

*CROSS-SECTORAL VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN STRATEGY GROUP
(CSVAWSG)*

EMERGENCY MEASURES AND BEYOND

IMMEDIATE AND LONG TERM RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHANGE

MARCH 2004

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The ***Cross-Sectoral Violence Against Women Strategy Group (CSVAWSG)*** is working towards the eradication of violence against women in Ontario. Broad social policy and program reform is essential in order for women to achieve the social, political and economic justice that will end the violence in their lives. We have brought representatives from all the relevant sectors, women's communities, and regions of Ontario together to collectively develop a long term approach to addressing the issue of violence against women.

In the fall of 2000 the Liberal opposition party was vocal and passionate in its support of the Cross-Sectoral Violence Against Women Strategy Group's Emergency Measures document. Dalton McGuinty officially signed the Declaration of Commitment, shown below, and we now demand the government take action to move forward on these recommendations.

Tom --- The Image would go here

Here are our recommendations:

The Violence Against Women Sector

Emergency Services

- ✿ Allocate \$15 million in annualized funds to independent community-based women's shelters, including those not currently funded by the MCSS. Immediate core/base funding increase for emergency women's shelters in Ontario for all operational programs such as shelter operations, outreach, Transitional Support Program, counselling and prevention programs, crisis lines, administration, transportation dollars etc.
- ✿ Allocate funding to those communities where there is a documented urgent need for additional shelter beds. Increase VAW shelter beds to recognize that many women are homeless due to the violence they have experienced.
- ✿ Provide core funding for the province-wide Assaulted Women's Helpline. Currently the provincial helpline is in its third year of a 5 year pilot funding. The critical demand and usage of this service requires ongoing operational core funding
- ✿ Implement an immediate review of shelter funding as recommended in the Arlene May Inquest Report and as per recommendation number 38 of the Gillian Hadley Inquest Report, (Hadley Inquest Jury Recommendations, Ontario Women's Justice Network, February 20, 2002 and Arlene May Coroner's Inquest, Jury's Verdict and Recommendations, Ontario Women's Justice Network, July 1998)

- ✳ Allocate \$3,360,000.00 in annualized funds to Second Stage Housing Programs via Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services. Second stage housing is needed as a critical bridge to safety for those women and their children who return to abusive situations because no housing options existed for them.
- ✳ Reinstate the 5% cut to rape crisis centre funding and make provision for annualized increases in core funding to these agencies
- ✳ Fund one community outreach worker per rape crisis centre
- ✳ Fund advocates and counsellors within rape crisis centres to provide support and help navigating complaint processes for women who are sexually harassed in the workplace
- ✳ Transfer money from the Victims' Justice Fund to independent, community-based women's programs that provide services for abused women
- ✳ Eliminate the gender neutral premise of the existing Supervised Access Programs and replace it with a mandate that acknowledges the dynamics of violence against women by male partners
- ✳ Repay shelters and rape crisis centres for Pay Equity disbursements taken from operational budgets from 1998-2003

Community & Neighbourhood Supports

- ✳ Grant funding for women's neighbourhood & advocacy groups – Toronto Women's Network
- ✳ Reinstate funding to Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses (OAITH)

- ✱ Funding to province-wide women's anti-violence advocacy groups like the Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres (OCRCC)
- ✱ Stable funding support to Women's Centre – i.e. North York Women's Centre
- ✱ Stable funding should be made available to settlement services, ethno-specific agencies, and immigrant women's centres and services, i.e. South Asian Women's Centre in Toronto and Immigrant Women's Services Ottawa.

Legal Reforms and Services

- ✱ Increase family legal aid to cover all matters relevant to separation and divorce, including supports such as language interpretation, etc. for abused women dealing with Family Court matters. Duty Counsel is not an appropriate service for provision of legal representation in family law matters involving violence against women.
- ✱ Provide funding at the level needed for cultural, deaf and American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation in Family Court as per the current provisions for criminal and immigration courts
- ✱ Extend Legal Aid coverage for abused women to include divorce and all property matters
- ✱ Provide Legal Aid to women who are victim witnesses in criminal cases, enabling them to obtain independent legal counsel
- ✱ Provide Legal Aid funding or legal representation to women filing complaints about harassment in the workplace to Ontario Human Rights Commission and other avenues of redress

Criminal Law Reforms

- ✿ Ensure that Risk Assessments are conducted, and the offender's previous history of violence must be completed and on file, before first bail hearings for abusers
- ✿ We support the following recommendations related to issues of bail as per the Hadley Inquest Jury, (Hadley Inquest Jury Recommendations, Ontario Women's Justice Network, February 20, 2002; Sections 14-17):
 - We recommend that if complainant can show the court reasons why their safety is or would be in jeopardy, bail should be withheld.
 - We recommend that the accused who breaches any bail condition be held in custody until trial.
 - We recommend that the Ministry of the Attorney General conduct a review of the surety system with a view to making improvements that would provide for the safety of women and children in domestic violence cases and create consequences for sureties who fail to comply with supervision responsibilities.
 - We recommend that the Ministry of the Attorney General develop a brochure, to be distributed in court, outlining the role and responsibilities of a surety.
- ✿ We support the recommendation as per the Arlene May - Coroner's Inquest, which states : Crown Attomeys should be requesting consideration of Section 7 and Section 15 Charter Rights - the right to life, liberty and personal security as well as equality rights in cases of domestic violence, in addition to the rights of the accused before determining orders of bail release, bail conditions or any other court order. (Arlene May Coroner's Inquest Jury's Verdict and Recommendations, Ontario Women's Justice Network, July 1998; Sections 14-17).

- ✿ Mandatory training of judges in the dynamics of woman abuse by women advocates

Family Law Reforms

- ✿ Implement a policy of no use of mediation where there is evidence of past or present abuse. There can be no negative judicial inference when women decline mediation due to safety concerns
- ✿ Increase the availability of supervised access exchanges to ensure they are available to all women who have safety concerns. Improve supervised access so that fathers and children can have safe, meaningful visits with supervisors that are appropriately trained and consistent in their practices
- ✿ Implement the family law recommendations of the Arlene May Inquest ([Arlene May Coroner's Inquest Jury's Verdict and Recommendations](#), Ontario Women's Justice Network, July 1998)
- ✿ Implement a mechanism to track the impact of new child welfare legislation and practices on abused women and child witnesses of violence and conduct an evaluation of the new legislation and ensuing practices, using an integrated feminist analysis

Information in this section references the document: [Emergency Measures for Women and Children In the Fall 2000 Legislative Session](#), written by Pam Cross, Punam Khosla, and Beth Jordan.

Women with Disabilities and Deaf Women

- ✦ Include American Sign Language (ASL) Interpreters and Deaf interpreters in the provincially funded Cultural Interpreter Program as they are providing a needed service and, under the “duty to accommodate” as per the Eldridge Decision are mandated to respond to emergency related calls from woman abuse services for persons who are Deaf. This includes responding to emergency interpretation requests on behalf of Deaf women fleeing violence and abuse. (Policy & Guidelines on Disability & The Duty to Accommodate, Ontario Human Rights Commission, November 23, 2000).
- ✦ **All staff working in any disability related government sponsored program should receive extensive training on issues related to violence against women given the prevalence and incidence among women living with disabilities and Deaf women.** This should include interministerial training both at the provincial level and for municipal service providers. Training would increase awareness and disseminate relevant information relating to violence and abuse to the following groups: women with disabilities/Deaf women, family members, women and disability/Deaf organizations, private and public caregiver agencies, law enforcement and justice departments, medical and counselling professionals and agencies, and all levels of government services departments.
- ✦ **Housing priorities for women fleeing violence/abuse should include the provision of priority housing for women with disabilities or who have children with disabilities, especially when the women are not able to access shelters in their community.** Currently, accessible, affordable housing is extremely limited and women can wait 5 – 10 years on waiting lists to get an accessible apartment. Fleeing from the abusive situation and finding a safe, accessible place is often not an option for women living with disabilities and/or for women who have children living with disabilities. Women with disabilities who require attendant services may remain in the relationship where the abuser is her

primary caregiver for fear of being institutionalized or for fear of having to move out of her community to a location where more services cannot be accessed, leaving her without her existing social supports.

- ✿ **Provide increased provincial funding for Nurturing Assistants for women with disabilities who have children.** Oftentimes, women with disabilities will stay with the abusive partner if the partner is the primary caregiver of her children. Women with disabilities who have children should have priority status to receive this support so that they can leave and establish themselves and their children in a safe place without worrying about their children being removed from their care.
- ✿ **Disability organizations that administer funds for individualized attendant services must work together with provincial funding programs to advocate for and to promote funding agreements, which will allow women with disabilities and their families to make their own choices and allow for additional hours. (Direct Individualized Funding Agreements and Self Managed Care.)** Collaboration between VAW services and disability organizations are key in order to place more pressure on government to respond. Currently, in Ontario, someone who receives individualized funding for attendant services receives up to 6 hours per day. If a woman requires more hours than what is currently provided through the Direct Funding Agreement, it is possible that her abuser may be providing attendant services in addition to those hours covered by Individualized Funding. Should she decide to leave and go to a shelter or safe place, those hours are portable, however it will be difficult to get supports in place that address additional care needs. Currently these policies restrict a woman's ability to leave if she is dependent upon others for her care.
- ✿ While not currently a provision under the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, **provincially funded VAW agencies that want to actively work toward enhancing their programs response to women with disabilities and Deaf women through the removal of barriers, should be fast-tracked through provincial granting programs.** They should receive funding upon completing an accessibility plan, which outlines how the agency will address the removal of barriers as well as be given support in meeting realistic timelines through collaboration with disability/Deaf organizations that can give guidance in removing barriers. The removal of barriers goes beyond physical barriers, but also refers to

barriers created by policies and procedures which could result in the exclusion or limited participation of women with disabilities using their services.

- ✱ **Funding levels to income support programs need to be increased to ensure that women leaving abusive relationships can maintain her independence in the community. All provincial and federal income support programs for people with disabilities must reflect indexed cost of living amounts. Financial assistance must not be linked to spousal income. Employment earnings must not negatively affect access to income support. Medical coverage must be separated from income supports.** Given that many women with disabilities experience high rates of unemployment or underemployment, we know current income supports are not sufficient to allow women with disabilities the financial stability and independence they need to remove themselves from abusive situations.
- ✱ **Provincial and municipal governments must fund and publicize emergency accessible 24 hour transportation services for women with disabilities who are victims of abuse.** Existing accessible transportation services are available and can be utilized with little or no additional cost if provisions are made to provide training and to implement a system to respond to emergency calls.
- ✱ **Finally, municipal and provincial governments need to provide shelter and second stage housing for women with disabilities who are not able to access shelters in their community or are not able to receive priority housing in their community.** Requests for Proposals should be developed for the building of accessible shelters/second stage housing which includes the provision of the range of services needed to respond to the needs of women who reside there. This would be considered an interim measure until all the shelters and second stage housing units across Ontario are fully accessible. This is in response to the Hadley Inquest where it was revealed that Gillian Hadley had not been able to go to the closest shelter in her community, which was inaccessible as she did not want to leave without her son who had a physical disability. (Hadley Inquest Jury Recommendations, Ontario Women's Justice Network, February 20, 2002).

This section was written by Fran Odette of the Women with Disabilities and Deaf women's program at Education Wife Assault, 2004.

Aboriginal Women

- ✦ Increase funding to Aboriginal Women's Shelters, to provide culturally appropriate services for Aboriginal women and their children (for example Beendigen and Minwashin Lodge) and fund "safe houses" on reserves, which don't have women's shelters
- ✦ Increase advocacy services for abused women in Aboriginal Women's Centres
- ✦ Increase support services for Aboriginal Women in all communities, including services in aboriginal languages
- ✦ Provide adequate, affordable housing (on and off reserve)
- ✦ Decrease CAS intervention. Specifically take measures to stop the rise in incidents where children are being made wards of the court due to changes in the Child and Family Services Act
- ✦ Increase representation of Aboriginal women in government and decision-making positions.
- ✦ Implement Aboriginal Language services where required

This section was written by Debbie Ball of Faye Peterson House Thunder Bay.

Immigrant, Refugee Women & Women of Colour

- ✿ Prioritize funding for community-based services and supports for immigrant women’s centres and services. Provincial VAW funding* should also be made available to settlement services and ethno-specific agencies, because:
 - The first point of entry to the service sector for immigrant, refugee and women of colour who are victims of abuse or war and trauma is most often an immigrant women service and/or a settlement service in the community. While some immigrant women’s agencies received funding to provide the required service, it is inadequate, and as a result some of the agencies are forced to spend a considerable amount of their time engaging in fundraising activities. At the same time, funding for settlement services is extremely narrowly focused and thus they are not mandated to serve abused women and their children.


* It is important that any organization eligible to receive VAW funding must adhere to the Preamble to the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women’s understanding and analysis. Here it purports that the vast majority of perpetrators of violence against women are men. It states that “violence against women is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women. Violence is part of a historical process and is not natural or born of biological determinism. The system of male dominance has historical roots and its functions and manifestations change over time.” (Preliminary report submitted by the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, United Nations 22 November 1994). In this context then, violence against women is an issue of power and control and arises from the oppression of women and is related to the “socialization of individuals, and the nature of economic and social exploitation.” (Preliminary report submitted by the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, United Nations 22 November 1994). In addition the power relations analysis understands how the experience of violence is compounded when other marginalized statuses, such as race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, income, single motherhood, disability, etc., intersect.

- Some immigrant women services are struggling to address the needs of children who witness violence in the home. While there is a strong emphasis on service to women, a more coordinated approach should be adopted to ensure immigrant and refugee children are not falling through the cracks. Failure to address the needs of these children could pose serious consequences for the future.
- ✱ **Fund Violence Against Women (VAW) training for Settlement workers and other programs serving immigrants, such as LINC language programs.** Funding should be provided to Immigrant Settlement agencies to allow them to utilize the services of trained cultural interpreters from agencies in the community, – a program financially supported by the Ministry of Citizenship
- ✱ **Criteria to receive provincial funding for VAW services should include the provision of culturally sensitive and multi-lingual information** about Canadian laws and human rights – including Immigration, Family, and Criminal Law, for both men and women.
- ✱ **Provide funding for culturally accessible and multi-lingual information about VAW services, agencies, programs, and legal aid clinics specifically developed to address woman abuse.** A lack of access to this information often keeps Immigrant Women in abusive relationships. Common fears resulting from lack of knowledge, interfaced with systemic discrimination include:
 - Immigrant women often fear jeopardizing their Canadian immigration status due to a sponsor relationship with their abuser. In addition, women often stay in abusive situations as they await the sponsorship of their parents or other family members
 - Due to systemic discrimination in employment and multiple barriers to accessing education and training for immigrant women, they have a strong and realist fear that they will not be capable to provide for their children and that they will lose them if abuse is reported

- Immigrant and refugee women fear being ostracized from their ethnic community and family. Sometimes they also worry about causing the family shame. This means that a women who discloses abuse or leaves an abusive relationship, risks losing the only support systems she may have in Canada
 - Immigrant women are often hesitant to seek help within the justice system due to strong fear, distrust and lack of confidence in police. In many countries the police represent an oppressive force and therefore would not be a service that would help women leave abusive situations. In addition, racism in policing is a well-documented phenomena in Canada, thus decreasing the likelihood that women of colour will contact the police for help.
- ✳ **Funding should be available for the dissemination of this information through multi-lingual hotlines, the settlement.org website and through immigrant services and ethno-specific organizations.**
- ✳ **Agencies receiving VAW funding need to provide culturally sensitive programs for immigrant, refugee women and women of colour. For example: health and social service providers should be required to participate in mandatory training which include information about woman abuse and the experience of immigrant women.** Culturally sensitive and appropriate services, are services that understand the key challenges that keep immigrant women isolated and dependent on their abusive partner.

These include:

- Immigrant and refugee women experience an increased dependency on their male partners because of isolation or lack of familiarity with Canadian society, i.e. the transportation systems, health and social services, etc.
- Experiences of prejudice, systemic discrimination, and/or racism when interacting with various institutions
- Lack of ability to communicate in either English or French
- Challenges with transportation and commuting; lack of access to fare money and fear of using public transit; lack of knowledge about the city's geography, no driver's license, etc.
- Difficulties living within a shelter environment (e.g., differences in food, cultural differences amongst other residents and staff)
- Disclosure often happens in informal circles. Culturally sensitive programs respect women in their own communities and seek out informal networks, i.e. faith communities.

 **The province should work collaboratively with federal departments such as Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) who are mandated to serve immigrants and refugees, in the development of funding programs that meet the needs of immigrant, refugee women and women of colour who are victims of violence.**

This section was written by Lucya Spencer (Immigrant Women's Services Ottawa), Doris Rajan (Cross-Sectoral Violence Against Women Strategy Group), with the input of Sangeeta Subramanian (South Asian Women's Centre).

Francophone Women

The Ontario Francophone Women's Community is made up of women born and raised in Ontario, women from other provinces of Canada, immigrant and refugee women, women of colour, lesbians, women with disabilities, marginalized women, rural and urban women, and women from the North of Ontario.

Francophone women who experience violence in their lives have the same service needs as other Ontario women, and support common demands, including:

- ✳ Recognition of specific needs of women in all their diversity
- ✳ Social assistance and income security
- ✳ Access to safe affordable housing and second stage housing
- ✳ Redress mechanisms for sexual harassment in the workplace
- ✳ Reforms of the justice system
- ✳ Childcare

Access to French services is a problem in many communities despite the existence of the French Language Services Act and the rights established and recognized by superior courts.

Francophone women of Ontario demand from the government of Ontario:

- A catch-up initiative for lost access to French language services , according to an inter-ministerial strategic plan jointly developed with women's organizations who work in the areas of sexual assault and violence against women and which envisages the creation of new autonomous French services.
- An immediate budget increase for the regional crisis lines, adequate to insure 24 hour staffing and to cover salaries for all workers engaged in outreach, supervision, training and promotion.
- Immediate budget increase for French services in the North-West, increased funding for services to immigrant and refugee women and for the opening of a sexual assault centre in Prescott-Russell.
- The recognition of the specific needs of the community of Francophone women in consultations, communications, access to programs and recognition of their capacity to manage resources provided to them.

This section was written by Ghislaine Sirois, coordonnatrice provinciale, Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes.

Rural Women

- ✿ Restore the 21% cut to social assistance and increase to social assistance to meet standard of living cut in 1995
- ✿ Improve access to legal representation as per Gillian Hadley Inquest report numbers 19, 20 and 21. – develop an expedited court procedure for the screening and processing of family law court cases where either child abuse or exposure to violence occurs, amend the Children’s Law Reform Act “best interests of the child” test be amended to consider the impact of domestic violence on children when custody and access are being determined, coordination between criminal and family law systems etc., and training for judges re VAW , (Hadley Inquest Jury Recommendations, Ontario Women’s Justice Network, February 20, 2002).
- ✿ Rural women should have access to safe, flexible, accessible public and emergency transportation
- ✿ Access to 911 in all areas of Ontario and women in danger have access to use of a phone
- ✿ Improve access to affordable housing in rural communities and revise the current application process to make it user friendly and sensitive to women who are experiencing violence in their lives
- ✿ Improve access to health care services by increasing the number of Nurse Practitioners in rural communities and developing inclusive health facilities to incorporate health care services, day care, employment skills and mental health services in one location

This section was written by Debbie Ball of Faye Peterson
House Thunder Bay

Northern Women

The geographical and cultural features of the northern environment that abused women live in, impact their ability for them and their children to access the justice system and social service agencies. These features also impede the ability of northern justice systems and agencies to provide essential services in a confidential, safe and appropriate manner. Access to all services in the north require improvement. The following lists our specific recommendations :

- ✱ Improve access to the legal system by ensuring transportation and location of the proceedings for the victim are paid for, arranged and are safe
- ✱ Access to 911 in all areas of northern Ontario and ensure women in danger have access to a phone
- ✱ Improve access to affordable housing in northern communities and revise the current application process to make it respectful and user friendly
- ✱ Improve access to health care services by increasing the number of Nurse Practitioners in rural communities and developing inclusive health facilities to incorporate health care services, day care, employment skills and mental health services in one location
- ✱ Develop extensive outreach and transitional support programs for rural women which permits workers to travel in the northern regions
- ✱ Ensure judiciary who practice in the North are trained on the dynamics of Woman Abuse

The Anti-Poverty & Income Security Sector

- ✿ Implement an annual cost of living adjustment to welfare rates to take effect immediately.
- ✿ We support the Hadley recommendation 31 that states: We recommend that the Government of Ontario (Ministry of Community and Social Services) review the social assistance rates under the Ontario Works Act and create a mechanism to provide for the adjustment of said rates to reflect the actual needs of recipients as they may be affected by the social and economic environment for the particular geographic location where they reside, (Hadley Inquest Jury Recommendations, Ontario Women's Justice Network, February 20, 2002)
- ✿ Provide transition benefits, including health care, dental care, childcare, transportation, disability supports and cultural supports for women who are entering the job market after receiving social assistance
- ✿ Restore Steps to Employment (STEP) exemptions – many women are working poor and stay in abusive relationships because two incomes are necessary for survival
- ✿ Increase provincial funding for the provision of housing subsidies and the construction of affordable housing

- ✿ Provide realistic shelter allowances to abused women in receipt of government assistance
- ✿ Remove all “deemed” income claw backs for women receiving Ontario Works benefits, including National Child Benefits Supplements (NCBS), rent from children who have graduated from high school, child-support, leftover food from family members, etc.
- ✿ Remove the asset level restrictions that disqualify women and their families from receiving Ontario Works benefits when they find themselves in critical need. Forcing women to liquidate assets, such as RRSPs, RESPs, and putting liens on their homes, prevents them from breaking free from a reliance on income assistance. (Liens are particularly problematic for women who have recently left abusive relationships. Ex-partners are highly unlikely to sign off on property and acknowledge that the woman has gone to welfare. This often leads to numerous “fraud tips” being made against her, enabling him to replace physical abuse with systematic abuse and harassment)
- ✿ Replace the ineffective costly Ontario Works “Hot-line” with an effective “Help-line” that can direct recipients to the supports available to them including access to legal aid, childcare, disability supports, women’s help lines, and services that promote transition back to paid employment
- ✿ Make plain language resources, including information about Community Start-up Benefits available in welfare offices and provide streamlined application procedures to enable women to ‘get out’ with their families quickly
- ✿ Implement an annual cost of living adjustment to welfare rates, to take effect immediately

- ✳ Make referrals to a community legal clinic, via plain language letters, to all people denied a benefit or cut off welfare
- ✳ Drop the plan to penalize for “benefits stacking” and maintain current policies allowing women to access multiple Provincial services as they need them, such as social assistance and Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP)
- ✳ Implement a policy to abandon the practice of requiring and/or requesting that women disclosing violence seek child support or spousal support in order to qualify
- ✳ Repeal workfare for social assistance recipients disclosing violence against women, with the provisions and increased availability of effective job training and job seeking programs, the provision of supports for women to return to school, and voluntary participation in workfare

This section is based on the work of Jacqueline Thompson Executive Director LIFE*SPIN (Low Income Family Empowerment*Sole-support Parents Information Network) and from Emergency Measures for Women and Children In the Fall 2000 Legislative Session, written by Pam Cross, Punam Khosla, and Beth Jordan.

The Housing Sector

The Women's Housing Advocacy Group offers the following recommendations to the provincial government in recognition that women's homelessness and housing needs are imbedded within the context of poverty, social, racial and gender inequalities, and violence against women.

These recommendations have been developed in pursuit of women attaining appropriate, secure, and affordable housing that is based on the physical and social needs that distinguish them from men; i.e. as primary caregivers to all generations of family, women need housing that is within close proximity to social infrastructure (schools, hospitals, and community centres). High levels of violence against women occur both in public (strangers) and private (partner, acquaintance, landlord assault) yet the design of most city, neighbourhood, open public spaces and housing fails to address this issue.

We are asking for:

- ✿ Low rise, mixed income developments with design features that allow for maximum supervision of children from within units (such as those designed around green space and playgrounds) can prevent some of the problems associated with high density concentrations of low income families raising children
- ✿ Low rise and multiple bedroom units are required for extended family use, and fully accessible disabled units are required to integrate those with disabilities into the mainstream of our communities
- ✿ Close proximity to social infrastructure, as well as well-travelled, well-lit areas with public transit routes are all part of the design features that should be considered in addressing women's housing needs
- ✿ The internal design of houses needs to accommodate a range of households: disabled, single parent, elderly, three generation, several sharing adults, changes from one household into another

This means:

1. Flexible designs (large kitchens that can accommodate several people cooking, removable dividers to make extra bedrooms)
2. More stacked housing and fewer narrow detached houses with lots of stairs
3. Grants to make houses more accessible (grab bars in showers, wider doors) and to provide accessory units
4. Removing zoning (including parking requirement) and social housing regulations that restrict paid work within homes, and limit housing units to 'single families'
5. Allowing social housing units to have 'extra space' for women who do paid work in their homes

Making Housing More Affordable Through Design

In Toronto, small 'grow homes', which can be expanded over time, can be encouraged in suburbs, and also in more central 'brownfield' developments. Encouraging apartments over shops along main streets, is another source of affordable housing near public transit links.

This means:

1. Using government-owned land for innovative affordability schemes such as 'grow homes' projects, and setting aside a high proportion of these homes for women-led households
2. Encouraging women's participation in self-built housing projects through peer support (e.g., funding Women in Trades to train women to participate in Habitat for Humanity projects)

3. Using property tax abatements to encourage social housing and affordable housing schemes that combine commercial and residential uses along Main Streets

- ✱ Housing groups have advocated for the 1% Solution, i.e. that 1% of provincial government budgets be allocated to the development of new housing
- ✱ We require a long- term plan and clear commitment to increase affordable rental stock. The Golden Report provides a well-researched approach to Toronto housing needs and calls for collaboration between all levels of government in the development of a housing plan that includes the following over the next ten years:
 - 40,000 units of new affordable units with 25,000 rent supplements for non-profit units
 - 5,000 units of supportive housing
 - An increase in the Ontario Works shelter allowance to match average rents
- ✱ Concentrate scarce public resources to assist those with low or fixed incomes. This can be achieved through significant construction or purchase of existing stock for non-profit rental and co-operative housing together with rent supplements.
- ✱ Non-profit housing that accommodates vulnerable clients such as the recently homeless, women fleeing violence and those with mental health challenges should have access to funds to provide supportive services
 - To date, Provincial mental health reform has not integrated any consideration of community-based supportive housing, despite massive deinstitutionalization and clear research linking mental health issues with homelessness. The Golden Report identifies that mental illness and addictions are contributing factors in determining a person's vulnerability to homelessness.

For women, these issues are most frequently linked to a history of psychological trauma, such as childhood sexual abuse, violence in their intimate relationships, experience of gender persecution and rape in the context of emigration or civil war.

- ✿ The government needs to fund the network of supports that assist in sustaining Housing, i.e. hostels, drop-ins, women's counselling services, family support centers, parent relief programs, mental health services, addictions programs, childcare and employment and training programs, as well as settlement services for new immigrants, adult ESL classes, community health centres and legal clinics
- ✿ Support safe, affordable housing with individualized supports that are portable and involve choice on the part of the tenant. The development of new housing and the administration of all joint housing programs must include a flexible range of supportive housing supports available on site or from an external source. Housing proposals that:
 - Provide opportunities for tenants to develop their skills in management-related activities if they wish
 - Allow access to a co-ordinated eviction prevention program, that combines supports for conflict resolution and the prevention of rent arrears
 - Recognize the potential need for attendant care for women with disabilities
 - Develop culturally appropriate services, such as translation, interpreters
 - Recognition of the critical role of support services in the maintenance of housing should be reflected in the allotment of funds to provide support services for social assistance recipients

The following is a summary of the recommendations resulting from the Hadley inquest (Hadley Inquest Jury Recommendations, Ontario Women's Justice Network, February 20, 2002) with respect to housing. They remain relevant:

Rational for recommendations 23-30: The prevention of a reoccurrence of domestic violence generally involves keeping the accused away from the complainant. While it is unfair that the complainant should have to move in order to achieve this separation, it is often the only practical way. It is important that there be suitable safe temporary accommodation immediately available as well as long term assistance in the form of subsidized housing. The present long wait for subsidized housing is unacceptable.

23. We recommend that the Government of Ontario and the Government of Canada immediately provide new funding for developing additional permanent subsidized housing units and "second stage" subsidized housing units (i.e. medium-term housing with supportive counseling and advocacy services) sufficient to meet the current and forecast needs for subsidized housing in each community in Ontario.
24. We recommend that the Government of Ontario and the Government of Canada ensure that an adequate number of the subsidized housing units be equipped to accommodate applicants, and/or their children, with disabilities.

25. We recommend that the Government of Ontario and the Government of Canada consult with municipalities of Ontario to devise changes in laws or policies that could facilitate the development of additional subsidized housing units -- e.g. taxation deductions, funding incentives, etc.

26. We recommend that the Government of Ontario (Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing) consult immediately with representatives of subsidized housing applicants/occupants, subsidized housing providers, coordinated housing access centers, community service counselling agencies and other professionals with appropriate knowledge of domestic violence issues, to determine whether the “90 days from separation” eligibility requirement for the Special Priority Housing Category (“abuse priority category”) should be amended or abolished. Such consultations should give regard to, among other things, the most current data on the time period of the risk of violence following the date of separation from an abuser, as well as the existing and forecast supply of subsidized housing units. This issue should be reviewed periodically to ensure that at all times it accurately reflects the current data and circumstances.

27. We recommend that the Government of Ontario (Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing) require Service Managers to ensure that all housing providers and coordinated housing access centers maintain a transparent complaint process for subsidized housing applicants, and provide to all applicants at the time of initial contact a written copy of the complaint process, similar to the letter describing the right of appeal that is currently provided to applicants by Housing Access Centre (Durham Region).

28. We recommend that the Government of Ontario (Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing) conduct, or ensure that the Service Managers under the Social Housing Reform Act and regulations (also known as Bill 128) conduct periodic and/or random operational audits of providers of subsidized housing and coordinated access centers in Ontario with a view to ensuring that they are administering the abuse priority criteria in accordance with the legal requirements.

29. We recommend that the Government of Ontario (Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing) create a committee or forum for representatives of subsidized housing applicant/occupants, Service Managers, housing providers and coordinated housing access centers to discuss issues relating to the provision of subsidized housing across Ontario. The Government of Ontario should use the information obtained through such discussions for the purpose of considering amendments to the Social Housing Reform Act and regulations on an ongoing basis. Such changes of law and policy must be communicated promptly and clearly to all organizations who are involved in these services.

30. We recommend that in addition to the education and training currently provided to them by coordinated housing access centers such as Housing Access Centres (Durham Region), and “third party” organizations (e.g. Victim Witness Assistance Program) should immediately, and on an ongoing basis, ensure that all of their case workers and counselors know and understand the criteria which must be verified for an individual to qualify for the abuse priority category for subsidized housing.

This section was written by Amanda Dale of the YWCA – Toronto and the Women’s Housing Advocacy Group.

Labour & Workplace Sector

- ✿ Occupational Health and Safety Act regulations define the issue of violence in the workplace as a clear hazard which results in injury of workers. The Ministry must provide for an interpretation of the Act to permit workers to exercise their right to refuse in potentially violent situations. The Ministry must develop regulation and training for workplace safety audits dealing with the issue of violence. Where a potential hazard is identified, the employer must take measures to eliminate the hazard.
- ✿ Employment Standards Act provisions that include job protection for 6 weeks of compassionate leave. Expand the definition of this leave to cover leave for abused women to go to court, find new housing, child care, and for healing time
- ✿ Employment Standards Act; Human Rights Code; and Occupational Health and Safety Act provisions that guarantee the right to workplace accommodation for abused women such as leaves for abused women to go to court, find new housing, child care and heal. In addition, the right to alternative work – such as change in start/finish time – and transfer to different work location
- ✿ Workplace Safety and Insurance Board policy on compensation for chronic stress is too restrictive. The policy must be expanded to cover workers who experience harassment, verbal and emotional abuse
- ✿ Fund Pay Equity – 1% adjustment to all proxy agencies to ensure the survival of women's agencies and services as they meet their legal pay equity obligations

This section was developed by Carrol-Anne Sceviour (Ontario Federation of Labour), Denise Brown (Canadian Auto Workers), and Miriam Edelson (Ontario Public Service Employees Union). Some points from Emergency Measures for Women and Children In the Fall 2000 Legislative Session, written by Pam Cross, Punam Khosla, and Beth Jordan.

The Childcare Sector

The CSVASWG supports the Ontario Coalition for Better Childcare's (OCBCC) recommendations for the 2004 Ontario budget (Please see Making the right choice: Investing in high quality early learning and child care in Ontario. A Submission to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, Government of Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care, February 2004.)

- ✦ **First, the Ontario government must keep its election promise to implement a universal, high quality, regulated, seamless system of ELC and develop a strategy for meeting this commitment.** Ontario's new child care strategy would commit government to providing high quality ELC programs to all children regardless of ability, economic, cultural, linguistic and regional circumstances or their parents' work status.

- ✦ **Second, we call upon the Ontario government to develop the following policy framework and action plan for implementation to begin to put this system in place. The plan should be ready for implementation one year from now – April 1, 2005.**

The starting point for this process would be the long-term goal as above, but a specific action plan and an effective policy framework are critical for success.

The policy framework should include the following components:

- principles;
- new legislation;
- timetables establishing service targets and plans for meeting them
- improved quality standards and strategies for meeting them;
- definitions of roles and responsibilities for management and funding of ELC;
- plans for accountability including effective tools for monitoring;
- plans for adequate funding.

The action plan should include, but not be limited to, the following components:

- Addressing current service and resource fragmentation by working towards a seamless ELC system. This process would use knowledge of best ELC practices, such as the *Toronto First Duty* pilot project, and would make the best use of existing provincial funds for regulated childcare and kindergarten together with new funds. Included in this would be a plan to bring the existing Early Years Centres under the administration of municipal governments
- Developing plans for making available services financially accessible to parents. These plans will take into account the long-term goal of universal access and that the existing system of fee subsidies for eligible families is outdated, ineffective and stigmatizing
- Bringing the provincial regulatory and pedagogical regime into line with the best available knowledge about quality in ELC. This would include developing clear plans for ongoing quality improvement including quality targets, increasing qualifications for ELC staff and developing a province-wide curriculum that considers the whole child

- Raising ELC training requirements to at least two years of post-secondary training and annual in-service training for all ELC staff and have plans for achieving these goals including increasing capacities at community colleges. Make both training and financial support available for Early Childhood Educators as they work to meet these new requirements
- Setting targets for improving ELC wages. This would take into consideration existing wage levels (including addressing the issue of increasing wage gaps in the proxy pay equity sector), the need to ensure funding for retroactive payments to child care programs that continued to honour pay equity commitments when funds were cut by the previous government and region
- Developing a provincial plan for collecting and analyzing ELC data and a long-term research and evaluation agenda. This would be supported by sustained annual investment and would include research on key policy goals and ongoing evaluation of policy initiatives and effectiveness of resource allocation. It would involve multiple disciplines and methodologies
- Re-establishing a Child Care Branch within the Ministry of Children's Services. This entity would be charged with a) putting the vision and public policy framework into action; b) co-ordinating strategies with other departments (particularly the Ministry of Education), jurisdictions and sectors; c) developing and maintaining strong ties with the community and experts to facilitate knowledge sharing; d) determining resource and research needs; and e) ensuring public accountability.

✿ **Third, the Ontario government must play a leadership role with the federal government and the other provinces and territories to move towards a national child care program.**

✿ **Fourth, the Ontario Government must take the following actions as immediate crisis control:**

1. Funding actions

- Designate 3/4 of the \$192 million federal dollars earmarked for early childhood development programs from the 2004-2005 ECDI to regulated not-for-profit child care
- In addition, replace the \$160 million cut from the annual provincial budget for regulated child care between 1995 and 2001 by the previous Tory government. These funds - \$144 million dollars from the federal government through the ECDI, \$30 million from the federal government through the Multilateral Framework agreement, and \$160 million new provincial dollars - will begin to stabilize current regulated, not-for-profit child care programs.

2. Policy actions

- Review the subsidy system and remove eligibility restrictions for student parents receiving OSAP, families with RRSPs and RESPs over \$5000 and parents looking for work

- Amend the education funding formula to ensure that space for existing and new child care programs in schools is available to not-for-profit groups at no charge
- Direct school boards to incorporate space for child care centres in every new school in the province. Fund wage enhancement grants (WEG) so that every person working in not-for-profit child care programs has a full WEG.

Making the right choice: Investing in high quality early learning and child care in Ontario. A Submission to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, Government of Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care, February 2004.)

The Health Sector

The Ontario Women's Health Network (OWHN) recognizes that violence against women can only be reduced through the use of a broader definition of health, which focuses on the socio-environmental determinants of health. While much of the work on health and violence against women to-date has focused specifically on the traditional health care system, the OWHN stresses the need to expand this focus and direct funding to support community-based health and social services. Here are our recommendations:

- ✱ Violence against women needs to be acknowledged as an urgent public health concern and that a public health approach be adopted to ensure that the complex social interventions required to end violence against women are implemented
- ✱ Community-based organizations that are providing VAW services should receive organizational health dollars to link violence and women's health. Establish interministerial cooperation, with Health as a key Ministry. As the effects of violence are far reaching, a model that involves all government ministries is critical for designing and implementing a comprehensive approach.
- ✱ More linkages should be supported within the health care system for addressing the issue of violence against women from a multi-disciplinary, cross-sectoral approach. Health care should participate in an integrated community response to violence against women and the provincial government should provide the funds and resources to ensure that this is supported.
- ✱ Ensure that all health programs and practices developed are designed to meet the diverse needs of all women in the community

- ✿ The provincial government should fund curriculum development to support the objective that violence against women and the appropriate structural understanding of the core causes, should be a mandatory component in medical and nursing school curriculum and continuing education for all health professionals
- ✿ That hospital accreditation standards include sensitivity to issue of violence against women
- ✿ That routine universal screening be adopted in all health care settings
- ✿ Provide funding for culturally accessible and multi-lingual VAW services that are based in the health care sector
- ✿ For the health care system to develop protocols that recognize the impact of violence against women on health care providers and professionals whether it is at the work-site or in their personal lives. Provide adequate funding to develop these protocols and the appropriate support services.

This section was written by Tekla Henderson, Provincial Director of the Ontario Women's Health Network.

Governmental Re-structuring of Women's Services

Make Victims Justice Fund (VJF) available to address needs of women for independent, community-based services and supports.

If the VJF is not going to be open to permanent initiatives outside the criminal justice system, then the VAW strategy of the government must ensure that there is sustainable funding designated to implement VAW reforms.

Government must ensure that all VAW initiatives, policy, legislation and programs stem from an equality-based, gender analysis of violence against women.

The lead within the government, therefore, should be within the Ontario Women's Directorate (OWD) and the OWD must ensure that other Ministries adhere to an equality-based analysis within VAW programs under their administration. In recent years, OWD has not assumed the role first envisioned for it of advocating within government on behalf of women in Ontario and this must change so that women's equality becomes a priority for the province on all issues of concern to women, including violence against women. OWD must become more than a "resource" to government or a "tool" to support and explain unpalatable government policies that have negative impacts on women in Ontario.

This section was written by Eileen Morrow, Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses.

When we know that ...

- ✿ **Women are economically insecure and face many barriers to employment, education, and training within the context of inadequate income supports available**
- ✿ **Women do not have the socio-environmental supports that they need to become economically secure such as affordable housing and childcare**
- ✿ **Women are staying in shelters longer because they cannot find a place to live. Despite two sets of provincial Coroner's Inquest recommendations that access to housing for women fleeing violence be improved, the opposite is in fact occurring. The "special priority" status definition for access to social housing has recently been broadened to include all forms of violence committed within any person's housing. In the absence of any increase in housing stock, this pits vulnerable groups against one another in a competition for basic needs and increases the likelihood of women returning to abuse, and quite possibly to their deaths (May/ Iles, 1998; Hadley, 2002).**
- ✿ **Women lack access to training and education particularly when they have low incomes. When they do find opportunities for upgrading, they most often have no one to care for their children while they attend training sessions or classes. Lack of subsidized childcare presents another barrier that prevents women from building new, independent lives free of violence (Please see [Choose to Change This](#), OAITH November 2003, attached).**

- ✿ **Women lack access to the healthcare services and information that they need and these services are not yet sensitive to the issues of abused women**
- ✿ **Women experience workplace violence as: harassment, including physical/verbal/emotional attacks. They experience domestic violence in the workplace. In all its forms, workplace violence is on the increase. Workplace violence has many causes. Government funding cuts to services and downsizing, together with corporate greed for maximum profits, creates workplaces where workers are over-stressed. Women are often more at risk due to their location as front-line workers – receptionists, social workers, service providers, nurses, and teachers. Women workers are often the first point of contact for clients, patients or students that are angry and dissatisfied. Additionally, abused women are often working women. Women living in violent homes often carry the impact of violence to the workplace in the form of stress, absenteeism and job performance problems. Domestic violence can interfere with a woman's ability to obtain, perform or keep a job. Stalking, threats and violence follow them to work. The workplace can be the site of threats and assaults, - or of effective interventions that save lives. No women should have to fear losing her job because of domestic violence and/or workplace harassment.**
- ✿ **Women have a constitutional right to fair and equal treatment under the law, that cannot be exercised if they have limited access to legal representation. With the legal aid system in a funding crisis, supports for women fleeing abuse are increasingly inadequate.**
- ✿ **Women' protection through criminal law has been on hold for many years. The province has yet to implement the many, detailed recommendations of the Arlene May Coroner's Inquest Jury.**
- ✿ **Women's fear for the safety of their children and fear that it will be compromised is one of the most salient concerns of abused women. Abusers have successfully manipulated the Family Court system in order to maintain their control over the family.**

- ✿ **Women are afraid to report abuse for fear of possible apprehension of their children**
- ✿ **Women who are immigrants, refugees, and/or women of colour in our communities are at high risk of violence, because of the multiple and overlapping ways sexism, racism and socio-economic factors impact their lives. Many immigrant, refugee and women of colour face added oppression due to disabilities, sexuality, etc. Furthermore, immigrant, refugee and women of colour experience difficulties accessing information and support services to help [them] heal from violence. (Changing The Landscape - A Training Manual To Improve Services For Immigrant And Visible Minority Women Who Are Victims Of Violence. Meyer & Estable, Immigrant and Visible Minority Women Against Abuse. March 8, 2001).**
- ✿ **Women who live in rural areas experience isolation and limited access to the justice system and social service agencies due to the geographical and cultural features of their environment. These features also impede the ability of justice systems and support agencies to provide essential services to abused women in a confidential, safe and appropriate manner. Rural women also deal with small town allegiances that make it difficult to report violence against them, and which make it difficult to maintain their confidentiality.**
- ✿ **Women with disabilities experience the highest rate of personal violence – whether at the hands of spouses, partners, boyfriends, family members, caregivers, and strangers – of any group in our society today. Yet they experience multiple barriers to accessing the justice system, and find community services such as violence against women and sexual violence programs inadequately prepared to fully understand and meet their needs. They face disability services and disability support systems that don't clearly understand and effectively respond to the violence, and are all too commonly devalued and unsupported because of societal prejudice.**

- ✿ **Women who have no economic supports have no way of fleeing violent situations. Financial solvency is central to women's safety. Most women leaving abusive situations need adequate welfare and other social supports to re-build their lives and the lives of their children.**
- ✿ **Women's decision to remain in or return to abusive relationships is influenced by: inadequate social assistance rates, and an ability to find adequate housing. There are long waits for subsidized housing and many women cannot afford market rental housing. The freeze on welfare rates makes it more and more difficult for women who are forced to go on welfare to survive. When they leave, they are finding it very difficult to survive; and women are driven to take drastic survival measures such as: eating less, using food banks, using shelter for food and clothing, going without medical and dental care, and giving children to the abuser. (Please see attached Report on Shelter Study in Choose to Change This, OAITH November 2003).**
- ✿ **Women who are younger or older experience multiple exclusions to accessing social and economic supports due to the specific barriers that exist for their community. Younger women experience much higher rates of violence than other groups of women – for example they are the victims of spousal homicide in greater numbers. Senior women are victimized more often by fraud, are abused by their children, purse snatchings, and are often very hesitant to report violence against them.**
- ✿ **Women who are lesbians, bisexuals and transgendered do not have services that are knowledgeable about their reality, and they face legal responses that are discriminatory**
- ✿ **Women living in the north experience many barriers to accessing information and services and are thus further isolated**
- ✿ **Women do not just belong to one of these identities, but they have multiple identities and thus experience multiple barriers**

What is CSVAWSG?

- CSVAWSG represents a wide variety of local and provincial women's groups who have come together to develop a response to the issue of violence against women, one that identifies the priorities for all the key sectors involved with the issue.
- The CSVAWSG has a province-wide scope and mandate and includes representation from three key areas: **regional** representation; representation from all **key sectors** concerned with violence against women; and **specific women's communities** experiencing multiple barriers to inclusion, (i.e. immigrant women and women with disabilities).
- We aim to work towards social, political and economic justice for all women through broad social policy and systemic change.
- Our mandate is to develop and present a comprehensive approach to addressing the issue of violence against women, carefully considering the root causes and examining the issues in all their layers of complexity. The best ways to realize a comprehensive strategy of this nature is to bring all sectors together who are concerned with violence against women, and thus with women's equality issues. Collectively we will continue to develop a long term approach that synthesizes the key priorities of all the relevant sectors, working towards the development of a consistent approach that addresses the root causes of violence against women.

What has CSVAWSG done so far?

- A cross-section of women's groups came together in Fall 2000 in reaction to a rash of murders against women by their male partners
- A document called **Emergency Measures** was developed by the group. This document presented a provincial strategy outlining specific policy and program reforms that were aimed at protecting women from violence. The Emergency Measures document asked policy makers to think more strategically beyond women's services.
- The central theme of CSVAWSG is that a provincial strategy needs to refocus VAW policy, funding and resources in a more holistic, cross sectoral approach that recognizes the need for social and economic supports for women and women's services
- It also emphasizes that the law and order response that was pursued and supported by the past Conservative provincial government does not work
- The campaign of 2000, brought groups together to support and push for the recommendations outlined in the Emergency Measures document. A lobby was conducted launching the CSVAWSG campaign. All parties, with the exception of the ruling Conservative government, signed on to the principles of the document .
- Due to the success of this campaign, the group became formalized in March 2003

Reference Notes

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