

Coercive Control in Intimate Partner Relationships

Amanda V. McCormick, Ph.D.

Abbotsford ACCESS October 18, 2023





Case Example

“her story was that everything was groovy, no issues, they got married, they went on their honeymoon, and he strangled her with the bathroom towel. Really, really badly. There was a horrific, traumatic incident when he strangled her almost to death with the bathroom towel...So then after that for six years of marriage - ... he never ever against used physical violence on her but whenever there was a moment of tension, he would go to the bathroom and he would bring out a towel, and he would put it on the table. And that as the sign: and then she would just be, like, “and then I would just give in – I would just do whatever it is he was trying to get me to do”

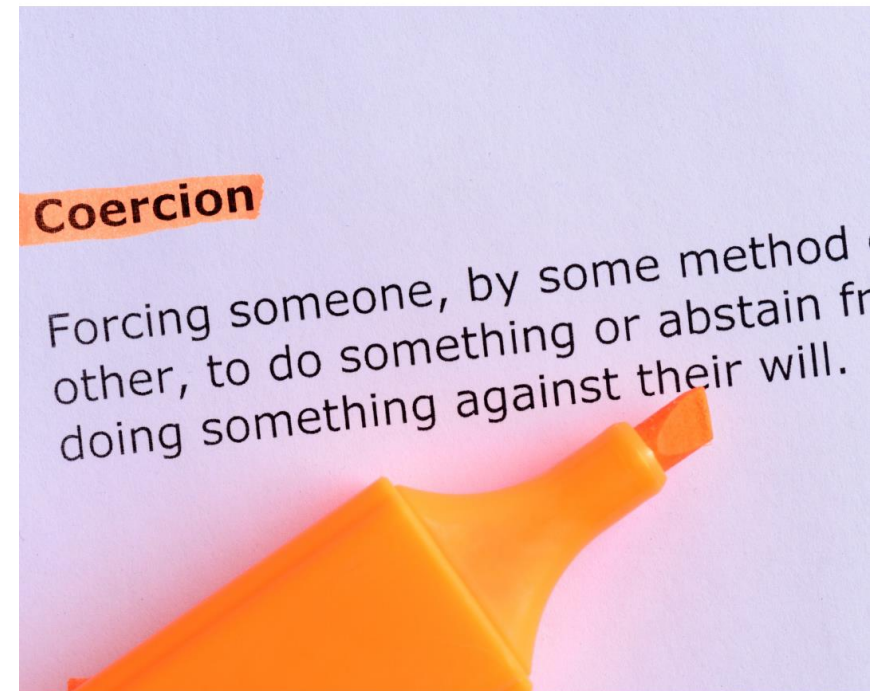
Wiener, C. (2023). Coercive control in the criminal law. Routledge.



- 44% of women aged 15 and older have experienced some form of intimate partner abuse in their lifetime
 - Much of this is psychological
- 19% of intimate partner abuse is reported to the police
 - Much of this is physical
- Barriers to reporting include
 - Not knowing whether what they are experiencing is criminal, or what police can/will do in response
- Coercive control
 - Ongoing course of conduct designed to control an intimate partner through tactics that produce fear or which have a serious adverse effect on their daily life
 - 30% of UFV students have experienced CCB by an intimate partner

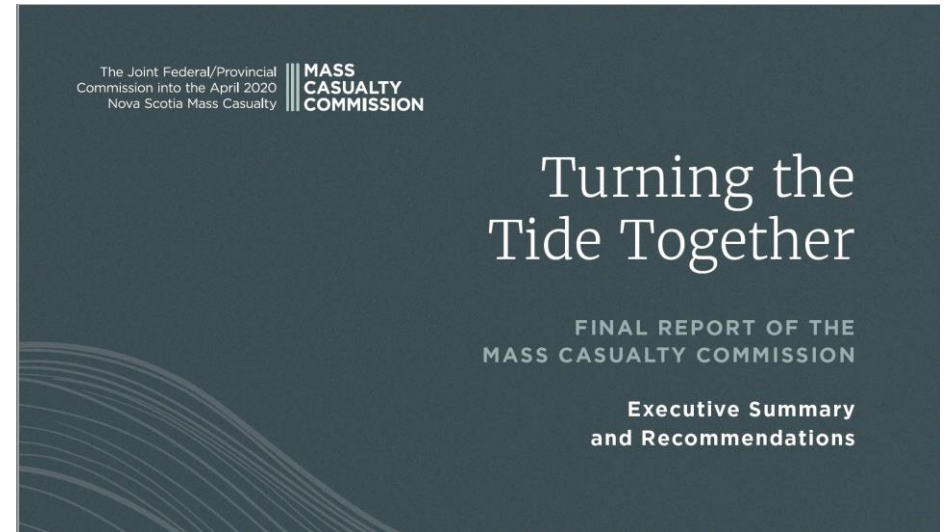
What is Coercive Control?

- Can include, but does not require, violence
- NOT an exhaustive list...
- Controlling Body
 - Rules/restrictions around weight, eating, bathroom habits, exercise routine, hairstyle, style of dress...
- Controlling Identity
 - Gaslighting, shaming, degrading, criticizing, verbal abuse
- Restricting Movements, Activities and Finances
 - Isolation from support systems, preventing license or access to transportation, monitoring mileage, installing tracking devices, preventing employment or education, keeping name off house titles, preventing access to money or bank accounts
- Manipulation through Children and Court Systems
 - Seeking custody, providing false information about mental health status or parenting abilities, taking actions to prolong cases in court, attacking credibility, failing to return the children on time post-visitation, threatening harm to children (or pets) for failure to comply



Coercive Control as a Risk Factor for Severe or Lethal IPV

- Risks are elevated at the point of separation
- When CCB are present
 - More frequent violence
 - More severe violence
 - Greater risk of injury
 - Less likely to desist
 - Increased risk for intimate partner homicide
- Increasing presence on risk assessment
 - Police in BC the first to risk review for CCB in IPV

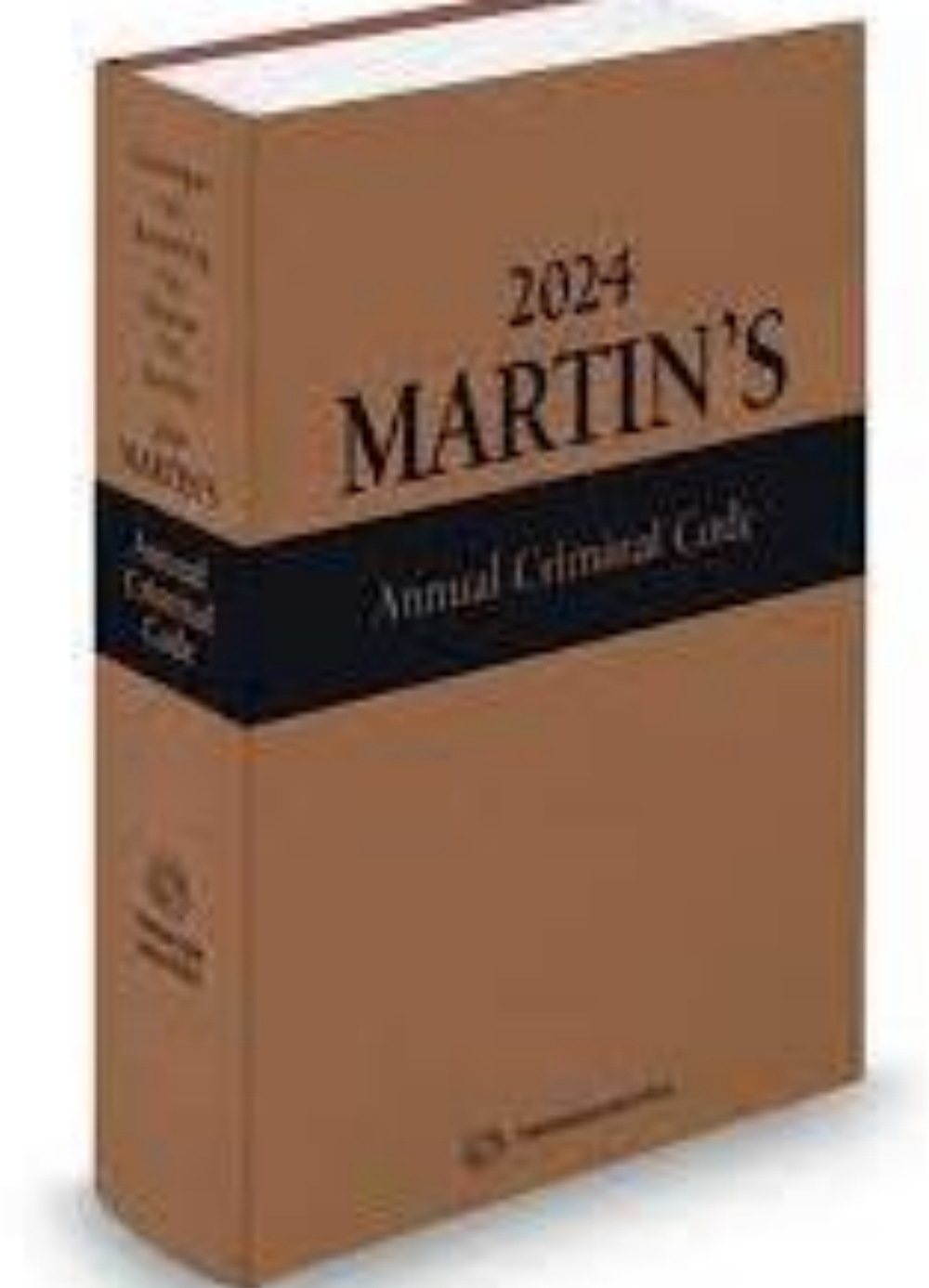


Guy Quenneville · CBC News · Posted: Jun 28, 2022 12:42 PM PDT | Last Updated: June 28, 2022



Criminalization of Coercive Control

- England and Wales (2015)
- Scotland (2019)
- Ireland (2019)
- California (2020)
- Hawaii (2020)
- New South Wales (2022)
- Canada?



THE SHADOW PANDEMIC: STOPPING COERCIVE AND CONTROLLING BEHAVIOUR IN INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS

Report of the Standing Committee on Justice and
Human Rights

Iqra Khalid, Chair

APRIL 2021
43rd PARLIAMENT, 2nd SESSION

Pending Criminalization of Coercive Controlling Behaviours in Canada

- Calls for education, training, and criminalization
- Bill C-332, Justice Canada virtual panels
 - How best to achieve criminalization, and what are the benefits/consequences?
- Experiences in England and Wales
 - Initial challenges with identifying CCB in IPV (Barlow et al., 2020, Barlow & Walklate, 2021; Wiener, 2017; Stark & Hester, 2019)
- What are the implications for agencies who are supporting families experiencing intimate partner abuse?
 - Neighbours, Friends, Families, and Coworkers program – training on what signs to look out for
 - Promote awareness of available resources - shelters, protection orders, what can police do, how can victim services help
 - Training on coercive control in preparation for the pending legislation

Thank you!

A close-up photograph of a hand holding a black marker, writing the words 'Thank you!' in a cursive script on a white surface. The hand is positioned on the right side of the frame, and the marker is just finishing the exclamation point.

Amanda.McCormick@ufv.ca