
To: AMO Board of Directors
From: Lindsay Jones, Director of Policy and Government Relations
Date: August 19, 2023
Subject: **Intimate Partner/Gender-Based Violence**

ISSUE: There has been an increase in abuse and domestic violence since the pandemic and municipal services are often the first to respond to these incidents. The Culleton, Kuzyk and Warmerdam Inquest Report released in June 2022 provided 86 recommendations to help address intimate partner violence and a helpful focal point for policy and advocacy work.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Board:

- Acknowledge that gender-based violence and intimate partner violence is an epidemic in Ontario, requiring an urgent and coordinated response
- Approve key messages outlined below to be sent to relevant provincial Ministers
- Task AMO's Social Policy and Policing Task Forces to advance work in collaboration with ministries, Indigenous organizations and community partners

ANALYSIS:

There has been a significant municipal response to the Culleton, Kuzyk and Warmerdam Inquest recommendations released in June 2022, highlighting the need for constructive action on intimate partner violence. Over 30 municipalities have passed resolutions declaring intimate partner violence an epidemic, indicating that this is a crisis in communities and naming this issue as a priority in need of resources and action. The federal government has also declared gender-based violence an epidemic in their formal response to the Inquest.

A letter highlighting municipalities' desire to work collaboratively with the provincial government sent to Ministers Michael Kerzner (Solicitor General), Michael Parsa (Children, Community and Social Services), and Charmaine Williams (Women's Social and Economic Opportunity) can help to underscore the role of municipalities in making progress on this important issue. Key messages will include:

- AMO recognizes that gender-based and intimate partner violence is an epidemic in Ontario and that we must prioritize urgent, coordinated action on intimate partner violence, gender-based violence, and violence against Indigenous women.
- Municipal governments are partners in responding to issues of intimate partner violence, gender-based violence, and violence against Indigenous women.

- Municipalities want to work together with the province on a strategy for responding to intimate partner and gender-based violence, building off the recommendations of the Inquest and the [Calls for Justice](#) from [The Final Report](#) of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.
- The provincial government should commit to prioritizing the development of a concrete plan of action intimate partner violence, gender-based violence, and violence against Indigenous women with clear implementation and accountability mechanisms.
- The provincial government work with groups such as the Ontario Native Women's Association and others to respond to the high rates of violence against Indigenous women, including through implementing the Calls for Justice.
- Disaggregated data must be collected to ensure we can appropriately respond to communities that are disproportionately affected by these forms of violence, including racialized communities.

AMO staff are also recommending that this issue be explored further with the Social Policy Task Force and Policing Task Force to determine implementation advice to the province and additional policy work. These Task Forces will examine how AMO advocacy can support recommendations from the Inquest with municipal implications. A sample of some of these recommendations include:

- Exploring incorporating restorative justice and community-based approaches in dealing with appropriate intimate partner violence cases to ensure safety and best outcomes for survivors.
- Exploring the integration of actions to address intimate partner violence into every municipality's community safety and well-being plan (currently rejected by province).
- Requiring all police services to immediately inform the Chief Firearms Officer (CFO) of intimate partner violence-related charges after they are laid, and provide any relevant records, including Firearms Interest Police information (currently accepted in part by province).
- Reviewing policies to ensure the timely, reliable, consistent, and accurate dissemination of information, including the use of emergency alerts and media releases, where the police are aware of circumstances that could put the public in danger, and that the focus is on safety when developing policies regarding what information to share with whom and when. Consideration should be given to disseminating information through alternative methods where cellular service is not consistently available.
- Establishing clear guidelines regarding the flagging of perpetrators or potential victims in police databases, immediate dispatch and police access to the identities and contact information of potential targets, and how to notify those targets.
- Realigning the approach to public funding provided to intimate partner violence service providers with a view to removing unnecessary reporting obligations with a focus on service by drawing on best practices in Canada and internationally, and adopting and implementing improved, adequate, stable, and recurring funding (currently accepted in part by the province).

- Improving the coordination of services addressing substance use, mental health, child protection, and intimate partner violence perpetration, and encouraging cross-agency service provision and case management.
- Providing specialized and enhanced training of police officers with a goal of developing an intimate partner violence specialist in each police detachment.
- Ensuring that the OPP conduct a study on improving tactical response timelines as it applies to rural environments generally and in intimate partner violence cases in particular.
- Expanding cell service and high-speed internet in rural and remote areas of Ontario to improve safety and access to services.
- Setting up satellite offices for police officers to work safely and comfortably to spread police resources more evenly over wide rural areas (i.e. consider asking schools and municipal governments to provide office space).

AMO Task Forces will also consider the Calls for Justice recommendations from the Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. Additional work on gender based and intimate partner violence can be incorporated into current advocacy priorities, for example housing policy recommendations can consider ensuring safe housing options for survivors of domestic abuse and human trafficking.

BACKGROUND:

On September 22, 2015, three women were found murdered in Renfrew County. In 2017, Basil Borutski was convicted of first-degree murder charges in the deaths of Anastasia Kuzyk, Nathalie Warmerdam and Carol Culleton. The Culleton, Kuzyk, & Warmerdam Inquest took place in June 2022 and made [86 recommendations](#) to prevent intimate partner violence (IPV).

The province was the subject of most of the recommendations. The province provided its responses to 30 recommendations: 22 were accepted or partially accepted and [8 were rejected](#). This has included formally declaring intimate partner violence an epidemic. Over 30 municipalities have passed resolutions making this declaration, supported by many local organizations.

The federal government has also [declared](#) that gender-based violence is an epidemic in their formal response to the Inquest. In a letter to the Ontario coroner's office, federal Justice Minister Arif Virani committed the federal government to ending this epidemic "in all its forms, and is working to address any gaps in the Criminal Code to ensure a robust justice system response." This includes working with provincial and territorial counterparts to create a new offence related to coercive control, a pattern of behaviours intended to isolate, humiliate, exploit or dominate a person which can include emotional, verbal and financial abuse. Justice Canada officials are also examining how the criminal justice system's responses to femicide cases can be strengthened and are working with Statistics Canada to improve the collection of data on femicide in Canada.

The Inquest recommendations and resolutions should be understood in the context of the increase of abuse and domestic violence that was seen during the pandemic which has been acknowledged by the United Nations, among others. This "shadow pandemic" has brought renewed attention and urgency to the issue of intimate partner violence. The Ontario Association of Interval and Transition

Houses [reported](#) that there were 52 femicides in Ontario in 52 weeks in the year 2021-2022. Already in 2023, they have [found](#) that there have been 30 femicides in Ontario in 30 weeks between November 26, 2022 and June 30, 2023.

Violence against Indigenous women (including but not restricted to IPV) is also national crisis, as evidenced by the findings of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. According to [Statistics Canada](#), Indigenous women (61%) are more likely to experience some form of IPV in their lifetime compared with non-Indigenous women (44%). 2SLGBTQ+ Indigenous women are particularly at risk, with 2SLGBTQ+ Indigenous women being five times more likely than non-Indigenous LGBTQ+ women to have experienced IPV in their lifetime. Given that 88% of Indigenous women live off-reserve, in urban centres, towns and rural areas in Ontario, there is an opportunity for joint advocacy with ONWA on this issue. Many of the recommendations in the Inquiry mirror what ONWA has been calling for, including core sustainable funding for Indigenous women's organizations. Ending gender-based violence and IPV won't happen without investment in Indigenous women and their solutions.

Current provincial action in the area of intimate partner violence has included committing over \$693 million to support victims of violence, including emergency shelters, counselling services and 24-hour crisis lines since 2020. For the 2023-24 year, the province is putting an additional \$2.5 million in youth violence, human trafficking prevention and victim response programming. The Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services has also reiterated the province's endorsement [10-year National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence](#).

NEXT STEPS:

Municipal representatives will meet with the Ministers during the AMO Conference. Participants at this meeting will include AMO staff and the following representatives identified based on expressed interest and diversity in representation of municipality size and geography:

Michelle Boileau	Mayor Chair	City of Timmins Northern Ontario Service Deliverers Association (NOSDA)
Riley Brockington	Councillor	City of Ottawa
Marilyn Crawford	Councillor Councillor	Town of Ajax Region of Durham
Colleen James	Councillor	Region of Waterloo
Christa Lowry	Mayor Councillor	Municipality of Mississippi Mills County of Lanark
Rowena Santos	Councillor Councillor	City of Brampton Region of Peel

AMO and the Ontario Native Women's Association (ONWA) will be signing an MOU at the conference committing to working together in the spirit of reconciliation to improve Indigenous women's safety, wellbeing, and access to services in our communities and building greater understanding in

municipal governments of their role in this work. As part of this new partnership with ONWA, CEO Cora McGuire-Cyrette and Senior Director Jennifer Richardson will also participate in the delegation.

AMO staff will prepare and send a letter to the relevant Ministers on this issue with the proposed key messages after the meeting. AMO's Task Forces will consider the recommendations of the Inquest and the Calls for Justice and will provide advice on future advocacy priorities on this issue.

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