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DATE: September 6, 2011

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

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### **RECOMMENDATION**

**That November 25, 2011 be proclaimed The International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women;**

**And further, that December 6, 2011 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.
- The true prevalence of women abuse is difficult to determine because according to national data from Statistics Canada, a low percentage of cases are reported to the police.
- The Region and community agencies are working collaboratively to address the root causes of violence against women and realities faced by many women.
- This 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 December 6th when, in 1991, the Parliament of Canada declared it as The National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women and, in 1999, when the United Nations declared November 25th as The International Day for the Elimination of 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

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Nation's 1993 Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, 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) Measuring the Issue**

Violence is a societal issue. According to recent statistics, from the 2009 General Social Survey (as reported by Statistics Canada), a small percentage of violent crime cases are reported so the numbers only represent a fraction of the realities faced by women in our community. Among female victims of violent crime across Canada in 2009, only one third said that they reported the incident to the police. Further, the reporting of spousal violence to police decreased by 6 per cent between 2004 and 2009, and this decline in reporting occurred primarily among female victims. Common reasons for not reporting to police are belief that the incident was a personal matter not concerning the police, dealing with the situation in another way, and feeling that the incident was not important enough.

Overall, both self-reported violent crime data (through the General Social Survey) and police-reported data (through the Uniform Crime Reporting Survey) show that Canadian females accounted for half of all victims of violent crimes in 2009. Self-reported victimization statistics are not available for the Region of Peel. However, Peel Regional Police data show that the reported number of 'domestic/family disputes/disturbances' have increased over the past three years:

<b>2008</b>	12,731
<b>2009</b>	13,319
<b>2010</b>	14,113

The reported number of 'sexual assaults' for the past three years are:

<b>2008</b>	428
<b>2009</b>	373
<b>2010</b>	432

Further highlighting the issue is the Region's social housing waitlist. As required under the *Special Priority Policy Provisions of the Social Housing Reform Act, 2000*, the Region of Peel provides priority status to victims of family violence. This means, once approved, they are placed at the top of the waiting list for available social housing subsidized units. In 2010, 41 per cent of total applicants housed were victims of family violence and therefore housed under the Special Priority Policy Provisions; yet they comprised just 3.2 per cent of the Region's Centralized Waiting List.

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**

- The overall proportion of Ontarians self-reporting spousal violence has remained stable between 1999 and 2009 at approximately 6 per cent of the population;

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- The scope and severity of violence differs between females and males. In 2009, Canadian women were more likely than men to report a physical injury (42 per cent versus 18 per cent), chronic violence (20 per cent versus 7 per cent), and fearing for their lives (33 per cent versus 5 per cent);
- In 2009, Canadian parents were responsible for more than half (59 per cent) of all family related physical and sexual assaults against children and youth, and girls were four times more likely than boys to be victimized primarily due to sexual offences; and
- Senior women had higher rates of violent victimization by a family member (41 per cent) compared to senior men (23 per cent) in 2009. Spouses and adult children are the most common perpetrators of family violence against senior women.

**ii) Sexual Assault**

- Across Canada in 2009, females were the most common victims of sexual assault representing 87 per cent of incidents.

**iii) Domestic and Spousal Homicide**

- Females continue to be more likely than males to be killed by a spouse or intimate partner. In 2009, females accounted for 71 per cent of victims of homicides by a current spouse, 88 per cent by a former spouse, and 78 per cent involving other intimate partners.

**b) What are the Impacts?**

Woman abuse is a serious societal problem. Women of any age group, racial and ethnic backgrounds, socioeconomic classes, religions, and sexual orientations may experience abuse. There are tremendous negative effects to the health and well being of women, children, families and entire communities. In fact, the economic costs of violence against women to victims and society involve costs to health, criminal justice, social services as well as lost productivity which range in the billions of dollars.

Recent research has highlighted the devastating effects that woman abuse may have on children and the importance of attachment in mitigating these effects. The impact on children is most concerning as it has longer term effects. Almost 40 per cent of women assaulted by spouses in 2004 said their children witnessed the violence against them (either directly or indirectly) and in many cases, the violence was severe. 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).

**2. Initiatives of the Region of Peel, Community Partners and Ontario Government**

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. Initiatives such as those being developed by the Peel Child and Youth Initiative and associated networks and organizations are a critical factor in addressing the irrefutable links between childhood trauma and violence in adolescence and adulthood. The work of the Region and its community partners, as well as that of the Ontario government, is included in Appendix II.

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As a result of the work staff have done with Peel Committee Against Women Abuse and Peel Committee on Sexual Assault, 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. The application of a gender specific lens accommodates 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.

Therefore, staff while always doing their best to consider multiple perspectives are applying a multi-focal lens approach as part of the broader Diversity and Inclusion Strategy. This will enable more inclusive strategy and policy development representative of all segments in our community.

**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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Commissioner of Health Services



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Commissioner of Human Services



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**Approved for Submission:**



D. Szwarc, Chief Administrative Officer

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c. Legislative Services

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APPENDIX I

# Proclamation

The International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women and National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women  
NOVEMBER 25, 2011 AND DECEMBER 6, 2011

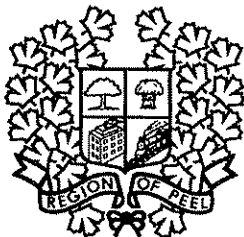
WHEREAS, in 1999 the United Nations declared November 25<sup>th</sup> as "The International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women" as a time to raise awareness about violence against women and its prevention activities that attempt to eliminate all forms of women abuse and recognize that 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, 2011 be proclaimed "THE INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN" and December 6, 2011 be proclaimed "NATIONAL DAY OF REMEMBRANCE AND ACTION ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN DAY" in the Regional Municipality of Peel.



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Emil Kolb  
Regional Chair

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## APPENDIX II

**Regional, Community and Provincial Initiatives****A. Regionally Lead or Funded Initiatives**

The Region of Peel 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 front line staff are engaged in, and the fact that they primarily deal with people who are at risk or are marginalized, they often come in contact with clients and children who are in volatile situations. Many times they include woman abuse or child abuse situations. Specific services and programs are listed below:

**i) Routine Universal Comprehensive Screening (RUCS)**

Public Health nurses have contact with young women and families through home visits, clinic visits, community programs and call centres. It was recognized that this presents an opportunity to ask women about abuse in their lives. All Family Health nurses receive RUCS training which provides the knowledge and training to screen female clients for physical, sexual, or emotional abuse and, once identified, offer support and refer to the appropriate community agency.

**ii) Family Abuse Prevention Website**

Regional staff have developed a website for members of the public and health care professionals on different types of abuse, facts, effects, as well as where and how to get help. Staff acknowledge the equally important issue of violence against men and intimate partner violence and are expanding the website to include information and resources specific to these issues.

**iii) Resources**

The Power and Control Wheel and Violence Affects Children posters, tear offs with the phone number for the Assaulted Women's Helpline and other resources are available for Peel Region Health Care Professionals and agencies.

**iv) Peel's Centralized Waiting List for Subsidized Housing**

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. 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.

**v) Second Stage Housing – Armagh House**

Armagh House is supportive second-stage housing (eight 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 woman 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 its 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.

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In January 2005, the Ministry of Community and Social Services implemented the Transition and Housing Support Program. 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. The Transition and Housing Support Program advocates work with the social housing sector, with the Region's Peel Access to Housing in the lead, and have developed a Local Referral Agreement that outlines the collaborative process for helping survivors of family violence to connect with community supports and find and maintain housing. Currently eight community agencies involved with the program are committed to this referral agreement for delivering of these services and resources within the Region of Peel.

**vii) Emergency Shelters**

The Region partners with three women's shelters (Interim Place 1 and 2, and the Family Life Resource Centre) which 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) and a family shelter (Peel Family Shelter). The Region also provides funding to the newly expanded 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.

**viii) 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.

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.

**ix) 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

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qualified to make appropriate referrals that assist women and children experiencing and/or fleeing violence.

**x) 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.

**xi) Families First**

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

**xii) 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.

**xiii) Family Justice and Child Advocacy Centre**

In October 2011, the Family Justice and Child Advocacy Centre will be opening in Brampton at 60 West Drive. The centre was developed by a 16 agency collaborative (led by Catholic Family Services of Peel Dufferin) dedicated to creating easier access to services for victims of violence and abuse by housing multiple services under one roof. This centre was supported by Peel Region through a capital loan for \$500,000.

**B. Community Collaborations**

Community agencies and collaboratives in Peel are actively working together towards prevention and support for violence against women.

**i) Peel Committee Against Woman Abuse (PCAWA)**

The 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. Example initiatives of the PCAWA include:

- 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; and
- 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.



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The PCSA is a program of Trillium Health Centre's Women's and Children's Health which brings together a broad group of individuals, agencies and service providers to work collaboratively to establish a comprehensive and effective community response to end sexual violence. Trillium Health Centre is also Peel's Regional Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Treatment Centre. Examples of initiatives of the PCSA include:

- The Region of Peel's Emergency Response Protocol which provides best practices and accountability for first responder agencies to sexual assaults;
- Co-leading a research proposal with Trillium Health Centre called "Interdisciplinary community-based primary healthcare and the impact of sexual assault on chronic illness in vulnerable and racialized women"; and
- Leading a round table discussion at the 11th International Women's Health Meeting (IWHM) this September 2011 in Belgium titled "Key Elements of a Framework for the Prevention of Sexual Assault in the Region of Peel in Canada".

**iii) Family Services of Peel**

Family Services of Peel provides intervention accessible within 24 hours of contact for free counselling and crisis intervention for women experiencing abuse. They also provide services for senior women who are currently experiencing or have experienced abuse. Programs are offered in conjunction with Distress Centre Peel, Peel Senior Link and Square One Older Adult Centre with funding from the United Way/ Ministry of Community and Social Services and Local Health Integrated Network. They recently launched drop in groups for women experiencing violence.

**C. Provincial Initiatives**

The Ontario government has implemented strategies and policies that aim to prevent and support the issue of violence against women.

**i) Ontario Sexual Violence Action Plan**

In March 2011, the Ontario government launched the "Sexual Violence Action Plan" to prevent sexual violence and improve support for survivors. The plan follows province-wide consultations with survivors, services providers, and experts. The Sexual Violence Action Plan includes \$15 million in funding toward educational, prevention, training and awareness programs and supports. There will also be new funds to develop programs and services to stop human trafficking. The Rape Crisis Centre of Peel will receive funds to work on this issue. Some of the highlights of the Action Plan include:

- Prevention of sexual violence, including initiatives which encompass the diversity of communities across the province;
- Supporting an international forum on sexual safety for women;
- Improving access and support to Ontario's 41 sexual assault care centres;
- Expanding language interpreter services; and
- Improving the criminal justice system's response to sexual violence through training a better coordination of efforts by police, crown counsel and other staff within the justice system.

**ii) Integrated Domestic Violence Court: Toronto Pilot**

In June 2011, the Ontario government announced the piloting of an Integrated Domestic Violence Court in Toronto: one family, one judge. This new approach will

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allow a family dealing with domestic violence to have both their criminal and family law cases heard by one judge, thus creating an easier, faster and more affordable system to navigate.

**iii) Bill 168: Violence and Harassment in the Workplace**

Bill 168, An Act to amend the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* (The "Act") with respect to violence and harassment in the workplace and other matters (2009), came into effect June 15, 2010. The amendment to the Act strengthens protection for workers from workplace violence and addresses workplace harassment. Bill 168 also requires employers to attend to domestic violence. Employers who are aware, or ought reasonably to be aware, that domestic violence may occur in the workplace must take every precaution reasonable in the circumstances to protect a worker at risk of physical injury.