

accessibility, responses by social service, health and criminal justice agencies and legislators, the level of the violence experienced by women, and the fear that circumscribes women's lives and limits their autonomy. These are not new areas of unmet need and concern. Indeed, one of the witnesses stated to the Committee that many of the recommendations included in her presentation were in fact the same recommendations she had made on behalf of her organization, the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses Against abused Women, before a House of Commons committee studying wife battering nine years ago. She commented: "It is kind of scary to think that in nine years so little has happened" (5:78).

The reason why progress has not been made rests, in part, with the way in which violence against women has been officially conceptualized. Most government initiatives, and certainly the federal government's Family Violence initiative, launched in 1988 and renewed in 1991, have subsumed violence against women under the rubric "family violence". It was noted that the gender-neutral term "family violence" is exclusive in that it encompasses only one aspect of violence against women — that perpetrated within the context of the family. The Committee agrees with the witnesses that sexual assault, date rape, and sexual harassment are equally serious forms of violence against women that necessitate government response. Further, it was noted by Anne McGrath of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women that the labelling of violence against women as family violence does not name the victims of violence, who is committing the violence, and how the victims are victimized (2:13).

The President of the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women described her thinking on this issue as follows:

"We...must say "violence against women", because if we say "family violence" it waters down the real thing. It is the women who are suffering the greatest violence... It is women who are suffering" (5:11).

This failure to name the problem has narrowed our understanding of how both women's economic, political and social inequality with men and social values and attitudes that condone the "controlling" of women are related to violence. And lacking such an understanding has militated against the development of multi-faceted, effective responses to violence against women. Witnesses stressed that a royal commission is required so that we, as a society, can examine how their status in society makes women vulnerable to violence and what changes are needed to enhance women's equality and reduce their vulnerability.

Patricia Marshall told the Committee: