

Culleton, Kuzyk & Warmerdam (CKW) Inquest Advocacy Toolkit

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CKW Inquest Advocacy Introduction

Background

On the morning of September 22, 2015, in rural Renfrew County, Carol Culleton, Anastasia Kuzyk and Nathalie Warmerdam were murdered by a man with whom each had had a past relationship. The perpetrator was arrested later that day and has been imprisoned ever since.

In 2019, the coroner's office announced that the province would hold an inquest into the murders. That inquest – the CKW inquest -- took place in June 2022. The five-person jury, after listening to three weeks of testimony and reviewing voluminous written exhibits, returned with a verdict that included 86 recommendations for change.

The recommendations

Of the 86 recommendations, 68 were directed at the provincial government across a range of topics: oversight and accountability; funding; education and training; measures addressing perpetrators of IPV; intervention and safety. Five recommendations related to gun control were directed to the Chief Firearms Officer; three about the Domestic Violence Death Review Committee (DVDRC) and one calling to have femicide added to the categories of causes of death were aimed at the Office of the Chief Coroner, and the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario was directed to support professionals in making informed decisions about privacy, confidentiality, and public safety. The federal government received five recommendations focused on changes to the *Criminal Code*, the timely implementation of the National Action Plan on Gender-Based Violence and Violence Against Women and the establishment of a royal commission to make the criminal system more victim-centric. Finally, the jury recommended that the inquest parties reconvene in one year's time to discuss the progress made in implementing the recommendations.

Why advocacy is needed

Inquest jury recommendations are non-binding, which means the government and other entities to which recommendations are directed have no legal obligation to implement them.

Since 2015, the year of the Renfrew County triple homicide, at least 273 women have been killed in acts of femicide. As the reports of the DVDRC tell us again and again, the vast majority of domestic homicides are both predictable and preventable. Implementation of the 86 recommendations produced by the jury in this most recent inquest would move us well along the right path to significantly reducing the number of women and children killed in this province.

We need to provide the leadership to ensure that these recommendations, which have the potential to save many lives, will be implemented.

What's in this toolkit

Luke's Place Support and Resource Centre for Women and Children has developed this toolkit to assist organizations that do not have the time or resources to develop their own advocacy strategy and tools. It reflects the priorities we have identified for ourselves, based on our organization's mandate, and is certainly not meant to limit or lead the thinking about what recommendations to focus on or what kinds of strategies to use.

The initial toolkit was produced quickly to support organizations and individuals wanting to get moving on advocacy efforts right away. We have updated and expanded the toolkit several times since then, as more work has been done and the political landscape has changed.

This edition was produced in the spring of 2024 and reflects work done by women's advocates and communities to advance implementation of key recommendations. We will do our best to continue to update the toolkit as further change comes about.

We welcome feedback, constructive criticism, and suggestions if you have any after looking through these materials. We also welcome contributions from anyone doing intersectional feminist advocacy related to implementation of the inquest recommendations, so please send any resources or tools that you have developed along to us, and we can add them to this resource: kathrynb@lukesplace.ca

Let's get those recommendations implemented!

CKW Inquest – Frequently Asked Questions

What's the CKW inquest?

On the morning of September 22, 2015, in rural Renfrew County, Carol Culleton, Anastasia Kuzyk and Nathalie Warmerdam were murdered by a man with whom each had had a past relationship. In June 2022, a coroner's inquest into the murders – the CKW inquest – was held in Pembroke Ontario. The five-person jury, after listening to three weeks of testimony and reviewing voluminous written exhibits, returned with a verdict that included 86 recommendations for change.

Is there a role for me as an individual?

Yes! Politicians listen and respond to the concerns of their constituents. To identify what kind of role you are best suited to play, ask yourself the following questions:

- Is there a particular reason I want to advocate for implementation of the recommendations?
- Does that mean I should focus on particular recommendations?
- Are there violence against women organizations in my community that may already have advocacy activities underway?
- Should we combine our efforts?
- Do I have friends, colleagues or family who would like to work on this with me?
- Are there any organizations in my community already engaged in this work? If so, how can I support their advocacy efforts?
- What skills do I already have that I can use? (eg writing or speaking skills, know MPP or other politicians, have lived experience related to any of the recommendations, etc.)
- What can I realistically do given my time and other commitments?

What can I do?

1. [Review the jury's recommendations](#)
2. Identify the recommendations that are most important or relevant to you.
3. Use our templates to assist you in writing letters about key recommendations.
4. Send a letter/email to the Prime Minister, Premier, Cabinet Minister and your local MP/MPP calling for implementation of all the recommendations or of those that are most important to you. Offer to meet with them to discuss your concerns/interests.
5. Consider bringing the recommendations to the attention of your municipal/regional mayor and municipal/regional councillors.

Where can I find more information?

- Check out the templates and other resources in this toolkit and adapt them as they are helpful to you
- Join our social media campaign

Tips for engaging effectively with decision makers

Identify the key decision makers

- Get to know the key players:
 - MPs, MPPs
 - Cabinet ministers
 - Political staff
 - Public servants
 - Deputy ministers
 - Opposition critics
 - Media
 - Other stakeholders
- Do your research to ensure you reach out to the right person for the issue at hand.
- Know the right place to reach them. For example, if you want to talk to your MP/MPP as a constituent, you need to make an appointment to see them in their constituency office. If you want to talk to them because they are a cabinet minister, then you need to make an appointment to see them in their government office.

Build relationships

- Develop a strategy for connecting with and building relationships with the key decision makers your organization has identified:
 - Find commonalities to personalize the relationship
 - Point out the mutual benefits of them supporting you/your cause
 - Ask them to make a personal introduction for you to anyone they think can further the cause
- Position yourself as an ally. Even if you know that the person does not support your organization's position, start by presenting yourself as though you see them as an ally. For example:

"We know you care about keeping women and children in our community/province safe. ..."
- Make sure you know the decision maker's track record on related issues

Engage decision makers

- Follow key decision makers on social media such as Twitter and, when appropriate, like and/or retweet their posts (this includes MPs, MPPs, their chiefs of staff and other key staff members)
- Provide positive feedback for good decisions or public statements the person makes, tying your praise to your organization's work/mandate. For example:

"I commend you for your recent public comments about the CKW inquest. As you stated, the rate of femicide in Ontario is far too high. Implementing the jury's recommendations would help to address this problem. We'd be happy to review key recommendations with you. ..."

- Prepare thoroughly for meetings with decision-makers:
 - Make sure you know the topic you wish to discuss thoroughly, so you can answer any questions the person may have for you
 - Send background materials to their staff person at least one week before the meeting
 - Be respectful of their limited time
 - Keep your presentation short so there is time for discussion
 - Be sure to end your meeting with the specifics of what you want
 - Follow up in writing to thank them for meeting with you, summarize what you discussed, provide anything you said you would, confirm your expectations of them, and put a timeline on when you hope to hear back
 - Be active on social media about your advocacy efforts and where appropriate tag decision makers directly affected
- Know when it is not worth your time to try to persuade someone to support your position
- Remember that government moves slowly: advocacy requires patience and follow-up

Social Media for Inquest Advocacy

The role of social media

Social media has become a daily activity for many of us. We use it every day to interact with family, friends and colleagues, to access news and to gather information. Organizations often use social media to promote their cause and garner support, as well as share resources.

Social media and inquest advocacy

- You will need to decide if you will be taking a supporting role by using/promoting social media content developed by others, taking a lead role by developing your own content, or both. This may depend on your role with the inquest, as well as your organizational capacity to engage in social media advocacy.

Tips for social media and inquest advocacy

- Know your audience – the audience for posting on social media about an inquest is unique. Research the key players involved in the inquest (media assigned to inquest, government officials affected by inquest recommendations/outcomes, experts who testified at the inquest, feminist law and policy reform organizations involved or following the inquest, etc.)
- Know what social media platforms to use – Twitter was very active during the CWK Inquest
- Collaborate with others participating or involved in the inquest. Search for and join their social media campaigns
- Research and follow those experts who will be participating in the inquest ahead of time if possible and share their posts
- Be consistent with posting/engaging with others (this shows that you are interested in and an advocate of the inquest).
- Maintain a singular voice across platforms
- Use hashtags already created by the inquest rather than making up your own

Example

In June of 2022, journalist Sarah Boesveld reported on the inquest into the deaths of Carol Culleton, Nathalie Warmerdam, and Anastasia Kuzyk. She was very active on Twitter throughout the inquest and, in fact, on June 28th, the day the jury delivered its verdict, tweeted more than 100 times (86 recommendations). By following Sarah, one could not only follow the inquest, but feel a part of the process and engage with it by liking, retweeting with or without a comment.

How to write an op-ed

What is an op-ed?

An “op-ed” is usually published in a newspaper or other media source and expresses the opinion of the author about a relevant public issue or matter. It is a great opportunity to raise awareness about gender-based violence. If you have a relationship with the editor you plan to submit to, connect with them prior to writing the op-ed to see if there is any interest. This is where prior relationship building comes in handy. It is important to note that most newspapers will not consider your piece if you submit to more than one outlet at a time. Another great option is to co-write an op-ed with another organization.

Tip: You can find an op-ed contact by searching the news outlet’s name with the terms “opinion” and “editor” in the search bar of Twitter/X, then click on people in the vertical search. Most editors list their contact information in their Twitter/X bio and, while you are at it, you can add them to your list of people you follow.

Goals:

- I. Compelling Introduction: The first line is the lede (or hook) and is where you must grab the reader’s attention. Remember, it must be timely.
- II. Thesis Statement (Main Message): This is your explicit or implied statement of argument.
- III. Body Paragraph(s) – info about issue: In the body you should provide three important arguments that are backed up by evidence and a conclusion. Provide hyperlinks to any statistics you provide.
- IV. Call to Action
- V. Conclusion: Your conclusion should circle back to your lead.

Op-ed Tip Sheet

Writing an op-ed about the inquest recommendations is a great way to raise awareness in your community and encourage people to take action. Unlike a news story, an op-ed expresses the opinion of the author, giving you a chance to share your thoughts about the recommendations with your community. You can also use it as a call to action.

Before you put time into writing one:

- Consider co-writing your op-ed with a colleague or another organization in your community, so a broader perspective can be shared
- Find out who is in charge of op-eds at the media outlet you want to work with
- Ask if they are interested in your topic for an op-ed
- Learn about any requirements in terms of writing style, number of authors permitted, length (generally between 750-800 words), etc.
- Ask whether you can submit your op-ed to multiple media outlets (most will only consider publishing an op-ed if it is submitted to just one media outlet)

There is a bit of an art to writing an op-ed. Here are a few tips:

- Tie your op-ed to something that is currently in the news
- Start with a strong sentence or two that will grab the attention of the readers
- Make a statement about what your main point or points will be
- Use the rest of your op ed to fill in the details and make your argument/pitch
- Whenever possible use hyperlinks to sources for any facts you include
- Make your call to action
- Conclude by circling back to the theme or those you identified at the beginning of the op-ed
- Keep your sentences and paragraphs short
- Use plain language and stay away from jargon
- Support your key points and arguments with facts
- Write for your audience
- Avoid obvious self-promotion

Sample Op/Ed: [Sealing criminal records of marginalized people will improve many lives](#)

Op-Ed Template

On September 22, 2015, Carol Culleton, Anastasia Kuzyk and Nathalie Warmerdam were murdered by a man with whom they had each been involved. Seven years later, a coroner's inquest (the CKW Inquest) into their deaths has resulted in [86 recommendations for systemic changes](#); changes that are desperately needed if we are to save the lives of women and children.

INSERT SOME LOCAL INFORMATION: # OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN YOUR AGENCY SERVES EACH YEAR, ANY RECENT IPV HOMICIDES, ETC. INCLUDE A LINK TO YOUR ORGANIZATION'S WEBSITE

We know from two previous inquests into intimate partner homicides – the 1998 Arlene May inquest and the Gillian Hadley inquest four years later – which resulted in hundreds of recommendations, that governments can be slow to respond.

We also know that rates of intimate partner violence (IPV), including femicide, rose dramatically in the early months of the pandemic and have not decreased. There's no time to be slow. That's why we all need to call on our elected officials to give immediate and careful consideration to these recommendations.

The province initially rejected recommendation one, to declare IPV to be an epidemic, but communities took this recommendation on themselves, with close to 100 municipalities making the declaration for their communities. Recently, in April 2024, the NDP introduced Bill 173, which calls on the government to make the declaration at the provincial level. This Bill has now been sent to the Standing Committee on Justice Policy for further review.

No more review is required. Reports from Ontario's Domestic Violence Death Review Committee as well as from prior inquests establish beyond a doubt that IPV is an epidemic.

INSERT SOMETHING ELSE LOCAL HERE: "OUR SHELTER SEES FIRSTHAND EVERY DAY THE IMPACT OF INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE ON WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN THIS COMMUNITY. WE BELIEVE THESE RECOMMENDATIONS COULD MAKE A POSITIVE DIFFERENCE FOR EVERYONE IN OUR COMMUNITY."

It has now been two years since the jury returned its verdict and it's time for real action. Call on your MPP and other provincial politicians to re-establish the provincial Roundtable on Violence Against Women, giving it a budget and the authority to oversee implementation of the inquest recommendations.

INSERT INFORMATION ABOUT ANYTHING YOU HAVE ORGANIZED IN YOUR COMMUNITY THAT PEOPLE CAN JOIN IN WITH.

If you don't know where to start, you can check out this [tip sheet for individual advocacy](#).

**Template letters to support the implementation of
the recommendations from the CKW Inquest**

FULL NAME, M.P.P.
ADDRESS
CITY, ON POSTAL CODE

DATE

Dear M.P.P. XXXX:

NAME OF YOUR ORG AND BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF WHAT YOU DO. REFER TO ANY CONNECTION YOU HAVE HAD WITH YOUR M.P.P. IN THE PAST.

I am writing to you today with respect to the recent Culleton, Kuzyk & Warmerdam (CKW) Inquest. As you may know, this inquest was held in June of this year in Pembroke, Ontario, to investigate the circumstances surrounding the deaths of Carol Culleton, Anastasia Kuzyk and Nathalie Warmerdam, all of whom were killed by the same perpetrator on September 22, 2015.

The inquest jury heard from many experts from across the province and beyond, as well as from witnesses who were involved in the events leading up to and on that day. It also heard from those working in the field of intimate partner violence and from IPV survivors. YOU MAY WANT TO REFER TO SPECIFIC WITNESSES IF YOU THINK THIS WILL INTEREST YOUR M.P.P.

[The jury returned 86 powerful recommendations.](#)

We would like to invite you to join us in calling for the implementation of all 86 recommendations. This would move Ontario in a very positive direction with respect to both responding to and eradicating IPV, including domestic homicide. Our communities would be safer and healthier, public money would be better spent, and women and children would be able to live lives free from the constant threat of violence and abuse.

ANOTHER PARA HERE OUTLINING ANY SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS THAT ARE ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT TO YOU OR THAT ARE RELATED TO ISSUES YOU HAVE PREVIOUSLY DISCUSSED WITH YOUR M.P.P.

We know you share our commitment to this vision for our province and our community and welcome an opportunity to further discuss implementation of the recommendations with you and your staff.

Sincerely,

NAME
POSITION
ORGANIZATION
EMAIL
PHONE NUMBER

FULL NAME, M.P.
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

DATE

Dear M.P. XXXX:

NAME OF YOUR ORG AND BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF WHAT YOU DO. REFER TO ANY CONNECTION YOU HAVE HAD WITH YOUR M.P. IN THE PAST.

I am writing to you today with respect to the recent Culleton, Kuzyk & Warmerdam (CKW) Inquest. As you may know, this inquest was held in June of this year in Pembroke, Ontario, to investigate the circumstances surrounding the deaths of Carol Culleton, Anastasia Kuzyk and Nathalie Warmerdam, all of whom were killed by the same perpetrator on September 22, 2015.

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ANOTHER PARA HERE OUTLINING ANY SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS THAT ARE ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT TO YOU OR THAT ARE RELATED TO ISSUES YOU HAVE PREVIOUSLY DISCUSSED WITH YOUR M.P.

We know you share our commitment to this vision for our country and our community and welcome an opportunity to further discuss implementation of the recommendations with you and your staff.

Sincerely,

NAME
POSITION
ORGANIZATION
EMAIL
PHONE NUMBER

16 days of action

November 2022

Introduction

November 25th is the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. It also kicks off the global 16 days of activism to end gender-based violence campaign, which runs until World Human Rights Day on December 10th.

Many violence against women advocates in Ontario are using these 16 days to call for implementation of the CKW inquest recommendations.

Working collaboratively, a number of women's shelters in northern Ontario and Luke's Place have developed a tool for organizations or individuals looking for inquest-related messages to use on social media, at events or otherwise during the 16 days.

We have created [infographics for 16 of the 86 recommendations](#), which contain a brief commentary on the recommendation as well as suggestions for where advocacy could be directed and some links to other information and tools.

We hope you will find them helpful.

Le 25 novembre se déroulera l'activisme la Journée internationale pour l'élimination de la violence à l'égard des femmes. Cela marquera aussi le début de la campagne internationale des 16 jours d'activisme pour l'élimination de la violence sexiste, qui dure jusqu'au 10 décembre, soit lors de la Journée mondiale des droits de la personne.

Bien des défenseurs des femmes victimes de violence en Ontario profitent de ces 16 jours pour demander la mise en œuvre des recommandations de l'enquête CKW.

Ensemble, des maisons d'hébergement pour femmes violentées du Nord de l'Ontario et Luke's Place ont développé un outil pour les organismes et les gens qui cherchent des messages associés à l'enquête pour les transmettre dans les médias sociaux, lors d'activités, etc., durant les 16 jours d'activisme.

Nous avons créé [une infographie portant sur 16 des 86 recommandations](#), qui comprend un bref commentaire sur chacune d'entre elles ainsi que des suggestions d'orientation des interventions et des liens vers d'autres renseignements et outils.

Nous espérons que vous trouverez le tout utile.

Encouraging your municipality to declare intimate partner violence an epidemic

Inquest recommendation #1 calls for the provincial government to declare intimate partner violence an epidemic, but there's no need to wait for the province to do this.

The Executive Director of [Lanark County Interval House and Community Support](#), Erin Lee, spoke about her organization's work and shared statistics about the numbers of women accessing their services with the community services committee of the Lanark County Council in mid-December. She ended her presentation by asking the committee to declare IPV an epidemic in the county.

While normally it would take some time for a suggestion from a member of the public to become a formal motion and pass through the various bureaucratic steps, that's not what happened this time. Before the end of the meeting, the motion to declare IPV an epidemic and to encourage other municipalities to do the same had been made, seconded and unanimously passed. A few days later, it was unanimously passed by the full council. It is being sent to every municipality in Ontario as well as to the Rural Ontario Municipalities Association and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario to encourage them to follow suit.

Let's start 2023 by seeing this motion sweep through other Ontario communities!

Community safety and well-being plans: what are they and how can we make sure gender-based violence is included in them?

Recommendation #10 calls on the provincial government to encourage municipalities to include IPV in their community safety and well-being plans (CSWBP). With much input from Lanark County, whose plan has included IPV since it was first written in 2018, we've created a tip sheet to assist you in working with your municipality to include IPV in your CSWBP). You can find it [here](#).

What are community safety and well-being plans (CSWBPs)?

In 2018, the Ontario government passed the *Safer Ontario Act*. It's a massive piece of legislation, one section of which mandates the creation of CSWBPs:

Section 195(1): Every municipal council shall prepare and, by resolution, adopt a community safety and well-being plan.

Plans were to be in place by July 2021, but not all municipalities have met this deadline.

The legislation is vague on the details of what these plans are to include. More information is available from the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, which has created a Framework to assist municipalities. It sets out the purpose of the plans, the legislative mandate, benefits to communities of having a plan and the elements to be contained in the plan. You can find the Framework at: <https://www.ontario.ca/document/community-safety-and-well-being-planning-framework-booklet-3-shared-commitment-ontario>

How do I know if my community has one?

The easiest way to find out if your community has a CSWBP is to do a google search, entering the name of your municipality, township and/or county and the phrase "community safety and well-being plan."

You could also ask one of your municipal councillors or staff.

Do all plans include a focus on gender-based violence?

No, but a number of them do. Lanark County's plan, for example, contains a comprehensive section on domestic violence and sexual assault and is an excellent guide if you want to talk to your council about including a section on gender-based violence: <https://www.perth.ca/en/live-and-play/resources/Documents/CSWB-Plan-for-LC-and-SF-final.pdf>

What should a CSWBP include about gender-based violence?

This will depend, to some extent, on your municipality, but some common themes include:

- Background information about GBV in your community, such as statistics, patterns, increases or decreases in rates, and unique issues that makes GBV different in your community than it might be elsewhere
- Services already available
- Existing collaborations
- Gaps in services
- Common challenges for survivors as well as for perpetrators
- Strategies for responding to and addressing GBV so community safety and well-being is enhanced

How should I go about trying to have gender-based violence included in my municipality's CSWBP?

The best place to start is to create a working group/steering committee (WGSC) to coordinate and guide the work to include GBV in your municipality's plan. If you have a Violence Against Women Coordinating Committee, it could reach out to others to join a WGSC.

Ideally, members would include those in your community who are affected by or who play a role in GBV issues: representatives from the police and others in the criminal system, community agencies, health care, education, social services, housing, victim services, violence against women services, Indigenous organizations, survivors and, of course, the municipal government.

The first task for the WGSC is to determine whether or not your municipality has completed and adopted a CSWBP.

If it has, read it carefully to see if it already includes any references to community safety and GBV. If GBV is not included or you are not satisfied with how it is addressed, see if the plan includes any information about a review process. If there is one, you can focus your work on that, but if it does not, you can approach the person within your municipal government who has responsibility for the CSWBP to let them know you would like to propose some additions/revisions to the plan.

If your municipality has not yet adopted its CSWBP, speak to the clerk of the council to find out who is leading the work to develop one and how you can get involved.

What are some practical suggestions?

Once you know where your municipality is at in its work to adopt a CSWBP, you can get down to the work of ensuring that GBV is profiled appropriately in the plan.

If your municipality has a CSWBP in place, you should design the GBV section to mirror the structure in the existing plan. If not, you might be able to suggest a structure to the municipality's CSWBP working group.

The Lanark County CSWBP uses the following structure within each topic it is addressing:

1. Overview/background: Include information about the community and GBV, including statistics

2. Key issues: Try to limit the number of key issues to no more than six
3. Background information on each issue: Include both local and more general information
4. Actions: See below
5. Desired outcomes and performance measures: What you want to achieve and how you will know you have achieved it

It's a good idea to designate a lead individual or organization within your WGSC so communication and tasks are coordinated.

Research is critical. This might include such activities as examining community strengths and gaps through consultations with key stakeholders. These consultations could include surveys, focus groups and interviews as well as a review of statistics and agency annual reports

Once you have this background information, you can identify the key GBV priority areas in your community.

The Framework provided by the government strongly encourages CSWBPs to include four areas for action:

- Social programming
- Prevention
- Risk intervention
- Incident response

You might find it helpful to review the recommendations from the 2022 CKW Inquest for ideas about what you could include in the action areas of your CSWBP. You can find the recommendations here: https://lukesplace.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/CKW-Inquest-Verdict-Recommendations-SIGNED_Redacted.pdf

What you include will depend very much on what you learn through your community-engaged research, but here are a few general ideas:

- Social programming could include activities related to raising public awareness through education, as well as school programming. Perhaps your community would like to institute a Neighbours, Friends and Families campaign: <https://www.neighboursfriendsandfamilies.ca/about/index.html>
- Prevention could include such activities as education in schools and programs for girls and boys about healthy relationships
- Risk intervention could include enhancing the work of your community's high-risk team, coming to a shared community understanding of effective information sharing to keep survivors safe as well as focusing on programming for those who have engaged in harming behaviours
- Incident response actions could focus on building stronger relationships with policing services and increasing communication and information sharing

There is no requirement that particular activities be included in your CSWBP: you need to base your plan on what your community needs. You might also find it helpful to talk to VAW folks in other communities to find out whether their CSWBPs include a focus on GBV and, if so, what they include.

How do we convince our municipality to include GBV in its CSWBP?

Generally, building a positive relationship with your municipal council is critical:

- If you don't already do this, ask to speak at council meetings at least once a year to make sure councillors and municipal staff are aware of your organization and the issue of GBV in your community
- Include councillors and key staff in your organization's regular communications
- Invite them to special events
- Publicly recognize their efforts to support your work and to address GBV in your community

Specifically with respect to the inclusion of GBV in the CSWBP:

- Include councillors and/or municipal staff in your process to develop the GBV section
- Ask for their input and feedback
- Make sure they understand why this is important
- Let them know other municipalities are also doing this
- Develop allies on council so you have someone in place to bring a motion to approve inclusion of GBV in the CSWBP
- Be prepared to, non-defensively, argue for what you want

We've got GBV in our CSWBP – now what?

First, take time to celebrate your achievement. Then, make sure the community knows that GBV is part of your CSWBP: engage the media, use social media and public events to spread the word.

You will need to monitor implementation of the GBV provision and track activities to see if your outcomes are being achieved. Be ready to do back to council to remind the politicians of the work they have committed to doing, but also ensure that you and other community organizations and services are doing what you and they need to do.

Community safety and well-being plans on their own will not end GBV, but they can play an important role in helping raise public awareness about GBV and encourage greater collaboration at the community level.

Request for Intimate Partner Violence to be Declared a Public Health Crisis

Violence against women organizations across Ontario continue to call for implementation of the inquest recommendations at both the community and provincial levels. One that many organizations are promoting is recommendation # 1, to have intimate partner violence declared an epidemic. The **Nipissing VAW Coordinating Committee** has prepared a backgrounder to support its advocacy, which others may find helpful as an example of how to approach this issue with your municipalities. You can read it below:

What is intimate partner violence?

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is the use of behaviour to gain control and power over an intimate partner (i.e., a current or former spouse, dating, or sexual partner). IPV does not look the same in every relationship. It may include physical violence, sexual violence, criminal harassment, threats of physical or sexual violence, reproductive coercion, coercive control, spiritual abuse, cyber violence, emotional abuse, financial abuse, or psychological abuse (Government of Canada, 2021a). IPV is not a series of isolated incidents, but a pattern of abusive behaviour (Katerndahl, 2010).

Who experiences IPV?

Victims and abusers can be of any age, gender, or sexual orientation and have any educational background or income (Government of Canada, 2021a). While victims do not fit a mold, women disproportionately experience IPV as the victim, with men being the abuser. Data also show that women often experience IPV with greater frequency and severity (e.g., being choked, being assaulted or threatened with a weapon, or being sexually assaulted) (Cotter, 2021). Due to the devastating impacts of colonialism, IPV against Indigenous women is significantly higher compared with non-Indigenous women (Ontario Native Women's Association, 2018).

Why is IPV a public health problem?

IPV is preventable, yet remains a major public health problem.ⁱ One-third of women in Canada aged 15 years and older will experience IPV in their lifetime (Cotter, 2021). For some women, it will be a death sentence. Approximately every six days, a woman is killed in Canada by a current or previous intimate partner (Armstrong & Jaffray, 2021).

Children exposed to IPV often experience numerous adverse outcomes, which can continue into adulthood and perpetuate an intergenerational cycle of violence (Wathen, 2012). In 2018, IPV was considered the primary form of child maltreatment in Ontario, making up nearly half (45%) of all substantiated investigations (Fallon et al, 2018).ⁱⁱ While IPV is often hidden behind closed doors, the consequences are devastating and costly, ultimately affecting every member of society.ⁱⁱⁱ

What are the local statistics?

At a local level, Victim Services received 325 calls for service for IPV between April 1 and Dec 7, 2022. During this period, Victim Services supported 270 female-identified IPV victims as well as

19 children, who were harmed or witnesses of IPV. In addition, Victim Services responded to 124 sexual violence incidents, of which 75 involved female-identified victims, 45 child victims, and 9 child witnesses (K. Jodouin, personal communication, December 9, 2022). While this data provides insight into the prevalence of IPV in our community, it is important to note that IPV remains underreported. The numbers shared reflect only a portion of the violence that occurs (Statistics Canada, 2022).

Why should the board of health declare IPV a public health crisis?

Declaring IPV as a crisis will help increase awareness of the problem. It may spark conversations about IPV and perhaps make it easier for survivors to come forward. The more members of our community who understand the costs and severe impact of IPV, the more prepared we will be to 1) strengthen efforts to prevent IPV; 2) protect and support victims when IPV takes place; 3) hold perpetrators accountable; 4) initiate measures to end the cycle of violence.

For survivors to leave unsafe situations safely, they need sufficient access to appropriate community support, counselling and mental health services, legal services, safe and affordable housing (including shelters), income support, and child care. Before COVID-19, social services in the region were already strained and COVID-19 added even more pressure. Support services (e.g., shelters) had to navigate changing protocols and were not always able to offer regular services, often operating with decreased capacity (Bielski, 2020). Meanwhile, certain households experienced heightened levels of conflict and violence due to stress from employment disruptions, financial pressures, and isolation (Haag et al, 2022; Thompson, 2021). Victims of IPV had decreased access to support systems and greater barriers to escaping abusive situations (Lyons & Brewer, 2022, Peterman et al, 2020).

COVID-19 highlighted the need for profound structural and social changes at all levels of society. Action around IPV at the local level can ignite long-lasting change. We need more systems-level support, maintained adequate funding, policies and programs that effectively address root causes of violence and look at safety holistically, stronger laws and law enforcement, and greater resources for relevant sectors that promote trauma-informed, survivor-centered, anti-racist, culturally competent, and equitable care with an intersectional perspective. Working collaboratively as a community and jointly advocating for increased resources can save lives. Everyone deserves to live free of violence and oppression.

IPV prevention and harm reduction align with growing efforts to address Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). Urgent action is needed to end the perpetuation of the cycle of intergenerational violence and trauma (Cotter, 2021).

What harms are associated with IPV?

IPV is associated with numerous harms, including^{iv} (Wathen, 2012):

- Physical health problems:
 - chronic pain
 - irritable bowel syndrome
 - gastrointestinal disorders
 - sleeping disorders
 - brain injuries
 - disability
 - fibromyalgia
 - sleep disorders
 - heart disease
 - stroke
 - asthma

- Psychological concerns:
 - high rates of depression
 - anxiety disorders (particularly PTSD)
 - sleep disorders
 - phobias and panic disorder
 - psychosomatic disorders
 - suicidal behaviour
 - self-harm
 - eating disorders
 - substance dependence
 - antisocial personality disorders
 - non-affective psychosis
 - low self-esteem
 - trust issues

- Reproductive health issues:
 - gynaecological disorders
 - infertility
 - pelvic inflammatory disease
 - pregnancy complications or miscarriage
 - sexual dysfunction
 - sexually transmitted diseases (e.g., HIV/AIDS)
 - unsafe abortion
 - unwanted pregnancy
 - pre-term labour
 - perinatal death
 - low birth weight

IPV is also linked with risky behaviours (e.g., substance use, unsafe sexual behaviour, physical inactivity), food insecurity, human trafficking, housing and homelessness, and difficulty keeping a job (Andermann et al, 2021; Peterson et al, 2018; Wathen, 2012; Wathen, MacGregor, & MacQuarrie, 2016).

Exposure to intimate partner violence can compromise a child's emotional and behavioural regulation capabilities and can lead to many of the physical and psychological concerns listed above (Wathen, 2012; Nikolova et al, 2021). IPV exposure is also related to poor academic outcomes, high-risk behaviours (e.g., delinquency, substance use), and an increased likelihood of entering the juvenile system. Children who witness IPV are more likely to experience other forms of abuse by caregivers (e.g., physical and sexual abuse). Come adulthood, those who were exposed to IPV as children are more likely to be involved in violent intimate relationships as victims or perpetrators (Nikolova et al, 2021).

The province responds

Our Advocacy Director, Pamela Cross, has created an overview of the responses to the inquest recommendations from the Office of the Chief Coroner, the Information and Privacy Commissioner and the Province of Ontario, along with a commentary about what those responses say (and don't say).

By Pamela Cross, Advocacy Director, Luke's Place Support and Resource Centre

February 28, 2023

On February 10th, the government of Ontario, the Office of the Chief Coroner and the Information and Privacy Commissioner provided their responses to many of the 86 recommendations that formed part of the verdict in the June 2022 inquest into the September 22, 2015, murders of Carol Culleton, Anastasia Kuzyk and Nathalie Warmerdam in Renfrew County (the CKW inquest). The federal government and the Chief Firearms Officer have yet to provide their responses.

The inquest process in Ontario does not require parties to whom recommendations are directed to respond, but they are encouraged to do so within six months of being informed about the recommendations that apply to them, and February 10th was exactly six months from that date.

Below is an overview of the responses from the Chief Coroner, the Information and Privacy Commissioner and the province, along with some comments about them.

Chief Coroner

Four recommendations were directed to the Office of the Chief Coroner (OCC), three of which were fully accepted and the intent of one of which was accepted.

Recommendation 74: Ensure that the DVDRC reviews its mandate with a view to enhancing its impact on IPV and provide DVDRC with improved supports.

The OCC has recently completed a review of the DVDRC, and a newly constituted committee will be in place by March 2023, to "enhance the representation of Ontario's diverse people." The committee will also be modernizing its processes in dealing with issues arising from deaths associated with and/or caused by IPV. Additional resources and improved supports have already been dedicated to the work of the DVDRC.

Comment: We'll let you know in March what the newly constituted DVDRC looks like.

Recommendation 75: Ensure DVDRC reports are published online in a timely manner.

According to the OCC, annual reports are published on the OCC's webpage on the Ontario.ca site and are available upon request. "The OCC will endeavour to improve timeliness to ensure reports are published regularly."

Comment: In my experience, it is not easy to find the DVDRC reports. When I searched the OCC webpage, the hunt to find the DVDRC report was not intuitive, and I was able to find only the 2018 report.

My greatest success came from the website of the Canadian Domestic Homicide Prevention Initiative: <https://www.cdhpi.ca/dvdrc-committees> While some of the links were dead, I was able to find most of the DVDRC reports at this site, but it shouldn't take this much work and insider knowledge to find these public reports.

Recommendation 76: Ensure that DVDRC reports and responses to recommendations are publicly available and will continue to be available without charge.

The OCC says that DVDRC reports and responses to recommendations are publicly available upon request, a process that will continue.

Comment: The OCC webpage should provide this information along with the contact information for those who wish to request a report.

Recommendation 77: Consider adopting Femicide as one of the categories for manner of death.

The OCC has accepted the intent of this recommendation and "is considering possible methods to implement it. . . to ensure recognition of these tragic deaths and defined focus on relevant safety initiatives."

Comment: The current categories for manner of death in inquest verdicts are: natural causes, accident, suicide, homicide, and undetermined. Adding femicide would draw attention to the frequency of IPV homicides, would make the distinct features of such deaths obvious and would make tracking and researching the rate of femicide easier.

Information and Privacy Commissioner

One recommendation was directed to the Information and Privacy Commissioner, which has been accepted.

Recommendation 78: The Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario should: working together with the Domestic Violence Death Review Committee (DVDRC), justice partners and intimate partner violence service providers, develop a plain language tool to empower intimate partner violence professionals to make informed decisions about privacy, confidentiality, and public safety.

The Commissioner noted in her response: "my office plans to implement the recommendation in the coming year, and has already made significant progress." Her response goes on to acknowledge that preventing IPV is a critical societal issue that includes multi-sectoral community-based collaboration and information sharing, and that organizations should not face uncertainty about how privacy rules apply when someone is at risk of serious harm.

"While protecting personal information and personal health information from unauthorized collection, use and disclosure is essential, privacy must not be used as an excuse to prevent the

lawful sharing of information, particularly where it is necessary for the prevention of serious harm.”

One of the IPC goals in developing the plain language tool is to identify and address myths and misconceptions about information sharing that may interfere with collaborations between the justice sector and community-based frontline service providers.

The IPC is already engaging with relevant stakeholders and conducting research to support development of the tool.

Comment: The IPC has embraced this recommendation. I have been part of a number of consultations and conversations with the lawyer leading the development of the tool and feel very positive that a useful tool will be in our hands in the foreseeable future.

The province

Sixty-eight of the 86 recommendations made by the inquest jury were directed to the Government of Ontario. The province made no comments on the recommendations at the time they were released, at the vigil held to commemorate the seventh anniversary of the triple femicide on September 22, 2022 -- which was attended by two Cabinet Ministers -- in the legislature or at any other time, until it provided its response to the Office of the Chief Coroner on February 10th.

The province’s response is in two parts: section one, in which it provides “initial responses” to 39 recommendations, noting that “the information contained herein may change in the coming months and additional details related to the responses to these recommendations may be provided as part of “Part II” of Ontario’s response,” and section two, in which the remaining 29 recommendations are identified as “requiring further analysis. These recommendations will be addressed in “Part II of Ontario’s response.”

General comments:

- The government is taking the position that these are such important issues that it requires more time to consider them carefully so the response can be as good as possible. We need to call them out on this. Many of these recommendations have been made before in earlier inquests and in the annual reports of the Domestic Violence Death Review Committee. The issues that need to be addressed have been more than amply studied and written about, and it is time for action.
- All of the responses are vague, with no timelines and little concrete substance as to what the government is planning to do.
- Many of the responses refer to work that has already been done (at least in the government’s mind), without identifying new work called for in specific recommendations.
- Similarly, the responses often cite principles or values, without identifying a clear action plan.

The jury’s recommendations were grouped by theme, so that is how I will comment on them here.

Oversight and accountability

Six recommendations appear here, all but one of which have been relegated to Section 2 of the government's response.

Recommendation 6: Amend the Coroner's Act to require the recipient of an inquest recommendation to advise the Office of the Chief Coroner if a recommendation is complied with or to provide an explanation if it is not implemented

This was accepted in part, with the comment that the government will explore opportunities to improve information sharing with the OCC.

Comment: Given that the government did not comment on the other five recommendations in this theme, it's hard to feel hopeful that it understands the need for increased oversight and accountability on issues related to intimate partner violence and femicide.

The five recommendations set aside "for further analysis and collaboration" are:

- Declare IPV an epidemic
- Establish an independent IPV Commission
- Engage in meaningful consultation with IPV stakeholders to establish the mandate of this commission
- Create a Survivor Advocate role
- Immediately institute a provincial implementation committee to oversee comprehensive consideration of these inquest recommendations

Comments:

- Declaring IPV to be an epidemic would have cost the government nothing. A number of rural and small municipal governments have made this declaration, even without leadership from the province
- Many of us had hoped the government would move quickly to establish an implementation committee. In the absence of that or of the establishment of an IPV Commission, we should call on the province to re-establish the VAW Roundtable.

System approaches, collaboration and communication

Of the 11 recommendations in this theme, three were set aside as requiring further consideration before a response could be made.

The eight remaining recommendations are accepted, accepted in part or, in the case of the recommendation that the government encourage municipalities to include IPV in their safety and well-being plans, rejected.

Comments:

- Those recommendations set aside speak to exploring restorative justice approaches to responding to IPV, creating a universal records management system to increase easy access to safety-related information and reviewing policies to ensure effective dissemination of information when there is a situation that could put the public in danger.

- The responses to those that the government accepts, whether in part or entirely, are, as noted above, vague and uninspiring. There is little commitment to new actions to be taken, other than consideration of possible further study and review of what is being done in other jurisdictions. In at least one case, the response indicates that work has been completed. Presumably, it has not, or this issue would not have arisen at the inquest and led to a recommendation for change. Unfortunately, this is a theme running through the province's response; a complacent "we agree, and we've already taken care of it," when those of us doing the work on the ground know that is not the case.

Funding

Five recommendations appear in this section, three of which were set aside for future consideration: recognizing the need for a significant financial investment in funding for organizations providing IPV support, development of a plan for enhanced second stage housing for IPV survivors, and funding for safe rooms in the homes of high-risk survivors.

The two to which the government responded spoke to the creation of an emergency fund for survivors and a realignment of IPV service provider funding structures. Both were accepted in part, with a commitment to further exploration.

Comments:

- In 2023, a commitment to further exploration is not a meaningful commitment
- The government does not need more time to support recommendations calling for increasing funding for IPC organizations and enhancing second-stage housing

Education and training

The jury made nine recommendations for improvements/changes to education and training for the public, in schools, and for specific professional groups. Three of these were identified as requiring further analysis before a response could be provided: development of a new approach to public education campaigns, a review of existing training for justice system personnel within the provincial and policing sphere and provision of IPV training for justice personnel.

Four of the remaining recommendations were accepted in part: a yearly review of public attitudes about IPV, revisions to school-based education, training to support teachers deliver this curriculum and development of resources.

The final two recommendations in this section were accepted, with the government saying it has completed work to provide specialized training to police officers and that work to track professional education and training is underway.

Comments

- Over the past 20 years, many recommendations for IPV education and training have been made by inquests, the DVDRC and other committees and individuals. What is currently available remains inadequate, much of it requires updating and all of it should be made mandatory and ongoing. But, even if training and education were perfect, they are not enough. Until those who receive the training are evaluated on what they have learned and required to implement it in their work, the training is of very limited value

- The responses to the recommendations related to school-based IPV education have very little substance and, given this government's track record on sex education curriculum, there's little reason for hope that we will see substantive action in this area.

Measures addressing perpetrators

The system failures in responding to the perpetrator in the triple femicide under review at the CKW Inquest were significant and came under close scrutiny; in particular, probation services and programming for perpetrators. Witnesses in senior management positions were questioned vigorously by the parties, lawyers and jurors and, too often, were not able to provide satisfactory responses to the questions.

The jury wrote eight recommendations related to this topic: proposing a hotline for men; services for perpetrators that were not one-size-fits-all; development of increased workforce capacity; addressing barriers and creating pathways to services for perpetrators; improving coordination among services addressing IPV perpetration, substance use, mental health issues and child protection and so on.

The province did not respond to a single one of these eight recommendations. All were set aside for further analysis before any response will be provided.

Comments

- This is ridiculous. We have known the problems with services and programs for perpetrators for decades. The government knows all it needs to know to take action to improve programming and to make sure both perpetrators and those responsible for supervising them are held accountable for their actions.

Intervention

All six recommendations in this theme were responded to by the government but, as noted above several times, there is a lack of depth to the responses.

For example, the response to the recommendation that the Family Law Act be amended to give courts the authority to order counselling for the perpetrator where a finding of IPV has been made is that there is "a commitment to undertake further analysis to consider whether amendments are necessary."

The risk assessment response seems to focus entirely on one tool, when there are others that have been well established to be equally or more effective.

The response to the recommendation about high-risk committees indicates that the province is in the process of drafting new standards for this committees.

Comments

- If the government's new standards for IPV high-risk committees are good, this is a potentially very positive step forward for the work being done by those committees

Safety

This theme contains a whopping 23 recommendations, of which seven were set aside for a later response.

These included recommendations for consideration of a Clare's law in Ontario, creation of an IPV registry similar to the sex offender registry, development of community-based safe spaces for women, creation of a criminal court version of the family court support worker program, a review of mandatory charging policies, tracking court decisions for recidivism and improved communication with the chief firearms officer.

The recommendations to which the government did respond cover such topics as increased uses of electronic monitoring of perpetrators, improved information sharing between police and victim services, improved tactical response times in rural settings, improved cell service and use of satellite police offices in rural communities.

Other recommendations touch on firearms management, long-term and dangerous offender designations for high-risk IPV perpetrators and changes to bail, probation and surety conditions in IPV cases.

Recommendations dealing with probation services were all accepted by the government, which also indicated they were completed.

Comments

- As with other recommendations set aside for further analysis, those in this section do not require further study; the government is in a position to make decisions about how to proceed with all of them.
- While the government accepted the recommendation for improved cell service, it simply reiterated what has become a standard election platform line – that all of Ontario will have access to high-speed internet soon. Now, the promise is for 2025. We'll see.
- Most disturbing is the government's position that it has completed work on the recommendations related to probation services. In this triple femicide, the failings of probation services were many and obvious. Whatever the decisionmakers may think about their policies and procedures, probation is not working on the ground to keep survivors safe and to ensure accountability of perpetrators. The way probation is managed, particularly in small and rural communities, needs serious and immediate attention.

Conclusion

As noted above, the federal government and the Chief Firearms Officer have yet to provide their responses to the recommendations that apply to them. The CFO has five recommendations, four of which deal with different aspects of PALs and one of which addresses the spousal support line.

There are seven recommendations for the federal government to consider:

- Creating a new offence of femicide in the Criminal Code
- Amending the dangerous offender and criminal harassment (stalking) provisions in the Criminal Code

- Creating a better system for witnesses in IPV criminal trials
- Implementing the National Action Plan on VAW
- Establishing a Royal Commission to make the criminal system more victim-centric
- Criminalizing coercive control

As well, the final recommendation, directed to the parties to the inquest, is for them to gather on the first anniversary of the verdict to discuss progress on implementation of the recommendations.

While response by the provincial government has been largely underwhelming so far, the NDP have asked a number of very pointed questions during question period over the past couple of weeks, which has led the province to say that it will complete part 2 of its response by the anniversary. We also now know which ministry/ministries are expected to lead on each recommendation, which positions us well to engage in ongoing advocacy.

We'll update this overview as more information becomes available.

Domestic Violence Death Review Committee

As committed to in its response to the inquest recommendations related to the Domestic Violence Death Review Committee, the Office of the Chief Coroner has announced the new members of the DVDRC. You can read excerpts from the announcement and the list of committee members below.

"The Office of the Chief Coroner is pleased to announce the new members of the Domestic Violence Death Review Committee (DVDRC).

The OCC has selected 15 Committee Members (along with two Resource Members) to serve on the DVDRC for two-year terms, with possibility of extension. We believe that this reconstituted committee will continue to set the standard for high-quality and innovative reviews into intimate partner deaths.

The Members represent Ontario's diverse communities and come from front line services, academia, public safety, and the legal field. Their deep commitment to the elimination and study of IPV and appreciation of a survivor's experience brings tremendous credibility and value to the important work of the DVDRC.

The Members chosen have dedicated their careers to addressing intimate partner violence and each has extensive expertise and experience in IPV and related areas Their collective expertise spans:

- Personal and experiential understanding of a survivor's perspective
- Child and youth welfare protection
- Victim services
- Immigration, family, civil, and criminal law
- Mental health, family, and housing support
- Law enforcement
- Perpetrator understanding and prevention
- Research, education, and training
- Rural and remote communities

The DVDRC, which reports to the Chief Coroner for Ontario, is a multi-disciplinary review committee of experts established in 2003 in response to jury recommendations made in two major inquests into the deaths of women killed by their intimate partners. Ontario was the first province in Canada to develop this type of expert death review committee to explore the circumstances surrounding intimate partner homicides and develop recommendations to prevent further deaths.

The DVDRC reviews the circumstances of the deaths associated with IPV and analyzes issues and identifies risk factors and possible points of intervention. The committee will investigate ways to impact effective change regarding the issue of IPV and its impact on individuals and communities, taking the opportunity to address the need to be more efficient and impactful with recommendations."

Committee members are:

Tamara Bernard, Lakehead University
Robyn Bourgeois, Brock University
Humberto Carolo, White Ribbon
Pamela Cross, Luke's Place
Carolyn Fraser, Ontario Police College
Marlene Ham, Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses
Peter Jaffe, DVDRC founding member
Shalini Konanur, South Asian Legal Clinic
Erin Lee, Lanark County Interval House and Community Supports
Deepa Mattoo, Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic
Sandra Montour, Aboriginal Shelters of Ontario
Jeanne Francoise Moue, Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes
Rabhu Rajan, Chief counsel, Office of the Chief Coroner, DVDRC Chair
Katreena Scott, Centre for Research and Education on Violence Against Women & Children
Deborah Sinclair, DVDRC founding member
Eva Zachary, Muskoka Victim Services

[View the full list including bios and photos.](#)

The new members of the DVDRC, with the leadership of its then-chair, Prahbu Rajan, have developed a much broader scope for the committee's work, which reflects how much has been learned about intimate partner violence, including homicide, in the 20 years since the committee was first created.

The DVDRC is now mandated to review deaths where there was violence or abuse "by a person's current or former intimate, dating or sexual partner . . . or by someone who has, had, or expressed a sexual or romantic interest in the person" that "likely contributed to the death of the person or an associated person."

To ensure these categories of reviewable deaths are interpreted in an appropriately broad manner, the document specifies that a partner includes married and common-law partners and former partners, current and former boyfriends and girlfriends, people who are or have been in a dating relationship, even if only casually, and someone who has had a sexual encounter with the victim at any time, whether or not it was consensual. The committee's scope also includes situations where there was an attempt to establish a relationship; where advances were made and rejected; where there was a perception by one person that a relationship existed, even if the perception was not mutual; where one person was infatuated with the other, whether or not that person was aware of the infatuation; where one person expressed an interest in another through an online interaction; and where one person was stalking the other.

"Likely contributed to the death" means "that it is reasonable to believe that the violence or abuse was a factor that likely led to the death." This definition includes homicide, but also situations where the abuse may have been a reason that the person died by suicide or may have led to an accident that caused the person's death or may have caused a serious injury that resulted in other medical complications that caused death.

“Associated persons” include family members, members of the person’s household, bystanders, and people who attempt to intervene, such as police officers. For example, if a friend, family member, or work colleague stepped in to assist a woman being attacked by her partner and was killed, even if the woman was not, that person’s death would fall within the scope of the DVDRC. Or if someone was killed by a person they did not know about but who had been obsessed with them, that death would be reviewable, as would be a suicide by someone who had been victimized by intimate partner violence.

Ultimately, it is the chief coroner who decides which deaths are reviewed. There is no doubt that this revised scope will mean more work for the committee, but it is also a strong acknowledgement of how many people are affected by intimate partner violence and how great the changes are that need to be made to prevent such deaths in the future.

EVA Media Release: Government Response to Inquest Recommendations Not Enough Says Violence Against Women Organization

The provincial government, the Office of the Chief Coroner and the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner have provided their responses to the recommendations made by the jury in last June's CKW inquest. We will be posting those responses shortly and, soon after that, will also provide you with an analysis of them. EVA Renfrew County, which had standing at the inquest, commented on the recommendations in a media release issued on February 16. You can read it below:



MEDIA RELEASE

Friday February 17, 2023

For immediate release

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO INQUEST RECOMMENDATIONS NOT ENOUGH SAYS VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ORGANIZATION, EVA

Last week, the Government of Ontario, the Office of the Chief Coroner and the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner provided their responses to many of the 86 recommendations that formed part of the verdict in the June 2022 inquest into the September 22, 2015 deaths of Carol Culleton, Anastasia Kuzyk and Nathalie Warmerdam in Renfrew County. The federal government and the Chief Firearms Officer have yet to provide their responses.

"We are very pleased to see that both the Chief Coroner and the Information and Privacy Commissioner have accepted the recommendations directed to their offices and, indeed, already have work underway to see those recommendations implemented. Communities will be safer, and survivors of

intimate partner violence (IPV) will be better served as a result,” say EVA Coordinator, JoAnne Brooks.

EVA also notes that there are some positive indicators in the response from the Government of Ontario, but says that it had hoped for more.

“In its response, the government has acknowledged the need for an all-of-government approach to properly address IPV. It has also indicated it will continue its work to identify ways to streamline funding and reporting requirements, which has the potential to relieve a considerable administrative burden faced by small organizations in rural communities.,” comments Lisa Oegema with Victims Services in Renfrew County.

However, the government’s response does not address the significant gaps between official policy and what is happening on the ground in a number of key areas; in particular, in the area of perpetrator intervention.

“It’s one thing to have the right policy in place; it’s another to ensure it is being implemented in an effective way at the community level,” says Erin Lee, Executive Director, Lanark Interval House (a neighbouring rural county).

“The inquest was an intense and difficult process for those of us who had already lived through the 2015 murders. We were moved and inspired by the courage of Malcom Warmerdam, whose mother was one of the victims and who was a party to the inquest, and by the commitment and vision of the five jurors. We had hoped the government would honour Carol, Anastasia, Nathalie and the inquest process by moving quickly to implement key recommendations such as declaring intimate partner violence to be an epidemic and establishing an implementation committee to ensure the comprehensive consideration of the recommendations from this inquest. The fact that it has not done so is a great disappointment,” commented Faye Cassista of Victims Services.

“However, we are hopeful that the activism we have seen over at the grassroots level in rural communities over the past several months will ensure that, even if the province does not lead the way, these recommendations will be implemented communities across Ontario.”

Ongoing Activism

In the two years since the jury released its verdict and recommendations, interest in seeing the recommendations implemented has consistently grown. As of June 2024, almost 100 municipalities have declared IPV to be an epidemic in their communities. Many are now working to expand their community safety and well-being plans to include gender-based violence. Community violence against women coordinating committees are focusing energy on advocating for implementation of recommendations that resonate in their communities.

Interest has moved well beyond the violence against women sector. The Canadian Federation of University Women, the National Farmers Union, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario and the Rural Ontario Municipalities Association, as well as the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police and many other such organizations have dedicated time to learning about the recommendations and calling for their implementation.

Recommendation 86 called on the parties to the inquest to reconvene “to discuss the progress in implementing these recommendations.” Two events took place in Renfrew County on the first anniversary of the jury’s verdict; one organized by the coroner’s office and one by Luke’s Place.

The coroner’s office held a private meeting to which the parties to the inquest (EVA Renfrew County, Malcolm Warmerdam, the province), the jurors, all those bodies to which recommendations were directed and some key witnesses) were invited. At this half-day meeting, those to whom recommendations had been directed shared their work on implementation and answered questions from others in attendance. The province appeared virtually; all others appeared in person.

Luke’s Place organized a two-day conference for women’s anti-violence organizations in Ontario to build their skills and capacity to engage in feminist law reform advocacy and with the media, using the inquest recommendations as the case study. A vigil was held at the women’s monument at the end of the first day and, on day two, all those who had an interest in the recommendations (jurors, witnesses, family members, parties, those to whom recommendations were directed, the public and the media) were invited to join the gathering for a discussion about progress on implementation.

The discussion was lively, with many comments directed at the (not present) provincial government. Survivors and frontline workers made powerful comments about the need for action. About 40 members of the community group What Now Lanark County arrived by bus with placards and loud voices calling on the province to take action. Constructive conversations happened with representatives from the federal department of justice, the coroner’s office and the office of the information and privacy commissioner, all of whom confirmed their institutions’ commitment to meaningful implementation.

Since that anniversary, work at the community level to see key recommendations implemented has continued. The introduction of Bill 173 by the provincial NDP has breathed new life into the campaign to have intimate partner violence declared an epidemic at the provincial level. Community coordinating committees have continued to focus on specific recommendations. The DVDRRC has reconstituted itself and broadened its scope (recommendation 74).

Of special note: On May 29, 2024, The Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner released its plain language resource on privacy legislation and information sharing in the context of intimate partner violence (recommendation 78). This is an excellent resource that will be very helpful to all of us: <https://www.ipc.on.ca/en/IPVguidance>

Federally, the National Action Plan on Violence Against Women/Gender-Based Violence, has signed bilateral agreements with the provinces and territories (recommendation 83). Bill C-332 – an NDP private member’s bill to criminalize coercive control – is moving through the legislative process (recommendation 85).

The impact of the inquest is not over. On June 28, 2024, a gathering will be held at the women’s monument in Barry’s Bay, Renfrew County, which was unveiled on September 22, 2023 – the anniversary of the murders of Carol Culleton, Anastasia Kuzyk and Nathalie Warmerdam. Participants will have the opportunity to be part of a discussion about the work that has already been done to give life to the inquest recommendations and about how we move forward to ensure the work to end intimate partner and gender-based violence continues.

Bill 173 (Intimate Partner Violence Epidemic Act, 2024)

On March 7, 2024, Ontario NDP MPPs Lisa Gretzky, Kristyn Wong-Tam, Jill Andrew, and Peggy Sattler introduced [Bill 173, the Intimate Partner Violence Epidemic Act, 2024](#), which would require the Ontario Government to recognize IPV as a provincial epidemic. The government supported the Bill at second reading and referred it to the Standing Committee on Justice Policy for, as described by MPP Christine Hogarth, “an in-depth study on all aspects with respect to intimate partner violence” so they can make recommendations to the government on how to address the issue. While we are pleased the government supported the Bill, what is needed right now is not an in-depth study by the Committee. We already know what needs to be done, which is to immediately declare IPV an epidemic and implement the other CKW inquest recommendations.

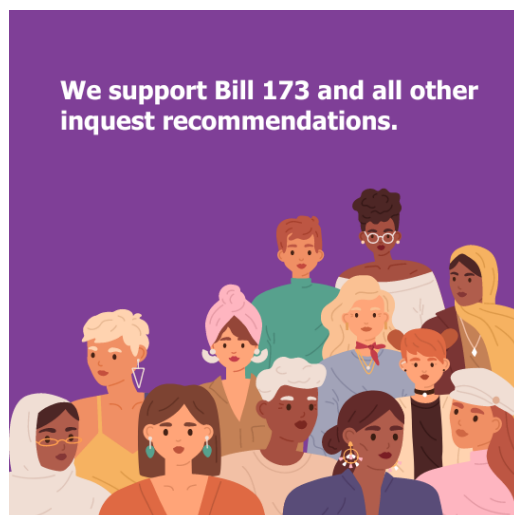
We have engaged in a social media campaign about various CKW inquest recommendations that still need to be implemented by the provincial government. Below are some template messages. We are happy to share the graphics we designed for organizations to us. To gain access, please email kathryn@lukesplace.ca.

Bill 173 social media campaign templates

Instagram/Facebook/LinkedIn message:

We support the immediate passage of Bill 173 declaring intimate partner violence an epidemic. We also need to focus on implementing the other recommendations from the CKW inquest. In the coming weeks we will be sharing some of these recommendations in hopes of reminding the government that they already have a roadmap on how to address IPV in Ontario.

🔔 Learn more and join us in calling for immediate action: <https://lukesplace.ca/no-more-delay-when-it-comes-to-implementing-the-ckw-inquest-recommendations/> #ONpoli #Bill173 #Ontario



X message:

We support the immediate passage of #Bill173 declaring #IPV an epidemic & also call for action to implement ALL inquest recommendations. In the coming weeks we'll be highlighting some we think the government should focus on first.

More: <https://lukesplace.ca/no-more-delay-when-it-comes-to-implementing-the-ckw-inquest-recommendations/> #ONpoli #Ontario



Recommendation 4: Create the role of a Survivor Advocate to advocate on behalf of survivors regarding their experience in the justice system.



Instagram/Facebook/LinkedIn message:

We support the immediate passage of Bill 173 declaring intimate partner violence an epidemic in #Ontario.

We also need to focus on implementing the other recommendations from the #CKWinquest, such as recommendation #4 which calls for the creation of a Survivor Advocate role.

The legal systems women are engaged with when they leave an abuser are complicated. Systems often do not communicate or share information with one another, and decisions and orders made in one may conflict with decisions and orders made in the other. Any survivor, but especially those dealing with trauma, can feel overwhelmed by the complexity, lack of clarity and the many decisions they have to make.

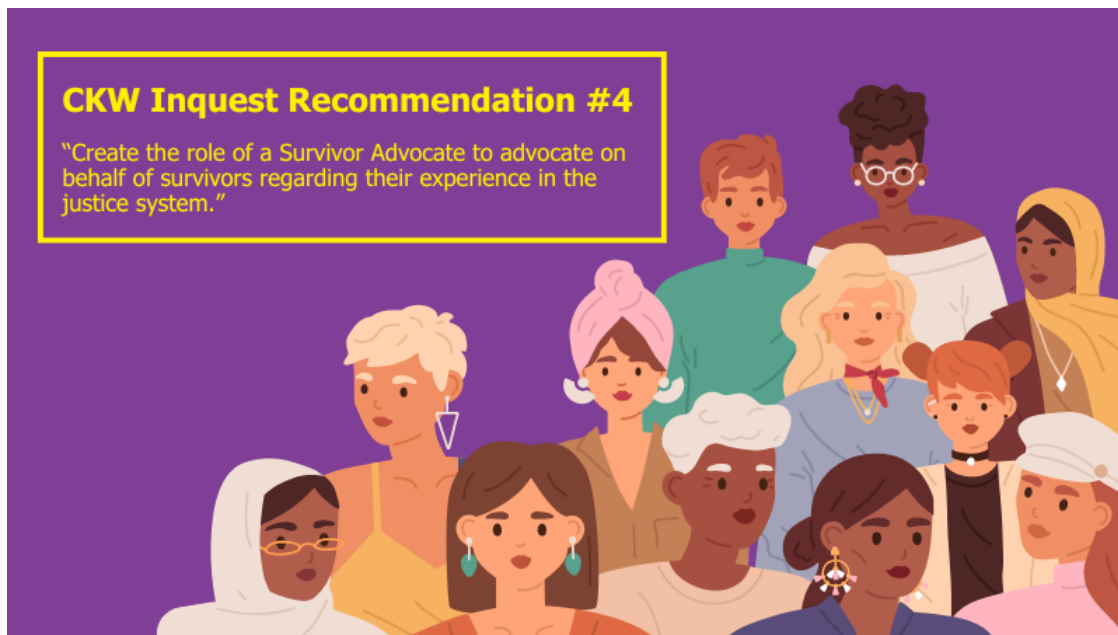
A survivor advocate would provide system navigation and could advocate with systems when requested to do so by a survivor, thus reducing her trauma, by making the process smoother. This could lead to better and safer outcomes.

Learn more and join us in calling for immediate action by visiting [LukesPlace.ca](https://lukesplace.ca)

X message:

We support the immediate passage of #Bill173 declaring #IPV a provincial epidemic. We also need to focus on implementing the other #CKWinquest recommendations such as recommendation #4 which calls to create a Survivor Advocate role.

Learn more: <https://lukesplace.ca/no-more-delay-when-it-comes-to-implementing-the-ckw-inquest-recommendations/> #ONpoli



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A survivor advocate would provide system navigation and could advocate with systems when requested to do so by a survivor, thus reducing her trauma, by making the process smoother. This could lead to better and safer outcomes.



Recommendation 5: Immediately institute a provincial implementation committee dedicated to ensuring that the recommendations from this Inquest are comprehensively considered, and any responses are fully reported and published. The committee should include senior members of relevant ministries central to IPV and an equal number of community IPV experts. It should be chaired by an independent IPV expert who could speak freely on progress made on implementation.

CKW Inquest Recommendation #5

"Immediately institute a provincial implementation committee dedicated to ensuring that the recommendations from this Inquest are comprehensively considered, and any responses are fully reported and published. The committee should include senior members of relevant ministries central to IPV and an equal number of community IPV experts. It should be chaired by an independent IPV expert who could speak freely on progress made on implementation."

Instagram/Facebook/LinkedIn message:

We support the immediate passage of Bill 173 declaring intimate partner violence an epidemic in #Ontario.

We also need to focus on implementing the other recommendations from the #CKWinquest, such as recommendation 5 which calls for the creation of an implementation committee.

Currently, inquest recommendations are non-binding and there is no external oversight of implementation. Recommendation five calls for the creation of a provincial implementation committee to ensure the recommendations from this inquest are comprehensively considered.

An implementation committee consisting of an equal number of senior members of relevant government ministries and community IPV experts, chaired by an independent IPV expert with the freedom to speak publicly about progress made or not made would create much-needed transparency and accountability, which would then encourage comprehensive consideration and potential implementation of recommendations.

Important to note: recommendation 1 from the Hadley Inquest over 20 years ago also called for an implementation committee.

Learn more and join us in calling for immediate action: <https://lukesplace.ca/no-more-delay-when-it-comes-to-implementing-the-ckwinquest-recommendations/> #ONpoli #Bill173

X message:

We support the immediate passage of #Bill173 declaring #IPV a provincial epidemic. We also need to focus on implementing the other #CKWinquest recommendations such as recommendation 5 which calls for an implementation committee.

Learn more: <https://lukesplace.ca/no-more-delay-when-it-comes-to-implementing-the-ckwinquest-recommendations/> #ONpoli

CKW Inquest Recommendation #5

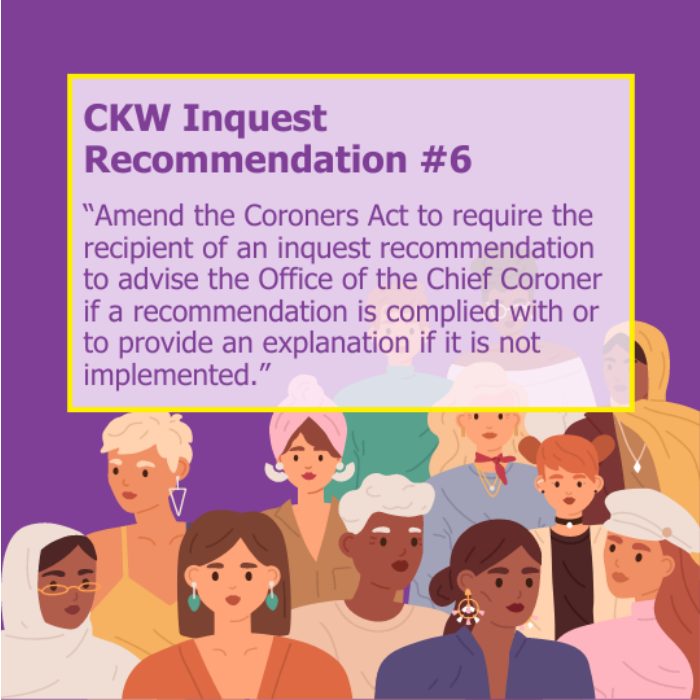
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Important to note: recommendation 1 from the Hadley Inquest over 20 years ago also called for an implementation committee.

Recommendation 6: Amend the Coroners Act to require the recipient of an inquest recommendation to advise the Office of the Chief Coroner if a recommendation is complied with or to provide an explanation if it is not implemented.



Instagram/Facebook/LinkedIn message:

We support the immediate passage of Bill 173 declaring intimate partner violence an epidemic in #Ontario.

We also need to focus on implementing the other recommendations from the #CKWinquest, such as recommendation 6 which calls for amendment to the Coroners Act to require the recipient of an inquest recommendation to advise the Office of the Chief Coroner if a recommendation is complied with or to provide an explanation if not.

This recommendation is focused on accountability and ensuring the recommendations are implemented. Having the Chief Coroner invested in

having the recommendations implemented identifies a leader responsible for following up on recommendations with recipients.

We believe that this recommendation should be implemented in combination with recommendation 5 which calls for a provincial implementation committee. Implementing recommendations 5 and 6 would promote ongoing conversations around the inquest recommendations and allow us to examine and address any barriers that prevent implementation.

Learn more and join us in calling for immediate action: <https://ow.ly/bgr050Rvj2O> #ONpoli #Bill173

X message:

We support the immediate passage of #Bill173 declaring #IPV an epidemic. We also need to focus on implementing the other #CKWinquest recommendations such as recommendation 6 which calls for an amendment to the Coroners Act.

More information: <https://ow.ly/whii50RviZj> #ONpoli

CKW Inquest Recommendation #6

"Amend the Coroners Act to require the recipient of an inquest recommendation to advise the Office of the Chief Coroner if a recommendation is complied with or to provide an explanation if it is not implemented."

This recommendation is focused on accountability and ensuring the recommendations are implemented. Having the Chief Coroner invested in having the recommendations implemented identifies a leader responsible for following up on recommendations with recipients. We believe that this recommendation should be implemented in combination with recommendation 5 which calls for a provincial implementation committee. Implementing recommendations 5 and 6 would promote ongoing conversations around the inquest recommendations and allow us to examine and address any barriers that prevent implementation

Bill C-332 (An Act to amend the Criminal Code (controlling or coercive conduct))

At Luke's Place, we support women and their children who have left abuse and are engaged with the family law/court process through both direct service and system change work. Through this work, we have developed a deep understanding of the many ways different legal systems intersect with and affect women's family law experiences.

We have followed discussions about the criminalization of coercive control with great interest and through the lens of the potential impact of such a move on survivors and their engagement with both criminal and family law.

Our position is that criminalization is not the best approach to respond to abusers who engage in coercively controlling behaviours.

Last year, MP Laurel Collins introduced a [private members bill – Bill C-332](#) – which would criminalize coercive control.

Following that, the Department of Justice, with its provincial and territorial counterparts, held a series of virtual consultations at which stakeholders shared their perspectives on criminalization. Luke's Place Legal and Advocacy Directors both participated in these [consultations](#).

Bill C-332 passed first and second reading and then moved to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights for further study. As part of this process, the Committee held public hearings. Luke's Place submitted a [written brief](#) and our Advocacy Director, Pamela Cross, appeared as a witness to give [oral testimony](#).

Where the Bill is now

Following the public hearings, the Committee met to discuss possible amendments to the Bill. It returned the [Bill to the House of Commons with significant revisions](#), where it will be debated and voted on one last time before moving to the Senate, where the same process will repeat itself. The amendments that the Committee has put forward reflect the input from witnesses at the hearings and considerably strengthen the Bill. That's good news.

However, Luke's Place continues to oppose the criminalization of coercive control altogether, and we plan to take that perspective to the Senate if and when the Bill reaches the public hearing stage there.

[Read our full statement on the status of Bill C-332 as of May 2024.](#)

Bill C-233 (An Act to amend the Criminal Code and the Judges Act (violence against an intimate partner))

[Bill C-233](#), also known as "Keira's Law" after four-year-old Keira Kagan who was killed by her father in 2020, received royal assent on April 27, 2023. Keira's law is an important advancement in the law when it comes to judicial education on issues of intimate partner violence.

Federally, the Judges Act requires that the Canadian Judicial Council consider providing continuing education on intimate partner violence and coercive control in intimate partner and family relationships. In Ontario, the Courts of Justice Act requires that all newly appointed judges undertake to participate in courses related to topics that include intimate partner violence and coercive control in intimate partner and family relationships.

Now that these important changes in the law have been made, we are focusing our attention on advocacy related to the content and delivery of the training and education. We want to make sure that survivors and the organizations that support them have a say when it comes to creating and delivering this content and that accountability measures are put in place to make sure judges are implementing what they have learned.

At the end of 2023, Luke's Place responded to an open call for feedback from the National Judicial Institute (NJI) about the topics that should be included in future judicial training and education. The NJI is the institution that develops and delivers training programs for federally appointed judges. Excerpts from our feedback can be found on our [blog](#).

Call for a review of Mandatory Charging Policies

Mandatory charging policies, introduced over 40 years ago, take the responsibility away from survivors for deciding whether to lay criminal charges in cases of intimate partner violence (IPV). Police are directed to lay charges where they believe there is a reasonable likelihood of conviction. The hope when these policies were first introduced was that they would increase survivors' safety, increase reporting and perpetrator accountability, and improve police responsiveness to IPV.

Unfortunately based on the experiences of the women we support, we know that, instead, some women are criminalized. This is an unintended consequence that occurs when women have contacted the police for help and are misidentified as the primary aggressor. Black, Indigenous, queer, disabled, migrant, transgender, and low-income women are disproportionately subjected to IPV. These same communities are also disproportionately criminalized by police, further contributing to the issue of survivors being criminally charged. This criminal charge can have a disastrous effect on a woman's family law case, because the family court may view her as the abuser rather than the victim/survivor.

A survivor may reach out to the police to de-escalate the immediate violence without any intention of having her ex-partner charged. There are several reasons why a survivor may not want her partner to be charged - he could be the primary income earner and a criminal charge could affect the family's ability to meet their basic needs, or it could impact their immigration status. The threat of a criminal charge against either person is enough to discourage some survivors from reaching out for help.

There is little formal research on how mandatory charging policies have affected those they were intended to protect, even though calls for review have been made over the past 20 years, including:

- In 2005, the Women Abuse Council of Toronto wrote a report that made six recommendations for changes to the then-current approach to mandatory charging
- In 2009, the provincial Domestic Violence Advisory Council called for a study to assess the impact of mandatory charging on women
- In 2022, the [CKW Inquest Jury's Verdict](#) included a recommendation for the provincial government to:

"Commission a comprehensive, independent and evidence-based review of the mandatory charging framework employed in Ontario, with a view to assessing its effect on IPV rates and recidivism, with particular attention to any unintended negative consequences." The province has accepted this recommendation "in part," also noting: "At this time, the Ministry of the Solicitor General does not have plans to commission an independent review of the mandatory charging framework."

- In 2023, at the national level, the [Nova Scotia Mass Casualty Commission](#) included a recommendation (rec. v. 10) for:

(a)provincial and territorial governments [to] replace mandatory arrest and charging policies and protocols for intimate partner violence offences with frameworks for structured decision-making by police, with a focus on violence prevention

What more do we need to take these recommendations seriously?

The negative impacts of mandatory charging are not going away on their own. The provincial government needs to take action to address this issue. We should not have to wait for another set of recommendations to say what we already know to be true.

It's time for the government to re-establish the Violence Against Women Roundtable

We ask the Ontario Government to re-establish the Violence Against Women Roundtable, which could lead a comprehensive, independent review of mandatory charging and:

- provide adequate resourcing to the Roundtable to ensure the review is professionally completed.
- have the Roundtable set a timeline for producing its final report and recommendations, to be no longer than 12 months from the time the review is started.
- ensure that this review include meaningful consultations with all stakeholders, including survivors, those who have caused the harm, women's advocates, police officers, Crown Attorneys, family law lawyers and the judiciary.
- The Roundtable provide its report and recommendations to the Legislative Assembly and publicly.

Next steps

We have prepared a discussion paper outlining the history of mandatory charging policies and how these policies have negatively affected many survivors. We wrote this paper to support our call for a review and to highlight the importance of addressing this issue without any further delay.

Learn more at LukesPlace.ca.

Feminist Law Reform & Media Leadership Virtual Workshops

Do you want to advocate for systemic change, write an op-ed or give an interview to the media but worry that you don't have enough knowledge or skills? Then these two workshops are for you. These self-directed online workshops were designed for Violence Against Women (VAW) service providers across Canada.

We are happy to offer **FREE** [online advocacy and media capacity and skills-building workshops developed for frontline VAW workers](#).

Feminist Law Reform

A self-directed multi-module e-learning that looks at how to do law reform as a community-based organization. It covers the steps in a law reform campaign, including how to work effectively in a coalition. It also looks at other forms of law reform and recent campaigns. Participants gain access to a comprehensive toolkit.

Feminist Media Leadership

This self-directed multi-module e-learning looks at how to work with the media to promote gender-based violence concerns. It covers traditional and social media, the role of a media spokesperson, communication tools and media interviews. It also explores how much language matters in all these situations. Participants gain access to a comprehensive toolkit.

If you are interested in accessing both or either of the workshops, please [contact us](#).

Helpful Links

Resources

[Culleton, Kuzyk & Warmerdam Inquest Jury Recommendations](#)

[Forty-four percent: A short history of intimate partner violence by Pamela Cross](#)

[WE REMEMBER: A toolkit about inquests and community consultations for feminist organizations in rural communities based on the 2022 CKW Inquest in Renfrew County](#)

[WE REMEMBER: A report from the community for the inquest into the murders of Carol Culleton, Anastasia Kuzyk and Nathalie Warmerdam](#)

[The Government of Canada response to the recommendations to the Chief Coroner](#)

[The Province of Ontario response to the recommendations to the Chief Coroner \(Letter\)](#)

[The Province of Ontario response to the recommendations to the Chief Coroner: Part II \(Letter\)](#)

[The Province of Ontario response to the recommendations to the Chief Coroner \(Spreadsheet\)](#)

[The Province of Ontario response to the recommendations to the Chief Coroner: Part II \(Spreadsheet\)](#)

[The Office of the Chief Coroner response to the recommendations to the Chief Coroner](#)

[The Privacy Commissioner response to the recommendations to the Chief Coroner](#)

[Building a Bigger Wave – Privacy & Information Sharing Infographic](#)

[Building a Bigger Wave – Privacy & Information Sharing FAQs](#)

[List of Municipalities that have declared IPV an epidemic](#)

[Culleton, Kuzyk & Warmerdam Inquest Media Coverage](#)

Provincial

Legislative Assembly of Ontario – Constituency contact information:

<https://www.infogo.gov.on.ca/infogo/home.html#orgProfile/6/en>

Legislative Assembly of Ontario – Queen’s Park contact information:

<https://www.infogo.gov.on.ca/infogo/home.html#orgProfile/5/en>

ⁱ Police reports of IPV reveal a gradual increase in Canada over the past seven years. In 2021, police assisted 114,132 victims of IPV aged 12 years and older (344 victims per 100,000 population), which marked a 2% increase from the previous year (Statistics Canada, 2022).

ⁱⁱ Exposure to IPV represented the largest proportion of substantiated child maltreatment investigations in Ontario in 2018 (Fallon et al, 2018).

ⁱⁱⁱ Incidents of spousal violence (which includes relationships of married, common-law, separated, or divorced partners of at least 15 years of age) that occurred in 2009 cost Canadians approximately \$7.4 billion (Zhang et al, 2013).

^{iv} Please note that this is not an exhaustive list.