

# **The Dance of the Politicians**

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The topic of Intimate Partner Violence is not something that appears in the paper unless it is to report a horrific killing such as what happened to a lovely 17-year-old girl this past July, in London, Ont.

Breanna Broadfoot, a kind and warmhearted girl, beloved by family and friends, was attacked and fatally stabbed by her former boyfriend. She died two days later of her injuries. Her death and the rising number of Intimate Partner Violence reports caused the Status of Women Committee of the Federal Government to call a mid-summer meeting on Intimate Partner Violence.

They invited, as their three key witnesses, a survivor of Intimate Partner Violence, Cait Alexander, a young woman who is in the performing arts and who had been left for dead following a murderous attack on her by her partner in Toronto three years ago, July 31, 2021.

Her attacker managed to escape his charge with only a Peace Bond after the number of allotted court days given to his appearance in court ran into overtime.

Thus he walked away, a free man.

Cait, who no longer lives in Toronto, moved to Los Angeles, as she does not feel safe in Toronto and in Canada.

The second witness is Megan Walker, a longtime women's abuse advocate who was recently appointed to the London Police Services Board.

The third witness was Deputy Chief of Police of Peel Region, Nick Milinovich.

I was notified about the meeting and given an online link to access the Committee Meeting in Ottawa on July 31. Cait flew up to Ottawa from Los Angeles to appear before this committee, looking forward to sharing the reality of Intimate Partner Violence.

The Chairwoman, new to the job, introduced the topic of Intimate Partner Violence and then made a surprising announcement. Each witness, she said, had exactly five minutes in which to present their testimony. Five minutes!

Cait had prepared a very visual and verbal presentation and thus she had to rush through the long list of names of victims/survivors, my name included. She was asked to slow down so the recording secretary could take note of all the names and was then cut off at the five-minute mark.

Megan Walker spoke next, five minutes, giving statistics of how many women and children were killed each year by Intimate Partner Violence.

Then the police chief spoke. He was allowed more than five minutes. A question-and-answer period was to follow. But what followed was nothing short of a political 'dance' between the parties and the MPs on the committee.

I watched as Cait's pain and suffering was completely ignored, Megan's words dismissed, and the police chief's words recounting all that his force had seen and dealt with, forgotten.

The political games began.

While there were one or two very concerned MPs on the committee who were genuinely compassionate in acknowledging Cait's testimony, there were others who were totally into their own agendas as politicians. While the Status of Women Committee has many legitimate and serious concerns about the status of women, all it took was for several member MPs to completely disrupt the meeting.

The Liberal MP from Ottawa West, Anita Vandenberg, pre-empted the meeting, which the Chair should not have allowed, complaining that the meeting had been called in haste by the Conservative MPs and that the Liberal MPs were not provided with the opportunity to give the names of witnesses they would like to call unlike those chosen by the Tory members.

Vandenberg also defended the Federal government's criminal justice record, which is well-known to be sadly lacking in the laws to help victims and convict the perpetrators of Intimate Partner Violence in the overloaded courts that the governments are not providing enough funding towards.

MP Vandenberg then accused the Conservative MPs of trying to use the victims in attendance to score political points.

To me, this was a very low blow on her part.

Then she moved to have a motion passed on women's abortion rights completely ignoring the topic of Intimate Partner Violence.

When this happened, Cait and Megan turned their backs on the committee and walked out, in tears, stating that the Status of Women's Committee had fallen into the political trap of obscuring the real purpose for the Status of Women's Committee.

Is it any wonder that our governments never get anything accomplished when political rivalry like this occurs?

Is it any wonder that politicians, some of whom I believe are very committed to their jobs, become frustrated by the behaviour of other politicians who are in the 'game' for their own self-serving personal satisfaction and ego trip?

I found the meeting to be a disgusting example of why Intimate Partner Violence appears not to be of any great importance to the politicians involved. Or the governments. Federal and Provincial.

They talk a good storyline but they don't back it up with laws or funding for the courts.

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