

Ontario Women's Directorate
owd@ontario.ca
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The Ontario Council of the Canadian Federation of University Women has been concerned about the issues surrounding violence perpetrated against women since the origins of the Ontario organization.

This has led to many discussions and studies including a recent study in 2008 prepared by members of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, which is appended.

We appreciate and commend you for conducting this online survey. It gives us the general public and stakeholders an opportunity to respond to and inform the decision-making process towards the development of a Sexual Violence Action Plan for Ontario.

The following answers to those questions answered have been developed in conjunction with members of the CFUW Ontario Council Standing Committee on the Status of Women and Human Rights.

These are also based upon policy that is developed through a resolution process emanating from the local clubs and committees throughout the three levels of our organization, provincial, national and international, discussed by the clubs and subsequently voted upon by the membership at the Annual General Meetings. There are currently approximately eighteen (18) resolutions dealing with violence perpetrated against women.

Questions for Discussion, as found in the Sexual Violence Action Plan Consultation Document (http://www.citizenship.gov.on.ca/owd/english/women/svap_doc.shtml)

Prevention

What are the key elements of or challenges for an effective prevention campaign targeting sexual violence?

CFUW Ontario Council recommends:

1. Adopt the United Nations definition of sexual violence as form of violence against women: "a violation of the rights and fundamental freedoms of women" that is caused by "historically unequal power relations between men and women".
2. Integrate a gender analysis into the prevention campaign.

3. Include a consistent provincial approach once the Sexual Violence Action Plan has been developed, actively addressing all ages by using clear, consistent messaging over a committed period of time.
4. Use a multi pronged inter-disciplinary approach with Coordinating Committees Against Violence taking the lead within their respective communities, while staying connected provincially.
5. Full involvement of schools (K-12, post secondary), rape crisis centres, criminal justice systems (i.e. police, Crowns, judges), health care, CAS, community counselling centres, shelters, etc.
6. Developing an effective provincial tool kit that is simple to access.

Are there promising practices, models or existing public education or awareness campaigns that could be expanded or implemented across Ontario?

CFUW Ontario Council recommends:

The province of Newfoundland and Labrador has implemented a comprehensive Violence Prevention Initiative strategy that could serve as a model for Ontario. For more information, visit the website – www.respectwomen.ca

Responsive services

Are there promising practices in the delivery of services in the community, healthcare, education and justice sectors that could serve as a model for the province?

CFUW Ontario Council recommends:

Engage a researcher to do a review of present models available.

Working as a system

How can cross-sectoral collaboration, community coordination and information sharing be improved?

CFUW Ontario Council recommends:

1. Ensure consistent collaboration from government with communities to enable community, health and criminal justice sectors to participate fully.
2. Empower Coordinating Committees Against Violence to join provincially to engage and use present research to effectively lead communities in response to violence against women.

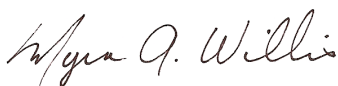
What steps or policies could be put in place to ensure the community works together in its responses to sexual violence?

CFUW Ontario Council recommends:

1. Develop and implement policies to guide Coordinating Committees provincially.
2. Ensure police services have policies integrated that recognize the importance of education in sexual violence prevention.

The Ontario Council of the Canadian Federation of University Women is composed of 57 clubs comprised of graduates living in urban and rural areas across Ontario from Perth to Windsor, from Thunder Bay to Niagara Falls. We are non-partisan, non-sectarian and we are totally member funded. Our members are active in public affairs, advocating on public education, justice, health and environmental issues as well as the status of women and human rights. Ontario Council is part of the Canadian Federation of University Women and has links to the International Federation of University Women.

Respectfully submitted,



Myra Willis
President, Ontario Council
Canadian Federation of University Women
President@cfuwontcouncil.ca
www.cfuwontcouncil.ca



REPORT ON THE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN QUESTIONNAIRE

June 2008

The “Violence Against Women” project grew out of a presentation by Andrea Levan, Regional Director Canadian Federation of University Women (CFUW) Ontario North and Professor of Women's Studies at Laurentian University. Andrea pointed out that much of the CFUW's current lobbying is reactive and suggested that we should be proactive. Club members across the province could find out what is going on in their communities, and what front-line workers feel *ought* to be going on, around violence toward women. To accomplish this, Andrea designed a nine-item open-ended questionnaire (copy attached) to examine this multifaceted issue.

This questionnaire was administered by CFUW volunteers to front-line representatives of thirty different organizations (Spring and Summer 2006). Although these organizations differ in their specific missions (e.g., women's shelter, sexual assault centre, immigrant women's services, community legal clinic), and hence view the system from different vantage points, they all deal in some direct way with violence toward women. Accordingly, this report will seek and emphasize areas of commonality that cut across specific agencies.

Needs and Issues Identified

Virtually all responders identify **inadequate funding** for a variety of programs as a primary need. These programs include among others child care, housing (especially for women trying to escape abusive relationships), and specialized services (e.g. immigrant, Aboriginal, substance addicted women).

A second major area of concern might be called issues of **public awareness**. This includes concern that neither governments nor the public at large regard violence against women as the pervasive phenomenon the respondents see it as being. Some respondents expressed their sense that public awareness of violence against women seems actually to have decreased in recent years, and funding cutbacks have left agencies without the time or resources to do outreach or public education. Several respondents spoke of the need to change the governments' understanding of the individual and societal impact of violence against women, based as it is on gender inequality. More programs are needed to focus attitudes and values through the educational and public health systems.

Also expressed by several respondents was a need for **a stronger, tighter, more comprehensive legal system** which will be more supportive of victims and more punitive of abusers. They identify a need for the legal and police services to “buy in” to the laws protecting women.

Finally, there was a wish strongly expressed for **reliable funding** for programs which have proven value, and less focus on “trendy” issues.

It may be worth mentioning that this question on needs and issues (question 1) generated by far the greatest number of responses – 82 needs and issues across 30 respondents. A later question, on useful changes in place (question 4) generated exactly half this number, plus several stern injunctions to continue working hard. Clearly, the work remaining is seen as far exceeding the work accomplished.

How can CFUW help?

The vast majority of answers to this question fall under one or both of the following headings: lobbying/advocacy and increased public awareness. Two individual responses summarize these concerns particularly aptly:

“Advocate, advocate, advocate. Lobby parliament for changes. Be in the news. Hold a rally. Create a ruckus.”

and

“Lobby, lobby, lobby. Educate, inform, train. Bring this issue to everyone you can. We need this issue to create a tipping point – a solid universal response that deems any violence against women and children as unacceptable and intolerable.”

In addition to the nearly universal calls for lobbying/advocacy and increased public awareness, there were **a number of more specific things that respondents thought groups like CFUW can do around violence against women**. These are listed here in no particular order.

1. Recognize the violence as it is! - not domestic or family abuse.
2. Don't put the victim in more danger. She is the expert on her safety.
3. Work closely with each county's domestic violence group throughout Ontario and the country.
4. Connect with teenagers regarding violence.
5. Publicize the need for corrective change (better lighting, emergency signals, video monitoring) to ensure safety in public areas.
6. Letter writing.
7. Sharing information from front-line practitioners.
8. Have guest speakers on the topic of violence.
9. Be accessible to isolated women: get on line; have toll-free numbers; have directories of lawyers who specialize in family law involving abuse.
10. Be interested, be thoughtful, be current, be knowledgeable.

11. Practical help - e.g. providing clothing for women having job interviews; donating items needed for women setting up housekeeping away from an abuser; volunteering; serving as a board member.

Pamela Scott, M.A.
CFUW Leaside-East York
June 18, 2008

A. John Arrowood, Professor Emeritus
University of Toronto

Stop Violence Against Women Sub-Committee
CFUW Ontario Council

Judie Arrowood	Leaside-East York
Ann McElhinney	Etobicoke
Arleen Midriak	Burlington
Rhea Pretsell	Belleville

Appendix 1

CFUW Clubs and Agencies participating:

Barrie	Simcoe County Sexual Assault Centre AIDS Committee of Simcoe County
Leaside-East York	YWCA Toronto Women's Shelter Thornccliffe Neighbourhood Office Metropolitan Toronto Police
Muskoka	Parry Sound Sexual Assault Services Lake Country Community Legal Clinic
Nepean	Nepean Community Resource Centre
North Toronto	Canadians Against Violence in Entertainment Toronto District School Board YWCA Arise
Oakville	Sexual Assault & Violence Intervention Services of Halton
Orangeville	Family Transition Place
Orillia	Couchiching Jubilee House Green Haven Women's Centre The Elizabeth Fry Society of Simcoe County Simcoe County Health Unit – Orillia branch New Path Partner Abuse Program

Ottawa	Immigrant Women's Services Ottawa Western Ottawa Resource Centre (Pinecrest Queensway Health & Community) Eastern Ottawa Resource Centre Sexual Assault Support Centre of Ottawa Amethyst Women's Addiction Centre Harmony House Cornerstone Women's Shelter Interval House Native Women's Association of Canada Ottawa Rape Crisis Centre
Perth & District	Perth Police Services Sexual Assault & Domestic Violence for Lanark County
Stratford	A Second Stage Shelter

Appendix 2

SCHEDULE OF QUESTIONS:

What do you see as the most important needs that could be addressed by changes in law or government policy?

What aspects of current law or policy are problematic in meeting the needs of women?

Are there examples (specific cases without names) that illustrate your concerns?

What are the most useful and significant changes that have occurred?

What, if any, changes have been detrimental?

What issues still persist despite years of working in the area?

What problems exist for women in accessing and receiving help or services from various agencies?

Are there other important issues that have not been addressed that you would like to mention?

What can groups like CFUW do?

Appendix 3

A PROJECT FOR ONTARIO CLUBS: INFORMATION GATHERING ON ISSUES RELATED TO VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

A sample of answers

Prepared by Andrea Levan, PhD, RD Ontario North

Jan.2007

1. What do you see as the most important needs that could be addressed by changes in law or government policy?

- There are difficulties accessing social assistance –it is slow, requires documents that aren't always readily available
- Counseling offered by the courts does not meet the needs
- Sentencing does not match the crime, and there needs to be follow-up on offenders
- Mandatory training of judges should be implemented
- With respect to family law, there should be a policy of no mediation where abuse occurs
- There needs to be better legal aid support
- Interpretation services, including sign language, are needed
- A national child care plan is necessary to help women seeking child care
- Affordable housing is inadequate
- We need to do more outreach to immigrant and faith group communities
- Cross-sectional solutions—e.g., between social assistance, housing, child care—are needed

2. What aspects of current law or policy are problematic in meeting the needs of women?

Wife abuse:

- Custody issues: sharing custody is difficult; when children are left in the home, the wife won't leave
- Child care while dealing with legal, economic, and employment matters
- Enforcement of restraining orders
- Victims are treated as witnesses and often have no legal representation, though the offender does

Sexual assault:

- Sexual harassment is not recognized as a crime
- Safety audits are available, but not mandatory for public spaces
- The burden of proof is difficult

3. Are there examples (specific cases without names) that illustrate your concerns?

4. What are the most useful and significant changes that have occurred?

- The Victim Witness Assistance Program provides long term support
- Mandatory charging has overall been beneficial, though it is problematic for women who cannot stop the process if they wish to
- Priority housing for abuse victims
- Victim notification when the offender is out on bail
- Communication is opening up between Children's Aid society and violence against women workers
- Provincial commitment to violence against women agencies
- A network of sexual assault counseling services and crisis centres
- A handbook produced by the Ontario Coalition of Sexual Assault Crisis Centres
- There has been improvement in emergency room services, where documentation is taken

5. What, if any, changes have been detrimental?

- Freezes and reductions in funding
- It is still almost impossible for victims to get financial support
- Counter-charging with abuse as a result of mandatory charging policy
- The VWAP puts all services under the legal system – a certain perspective/bias
- The CAS is mandated to remove children from the home where sexual abuse is reported – means that women may lose their children if they report

6. What issues still persist despite years of working in the area?

- Fear of disclosure: related to a wish to protect children, economics, and fear of retaliation
- Many women are still unaware of resources and help available
- Difficulty accessing legal and financial support
- Only sensational cases are publicized—otherwise, the issue remains largely invisible
- Persistence of “anger management” models, treating abuse as conflict-based rather than as coercion-based, and the “family violence” model
- Violence normalized in the media, including the sexualization of women and children in the media
- The violence continues! There is a lack of political will to end it

7. What problems exist for women in accessing and receiving help or services from various agencies?

- Funding cutbacks
- Transportation and child care
- Victim blaming, and the stigma attached to the victim
- Confidentiality, especially in rural areas
- Language barriers
- Lack of community education

8. Are there other important issues that have not been addressed that you would like to mention?

- Dating and teen violence

9. What can groups like CFUW do?

- Support local agencies—*listen!*
- Education—especially young, immigrant, and other marginalized women
- Lobby around all the issues mentioned above
- Share the findings of our study!