

# OAITH 2004

## *The Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses--Year in Review*



A little picture-taking break from a foggy, rainy day of travelling on the way to Sault Ste. Marie. This year OAITH has criss-crossed the province talking to members, conducting public advocacy and ARAO training workshops and responding to requests for visits from member shelters.

## **Actions and issues make for pressure packed exciting year**

The past year has been one of both internal and external action for OAITH.

Externally, the year has been one of hope and expectation for change by a new government. Internally, we worked to make OAITH a stronger network of services that respond effectively to the equality and policy issues affecting women and children who experience violence.

Like all years, it had its ups and downs.

We began with great expectations for collaboration and support from a new Liberal government that has made significant promises to take violence against women seriously and to make it a priority in government response. A year later, we are disappointed with the government's worrisome new approach to women's shelter funding.

### **Raising the issues**

OAITH has done some amazing work this year to raise issues affecting women and children and to hold government accountable for making women's equality rights a reality in Ontario.

In April, we were proud to be a part of the public release of the *Walking on Eggshells* research, a damning report on abused women's experiences of welfare in the province of Ontario.

We participated in every opportunity provided to consult with the new government.

Although women's groups generally receive no core funding to assist in responding to public policy planning and implementation, and OAITH is no different in this regard, we continue to provide ongoing information and advice to government in support of women and children affected by government policy.

OAITH also raised the issues of members in letters and emails to the Minister of Community and Social Services, Sandra Pupatello, and met with the Minister in November to discuss a number of issues affecting women and shelter services.

Also in November, OAITH conducted a poster campaign and held a press conference to raise issues of poverty and lack of housing for women escaping violence. The press conference annually honours the

women who have been murdered in the last year.

Within the OAITH membership, OAITH provided ongoing information and support and spent this year travelling to speak to many shelter workers.

### **Training**

We were especially pleased this year to be able to provide a number of trainings for OAITH member shelters. Following up on our work last year to find out the needs of members on public advocacy support, the Lobby Committee of OAITH conducted training across the province.

The Anti-Racism/Anti-Oppression Committee received overwhelming support for trainings of shelter staff on improving service delivery and support for abused women and their children who experience differential impacts of violence as a result of racism, classism, homophobia, discrimination based on age and ability, or marginalization as immigrant women.

For more information about these and other activities during the year, read on.

# Skills building for action: poverty linked to public policy

Poverty is the biggest systemic barrier to escaping violence, according to Ontario shelters surveyed by OAITH.

For the past two years, OAITH has been encouraging member shelters to educate policy makers on the impacts of poverty on women and children experiencing violence. Part of this work has included training sessions on learning public advocacy skills related to poverty issues.

The training sessions--called *Training for Change*--were designed from previous consultation and involvement of OAITH members at meetings to direct the training format and content.

To date, five training sessions with 85 participants have been held in Ottawa, Woodstock, Barrie, Toronto and Sault Ste. Marie. Four of the five sessions were two-day participatory trainings. We are currently planning a sixth training for Northwest Ontario shelters.

The training sessions included discussion and activities in 6 areas: Creating a strategy for change, Building community coalitions, Building internal capacity, Strategies



In a mock media presentation, Lisa Medeiros of Ernestine's Women's Shelter in Toronto, demonstrates that ending poverty has a lot to do with lack of 'money' for basic human needs like food and housing.

for lobbying government, Media strategies for advocacy and Public action strategies.

Participants also received a training manual with information to continue advocacy work in their own communities. We are now working on a plan to produce an instructional CD containing the information provided in the manual to training participants.

Three-quarters of participants rated the training as "excellent", the top rating in our evaluation tool. Participants described the session as an "excellent skills building workshop", "incredibly useful information", and "totally inspirational". One commented that the training session was "one of the best workshops

I've attended in 13 years of shelter work". We also were grateful for suggestions from participants that would improve our work in the sessions and we used these constructive critiques to create better workshops as we travelled.

A number of participants that took part in the training later joined the Lobby Committee continue the action. We are hoping that other participants also discovered ways to engage their local communities in public advocacy and to better understand the links between public policy and material conditions for women and children experiencing violence.

The training sessions were part of our overall two-year project to raise issues of poverty for abused women and their children and to build shelter capacity for doing public advocacy work on behalf of them.

Training was provided by members of the Lobby Committee and the OAITH Coordinator.

We are grateful for funding from Status of Women Canada and the Canadian Women's Foundation that allowed us to complete this work. Other activities of the project included membership planning workshops, education of the new government in Ontario, participation in the *Walking on Eggshells* research and our November poster and campaign to make the links between poverty and violence.



Carloyn Braithwaite and Valerie Guay, from Interval House of Ottawa, practice their press conference skills at the Ottawa training session. It's serious work, but not without a few lighter moments. Valerie is now an active member of the Lobby Committee.



# OAITH shelters support Anti-Racism/Anti-Oppression work

By Winsome Miller and Rebecca Rogers, OAITH Co-VPs of ARAO.

The ARAO Committee began province-wide training for shelters. Five shelters completed the training to date and there are 14 trainings planned between January and June this year.

Training assists organizations with implementation of integrated, anti-racist/ anti-oppressive, feminist service delivery to women and children. Each training opportunity is geared to the particular needs of the participant agency. A typical flow for discussion and facilitation would include the following:

- ❑ Brainstorming the meanings and experiences of anti-racism/ anti-oppression work for the participants.
- ❑ Looking at the experiences of marginalized women and children, as well as the responsibilities (from both an equality analysis and legal aspect) of women's advocates to implement accessibility for marginalized women and children.
- ❑ Exploring what the participants have already been able to implement within their agencies and communities to respond to marginalized women and children.
- ❑ Identifying the challenges, struggles and areas for improvement within the organization.
- ❑ Considering strategies for transferring the knowledge gained into community-based systems such as justice, social services, housing agencies to expand overall improved community response.

- ❑ The training will determine how the organizational structure, employment practices and program and services either support or don't support agency efforts to create inclusive spaces for women and children.

The feedback showed that participants' awareness and knowledge regarding working with disabled and deaf women was increased and most indicated that their work as service providers would change as a result of the workshop.

***The Anti-Racism/Anti-Oppression (ARAO) Committee recognizes that violence against women and children occurs due to unequal status of women and children in society. The Committee also recognizes that racism and oppression is a form of violence. Our aim is to ensure that the equal, civil, human, social, economic, political, spiritual and sexual rights for the women and children we serve are guaranteed.***

The ARAO Committee looks forward to working in partnership with the Trans Anti-Violence Access Project to offer the membership another workshop opportunity in 2005.

## ARAO Implementation Plan

In partnership with the OAITH Board of Directors, the Committee will be developing an Anti-Racism/ Anti- Oppression Implementation Plan for membership action based on motions passed at the Annual General Meeting in October, 2004.

## Woman Abuse Awareness Month

The ARAO Committee designed and distributed a poster for Woman Abuse Awareness Month in November. The poster focussed on ways to work towards ending violence and oppression against women and children.

New materials will be available for November 2005. We will keep you posted!

If your agency is an OAITH member and is interested in participating in the Creating Inclusive Spaces training, or if you are interested in becoming an ARAO Committee member, contact Rebecca Rogers at 519-836-6831, Extension 222 or Winsome Miller at 416-252-1785, Extension 232.

The Committee looks forward to working with the OAITH membership in 2005.

Facilitators assist agencies with the development of a step-by-step realistic work plan to ensure the changes needed to maintain an integrated, anti-racism, feminist services delivery in the agency. We hope that the training will create ongoing organizational change that will result in permanent improved response to women and children.

## Workshop opportunities

In October, OAITH member shelters had the opportunity to participate in the workshop "Access is More than Just a Ramp: Enhancing Service Provision to Women with DisAbilities and Deaf Women".

This was an action-based workshop that explored shifting attitudes and perceptions of accessibility in shelters, as well as exploring ways to improve access to services. An excellent resource package was provided to all participants.



Women from the Women with Disabilities and Deaf Women's Program of Education Wife Assault presented the *Access is More than Just a Ramp* workshop day for OAITH members in October. Presenters included: Amtul Hussain, Fran Odette, Gwen Reid, Marie Paul, Natasha Bacchus, Nancy Barry and Rena Nikou.

# Annual gathering time for reflection, fun

The Annual OAITH Business Meeting is an important time for the Association. Since the funding for OAITH was withdrawn by the Tories in 1995, our network has been able to mount only one gathering a year at which to give overall direction from members to our Board.

This year, the meeting was held in October to provide better access for women traveling from distances to join us. Annual meetings are usually lively, with serious discussion and debate, as well as networking and times for relaxation. This year was no exception.

An inspiring opening by Gloria Harris of Marjorie House in Marathon urged us to work in harmony and positivity and prepared us for our important work on the weekend.

This year, members debated motions on how to move forward in our anti-racism/anti-oppression work for women and children, as well as re-affirming our support for the reinstatement of funding to second stage housing programs for abused women and their children.

Members heard about the work of the Association committees, including the Anti-Racism/ Anti-Oppression Committee and the Lobby Committee. Members welcomed and affirmed full membership for 12 new OAITH members presented by the Membership Vice-President.

## Current issues

Lobby Committee members facilitated discussions on current issues for shelters and women: the continuing pressure on Northern shelters to engage in "Service System Management", the experience of

shelters in implementing CAS/VAW Collaboration Agreements and the views of members on government funding, such as the budgetted 3% increase for core programs in emergency shelters. Members were also asked for their thoughts and suggestions on project ideas for OAITH work in the next two years.

Information from discussions on the current issues is collected and reviewed in subsequent work of the Lobby Committee and considered in public policy actions.

## Sistership gathering

The night before the Business Meeting, we held our now 'traditional' meet and greet for new and practiced AGM attendees.

At the gathering, women are encouraged to bring musical instruments and get involved in singing and chatting with women from across the province. It's a social time that members have come to look forward to each year.

## Board elections

As always, there are women we thanked for their service to OAITH and others we welcomed on to our Board of Directors.

We said a regretful goodbye to Margaret Alexander, Vice-President of Lobby, and Karan Mann-Bowers, Co-Vice-President of Anti-Racism/Anti-Oppression, as well as Marg Philp, East Central Regional Rep. All of these women were dedicated Board members committed to advocacy for abused women and their children and to the Association. They will be missed.

We were pleased to welcome a number of women on to the OAITH Board: Cindy Cowan, President, Winsome Miller, Co-Vice-President of ARAO, Dawn Blakley and Renee Parent, Reps for Eastern Region, Kathy Latell, Northwest Region and Heila Pitter of East Central Region.

Remaining on the Board to continue their terms were: Thelma Beaudry,



Heila Pitter and Marie Dixon, of the Lobby Committee, share facilitation duties for a discussion of current issues facing women's shelters in Ontario.

Treasurer, Rebecca Rogers, Co-Vice-President ARAO, Alex Dean, Secretary, Pat Yellina, Membership Vice-President, Carol Latchford, Metro Toronto Regional Rep, Joanne Scott and Liz Forestell, Northeast Region Reps, and Natalie Seltzer, Central Region Rep.

The new Board has already been engaged in developing a progressive workplan for OAITH work in the next year, including work on an Implementation Plan for supporting members in engaging in ongoing ARAO work for women and children.

## 10 years

During the AGM, the Board of Directors of OAITH and the members recognized the 10-year service of Eileen Morrow, OAITH Coordinator. Eileen received a beautiful, customized ceramic bowl with messages and words of appreciation and Board members spoke about her service and dedication to OAITH since she took on her position in September, 1994.

## Time constraints

Every gathering has its challenges and this year, we were working within time limits for space at the meeting place.

Unfortunately, as a result, we were rushed in providing information on the launch of our poster campaigns for the Anti-Racism/Anti-Oppression and Lobby Committees.

We were grateful for the patience of members and the commitment to take our posters away after the meeting so that we were able to distribute a great many at the meeting. Hope to see you next year!



Paula Valois and Deb Shirley provide backup for member singalong and pre-AGM evening sistership gathering.

# Ontario Works has abused women 'walking on eggshells'

In April, OAITH was proud to be part of the public release of the *Walking on Eggshells* research report on the experiences of abused women on Ontario Works.

This groundbreaking research conducted interviews with women in seven sites in Ontario about their experiences on welfare. Researchers also canvassed welfare administrators on policy regarding violence against women.

Press coverage of the release of the research findings reached over a million people and spanned the country.

Janet Mosher, principal investigator, Eileen Morrow from OAITH and Joanne Boulding of the Ontario Social Safety Network participated in a press conference at Queen's Park to release the findings. OAITH and OSSN were community partners on the three-year research work. The research team also included Margaret

Little from Queen's University and Pat Evans from Carleton University. Janet is at Osgoode Hall, York University.

It will be no surprise to shelter workers that women who participated in the interviews compared their experiences on Ontario's welfare system to being in an abusive relationship. They described their relationship with Ontario Works as "walking on eggshells" a phrase commonly used to describe abusive situations for women.

The *Walking on Eggshells* report was influential in moving the Liberal government of Ontario to increase social assistance rates and to include issues raised by women in the research in the review of social assistance and workfare conducted by the Ministry of Community and Social Services. The full report of the research is available on the OAITH website at [www.oaith.ca](http://www.oaith.ca). It has also been translated into French.



Janet Mosher, principal investigator for the *Walking on Eggshells* research speaks to OAITH members at the annual meeting.

## OAITH on the web

Finally, OAITH has made it to the Web. At the October AGM, we unveiled our new website for the first time.

The site--at [www.oaith.ca](http://www.oaith.ca)--is a beginning venture providing basic information on who we are and what we do, as well as highlighting some of the issues and actions OAITH has taken on. We also have a publications and briefs section with our most recent documents and a page of our recent media releases.

Oaith.ca includes a growing list of links to women's advocacy and equality seeking groups that are also doing work to end violence against women.

Because our budget for the site is very small at the moment, we have started with a basic informational public site.

Our goal is to eventually expand the site, including developing a "members only" site where OAITH members can share ideas and service information as well as post shelter websites, job postings, events and so on.

The OAITH Board of Directors has a web policy for determining site content. Any one who accesses the site can directly contact members of the Board responsible for different OAITH work areas by using the email links posted on the site. Please feel free to contact us through the web.

We are grateful to Margaret Alexander, who did the work to organize the site, to Annelise VanOers who designed the pages and to Sherece Taffe who continues to be our volunteer web mistress.

## Posters focus of November campaigns

Violence against women has differential impacts on women. To educate and illustrate these links, OAITH produced two terrific posters (see below).

The first was created by the ARAO Committee and printed with the support of the Canadian Auto Workers. (See story on page 3.)

The second was created by the OAITH Lobby Committee. It shows the link between poverty and violence against women and some measures needed to stop violence and poverty. The anti-pover-

ty poster was printed by the Ontario Federation of Labour.

The posters went to unions, community groups, women services, hospitals and public displays. We enlarged both posters for displays at our press conference to mark November 25th, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women.

We are grateful to the CAW and the OFL for their support. Both posters can be downloaded from the OAITH website at [www.oaith.ca](http://www.oaith.ca)

**November is Woman Abuse Awareness Month**

Some examples of violence include:  
Racism • Homophobia • Classism • Sexism • Ableism • Poverty • War

Since June 1995, in the province of Ontario...  
188 women and 22 children were murdered  
500,000 women and children required safety at a shelter due to abuse

With the epidemic number of women incarcerated in our communities, stopping violence against women and children must be a top priority. As a community we must respond.

**10 ways you can work towards ending violence against women and children**

- Confront oppression: Sexism, Racism, Ableism, Classism, and Homophobia
- Make a pledge: Refuse to show your support
- Demand equality between men and women
- Demand women's rights are human rights
- Speak out when oppression occurs, silence sends the message that the behaviour is okay
- Be aware of ways that male violence is excused and justified
- Recognize that violence is based on power and control and is supported by society
- Support and/or organize local campaigns for Women Abuse Awareness Month in November
- Support and/or organize local campaigns such as: International Day for Elimination of Poverty on October 17th, International Day of People with Disabilities on December 3rd, National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women on December 6th
- Participate in lobby efforts to increase funding for social assistance, safe and affordable housing, access to shelter

On behalf of the Anti-Racism/Anti-Oppression Committee of OAITH [www.oaith.ca](http://www.oaith.ca)

PAITH  
Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses

Co-sponsored by the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses and the Canadian Auto Workers

Many abused women are forced to stay with or return to abusive partners because they can't afford housing and food.

**No woman should have to choose between violence & poverty**

end violence against women  
end poverty

**demand**  
Good jobs and fair wages  
Liveable income assistance  
Affordable housing  
Quality affordable child care  
Training and Education

PAITH  
Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses

OFL/FTO  
Ontario Federation of Labour

Co-sponsored by the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses and the Ontario Federation of Labour

# Analyzing the Domestic Violence Action Plan

On December 13th, the provincial Liberals publicly announced the release of their new “Domestic Violence Action Plan”.

The announcement was apparently the culmination of work by Laurel Broten, Parliamentary Assistant to the Premier, to put together a set of reforms on the issue, as well as consultations held with ‘stakeholders’ subsequent to that process by Sandra Papatello, Minister Responsible for Women’s Issues.

## Many details not known

Attendees at the public announcement received copies of a press release and a 2-page backgrounder as detail of the Plan. Since then, we have received little additional information about the announced measures. Ms. Broten’s report of her consultations has never been made public. Many details of how the Plan will be implemented or how specific initiatives were selected are not known.

As a result, any analysis is, by necessity, based on the public announcements made and whatever initiatives have now begun to unfold, rather than ongoing involvement of women’s advocates in the process of developing the Plan or guiding its implementation. That did not happen.

The public release and backgrounder are available online at: [www.gov.on.ca/citizenship/owd/index.html](http://www.gov.on.ca/citizenship/owd/index.html)

## Positive steps of the Plan

- ❑ **Gender-Based Analysis:** The government is stating that violence against women is a gender-based, equality issue. This is an important shift. For years, women’s advocates have been struggling with a primary government focus on criminal justice system response. For most abused women, however, the biggest barriers to escaping violence are now poverty and lack of housing.
- ❑ **Premier is Responsible:** The Premier has put his name to the Plan by both appointing his Parliamentary Assistant as the ‘lead’ on reform and by making the announcement of the Plan personally. It is gratifying that the Premier will be taking personal responsibility for all government reforms in the area.
- ❑ **Differential Impacts:** There is some acknowledgement of differential impacts of violence against women on marginalized women and some designated funding, although small

in comparison to the need—\$2.5 million annually starting in 2005/06 for addressing community-based counselling waiting lists and services for “specific populations”.

- ❑ **Dual Charging:** The government is working on a tool to help police officers determine a primary aggressor in ‘domestics’ to reduce an increasing pattern of dual charging around the province. The 1998 May inquest called for police to stop dual charging, so this is long overdue.
- ❑ **Custody and Access:** The Plan calls for work to consider ‘domestic violence’ in custody and access proceedings. This was also recommended in both the May and Hadley inquests. How government does this is the critical question now. We urge the Liberals to adopt approaches provided in recent years by the Ontario Women’s Network on Child Custody and Access and NAWL.
- ❑ **Funding Increases:** There are some very small increases for shelters, second stages, community counselling programs and social assistance in the government plan. They represent a welcome difference from the previous government’s cuts, but they don’t come close to closing the gaps created by them, or to providing the support women and children deserve. There are also some funds for one-time capital costs for shelters. Some funds are provided to continue local service coordination efforts.
- ❑ **Training and Public Education:** Funding is provided for training in the housing sector, another recommendation of the Hadley jury. Education will also promote equal relationships for young girls and women. A high-profile campaign will focus on girls and boys aged eight to 14.

## Serious flaws of the Plan

- ❑ **Not Really a Plan:** For all the optics, the DV Action Plan is not really a comprehensive strategy to address all violence against women, nor is it a real Plan to respond to woman abuse alone. It is merely a set of initiatives accompanied by some resource announcements. If it constitutes all the government intends to do over the next four years, it falls well short of what is needed in Ontario, particularly in view of the damage done to women’s and social programs by the

previous government.

- ❑ **Moving and Re-announcing Money:** Much of the announced funding was already earmarked for the system by the Tories. The capital money for shelters, public education funds, resources for coordinating committees, were already in the budget. “New” money has been moved from other areas where it was dedicated to anti-violence work. For example, in a disingenuous shell game, funds for increasing community-based counselling and services for specific populations, as well as additional funding for ‘transitional supports’ was taken from funding now in the Ministry of Education for work with schools. Much of this funding went to women’s shelters to work with teachers and children and was critical to many local communities.

Also troubling is the quite divisive way the government provided \$3.5 million in funding for the ‘transitional housing supports’ also included in the Action Plan, but previously announced in November. Although originally loudly promised to second stage housing programs, the money was later spread over 70 agencies with only some of the allocation going to second stages. This kind of ‘bait and switch’ tactic is destructive to the women’s anti-violence network. Taking from one anti-violence program to give to another is not, by any means, an effective approach to providing services. Women’s advocates need resources *in addition to*, not as *alternatives to*, currently existing programs.

- ❑ **Funding is Inadequate:** The funding in the overall Plan over four years is insufficient to address the needs.
- ❑ **Women’s Services Funding:** This is the most problematic of the new ‘directions’ for the Liberals. Regardless of the dollar amounts, the new funding for “improving functional capacity” for women’s services by making them more “financially independent” of government is wrong. (See next page for analysis.)

In addition, no funding is designated to support core work in women’s anti-violence networks, such as DAWN, Action Ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes, or OAITH; the only ongoing collective work to receive designated funds is local generic service coordination.

# Funding not fundraising for women's shelters

It's not about money.  
It's about equality.

The most misguided of the new Liberal Government measures on 'domestic violence' is the introduction of money for fundraising costs, rather than stable funding of women's services.

Since the inception of women's services, advocates have been fundraising. Virtually all women's anti-violence services--rape crisis centres, women's centres and women's emergency shelters would not exist except for tireless fundraising to establish them. That's not the point.

The point is that ongoing State failure to provide adequate stable core funding for women's services and equality rights work has been one of the central critiques of social policy by women's equality seekers for over 30 years. More fundraising is the Liberal policy answer to that critique.

This action is in stunning contradiction to Liberal Government rhetoric that woman abuse is an equality and human rights issue.

## What's the Problem?

The Liberals must reconsider and alter this policy immediately because:

- ◆ **It abandons public responsibility for women's equality rights.** Canada has signed international agreements directing States to provide core resources for gender specific women's anti-violence services as a necessary support for women's safety and equality rights. It is also a public responsibility implicit in equality protections enshrined in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Making core shelter services a function of fundraising essentially creates a situation where individuals may decide whether women's rights will be realized.
- ◆ **It denies the essential nature of women's crisis intervention services.** Police and child protection services are not required to fundraise their core service budgets. This is as it should be. Nor should women's essential anti-violence services.
- ◆ **It is an unstable and unpredictable way to fund services.** Private donations move around. Services that women rely on for ongoing safety and crisis intervention must not be dependent on funding that may be here today and gone tomorrow.

- ◆ **It will result in increasing disparity of service for abused women and their children across the province.** In the past, implementation of local 'per diem' funding for shelters created disparity among services in different communities. No adjustments were made to eliminate these disparities when the per diem was uploaded to the provincial level in 1998. Dependency on private funding can only enlarge these inequities, particularly in communities without rich donor bases or large populations. Such disparities mean institutionalized inequality based on regional differences, especially for rural and Northern women.

- ◆ **It fosters an environment for silencing advocate voices that need to be protected.** Dependence on local community donors is counterproductive to the responsibility women's advocates

***“Some shelters have been doing the same things in the same way for 20-30 years and we have to change the way we deliver services.”***

*Sandra Pupatello, Minister Responsible for Women's Issues. Quoted in the Kincardine News after a speaking engagement for Women's House of Bruce County. Minister Pupatello urged shelters to get "closer" to their communities, advice that surprised already very well-connected services.*

have to challenge patriarchal attitudes and provide critical analysis on women's issues. It is also often largely conservative community elements that are rich enough to give substantial private funds. These sources can be reluctant to support strong political positions and social justice actions on violence against women that are necessary to end it. Women's services cannot be placed in the position of second guessing their responsibility to speak out against injustice in order to ensure stable donations. Although governments, too, can be hostile to women's progress, advocates have the right to public support and the right to hold public decision makers accountable.

- ◆ **It is another form of privatization of public services.** This dangerous trend is jeopardizing the social safety net in Canada. Women's programs, like others that protect human rights, must not become 'have not' services.

- ◆ **It will not sustain needed essential services in the future.** Cuts to public services have already created an upsurge in competition for private donations that has seen both large institutions, like schools and hospitals, and smaller community services saturating donors with fundraising appeals. Women's shelters, second stage housing programs and other women's community-based services are already competing against major systems with fundraising capacities well beyond those of shelters, even with new support to cover costs. The experience of women's shelters and second stage housing programs since the cuts of 1995 have shown us that they are already tapping into most of the private sources available in their communities. New resources may result in little more than recovery of those costs spent for fundraising administration.

- ◆ **It is divisive.** Women's services will be increasingly competing with each other for donors, especially in those communities large enough to require more than one shelter or women's anti-violence service. Setting women up to further compete with each other for money is destructive to the overall women's equality rights movement, a movement that provides the only effective leadership to end violence against women.

- ◆ **It will not create financial "independence" from government.** Women's shelters will continue to need substantial public support to survive. Nor will fundraising ensure women's shelters survive any future government cuts, as implied by Minister Sandra Pupatello in defence of the policy. The example of the exhaustive efforts of women's shelters and second stage housing programs to replace funds cut by the Tories is evidence enough that endless fundraising will not make women's services "stronger," as the Minister suggests.

- ◆ **It was not the advice of women's advocates to government consultations prior to release of the Plan.** Advocates did not suggest fundraising resources as the solution to their financial struggles. Shelters want permanent, stable funding.
- ◆ **It flies in the face of the inquest recommendations.** The Gillian Hadley inquest jury charged the Ministry of Community and Social Services to provide adequate shelter funding. The Liberals must honour their promise to implement those recommendations.

## 2004/05 year of OAITH action on a wide range of issues

Despite our small budget and no core funding from the Province, OAITH staff and volunteers responded to many issues in 2004 and continued that work into 2005. We are currently attending a number of provincial government committees.

### Provincial Conference Planning

**Committee:** A very new committee to look at potential government plans for a province-wide conference. We still learning the ropes on this one.

### Special Housing Priority Working

**Group:** This group is looking at the abuse priority in the *Social Housing Reform Act* and will be working throughout the year.

### Legal Aid Family Law Advisory

**Committee:** We have been part of this committee for a number of years. The group meets twice a year to discuss issues with legal aid implications. While arms-length from government, much of its work depends on government policy.

### Advisory Committee on Differential

**Response in Child Welfare:** This committee hasn't been called together at this writing, but OAITH has been invited to participate when it does. We are eagerly awaiting our first meeting.

OAITH has also provided many hours of time and effort to responding to government invitations for consultation and reac-

tion to policy and legislation, including:

- The consultation on the *Arbitration Act* responding to concerns of Muslim women regarding Sharia Law.
- Consultation regarding the \$3.5 million allocation for "housing supports".
- Consultation on the Affordable Housing Strategy for Ontario. OAITH also prepared a written submission to this process.

We also provided written submissions to the Pre-budget consultations of the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, the request for response to the draft Dual Charging Reduction tool, and the hearings on *Bill 118: Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*.

### Working in Solidarity

OAITH is committed to working in solidarity with equality seeking groups in whatever ways we can offer support.

This year, we continued to have representation at the Cross-Sectoral VAW Strategy Group and well as the Ontario Women's



**December 6th Action:** Ethyl Birkett-LaValley, Secretary of the Ontario Federation of Labour, Peggy Nash of the Canadian Auto Workers and Eileen Morrow, OAITH Coordinator, spoke at the Toronto launch of the *15 Days, 15 Ways* postcard campaign to mark December 6th. According to the OFL, Ontario shelters ordered about 30,000 postcard books to send to Prime Minister Paul Martin in Ottawa.

Network on Child Custody and Access. In addition, we've worked in solidarity with women's advocates in the labour movement to provide joint poster messages during November and December and to be an active supporter of the Canadian Labour Congress *15 Days, 15 Ways* Campaign.

In support of members, we have travelled to speak at individual and regional shelter organized events and have enjoyed responded to hundreds of email and phone contacts with member shelters.

## Woman's work never done--upcoming action for change

Look for exciting opportunities for action on issues critical to abused women and their children in the next year. Coming soon for spring, shelters will want to get involved in these two important actions:

**National Childcare Program Action:** As the federal and provincial governments consider how to implement the federal promise of a National Childcare Program, it will our responsibility to support campaigns by childcare advocates to ensure that the national program is a quality, non-profit system that is adequately funded and accessible to all families.

A quality, affordable national childcare program would give abused women enormous support for re-building their lives and the lives of their children after escap-

ing violence. This is our best chance to make that happen, and all voices will be needed to move governments forward in the best interests of women and children.

In March and April, a provincial campaign will ask for your involvement in holding both provincial and federal governments accountable to hear women's voices.

Please don't let this one pass you by!

**Hands Off! the National Child Benefit Supplement:** Also in the spring, in advance of the provincial budget release, anti-poverty advocates will be gearing up in the Hands Off! campaign, a province-wide campaign to demand that the provincial Liberals honour their promise to end the clawback of the National Child Benefit

Supplement from social assistance recipients in Ontario. OAITH will be participating and supporting this campaign. We have been calling for the end to the clawback for years. This coming provincial budget is the right time for the Province to make good on its promise to give back the Benefit to Ontario's poorest families. Stay tuned for ideas on how you can get involved.

Of course, OAITH will continue all of its work on issues of violence against women and their children. Members are informed of our work on an ongoing basis and provided with opportunities to respond and become involved in our decision-making and action. Contact us for more information through our website at [www.oaith.ca](http://www.oaith.ca), or by calling 416-977-6619.



# Join us!

