



PEEL REGIONAL POLICE  
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A SAFER COMMUNITY TOGETHER

March 31, 2022

To: **Chair Karen Vecchio, MP**  
**Standing Committee on the Status of Women**  
Canada's House of Commons – 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> Session

### **Brief on Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence**

Peel Regional Police (PRP) would like to start by commending the members of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women for the important work and focus that is being placed on **Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence**. We believe this conversation needs to be elevated at every opportunity and consistently prioritized.

Identifying supports and strategies to address **Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)** is a major priority for our police service and part of our **Community Safety and Wellbeing (CSWB) Plan** that is shared with Peel Region.

PRP's CSWB Plan is legislatively mandated in Ontario and we have made it a cornerstone of our service to ensure that every aspect of policing is approached through a safety and wellbeing lens. This means employing upstream approaches and working with community partners to build capacity in providing the supports and services for those experiencing challenges with mental health and addictions, at risk of violent crimes including IPV, work with priority populations, and protect road safety.

PRP is the third largest service in Canada and serves the communities of Mississauga and Brampton, as part of Peel Region, which is inclusive of Caledon. The Region is one of the most diverse in the country with over 1.5 million residents.

Peel Region emulates national stats on IPV, which significantly impacts our community. Consistently, our number one call for service is on intimate partner disputes and in 2020, 30% of the total number of homicides were related to intimate partner violence.

In 2021, officers responded to 16,352 incidents of family and intimate partner violence, which means approximately 45 incidents every two hours, every day. We also laid 393 strangulation charges against men whose victims were seconds away from a femicide. These are just the incidents that are reported and studies have shown that there are greater unreported numbers.



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PRP has extensively reviewed gender based violence and family criminal cases, and identified major gaps. Many IPV cases, which scale between low to high risk, are not receiving the attention they require due to capacity issues and other demands on the judicial system. There are major inconsistencies with the approach to intimate partner and domestic violence cases, which often leave survivors experiencing additional trauma.

### **PRP's Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) Unit:**

In April 2021, as part of our CSWB Plan and our priority in addressing family violence and priority populations, PRP launched a dedicated IPV Unit with a team of specialized investigators. This team received specialized training in trauma informed, domestic violence and sexual assault, culturally appropriate and sensitivity response, and victim care and management.

PRP's IPV Unit is one of the largest in the country with 56 Constables, 8 Detectives and 1 Detective Sergeant to oversee the Unit.

### **Safe Centre of Peel and Family Justice Centre (FJC) Model:**

PRP's IPV Unit has partnered with the **Safe Centre of Peel (SCoP)**. This is a community hub that has been in operations for over a decade; providing integrated, research-based, best-practice supports and wrap-around services for survivors of IPV. There are 16 partners in total with 9 onsite.

PRP's partnership with SCoP and service delivery for IPV is based on the Family Justice Centre (FJC) Model. The FJC are organizations like SCoP that combine collaboration between police, legal and community support agencies, and focus on creating innovative, collaborative, trauma-informed approaches to intimate and domestic violence. These integrated multi-disciplinary centres not only meet the needs of survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, child abuse, elder abuse and human trafficking, but in often cases, break the generational cycle of violence.

The FJC Model has been recognized as a best practice by the US Department of Justice. The Model has been used to establish centres across the US and 25 countries. In Ontario, there are currently eight hubs that are all structured differently.



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PRP's objective in the partnership with SCoP is to approach service delivery with the survivor's wellbeing at its core. This includes interactions in a safe and comfortable setting, outside the police station, and with plain clothes officers. Survivors can seamlessly receive risk assessments, do safety planning, receive counseling, and access other services including child minding from partners at the Centre. Survivors also have a choice on filing a police report and can access all of the supports within the SCoP regardless of their decision.

Intimate partner and domestic violence needs are complex, they need to be responded to in innovative and integrated way, and funded adequately. The SCoP provides exactly that, however, funding continues to be scarce for the Centre, which limits capacity to address high demands.

### **Recommendations:**

PRP would like to ask the Standing Committee on the Status of Women to lead and elevate the national dialogue on intimate partner and domestic violence through:

- Identifying strategies and specific funding dedicated to intimate partner and domestic violence initiatives, including supporting existing and expanding on the Family Justice Centres across the country.
- Advocating for an **Integrated Family Criminal Court** model. According to the Ontario Court of Justice this would "provide a single judge to hear both the criminal and the family law cases (excluding divorce, family property and child protection cases) that relate to one family where the underlying issue is domestic violence. The goals of this court are a more integrated and holistic approach to families experiencing domestic violence, increased consistency between family and criminal court orders and quicker resolutions of the judicial proceeding." This would help to address some of the inconsistencies and gaps which currently exist and induce trauma for survivors.
- Advocating for a **Specialized Court for Intimate Partner Violence**. This court would have specialized Justices and Crown Prosecutors that would have appropriate gender based violence and trauma informed training.



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- Consider the adoption of an Intimate Partner Violence Disclosure Act and Clare’s Law.
- Reforming the Criminal Code to address the limitations of the law when it comes to intimate partner and domestic violence, which would include the addition of coercive control as a new offence (as suggested in Bill C202).
  - PRP’s Chief, Nishan Duraiappah, extensively spoke on this issue at the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights in February 2021.
  - BC Supreme Court Justice, Anthony Saunders, has said “the problem of domestic abuse has reached a point where a distinct and a higher range of sentencing is needed when punishing those who commit violence against intimate partners.”

### **Conclusion:**

Our goal at Peel Police, alongside our community partners, is to provide the best support for intimate partner and domestic violence survivors, and reduce the rate of gender based violence and femicides.

We thank the Standing Committee on the Status of Women for their time and consideration. We look forward to collaborating and being partners alongside this important work.

We encourage you to connect with Inspector Lisa Hewison ([Lisa.Hewison@PeelPolice.ca](mailto:Lisa.Hewison@PeelPolice.ca)), who leads the Crimes Against Persons Bureau, which the IPV Unit is a part of, to learn more about PRP’s work and for any further discussion.