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DATE: August 13, 2010

REPORT TITLE: **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
David L. Mowat, MBChB, MPH, FRCPC, Medical Officer of Health
Janet Menard, Commissioner of Human Services

RECOMMENDATION

That November 25, 2010 be proclaimed The International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women;

And further, that December 6, 2010 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 issue of women abuse are difficult to determine because according to the Ontario Women's Directorate and Statistics Canada a small percentage of the cases are reported, hence they represent a fraction of the realities faced by many in our community.
- 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 Parliament of Canada declared December 6th as The National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women.

August 13, 2010

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND 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) Defining and Measuring 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. Approximately one-third (36 per cent) of female victims of spousal violence and less than ten 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.

Region of Peel specific statistics are not available, however, Peel Regional Police show that the reported number of 'Domestic/family disputes/disturbances' increased by 1.2 per cent, from 12,731 in 2008 to 13,319 in 2009. The reported number of sexual assaults decreased by 13 per cent over the past year, from 428 in 2008 to 373 in 2009.

Further highlighting the issue is the Region's social housing waitlist. As part of managing the social housing waiting list for all social housing providers, 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. In a recent report 83 per cent of the total number housed in were VOFV. Back in 2007 it was 60 per cent.

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

i) Spousal and Family Violence

- Nationally, police-reported spousal violence has steadily declined over the past 10 years, decreasing 15 per cent between 1998 and 2007.
- The majority of victims of spousal violence continue to be females, accounting for 83 per cent of victims. Police reported spousal violence is twice as common between current partners (married or common-law) as ex-partners.
- 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.
- 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.
- Senior women had higher rates of violent victimization by a family member (52 per 100,000) compared to senior men (43 per 100,000). Spouses and adult

August 13, 2010

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

children were the most common perpetrators of family violence against senior women.

ii) Sexual Assault

- Half of women in Canada (51 per cent) have experienced at least one incidence of physical/sexual violence since the age of 16.
- In Ontario in 2008, there were more than of 7,300 sexual assaults reported to the police.

iii) Domestic Homicide/Spousal Homicide

- Rates of spousal homicide declined over the three decades from 1978 to 2007. In 2007, the spousal homicide rate of 4 per million spouses was the lowest in over 30 years.
- In Canada, 142 women died as a result of domestic violence from 2002 to 2007.
- Women continue to be more likely than men to be victims of spousal homicide. In domestic homicide cases in 2007 males were the perpetrators in 92 per cent of the cases and females were the victims in 92 per cent of the cases.

iv) Services

- A survey of all Ontario shelters (April 2008) reported 30,671 women and children staying in shelters. Women escaping abuse made up 74 per cent of this population.
- Nationally, over half of women in shelters escaping abusive situations were admitted with their children.
- 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.

b) What are the Impacts?

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.

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.

Initiatives such as those being developed by the Peel Child and Youth Initiative and associated networks and organizations are a critical factor addressing the irrefutable links between childhood trauma and violence in adolescence and adulthood.

August 13, 2010

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

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

As reported in previous years, throughout the Region there is a great deal of work being done to shift social views and behaviour around the issue of violence against women. This work will continue.

In addition, the Ontario government is currently developing a Sexual Violence Action Plan for Ontario. Consultations to develop this Plan are led by the Ontario Women's Directorate and will help the government determine how it can:

- Prevent sexual violence against women;
- Improve the responsiveness of services;
- Support cross-sectoral collaboration and coordination.

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.

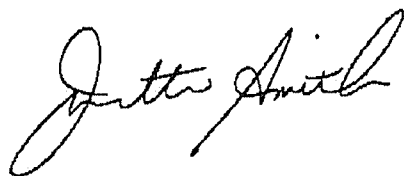
Given this viewpoint, staff, while always doing their best to consider multiple perspectives, are planning to apply tools that would allow for a multi-focal lens as part of a broader Diversity strategy. This would enable more inclusive strategy and policy development representative of all segments in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

August 13, 2010

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

CONCLUSION

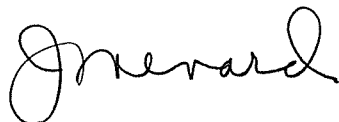
The Region of Peel Proclamation of The International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women and National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women, acknowledges the commitment of the Region to support a wide range of activities related to gender-based discrimination and women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



Janette Smith
Commissioner of Health Services

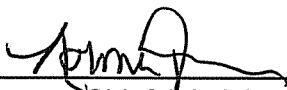


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Approved for Submission:



for

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c. Legislative Services

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NATIONAL DAY OF REMEMBRANCE AND ACTION ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

APPENDIX I

Proclamation

**THE INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND
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NOVEMBER 25, 2010 AND DECEMBER 6, 2010

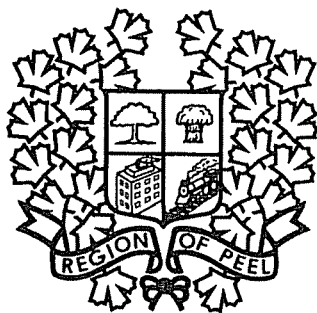
WHEREAS, in 1999 the United Nations declared November 25th as "The International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women" as a time to raise awareness about violence against women and its prevention activities that attempt to eliminate all forms of women abuse and recognize that everyone has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

AND WHEREAS, in 1991 the Parliament in Canada established December 6th 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, 2010 be proclaimed "THE INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN" and December 6, 2010 be proclaimed "NATIONAL DAY OF REMEMBRANCE AND ACTION ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN" in the Regional Municipality of Peel.



**Emil Kolb
Regional Chair**