

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

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Toronto – Key women’s equality rights activists from across Ontario gathered at a forum in Toronto today, on the eve of the government’s “Finding Common Ground: Working Together to Reduce Domestic Violence” conference to discuss how to end violence against women.

“Last December, this government announced its Domestic Violence Action Plan,” said Eileen Morrow, Coordinator of the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses (*OAITH*). “Very little of the Plan has been put into action and much of it will not directly help women and their children. In the meantime, women continue to be murdered – 23 since the Plan was announced, 209 in the past 10 years, three this month alone.”

“We applaud this government for making violence against women a priority,” added Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres (*OCRCC*), President, Marilyn Oladimeji, “but sexual violence is invisible in this plan. This is not acceptable.”

Forum participants call on the government not just to maintain and improve services to women and children after violence has happened, but to create a climate in which violence does not happen.

Ghislaine Sirois of Action Ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes (*AOCVF*), stated: “As long as women are poor, have little or no access to good, affordable child care and cannot find affordable, safe housing, they will remain vulnerable to male violence.”

Forum participants call on the provincial government to “recognize the expertise of women’s equality seeking groups with respect to policy development. The government must commit at least \$5 million dollars, to be managed by the Cross-Sectoral Violence Against Women Strategy Group, to fund independent women’s equality seeking groups to conduct policy analysis, reform and development across the province. “

“Our demand is really quite simple,” said Pamela Cross, Legal Director of the Metropolitan Action Committee on Violence Against Women and Children (*METRAC*).. “We want equality for all women as guaranteed by the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. With equality will come freedom from violence and the threat of violence.”

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