



Standing Committee on Justice Policy
Subcommittee on Bill 173, Declaring Intimate Partner
Violence an Epidemic

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Prepared By: Marlene Ham, Executive Director, Ontario
Association of Interval & Transition Houses

Submitted To:
Thushitha Kobikrishna, Committee Clerk
Whitney Block, Rm 1405
99 Wellesley Street W
Toronto, ON M7A 1A2
Via email: scjp@ola.org

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Background:

Ontario Association of Interval & Transition Houses (OAITH) represents 88 gender-based violence organizations including shelters, transitional housing and community-based programs and services. With our member and ally organizations we [envision a future where gender-based violence services are no longer needed](#). We aim to end all forms of gender-based violence and oppression through advocacy, education, prevention, research and training.

Quick Facts About OAITH:

- Established in 1977, OAITH represents 88 organizations across Ontario and has been a leader in policy and program development, advocacy, training and raising awareness about and how to end gender-based violence.
- We operate an online [Training Hub](#) that generated a 52% increase in course completions from 22/23-23/24. In total 1,568 courses were completed by users last year demonstrating the number of new workers coming into our services.
- [MulberryFinder](#), a unique platform created by OAITH in December 2022 to connect Ontarians to gender-based violence services, saw 7,000 unique visitors from June 2023 to June 2024.
- [OAITH Femicide Reports](#) were accessed more than 7,000 times in 23/24. This culminates into a 32% increase from the prior year.

Quick Facts About Emerging Issues for Shelters

- Total number of survivors referred elsewhere due to lack of bed space 22/23 in 30 shelters: 6,186 (n=30, Provincial Budget Survey 2024)
- 37% of OAITH member organizations have seen a change in organizational leadership since 2020 (Provincial Budget Submission, 2024)
- Nearly 80% of responding shelters are not double staffed 24 hours per day due to lack of funding, leaving many staff to work alone during evening, overnights and weekends. (n=30, Provincial Budget Survey 2024)
- There is an 11.00 wage difference for staff to perform the same job (n=30, Provincial Budget Survey 2024)
- 43% of workers in the shelter workforce are relief, part time or contract workers (n=30, Provincial Budget Survey 2024)

Context Setting

OAITH and our member organizations bring considerable expertise to the topic of Intimate Partner Violence, given the primary and core purpose of these organizations is to solely focus on ending gender-based violence. These organizations are more than programs and projects and as such the information provided in this written submission and the presentation to be made to the committee, aim to provide the depth and breadth to support the committee's work.

In preparation for the hearings being held for Bill 173, OAITH convened our membership on June 19th, 2024 and structured the day to gather their experience, insights and recommendations as the Government of Ontario moved Bill 173, Declaring Intimate Partner Violence an Epidemic to committee for further study. Those key findings will be explored in more depth and included further down in this written submission to form the basis of the problem statement outline. To form a foundation and to educate committee members, a 5 Year Review and Analysis of Femicide in Ontario has been prepared. This review and analysis examine all types of femicide in the last 5 years, including Intimate Partner Femicide.

5 Year Femicide Analysis in Ontario

OAITH tracks the gender-based killings (femicides) of women and their children, trans women, 2-Spirit and gender-non conforming individuals. We track and examine gender-related killings where men have been charged or deemed responsible (murder-femicide). We do this because we understand violence and harm as learned behaviour, with attitudes and beliefs needing to change to address gender-based violence and move towards a more non violent society for everyone. Femicide is preventable and ultimately is the lethal outcome of patriarchy, misogyny, trans-misogyny, hatred, racism, control and all forms of oppression.

OAITH's definition of femicide has broadened beyond IPV and the 5 Year Analysis includes multiple femicide relationship types. OAITH has defined and categorized for our research and data collection purposes. These relationship types include:

Intimate Partner (current/former)

Family (son, father, -in law, nephew, brother)

Known (acquaintance, friend, neighbour, landlord, roommate, coworker)

Relationship Not Reported (details regarding the nature of the relationship between the victim and perpetrator, if any, have not been publicly disclosed but victim targeted)

No Prior Relationship (police have specified no prior relationship existed between the victim and perpetrator)

By examining and tracking changes by relationship type we gain a more in-depth understanding of gender-based violence but more importantly about men's violence towards women and their children, towards trans women, 2 Spirit and gender-non conforming individuals. To only examine violence towards intimate partners can be limiting and does lead to missed opportunities, lessons learned and ways to bolster broader prevention efforts.

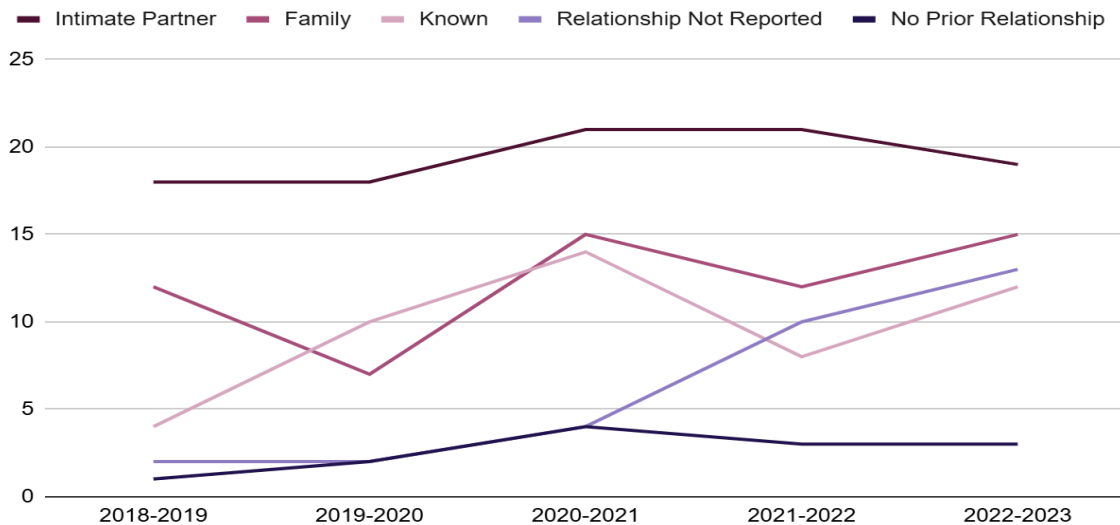
In addition to the type of femicide (relationship), there are several data sets or trends that we examine. In fact, there are approximately 30 that we track, however for the purposes of this report, we have analyzed 10 key trends over the last 5 years that most commonly emerge in media reports. There can be many limitations when tracking femicide that can be informed and influenced by a range of factors. These factors or reasons include but are not limited to; manner of death coding impact on police disclosure, type of police disclosure, ongoing police investigations (when no suspect is identified), autopsy results if they are released publicly, who journalists interview, available information at the time a media report is published, if follow up stories are published or information is updated, how and if family and friends want to talk publicly, publication bans, requests for privacy from family and other survivors of these crimes and finally, if media is present for criminal court proceedings. While these limitations exist, information can and does change overtime and we work to continuously update information as it's released.

Annual Femicide Rates by Relationship Types:

In examining femicide by relationship type between 2018/2019 through to 2022/2023 there is a disturbing 68% increase across all types of femicide in the last 5 years. Overall there have been 237 women and children killed primarily by men closely known to them in this timeframe. A trend that has increased over this five-year period is that more femicides (Relationship Not Reported) has emerged. In 2018/19 this accounted for only 2 femicides, while in 2022/2023 there were 13 femicides where the relationship hasn't been reported. This information is typically released by police and is reported through the media, however year after year the number of cases lacking a disclosure about the relationship between the victim and the person charged or deemed responsible is increasing. Knowing the relationship between victims and those charged provides opportunity for public awareness, for truths to be identified, lessons learned for early intervention, validation for loved ones and ensuring people in similar situations get the help they need to prevent future tragedies.

While it may not appear that Intimate Partner Femicides increased between 2018/2019 to 2022/2023, when police report the victim and person charged are *known to one another* or the *relationship isn't initially reported*, some of these femicides can be IPV-

Annual Femicide Rates by Relationship Types



related, but not but not disclosed at the time when the media report is published. At time this information can take 1 or 2 years to change as cases move through court processes. And in some cases (murder-femicide), it may never be revealed.

Overall, in 2022/2023, 62 women children were killed by November 25th, 2023 with at least 39% of those being an IPV femicide. Between November 2023 and June 30th, 2024 there have been 35 women and children killed in Ontario. Of these, 16 femicides (45%) occurred in May and June of this year. We have confirmed that 37% of these are IPV Femicides however an additional 29% of femicides in the last 8 months have only indicated they were known to one another. Known to one another could be an IPV related femicide leading to an underestimation of the true numbers but also missed opportunities for support services to be responsive and contribute to prevention of lethal outcomes in the future.

Relationship Type	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	Total	%
Intimate Partner	18	18	21	21	19	97	39%
Family	12	7	15	12	15	61	24%
Known	4	10	14	8	12	48	19%
Relationship Not Reported	2	2	4	10	13	31	12%
No Prior Relationship	1	2	4	3	3	13	5%
Total	37	39	58	54	62	237 Femicides	

Quick Facts About Femicide in Ontario 2019 to 2023

- Between 2019 and 2023 there have been 237 confirmed cases of femicide
- Between 2019 and 2023 we have seen an overrepresentation of femicides for South Asian Women (9%), Black Women (8%) and Indigenous Women (6%). Given these communities represent a much smaller proportion of the population yet continue to be overrepresented in femicide data, understanding and addressing systemic barriers and failures, particularly racism should be the highest priority of services and government as intervention and responses are examined. Solutions designed and informed by the most marginalized will work for everyone and leave nobody behind.
- Between 2019 and 2023 there has been a 68% increase in femicides overall
- Majority of women have been killed by a current or former intimate partner
- There have been 20 children under the age of 17 killed in Ontario in the last 5 years. Most of these children have been killed by their father or Mother's former/current partner.
- 98% of victims were killed by men they knew, reinforcing the reality that most femicide victims are killed by men closely known to them.
- Femicides more likely to occur inside a residence include Family (84%), IPV (76%) or Known Relationships (67%) Family femicide. Where there was no relationship reported between the victim and accused or they were not known to one another at all, the deaths were more likely to occur in either a public indoor or public outdoor setting.
- In some cases, history of violence (15%) and previous violence related charges (18%) has been reported among those accused. There can be overlap between these trends, however this is an important area of continued research. Perpetrators of mass killings have had reported histories of violence against women and girls. While some of our reported cases are not IPV related, histories and prior charges are showing up in some media reports. We encourage more reporting on accused history of violence and prior charges.
- Between 2019 to 2023 women over the age of 55 have been killed less often by intimate partners (22%), but more often targeted by someone they didn't know (54%).
- The majority of femicide victims have been between 18-35 (40%) and 36-54 (37%)

Problem Statement Submission to Committee

Current Reality-Identify the Problem

Delivering shelter services needs to be sustainable to be effective

When: Over next three years

What: Survivors and their children don't receive the same quality of service in VAW/GBV Shelters across Ontario because these essential programs are underfunded and not based on actual costs.

Where: Across Ontario

Extent: Pervasive and has a variable impact on 95 shelter organizations

How Much: 60 Million Over 3 Years for All Core GBV Programs

Organizational Data:

- In a self reported shelter data sample, a significant shortfall in funding is being offset by other fundraised revenues. For example, nearly 70% of shelters reported they had to fundraise for their shelter services and on average they were fundraising just over 300,000.00 to balance their budget. (Provincial Budget Submission, 2024; Provincial Budget Submission, 2023).
- The chart below outlines the additional core programs that also require offsetting revenue providing a simple snapshot. With the recent investments through the National Action Plan and Ontario STANDS, we anticipate a reduction in the amount some are required to fundraise due to this much needed investment.
- 80% of respondents indicated they had a relief staff shortage, while 43% of their shelter workforce is made up of relief, part time and contract workers.
- There have been 40% turnover of our leadership, while 97% of our members who participated in the Provincial Budget 2024 Survey, indicated they've experienced varying degrees of turnover. This is contributing to destabilization of their operations and ultimately quality services for survivors.
- The most common reasons shelters are losing staff is due to low wages (79%), hours of work (72%) and burnout (62%)

- Across 36 organizations varying in size, budgets and geographical regions in Ontario there is a notable 11.00 an hour difference between relief staff (Provincial Budget Submission, 2024)
- Nearly 80% of respondents (Provincial Budget Submission, 2024) indicated they are single staffed during the evening, overnight and weekends because they do not have the funding to staff additional positions.
- Survivors and their children are staying longer. In fact, between 2021-2022 and 2022-2023, members who participated in the Provincial Budget Submissions indicated that on average families stayed 4 weeks longer than the prior year.
- Members are reporting more complex needs in an environment and service delivery model that wasn't designed for more than a 6 week stay. This is creating poorer outcomes for survivors and children and high turn over and burnout for employees.

MCCSS Program	Avg Fundraised Amount (22/23)	# of Org's Receiving Funding	% of Org's Who Need to Offset Core Operating Expenses
VAW Shelter	\$301,669.00 (n=24)	35	68.5%
VAW Counselling	\$70,349 (n=12)	27	44.4%
Transitional Housing Support Program	\$65,507 (n=16)	38	42.1%
Child Witness Program	\$26,070.50 (n=8)	17	47%
Family Court Support Worker Program	\$25,400.00 (n=3)	14	21.4%
Capacity Building	\$37,355.08 (n=12)	31	38.7%

It is for all these reasons OAITH submitted recommendations to the Ontario Government in 2017 through the Shelter Realities Report (Campbell, J. 2017). We

continue to advocate that all shelters be funded for all programs to achieve and maintain sustainable services.

OAITH is pleased that we have a National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence and Ontario STANDS that provides a strategy to address gender-based violence in Ontario. Many of OAITH's recommendations are reflected in the plan and we continue to work closely with our members to continue providing feedback to government. Our main problem can be served through the Ontario STANDS plan, with the investment that we're suggesting (OAITH, 2023)

Consequences

- Inadequate funding of shelters and their programs in Ontario has been a repeat inquest recommendation since the 1990's. To review all inquest recommendations made in Ontario please go [here](#).
- Longer stays in shelter are not related to the funding of a shelter, but rather the interrelated impact of no available housing, no additional and/or available shelter beds or temporary safe housing solutions (family, friends). This has created a bottleneck with increasingly high numbers of survivors and their children not being able to access a shelter.
- Overall, only 30% of those who contact a shelter ever get a bed, while the remaining 70% are referred elsewhere (Financial Accountability Office Report, 2024)*. This is a true indicator of an unsustainable and a system unable to respond to the majority of people trying to access it.

*This MCCSS data is limited as it's not unique and shelters do receive multiple calls from the same families and some families call multiple shelters looking for space.

- The longer survivors and their children who need to leave their situation must wait for a bed, the more risk they are exposed to and the more likely it can become they are seriously harmed, or worse, killed. Enduring trauma either episodically or for long durations has lasting impacts across the life course and costly implications to services and systems.
- With police reported domestic violence calls, femicides and service usage data all increasing, more staff, programs and resources are required to respond to the demand.

Ideal Situation:

Members of the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses convened on June 19th, 2024 for a day of strategic discussion in preparation for the study of Bill 173. OAITH's role is to support our members by creating opportunities to convene, by producing relevant research, training and capacity building opportunities. OAITH will continue to support our members in 5 key areas of policy and will support them to present their own proposals to the committee throughout the duration of the study. There are 5 key areas of policy that would lead to ideal outcomes for survivors and the services that support them, leveraged through discussions with our members in June 2024. Currently, here are three key areas for consideration:

FUNDING

Ideal Outcome: Core delivery of essential services and programs doesn't rely on or require unpredictable fundraised dollars.

Impact:

Adequately funded gender-based violence services through MCCSS. This would require collaboration between MCCSS, Executive Directors/Organizations and Provincial Associations to work towards ensuring all shelters have the same base programs, base rate of pay for workers across all organizations, moving from project to larger scale program planning across all shelters for more effective evaluation, sector wide and ministry supported research on the actual cost of delivering services and collaborating towards the solution to sustain them. Finally, but most importantly, annual budgeting processes requires considerations for actual and changing costs related to inflation. By ignoring these realities any budgeting process will continue to put these essential services and quality of service at the whim of donations received.

HOUSING

Ideal Outcome: Those who need emergency shelter would be able to access it when they need it; movement in the shelter system and stays are reduced to be conducive to the conditions in which shelters were actually designed.

Impact

Survivors have choice of shelter and housing services based on what they need for themselves and their family. Available housing options including but is not limited to; affordable rent geared to income stock, adjustments made to COHB to ensure available housing can be accessed, purpose-built housing for families, supportive housing for survivors and their families, capitol and operational funding for transitional housing builds. To reduce barriers to housing, our members also suggested housing ownership programs, simplifying the application process for housing, and increase the availability of subsidies.

PREVENTION

Ideal Outcome: The number of men perpetrating violence and femicide is reduced. Knowledge, awareness and experiencing healthy relationships, safety and overall wellness is increased and/or improves.

-Prevention programs must be targeted towards men and boys with standardized and consistent public education programming. This could be realized through large scale provincial projects that are measurable, culturally adaptable and provide a longitudinal opportunity to track outcomes over time. Those in attendance at OAITH's Strategy Day strongly support the shifts from a responsive system to one that is upstream with gender-based violence services focusing more of their work in community settings and school systems with children, youth and adults. To address the burden put onto the responsive services we need to invest in preventative services. Furthermore, to address the costly burden of a criminal justice ensuring community-based services are available for those who experience and cause harm, and in consideration that this can be concurrent, we need services to respond sooner and outside of the criminal justice system.

OAITH has made numerous submissions to government, notably and more recently, a Briefing Note on key policy areas was made to Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, Associate Ministry of Women's Social and Economic Development, Associate Ministry of Housing and the Associate Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions that will hopefully provide more detail than is listed above and is available in the list of references.

Finally but most central to the purpose of the committee's work is around the province of Ontario, Declaring Intimate Partner Violence an Epidemic, Bill 173. In convening our members in June, we had an opportunity to learn from them what it would mean if the province moved forward with this. We also explored with them their experience about any impact local declarations are having and adoption into their Community Safety and Well Being Plan. In asking our members what they wanted OAITH to inform this committee about a few key areas emerged worth mentioning:

1. Participants noted the importance of system-level (systemic) change most valuable including change to the legal system response (Family and Criminal Court)
2. Investment into research to determine actual cost of keeping survivors safe from harm and the lifelong impacts of IPV
3. There is an integral connection between social service and health services in the context of gender-based violence
4. There is a need to increase GBV expertise across sectors and systems, but not at the expense of continuing to underfund the foundational and

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primary expertise within MCCSS funded organizations through shelters and sexual assault centres

5. Quantitative goal setting and thresholds could be strategies to increase awareness and accountability
6. Increasing information sharing, knowledge transfer and capacity-building would be helpful for member organizations

During the presentation to the committee next week, I will bring forth additional insights we learned from them specifically as it relates to the change, they want Bill 173 to achieve, concerns they have and their suggestions on mitigating them.

On behalf of OAITH our Board of Directors and staff team, I would like to thank members of the Standing Committee on Justice for the invitation to participate in this important study.

Many thanks,



Marlene Ham, Executive Director
Ontario Association on Interval & Transition Houses
marlene@oait.ca

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