

***Cross-Sectoral Violence Against Women  
Strategy Group (CSVAWSG)***

**Final Report**

Prepared For  
The Status of Women Canada

**September 2004**

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## **I BACKGROUND**

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The CSVAWSG was established in 2002 in reaction to the alarming increase of women murdered by their male partners. The document Emergency Measures was developed aimed at immediately and drastically reducing the levels of violence against women in the province of Ontario. It outlined recommendations aimed at 13 key sectors all in dire need of immediate political, social and economic action to address core issues. The Group believed that the best way to realize a comprehensive strategy of this nature would be to bring the community representatives from all the sectors together, who are concerned with violence against women and thus women's equality issues. The idea was that we would collectively develop a long term approach that synthesizes the key priorities of all the relevant sectors, towards one consistent approach that addresses the core issues.

In the spring of 2003 we received a grant from Status of Women Canada that allowed us to conduct our work in a non-voluntary fashion which meant women from all over the province could be brought together to develop the strategy and actions, implemented by a full-time Coordinator. Thus representatives from all the relevant sectors, women's communities, and regions of Ontario, were invited to work in the Group, in a participatory, integrated and collaborative manner in the areas of political and bureaucratic monitoring and involvement in policy and program issues, developing regional networks and assisting women in organizing around this issue, and in the development of resources and training materials for public education purposes.

## II TERMS OF REFERENCE

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### **What is the Cross-Sectoral Violence Against Women Strategy Group?**

CSVAWSG represents a wide variety of local and provincial women's groups who have come together to develop a response to the issue of violence against women, one that pursues the priorities for all the key sectors involved with the issue. We want to develop and present a comprehensive approach to addressing the issue of violence against women in Ontario that understands the core causes and issues in all their complexity, levels and interaction.

### **Mission**

To develop and sustain a broad-based cross-sectoral response to the issue of violence against women in Ontario, and to work towards social, political and economic justice for all women using a multi-leveled approach which includes social policy and systems change, as well as local level capacity building.

### **Guiding Principles**

1. Violence against women is rooted in social, political and economic inequality between men and women.
  2. Women are not victims by nature, they become victims because they cannot access the means to protect and support their children and themselves.
  3. Strengthening women's economic and social position must be the centerpiece of any plan to stem violence against women and children.
  4. The growing gap between the rich and the poor in Canadian society is impoverishing women, especially women of colour and aboriginal women and women with disabilities. This weakens women's position in averting male violence.
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5. Aboriginal women, racialized women, recent immigrants, refugee

women, women with disabilities and poor women face compounded inequalities that weaken their position even further. Traditional generic approaches to addressing violence against women do not work for these women.

6. Women's safety and freedom depends on a comprehensive, consistent, long-term approach that addresses the root problem of women's social, economic and political inequality.
  7. Violence against women is a gender-specific reality and requires a gender-specific solution
  8. Public policy development must include active participation of women from all communities and sectors; especially those who face compounded inequalities.
  9. Individual responses are not the answer; the government has a social and legal responsibility to use public resources to prevent and stop violence against women.
  10. Criminalization strategies don't stop or prevent violence against women, and draw resources from social programs. Law and order initiatives favour the use of heavy-handed law enforcement strategies against socially disadvantaged groups, which in no way addresses the violence women face in their intimate and familial relationships. They also serve to scare off women in low-income and racialized communities from reporting violence, putting those women at further risk of death or serious injury.
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### **Organizational Structure**

Over the past year CSVAWSG has established an organizational structure, that is designed to be sustainable and permanent, one that has positioned itself as a key player in the VAW movement.

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### ***Steering Committee***

The Cross-Sectoral Group is not incorporated and does not have a board

of directors. We have a Steering Committee that meets monthly and is responsible for record keeping, meeting arrangements, finances, agendas, membership recruitment, maintenance, and overseeing the work of the Coordinator. We have been rotating chairs for each meeting and the Coordinator prepares the minutes.

### ***Financial Management***

Faye Peterson Transition House continues to provide financial services such as banking, payroll, petty cash disbursements, etc. to the CSVAWSG. In addition they are responsible to the CSVAWSG to provide financial updates as well as financial reports to the funder. There are no overhead fees allocated to this function.

### ***Lobby Committee and other Sub-committees***

Our sub-committees are working groups that focus on specific priorities. The Lobby Committee was formed to advance social policy and change at the Provincial level. We aim to create public and political pressure through education, information, and action directed at both the community and government. The Committee has been involved in the development of press releases in reaction to government announcements and in the organization of meetings with the Minister of Community and Social Services. We have used sub-committees for the purposes of conducting the planning events, some writing and direct involvement in areas needing research. The sub-committees have been made up of volunteers from the larger membership and/or Steering Committee and have communicated via email, conference call and face-to-face meetings.

### ***Supervisory Committee***

Reporting to the CSVAWSG (as a whole) the personnel committee provides support and feedback to the Coordinator on day to day or operational items. In addition they have the role of monitoring and evaluating the Coordinators performance. Other responsibilities include assisting in the development of press releases, grant applications, minutes, agendas etc.

***Larger Membership – Partner Agencies***

The Cross-Sectoral Group is made up of representatives of a wide variety of women's agencies, services, programs and organizations that reflect the diversity of sectors, regions and women's communities from equity seeking groups in Ontario, (Please see list attached). All members of the group (including those who have not been able to attend as consistently) are encouraged to add their comments about items that arise, through Listserv communication.

There will be participatory agreement mechanisms between members in order to affirm commitments from members on roles and responsibilities. Members will also outline the resources that they can provide for the Group, in-kind and other. A process will be developed that allow us to quantify contributions. In addition, a conflict resolution clause will be developed that will outline a protocol for dealing with conflict that may arise in the Group.

Members are asked to take proposals from the large group to their membership and larger networks for discussion and input. Members are canvassed at meeting for consensus re decisions that the group needs to make. Participants are invited to suggest items for the agenda at every meeting.

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### **III Activities September 2003-2004**

#### **a. Before the Election Call**

The Steering Committee of the Cross Sectoral Group met on a regular basis throughout the spring and summer of 2003, focusing on the need to hire a coordinator, with first task to revise the original Emergency Measures document to reflect emerging issues and developments in policy affecting women.

The group officially received funding in March 2003, and began the search for a Coordinator. A call was put out advertising for an individual who would be responsible for the maintenance and development of a non-partisan provincial network of community-based organizations and individuals working to end violence against women.

The specific areas of responsibility were outlined as:

- To monitor all systemic processes as they pertain to violence against women.
- To build the diverse, Ontario-wide membership of the CSVAWSG
- To provide support to grassroots and community-based groups throughout the province
- To assist the CSVAWSG in developing policy analysis and recommendations.
- To prepare briefs and/or reports for both oral and written presentation to relevant stakeholders
- To develop strategic contacts and provide policy analysis and consultation to women's and community groups, public officials, etc.
- To act as primary spokesperson to the media.
- To prepare the necessary reports and funding proposals.
- To perform other related duties as assigned by the Cross-Sectoral Steering Committee.

The interviewing process involved bringing in representatives from key organizations such as; Faye Peterson Transition House in Thunder Bay, the Assaulted Women's Helpline, Nellie's, Women's Habitat, Sistering, Toronto Rape Crisis Centre, Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres – to conduct the

interview process. With two interview calls a Coordinator was hired in late August 2003. On September 15, 2003 the CSVAWSG Coordinator began her one year position. A supervisory team (three members of the Steering Committee) was established to oversee and monitor the day to day activities of the Coordinator on behalf of the larger Steering Committee.

A comprehensive orientation process occurred with the supervisory team meeting with the coordinator to share information on the history of this initiative, all written documents, and numerous hard and electronic files that the group has collected over the years.

## **b. The Election**

Immediately after the Coordinator had officially begun her position, the provincial election was called for October 2, 2003. The Coordinator and the supervisory team were thrown into the task of organizing pre-election activities, prior to the Coordinator's official start date.

In June and July 2003, members of the Steering Committee conducted an informal survey with women's groups and agencies around the province to determine the issues and demands that the group would bring forward during and after the provincial election. Our members asked the question *"What demand would your organization/sector make of the provincial government, that would ensure that we can stop violence against women?"* This information was used to outline recommendations to be incorporated into the **Emergency Measures** document. The document was intended to be used to lobby the provincial government for specific changes, by sector, women's communities, and regions of Ontario.

The planning committee decided they would organize one key pre-election event. The planning group decided emphasis in pre-election planning should be on the development of a "message". This message should outline the group's main desired areas of focus for the election. Pre-election activities would involve key sectoral and regional spokeswomen to speak out against violence against women and make the links with need for housing, adequate living incomes for women who are starting over, the need for more services and supports, the need for affordable childcare, work protections, etc... The

following election activities occurred:

- (1) A **press release** was developed, circulated, distributed and used throughout Ontario and within organizations doing political lobbying,
- (2) **Staged media events** to occur in local communities that highlights VAW issues from a Cross-Sectoral perspective. For example, Women's Habitat offered to host an event with other community agencies in their area (the Daily Bread Food Bank, LAMP and others) that involved inviting local provincial candidates to come to the shelter and talk with residents about their concerns. Other women in attendance offered to use Take Back the Night events to highlight provincial election issues.
- (3) A communication was developed and sent to the **televised provincial debate on CBC - September 15, 2003.**
- (4) Group made a contribution, with the support of OAITH to an **article by Michele Landsberg** of the Toronto Star, that articulated CSVAWSG's position, **(Please see Appendix # 3: Press Releases & News Articles).**
- (5) An attempt was made to **coordinate concurrent media events and/or articles** on or around September 25.

The following lists pre-election activities that CSVAWSG members were directly involved in. CSVAWSG materials, particularly the press release, supported the work of the following activities:

The following organizations developed a **joint Advertisement in the Thunder Bay local paper** regarding the record of the current government.

Faye Peterson Transition House  
Decade Council  
First Step Women's Shelter (Sioux Lookout)  
Atikokan Crisis Centre (Atikokan)  
Geraldton Family Resource Centre (Geraldton)  
Marjorie House (Marathon)  
New Starts Women's Shelter (Red Lake)

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Northwestern Ontario Women's Centre  
Women's Place Kenora  
Kenora Sexual Assault Centre  
Thunder Bay Sexual Assault/Crisis Line

**Women's Habitat (Steering Committee member) conducted a round table discussion with local candidates.** Clients, board, staff and ex-clients were invited to a discussion, which centred on issues like housing, justice and childcare. The event was held in the shelter with about 25 people in attendance.

**The Ontario Federation of Labour's Women's Committee** developed an Women Vote '03 pre-election on-the-job canvass of women, by women. The purpose of the kit was three-fold: Putting women's issues and concerns front and centre on the political agenda; drawing more women into the election process; and Mobilizing women to vote. 20, 000 kits were distributed to community and labour groups and used by the CSVAWSG network.

### **c. Policy & Program Reform and Advocacy**

Immediately after the election the group focused their work in the following areas:

- Work-planning – identifying priorities within the context of the new government
- Presentations: i.e. Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres
- Preparation for the next Large Group Meetings and steering committee meetings
- Targeted Outreach Plan and Promotion
- Development of Interim Report for Status of Women
- Working with diverse networks for the drafting of the Emergency Measures & Beyond document
- Making provincial contacts with the Ministry of Community and Social Services, the Ontario Women's Directorate, and lobbying for issues to be included in Throne Speech

- In Thunder Bay one of founding Steering Committee members is to meet with MPP's Michael Gravelle and Bill Mauro on November 24th to confirm the new government's commitment to women.
- A letter to Sandra Pupatello, Minister of Community and Social Services was also sent requesting that she ensure that the government upholds the commitment to women that they made in the fall of 2000 when Dalton McGuinty signed the Cross-Sectoral Emergency Measures declaration, and that measures to address women's inequality are included in the throne speech on November 19, 2003.
- The CSVAWSG will also be participating in OAITH's Lobby Day on November 24<sup>th</sup>, 2003.

The result was our promotion of and association with the following campaigns:

- Housing Ontario Means Everyone campaign
- Ontario Needs a Raise campaign
- OFL Anti-Violence Campaign
- Women Our Vote Counts
- Oshawa Durham Rape Crisis Centre - Take Back the Night

Pay the Rent Feed the Kids campaign

One of the goals after the election was to identify lobby opportunities and create relevant contacts within the provincial government bureaucracy and political office. We focused on developing the capacity of the CSVAWSG Steering Committee and larger group members in collective strategies for influencing the provincial Ministry of Community and Social Services – the ministry holding the primary responsibility for VAW. We have been working with them to ensure that issues are addressed from a cross-sectoral women's equality framework.

We have been quite successful in profiling ourselves with the new Liberal government as a significant and one of the major organizations and/or group in the province needing to be consulted on VAW issues.

Beginning with our initial meeting with the Minister in March 2004, that was unfortunately cut short due to an announcement of the death of a MPP – a close friend of the Minister.

We re-organized the meeting that took place on March 24, 2003. The agenda for this meeting included four minute presentations from women representing the following sectors/communities and issues :

**1. Anti-violence sector, Aboriginal, and Northern Women's Issues  
– Gloria Harris**

- 1) Increase funding to aboriginal women's shelters
- 2) Increase support service to aboriginal women in all comm
- 3) Improve access ensuring transportation
- 4) Develop extensive outreach to northern and rural women
- 5) Justice – Judges to be “trained” on the dynamics of abuse in light of what happened in the Yukon

**2. Francophone Women - Ghislaine Sirois**

- as per Emergency Measures & Beyond

**3. Immigrant and Refugee Women, Supporting Women's  
Community-based services/supports - Lucya Spencer**

- 1) Funding for community based women's services.
- 2) Access to interpretation and dealing with the justice
- 3) Federal-provincial collaboration/linkages for the federally funded immigrant settlement services.

**4. Women with Disabilities and Deaf women - Rabia Khedr**

- as per Emergency Measures & Beyond

**5. Income security, social assistance and childcare – Jacqueline**

Thompson OSSN

### **6. Housing - Amanda Dale**

And WHAG's real concerns are around coordination between housing and VAW: so my points are structure (have a joint committee or round table between the housing portfolios and OWD/COMSOC); supports to housing to keep the marginally housed in their housing (health); universal design standards that account for disability issues and strollers all in one; increased affordable stock with women-only buildings and design considerations for women fleeing violence. (our platforms develop these in detail).

### **7. Labour and workplace - Denise Brown**

Employment Standrad Act – workplace saftey policies. The word policy needs to be expanded. Talk about the Human Rights Code and the Health and Safety Act. Job protection and expanded leave for abused women. The issue of workers who have no protection at all cross between organize and unorganize issues and poverty.

### **8. Rape Crisis Centres, more specifics from anti-violence sector – Marilyn O**

Talk about that main priority of this government and that we are not accepting their definition of sexual violence. Look at all forms of sexual violence. 5% cut reinstated. The need to maintain independent feminist women services and here is how we can do that. Talk about Police accountability broad provincial points, fact that the reporting are extremely low. Pam will not speak for Aboriginal women, but can frame it more broadly showing our support for the women in theYukon who are trying to protect women in the community. She will talk about issue of appropriate and inappropriate sentencing.

### **9. Women's Health Issues- Tekla Hendrickson - Health**

- That this is a broader social sector issue
- Must look beyond hospitals and the healthcare sector as the traditional model and emphasize more community-base women's services and take their leadership from there

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- Interministerial work needed

We then moved into specific questions to the Minister which our Coordinator posed. They were;

- 1) What are the policies or reforms that the government is looking at around the issue of violence against women?;
- 2) What will be the structured process for consultation and accountability with the CSVAWSG?
- 3) What are they looking at in terms of resources for addressing the issues of VAW?

On April 15th the Group developed and circulated a press release in reaction to the McGuinty government's announcement to fight violence against women in the province (please see Appendix #3).

On May 19th the Group circulated another press release in reaction to the government's budget announcement, (Please see Appendix #3). In addition, **Jacqueline Thomson of the Ontario Social Safety Network and Lifespin of London Ontario** (*perhaps ask Jacquie to expand on this if you would like*)

participated at the Budget Lockdown, taking our press release and copies of the Executive Summary of Emergency Measures. She would speak on the fact that there isn't anything concrete yet in the planning process and that the government is not engaging in real consultations unless they recognize groups like CSVAWSG who bring the feminist grass-root perspective from a variety of communities and sectors.

One of the main thrusts of our lobby efforts was to convince the Minister's office that we need to be at any table that she convenes to address the issue of VAW in the province. We asked that we could have a place at the inter-ministerial Committee set up to address the issue of VAW.

In the summer of 2004 we realized our greatest success to date when we pressed for representation and a voice at the Minister's Housing Supports for Abused Women held in August 2004. A Steering Committee member and the Coordinator attended this meeting that was dominated by mainstream

organizations such as Family Service groups, rather than organizations in the VAW sector and/or feminist community-based groups. The following outlines our response to the questions posed :

**1. Are there other specific objectives that you feel should be addressed in the design of the program?**

**We have offered some re-wording of the first three objectives, for purposes of specificity and clarification.**

- To connect women with the community supports, financial resources and to secure affordable housing, that will assist women to build stable lives apart from their abusers.
- To implement a woman-focused program that serves as many women as possible, that recognizes the diversity of needs that exist cross regions, economic circumstances, and for socially marginalized women. A program that does not de-gender the issue of violence, recognizing that the vast majority of perpetrators of violence against women are men, and thus is based on a system of male dominance, the socialization of individuals, and the nature of economic and social exploitation. (Please see the Preliminary report submitted by the Special Rapporteur on violence against women. United Nations 22 November 1994). In addition such a program understands how the experience of violence is compounded when other marginalized statuses, such as race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, income, single motherhood, disability, etc., intersect.
- To design a program that is accessible and flexible that will allow women to live in a range of housing situations independent from their abusers, as well as those who will live in new units created under the Affordable Housing Program.
- To invest in more services for more women. The \$3.5 million should supplement rather than replace sources of funding for existing services.

Concerns with the above objective, from a Cross-sectoral perspective is that such investment in more services for abused women will be at the expense of second stage housing. Second stage housing is needed as a critical bridge to safety for those women and their children who return to abusive situations

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because no other housing options exist for them. In our document *Emergency Measures and Beyond* – we stated as a priority recommendation, the allocation of \$3,360,000.00 in annualized funds to Second Stage Housing Programs via Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services.

- To build on best practices to get the most effective program model up and running as soon as possible.

This objective must be based on Best Practises that are developed and based on the work of community-based VAW focused agencies, rather than mainstream. In our document *Emergency Measures and Beyond* we outline extensively Best Practises in housing for abused women, (please see pages 26-32) these include affordable design practises, types of developments, accommodations, funding allocations, and zoning ideas. Much work has already been conducted by many of our CSVAWSG member organizations including, the Women Housing Action Group and the Second Stage Housing Alliance. We would suggest that linkages with these community-based experts will assist the government in the speedy development and implementation of the most effective model within the scope of available funding.

**2. Given their similar objectives, how can the new funding build on the existing investment in the Transitional Support Program? Should there be one program?**

While we support the Transitional Support Program, again we cannot do so at the expense of Second Stage Housing. There is a need for both, and as a group that is working towards a comprehensive, cross-sectoral, long-term plan that will address the root causes of violence against women, we believe that the funding allocation process should be based on shelters and Second Stage Housing working collaboratively together, determining their own region's priority needs..

**3. What kind of linkages need to be built among violence against women shelters, counselling agencies, housing providers and municipalities to provide supports that will help women maintain their placements in social housing?**

*We would need some elaboration on this question to enable us to address it.*

What is the assumption underlining this question? i.e. Why do you think women need help maintaining their placements? Are women losing their placements? If so, why do we think this is happening?

**4. What is the capacity of the organizations you represent to deliver a program that meets the proposed objectives? And 5) How can we maximize the impact of the new \$3.5 million in support service funding to benefit abused women?**

Certainly many of the direct service and front line organizations that are members of our Group have the capacity to deliver the proposed objectives. The issue however is whether or not these objectives represent the most effective way to maximize the impact of the \$3.5 million for housing supports for abused women? From the cross-sectoral perspective, representing diverse regions and women's communities of this province our recommendation is that we use the ideas and plans of expert organizations and Groups, who have already developed plans of actions for housing for abused women, based on research and direct service experiences. Organizations such as WHAG, Second Stage Housing Alliance, OAITH, and our Group itself, the CSVAWSG.

**5. The government is planning a provincial conference on supports for abused women in Spring 2005. What priorities would you like to see addressed at the conference? What resources would you need to support your attendance at the conference?**

The government stated that the provincial conference will provide a forum that will "allow community leaders, experts and service providers to share best practices"

The Cross-sectoral Group would like to share to this audience :

- The importance of a cross-sectoral approach – i.e. what that looks like, what we want and think will work, and the rationale for our strategy.
- We would emphasize the need for the government to make a significant investment both financially and organizationally.

- We would emphasize the need to expand our definition of violence against women to include sexual violence, poverty, workplace harassment, elder abuse, racism, violence against women with disabilities and Deaf women, as well as abuse by intimate partners, etc..and the appropriate supports that are needed.
- We would alert the policy makers and service providers to the tendency to de-gender the issue of violence, and emphasize the need for policy and funding to be directed in a way that does not do this..

The resources that the CSVAWSG would need is funding to pay for a CSVAWSG member to develop, and deliver a presentation from our group. As well funding that would cover the cost of attending, i.e. travel and accommodation.

(This question is directed to organizations with an interest in shelter services only)

**6. Some stakeholders have asked the government to conduct a review of the violence against women shelters. What would be the goal of a shelter review?**

Many of the organizations that are members of the CSVAWSG represent individual shelters and the Association. In both the Arlene May and Hadley Inquest reports recommendations for a review of shelter **funding** was presented to determine the adequacy of funding in the system, (Please see Arlene May Coroner's Inquest, Jury's Verdict and Recommendations, Ontario Women's Justice Network, July 1998 and Hadley Inquest Jury Recommendations, Ontario Women's Justice Network, February 20, 2002.). Our Group, again representing a vast diversity of VAW organizations across the province greatly support these recommendations and note the very distinct difference between a "shelter review" and a review of "shelter funding", thus we are curious of who these "stakeholders are" and are interested in obtaining more information on their recommendation for a shelter review.

After the meeting , the Minister expressed her support for the Groups work and recognition of the diverse membership that we work with. It was also evident that the Minister would invite us to the larger forum on Affordable Housing in the fall and most exciting was that the Group would be considered

to play a lead role, organizationally and as a participant in the proposed Provincial Conference for November 2005, sponsored by MCSS.

**d. Resource Development and Documentation**

We have been working collaboratively towards the articulation of our evolving collective voice, entrenching this in ***Resource Development and Documentation***. Various types of documentation including policy papers, resource tools - i.e. presentations, shorter information tools such as Executive Summary, two page fact sheets, etc..., have assisted us in both our networking and policy reform and advocacy work.

The current Liberal Government has implemented some of our recommendations from the Emergency Measures and Beyond document. They have given Violence Against Women agencies a 3% increase, they have increased Ontario Works payments by 3%, they are not clawing back the increase in the child tax credit of 3%, they are implementing the Housing Supports Program for Abused Women, and others.

Please see Appendix 1 and 2 for Emergency Measures & Beyond and its Executive Summary.

**e. Cross-sectoral Engagement and Network Development Outreach Planning**

The Cross-Sectoral Group represents a unique model of partnership among and between diverse women's organizations and individuals across the province. In the first year of work the foundation has been laid, equipping us now to focus more energy on developing local, community-level capacity of our growing regional networks. We have been encouraged by the diversity of women's communities, regions, and cross sectoral representation on our Steering Committee and the pilot regional visits to date. Our efforts have been successful in positioning CSVAWSG at a point where our profile has been established at a political and planning level and important players have come together affirming necessary relationships at a provincial level. Continuing efforts to affect change to the policy and systems level can now be more efficiently pursued with this collaborative effort of multiple partners, who mutually benefit.

An outreach strategy was used by the Group in our first year aiming to accomplish the following:

- Facilitate the involvement of women's organizations in the public policy process, from a **variety of sectors**
- Work towards the creation of a structure that ensures that the **analysis of marginalized women** and their organizations will be integrated into all sections of the **Emergency Measures & Beyond** document.
- Contribute towards a greater public understanding of the need for a **cross-sectoral, anti-racist, feminist, anti-poverty approach** to creating the conditions necessary to prevent and stop violence against women.
- To further develop the analysis of how **race, class, ability and poverty intersect** to affect women's experience of violence against women and the systemic response to violence against women.

The key areas where participant representation was targeted were:

- **Regional** representation – All regions need at least one representative, especially the south west and Parry Sound.
- Francophone women
- Representation from provincial women's groups, representing all **key sectors**, i.e. The Ontario Women's Health Network (OWHN), education (ETFO), labour, childcare (OCBCC)
- **First Nations and Aboriginal** women – i.e. Native Women's Association
- **Immigrant, refugee, ethno-racial** women – representing a diversity and proportionally reflective of the populations of ethnic communities in Ontario.
- **Lesbian and bisexual** women
- **Low and no income women**, women who live and work on the streets, and single mothers on assistance, i.e. Sistering
- **Younger women and older women**, (Older Women's Network, Ontario Young Peoples' Alliance)
- **Women with disabilities – cross disabilities**, (DAWN Ontario)

We were successful in bringing individual women and/or representatives of key organizations to be involved in the ad hoc lobby strategizing sessions and for recruitment to the Steering Committee.

#### **f. Building our Regional Networks**

We continued to pursue ongoing and continual networking events and forums to allow for the sharing of information to ensure that we are acutely aware of the environment under which we aim to conduct our political advocacy work.

Although our priority focused on policy & program reform, lobbying and advocacy, and resource development we were still able in our first year to connect with our regions and communities.

Of the priority areas for participant representation in our interim report we noted areas where we need to do more targeted outreach. The following meeting and joint initiatives with CSVAWSG served to enhance our networks and increase access to particular communities and/or regions.

#### **Aboriginal and First Nations Women**

Gloria Harris of Marjorie House in [REDACTED] has worked very closely with the Group in the second half of our first year. In particular she worked closely with the Group to define the key priorities for First Nations women related to this issue and to be presented to the Minister of Community of Social Services in March 2004. Gloria travelled from [REDACTED] to present and advocate for the following key points areas needing attention:

- 1) Increase funding to aboriginal women's shelters
- 2) Increase support service to aboriginal women in all communities
- 3) Improve access by ensuring that transportation is available
- 4) Develop extensive outreach to northern and rural women via government programming.
- 5) Justice – Judges to be “trained” on the dynamics of abuse in light of what happened in the Yukon.

Gloria also worked closely with the Coordinator in our attempt to bring more First Nations women to the Group. She connected us to the following key individuals and organizations:

1. Equay-Wuk (Women's Group)  
16-A Fourth Avenue N  
Sioux Lookout, Ont 807-737-2214  
Program Director, Felicia Waboose
2. Ontario Native Women's Association (Thunder Bay office)  
212 E Miles Street  
Thunder Bay 807-623-3442  
Executive Director, Josephine Mandamin  
President, Dawn Harvard

### **Southwest Region**

Primarily due to the hard work and commitment of one of our key Steering Committee members Jacqueline Thompson of London Ontario and her many regional affiliations we have increased our profile in this region. Jacqueline was involved in a Priority Housing debate in her area that lacked participation from feminist VAW advocates. She brought and presented, on behalf of the Group our position on the needs of abused women and housing.\

### **Immigrant and Refugee Women**

The Coordinator was contacted by Samantha Sherkin, Ph.D and Researcher with the Community Social Planning Council of Toronto to provide resources for an upcoming national conference dealing with Immigrant women and abuse. The CSVAWSG is highlighted in the report and presentation having provided several resources that served as the foundation of the piece. Ms. Sherkin's presentation was a huge success at the Seventh National Metropolis Conference held in Montreal from 25 to 28 March 2004 and is now a published document.

### **Ontario Women's Justice Network**

The Ontario Women's Justice Network is active again with newly acquired dollars and thus asked if they could post key CSVAWSG materials. The Coordinator prepared a package, (including Emergency Measures & Beyond, some press releases, and an overview of the Group) which can currently be viewed on their website at <http://www.owjn.org/>

## **Regional Work**

The Coordinator was able to travel to Belleville for the OCRCC as reported in the Interim report and in this term she went to Ottawa for the keynote presentation at the AGM for their Regional Coordinating Committee. Please Appendix # 4 for more details. In addition the SWC officer gave us some great referrals to follow up with in future work, such as Haitus House in Windsor and their Immigrant Women's Centre.

## **IV Vision – Moving Forward**

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Our vision for Phase II of our work remains the same, i.e. to develop a multi-leveled cross-sectoral approach to the issue of violence against women in Ontario, which includes social policy and systems change, as well as local level capacity building. However our focus and/or emphasis for this Phase of our work differs.

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With the establishment of the broader infrastructure and relevant processes now in place, the next logical point of focus would be to develop regions cross-sectorally in terms of the supports and services necessary to deal with the broad range of violence that women experience including; sexual violence, poverty, workplace harassment, elder abuse, racism, violence against women with disabilities and Deaf women, as well as abuse by intimate partners. It is helpful to use the "social capital" concept when attempting to understand the merits of this regional capacity building focus. This analysis views particular types of social networks and social resources as 'capital' in relationship to their capacity to enable specific positive outcomes – in this case the delivery of an array of cross sectoral supports and services necessary to deal with violence against women. Social capital can be considered to refer to the networks of social relations that provide access to needed resources and supports. Having spent our initial year establishing ourselves organizationally and addressing issues at the broader policy level, while we need to maintain and continue this work, our focus now requires us to invest in the development and accruing of 'social capital' at the local level, working with communities to build those social networks by, sharing knowledge and affirming shared values and principles, identifying regional priorities and networks, and nurturing successful practises.

It is this sustained investment that we are asking for now, as local level capacity building is the next step in the recognition of the multiple dimensions and thus multiple leveled strategies needed, to address the issue of violence against women in Ontario comprehensively.

# **Appendix #1:**

## **Emergency Measures & Beyond**

# **Appendix #2:**

## **Emergency Measures & Beyond - Executive Summary**

# **Appendix #3:**

## **Press Release & News Articles**

## **Michele Landsberg Article, Sept. 28, 2003**

**Sep. 28, 2003. 01:00 AM**

### **Tories waging a sinister war on women**

Strange, but as I listened to the provincial men's debate, I didn't hear the word "woman" mentioned even once, beginning to end. And yet it could easily be argued that after eight years of the most misogynist government in living memory, the Tories have targeted women for more serious harm than almost any other group. No sooner was Mike Harris elected than he was vilifying welfare mothers, nurses and teachers. Every woman-focused service in the province was hacked and slashed.

The extraordinary thing is that the harms are so vivid, so pervasive and so frightening, and yet they seem completely invisible to the electorate. Of course, harm done to large groups of women will reverberate throughout the population. Attack schoolteachers, and the children will suffer. Fire 12,000 nurses, and sick people will feel the pain. Go after welfare mothers with unique viciousness, and their children will most certainly be savaged.

Here's how the stealth war on women achieves its sinister impact. First, you cut the welfare rates 21 per cent, to a starvation level. Then you cut all the battered women's shelters by 5 per cent, and keep those levels frozen for eight years. Slash legal aid certificates for family law by 75 per cent. Grudgingly restore only a tiny portion. Freeze the minimum wage. Cut child care by \$100 million.

Now that things are really getting tough for women, introduce the 60-hour work week. Tighten the screw: Cancel all new subsidized housing and download the cost of all the rest. Then cut all funding for second-stage housing – the kind of rent-controlled apartments, with supportive social services, that help abused women get on their feet and stay free of their abusers.

Multiply by two the rate of female poverty for immigrant women, and those with disabilities. For First Nations women, multiply by four.

"This government has no concept of sexual violence or of women's poverty," said Sandy Onyalo, executive director of the Ottawa Rape Crisis Centre. "We see women coming in for counselling who are so hungry that we have to save food for them. Fewer women than ever are reporting rape to the police because they're afraid of being charged with mischief. And although the government has cut and frozen funds for core services, they now demand we ask every woman on a crisis call if she was 'satisfied with our service.' How ridiculous. And the paperwork! We have to give

quarterly quantitative reports. We are getting more suicide calls ... we're stretched too thin."

Gloria Harris, a First Nations woman who had to fight the government to keep her shelter open in Marathon, said, "They're big on fake consultations. They announce these policies to us, and then tell the public that they `consulted' us."

With all this, how is a battered woman with children supposed to flee? Where will she go? How will she work and care for her children? Every avenue has been cut off, every escape route barricaded. The shelters themselves, according to Statistics Canada, are full to bursting. Three quarters of them have recently had to turn away desperate women and children for lack of space.

It's not only Dudley George whose death is festering unacknowledged on the Tories' doorstep. In 2001, the number of men in Canada charged with killing their wife or ex-wife rose from 52 to 69 (this is just the number of charges) and almost all the increase was in Ontario, according to Statistics Canada. Sooner or later, the children, too, are in the line of fire. Now here's the really diabolical aspect to Tory policies. In amendments to the Child and Family Services Act 2000, the Conservative government actually managed to put even more women and more children at risk from violent abusers. All the political parties fell into the trap of supporting it, probably because, in a pale echo of Conservative contempt for women, they didn't bother to consult front-line women.

It was those front-line women who spelled out the problems to me last week, as I sat in the tiny downtown office of OAITH, the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses.

When public furor arose about infant and child deaths in Ontario, the government responded by giving more money to police and law enforcement, which suited their "law and order" agenda splendidly, while doing nothing to keep women and children safer.

Then - and here's the key flaw - it demanded that all shelters report to the Children's Aid every child accompanying his or her battered mother to the shelter. The ham-fisted theory was that all children witnessing abuse are harmed.

There's some truth in this, but you don't trap women into permanent danger by threatening to snatch her child if she admits to being beaten. Immediately, of course, the number of children arriving at shelters decreased by 10 per cent. (Meanwhile, Tories hold the perpetrator "accountable" by sending him a letter).

"Even the volunteer boards of shelters are intimidated by this new law," said Ghislaine Sirois, co-ordinator of the francophone version of OAITH. "Of course, while Children's Aid gets more money for this new burden, we front-line services get nothing for the training we have to do."

In many U.S. states, the danger to children in abusive homes has been handled far more intelligently, by putting feminist front-line shelter workers into the children's agencies as liaison officers who are sensitive to the complexities of domestic violence, and equally committed to protecting women and their children. Most children's aid workers, let's face it, have not received sophisticated training in issues of violence against women.

The waste of women's lives and energies, the destruction of women's services, the sheer bloody-minded hatefulness of the Tories toward women and children, has diminished this province in heart-breaking ways.

If this goes on, Sirois said, "In five years we won't know there was ever a vibrant women's community in Ontario."

"People!" exclaimed Beth Jordan of the Assaulted Women's Helpline. "Are you paying attention?"

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Michele Landsberg's column usually appears in the Star Saturday and Sunday. Her e-mail address is [mlandsb@thestar.ca](mailto:mlandsb@thestar.ca)

## Ontario-wide anti-violence women's Group acknowledges the Province's first steps – and the long journey ahead of us

APRIL 15, 2004

### **For Immediate Release:**

The ***Cross-sectoral Violence Against Women's Group***, (CSVAWSG) representing a vast variety of local and provincial women's groups, acknowledges the McGuinty government's April 6th announcement to fight violence against women, as the very initial first steps of a long-term cross-sectoral plan of action. The government announcement included; the provision of \$3.5 million in additional funding to create second-stage housing supports for women leaving shelters, an investment of \$4.9 million in public education and awareness campaign, monies towards the improvement of training for police officers, and support for a provincial conference that will allow community leaders, experts and service providers to share best practices.

" We certainly agree with the Premier that this is only a first step in our long journey back from the crisis of 1995 when cuts to shelters, sexual assault centres, and welfare hugely effected women in Ontario. It is imperative however, as the government moves ahead that they recognize that there needs to be a significant investment, based on a comprehensive cross-sectoral strategy that delivers supports and services to deal with the broad range of violence that women experience including sexual violence, poverty, workplace harassment, elder abuse, racism, violence against women with disabilities and Deaf women, as well as abuse by intimate partners. We applaud the government for keeping their commitment to restore funding to Second Stage Housing, the implementation of an Ministerial Committee that will bring all key cross-sectoral Ministers together to work on this issue, and the change in the exclusive focus on criminal justice to acknowledging the supports that victims need and the appropriate prevention strategies," said Doris Rajan, the Group's Coordinator.

" We have appreciated from the onset that this government is prepared to tackle this critical issue uncompromisingly, as demonstrated with the appointment of his Parliamentary Assistant to the Premier, Laurel Broten to develop a package of reforms and assigning the Honourable Minister Sandra Pupatello to lead the inter-ministerial Committee. We also know however, that we have a long way to go. We were given the opportunity to meet with both Minister Pupatello and M.P.P. Broten on April 5th to share our strategy and concrete recommendations for addressing violence against women in Ontario as outlined in our paper Emergency Measures and Beyond. This report is based on the work and consultation of hundreds of women affiliated with key provincial women's organizations and representing diverse women's communities and regions of Ontario."

**" What we would like to see by this fall is the development of an implementation plan prioritizing initiatives as identified in our document, that includes : reinstatement of the 5% cut to first stage shelters and Sexual**

**Assault Centres, income security, supports for women with disabilities and Deaf women and that acknowledge the need to address all forms of violence against women, cross-sectorally with the use of a gendered anti-oppression framework. A good starting point would be for the government to insist on not using the gender neutral language of "domestic violence" because gender neutral terms such as this makes women invisible. Lastly, it is vital that the government establishes a structured relationship with our Group, that includes an accountability process for actions taken. A transparent consultation process with groups like ours requires a feedback loop to demonstrate to the hundreds of women, who are part of our network, this government is listening!**

For more information contact: Doris Rajan, CSVAWSG Coordinator 416 409-7025

### **The Cross-Sectoral Violence Against Women Strategy Groups Reaction to the Government's Announcement - April 6, 2004**

#### **Poverty**

While restoring funding to Second Stage Housing is welcome, it does not address the major barrier for women who are in abusive relationships - poverty. As the key findings of the just released report, "Walking on Eggshells: Abused Women's Experiences of Ontario's Welfare" indicates benefit levels are wholly inadequate to meet real costs of housing, food, heat, hydro, water, insurance, attendant care and other accommodation needs, transportation and other living expenses, thus women are staying in or returning to abusive relationships because of inadequate welfare rates. Women may not have access to their share of family assets, legal aid does not cover dissolution of marriages and social assistance does not come close to covering the costs of housing.

Ontario must restore funding to first stage shelters and raise shelter rates to meet actual costs of housing for families relying on income assistance when they move out of sheltered housing. The province just added 84 million to the child welfare system because their caseloads were out of control. According to Protecting children is everybody's business, a 2003 report from the

Children's Aid Society in London, 'the direct cost of keeping a child in care is in the range of \$121 a day' - a rate far in excess of social assistance paid to families.

We know that women continue to be the primary caregivers for children and until we can offer single mothers viable options for quality child care, women will continue to be forced to stay in violent relationships in an effort to provide care and basic needs for their children.

The next steps of the government plan need to address the systemic linkages of violence to poverty and acknowledge that poverty victimizes women and children. This will mean raising the levels of social assistance, minimum wage and childcare wages, offering a realistic time frame.

### **Broaden our Approach to Violence**

The government's plan must embrace the full spectrum of violence as outlined in our document Emergency Measures and Beyond. An approach that does not, excludes survivors of sexual violence – i.e. violence which begins and is learned in the home and spills out onto the street in the form of date rape, gang rape, sexual harassment, and sexual assault. Without a comprehensive understanding of violence against women and the different forms of violence, the experiences of marginalized women's communities become invisible.

Mid-life and older women often suffer the "cycle of abuse" again and again. Starting with childhood sexual assault, partner abuse, systemic institutional abuse, abuse in the legal system, through the loss of their children through Children's Aid, under the sponsoring control of abusive family members for immigrant and refugee women, etc.. Children are often removed from their homes due to the compounding effects of violence and poverty. So when we speak of the "cycle of abuse" we need to understand that removing victims from violent situations is stage one; transition housing stage two; placing children into care or returning victims to their abusers brings the cycle full circle unless we build budgets and plan services based on the premise that all citizens have a basic right to income support and dignity.

The government's plan must prioritize the needs of women with disabilities and Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deafened women and children because they experience the highest rate of personal violence – whether at the hands of spouses, partners, caregivers or family members. It must include American Sign Language (ASL) Interpreters and Deaf interpreters in the provincially funded Cultural Interpreter Program, housing priority for women with disabilities and Deaf women, and increase funding levels to disability income supports.

The next steps of the plan must address the needs of immigrant women, Aboriginal women, Francophone women, rural and northern women – even in a preliminary way.

### **Second Stage Housing**

It is good to see that the government has put some money into this program after the past 8 years of neglect, but this amount can only possibly restore and increase support to existing second stage programs. The \$3.5 million for second stage will certainly not create new second stage housing. We desperately need more second stage housing across the province. The CSVAWSG, other women's groups and non-profit and subsidized housing providers need to be active participants in the consultations that will take place on; how the monies will be distributed to second stage programs and the models for delivery of affordable housing.

### **Education**

While there is some concern about money being allocated to education as a priority first step, when shelter and sexual assault services are overwhelmed – public education and awareness is always good. We do believe that the \$4.9 million for education is a re-announcement of the past Tory government's September 2002 announcement of \$21.4 million which included \$5 million for a "public education and prevention campaign". In addition the provincial conference money appears also to be from the same Tory allocation of \$600,000 from the same pot of money.

Regardless, we do support the Death Review Committee's ideas about developing a three-year public education and prevention campaign with

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community leaders, agencies and experts. **We feel it is critical that the CSVAWSG plays a primary role in the developmental planning and implementation processes.** With \$600,000 being allocated to bring together “experts, community leaders and service providers to share strategies, expertise and ideas at a series of regional and provincial conferences to improve services to victims” – we are in an optimal position to support the government in this effort, due to our networks and broad representation of sectors, women’s communities and regions in Ontario involved in anti-violence work.

## **Risk Assessment**

While looking at risk assessment is important, the use of the ODARA assessment tool developed by the OPP and the mental health centre at Penetanguishine is inappropriate. According to the Death Review Committee Report, this tool is completely inadequate in assessing lethality -- it does not ask key questions about increase in violence, recent separation of the partners, access to weapons, abuse of pets, stalking behaviour etc. The Death Review Committee also asserts that a risk assessment must be more than a list of yes/no questions, like the ODARA assessment tool offers. In addition the tool is very dominant culture based and does not take into account diversity. We also must be cognizant of the reality that only 25% of women report "domestic violence" to the police, so even the best risk assessment tool used properly, will have an impact on only a small percentage of women. If this tool must be used, we would like to see a pre-testing of it, which would include an evaluation with survivors and front-line and community based workers to incorporate their ideas for improvement of the tool. This should also include exploring other mechanisms (i.e. emergency measures) to protect and support the safety of women who do not report.

## **Structured Accountability with CSVAWSG and the Community**

While the CSVAWSG was not asked to take part in the consultation process conducted by the Task Force led by Laurel Broten, many of our member organizations were. It was their understanding that a report based on these consultations would be produced. We welcomed and were greatly anticipating this opportunity to provide feedback prior to the development of

a government plan of action.

While we did accept the announcement that a report would not be available due to the government's commitment to push forward with an action plan, **we are now asking that an implementation plan be developed in conjunction with the Cross-sectoral Violence Against Women Strategy Group, in a formalized manner.** This would include regular opportunities to meet with and provide input to the Interministerial Roundtables on VAW. We are asking that the vast networks and the women of Ontario that we represent, receive the kind of respect in this process that we deserve.

We do understand the enormity and complexity of the restraints that this government has inherited in the area of Violence Against Women. We also appreciate the openness and access to-date that we have received from Minister Pupatello and Laurel Broten. It is this spirit that we will bring with us, when we are formally invited to work together with you in tackling this critical issue.

# ***Cross-Sectoral Violence Against Women Strategy Group***

Coordinator Doris Rajan: E-Mail [drajan@sympatico](mailto:drajan@sympatico) [ ] Phone: 416 409-7025

May 19, 2004

## **Budget is a good start in addressing violence against women's services and supports but there is a long road ahead**

### **For Immediate Release:**

While the ***Cross-sectoral Violence Against Women's Strategy Group***, (CSVAWSG) representing a vast variety of local and provincial women's groups applauds the government's budget announcement as a positive first step that includes; the re-investment of 3.5 million annually to create second-stage housing supports for women leaving shelters, an additional 3 million dollar investment in operating funds for women's shelters and counselling agencies, a 3% increase in Ontario Disability Supports and Ontario Works benefits, the maintenance of the National Child Benefit Supplement, 4000 new subsidized daycare spaces, and the allocation of 8 million for 2004-2005 for the expansion of women's shelters. The CSVAWSG however stresses the government needs to develop a comprehensive, cross-sectoral, long-term plan that will address the root causes of violence against women.

The CSVAWSG was given the opportunity to meet with both Minister Sandra Pupatello (Minister for Community and Social Services and Women's Affairs) and M.P.P. Broten (Parliamentary Assistant to the Premier) last month to present their strategy and concrete recommendations for addressing violence against women in Ontario as outlined in their report entitled Emergency Measures and Beyond. This report is based on the work and consultation of hundreds of women affiliated with key provincial women's organizations and representing diverse women's communities and regions of Ontario.'

The Group underlines the need for the government to recognize that a significant investment both financially and organizationally needs to be made in order to deliver the array of cross sector supports and services necessary to

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deal with the broad range of violence that women experience including; sexual violence, poverty, workplace harassment, elder abuse, racism, violence against women with disabilities and Deaf women, as well as abuse by intimate partners. “ While the budget’s 7 million for anti-violence initiatives, promise of 8 million in the coming year, and increases in income security will have some benefits to low-income single mothers and women with disabilities – CSVAWSG views this as the very initial step in the recognition of the multiple dimensions of the experience of violence for women.

The health care tax does not acknowledge the needs of our most vulnerable women’s communities, i.e. low income and those on social assistance, those who require documentation to access health services, such as immigrant and refugee women, and women with disabilities – who will continue to not meet and afford their physical and mental healthcare needs.

While it is imperative that housing dollars must be provided for women at risk due to poverty and homelessness, the support for the creation of second stage housing must be prioritized and fast tracked for women fleeing the violence in their intimate relationships.

“ We have been asking for community-based, structured and coordinated consultations with the Ministerial Committee on Domestic Violence to be able to offer our expertise and have direct input on the government’s plan of action to address this issue.

**“ By next fall we want to be involved in the development of an implementation plan prioritizing initiatives that have been identified in our document, including; the reinstatement of the 5% cut to first stage shelters and Sexual Assault Centres, income security, supports for women with disabilities and Deaf women and that acknowledge the need to address all forms of violence against women, cross-sectorally with the use of a gendered anti-oppression framework with a more targeted and responsive approach to our diverse populations. “**

**“ A response to hold perpetrators accountable to prevent revictimization. Lastly, it is vital that the government establishes a structured relationship**

**with CSVAWSG, that includes an accountability process for actions taken. “**

**For more information contact: Doris Rajan, CSVAWSG Coordinator 416 409-7025 or Debbie Ball 807 345-0450**

# **Appendix #4: Presentations**

# **Appendix #5: Revenue & Expenses**

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