

Beyond Bill C-16: Turning Legislative Reform into Survivor Safety

Presented by: Angela Marie MacDougall

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Beyond Bill C-16

Turning Legislative Reform into Survivor Safety

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BEGIN WITH SURVIVORS

“I need the violence to stop.”

And I need the systems I turn to for help not to make things worse.

The test for Bill C-16



Ultimately, we will measure Bill C-16 not only by what it recognizes, but also by whether survivors and their children are safer because of it.

What Parliament changed

CORE GBV REFORMS

Coercive or controlling conduct
First-degree murder / femicide
Criminal harassment
Intimate images and synthetic sexual images

WIDER REFORMS

Bail, sentencing and firearms
Testimonial and procedural protections
Evidence and victims' rights
Other criminal and correctional changes

A significant conceptual shift

PRIVATE MATTER → INCIDENT OF VIOLENCE → CRIMINAL JUSTICE PROBLEM

PATTERN + RISK + PUBLIC SAFETY + PREVENTION

C-16 creates an opportunity to move Canadian law closer to the way survivors actually experience intimate partner violence.

COERCIVE CONTROL

Don't ask only: "What happened?"

Ask: "What has been happening over time?"

What the new offence makes possible

FROM

- Discrete incidents
- Visible injury
- Individual acts
- Conflict framing

TOWARD

- Patterns over time
- Psychological and non-physical harm
- Cumulative impact
- Domination, entrapment and deprivation of liberty

THE IMPLEMENTATION RISK

Protection must never become punishment.

Survival is not always legible to systems.

The question the system has to get right

Who established the pattern?

Who holds coercive power?

Whose liberty is being constrained?

Who is afraid of whom?

Who is adapting behaviour to survive?

Is this coercion — or resistance to coercion?

CONTEXT CHANGES MEANING

The law can itself become part of the pattern

Retaliatory police complaints

Cross-allegations

Family litigation

Child-protection involvement

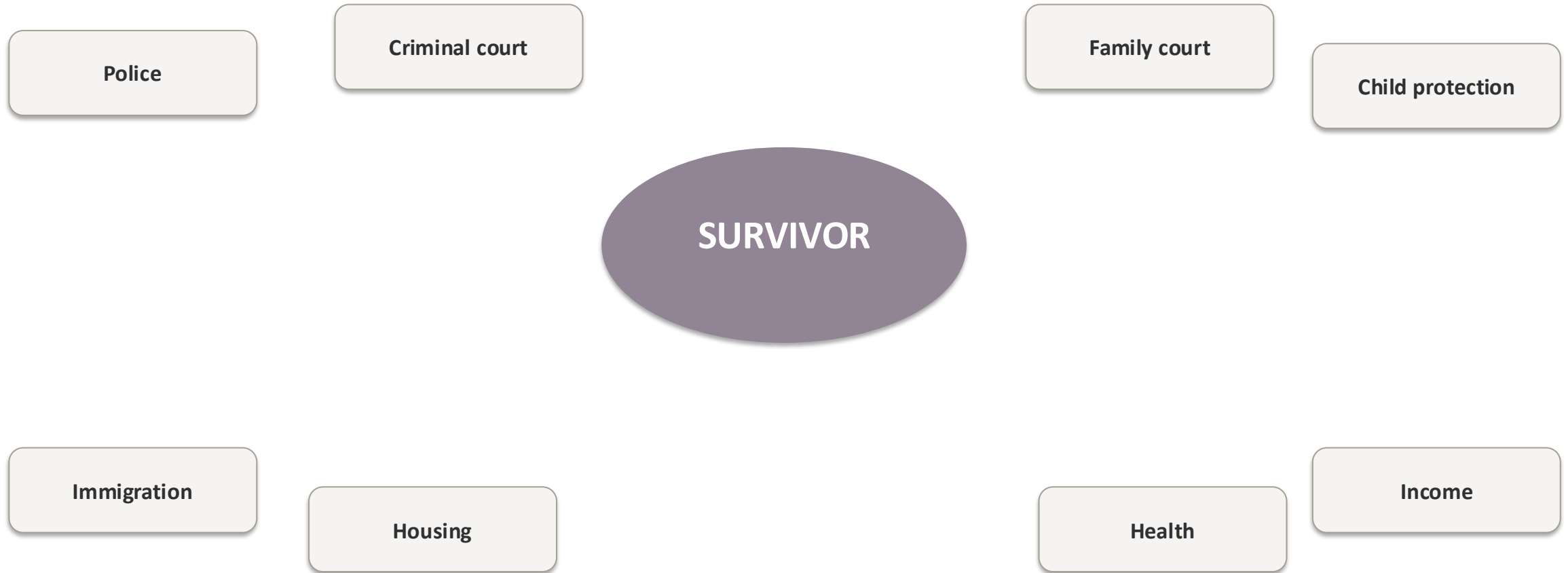
Immigration processes

Repeated litigation and legal entanglement

Coercive control does not stop at the courthouse door.

The abusive person may not simply resist the system — they may recruit the system into the abuse.

A new law enters an unequal system



There is no neutral implementation. One wrong identification can cascade across systems.

Naming femicide matters

C-16 expressly brings femicide into Canada's criminal-law framework in specified first-degree murder circumstances.

Recognition makes visible that women's killings can occur within recognizable patterns of gendered violence.

Naming femicide is not the same thing as preventing femicide.

The most important femicide question comes before the killing

Coercive control • Separation • Stalking • Strangulation

Death threats • Sexual violence • Escalation • Firearms

Threats involving children • Previous system contact

The tragedy is not simply that lethal risk can be difficult to predict.

The tragedy is that risk may be visible across multiple systems — without being assembled into an effective intervention.

From femicide recognition to femicide prevention

WHAT SAFETY REQUIRES

- Dynamic lethality / risk assessment
- Coordinated high-risk response
- Information sharing
- Safe housing and specialized services

WHAT ACCOUNTABILITY REQUIRES

- Femicide and near-lethal review
- Disaggregated data
- Independent oversight
- Review of missed intervention opportunities

TECHNOLOGY-FACILITATED VIOLENCE

The image may be fake. The violence is real.

The technology is new. The use of power, punishment and control is not.

Deepfakes expose both the reach — and limits — of criminal law

WHAT C-16 RECOGNIZES

Certain synthetic sexually explicit images
Threats involving intimate images
Digital abuse can have real-world consequences

WHAT SAFETY STILL REQUIRES

Attention to creation and realism gaps
Rapid removal / takedown pathways
Evidence preservation
Safety planning and specialized legal support

What safer implementation actually requires

- 1 Pattern-based investigation and evidence gathering
- 2 Primary / predominant-aggressor analysis
- 3 Trauma- and violence-informed, intersectional practice
- 4 Standardized lethality and risk assessment
- 5 Clear Crown / prosecutorial guidance
- 6 Disaggregated data + independent monitoring
- 7 Specialized, properly resourced community-based services

These are not peripheral social-policy requests. They are part of the infrastructure required for the law to work.

The GBV sector is implementation infrastructure

WHAT THE SECTOR BRINGS

- Pattern recognition over time
- Dynamic risk and safety planning
- Context for resistance and survival
- Cross-system legal advocacy

WHAT THE SECTOR MUST DO

- Support survivors
- Observe implementation
- Document unintended harms
- Challenge, advocate and shape practice

Coordination without capacity is not safety. A referral is not an intervention if the service cannot respond.

How will we know whether C-16 is working?

WE WILL COUNT

- Reports
- Arrests and charges
- Prosecutions
- Convictions and sentences

WE ALSO NEED TO KNOW

- Were survivors safer?
- Were survivors misidentified?
- Was lethal risk recognized earlier?
- Were repeat harms reduced?
- Who experienced unintended consequences?

Criminal-justice activity and survivor safety are not the same measure.

BEYOND C-16

Will I be safer?

Recognize the pattern. Identify the risk. Understand the context.
Intervene before escalation. Resource pathways to safety.
Measure what happens to survivors. Correct what causes harm.

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Thank you for your consideration

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