

16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence

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INCOME ASSISTANCE

November is Woman Abuse Prevention Month, which includes the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, a global campaign spanning November 25th to December 10th that calls for an end to gender-based violence.

Thunder Bay City Council formally declared GBV and IPV an epidemic on September 25th immediately following our deputation. In addition, City officials have invited us to present to the local social services administration board and the Intergovernmental Affairs committee, and also supply a list of actionable goals for City Council to better support survivors of GBV in our community.

Our 2023 16 Days campaign will focus on these actionable goals - efforts at the municipal and personal levels to address gender-based violence.

Why it Matters

- GBV/IPV and poverty are SYSTEMIC problems; individual women are not to blame.
- Women often cannot afford to leave an abusive partner, especially if they have children.
- Abusive partners often directly sabotage women's efforts at financial security and autonomy by interfering with their ability to maintain employment, accessing joint credit to create high debt, withholding child and/or spousal support payments, etc. Child and spousal support is often a sole source of income for women leaving abuse.
- Poverty contributes to IPV by keeping women reliant upon their abusers. Lower-income and poor women have fewer material resources available to them as their social support network may also be living in poverty.
- Indigenous women, women with disabilities, LGBTQIA+ women, older women, racialized, and immigrant women face additional barriers to economic security.
- Financial insecurity can quickly lead to housing precarity or homelessness. IPV is a leading cause of homelessness for women.

ACTION

- Provide bus passes to GBV/VAW agencies for distribution to women navigating GBV/IPV issues.
- Advocate for income assistance rates to align with living wage rates in our region.. (Universal basic income would be even better.)
- Municipal social benefit providers should ensure that discretionary benefits (such as the Housing Support Fund) for those on OW, ODSP or low income are easily available to women leaving abusive situations, including human trafficking. If family benefits are changed or re-evaluated upon separation, differential policies for extension of benefits should apply in cases of IPV.
- Advocate for the implementation of CWK Recommendation #19: "Create an emergency fund, such as the "She C.A.N Fund", in honour of Carol Culleton, Anastasia Kuzyk and Nathalie Warmerdam to support women living with IPV who are taking steps to seek safety." (Must be low-barrier access with no impact on other income benefits.)
- Establish a local travel assistance fund if women need to leave town.

Women need real options to leave abusers. Poverty destroys those options (and gives the abuser more weapons of and opportunities to control).

Resources

- The Facts about Women and Poverty in Canada: <https://canadianwomen.org/the-facts/womens-poverty/>
- Cost of living, housing crisis compounds issues of economic abuse: organization (CTV News): <https://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/cost-of-living-housing-crisis-compounds-issues-of-economic-abuse-organization-1.6662716>
- Living Wage Rates (November 2023): <https://www.ontariolivingwage.ca/rates>
- Interactive Policies Matter Tool created by WomanACT illustrates how policies and policy areas intersect and impact women: <https://womanact.ca/research-policy/policy-impacts/>
- Public Transit & Women's Safety: https://womanact.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/WomanACT_Women-safety-and-public-transit-issue-brief.pdf
- HIDDEN IN THE EVERYDAY: Financial Abuse as a Form of Intimate Partner Violence in Toronto: https://womanact.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/WomanACT_Hidden-in-the-everyday_Financial-Abuse-Report-1.pdf
- ECONOMIC ABUSE: Coercive Control Tactics in Intimate Relationships: <https://gbvlearningnetwork.ca/our-work/infographics/economicabuse/Economic-Abuse.pdf>
- YWCA Canada's National Emergency Survivor Support Fund (does not cover our region): <https://ywcacanada.ca/what-we-do/projects-initiatives/nessfund/>
- WHEN CRISES COLLIDE: How Intimate Partner Violence and Poverty Intersect to Shape Women's Mental Health and Coping? (Goodman et al., 2009): <https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/document?repid=rep1&type=pdf&doi=1ad27b21ae4158d2926bf74f1d3565162d200ffa>

