



Ontario Association of Interval & Transition Houses

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The Right Honourable Stephen Harper
Prime Minister of Canada
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6

July 21, 2010

To: Prime Minister Stephen Harper:

We are writing to express our deep concern over the unprecedented curtailment of civil liberties that took place at the June 2010 meeting of the G20 in Toronto. At a time when Canada was hosting leaders from around the world to discuss the direction of global policy, members of the public should have been encouraged to actively participate in the debate and discussion. Instead, the extraordinary powers granted to police, as well as the massive level of security, severely limited the space for democratic expression and, according to Amnesty International Canada, "cast a chill over citizen participation in public discourse".

The Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses (OAITH) is shocked and outraged over the treatment of all people, but especially of women during the G20 Summit. As a shelter association with more than 60 members, including first stage women's emergency shelters as well as anti-violence women's agencies from across the province, we believe that both advocating for and ensuring women's lived experiences are heard and responded to are critical to our work. The lived experience of our own staff during their participation in peaceful demonstrations during the G20 Summit is of a concerning nature for the Association and its members.

Our Association Coordinator was stopped, interrogated and had her car searched without consent as she made an effort to return to her home, three blocks from the make-shift detention centre on Eastern Avenue in Toronto. The memory card in her camera was confiscated without her knowledge or consent. When she discovered the removal of her property within minutes of leaving the scene and returned to ask how to retrieve it, police officers claimed that they didn't know anything about the missing item and refused to acknowledge that it had been taken. In addition, two staff members participating in a peaceful and legal march

reported that they were “roughed up” by police in their inappropriate effort to maintain power and control.

Vandalism during the G20 Summit as reported by the media served to create a cone of silence on the real issues of peaceful demonstrators including poverty, maternal rights and Violence Against Women, among others. These are the voices and issues that are central to OAITH and should be central on all agendas. The war on women is alive and well in the international world and right here in Canada. The lack of adequate funding to support women and children to take back their power seemed negated while investment in creating a Canadian power zone was prioritized.

The more than 900 arrests are particularly alarming. Perhaps more worrying are indications that the police detained large numbers of people without cause or explanation. These arrests appear to be a strategy of preventative detention, which denies citizens their Charter right to due process and cannot be justified in a free and democratic society. There are also numerous reports of activists and protest organizers being arrested, and raids being carried out by police on locations used by them to coordinate their activities.

We at OAITH support the demand for a full, comprehensive public inquiry and encourage you to put the treatment of women on the inquiry agenda. It is essential for Canada to learn from the mistakes made during the G20 weekend. The only way for Canadians to understand exactly what transpired during this Summit is through a full, independent public inquiry into security during the 2010 Canadian G8 and G20 Summits. The inquiry must be held jointly by the Ontario and Federal and Municipal governments whose decision-making and responsibility for police direction gave rise to our concerns. Such an inquiry must also include opportunities for public input and participation and produce findings that are released to the public in a timely manner. The inquiry should consider the impact of security measures on the Charter rights of citizens to freedom of assembly, association, expression, and due process. In particular, the inquiry should review:

- All raids and mass arrests conducted by police and security in connection to the 2010 Summits and, in particular, raids carried out at the Parkdale Community Legal Aid Clinic and the University of Toronto;
- The arrest and detention of journalists and photographers from a variety of media outlets including CTV, the Globe and Mail, the National Post, independent alternative and internet media representatives and, in particular the arrest and alleged assault of a Guardian journalist;
- The use of excessive force against protestors by police and security during the 2010 Summits, in particular on the afternoon and evening of June 26 and 27;

- The use of preventative detention and arbitrary arrest by the police and security forces; and
- The conditions in which those detained were held.
- The specific treatment of women during the G20 summit
- The effect of passage by the Province of Ontario with regard to regulation of police powers around certain 'public works' within the Summit perimeter barrier between June 21 and 27 and the misinformation allowed—without correction by provincial officials or police—to circulate about the extent of these powers.

We request an opportunity to express our concerns further. When there is a forum to continue to dialogue about the historical and ongoing oppressive and sexist manner with which women are treated, then OAITH will be at the table.

Thank you for your consideration and willingness to take action on behalf of Canadian women.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paula Valois". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Paula Valois, Chair of the Board of Directors
Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses (OAITH)

Cc:

Nathalie Des Rosiers, General Counsel, Canadian Civil Liberties Association
Michael Ignatieff, Leader of the Opposition, House of Commons
Jack Layton, Leader of the New Democratic Party, House of Commons