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Media Release

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Women's Shelters Mark Day Against Violence at Queen's Park

(Toronto) On Thursday, November 25, Ontario shelters for abused women invite Premier Dalton McGuinty to join them in marking the United Nations International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. Sandra Papatello, Minister Responsible for Women's Issues and Minister of Community and Social Services, is expected to represent the Premier to receive ribbons and roses commemorating 21 women and 1 child murdered this year in situations of 'domestic violence'.

The press conference and presentation will be held in Toronto at the Queen's Park Media Studio in the Main Legislature Building at 11 a.m. today.

The Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses (OAITH) will raise issues of housing, social assistance and inclusion of shelters in a proposed provincial Domestic Violence Action Plan. On November 4th, the Ontario government declared November "Wife Assault Prevention Month" and promised a decisive Action Plan by month's end.

"Poverty and lack of housing are the two top barriers for women and children leaving violent situations in Ontario and it is common for women to be forced back to abusers because they can't feed their children or pay the rent," said Rhonda Roffey, spokesperson for the group.

"Today we are asking the Premier and the Government of Ontario to join with us to make sure that by next November Wife Assault Prevention Month, women have social assistance to meet their needs and affordable housing to go to after they escape abuse."

To mark the International Day, women's shelters across Ontario will also take part in a campaign to send an Open Letter to the Premier requesting government action on the issues. They will also be participating in locally organized activities to mark the International Day. In Ottawa, women's groups will be protesting in front of their local housing office and then meeting with politicians and local officials to discuss better ways to support women locally, provincially and federally.

In Kincardine, Women's House of Bruce County will be hosting a speaking engagement for Sandra Papatello, Minister of Community and Social Services and Minister Responsible for

Women's Issues. In Red Lake, women have invited local officials to participate in a "poverty game" to highlight the experiences of women and children using welfare.

The Association has also distributed posters highlighting issues of equality and poverty throughout the province. During November the posters, sponsored jointly by OAITH, the Ontario Federation of Labour and the Canadian Auto Workers, have been placed in community agencies, shelters, hospitals, union halls, newspapers and other public places.

"We are pleased that Premier McGuinty has put his personal stamp on whatever action his government takes to respond to woman abuse and we are looking to him to make commitments this year that will substantially increase the chances for women and children to escape violence," said Eileen Morrow, OAITH Coordinator.

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