous and people of colour.

248 Two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and others.

concerning given that BIPOC women and 2SLGBTQ+ people experience disproportionate levels of IPV, and Indigenous women, in particular, experience among the highest rates of IPV in Canada. The survivors who are most likely to be dismissed or criminalized in courtrooms are thus also those who are the most likely to experience IPV.²⁴⁹

For this reason, numerous witnesses advocated for mandatory education on IPV and coercive control for professionals involved in the justice system, particularly for lawyers and judges,²⁵⁰ as well as community organizations providing services to survivors of IPV.²⁵¹ Pamela Cross explained:²⁵²

yes, we need to educate judges...We need lawyers to have access to ongoing professional development opportunities that are mandatory, frankly... In addition to education and training, we have to build accountability systems so that when that individual goes back to their workplace, their regular performance reviews include an examination of whether they've been applying what they should have learned in the training session they were at.

Several witnesses supported Bill C-233, An Act to amend the *Criminal Code* and the *Judges Act* (violence against an intimate partner), also referred to as “Keira’s Law,” and called on the Government of Canada to adopt it.²⁵³ If passed, Bill C-233 would amend “the *Judges Act* to provide for continuing education seminars for judges on matters related to intimate partner violence and coercive control.”²⁵⁴

249 Alberta Council of Women’s Shelters, [Research Brief: Intimate Partner Violence in the Courtroom](#), Brief.

250 See for example: FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 25 March 2022, 1345 (Pamela Cross); Anonymous Author (Author 5), [Brief](#); Anonymous Author (Author 52), [Brief](#); Sara Yantho, [Brief](#); Anonymous Author (Author 51), [Brief](#); Probation Officers Association of Ontario, [Submission to the Status of Women Committee for its Study on Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada](#), Brief; Anonymous Author (Author 11), [Brief](#); Centre to End All Sexual Exploitation, [Brief submitted to the Standing Committee on Status of Women \(FEMO\) – Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada](#), Brief; Anonymous Author (Author 2), [Brief](#); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 4 March 2022, 1445 (Kimberley Greenwood).

251 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 4 March 2022, 1430 (Francis Lanouette).

252 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 25 March 2022, 1345 (Pamela Cross).

253 See for example: FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 22 March 2022, 1605 (Farrah Khan); Anonymous Author (Author 6), [Brief](#); Judy Coey, [Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada](#), Brief; Anonymous Author (Author 8), [Brief](#); Karen Gosbee, [Brief to the Standing Committee on the Status of Women](#), Brief; Anonymous Author (Author 47), [Brief](#); Anonymous Author (Author 39), [Brief](#).

254 [Bill C-233, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and the Judges Act \(violence against an intimate partner\)](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session.



The Committee heard that mandatory education on IPV and coercive control for professionals involved in the justice system should be trauma-informed²⁵⁵ and be developed in collaboration with survivors and organizations working with them.²⁵⁶ Witnesses recommended the training cover issues such as litigation abuse,²⁵⁷ parental alienation,²⁵⁸ the effects of IPV on children²⁵⁹ and the link between animal abuse and IPV.²⁶⁰ Witnesses also stressed the need for this training to tackle unconscious cultural and racial biases²⁶¹ and address the ways in which the effects of IPV are exacerbated for survivors from marginalized communities or with intersecting identities such as survivors who are BIPOC,²⁶² survivors who are immigrants, refugees or have a precarious immigration status in Canada,²⁶³ survivors who are members of LGBTQ2 communities and survivors with disabilities.²⁶⁴

With regards to law enforcement, Gerri Sharpe highlighted the need for “community-led” policing that improves the safety and security of Inuit women, families and communities.²⁶⁵ She shared with the Committee an initiative of community-drive training offered to new officers in Yellowknife: officers would take part in community cultural activities, which offered a safe space for new officers to ask questions about

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- 255 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 1 April 2022, 1400 (Mercy Lawluvi); Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses, [Brief on Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada](#), Brief; YWCA Toronto, [YWCA Toronto Recommendations for Addressing Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada](#), Brief; Julie Gill, [Brief](#).
- 256 Alberta Council of Women’s Shelters, [Research Brief: Intimate Partner Violence in the Courtroom](#), Brief; Ending Violence Association of Canada, [Brief on Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada](#), Brief; FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 15 February 2022, 1650 (Chantal Arseneault).
- 257 Anonymous Author (Author 15), [Brief](#).
- 258 Anonymous Author (Author 42), [Brief](#).
- 259 Anonymous Author (Author 12), [Brief](#).
- 260 Link Toronto and SafePet Ontario, [Re: Study on Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada](#), Brief.
- 261 Be The Peace Institute, [Brief on IPV/DV in Canada](#), Brief; Julie Gill, [Brief](#); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 5 April 2022, 1715 (Shelina Jeshani).
- 262 Be The Peace Institute, [Brief on IPV/DV in Canada](#), Brief.
- 263 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 1 April 2022, 1400 (Mercy Lawluvi); Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses, [Brief on Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada](#), Brief.
- 264 Alliance of Canadian Research Centres on Gender-Based Violence, [Brief to the Standing Committee on the Status of Women](#), Brief.
- 265 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 1 March 2022, 1545 (Gerri Sharpe).

Inuit culture and practices.²⁶⁶ She emphasized the need for officers to feel like they are part of the community to effectively protect its members.²⁶⁷

Introducing Other Legal Initiatives and Tools to Address Intimate Partner Violence

The Committee heard about several other legal initiatives and tools to address IPV, in addition to criminalizing coercive control and offering training for professionals involved in the justice system. The sections below describe these tools and initiatives.

Creating Specialized Courts

The Committee heard the federal government should support the creation of specialized courts to hear cases of intimate partner and family violence and/or family law²⁶⁸ and integrate civil and criminal law cases.²⁶⁹ Witnesses indicated that courts specialized on intimate partner and family violence would be better suited to support survivors of violence throughout the court process.²⁷⁰ The Committee was told that such courts exist in Australia and Quebec. Manon Monastesse, Executive Director of the Fédération des maisons d'hébergement pour femmes, stated that specialized courts in Australia “adopt a much more integrated approach, by simultaneously addressing both criminal and civil components” of a case.²⁷¹

However, witnesses highlighted possible problems that could arise both with existing and new specialized courts. First, Nneka MacGregor argued that existing specialized family violence courts have not proved to be particularly effective.²⁷² Second, Stéphanie Vallée, Co-coordinator of L’R des centres de femmes du Québec, noted that

266 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 1 March 2022, 1615 (Gerri Sharpe).

267 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 1 March 2022, 1615 (Gerri Sharpe).

268 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 22 March 2022, 1715 (Sabrina Lemeltier); Peel Regional Police, *Brief on Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence*, Brief; Anonymous Author (Author 6), *Brief*.

269 Alliance of Canadian Research Centres on Gender-Based Violence, *Brief to the Standing Committee on the Status of Women*, Brief; Anonymous Author (Author 10), *Brief*; Peel Regional Police, *Brief on Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence*, Brief; Anonymous Author (Author 40), *Brief*.

270 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 4 March 2022, 1410 (Francis Lanouette).

271 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 8 February 2022, 1720 (Manon Monastesse).

272 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 29 March 2022, 1635 (Nneka MacGregor).



specialized courts might not be available for women who live far from larger urban centres.²⁷³

The Committee was told that the creation of specialized courts needs to be accompanied by training for all actors in the system.²⁷⁴ Specialized courts are a new initiative in Quebec, but Louise Riendeau, Co-lead, Political Issues, Regroupement des maisons pour femmes victimes de violence conjugale, explained that all participants involved in the specialized courts of sexual and family violence in Quebec will receive training.²⁷⁵

Implementing Alternative and Restorative Justice Approaches

The Committee was told that since many survivors of IPV choose to not access the justice system, the implementation of restorative and alternative, non-traditional, models of justice is crucial.²⁷⁶ Nneka MacGregor suggested “to move away from the criminal penalization and into transformative justice and accountability.”²⁷⁷ Lana Wells, Associate Professor, Brenda Strafford Chair in Prevention of Domestic Violence, University of Calgary, who appeared as an individual, defined these models of justice as “activities and interventions that are outside of the criminal legal system, that are survivor-centred and trauma-informed, and that promote prevention and healing with survivors and aggressors of sexual violence.”²⁷⁸

In particular, the Committee heard about the successes of the Indigenous Community Justice Program in Ontario, “a culturally appropriate alternative to the mainstream justice system that supports the prevention of violence through diversion programming.”²⁷⁹ The program is based on Indigenous legal principles and involves

273 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 1 April 2022, 1435 (Stéphanie Vallée, Co-coordinator, L’R des centres de femmes du Québec).

274 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 29 March 2022, 1635 (Simon Lapierre).

275 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 15 February 2022, 1710 (Louise Riendeau).

276 Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses, [Brief on Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada](#), Brief; YWCA Toronto, [YWCA Toronto Recommendations for Addressing Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada](#), Brief; FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 4 March 2022, 1350 (Erin Whitmore).

277 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 29 March 2022, 1630 (Nneka MacGregor).

278 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 15 February 2022, 1550 (Lana Wells).

279 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 1 March 2022, 1530 (Gertie Mai Muisse).

community members, survivors and Elders “in the creation of healing plans that seek to resolve and restore balance, and mitigate further harm.”²⁸⁰

Restorative justice aims to reduce the risk of recidivism by keeping perpetrators rooted in their communities and committed to long-term healing.²⁸¹ Witnesses stressed the importance of providing restorative justice options as early as possible in the process²⁸² and indicated that the federal government should provide support for such initiatives.²⁸³

Enacting *Clare’s Law*

The Committee heard about *Clare’s Law* legislation, which “allows police to disclose a person’s prior intimate partner violence information to a current or former intimate partner — or third party such as a parent — through a provincially-established process.”²⁸⁴ *Clare’s Law* legislation first came into force in Canada in Saskatchewan in June 2020.²⁸⁵ Similar legislation also came into force in Alberta. Some witnesses spoke in favor of *Clare’s Law* arguing that it can reinforce protections for victims of IPV,²⁸⁶ and recommended the Government of Canada adopt such legislation federally.²⁸⁷ However, the Committee was told that *Clare’s Law* legislation should also be accompanied by services for survivors and by resources for law enforcement training.²⁸⁸ Erin Whitmore, Executive Director of Ending Violence Association of Canada, stated: “I think we really want to be careful that something like *Clare’s Law* doesn’t put additional onus on victims in any way for leaving situations.”²⁸⁹

280 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 1 March 2022, 1530 (Gertie Mai Muisse).

281 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 1 March 2022, 1530 (Gertie Mai Muisse).

282 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 15 February 2022, 1620 (Katreena Scott).

283 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 15 February 2022, 1615 (Lana Wells); Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses, [Brief on Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada](#), Brief; Ending Violence Association of Canada, [Brief on Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada](#), Brief.

284 Public Safety Canada, [RCMP can now participate in Clare’s Law legislation in Saskatchewan and Alberta](#), News release, 31 March 2021.

285 Province of Saskatchewan, [Clare’s Law](#).

286 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 11 February 2022, 1325 (Melpa Kamateros).

287 Peel Regional Police, [Brief on Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence](#), Brief; Be The Peace Institute, [Brief on IPV/DV in Canada](#), Brief; Interval House, [Addressing Intimate Partner Violence at the Federal Level: A Brief to the Federal Standing Committee on the Status of Women](#), Brief.

288 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 11 February 2022, 1325 (Melpa Kamateros); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 4 March 2022, 1350 (Erin Whitmore).

289 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 4 March 2022, 1350 (Erin Whitmore).



Using Electronic Monitoring Bracelets

Another tool that can be used to address IPV is electronic monitoring through bracelets to “prevent ex-spouses who are released from prison and continue to harass their victims from committing murders, homicides and infanticides.”²⁹⁰ The Committee was told that Québec has started testing this tool following a recommendation from the Comité d’experts sur l’accompagnement des victimes d’agressions sexuelles et de violence conjugale;²⁹¹ the Assemblée nationale du Québec adopted a bill to that effect in March 2022.²⁹² However, witnesses indicated that this technology might not be adapted to the situation in some parts of Canada: in some regions, access to reliable Internet is limited which would not allow the electronic monitoring devices to function properly.²⁹³ As well, witnesses indicated that police services also need training to develop the skills needed to respond to alarm signals sent by the monitoring device.²⁹⁴

Addressing Economic and Financial Abuse

Meseret Haileyesus shared with the Committee ways the federal government could address financial abuse perpetrated by intimate partners. First, she recommended the Government of Canada amend the *Divorce Act*, the *Civil Marriage Act* and the *Criminal Code* to include specific mentions of “economic control, economic exploitation and employment sabotage.”²⁹⁵ Second, she suggested developing a “financial abuse code of conduct” destined to financial institutions²⁹⁶ and other private stakeholders, such as telecommunications, housing or utilities companies,²⁹⁷ to survivors of financial and economic abuse. She added that Australia and the United Kingdom have adopted such

290 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 22 March 2022, 1715 (Sabrina Lemeltier).

291 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 5 April 2022, 1610 (Geneviève Lessard); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 22 March 2022, 1715 (Sabrina Lemeltier); Comité d’experts sur l’accompagnement des victimes d’agressions sexuelles et de violence conjugale, [Rebâtir la confiance : Rapport du comité d’experts sur l’accompagnement des victimes d’agressions sexuelles et de violence conjugale](#), 2020, p. 125 [AVAILABLE IN FRENCH ONLY].

292 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 4 March 2022, 1410 (Francis Lanouette); Quebec, [Bill 24, An Act to amend the Act respecting the Québec correctional system to provide for the power to require that an offender be connected to a device that allows the offender’s whereabouts to be known](#), 42nd Legislature, 2nd Session.

293 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 5 April 2022, 1620 (Marjolaine Montminy); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 25 March 2022, 1325 (Pamela Cross).

294 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 8 February 2022, 1630 (Lise Martin).

295 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 4 March 2022, 1330 (Meseret Haileyesus).

296 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 4 March 2022, 1310 (Meseret Haileyesus).

297 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 4 March 2022, 1310 (Meseret Haileyesus).

codes of conduct, which has “helped financial institutions to educate and to put policy and practices in place to protect survivors.”²⁹⁸

Supporting Survivors Involved in the Justice System

In addition to the initiatives and tools detailed in previous sections, witnesses stated that survivors of violence involved in the justice system needed additional supports to help them with their case. Examples provided include assisting survivors using a case management model (one contact-person for information on the court case),²⁹⁹ increasing legal aid available and addressing the use of parental alienation claims in courts. The latter two examples are detailed in sections that follow.

Providing Legal Aid

The Committee heard that “[h]aving well-informed, trauma-focused legal counsel and judges is crucial” for survivors of IPV, as poor legal representation and experiences in the justice system can cause re-traumatization.³⁰⁰ However, witnesses explained that retaining legal representation is very expensive, or simply unaffordable, for most survivors of IPV.³⁰¹ For instance, some survivors’ income might be too high for them to qualify for legal aid, but too low to be able to afford a lawyer. In a written brief, Karen Butt told the Committee: “It wasn’t until I was laid off from my job that I was able to take my ex-husband back to court with the help of legal aid in Sept 2019.”³⁰² This situation can force women to self-represent, which can put them at a disadvantage.³⁰³

298 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 4 March 2022, 1335 (Meseret Haileyesus).

299 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 1 April 2022, 1420 (Alice Czitrom); FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 5 April 2022, 1640 (Peter Jaffe); Anonymous Author (Author 15), *Brief*.

300 YWCA Toronto, *YWCA Toronto Recommendations for Addressing Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada*, *Brief*.

301 Anonymous Author (Author 33), *Brief*; Alliance of Canadian Research Centres on Gender-Based Violence, *Brief to the Standing Committee on the Status of Women*, *Brief*; Stéphanie Plante, *Brief*.

302 Karen Butt, *Brief*.

303 Shalom Wiebe, *Written Brief for the Study on Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada*, *Brief*; Anonymous Author (Author 30), *Brief*.



For these reasons, witnesses recommended increasing legal aid funding to ensure survivors of IPV who have a low income have access to adequate legal representation.³⁰⁴ In particular, witnesses recommended removing legal aid admissibility thresholds for survivors of IPV³⁰⁵ and eliminating “the gendered inequity between resources for criminal and family legal aid so that adequate funding is available for family law.”³⁰⁶

Finally, witnesses also recommended supporting organizations providing legal support to survivors of intimate partner violence.³⁰⁷ Witnesses spoke of two successful initiatives in that regard: Ontario’s Family court Support Worker program (destined to survivors of family violence)³⁰⁸ and the Safe Centre of Peel. For the later, survivors can access coordinated supports and services in a safe and child-friendly place, including giving police statements;³⁰⁹ survivors do not have to navigate the system by themselves.³¹⁰ Shelina Jeshani explained that:

when people come into the safe centre, they do one intake; they don’t repeat their story over and over again; we have one file and again, we work integratively with our partners so that we are all using the same risk assessment and therefore, speaking the same language.³¹¹

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- 304 Anonymous Author (Author 17), [Brief](#); Julie Gill, [Brief](#); Vancouver Rape Relief and Women’s Shelter, [Brief](#); Armagh House, [Ending Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada](#), [Brief](#); Anonymous Author (Author 24), [Brief](#); Anonymous Author (Author 33), [Brief](#); Shalom Wiebe, [Written Brief for the Study on Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada](#), [Brief](#).
- 305 Anonymous Author (Author 29), [Brief](#); Anonymous Author (Author 47), [Brief](#); Anonymous Author (Author 39), [Brief](#).
- 306 Luke’s Place Support and Resource Centre for Women and Children, [Luke’s Place/National Association of Women and the Law – Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada: a Brief to the Status of Women Committee](#), [Brief](#).
- 307 YWCA Toronto, [YWCA Toronto Recommendations for Addressing Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada](#), [Brief](#); Anonymous Author (Author 24), [Brief](#); Be The Peace Institute, [Brief on IPV/DV in Canada](#), [Brief](#); Violence Against Women Coordinating Committee of Windsor-Essex, [IPV Brief Submitted to the Status of Women Committee](#), [Brief](#).
- 308 Luke’s Place Support and Resource Centre for Women and Children, [Luke’s Place/National Association of Women and the Law – Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada: a Brief to the Status of Women Committee](#), [Brief](#); Ontario, [Family court support workers](#).
- 309 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 5 April 2022, 1710 (Shelina Jeshani); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 5 April 2022, 1710 (Lisa Hewison, Inspector, Crimes Against Persons, Peel Regional Police).
- 310 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 5 April 2022, 1645 (Shelina Jeshani).
- 311 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 5 April 2022, 1710 (Shelina Jeshani).

Addressing Parental Alienation Claims

Perpetrators of IPV may use the concept of parental alienation in family courts to keep access to their children and hide the effects of their abusive behaviours.³¹² In a written brief, the Alliance of Canadian Research Centres on Gender-Based Violence explained:

IPV survivors are also fighting in family court to protect their children from unsupervised time with an abusive parent, however, their vulnerability is compounded by the need to represent themselves as a “cooperative” “friendly parent”. Citing parental alienation is a tactic utilized by some abusers to maintain control over their former intimate partners. When survivors bring their concerns about family violence before the courts, it is often them, and not the abuser, whose parenting is viewed with increased suspicion.³¹³

The Committee heard that there was a bias toward fathers in cases in which parental alienation arguments were used in custody cases; fathers “were more likely to be awarded custody over the victimized mother.”³¹⁴ Witnesses indicated parental alienation arguments should not be permitted in family court in cases involving IPV.³¹⁵ Simon Lapierre stated:

What is also extremely problematic in situations of this nature is that when women victims of spousal violence do everything they can to try to keep their children safe, they are often perceived as hostile individuals who are fuelling the conflict or even causing parental alienation. I really want to stress the fact that in recent years, through our work, we have observed growing use of the concept of parental alienation against women victims of spousal violence. This use of pseudoscience poses a serious problem in that it punishes women and children and often puts them in a situation where they are unable to report violent behaviour on the part of the spouse or father.³¹⁶

312 Anonymous Author (Author 17), [Brief](#); Shalom Wiebe, [Written Brief for the Study on Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada](#), Brief; Anonymous Author (Author 33), [Brief](#).

313 Alliance of Canadian Research Centres on Gender-Based Violence, [Brief to the Standing Committee on the Status of Women](#), Brief.

314 Probation Officers Association of Ontario, [Submission to the Status of Women Committee for its Study on Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada](#), Brief.

315 Anonymous Author (Author 29), [Brief](#); Anonymous Author (Author 33), [Brief](#); Dimitra Pantrazopoulos, [Brief](#); Shalom Wiebe, [Written Brief for the Study on Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada](#), Brief; Anonymous Author (Author 12), [Brief](#); Judy Coey, [Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada](#), Brief; Anonymous Author (Author 5), [Brief](#).

316 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 29 March 2022, 1540 (Simon Lapierre).



The Committee was told that it “is imperative for the system to realize that intimate partner violence is also child abuse, and safety concerns for a mother leaving an abusive relationship are also safety concerns for the children involved.”³¹⁷ Courts allowing abusive parents to have access to their children, particularly equal access, is not always in the best interest of the children: assuming it is “places the rights of abusers ahead of the rights of the children to safety”³¹⁸ and promotes the use of parental alienation arguments in court.³¹⁹ When abusive partners have custody rights, possible protections for survivors and their children can include supervised visitations and/or transfers, court-ordered therapy for the violent partner and access to child advocates trained on coercive control and violence.³²⁰

Therefore, the Committee recommends:

Recommendation 14

That the Government of Canada explore methods to enhance judicial education on intimate partner violence and coercive control, including by providing more funding to the Canada Judicial Council to develop, improve and modernize training for judges on intimate partner violence and coercive control, in collaboration and informed by survivors of intimate partner violence and frontline organizations.

Recommendation 15

That the Government of Canada develop a comprehensive strategy to address financial and economic abuse as a facet of family and intimate partner violence, reviewing existing legislative and policy structures available to support victims, including the *Federal Divorce Act*, the *Civil Marriage Act*, and the *Criminal Code*; encouraging coordination of enhanced trauma-informed policies for relevant sectors across Canada in partnership with provinces and territories, and investing in funding to develop educational materials and training for the incidence of economic abuse, as well as for organizations providing financial counselling and financial literacy training, in various languages.

317 Anonymous Author (Author 30), [Brief](#).

318 Anonymous Author (Author 6), [Brief](#).

319 Stéphanie Plante, [Brief](#).

320 Anonymous Author (Author 49), [Brief](#).

Recommendation 16

That the Government of Canada conduct a review of all federally regulated financial institutions, including their governing acts, to inform the development of a federal system designed to detect signs of economic abuse and provide support to survivors; considering similar frameworks as observed in the United Kingdom, and with attention to complicating circumstances preventing complete severance from financial abuse, such as for splitting jointly held debt and removing an account holder's name if family violence has occurred.

Recommendation 17

That the Government of Canada, modeling the Safe Centre Peel model, explore ways of encouraging integration and cooperation among the various resource agencies in communities, and respecting the jurisdictions of provinces and territories, encourage police services to implement victim-centric practices informed by survivors, the Calls for Justice from the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and frontline organizations.

Recommendation 18

That the Government of Canada provide investment in the expansion of intimate partner and gender-based violence research, including disaggregated data for Black, Indigenous, racialized, disabled, and 2SLGBTQ+ communities as it relates to economic and financial abuse, including funding for the increased research capacity of organizations currently studying economic abuse, and the revision of metrics used by Statistics Canada to collect economic and financial abuse data.

Recommendation 19

That the Government of Canada study the possibility of introducing electronic monitoring devices to protect victims of family violence, including the gaps in infrastructure and accessibility of services, based on the Government of Quebec's pilot study.

Recommendation 20

That the Government of Canada work with provinces and territories to commit to exploring the feasibility of implementing *Clare's Law* in Canada.



Recommendation 21

That the Government of Canada, in collaboration with provinces and territories, with the goal of ensuring that survivors with low incomes have access to adequate legal representation, increase funding for organizations providing legal support to survivors of intimate partner and family violence.

PREVENTING INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

“Investing in primary prevention saves lives and stops violence from happening now and in the future. It’s the formula for transformative social change.”³²¹

White Ribbon

Ending IPV starts with prevention efforts, which must be intersectional and address the root causes of violence against women and shift the culture that normalizes violence, racism, oppression and discrimination.³²² Katreena Scott described that:

adversity in childhood, including all forms of violence, losing a parent, or having a parent who has a major mental health problem or a substance use problem or who’s incarcerated, is associated with later victimization for women and perpetration for men. It’s both for both, but more often it’s perpetration for men and victimization for women.³²³

In addition, many witnesses centred culturally based programming as essential for supporting healthy families and healing in Indigenous communities.³²⁴ The sections that follow describe some of the ways witnesses suggested the Government of Canada prevent IPV, such as raising awareness and educating Canadians about the issue as well

321 White Ribbon, [Brief](#).

322 See for example: FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 15 February 2022, 1555 (Lana Wells); White Ribbon, [Brief](#); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 22 March 2022, 1600 (Angela Marie MacDougall); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 25 March 2022, 1305 (Pamela Cross); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 22 March 2022, 1605 (Farrah Khan).

323 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 15 February 2022, 1630 (Katreena Scott).

324 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 25 March 2022, 1435 (Paul Lacerte, Co-Founder and National Ambassador, Moose Hide Campaign); Ontario Federation of Friendship Centres, [Written Submission to the Standing Committee on the Status of Women on the study of intimate partner and domestic violence in Canada](#), Brief.

as engaging men and boys in the fight against GBV.³²⁵ Witnesses also stressed the importance of supporting research on evidence-based approaches regarding education and prevention of GBV, including on IPV.³²⁶

Raising Awareness About Intimate Partner Violence

Raising awareness about all forms of IPV and the continuum of violence is essential.³²⁷ As noted earlier, a common misunderstanding around IPV is that it only includes physical violence. However, IPV goes beyond and includes psychological, financial and spiritual violence as well as coercion. Witnesses explained that education and awareness about coercive control is primordial since many individuals might not recognize its signs and therefore might not realize they are, or someone they know is, in a coercive relationship.³²⁸ Yasmin Hussain, Manager, Public Education and Community Programs, at the Muslim Resource Centre for Social Support and Integration, explained:

Most individuals who experience intimate partner violence or family violence turn first to family members and friends before accessing formalized services, so it's important that we all have the knowledge to understand intimate partner violence, to recognize it, to name it, to recognize warning signs and to know how we can provide peer support.³²⁹

Several witnesses recommended that the Government of Canada implement national public education campaigns that:

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- 325 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 29 March 2022, 1605 (Simon Lapierre); FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 15 February 2022, 1700 (Louise Riendeau); Centre to End All Sexual Exploitation, *Brief submitted to the Standing Committee on Status of Women (FEMO) – Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada*, Brief.
- 326 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 25 March 2022, 1410 (Yordanka Petrova); Alliance of Canadian Research Centres on Gender-Based Violence, *Written Brief to the Standing Committee on the Status of Women for the Study on Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada*, Brief; Be The Peace Institute, *Brief on IPV/DV in Canada*, Brief.
- 327 Centre for Research and Education on Violence Against Women and Children, *Submission to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women: Centre for Research & Education on Violence Against Women & Children, Western University*, Brief; FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 5 April 2022, 1715 (Peter Jaffe).
- 328 See for example: FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 15 February 2022, 1650 (Chantal Arseneault); FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 15 February 2022, 1705 (Louise Riendeau); Shalom Wiebe, *Written Brief for the Study on Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada*, Brief; Carmen Wittmeier, *Study on Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada*; FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 8 February 2022, 1650 (Claudine Thibaudeau).
- 329 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 4 March 2022, 1330 (Yasmin Hussain).



- raise awareness on coercive control and other non-physical forms of violence and abuse as well as on the interconnectedness of all forms of violence,³³⁰
- provide bystander recognition of IPV risk factors;³³¹
- provide information on resources and how to access them;³³²and
- promote healthy masculinity.³³³

The Committee was told that these campaigns should be available in multiple languages and formats, including on social media and during important media events, to reach a wide audience.³³⁴ As well, witnesses indicated that a part of raising awareness about IPV is to ensure individuals in various professional fields (such as social workers, lawyers and hairdressers) are educated on the long-term impacts of IPV, as well as on how to identify dynamics of abuse and how to provide support to victims.³³⁵

Witnesses explained that organizations providing prevention programs, activities and initiatives need to be supported financially to perform their work, including those targeted to youth and to men and boys.³³⁶ The Government of Canada does provide

330 See for example: Anonymous Author (Author 38), [Brief](#); Anonymous Author (Author 18), [Brief](#); Anonymous Author (Author 24), [Brief](#); Anonymous Author (Author 33), [Brief](#); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 15 February 2022, 1650 (Chantal Arseneault).

331 Centre for Research and Education on Violence Against Women and Children, [Submission to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women: Centre for Research & Education on Violence Against Women & Children, Western University](#), Brief.

332 Centre for Research and Education on Violence Against Women and Children, [Submission to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women: Centre for Research & Education on Violence Against Women & Children, Western University](#), Brief.

333 Shalom Wiebe, [Written Brief for the Study on Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada](#), Brief.

334 Shalom Wiebe, [Written Brief for the Study on Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada](#), Brief; YWCA Toronto, [YWCA Toronto Recommendations for Addressing Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada](#), Brief.

335 Karen Gosbee, [Brief to the Standing Committee on the Status of Women](#), Brief; Alice House, [Brief: Study on Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada](#), Brief; FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 4 March 2022, 1400 (Michael Jason Gyovai); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 29 March 2022, 1610 (Nneka MacGregor).

336 White Ribbon, [Brief](#); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 4 March 2022, 1315 (Yasmin Hussain); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 11 February 2022, 1450 (Karen Campbell).

some funding for such initiatives,³³⁷ but some witnesses stressed the need for core operational funding to be available for community organizations offering prevention programs.³³⁸ In particular, Gertie Mai Muise stated that the capacity for culturally appropriate urban Indigenous prevention programs needs to be increased.³³⁹

Raising Awareness Among Individuals Who Are Newcomers to Canada

The Committee was told that there is a need to raise awareness about IPV among some newcomers to Canada who may have different understandings of gender roles, norms, and practices in their countries of origin.³⁴⁰ This can include differences in laws, norms and culture surrounding IPV that differ from those in Canada. As a result, many witnesses testified that employees providing support to newcomer women experiencing IPV need to be trained properly to ensure they can access “resources without feeling afraid and without feeling ashamed, just so they can get a better understanding of what it means to be Canadian.”³⁴¹ Witnesses also asserted that coming “from cultures of toxic masculinity, with defined gender roles and cultural norms that do not expect them to be part and parcel of the daily routines, of upbringing and of supporting their partners” may require some men to receive assistance to better understand and uphold women’s rights in Canada.³⁴²

Several witnesses suggested information about IPV, in all its forms, be provided to individuals who enter Canada as immigrants or refugees at their point of entry, and that the information be provided in their language of choice.³⁴³ According to Mercy Lawlivi, Executive Director of Immigrant Women Services Ottawa, the information provided could include details on available resources and Canada’s law about GBV.³⁴⁴ Furthermore, initiatives to raise awareness among individuals who are newcomers to

337 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 4 February 2022, 1410 (Karen McKinnon); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 4 February 2022, 1310 (Alia Butt).

338 White Ribbon, [Brief](#).

339 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 1 March 2022, 1535 (Gertie Mai Muise).

340 Alice House, [Brief: Study on Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada](#), Brief; Centre for Research and Education on Violence Against Women and Children, [Submission to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women: Centre for Research & Education on Violence Against Women & Children, Western University](#), Brief; Violence Against Women Coordinating Committee of Windsor-Essex, [IPV Brief Submitted to the Status of Women Committee](#), Brief.

341 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 4 March 2022, 1425 (Michael Jason Gyovai).

342 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 5 April 2022, 1535 (Rekha Gadhia).

343 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 1 April 2022, 1400 (Mercy Lawlivi).

344 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 1 April 2022, 1435 (Mercy Lawlivi).



Canada should recognize the intersectional aspects of violence, particularly regarding race, culture, immigration status and language.³⁴⁵

Educating Young Canadians on Healthy Relationships

To prevent GBV and IPV, the Committee was told kids should be educated on what healthy relationships look like, including on consent, the root causes of GBV, and the different possible manifestations of violence and coercion in intimate relationships.³⁴⁶ Sherilyn Bell, a psychologist who appeared as an individual, explained:

[W]hile most teens, including young teens of 12 to 14 years of age, are easily able to identify what constitutes a physically or sexually abusive intimate relationship, there are still challenges to be overcome for many teens, and especially young teens, to easily identify the components of unhealthy intimate relationships that involve manipulation, control and intimidation, especially when they, themselves, find themselves in such a relationship. It is not uncommon for some young teens to misinterpret manipulation and control as care and love, which can then result in the non-recognition of a dysfunctional relationship.³⁴⁷

Witnesses recommended that primary and high school curricula include mandatory education on these topics.³⁴⁸

In addition, witnesses indicated that parents, teachers and school employees should be educated on gender-based and IPV as they might not know how to recognize signs of violence in teen relationships or how to talk to youth about healthy sexuality and

345 Violence Against Women Coordinating Committee of Windsor-Essex, [IPV Brief Submitted to the Status of Women Committee](#), Brief.

346 See for example: YWCA Toronto, [YWCA Toronto Recommendations for Addressing Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada](#), Brief; Anonymous Author (Author 38), [Brief](#); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 4 March 2022, 1400 (Michael Jason Gyovai); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 22 March 2022, 1625 (Farrah Khan); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 4 March 2022, 1345 (Erin Whitmore).

347 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 11 February 2022, 1400 (Sherilyn Bell).

348 See for example: Anonymous Author (Author 20), [Brief](#); Anonymous Author (Author 8), [Brief](#); Violence Against Women Coordinating Committee of Windsor-Essex, [IPV Brief Submitted to the Status of Women Committee](#), Brief; FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 22 March 2022, 1620 (Farrah Khan); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 5 April 2022, 1555 (Rekha Gadhia).

relationships.³⁴⁹ A witness from the Organization grouping sexual assault help centres in Quebec explained: “We feel that both parents and school staff must know how to identify these kinds of situations and, above all, how to intervene in situations where they suspect or witness assault of a sexual nature.”³⁵⁰ Michael Jason Gyovai, Executive Director of BGC Peel, said that awareness about how new technologies, such as social media, can be used to commit violence and on possible safeguards should be raised among parents.³⁵¹

The Committee heard that the federal government needs to play a leadership role around prevention of IPV and youth education,³⁵² including by:

- ensuring that sexual education is mandatory in primary and high schools across Canada;³⁵³
- collaborating with provinces and territories to develop a national youth education curriculum around family sexual violence;³⁵⁴
- providing more funding to organizations that implement projects aiming to educate kids and youth on IPV;³⁵⁵
- requiring schools to develop stand-alone sexual harassment and sexual assault policies;³⁵⁶ and

349 See for example: Canadian Centre for Child Protection Inc., [Brief for the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women 2022 Study on Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada](#), Brief; Regroupement québécois des Centres d’aide et de lutte contre les agressions à caractère sexuel, [Study on Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada](#); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 11 February 2022, 1335 (Witness-Témoignage 1); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 29 March 2022, 1705 (Mitch Bourbonniere); Alice House, [Brief: Study on Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada](#), Brief.

350 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 11 February 2022, 1310 (Witness-Témoignage 1).

351 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 4 March 2022, 1450 (Michael Jason Gyovai).

352 Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes, [Brief submitted by Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes \(AOcVF\) : Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada](#), Brief.

353 Armagh House, [Ending Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada](#), Brief.

354 The Women’s Resource Centre, [Domestic Violence in Rural Settings: A Human Rights Issue](#), Brief; FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 8 February 2022, 1635 (Jennifer Dunn).

355 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 11 February 2022, 1405 (Sherilyn Bell); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 15 February 2022, 1705 (Louise Riendeau).

356 Be The Peace Institute, [Brief on IPV/DV in Canada](#), Brief; FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 5 April 2022, 1550 (Marjolaine Montminy).



- mandating universities and colleges to have IPV prevention policies.³⁵⁷

Engaging Men and Boys

“We have to call men and boys in and make sure that they are at the table and that we are engaging in conversation and listening and understanding.”³⁵⁸

Hon. Marci Ien

P.C., M.P., Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Youth

Involving men and boys is key to prevent and end IPV.³⁵⁹ Ninu Kang, Executive Director of Ending Violence Association of British Columbia, told the Committee that “raising awareness on gender-based violence, and providing simple tools to boys and men to intervene and respond to various forms of gender-based violence, is critical. It’s empowering boys and men to be part of the solution instead of being part of the problem.”³⁶⁰

Men and boys are responsible for changing their behaviours,³⁶¹ but they need support to do so.³⁶² Witnesses described a need to invest in initiatives “promoting healthy masculinities and gender equality” for men and boys.³⁶³ Mitch Bourbonniere explained that boys need to be taught “to express themselves, to honour their emotions, to have deep respect for the life-givers—their sisters, their moms, their aunties—and that has to start at a very early age through education.”³⁶⁴

357 Be The Peace Institute, [Brief on IPV/DV in Canada](#), Brief.

358 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 1 April 2022, 1350 (Hon. Marci Ien).

359 Immigrant Women Services Ottawa, [Brief to The Standing Committee on the Status of Women Study on Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada](#), Brief; FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 1 March 2022, 1640 (Melanie Omeniho); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 8 February 2022, 1715 (Manon Monastesse); White Ribbon, [Brief](#).

360 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 22 March 2022, 1700 (Ninu Kang, Executive Director, Ending Violence Association of British Columbia).

361 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 29 March 2022, 1640 (Mitch Bourbonniere).

362 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 15 February 2022, 1550 (Lana Wells).

363 White Ribbon, [Brief](#).

364 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 29 March 2022, 1700 (Mitch Bourbonniere).

Prevention initiatives targeting men and boys should not perpetuate colonialism and should deconstruct “lifelong exposure to stereotypical constructions of masculinities” and be culturally rooted.³⁶⁵ For instance, in a written brief, the Native Women’s Association of Canada indicated that “Indigenous [m]en and boys experience violence and harm from colonization, racism and toxic masculinity and can work to address these harms and build safer communities. Decolonizing toxic masculinity and engaging with boys and men in this work is paramount.”³⁶⁶

Government of Canada officials told the Committee that the federal government provides funding for several projects that work to aid men and boys in advancing gender equality and ending gender-based violence, such as the FOXY program, Next Gen Men, the Moose Hide Campaign, the White Ribbon Campaign and Catalyst Canada.³⁶⁷ The Committee was told that \$105 million was earmarked for this purpose in Budget 2021.³⁶⁸ Witnesses recommended the Government of Canada continue to support initiatives to engage men and boys in the prevention of violence against women and girls and GBV.³⁶⁹

Implementing the *National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence*

“Systemic change takes time, and Canada’s national action plan must be developed in a way that will allow it to bring this change, regardless of which government is in power.”³⁷⁰

Lise Martin
Executive Director, Women’s Shelters Canada

365 White Ribbon, *Brief*.

366 Native Women’s Association of Canada, *Written Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women for its Study on Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada*, Brief.

367 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 4 February 2022, 1325 and 1350 (Alia Butt); FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 4 February 2022, 1350 (Lisa Smylie); FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 4 February 2022, 1405 (Ian Kenney).

368 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 4 February 2022, 1325 (Alia Butt).

369 White Ribbon, *Brief*.

370 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 8 February 2022, 1545 (Lise Martin).



The Committee heard that the Government of Canada is working toward the implementation of the *National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence* (the National Action Plan), in collaboration with provincial and territorial governments.³⁷¹ Unlike *It's Time: Canada's Strategy to Prevent and Address Gender-Based Violence*, which coordinates efforts to end and prevent GBV among the federal departments and agencies, the National Action Plan's aim is to coordinate efforts among all jurisdictions in Canada.³⁷² Budget 2021 earmarked \$601.3 million for the development and implementation of this action plan.³⁷³

Overall, witnesses supported the development and implementation of the National Action Plan.³⁷⁴ However, witnesses stated that it needs to help:

- address the root causes of gender-based violence;³⁷⁵
- eliminate systemic barriers facing survivors looking for help;³⁷⁶
- ensure a consistent level of access to gender-based violence supports and services in Canada,³⁷⁷ including providing core funding to shelters;³⁷⁸

371 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 4 February 2022, 1310 (Alia Butt).

372 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 1 April 2022, 1315 (Hon. Marci Ien).

373 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 1 April 2022, 1300 (Hon. Marci Ien).

374 See for example: FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 22 March 2022, 1555 (Angela Marie MacDougall); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 22 March 2022, 1605 (Farrah Khan); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 11 February 2022, 1430 (Karen Campbell); Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes, [Brief submitted by Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes \(AOcVF\) : Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada](#), Brief; Ending Violence Association of Canada, [Brief on Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada](#), Brief.

375 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 4 March 2022, 1355 (Erin Whitmore).

376 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 4 March 2022, 1355 (Erin Whitmore).

377 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 8 February 2022, 1725 (Manon Monastesse); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 8 February 2022, 1605 (Lise Martin); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 8 February 2022, 1720 (Jennifer Dunn); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 11 February 2022, 1340 (Witness-Témoins 1); Jennifer Koshan, Janet Mosher and Wanda Wieggers, [Submission to the Standing Committee on the Status of Women for its Study on Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada: A Consideration of Laws and Policies Affecting Intimate Partner Violence Across Canada](#), Brief.

378 Canadian Labour Congress, [Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada](#), Brief.

- ensure better coordination between all levels of government in Canada regarding efforts to end gender-based violence;³⁷⁹
- address disparities in community organizations’ funding across Canada, including funding for organizations serving women living in rural communities;³⁸⁰ and
- support intervention programs for perpetrators of violence.³⁸¹

Witnesses suggested the federal government implement the recommendations made in Women’s Shelter Canada’s report entitled *A Report to Guide the Implementation of a National Action Plan on Violence Against Women and Gender-Based Violence*.³⁸²

Furthermore, witnesses underscored the importance of using an intersectional approach to the development of the National Action Plan to ensure the needs of all groups of women and girls are addressed, particularly those of marginalized communities.³⁸³ During her appearance, the Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Youth indicated that the National Action Plan would “be guided by the needs of Canadians from every province and territory, taking into very careful account the intersections of sex, gender, gender expression, gender identity and perceived gender.”³⁸⁴ With regards to the implementation of the National Action Plan, Farrah Khan noted that:

I can say, as someone who has been on a GBV advisory committee for the federal government, that there are things that are much better under this government in terms

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- 379 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 5 April 2022, 1720 (Peter Jaffe); Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes, [Brief submitted by Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes \(AOcVF\) : Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada](#), Brief; FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 8 February 2022, 1545 (Lise Martin).
- 380 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 4 March 2022, 1320 (Erin Whitmore); The Women’s Resource Centre, [Domestic Violence in Rural Settings: A Human Rights Issue](#), Brief.
- 381 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 15 February 2022, 1600 (Katreena Scott); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 4 March 2022, 1415 (Tim Kelly).
- 382 YWCA Toronto, [YWCA Toronto Recommendations for Addressing Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada](#), Brief; Ending Violence Association of Canada, [Brief on Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada](#), Brief; FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 22 March 2022, 1555 (Angela Marie MacDougall).
- 383 Canadian Federation of University Women, [Brief Submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women for its Study on Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada](#), Brief; Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes, [Brief submitted by Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes \(AOcVF\) : Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada](#), Brief; FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 22 March 2022, 1650 (Farrah Khan).
- 384 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 1 April 2022, 1300 (Hon. Marci Ien).



of the fact that we are talking about it and it's open to the community. All of a sudden, violence against women organizations were welcomed to Parliament to have in-depth conversations about what we needed to do. All of a sudden, there was funding for organizations to talk about this as a systemic issue and not just as an issue that is something that happens between two people, as Angela has said. We're also seeing intersectional conversations come forward, and funding that was put forward to the community to put together the national action plan, to the community to say what we needed and to the community to say, "This is what has to happen."³⁸⁵

However, the Committee was told that there was a need for systemic change within the federal government structures.³⁸⁶ Bonnie Brayton explained that "systemic discrimination, including ableism, sexism and racism, pervades our research, our policies, our programs and our responses."³⁸⁷ Karen Campbell recommended that gender-based analysis plus should "be embedded in all policy instruments, and they must be grounded in the lived realities of the most marginalized women, trans and non-binary people."³⁸⁸

Implementing the Calls for Justice From the National Inquiry Into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls

The Committee was told that the work that will be set out in the National Action Plan should happen simultaneously to the work being done to implement a national action plan to address violence against Indigenous women and girls and the Calls for Justice of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG).³⁸⁹ To this point, several witnesses called on the Government of Canada to implement all Calls for Justice.³⁹⁰

Federal government officials shared some of the initiatives that are underway to implement the Calls for Justice, including creating "more consistent reporting mechanisms and information on missing indigenous women and girls, 2SLGBTQIA

385 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 22 March 2022, 1630 (Farrah Khan).

386 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 15 February 2022, 1620 (Lana Wells).

387 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 11 February 2022, 1305 (Bonnie Brayton).

388 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 11 February 2022, 1410 (Karen Campbell).

389 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 4 March 2022, 1355 (Erin Whitmore).

390 See for example: FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 29 March 2022, 1550 (Nneka MacGregor); YWCA Toronto, [YWCA Toronto Recommendations for Addressing Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada](#), Brief; Canadian Federation of University Women, [Brief Submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women for its Study on Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada](#), Brief; FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 5 April 2022, 1650 (Deputy Grand Chief Anna Betty Achneepineskum).

people and other missing persons”³⁹¹ and launching the Federal Pathway to Address Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ People.³⁹² However, the Committee was told “that at this time, there has not been enough action to implement the recommendations that were brought forward.”³⁹³ Deputy Grand Chief Anna Betty Achneepineskum, Nishnawbe Aski Nation, Assembly of First Nations, and Julie McGregor, Director, Justice, Assembly of First Nations, explained that gaps in funding for organizations serving Indigenous women stemming from interjurisdictional issues still need to be addressed³⁹⁴ and that changes in the availability and accessibility of services on the ground are not visible to Indigenous communities.³⁹⁵

Therefore, the Committee recommends:

Recommendation 22

That the Government of Canada work with provinces and territories to continue to prioritize the implementation of the *National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence* and the *Federal Strategy to Prevent and Address Gender-Based Violence*, ensuring that:

- **the National Action Plan is intersectional, responsive to the needs of individuals made most vulnerable by systems and takes a holistic approach to include resources and supports for violence prevention, intervention and healing strategies;**
- **investments are made in early intervention strategies to address family violence and to prevent engagement with the criminal justice system;**
- **investments are made in preventative programming to bring about and maintain lasting change; and**
- **the National Action Plan includes commitments to funding for organizations serving women, to contribute to their long-term stability and lasting impact for vulnerable communities.**

391 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 15 February 2022, 1630 (Lucie Léonard).

392 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 4 February 2022, 1400 (Chantal Marin-Comeau).

393 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 1 March 2022, 1705 (Melanie Omeniho).

394 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 5 April 2022, 1725 (Deputy Grand Chief Anna Betty Achneepineskum).

395 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 44th Parliament, 5 April 2022, 1725 (Julie McGregor).



Recommendation 23

That the Government of Canada, in collaboration with provinces, territories and communities, develop violence prevention, intervention and healing strategies that respond to the unique cultural, social, economic, and historic context of the communities it serves.

Recommendation 24

That the Government of Canada, respecting the jurisdictions of provinces and territories, develop educational tools regarding bodily autonomy and consent for children and youth using an intersectional lens and informed by social context, for public availability and distribution, to support Canadian parents, and continue to fund organizations who provide these services, as well as implement early prevention campaigns in relation to intimate partner violence, adolescent relationships, healthy relationships, and mental health in high schools and post-secondary institutions.

Recommendation 25

That, to ensure that groups of people who may be vulnerable to, or who are experiencing intimate partner and family violence, are equipped with knowledge and resource information, the Government of Canada:

- **invest in and promote efficient communication strategies, with attention to accessibility by reaching women in often-frequented locations, such as hair salons and women’s washrooms;**
- **implement culturally sensitive, locally informed and community-oriented awareness campaigns and education programs for various groups including young people, men and boys, women, gender diverse individuals and those living in Indigenous and northern communities in relation to intimate partner violence; and**
- **work with cultural community services and immigration settlement services to raise awareness of the signs of intimate partner violence and of local support resources in Indigenous languages and languages other than English and French, among the communities they serve.**

Recommendation 26

That the Government of Canada, through relevant departments, provide funding for support and educational programs that raise awareness and that address cultures of toxic masculinity and empower men and boys to take part in ending intimate partner violence and family violence and that promote healthy relationships, through the implementation of programs and services that support violence prevention and healing.

Recommendation 27

That the Government of Canada, in its work with organizations providing cultural community services and immigration settlement services, raise awareness of the signs of intimate partner violence and of local support resources and ensure services in Indigenous languages and languages other than English and French are available among the communities these organizations serve.

Recommendation 28

That the Government of Canada, in partnership with community organizations and ethnic community associations, offer support and fund services for newcomers, and provide pathways for women with precarious immigration status who might be vulnerable to exploitation and abuse, as offered through language resources and settlement supports, temporary resident status, and open work permits, in a way that is consistent with the cultural and social context of these communities and implementing culturally based programming that reflect diverse communities by providing sustainable funding for Elders, knowledge keepers, traditional healing centres, ethnic community associations, and newcomer and refugee service centres.

APPENDIX A LIST OF WITNESSES

The following table lists the witnesses who appeared before the committee at its meetings related to this report. Transcripts of all public meetings related to this report are available on the committee’s [webpage for this study](#).

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
Department for Women and Gender Equality Annette Arsenault, Director General Gender-Based Violence Policy Alia Butt, Assistant Deputy Minister Strategic Policy Lisa Smylie, Director General Research, Results and Delivery Branch	2022/02/04	3
Department of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Chantal Marin-Comeau, Director General Missing and Murdered Women and Girls Secretariat	2022/02/04	3
Department of Indigenous Services Ian Kenney, Director General Social Policy and Programs Branch	2022/02/04	3
Department of Justice Claire Farid, Director and General Counsel Family and Children’s Law Team, Policy Sector Nathalie Levman, Senior Counsel Criminal Law Policy Section	2022/02/04	3
Public Health Agency of Canada Karen McKinnon, Director General Centre for Health Promotion	2022/02/04	3
Fédération des maisons d’hébergement pour femmes Manon Monastesse, Executive Director	2022/02/08	4
London Abused Women's Centre Jennifer Dunn, Executive Director	2022/02/08	4

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
SOS violence conjugale Claudine Thibaudeau, Social Worker and Clinical and Training Supervisor	2022/02/08	4
Sudbury Women's Centre Giulia Carpenter, Executive Director	2022/02/08	4
West Central Women's Resource Centre Lorie English, Executive Director	2022/02/08	4
Women's Shelters Canada Lise Martin, Executive Director	2022/02/08	4
As an individual Sherilyn Bell, Psychologist	2022/02/11	5
Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women Jane Stinson, Research Associate	2022/02/11	5
Canadian Women's Foundation Karen Campbell, Director Community Initiatives and Policy	2022/02/11	5
DisAbled Women's Network of Canada Bonnie Brayton, National Executive Director	2022/02/11	5
Organization grouping sexual assault help centres in Quebec Witness-Témoins 1	2022/02/11	5
Shield of Athena Family Services Melpa Kamateros, Executive Director	2022/02/11	5
As an individual Lana Wells, Associate Professor Brenda Strafford Chair in Prevention of Domestic Violence, University of Calgary	2022/02/15	6
Centre for Research and Education on Violence Against Women and Children Katreena Scott, Professor	2022/02/15	6

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
Regroupement des maisons pour femmes victimes de violence conjugale Chantal Arseneault, President Louise Riendeau, Co-lead, Political Issues	2022/02/15	6
Statistics Canada Kathy AuCoin, Chief of Analysis Unit Canadian Centre for Justice and Community Safety Statistics Lucie Léonard, Director Canadian Centre for Justice and Community Safety Statistics	2022/02/15	6
Ka Ni Kanichihk Inc. Angela Brass, Coordinator UMatter Program	2022/03/01	7
Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres Sean Longboat, Director of Programs Gertie Mai Muise, Chief Executive Officer	2022/03/01	7
Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada Gerri Sharpe, Interim President	2022/03/01	7
Wahbung Abinoonjiag Inc. Angie Hutchinson, Executive Director	2022/03/01	7
Women of the Métis Nation - Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak Melanie Omeniho, President	2022/03/01	7
BGC Peel Michael Jason Gyovai, Executive Director	2022/03/04	8
Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police Kimberley Greenwood, Co-Chair Victims of Crime Committee Francis Lanouette, Co-Chair of the Crime Prevention, Community Safety and Well-being Committee	2022/03/04	8
Canadian Center for Women's Empowerment (CCFWE) Meseret Haileyesus, Executive Director	2022/03/04	8

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
Changing Ways Inc. Tim Kelly, Executive Director	2022/03/04	8
Ending Violence Association of Canada Erin Whitmore, Executive Director	2022/03/04	8
Muslim Resource Centre for Social Support and Integration Yasmin Hussain, Manager Public Education and Community Programs	2022/03/04	8
Alliance des maisons d'hébergement de 2e étape pour femmes et enfants victimes de violence conjugale Sabrina Lemeltier, President Maud Pontel, General Coordinator	2022/03/22	9
Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society Josie Nepinak, Executive Director	2022/03/22	9
Battered Women's Support Services Angela Marie MacDougall, Executive Director	2022/03/22	9
BC Lions Jamie Taras, Director of Community Partnerships	2022/03/22	9
Ending Violence Association of British Columbia Ninu Kang, Executive Director	2022/03/22	9
Possibility Seeds Farrah Khan, Executive Director	2022/03/22	9
South Asian Women's Centre Kripa Sekhar, Executive Director	2022/03/22	9
Interval House of Ottawa Keri Lewis, Executive Director	2022/03/25	10
Luke's Place Support and Resource Centre for Women and Children Pamela Cross, Legal Director	2022/03/25	10

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
Moose Hide Campaign Paul Lacerte, Co-Founder and National Ambassador David Stevenson, Chief Executive Officer	2022/03/25	10
WoodGreen Community Services Yordanka Petrova, Senior Manager Homeward Bound Program	2022/03/25	10
As an individual Lisa Crawford, Chief Executive Officer Crawford Master Stylists Simon Lapierre, Full Professor University of Ottawa	2022/03/29	11
Fort Saskatchewan Families First Society Jodi Heidinger, Coordinator Family Violence Prevention Program	2022/03/29	11
Ogijiita Pimatiswin Kinamatawin Mitch Bourbonniere, Outreach Worker	2022/03/29	11
Sakeenah Homes Mashooda-Lubna Syed, Government and Community Relations	2022/03/29	11
Women's Centre for Social Justice Nneka MacGregor, Executive Director	2022/03/29	11
YWCA Peterborough Haliburton Kim Dolan, Executive Director	2022/03/29	11
Department for Women and Gender Equality Hon. Marci Ien, P.C., M.P., Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Youth Alia Butt, Assistant Deputy Minister Strategic Policy Lisa Smylie, Director General Research, Results and Delivery Branch	2022/04/01	12
Immigrant Women Services Ottawa Mercy Lawluvi, Executive Director	2022/04/01	12
L'R des centres de femmes du Québec Stéphanie Vallée, Co-coordinator	2022/04/01	12

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
Peterborough Police Service Alice Czitrom, Coordinator Victim Services Emily Jones, Coordinator Community Development and Engagement	2022/04/01	12
As an individual Peter Jaffe, Professor Emeritus Western University Geneviève Lessard, Professor Laval University	2022/04/05	13
Assembly of First Nations Deputy Grand Chief Anna Betty Achneepineskum, Nishnawbe Aski Nation Julie McGregor, Director Justice	2022/04/05	13
Calgary Immigrant Women's Association Rekha Gadhia, Manager Family Services Department	2022/04/05	13
Centre-Femmes de Bellechasse Marjolaine Montminy, Director	2022/04/05	13
La Gîtée inc. Chantal Tanguay, Director	2022/04/05	13
La Jonction pour Elle inc. Sylvie Bernatchez, Director	2022/04/05	13
Peel Regional Police Lisa Hewison, Inspector Crimes Against Persons	2022/04/05	13
Safe Centre of Peel Shelina Jeshani, Director Strategic Partnerships and Collaboration	2022/04/05	13

APPENDIX B LIST OF BRIEFS

The following is an alphabetical list of organizations and individuals who submitted briefs to the committee related to this report. For more information, please consult the committee's [webpage for this study](#).

Abel, Michelle

Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes

Alberta Council of Women's Shelters

Alice House

Alliance of Canadian Research Centres on Gender-Based Violence

Amamor Women's Foundation

Animal and Interpersonal Abuse Research Group

Anonymous Authors

Archambault, Anita

Armagh House

Association for Equality on the Basis of Sex

Babchishin, Kelly

Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic

Be The Peace Institute

Bell, Allan Gordon

Butt, Karen

Campbell, Lorraine Elizabeth

Canadian Center for Women's Empowerment (CCFWE)

Canadian Centre for Child Protection Inc.

Canadian Centre for Elder Law

Canadian Federation of University Women

Canadian Labour Congress

Canadian Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse

Canadian Women's Foundation
Carrier, Lynn
Centre for Research and Education on Violence Against Women and Children
Centre to End All Sexual Exploitation
Centre-Femmes de Bellechasse
Charbonneau, Diane
Charbonneau, Evan
Coey, Judy
Collins, Chris
DisAbled Women's Network of Canada
Ending Violence Association of Canada
Family Dispute Resolution Institute of Ontario
Foundation for Justice and Social Ethics
Gill, Julie
Gosbee, Karen
Harder, Kayla
Humane Canada
Immigrant Women Services Ottawa
Interval House
Kelford, Stephanie
Klebanowski, Tabatha
Knight-Jones, Shannon
Koshan, Jennifer
Link Toronto
London Abused Women's Centre
Luke's Place Support and Resource Centre for Women and Children
Luketa, Laura
Metro Interagency Restorative Conversations Committee on Family Violence
Mosher, Janet
Native Women's Association of Canada

O'Connell, L.
Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses
Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres
Pantrazopoulos, Dimitra
Peel Regional Police
Pita, Anna
Plante, Stéphanie
Probation Officers Association of Ontario
Regroupement québécois des Centres d'aide et de lutte contre les agressions à caractère sexuel
RESOLVE
RESOLVE Alberta
RESOLVE Manitoba
RESOLVE Saskatchewan
RESPECT Society for Women
Ross, Nancy
Safe Centre of Peel
Safe Housing and Directed Empowerment Inc.
SafePet Ontario
Sagesse Domestic Violence Prevention Society
Sharon Aheer, Leela
South Asian Women's Centre
Statistics Canada
Sutherland, Rebecca
The Women's Resource Centre
Vancouver Rape Relief and Women's Shelter
Violence Against Women Coordinating Committee of Windsor-Essex
Violence Link Consulting
White Ribbon
Wiebe, Shalom

Wiegers, Wanda

Wittmeier, Carmen

Woman Abuse Council of Toronto

WoodGreen Community Services

Worden, Jo-Ellen

Yantho, Sara

YWCA Toronto

REQUEST FOR GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to this Report.

A copy of the relevant *Minutes of Proceedings* ([Meetings Nos. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 21, 23, 24, 25 and 26](#)) is tabled.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Vecchio
Chair

Bloc Québécois Complementary Opinion

First, we would like to mention that we do not question the need for the Standing Committee on the Status of Women to address the important issue of intimate partner violence. On the contrary, we believe that the study of this issue was essential. Especially since the pandemic and the current social context have exacerbated violence of all kinds, especially intimate partner violence. The social isolation of vulnerable populations caused by the pandemic has only aggravated an already problematic situation. Indeed, we have seen a dramatic increase in femicide across the country over the past two years.

Equality between men and women has always been a central value at the heart of the Quebec social model, and intimate violence against women is a consequence of the negation - conscious or not - of this principle. The ultimate goal of this study was therefore to find concrete solutions to present to the federal government in light of the various testimonies.

However, the Bloc Québécois believes that the report tabled completely disregards respect for Quebec's jurisdictions since the Quebec government is already working, in consultation with community groups, to develop different coherent health and social services policies, focused on education, rehabilitation and justice. The network is in place, but resources are lacking. Quebec must remain in charge of the main measures, since they must be effective, targeted and coherent in order to avoid duplicating funds as much as possible.

If some say that this is not the time for jurisdictional wars, we say that this is not the time for duplication and ineffective measures. Both levels of government have complementary roles and must work together to address violence. Quebec and the provinces are responsible for the prevention aspect, education, professional orders, health care and

social services, legal personnel under Quebec law and police forces (provincial and municipal), and the administration of justice under their laws.

However, the federal government holds the reins of the Criminal Code and the administration of criminal justice, including the supervision and management of prison sentences in penitentiaries, parole and statutory release.

One cannot be done without the other, and efforts must be coordinated. That is why it is imperative that governments work together to consider how best to adapt the Criminal Code to make provincial policies and laws more effective.

Finally, the conclusions and recommendations of this report should be limited to the areas of jurisdiction of federal legislators and thus avoid interference in the exclusive jurisdictions of the provinces. In this sense, it is undeniable that the federal government has a role to play in addressing the major issue of intimate partner violence. Indeed, it must act on the issue of strengthening the Criminal Code and on the training of judges with respect to intimate partner violence, but, above all, on the issue of federal health transfers in order to adequately fund the health and social services systems of the provinces and Quebec, which is, let's not forget, a unanimous demand of all the provinces.