



Ontario Association of Interval & Transition Houses

**Standing Committee on
Finance and Economic Affairs**

Pre-Budget Consultations 2007

**Submission by the Ontario Association of Interval
and Transition Houses (OAITH)**

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Introduction

On behalf of the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses (OAITH) we are pleased to make this contribution to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs pre-budget process for 2007.

OAITH is the provincial network of women's emergency shelters, the largest such coalition in Canada. As you all know very well by now, women's shelters work with women and children who experience high levels of violence in their homes. Your decisions on the budget will make a difference to their lives—whether for better or worse depends on you as social and budget policy makers.

Ending violence against women—how long will it take?

The Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs has an opportunity each year to make recommendations and decisions that could make a real difference to whether or not women can expect to be free of violence.

Each year, for many years, OAITH has provided information to the Standing Committee and asked, begged, pleaded and urged members of the Committee to read our submissions and take a stand to support women and children in Ontario through the pre-budget process. Seldom have we seen our recommendations reflected in the final Committee reports to the Government on expenditures for the following year. Why is that?

Since 1995, at least 245 women and 37 children have been murdered in Ontario in situations where their intimate partners were either charged or committed suicide. When will these murders be serious enough for public policy makers to take the strong steps needed to stop it?

The upcoming 2007 pre-budget process is the next opportunity for you to intervene to protect and support women and children before they are added to the murder list. Please don't let that chance go by again.

10 Steps to End Violence Against Women

For years, women's anti-violence advocates have struggled in Ontario to counter the damage done by cuts to programs that women and children need to escape violence. While some steps have been taken to ease the loss of momentum resulting from budget cutting, we are still scrambling to reach the funding inadequacies that confronted us prior to those cuts.

We have had to measure our shrinking progress with the suffering and deaths of women and children. How can this be acceptable to any person dedicated to public service in this province? We know without question that it is not acceptable to the many dedicated women's advocates and violence survivors across Ontario.

In June of 2006, OAITH heard this message clearly in a province-wide meeting of women's activists whose commitment and work to end violence against women is

unquestioned. Sponsored by OAITH, 60 advocates from women's networks and services across Ontario agreed that the time has come for the Government of Ontario to "step it up" on action to end violence against women.

As a result of discussions held in June, women's advocates launched the [Step it Up Campaign](#) on November 2nd in both Toronto and Ottawa to mark Woman Abuse Prevention Month. At that time, the Campaign introduced **10 Steps to End Violence Against Women** that advocates from a broad range of sectors agree must be taken if governments are as serious about taking action on violence against women as they claim.

The Step it Up Campaign will continue across Ontario until the next provincial election in October. In collaboration with the Step it Up Campaign members, OAITH urges this Committee to consider recommendations for the provincial 2007 budget in the light of action to embed the following **10 Steps to End Violence Against Women**.

Step 1: Understand that violence against women is an equality rights issue.

The [United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women](#) states that violence against women is "a violation of the rights and fundamental freedoms of women" that is caused by "historically unequal power relations between men and women". In other words, women's rights are human rights. Those rights include the right to be free from violence.

When public policy makers adopt gender inequality as the root cause of violence against women, as current and previous governments in Ontario have at least in name, that decision implies that policy will be developed and budgets provided in support of policy, to address not only the effects of violence against women, but the inequities that foster it.

The Premier of Ontario and the Minister Responsible for Women's Issues have clearly said that they take a gender-based approach to violence against women and see it as a violation of human rights for women. We support this analysis of the violence women face. Yet within the Ontario government, there is no formal framework to advance this approach.

If public funds are to be used effectively, the first step is to understand the issue. Next, that understanding has to be formally imbedded in policy and programs, such as the review of budget issues undertaken by all government departments, Ministries and this Committee.

The provincial government must clearly outline an equality-based framework and process for policy and budget development. In particular, the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs should examine budget issues within a framework of gender equality and equity for disadvantaged groups in the province.

Recommendation 1: The Province of Ontario, in consultation with frontline women's and equity seeking advocates, must develop a gender and equality based analysis and

approach to the provincial budget that takes into account goals to ensure equity and gender equality in Ontario.

Step 2: Recognize that male power is upheld by rape and sexual harassment.

The most complete statistics on sexual assault and other sexual offences against women come from the 1993 *National Survey on Violence Against Women*, almost 15 years ago. Other data comes from police records of offences reported and tracked by Statistics Canada. The data shows that 93% of sexual assaults against persons 18 and over are against women and 89% of sexual assaults against persons between 12 and 17 are against girls. The vast majority of girls and women do not report sexual assaults to police and in many instances, women and girls are discouraged from even talking about sexual violence.

The vast majority of sexual violence against women and girls happens in the home, workplace, school or local neighbourhoods. Most women know who their assailant is: their father, uncle, boyfriend, classmate, acquaintance, employer or co-worker.

For Aboriginal women and women with disabilities, for young women and women of colour, sexual stereotyping, racism and lack of support make sexual violence a virtual certainty in the lives of many women and girls. Little is being done, however, to address these added risks through public funding support and leadership.

Successive Ontario governments have acknowledged that action of some kind must be taken on issues of “family” or “domestic” violence against women. And as we mentioned above, the current Ontario Government recognizes that the root of violence against women is inequality and violation of women’s human rights. Yet there is relatively little attention paid by governments specifically to the ongoing damage to women and girls caused by sexual violence by men.

In the current government “Domestic Violence” Action Plan, which focuses almost exclusively on woman abuse by partners, there is only a passing recognition that sexual violence occurs and will be addressed with a minimal gesture of funding to sexual assault programs and generic victims’ services. This level of attention to sexual violence is inadequate and certainly inappropriate. The upcoming budget must address the issue.

Recommendation 2: The Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs should urge the Government of Ontario to work with independent, community-based women’s advocates in the sexual assault centres across Ontario and the Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres (OCRCC) to develop a comprehensive, publicly funded Action Plan on Sexual Violence that fully supports the financial needs of the Plan, including increased funding to women’s sexual assault centres.

Recommendation 3: Fully implement the recommendations of the inquest into the death of Theresa Vince, who was murdered in a sexual harassment case.

Step 3: Stop racism and oppression. Make Ontario accessible.

For many women, inequality and power imbalance with men is only part of the picture. Their choices and freedoms are also limited by overlapping unequal power because of their race, the amount of money they have, a disability, the language they speak, their age, where they come from or where they live. These added inequalities mean that not all women have the same risk of experiencing violence—or the same chance of finding a way out of it. Women’s equality means equality with men *and* among women.

*As the Canadian Government has said in its *Federal Action Plan for Gender Equality*, “Barriers to equality are rooted in long-standing attitudes and traditions not only about women, but also about race, age, sexual orientation, disability, colour, etc. In particular, the life situations of women outside the dominant culture—women with disabilities, Aboriginal women, women from visible minorities, elderly women, lesbians, lone mothers, women in poverty—are quite different from the mainstream. For them, the path to equality has been, and continues to be, even more difficult. Equality for all women will come about only as these attitudes, imbedded in the workplace, educational institutions and the family, are challenged and begin to change. To achieve true equality, actions must be taken that adjust for the differences in experiences and situations between women and men, and among women, and that correct the systemic nature of inequality.”*

The work of the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs can play a critical role in taking those actions, here and now. While some funding has been increased for women working to address violence in marginalized communities in Ontario, much more must be done to provide equal access to services and independent advocacy for women disadvantaged by colonialization of Aboriginal peoples, racism and discrimination against women of colour and newcomers, exclusion of women with disabilities and discrimination against young women and older women. Francophone women still do not have access to sufficient services despite guarantees of their right to services in French. Geographically, women in Northern and rural communities still struggle to have services for crisis intervention, legal support, police response and social programs of every kind.

The Province of Ontario must expend the time and resources necessary to address these issues for women and children attempting to escape violence so they are not confronted with differential impacts of violence adding serious additional risks to an already dangerous situation.

Recommendation 4: Urge the Province of Ontario to work with equity seeking women’s advocates in disadvantaged communities to ensure that all anti-violence policy and practices meet their needs and that government policy, including budgetary policy and allocations, are determined within an equity-based framework.

Recommendation 5: Raise ODSP rates and provide the resources needed to ensure accessibility for women with disabilities and deaf women: universal transportation accessibility, resources for adequate cultural and ASL interpretation and access to alternative formats for information and support, attendant care services and supports for

women with disabilities using women's shelters and community-based services.

Step 4: End poverty NOW.

Poverty and violence against women are closely linked.

In 2003, OAITH surveyed its members to find out what were the most serious barriers are to leaving abusive relationships. Results showed that both poverty and lack of affordable safe housing for women were high on the list of reasons why women and children were forced to remain with or return to an abuser.¹

The Committee is well aware from presentations and submissions of others, such as Campaign 2000, the Ontario Coalition for Social Justice and others, that there are very concrete recommendations for the Government of Ontario on the issue of poverty reduction in Ontario. We have made similar recommendations on behalf of women and children who are forced into poverty by violence or unable to leave abusive situations because of poverty.

By now you have heard all the realities and statistics on poverty in Ontario many times over, from reams of submissions to the current and previous governments, from government generated statistical reports and from major mainstream media reports on poverty. It seems pointless to repeat them here.

We will only say this. It is intolerable that women in Ontario are forced to choose between poverty and violence. It is intolerable that Aboriginal women and immigrant women, women of colour and women with disabilities will have to make that choice more often than other women. It is unfair that women with children will continue to feel the shame and desperation of child poverty unless public policy decision makers use their power to make a difference.

Let this be the year this Committee has the courage to recommend that the Province of Ontario immediately develop a Poverty Reduction Strategy for Ontario.

Recommendation 6: Immediately end any and all clawback of the National Child Benefit Supplement, whether or not any future "child benefit" is developed.

Recommendation 7: Raise social assistance rates to meet the real needs of recipients wherever they live in Ontario, and index social assistance to the cost of living.

Recommendation 8: Implement the recommendations in the research report: *Walking on Eggshells: Abused Women's Experiences of Ontario's Welfare System*.² (http://www.oaith.ca/pdf/Walking_on_Eggshells.pdf) Implement the recommendation of the Gillian Hadley jury on changes to labour legislation to protect women workers who

¹ *Choose to Change This*, OAITH November 2003, pgs. View at www.oaith.ca, Briefs and Publications section.

² *Walking on Eggshells: Abused Women's Experiences of the Ontario Welfare System*. Janet Mosher, principal researcher. York University. 2004. View at: http://www.oaith.ca/pdf/Walking_on_Eggshells.pdf

are in abusive relationships.³

Recommendation 9: Reverse the decision to narrowly restrict access to the special dietary allowance for social assistance recipients.

Recommendation 10: Increase the minimum wage in Ontario to at least \$10 per hour.

Recommendation 11: Move aggressively to advance pay and employment equity within all Ontario employment sectors and to enforce Employment Standards for workplaces using temporary labour, contract workers and other forms of insecure and unprotected work.

Step 5: Create and maintain housing, non-profit childcare, training–NOW

Housing

Lack of affordable housing for abused women is linked to poverty and lack of economic security. It is also a function of the ongoing failure of governments to respond to an increasing crisis in social housing in Ontario and across Canada.

In the two most recent federal surveys of women's shelters and second stages across Canada, lack of housing was one of the top three issues for women leaving shelters.⁴ Campaign 2000 reports that 70% of low-income families with children are paying too much for their housing.

The Centre for Equality Rights in Accommodation (CERA) also reports that high levels of discrimination and poverty make adequate housing inaccessible to many women, especially Aboriginal women, women with disabilities, immigrant women and women of colour.⁵

While the Province of Ontario has been working on improving the priority for social housing for women leaving abusive relationships, the overall lack of housing in the province counteracts this work. Despite ongoing promises from the Province that housing will be built, women and children are still forced into unsafe and unaffordable housing that puts them at risk and their children in danger of apprehension by child welfare.

³ Recommendation 48 of the jury recommendations of the inquest into the death of Gillian Hadley states: We recommend that all employment related legislation, including the *Employment Standards Act*, the *Human Rights Code*, the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* and the *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act* be reviewed and amended to ensure that: violence is defined to include harassment, stalking and threats of violence; women experiencing violence in an intimate or personal relationship may take a leave of absence sufficient to address the violence in the relationship and establish themselves and their children in a safe place without fear of losing their employment or fear of experiencing some other employment related reprisal.

⁴ Canada's Shelters for Abused Women, 2003/04. Transition Home Survey. .Juristat, Statistics Canada. Pg.

⁵ Women and Housing in Canada: Barriers to Equality. Centre for Equality Rights in Accommodation. (View at [CERA](#))

The Province must release the almost \$400 million dollars it has banked to build housing in Ontario and keep the promise of providing over 20,000 housing units and additional housing rental supplements to meet the real costs of rental housing in local communities.

In 2003, 90% of OAITH members reported that lack of affordable housing was driving women back into abusive relationships. Isn't it time to stop asking women to choose between a violent home and no home?

Recommendation 12: Immediately release the funding held by Ontario to build low-income housing and fulfill the promise of over 20,000 housing units for "needy Ontarians" this budget year.

Recommendation 13: Provide shelter rental subsidies and supplements to a level that guarantees low-income families are able to pay their shelter costs without reducing their budget for basic food, transportation, clothing, school supplies and so on.

Child care

Quality, regulated child care is pivotal to women's equality and an end to poverty. The primary care giving of children remains primarily the responsibility of women. When women leave an abusive relationship with their children, they are at high risk of poverty as a result. Without affordable child care, they must struggle not only to stay safe from the violence, but also to survive financially.

We are aware of the work undertaken by the Province to oppose Federal Government reversal of the national child care program announced in 2005 and we support efforts by the Province to pursue funding from the Government of Canada to provide child care.

At the same time, it appears unlikely that the national government will take any further interest in providing child care for families beyond its token payments to families of children under six. It will be up to the Province of Ontario to step up on this issue to ensure that families have safe, affordable child care and that women can participate in the economic life of the Province.

The Committee has already heard about the need for child care from a number of other submissions (Campaign 2000, the Ontario Coalition for Social Justice, the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care and so on). We support their submissions and would like to support their recommendations for action by the Government of Ontario. For women who are attempting to raise children alone while contending with the impacts of violence (and often the ongoing harassment from their ex-partners) child care is a vital step to freedom.

We would like to add our voice to that of the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care in their recommendations brought before this Committee in December.

Recommendation 14: Support all recommendations presented in the OCBCC presentation to the Committee in December 2006, and in particular the recommendation

specifically for a \$600 million investment in the Best Start Program to increase child care in Ontario.

Education and training

Why are education and training for women critical ingredients in any plan to end violence against women?

Violence has a severe impact on women's ability to access education and training. Sexual violence and harassment has been instrumental to the interruption of education for many girls and young women in both high school and post-secondary education. Abusive partners often disrupt or deny any chances for women to receive language education, work upgrading, and continuing education courses.

Lack of education and training opportunities traps women in low-paying and exploitive work, makes them more dependent on abusive men and decreases their sense of self-worth. Without opportunities to develop skills and knowledge, girls and young women are further vulnerable to exploitive sex work and homelessness.

Although education is one area where women in general have seen a lot of progress over the last few decades, large numbers of women—especially low-income women in all communities have not reaped many of the benefits.

Education and training for women are keys to unlock some of the traps keeping women in dangerous situations.

Recommendation 15: Reinstate the policy that allows individuals on social assistance to simultaneously receive basic social assistance living allowance and student loans for tuition and course-related expenses. The current policy makes a post-secondary education a virtual impossibility for single mothers on OW or ODSP.

Recommendation 16: Eliminate the mandatory work requirement in Ontario Works. As women in the *Walking on Eggshells* study reported, it does not work and it is not fair. The objective of the 'shortest' route to a job must be replaced by an emphasis on sustainable employment. OW employment planning must support appropriate, meaningful and longer-term training opportunities that are likely to lead to long-term economic security.

Recommendation 17: Provide language training and assistance in the recognition of qualifications earned abroad as mandatory components of employment planning and supports.

Recommendation 18: Substantially increase funding to programs designed to support low-income women and women leaving abusive relationships to pursue self-identified goals towards economic security—whether job training, education upgrading, apprenticeships in trades and technology, or small business development.

Step 6: Provide fair access to justice for women.

Women still need access to justice. In spite of years of numerous initiatives, policies, training programs and other measures funded within legal systems in Ontario, relatively few women call on these systems because their process is often traumatic and their results still frequently unfair.

Many women still have little information about their legal rights, particularly if they are newcomers to Canada or do not speak English as their first language. For women in rural and remote areas of Ontario, there are few legal services or lawyers who will work for Legal Aid pay rates.

Legal Aid Ontario has publicly urged the Province to increase funding for legal aid and to recognize the fact that many Ontario residents are excluded from support by tight eligibility rules even if their income may be as low as \$13,000 annually. For women escaping abusive relationships, there is certainly an issue of fairness and equality within the division of funding support for Legal Aid in criminal and family law areas. Family law legal aid, where most women will seek support, continues to be under funded in comparison to criminal legal aid. As a result, women are finding themselves without representation in complex and dangerous family law custody and access disputes that have sometimes led to tragic consequences. This must be addressed immediately.

Women often come to court without adequate support or with minimal support from overstretched women's advocates. The Victim-Witness Programs work only within the criminal court system and are controlled by the system. Some women's shelters have managed to raise private money to support a legal worker, but they are in the minority. Within rural and Northern communities, access to legal services of any kind are a struggle because services are sparse in both criminal and family law systems.

Positive steps have been taken in Ontario with regards to family law. We were very pleased that the current Ontario government made important changes to the *Children's Law Reform Act* to require judges in family courts to consider "domestic violence" and that the government reaffirmed that there would be one family law for Ontarians.

Yet much more needs to be done.

When the jury into the death of Arlene May released its recommendations in 1998, it specifically stated the need for independent community-based women's advocates funded to work with women within the family law and criminal legal systems. At the time, the Mike Harris government 'implemented' the recommendation with a short-term "pilot project" at the Barbara Schlifer Clinic, which has since been provided with annualized funding by the Liberals. We are pleased that the Clinic has received annualized funding for its valuable work. But when will the "pilot" become a province-wide funded program for all Ontario women who need it? As we feared at the time, it appears the "pilot" was merely a way to undermine the inquest recommendations and hamper the development of province-wide advocacy for women?

Governments talk a lot about justice for women, but don't often provide effective means for women to get it. We would like to see the Standing Committee show support for

women and children by recommending changes in provincial budgeting to ensure that Legal Aid improves to meet the needs of women and that women escaping violence can be sure they have support and representation in both criminal and family legal systems.

Recommendation 19: Immediately increase funding within Legal Aid specifically to close the gap between family and criminal law areas and to ensure that women have adequate financial support to provide representation by certificate lawyers throughout their family law matters.

Recommendation 20: Provide funding for full-time legal support workers for women within independent women's services and agencies across Ontario, as recommended by the jury in the inquest into the death of Arlene May held in 1998, almost 10 years ago.

Step 7: Hold violent men accountable for their actions.

Over the last decade in Ontario, there has been a great deal of attention to the criminal justice system response to woman abuse and the determination to hold abusers accountable for their actions.

Perhaps the largest allocation of funds in this area has been to the expansion of Domestic Violence Courts and ancillary programs and committees that revolve around them. Unfortunately, it isn't clear that we are getting "value for money" or the "measurable outcomes" that community-based women's services hear so much about when they are schooled on taxpayer accountability for the limited funds they receive.

A recent study of the effectiveness of Domestic Violence Courts in Ontario shows disappointing results.

The *Final Report of the Evaluation of the Domestic Violence Court Program* released in September reported some progress in some areas of the objectives of the six courts reviewed. But the final report, gentle in its criticisms of the Courts' shortcomings, contained so many qualifiers and caveats as to the accuracy or usefulness of its information that it doesn't instil much confidence that the courts are worth the \$22.4 million being spent on them, or the additional \$8 million allocated in 2000 to support Crown contact with victims. Information, data collection and program delivery were inconsistent, early intervention programs were questionable in their effectiveness and delays were increased rather than decreased in the Domestic Court process. The report calls for the Courts to regroup and do a better job, and recommends increasing resources to allow better response.

The Woman Abuse Council of Toronto is more direct in its assessment of the Toronto Domestic Violence Courts. In its *Court Watch IV 2006 Annual Report*, the Council titled its introductory section "*Disturbing Trends*" and reported: "In almost every area tracked, we found that the criminal justice response in 2006 was less vigorous than three years ago...The overall message from the information collected is that the domestic violence courts in Toronto are less rigorous and less consistent in providing an effective, meaningful and accountable response to woman abuse compared to 2004." The

Toronto courts were the pilot models for the provincial expansion of domestic violence courts across Ontario.

Recommendation 21: Do not provide further funding to expand Domestic Violence courts without first ensuring that independent women’s shelters, rape crisis and women’s neighbourhood centres are adequately funded.

Step 8: Stop criminalizing and psychiatrizing women

Criminalizing happens when women experience male violence, but they are the ones treated like criminals, made to take the blame for what happened, or made to feel like they create the situations they are forced into when they try to get away—poverty, homelessness, immigration issues, child exposure to the violence, and so on.

Psychiatrizing happens when men are violent to women, but women are treated as though they have emotional, medical or psychiatric conditions or “character deficits” that contributed to or ‘provoked’ the abuse, even if they didn’t actually cause it. Even well meaning helpers who take this road may decide that women who experience violence need more therapy, psychiatric treatment or “assertiveness” training programs in order to end the violence in their lives.

As progress is made in the delivery of programs and services to abused women and their children—and there have been significant steps in our progress over the past 30 years—it is important to remember that the abuser is the one with the problem, not the survivor of his violence.

Although women are victimized in criminal ways, woman abuse is larger than a “crime prevention” issue. Although women’s health and well-being and that of their children are affected by the violence, woman abuse is not a “mental health” issue. Violence against women is an equality rights issue and it is there that we must keep our focus.

As a Committee examining budget issues, there are few recommendations you can make on this issue, but it does underscore the need to understand the equality rights issues in order to recommend where funding should go to address violence against women.

Step 9: Demand secure funding for women's organizations

Women’s anti-violence and equity groups are the foundation of the movement to end violence against women. All positive initiatives to respond to violence against women can be traced back to the women who created the shelters, rape crisis centers and women’s community services created and controlled by women dedicated to women’s equality.

Women’s feminist and equality seeking advocates also created the analysis of violence against women and the intersectional frameworks to incorporate differential impacts of violence against women on Aboriginal women, women of colour, low-income women, women with disabilities and women experiencing discrimination based on age, sexuality, geographic location, language or culture.

Without ongoing adequate and stable core funding to support all of the programs provided by women for women, we cannot prevent further violence against women and provide appropriate intervention for children who are exposed to violence. In particular, it is necessary to support those women's services that work in partnership with survivors to meet their needs and to advocate for them on a public policy level from a feminist, anti-racist/anti-oppression framework.

In recent years, and specifically since the cuts to women's services and the elimination of funding to women's advocacy networks in 1995, Ontario has either damaged women's ability to organize and create innovative responses, or done little to reverse the damage done. In addition, backlash against women's progress on violence against women and the gender neutralizing of "domestic violence" have done a disservice to the goal of ending violence against women and consigned progress to a narrow focus on responding to the impacts of violence rather than eliminating the root cause.

Women's shelters remain seriously under funded despite small increases to core budgets. Now shelters spend many hours attempting to fundraise the critical core funds they need for what is an essential public service. Shelter staff salaries remain inadequate and government seems committed only to "project" funding or funding for "new" programs rather than ongoing stable comprehensive services.

Rape crisis centres continue to be funded at severely low levels and women's centres still experience unstable, piecemeal funding. Provincial networks such as OAITH, which has for the last 30 years provided countless hours of consultation and contributions to public policy development and leadership on violence against women issues, has not received any ongoing funding from the Province since our funding was eliminated in the Harris purges of 1995/96.

It is time for the Province to stop diminishing the importance of women's shelters, rape crisis centres, neighbourhood women's groups, women's centres and women's provincial policy organizations in the fight to end violence against women. Yes, it is the responsibility of the whole community to address violence against women, but it is the expertise and leadership of the women's movement working with survivors that guides the community to effective action.

Recommendation 22: Implement the recommendations in the May-Iles and Hadley inquests to adequately fund women's shelters. Work with the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses (OAITH) to establish a fair funding process and level of funding for women's shelters.

Recommendation 23: Ensure that Aboriginal women's shelters—both on and off reserve—are funded adequately and that their funding is at least comparable to or better than the 'best' funded women's shelter services in Ontario.

Recommendation 24: Provide funding to ensure that shelters in Northern and rural areas can provide the same quality of services as shelters in urban and Southern communities (including additional funding to address regional issues such as transportation costs for women, additional staff time for travel, etc.)

Recommendation 25: Fully fund pay equity increases in women’s shelters and other women’s workplaces affected by proxy pay equity within the broader public sector.

Recommendation 26: Increase annualized core funding for rape crisis centres, women controlled neighbourhood services and groups and women’s centres working with women for women.

Step 10: Listen to survivors and women’s advocates—they are the experts!

Feminist equality seeking women advocates created the analysis of violence against women and appropriate service delivery practice that has been the bedrock of quality service to women for over 30 years in Ontario. Equity seeking women’s advocates have developed and led our understanding of intersectional frameworks to incorporate differential impacts of violence against women on Aboriginal women, women of colour, low-income women, women with disabilities and women experiencing discrimination based on age and sexuality, for example.

Leadership by these women is critical to finding ways to work towards an end to violence against women.

The foundation of appropriate response to violence against women is built on the principle that women are the experts on their own lives and it is our responsibility to be accountable to that principle and listen to women. Similarly, it has been the women’s movement for equality in all its aspects that has been the foundation of work to end violence against women.

If we are to continue progress to end violence against women, governments must listen to and take direction from the daily experiences of women and the analysis of violence against women by feminist equality analysts that is based on the experiences of survivors. This experience and knowledge is rich and priceless to policy makers that genuinely want to address the issues. To include the expertise and assistance of survivors and women’s activists, government should be providing the means for them to participate and contribute their expertise to the best of their ability.

Recommendation 27: Restore and increase annualized funding to the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses (OAITH) in order for the Association to provide support to member shelters across Ontario on both program and public policy issues. Government policy to limit core funding to “direct services” for women at the provincial level (and now we are seeing at the federal level) has been and will continue to be counterproductive to the goal of ending violence against women.

Recommendation 28: Fund ongoing program and public policy work in other provincial women’s networks such as Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes, the Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres, the Ontario Native Women’s Association, DAWN Ontario and the Ontario Association of Women’s Centres.

Recommendation 29: Provide additional funding to shelters and other women's anti-violence services and groups in Ontario to support involvement of survivors in providing service feedback and input into public policy issues and debates.

Recommendation 30: Work with women's advocates and survivors, particularly women's provincial networks, to develop an ongoing process for including voices of women and their advocates in strategic policy analysis and development of initiatives on violence against women as recommended by the jury in the May-Iles inquest.

Respectfully submitted:

Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses (OAITH)
January 2007

Summary of Recommendation of the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses (OAITH)

Recommendation 1: The Province of Ontario, in consultation with frontline women's and equity seeking advocates, must develop a gender and equality based analysis and approach to the provincial budget that takes into account goals to ensure equity and gender equality in Ontario.

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Recommendation 11: Move aggressively to advance pay and employment equity within all Ontario employment sectors and to enforce Employment Standards for workplaces using temporary labour, contract workers and other forms of insecure and unprotected work.

Recommendation 12: Immediately release in the coming budget the funding held by Ontario to build low-income housing and fulfill the promise of over 20,000 housing units for “needy Ontarians” this budget year.

Recommendation 13: Provide shelter rental subsidies and supplements to a level that guarantees low-income families are able to pay their shelter costs without reducing their budget for basic food, transportation, clothing, school supplies and so on.

Recommendation 14: Support all recommendations presented in the OCBCC presentation to the Committee in December 2006, and in particular the recommendation specifically for a \$600 million investment in the Best Start Program to increase child care in Ontario.

Recommendation 15: Reinstate the policy that allows individuals on social assistance to simultaneously receive basic social assistance living allowance and student loans for tuition and course-related expenses. The current policy makes a post-secondary education a virtual impossibility for single mothers on OW or ODSP.

Recommendation 16: Eliminate the mandatory work requirement in Ontario Works. As women in the *Walking on Eggshells* study reported, it does not work and it is not fair. The objective of the ‘shortest’ route to a job must be replaced by an emphasis on sustainable employment. OW employment planning must support appropriate, meaningful and longer-term training opportunities that are likely to lead to long-term economic security.

Recommendation 17: Provide language training and assistance in the recognition of qualifications earned abroad as mandatory components of employment planning and supports.

Recommendation 18: Substantially increase funding to programs designed to support low-income women and women leaving abusive relationships to pursue self-identified goals towards economic security—whether job training, education

upgrading, apprenticeships in trades and technology, or small business development.

Recommendation 19: Immediately increase funding within Legal Aid specifically to close the gap between family and criminal law areas and to ensure that women have adequate financial support to provide representation by certificate lawyers throughout their family law matters.

Recommendation 20: Provide funding for full-time legal support workers for women within independent women's services and agencies across Ontario, as recommended by the jury in the inquest into the death of Arlene May held in 1998, almost 10 years ago.

Recommendation 21: Do not provide further funding to expand Domestic Violence courts without first ensuring that independent women's shelters, rape crisis and women's neighbourhood centres are adequately funded.

Recommendation 22: Implement the recommendations in the May-Iles and Hadley inquests to adequately fund women's shelters. Work with the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses (OAITH) to establish a fair funding process and level of funding for women's shelters.

Recommendation 23: Ensure that Aboriginal women's shelters—both on and off reserve—are funded adequately and that their funding is at least comparable to or better than the 'best' funded women's shelter services in Ontario.

Recommendation 24: Provide funding to ensure that shelters in Northern and rural areas can provide the same quality of services as shelters in urban and Southern communities (including additional funding to address regional issues such as transportation costs for women, additional staff time for travel, etc.)

Recommendation 25: Fully fund pay equity increases in women's shelters and other women's workplaces affected by proxy pay equity within the broader public sector.

Recommendation 26: Increase annualized core funding for rape crisis centres, women controlled neighbourhood services and groups and women's centres working with women for women.

Recommendation 27: Restore and increase annualized funding to the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses (OAITH) in order for the Association to provide support to member shelters across Ontario on both program and public policy issues. Government policy to limit core funding to "direct services" for women at the provincial level (and now we are seeing at the federal level) has been and will continue to be counterproductive to the goal of ending violence

against women.

Recommendation 28: Fund ongoing program and public policy work in other provincial women's networks such as Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes, the Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres, the Ontario Native Women's Association, DAWN Ontario and the Ontario Association of Women's Centres.

Recommendation 29: Provide additional funding to shelters and other women's anti-violence services and groups in Ontario to support involvement of survivors in providing service feedback and input into public policy issues and debates.

Recommendation 30: Work with women's advocates and survivors, particularly women's provincial networks, to develop an ongoing process for including voices of women and their advocates in strategic policy analysis and development of initiatives on violence against women as recommended by the jury in the May-Iles inquest.