

**Submission to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women
Centre for Research & Education on Violence Against Women & Children, Western University**

The Centre for Research and Education on Violence Against Women and Children (CREVAWC) was established in response to a federal study on the problem of violence against women, triggered by the 1989 murder of 14 women at École Polytechnique in Montreal. It joined the Western University in 2001. CREVAWC is committed to the development and application of knowledge for the prevention of gender-based violence (GBV) through promoting innovation, collaboration, and equality. Researchers at CREVAWC have engaged in a wide range of collaborative research projects addressing intimate partner violence. On the basis of this work, we advance four recommendations to the Standing Committee.

Recommendation 1: Expand public education to address Intimate Partner Violence (IPV).

There is continued need for broader public awareness and education on GBV and the continuum of violence, to move the issue of IPV upstream toward early intervention and prevention. Death reviews of intimate partner femicides clearly show that it is neighbours, friends, family members, and coworkers who are first to see the warning signs, but do not know what to do to respond. A culture of silence around abuse and violence still exists in families, communities, and workplaces. Broad, ongoing public education is needed on the dangers of GBV with a focus on coercive control.

The federal government is ideally situated to lead development of a pan-Canadian campaign that is [trauma-and-violence informed](#) and holistic in the sense of supporting the entire family; victims, perpetrators, and their children. Content should promote bystander recognition of risk factors and warning signs of IPV. It should include information on availability of resources and how to access them. Materials should be accessible in multiple languages and in multiple formats. Messages should include survivor voices, as well the experiences/perspectives of men who have perpetrated IPV and successfully made changes to reduce their risk for future violence. Content should include skill-building on how to “open the door” to conversations about behaviours of concern and specific risk. A pan-Canadian approach would create consistent, progressive, evidence-based messages and materials that are widely available. This could eliminate the costly duplication of constantly creating new campaigns that are local or regional. The campaign should include social media and public service announcements (PSAs) that are promoted during highly subscribed media events (e.g., Hockey Night in Canada).

Recommendation 2: Recognize and develop the workforce capacity (i.e., specialized knowledge and expertise) of service providers in the gender-based violence sector.

CREVAWC recently completed a survey on the training needs of IPV specialist service providers across Canada (Lopez et al., 2022). *The overall picture from these respondents is of a workforce that is not well prepared when they start their position and that does not have access to adequate training or supervision for ongoing skill development.* A workforce capacity approach is one way to begin to address the gap that currently exists in competency and expertise of professionals to intervene to end IPV. The approach is based on the recognition that responding effectively to IPV requires service providers across sectors to develop specialist knowledge, attitudes, and skills, or “core competencies”. Other countries have taken a workforce capacity development approach to improving IPV service provision, including Australia and New Zealand. In Canada, as well, there has been significant work done to recognize and articulate the expertise of IPV service providers. The Flourishing Practice Framework was released in February 2022 and is based on collaborative work of 80 service providers,

survivors, and researchers from across all of Canada's provinces and territories. This framework can provide a roadmap for consistent skill development for IPV service providers. The federal government should lead the development of this next step that can consolidate and align knowledge and practice to address the geographical and sectoral disparities in the provision of services.

Recommendation 3: Expand and promote workplaces as a key location for recognizing and responding to IPV perpetration.

National surveys have confirmed that IPV persists into the workplace, impacts job performance and absences, and jeopardizes the health and safety of everyone in the workplace. Implementing prevention and effective responses to IPV through workplaces has clear potential benefits to and to workplaces, with increased productivity and reduced costs (Galvez et al., 2011; Lim et al., 2004; Mankowski et al., 2013; Rothman & Corso, 2008; Rothman & Perry, 2004).

Canada has made extensive use of occupational health and safety legislation in recent years to explicitly outline employer responsibilities for preventing and responding to IPV in the workplace. Most provisions focus on response to victims. Workers and workplaces also need to be able to recognize controlling, degrading, emotionally, and physically abusive behaviors along the continuum of violence. Individual workers need to have skills to speak out against these behaviors. Organizations need policies and programs to prevent and respond to those perpetrating. Investments are needed by the federal government to develop resources and materials that support employers to address IPV perpetration at work. This is particularly needed for groups of workers and organizations that are typically excluded from these policies and programs, such as employed contractors, seasonal workers, and franchise owners.

Recommendation 4: Invest in developing and evaluating pan-Canadian approach to early intervention, accountability, and change in perpetrator behaviour.

All Canadian provinces and territories have at least one program that specializes in working with those who have perpetrated IPV. In many parts of Canada, the only way to access these programs and services is by being arrested. Moreover, in many places, *only one* program is available - a short term, group-based one size fits all intervention. In rural communities, this program is often offered only once or twice a year (Scott et al., 2017). A much more robust system of early intervention is necessary.

Empirical evidence and major policy recommendations support the development of a system of specialized interventions for IPV perpetrators that uses an intersectional lens, is flexible to individual needs, aligns with services for survivors, and engages and promotes early involvement of perpetrators in reducing risk, through as many doors as possible. Such a service would create a "web of accountability" for perpetrators – a way of keeping them in view while working to promote victim safety and behavioural change. The federal government could support the development of such interventions with funding opportunities devoted to developing, evaluating, and disseminating effective interventions for those who perpetrate abuse. Joining projects in a community of practice model would help ensure sharing of knowledge and learning across the country and would lead to increased consistency across these programs and the evaluation of outcomes. The ultimate outcome would be clear recommendations or the creation of an intervention system that closes current loopholes that implicitly condone and/or ignore the actions of perpetrators and that place the burden of risk management on victims, family members, and community members.