

APPENDIX 6



**Significant National, Provincial & Local Milestones
to Eradicate Partner Abuse**

SIGNIFICANT NATIONAL, PROVINCIAL & LOCAL MILESTONES TO ERADICATE PARTNER ABUSE

Partner Abuse in Canada

The existence and severity of partner abuse in Canada was brought to our national attention in the early 1970s, primarily as a result of the efforts of victims and survivors of such violence and feminist anti-violence workers. The first shelters for abused women in Canada were established in the mid-1970s; there are now approximately 540 shelters for abused women in Canada today, 130 of which are in Ontario.

Over the past 30 years, our understanding of the prevalence and complexity of partner abuse has grown. In keeping with this awareness, professionals and advocates from various sectors, including legal-justice, health and mental health, and victim services, have come together to develop, establish and maintain comprehensive service networks for victims of partner abuse and their families. Coordinating Committees have been established in many communities to support and facilitate positive working relationships among the many different agencies and organizations working with victims of partner abuse and their families.

Significant national and provincial milestones in the effort to eradicate partner abuse include:

- **Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women (1991-93)** Created by the Prime Minister in 1991 and mandated to investigate the issue of violence against women and develop solutions with attention to various sectors involved in anti-violence work. Final report includes Zero Tolerance Action Plans for: anti-violence, health and community services; legal institutions; workplace environments; military; education; media; religious institutions; and the government.
- **May-Illes Inquest (1998)** Inquest into the death of Arlene May, who was murdered by her estranged common-law partner in March, 1996. The final report from the inquest included 213 recommendations for action and change.
- **Family Violence Initiative (1996-ongoing)** Federal initiative mandated to: promote public awareness of risk factors for family violence; improve responses to family violence in criminal and housing sectors; and research effectiveness of various forms of intervention.
- **Hadley Inquest (2002)** Inquest into the death of Gillian Hadley, who was murdered by her estranged husband in June, 2000. The final report from the inquest included 58 recommendations for action and change.
- **Domestic Violence Death Review Committee (2003)** As recommended in the final report from the Hadley Inquest, the Domestic Violence Death Review

Committee (DVDRC) was established by the Coroner of Ontario. The DVDRC is mandated to contribute to the reduction in domestic violence in general and domestic violence in particular by reviewing all intimate partner and ex-partner homicides and making recommendations to address any systemic issues, problems, gaps or shortcomings identified during said reviews.

- **Domestic Violence Action Plan**, Provincial initiative mandated to: improve services for abused women; support effective community coordination and collaboration; and increase awareness and understanding of the issue of domestic violence in social service sectors and community-at-large.

Improving Our Response to Partner Abuse

Canada and Ontario have instituted a number of specific measures designed to improve our response to partner abuse, including:

- significant amendments to the Criminal Code of Canada, such as changes which made illegal for men to rape their wives and clarified the issue of consent (1983), and the more recent development of criminal harassment and stalking laws designed to protect victims after they separate from an abusive partner (1993);
- changes to police orders including the introduction of mandatory charging policies in the case of spousal violence resulting in a significant increase in the number of charges laid (early-mid 1980s);
- specialized Domestic Violence Courts (or “dedicated courts”) and Domestic Violence Crown Attorneys (or “dedicated Crowns”) located throughout the province;
- creation of Victim/Witness Assistance Program to provide support to victims involved with criminal courts;
- creation of Partner Assault Response Program designed to hold offenders accountable for their violence through court-mandated counselling and increase victims’ safety;
- development of the Ontario Domestic Risk Assessment (2001) for use by police officers when assessing likelihood that an offender will commit more violent assaults – and -
- revisions to the Child & Family Services Act (Ontario) to recognize children who witness partner abuse as children in need of protection.
- Development of Quinte Coordinating Committee Against Violence Protocol – “Our response to sexual assault and domestic violence.” – 2003
- Local development of dedicated Domestic Violence Court – 1999
- Development of Quinte & District Victims Fund Committee – 1995