
DATE: October 8, 2009

SUBJECT: **INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND NATIONAL DAY OF REMEMBRANCE AND ACTION ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

FROM: Janette Smith, Commissioner of Health Services
Janet Menard, Commissioner of Human Services
David L. Mowat, MBChB, MPH, FRCPC, Medical Officer of Health

RECOMMENDATION

That November 25, 2009 be proclaimed The International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women;

And further, that December 6, 2009 be proclaimed as National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women in the Region of Peel.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- The prevention of women abuse and violence is a very important issue being worked on by many throughout the Region of Peel.
- Statistics related to the incidence of women abuse are difficult to determine because according to the Ontario Women's Directorate and a Statistics Canada's report Measuring Violence Against Women (2006) a small percentage of the cases are reported, hence they represent a fraction of the realities faced by many in our community.
- One Canadian study done in 2003 estimates the economic cost of child abuse to victims and adult survivors to be \$15 billion with \$11 billion associated with lost earnings alone.
- The Region and community agencies are working collaboratively to address the root causes and realities faced by many women.
- The proclamation will raise awareness and support activities which will continue to address the needs of women and children living in abusive situations.

DISCUSSION

1. Background

This report provides an update on the work the Region is engaged in with its community partners to aid in the elimination of violence against women. It also asks for the endorsement of a proclamation of two events that will help support this work. These two significant events include November 25th when, in 1999, the United Nations declared it as The International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women and in 1991, the

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Parliament of Canada declared December 6th as The National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women.

Definitions of violence against women vary broadly depending on the objectives of a particular research study or policy, and on the source of the data being used. The United Nation's 1993 Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, which was signed by Canada defines violence as "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life".

a) How Big is the Issue?

Violence is a societal issue and one that the Health and Human Services departments, Peel Regional Police and Caledon OPP, are partnering with many community agencies in trying to make a difference.

According to the Ontario Women's Directorate and a Statistics Canada's report, Measuring Violence Against Women (2006) only a small percentage of these cases are reported, so the numbers only represent a fraction of the realities faced by women in our community. Region of Peel specific statistics are not available, however, Peel Regional Police show that reported number of "domestic /family disputes /disturbances" increased by 9.5 per cent from 2007 to 2008 (from 11,631 in 2007 to 12,731 in 2008). The reported number of sexual assaults decreased by 11.6 per cent over the past year, from 484 in 2007 to 428 in 2008.

Below are some additional Canadian and Ontario based statistics that demonstrate this issue is still very prevalent in our society.

- 51 per cent of women in Canada have experienced at least one incidence of physical/sexual violence since the age of 16.
- Seven per cent of Ontario women living in a common-law or marital relationship experienced physical/sexual assault by a spousal partner at least once during the period of 1999-2004.
- 25 female victims were of spousal homicide each year in Ontario from 1975-2004.
- Almost 40 per cent of women assaulted by spouses said their children witnessed the violence against them, and in many cases the violence was severe.
- 11 per cent of Ontario women reported experiencing stalking during the period of 1999-2004.
- 71 per cent of women residing in Ontario shelters on April 19, 2006 were victims of abuse. 52 per cent of women escaping abusive situations were admitted to Ontario shelters with their children, and 69 per cent of these children were under the age of 10.
- 36 per cent of female victims of spousal violence and less than 10 per cent of victims of sexual assault reported these crimes to the police in 2004. Reasons for not reporting to police are varied and include fear of reprisals by the offender, shame and embarrassment, and a reluctance to become involved with the police and courts.
- Among other types of services for crime victims (excluding shelters), women make up the majority of clients, and most are seeking help for the effects of sexual assault, partner violence or stalking.

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There are tremendous impacts to society as a result of this often hidden issue. Impacts include psychological, physical, social and economic impacts for victims, their families resulting in costs to the social system. In fact, the economic costs of violence against women to victims and society involves costs to health, criminal justice, social services as well as lost productivity and they range in the billions of dollars. One Canadian study done in 2003 examined the economic cost of child abuse to victims and adult survivors and estimated the cost to be \$15 billion with \$11 billion associated with lost earnings alone.

The impact on children is most concerning as it has longer term effects. Almost 40 per cent (Statistics Canada) of women assaulted by spouses said their children witnessed the violence against them (either directly or indirectly) and in many cases, the violence was severe. This has a profound effect on the children. Children who are exposed to violence in the home suffer from emotional trauma, have poor educational outcomes, and are at increased risk of using violence to solve problems or being victims of violence (for example bullying and dating violence). As a result, children traumatized by violence in their homes are at an increased risk of not only being victimized in the future but also to exhibit offending behavior.

Strategies such as those being developed by the Peel Youth Violence Prevention Network are a critical factor addressing the irrefutable links between childhood trauma and violence in adolescence and adulthood.

2. What the Region of Peel and Community Partners are Doing

Throughout the Region there is significant work being done to shift social views and behaviour around the issue of violence against women. The work of the Region and its community partners is included in Appendix II.

a) Gender and Multi-focal Lens Use in Regional Planning

As a result of the work staff have done with Peel Committee Against Women Abuse (PCAWA) and Peel Committee on Sexual Assault (PCSA), it became clear that when doing our strategic and policy development more mindful methodological focus is needed to ensure all perspectives, including gender, are considered. For example, until recently, researchers gathered statistics generically, compiling data on violence regardless of the gender of victims or offenders. This gender neutral approach contributed to the development of general programs that addressed violence in society as a whole. However, in doing so, social program and policy developers identified instances where programs often fail to consider the effect of gender. Generic programs meant to address violence against all Canadians risk failing to adequately address women's experiences of violence. Also, given the public nature of gender neutral violence, program development with this approach will not adequately address the complex needs of women and children experiencing insidious private violence in their homes or intimate relationships. The applications of a gender specific lens will accommodate the inclusion of both public and private violence. Gender-specific data can pinpoint those areas where the need for support services is different for women and men.

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Given this viewpoint, staff, while always doing their best to consider multiple perspectives, are planning to apply tools that would allow for a multi-focal lens. This would enable more inclusive strategy and policy development representative of all segments in our community.

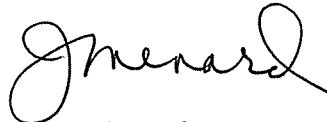
Understanding that gender is just one lens and realizing the complexity of working with multiple lenses, staff are working toward the development of a tool that will integrate the equity and anti-oppression concerns of the groups most affected by social exclusion in the Region of Peel.

CONCLUSION

The Region of Peel Proclamation of The International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women and National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women, acknowledges the commitment of the Region to support a wide range of activities related to gender-based discrimination and women abuse.



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**INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND
NATIONAL DAY OF REMEMBRANCE AND ACTION ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

Proclamation

**The International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women and National
Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women
November 25, 2009 and December 6, 2009**

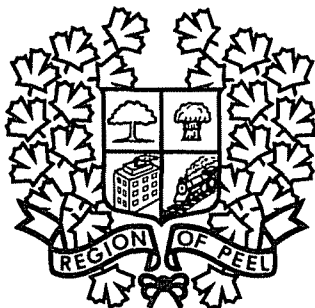
WHEREAS in 1999 the United Nations declared November 25th as "The International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women" as a time to raise awareness about violence against women and its prevention activities that attempt to eliminate all forms of women abuse and recognize that everyone has the right to live free of violence;

AND WHEREAS, in 1991 the Parliament in Canada established December 6 as the "National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women", a day to remember the 14 young women from l'Ecole Polytechnique de Montreal and all women who have lost their lives in an act of gender-based violence;

AND WHEREAS, it is a time to recognize that the root causes of violence against women are structural and systemic and due to an imbalance of power in social, political and economic arenas, including poverty and discrimination which all result in greater vulnerability lack of respect, limited opportunities and violence;

AND WHEREAS, the elimination of violence benefits society as a whole and requires the participation of all stakeholders and a holistic response that addresses issues such as employment, housing, childcare, education, health, safety and justice;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, THAT November 25, 2009 be proclaimed "The International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women" and December 6, 2009 be proclaimed "National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence against Women Day" in the Regional Municipality of Peel.



**Emil Kolb
Regional Chair**

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Regional and Community Initiatives

Regional Initiatives and Activities

The Region's citizen focused model acknowledges that individuals and families need to feel empowered by programs intended to assist them. As a result, the Region is active in its commitment to providing accessible services for women whose personal or family's safety is at risk, due to abuse by a partner/spouse or family member living in the home. It is important to note that given the nature of the activities staff are engaged in and the fact that they primarily deal with people who are at risk or are marginalized, they will come in contact with clients and children who are in volatile situations. Many times they include woman abuse or child abuse situations. All designated Region of Peel employees receive mandatory women abuse training and as such all employees are equipped with the appropriate skills and knowledge to make internal as well as external referrals.

Specific services or programs are listed below:

i) Family Health Routine Universal Comprehensive Screening (RUCS)

The RUCs program ensures all women over the age of 12 years are screened for abuse. Skill building sessions have ensured Public Health staff are aware of and knowledgeable of the issue of woman abuse, available community resources and supports for their clients. Documentation protocols as well as duty to report when a child is at risk. This work has been integrated into the reproductive health programs, parenting and breastfeeding programs as well as the Healthy Babies, Healthy Children home visiting program. Additionally, this work has been integrated into the transitional facilities in Peel (Peel Youth Village and Angela's Place) through the public health nurse assessments.

In addition, the ASK toolkit was designed to educate and inform health care professionals about woman abuse and to engage them in asking women about violence in their lives. Physicians and other health care professionals are provided with the information they need to ask appropriate questions, deal with presenting issues and make referrals to community agencies that specialize in supporting women who are coping with violence. Advocacy aimed at making systemic policy changes to further support the work of physicians in reducing violence will also be undertaken.

ii) Social Housing Rent-gearred-to-income Waiting List

As part of managing the social housing waiting list for all social housing providers in the Region of Peel, Regional staff are regulated under the Social Housing Reform Act to provide priority status to victims of family violence (VOFV). This means, once approved they are placed at the top of the waiting list for available social housing subsidized units and therefore get the units first. In 2007, 512 VOFV households, or almost 60 percent of the total number housed, were placed in a housing community.

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iii) Second Stage Housing – Armagh House

Armagh House is supportive second-stage housing (8 units subsidized through the Region's Service Manager role) and counselling program for mothers and children in crisis. Second stage is the next point in time when a women and children have left an abusive home situation and have lived for a few months in an emergency hostel. Armagh House offers accommodation after the hostel and before the family is able and ready to move into their own apartment. During this time many legal, financial and social problems must be addressed and resolved to give the women and children the best possible chance to be successful.

iv) Transitional and Housing Support Program (THSP)

In January 2005, the Ministry of Community and Social Services implemented the Transitional and Housing Support Program (THSP). This program assists women and their children who are planning to leave or have left abusive relationships, and is available to any survivor of family violence. Currently, Victim Services of Peel and Interim Place are responsible for delivering the Transitional and Housing Support Program (THSP) within the Region of Peel. As an additional requirement, Transitional and Housing Support Program workers are required to work with the social housing sector (with Peel Access to Housing (PATH) in the lead) to develop a Local Referral Agreement that will outline the collaborative process for helping survivors of family violence to connect with community supports and find and maintain housing.

v) Emergency Shelters

The Region partners with three Women's Shelters (Interim Place 1 and 2, and Family Life Resource Centre) that are operated by community agencies. The Region provides a personal needs allowance as well as travel and transportation. Services include crisis counseling, safety planning, advocacy, employment and education training as well as referrals to appropriate programming. Ontario Works caseworkers are involved in intensive case management and liaise with case managers at each facility.

Additionally, the Region owns and operates two single shelters for males and females (Mavis Road and Wilkinson Road), a family shelter (Peel Family Shelter), and a youth shelter (Our Place Peel). Individuals escaping abuse enter emergency shelters seeking temporary accommodations and basic needs. A wide range of programming and supports are available such as financial assistance from Ontario Works, employment and housing supports, life skills training, spiritual counseling, a health clinic, recreation, mental health and addiction services. When and if individuals and families identify their abuse experience, appropriate referrals are made.

vi) Transitional Housing

In 2005, the Region opened two transitional housing facilities: Angela's Place (for families) and Peel Youth Village (for youth). Women and youth, who have experienced abuse have been admitted to both Angela's Place and Peel Youth Village.

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Transitional housing facilities are intended to bridge the gap between emergency shelters and permanent housing for youths and families who do not have appropriate shelter and who are motivated to sustain independence in the community but require supports to do so. Programs consist of counselling, life skills training, parenting, childcare services, housing supports, employment training, education and budget management.

vii) Peel's Outreach Program

Peel's Outreach Program serves individuals who are at risk of or are experiencing homelessness. A number of women and children experiencing violence at home, often contact Peel's Outreach Program. With a focus on basic needs, primary health care, mental health, addiction, transitional supports, advocacy and referrals, services are provided through foot patrol, the mobile outreach van and within health clinics by Regional staff and community agencies. Peel's Outreach Team is trained and qualified to make appropriate referrals that assist women and children experiencing and/or fleeing violence.

viii) Eviction Prevention Programs

Programs that assist vulnerable households to avoid eviction and secure affordable accommodations include: the Strong Communities Rent Supplement Program, the Eviction Prevention Program for Ontario Works clients and Victims of Family Violence, the Families in Transition Program and the Preventing Homelessness in Peel Program. In assessing eligibility for programming and subsidized units, women experiencing violence/safety concerns are given priority status.

ix) Families First

Families First is a collaborative partnership among three Regional divisions: Ontario Works, Peel Public Health and Children Services. Intensive case management to sole support families, including victims of violence, with subsidized childcare, employment training, education supports, recreational programs for children and access to a Peel public health nurse is provided.

x) Learning, Earning and Parenting Program

This program assists parents (including victims of family violence) who are 21 years of age or younger, who are eligible for Ontario Works and have not graduated from high school. Supports include education, employment and life skills training.

Collaborative Partnerships

The Peel Committee Against Women Abuse (PCAWA) is a collaborative of over 35 organizations including departments within the Region of Peel, that are directly involved, or concerned with, the issue of women abuse. The agencies work together to promote a more effective and coordinated response to women abuse in the Region of Peel. Agency representation includes, but is not limited to, shelter, housing, legal, police, education, social services, settlement and health sectors.

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The Peel Committee on Sexual Assault (PCSA) is a program of Trillium Health Centre's Women's and Children's Health. Trillium Health Centre is Peel's Regional Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Treatment Centre. PCSA is a group of individuals and service providers working collaboratively to establish a comprehensive and effective community response to end sexual violence. This committee also includes broad agency representation.

Human Services and Health Services departments, Peel Regional Police and Caledon OPP are working with both PCAWA and PCSA.

Some initiatives of PCAWA and PCSA include:

- The distribution of ethno-specific resources (Creating a Safety Plan) and the promotion of routine screening for woman abuse in health clinics and hospital settings.
- The Region of Peel Women Abuse Protocol: Best Practice Guidelines which seeks to promote a coordinated response system to women abuse in the Region of Peel. There are over 30 signatory agencies.
- The Region of Peel's Emergency Response Protocol which provides best practices and accountability for first responder agencies to sexual assaults.

Regional staff will continue to work with PCAWA and PCSA to implement initiatives to prevent and respond to women abuse and sexual assault. Lessons learned from the Women in Cities International Initiative (2005) and the World Urban Forum (2006) can also be incorporated into Regional planning to ensure safe and inclusive communities for women.