



Description

In cases of intimate partner violence, signs of harm often remain hidden, masked by coercive control that's nearly impossible to 'see.' Without the right tools, understanding and assessing these subtle yet dangerous behaviors is challenging. This workshop will help to equip attendees with the tools needed to recognize the unseen signs and support those who may be victimized by coercive controlling behaviours.

Coercive control is a pervasive pattern of abuse that aims to control, isolate, and dominate an intimate partner, with or without the use of physical violence, and is difficult to assess when viewing intimate partner violence as an incident-specific and episodic event. Other countries (England, Wales, Scotland, Ireland, Australia) have already criminalized coercive control, and the Canadian landscape is changing to officially acknowledge coercive control as harmful, and criminal, behaviour. Bill C-332, an Act to amend the Criminal Code (coercive control of an intimate partner) passed in the House of Commons in June 2024, however ended in January 2025 when Parliament dissolved for the election. The priority now is to have it reintroduced and moved through the legislative process again. This workshop will equip members of the criminal justice system with the knowledge and tools required to more adequately respond, investigate, and intervene when faced with coercive control situations.

Objectives

This workshop offers an opportunity to:

- Adopt a trauma informed approach
- Deepen understanding of coercive control in intimate partner violence
- Recognize the signs of coercive control
- Assess and effectively respond to situations involving coercive control
- Share best practices

Target Audience

- Law Enforcement personnel (Investigators, Front Line, Supervisors, Senior Managers, and Executives)
- Specialized Domestic Violence Units
- Crowns Prosecutors

| TIME | SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 2025 |
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| 17:00 – 19:00 | Onsite Registration (<i>Beethoven Foyer</i>) |

| TIME | MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 2025 |
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| 07:00 | Onsite Registration (<i>Beethoven Foyer</i>) |
| 07:00 – 16:30 | Exhibit Show (<i>Beethoven Foyer</i>) |
| 07:00 – 08:30 | Breakfast (<i>Beethoven Foyer</i>) |
| 08:30 – 16:30 | Plenary Sessions (<i>Chopin</i>) |
| 08:30 – 09:00 | Opening Ceremonies Opening Remarks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directeur Simon Fournier, Gatineau Police Service |
| SESSION 1 09:00 – 10:30 | Understanding Coercive Control: Definitions, Tactics, and Impacts of Coercive Control <i>Presenters</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carmen Gill, Ph.D., Professor, Department of Sociology, University of New Brunswick • Mary Aspinall, PhD, Assistant Professor, Department of Criminology & Criminal Justice, St. Thomas University <i>Description</i> Coercive control is a pattern of violence that contains abuse beyond a single incident. This session will be an opportunity to discuss the definitions and tactics of intimate partner violence, including coercive control. In addition to discussions regarding perpetrator behaviours and victim experiences, considerations of children involved (as direct and secondary victims) and policing perspectives will be reflected upon. An exercise on tactics used by abusers will provide a better understanding of a pattern of coercive control. In addition, participants will learn about the risk of lethality and signs of coercive control. |
| 10:30 – 11:00 | Network Break (<i>Beethoven Foyer</i>) |
| SESSION 2 11:00 – 12:00 | A Trauma-Informed Approach <i>Presenter</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inspector Valarie Gates, Barrie Police Service; Member, CACP Victims of Crime Committee |

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| | <p>Description</p> <p>In 2024, the CACP endorsed and encouraged the adoption of the <i>Canadian Framework for Trauma-Informed Response in Policing</i> by all police services in Canada. This session will provide an understanding of trauma and trauma-informed policing, elaborate on the signs and symptoms of trauma in a policing context and offer ideas on the implementation of a trauma-informed approach in the context of coercive control situations.</p> |
| 12:00 – 13:00 | Lunch (<i>Beethoven</i>) |
| SESSION 3 13:00 – 14:00 | <p>Victim's Reality and Policing</p> <p>Presenter</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carmen Gill, Ph.D., Professor, Department of Sociology, University of New Brunswick • Shelina Jeshani, Catholic Family Services/The Safe Centre of Peel <p>Description</p> <p>There are challenges for victims in reporting a situation of intimate partner violence (IPV) /coercive control and proceeding through the criminal justice system. This session will address topics like the communication challenges encountered with victims who may not recognize themselves as victims and how to effectively approach reluctant complainants. Victim involvement in the judicial process will also be discussed with a focus on co-operation, recantation, and victim impact statements. Finally, this session will address myths and assumptions about IPV and how these are impacting the understanding victims have of their situations.</p> |
| SESSION 4 14:00 – 14:45 | <p>Coercive Control and the Criminal Law, including Former Bill C-332</p> <p>Presenter</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nathalie Levman, Senior Counsel, Criminal Law Policy Section, Department of Justice Canada |
| 14:45 – 15:15 | Network Break (<i>Beethoven Foyer</i>) |
| SESSION 5 15:15 – 16:30 | <p>Why address coercive control, whether there is a criminalization or not?</p> <p>Presenters</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Karine Barrette, Lawyer, responsible for improving judicial practices to increase the safety of women who are victims of domestic violence, Regroupement des maisons pour femmes victimes de violence conjugale, Québec • Carmen Gill, Ph.D., Professor, Department of Sociology, University of New Brunswick • Mary Aspinall, PhD, Assistant Professor, Department of Criminology & Criminal Justice, St. Thomas University <p>Description</p> |

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| | To date, coercive control has not been criminalized in Canada. However, civil and criminal legislation exists at the federal and provincial levels that relate to intimate partner violence and coercive control situations. It is essential for all partners in the justice system to understand what these are and how they can be used more effectively to respond to these cases. Furthermore, this session will emphasize why detecting and documenting the complexity of IPV helps save lives in various ways, especially by developing more appropriate safety planning strategies for victims and children, and enabling frontline responders to perform more informed risk assessment evaluations. |
| 16:30 | Closing Remarks |

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| 07:00 – 13:30 | Exhibit Show (<i>location</i>) |
| 07:00 – 08:30 | Breakfast (<i>Beethoven Foyer</i>) |
| 08:30 – 15:30 | Plenary Sessions (<i>Chopin</i>) |
| 08:30 – 08:35 | Opening Remarks |
| SESSION 6 08:35 – 09:30 | <p>Scotland and Coercive Control: A Promising Approach</p> <p>Presenter</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> T/Detective Superintendent Adam Brown, Public Protection, Specialist Crime Division, Police Service of Scotland <p>Description</p> <p>The criminalization of coercive control took effect in Scotland in 2019. While there seems to be a consensus among political parties, provinces and territories on the importance of criminalizing coercive control in Canada, many concerns remain about the implementation of the offence, and its practical application by police and prosecutors. There is much to be learned from Scotland's experience in applying the new law on coercive control in the field. This session is an opportunity to gain insight on the real challenges encountered in the implementation of the offence, the reasons for these, and to discuss the concrete solutions that might exist to address, or better still, avoid them in Canada. But the experience was not all bad; this is why the session will also touch on the benefits Scottish society has derived from this new legislation.</p> |
| SESSION 7 09:30 – 10:15 | <p>Small Group Discussions: Police Response to Coercive Control</p> <p>Facilitators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carmen Gill, Ph.D., Professor, Department of Sociology, University of New Brunswick |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mary Aspinall, PhD, Assistant Professor, Department of Criminology & Criminal Justice, St. Thomas University • Karine Barrette, Lawyer, responsible for improving judicial practices to increase the safety of women who are victims of domestic violence, Regroupement des maisons pour femmes victimes de violence conjugale, Québec • Inspector Francis Lanouette, M.O.M., Royal Canadian Mounted Police <p>Description Following the discussions from day one and hearing from our international partners, participants will have gained a better understanding of the Canadian context of coercive control. During this session, participants will engage in small group discussions focusing on adapting lessons learned to Canadian policing by working through various scenarios. These scenarios will offer an opportunity for participants to share experiences and practical responses.</p> |
| 10:15 – 10:45 | Network Break (<i>Beethoven Foyer</i>) |
| SESSION 8 10:45 – 12:15 | <p>Panel Discussion: Delivering an ‘Appropriate’ Police Response</p> <p>Panelists</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sergeant Jon Cawsey, Regional Domestic Violence Unit, Saanich Police Department • Detective Constable Andrea Gilker, Intimate Partner Violence – Early Intervention, Waterloo Regional Police Service • Inspector Anouk St-Onge, Prevention and Urban Safety Division, Montreal Police Service • Sergeant Morgan Kyle, Royal Canadian Mounted Police <p>Description What is considered to be an ‘appropriate’ police response by one individual or one community, may not be by another. The issues of intimate partner violence and coercive control are sensitive and complex. Panelists will discuss a wide range of police practices adopted across Canada and some key factors that must influence police interventions. These considerations include public concerns about over-policing in marginalized communities, the impact of colonization, etc.</p> |
| 12:15 – 13:15 | Lunch (<i>Beethoven Foyer</i>) |
| SESSION 9 13:15 – 14:15 | <p>Group Discussion: What can police officers do?</p> <p>Facilitators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carmen Gill, Ph.D., Professor, Department of Sociology, University of New Brunswick • Mary Aspinall, PhD, Assistant Professor, Department of Criminology & Criminal Justice, St. Thomas University |

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| | <p>Description</p> <p>In this session, participants will deepen their understanding of signs and various forms of disclosure of coercive control, learn about assessing risk of coercive control and identify evidence to collect. This will be an opportunity to revisit the criminal coercive control (CCC) offences already in place.</p> |
| 14:15 – 14:30 | <p>Network Break (<i>Beethoven Foyer</i>)</p> |
| <p>SESSION 10 14:30 – 15:30</p> | <p>The Judicial Impact of Coercive Control Intimate Partner Violence</p> <p>Presenters</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Isabelle Dorion, Prosecutor, Director of Criminal and Penal Prosecutions (DCPP); Provincial Coordinator, Domestic Violence, Quebec Inspector Francis Lanouette, M.O.M., Royal Canadian Mounted Police <p>Description</p> <p>The possible criminalization of coercive control has led the judiciary to question its impact. This session will explore the judicial impact of coercive control in domestic violence cases and its implications for prosecutors handling these. It will focus on how recognizing this form of abuse can improve legal outcomes. It will examine how understanding coercive control can strengthen prosecutions, lead to more effective collaboration between police and prosecutors, improve the collection and presentation of evidence, enhance case building, and support victim testimony. Participants will also consider the potential benefits of adopting a national framework to help guide and standardize investigative approaches and prosecutorial strategies, ultimately increasing the chances of successful outcomes in court.</p> |
| 15:30 | <p>Closing Remarks</p> |