

"I think it [a royal commission] is the only answer right now. I think we have to improve our national understanding of what violence against women really is. We do not get it as a nation... We need a national understanding of the nature of violence, how women are sexually assaulted in their homes, in their workplaces, in their schools, in their churches, in their doctors' offices, as well as by men behind bushes, the pervasiveness, the impact, the political and social and health costs that women are paying and we as a society are paying" (5:99).

While the support for the establishment of a royal commission was virtually unanimous, witnesses qualified this support in three ways. First, the Committee was told that it should not be a strategy that would preclude doing other things to reduce abuse of woman. Witnesses recalled examples of previous royal commissions that had been set up to stall government action on contentious issues. Second, a commission should not be a mechanism that would reduce or divert funds away from existing programs and services. Witnesses noted that community resources are already inadequate to meet the current demand for services and, that therefore, any erosion of those resources was unacceptable. Third, they stressed that a royal commission on violence against women must involve women's groups, including front-line workers, in the planning and implementation stages. The broad mandate of the royal commission and the eventual recommendations for permanent solutions to violence against women envisioned would not be achieved, it was maintained, without the involvement of those who have an understanding of the problem and a commitment to its eradication.

As well, a number of witnesses were opposed to a royal commission that would engage in extensive research. They felt that the incidence of violence against women is well-documented and that one of the mandates of the royal commission should be to pull together and coordinate the information already contained in the numerous research reports. Any gaps in our knowledge identified through this process should then be the subject of focused research.

Representatives of front-line agencies expressed frustration about their negligible contact with colleagues across the country because of a lack of travel funds. The considerable expertise and good work that exists in communities in Canada and the innovative approaches being taken at the community level are fragmented and uncoordinated. As a result, there is duplication of both effective and ineffective programs. Witnesses felt that a royal commission could coordinate knowledge about services, funding, programs, training, protocol development and research findings and use existing agencies to develop solutions.

Witnesses called for an "action-oriented" royal commission, one that would develop an appropriate definition of violence, would make public the enormity of the problem of violence against women, and examine its endemic nature. Witnesses repeated that our