

July 7, 2023

Honourable Michael Kerzner

Solicitor General of Ontario

Toronto

Ontario,

Canada

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Dear Minister Kerzner,

The Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime (CRCVC) is a national agency that amongst other duties, is committed to supporting and advocating for victims and survivors of crime in Canada. Along with Ottawa Victim Services, our Victims Advisory Committee and The 7th Step Society of Canada we write to you with mixed feelings of sadness, anger and disappointment due to your recent actions, or lack thereof towards Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) in Ontario. It is a failure of the government to the most vulnerable citizens and a grave error to state “Intimate partner violence (IPV) would not be considered an epidemic as it is not an infectious or communicable disease,” as Ontario wrote in its responses to the top recommendation from the Culleton, Kuzyk & Warmerdam Inquest.

Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and IPV go hand in hand. Women in Canada are not only vastly overrepresented as victims of IPV accounting for over three-quarters of police reports, but moreover, through self-reported surveys, women in Canada ages 15 and older have been shown to have a 44% chance of being affected by IPV if they enter an intimate relationship. Furthermore, the previously mentioned statistic does not include the volume of victims who rely on crisis help centres or victim service centres such as ourselves, where the crimes are left unreported. According to the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses femicide statistics in June 2023 alone, 5 women lost their lives to gender-based violence in Ontario and in just 30 weeks, there have been 30 Femicides in Ontario.

Equally important, is that the statistics shown above are only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to IPV in Canada and by extension Ontario. What follows being victimized by IPV is also a need to remove oneself from a frightening and violent situation, consequently, victims of IPV must resort to finding somewhere to go with someone they know or a shelter, however, because IPV is a festering problem within our communities the shelters for women fleeing abuse are typically at their maximum capacity, and instead of victims having support from professionals they are instead offloaded to motels where they are kept alone temporarily. To remove people from one frightening situation and stick them into a new one is not just cruel, but it adds to the immense stress and anxiety that victims of IPV already feel.

Further jury recommendations from the Inquest were also rejected, namely the decision to implement an independent IPV commission because it was determined to be duplicating existing services, however with the aforementioned lack of shelter space and the sheer amount of victims of IPV in mind, the existing services are simply overrun and do not have the capacity to deliver the prevention work needed in this area.

Consequently, to effectively combat IPV in Ontario, there must be tangible action taken. The government must follow in the steps of over 30 municipalities in Ontario which declared IPV an epidemic and must take full advantage of the wealth of experts at your disposal who have time and time again, backed by extensive research, stated that to forego labelling IPV as an epidemic due to a narrow definition will have dire consequences for women and girls in Ontario.

To illustrate the effect of neglecting to substantially combat IPV, recent evidence shows that in Ottawa alone there was a 10% increase in 2022 of IPV criminal charges laid. In short, for the seventh year in a row, there has been an increase in IPV and by extension an increase in GBV against women. With nearly 1 in 3 women age 15 or older experiencing physical or sexual IPV in their life, it is time to address this form of private violence as a major public health concern that causes serious short- and long-term physical, mental, sexual and reproductive health problems for women. IPV also affects their children's health, safety and well-being.

We conclude this letter disheartened with the outcome of the Province's response, but with a hope that you will seriously consider what we have said, and will seriously consider the gravity of the matters we have brought to your attention.

Sincerely,



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Executive Director
Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime



Heidi Illingworth
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