

As a result of the evidence it heard, the Committee is aware that not all abused women wish to see their husbands or partners jailed. Typically they want them to receive counselling and treatment and the abuse to stop. The Committee is also aware of research showing that many violent men will find another woman to abuse if their wife or partner ends the relationship. The Committee is convinced that a man who has resorted to threatening a woman with a gun or inflicting grievous bodily harm on her is unlikely to seek help by himself. Accordingly, the Committee agrees with the witnesses that, if the cycle of violence is to end, effective treatment and counselling, either in the community or a correctional facility, must be a mandatory part of the sentence given to a man convicted of physical or sexual assault against women or children.

Notwithstanding its endorsement, the Committee recognizes the limits of treatment programs. David Singleton, of the Assault Prevention Centre in Montreal, cited research on men who sexually abuse women and children. It shows that male violence against women is related both to traumatic experiences in childhood as well to normal male behaviour which is to gain power and control over persons with less status. Abusive men are rarely abusive towards someone they regard as their equal. These men have absorbed societal values and attitudes which give men permission to abuse women and children. Thus, programs must be sensitive both to earlier victimization and to the sexist culture which reinforces male dominance and control over women (13:20-21). John MacDonald, a facilitator with an Ottawa treatment program for violent men, believes that these programs are inherently limited by virtue of the context in which they are given.

I think that success is very, very limited and I think it is bound to be if we are talking about a short program in a society that does so much to reinforce men's feelings of men's privilege and sense of entitlement, which lies at the root of the choice to be abusive. (13:60)

However, Anna Nosko, a counsellor with the Family Service Association of Metro Toronto, who also runs programs for abusive men, told the Committee that despite their qualified success, "it is important to mandate programs for men... It is a statement that it is wrong... Even if they are very angry by the end of the program they will be held responsible for their behaviour. They will have been given a chance to learn how not to be violent" (12:30).

There are fundamental limits to the effectiveness of treatment programs that attempt to change sexist attitudes and violent behaviour towards women without altering the societal influences giving rise to and reinforcing those behaviours and attitudes. Yet, the Committee believes that violent men must be made accountable and responsible for their behaviour in order to protect women from becoming the future targets of their rage.