Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres &
Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses Ontario
Violence Against Women

1. **Will your party commit to maintaining the current funding allocation for organizations serving women experiencing violence?**

Our party has shown a strong commitment towards women experiencing violence, which we will continue to champion if given the opportunity to form the next government. We have provided women who are experiencing violence with a number of victim services. Since 2003, we have invested over a billion dollars in services for victims of crime. Each year we spend over $100 million dollars on victim services.

Not only do we commit to maintaining services for women experiencing violence, we have increased funding for community services that help victims of domestic violence by 48 per cent since 2003. This funding helped to serve close to 12,000 women and 8,000 children in emergency shelters last year. We also proposed a further increase to funding for domestic violence shelters in the 2014 Budget – an additional $15 million dollars over 3 years. Unfortunately, that increase, and all the work we have pursued together to protect women and children experiencing violence, was placed in jeopardy by the NDP's decision to force this election.

2. **How will your party speak to the needs of women experiencing violence in your election platform?**

Domestic violence crosses every social boundary and it will not be tolerated in Ontario. It is a priority for Ontario Liberals to ensure that women in Ontario feel safe in their homes, in the workplace, and in their communities.

Since releasing our Domestic Violence Action Plan in 2004, we have implemented many initiatives to raise awareness of domestic violence and strengthen support for victims and will continue to do so if we form the government. These services include the following:

- Our 2014 Budget proposed an additional $15 million over three years to support Violence Against Women shelters.
• The Neighbours, Friends and Families public education campaign – reaching out to communities across the province – including Francophone, Aboriginal, immigrant, and refugee communities.

• Training for more than 34,000 front-line professionals and service providers to detect domestic violence and support victims.

• Expanding the Language Interpreter Services program to include sign language interpretation for Deaf, oral deaf, and hard of hearing women who may have experienced violence and need access to health care, legal and social services.

• A Learning Network that is researching and promoting effective professional training and public education for those working to prevent and respond to violence against women.

• Introduced the Family Court Support Worker program, available in all court districts across Ontario, to help victims of domestic violence across Ontario navigate the family court system during the difficult process of separation and divorce.

• Launched Canada’s first Integrated Domestic Violence court as a pilot project in Toronto, which will hear both criminal and family cases where domestic violence is the underlying issue. This “one family, one judge” approach allows the judge to have more complete information about the families, and to monitor them more effectively.

• Established specialized Domestic Violence Courts in every court district in Ontario. Specially trained police, Crown attorneys and Victim/Witness Assistance Program staff work together with community partners to support victims while holding abusers accountable.

• Amended the Occupational Health and Safety Act to prevent violence in the workplace, including domestic violence and sexual harassment.
Ontario Liberals launched a $15 million, four-year Sexual Violence Action Plan in 2011. We are working with community organizations to implement public education and training initiatives, and improve the community and justice response to this serious issue. As part of the action plan, the Ontario Women’s Directorate supports a number of initiatives to help raise awareness and improve services; among them:

- Development and implementation of standards of care for hospitals to better support victims of sexual violence.

- A guide to assist Ontario’s colleges and universities in their ongoing efforts to prevent and respond to sexual violence.

- Expansion of the Language Interpreter Services program to help women who have experienced sexual assault access health care, legal and social services in over 70 languages. Sign language interpretation is also offered to improve access to services for women who are hearing impaired.

- Training for more than 8,000 professionals in the health, education, justice, and social service sectors on evidence-based practices for treating and caring for women who have experienced sexual violence.

- Our government is also providing an additional $3 million over four years to sexual assault centres across the province to help them better respond to victims of sexual assault in their communities.

We continue to work closely with community organizations on initiatives aimed at preventing sexual violence, improving the justice system response and providing better supports for victims.

3. In light of the recent RCMP report that states 1,186 Aboriginal women are missing and believed murdered in Canada, what will be your party strategy to address Violence against Aboriginal Women?

Violence against aboriginal women and girls is an issue the Wynne government takes very seriously. The funding available through Aboriginal initiatives enables Aboriginal organizations to deliver services that prevent victimization and help victims in a manner that is culturally relevant and community-based. Since 2011, the Wynne government has allocated $4 million over four years in the Ending
Violence Against Aboriginal Women, including the funding of the Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres.

In 2011-12, our government secured a five-year funding commitment from the Federal Victims' Fund for an initiative relating to missing and murdered Aboriginal women. This funding is being passed on to service providers in Thunder Bay and Kenora to families of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and to Aboriginal women who have experienced violence.

The Wynne government continues to work collaboratively with First Nations leaders on renewing our Aboriginal Health and Wellness Strategy. The agreement formalizes Ontario’s relationship and mutual commitment with Aboriginal partners to work together on reducing family violence and violence against Aboriginal women and children, and to improve Aboriginal healing, health, and wellness.

The Joint Working Group on Violence Against Aboriginal Women was convened in 2010 to identify priorities and opportunities for support, development, and implementation of policies, programs, and services that prevent and reduce violence against Aboriginal women and their families. The Wynne government is committed to continuing to work in collaboration with Aboriginal partners to address violence against Aboriginal women. Ontario Liberals understand that our Aboriginal partners require capacity funding to participate in the Joint Working Group. If given another mandate, we would invest $2 million over two years to support the Aboriginal partners on the Joint Working Group.

As demonstrated at the Aboriginal Affairs Working Group meeting in April 2013, and at the annual meeting of the Premiers and Leaders of the National Aboriginal Organizations in July 2013, Ontario Liberals support the call by the National Aboriginal Organizations for the federal government to establish a National Public Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women and Girls.

In spite of the federal government’s dismissal of the call for a National Public Inquiry, and their rejection of the UN recommendation to develop a national plan of action to end violence against Aboriginal women, Ontario Liberals continue to be committed to working with provincial, territorial, and Aboriginal partners to end violence against Aboriginal women and girls.