

**REPORT BY THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA**  
**TO THE**  
**UN COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS**  
**SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

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**STATUS OF WOMEN CANADA**

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

This report is the Government of Canada's response to the request by the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women to report on national strategies adopted since 1994 to combat violence against women, provide information and copies of official statistics compiled, and describe training programs for the police, prosecutors and the judiciary, and other programs to prevent violence, as well as support services for victims.

Part 1 is an introduction to the Report. Part 2 provides background information on Canada's approach to the issue of violence against women, the actions that Canada has taken in the past to work toward the eradication of the problem, the Canadian situation in terms of incidence, and the impact on women and the resulting costs to society.

Part 3 presents recent initiatives undertaken to address violence against women. Part 4 provides Canadian data. Part 5 describes training programs in the criminal justice system, as well as prevention and public education activities recently undertaken. Part 6 is a description of existing support services for women victims of violence and their children. Finally, Part 7 is the conclusion of the Report.

There have been profound changes in Canada in less than one generation with regard to the issue of violence against women. Violence against women is no longer perceived as an individual problem, but rather as a human rights issue, a crime, and a social and structural problem that is very much related to women's inequality in society. It is a complex problem, which is present in all segments of Canadian society, and has no racial, cultural or religious boundaries.

## **2. BACKGROUND**

Over the last twenty years, all levels of government in Canada have taken numerous actions, and developed and implemented major strategies aimed at the reduction of violence. Combating and eliminating violence against women has increasingly been a key priority of these initiatives.

The voluntary sector has played a very important role in raising public awareness about violence against women and it is largely as a result of their continued efforts that the issue has become a public policy issue. Women's groups, in particular, have long been instrumental in raising awareness about violence against women and other related issues, such as the housing needs and the economic situation of women survivors of violence.

The private sector has also played a role by supporting violence against women prevention initiatives, such as national and regional public education campaigns.

Federal government action to address the issue of violence against women began in 1978 with the funding of shelters for abused women built under the Non-Profit Housing Program. Later, in 1982, the federal government established the basis for a National Clearinghouse on Family Violence, and in 1986 announced a Child Sexual Abuse Initiative that funded a variety of university-based research and community-based prevention and intervention projects.

The first Canadian initiative to address the issue of family violence, the Family Violence Initiative, was announced by the federal government in 1988. The goals of this four-year program were to support initiatives which would reduce the incidence and effects of family violence; to underline the need for partnership and co-operation with provincial governments and with the voluntary sector; and to focus public and government attention on the issue. Six federal departments were involved in implementing the Initiative.

In February 1991, the federal government launched a second, five-year Family Violence Initiative. The major objective was to build on and integrate the accomplishments of the first Initiative and the Child Sexual Abuse Initiative. The Initiative focused on increasing public awareness about family violence and changing attitudes; strengthening the federal legal framework; providing prevention, protection and treatment services to First Nations; strengthening family violence intervention and treatment services, especially for high risk populations; increasing the availability of housing for victims; and, enhancing national information exchange and co-ordination.

In partnership with the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, this Family Violence Initiative provided five-year start-up funding to establish five Research Centres on Family Violence and Violence Against Women. A recent study has documented the success of the Centres in developing mechanisms for collaboration, creating a critical mass of research, and changing the way that front line workers and academics conceptualize research. An annotated inventory of research conducted by the Centres will be available in 1999.

Both Family Violence Initiatives had a significant impact in raising awareness and advancing our development of responses to eliminate family violence in Canada. The second Initiative funded more than 3,000 projects that broadened public and professional awareness of the issue, and contributed to solutions that are practical, adaptable and community owned. The National Clearinghouse of Family Violence developed an extensive collection of publications and fact-sheets on many subjects related to violence against women, including dating violence, family violence against women with disabilities, the impact of wife abuse on children, elder abuse, etc. The results of the activities undertaken under these initiatives underlined the importance of involving everyone in society in preventing violence against women, and how essential it is for all levels of government, Aboriginal peoples, non-governmental organizations, professional associations, academic institutions, and the private sector to work together.

In 1993, we also learned much about the incidence of violence against women in Canadian society from the *Violence Against Women Survey*. The survey results showed that one half (51%) of all women 18 years of age and over had experienced at least one incident of physical or sexual violence since age 16. The survey also showed that of all violent incidents reported by respondents few, 14%, were reported to the police<sup>1</sup>.

In August 1995, the Government of Canada released the document entitled *Setting the Stage for the Next Century – Federal Plan for Gender Equality*. The *Federal Plan for Gender Equality* outlines the course to guide federal initiatives to advance gender equality in Canada. The *Federal Plan for Gender Equality* reflects the key areas for action in the *Platform for Action* adopted in Beijing at the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women.

The *Federal Plan for Gender Equality* includes as one of its eight objectives to reduce violence in society, particularly violence against women and children. The *Federal Plan* elaborates on the federal government's commitments to reduce violence against women and children, and to ensure their safety in society and sets priorities for action in many areas. The Government of Canada is currently in the process of developing an update on its actions to implement the *Federal Plan* and the *Beijing Platform for Action*.

We do not yet have a clear picture of whether violence against women has decreased or increased in Canada. Reports from a sample of 61 police agencies across Canada indicate that, between 1993 and 1996, the number of cases of spousal assault reported dropped by 7%<sup>2</sup>. These statistics look promising. However, we also know that a large number of cases are still not reported to police. Of those women who reported being victims of spousal violence in the *Violence Against Women Survey*, only one-quarter (26%) had reported an incident of violence to police.

We know that any form of violence that a woman experiences, whether it is physical, sexual, or psychological, has serious and damaging effects on her physical, mental and spiritual well-being, and that of her children. In Canada, two recent studies have estimated that the economic costs of violence against women are also very significant. One study showed that the total annual measurable costs relating to health and well-being alone amount to over \$1.5 billion<sup>3</sup>. The second study estimated preliminary partial social services/education, criminal justice, labour/employment and health/medical costs of violence against women to be at least \$4.2 billion<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Statistics Canada. The Daily, November 18, 1993. *The Violence Against Women Survey Highlights*. Ottawa

<sup>2</sup> Statistics Canada. 1998. *Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile*. Ottawa: Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics.

<sup>3</sup> Day, Tanis. 1995. *The Health Related Costs of Violence Against Women in Canada: The Tip of the Iceberg*. London, Ontario: Centre for Research on Violence Against Women and Children.

<sup>4</sup> Centre for Research on Violence Against Women and Children. 1995. *Selected Estimates of the Cost of Violence Against Women*. London, Ontario.

### **3. CANADA'S AGENDA FOR ACTION TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

Since the Government of Canada's last report to the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, in 1994, several initiatives have been undertaken to address the issue of violence in our society. The ultimate goal of the initiatives is to prevent violence, provide appropriate supports to victims, hold perpetrators of violence accountable for their actions, and rehabilitate and treat offenders.

Consultations with, and among federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal governments, and with Aboriginal peoples, ethnocultural organizations, equality groups, and professionals in various fields were key to the development and implementation of the strategies. The exchange of knowledge and concerns played an important role in shaping Canadian strategies to address the issue of violence against women.

#### **3.1 Federal initiatives**

In 1997, the federal government's commitment to reduce family violence in Canada, and in particular violence against women and children, was re-affirmed with the launching of the third Family Violence Initiative. This Initiative has no pre-set sunseting date, although it is to be reviewed after five years. The objectives of this current Initiative are to promote public awareness of the risk factors of family violence and the need for public involvement in responding to the problem; to strengthen the ability of the criminal justice and housing systems to respond to the problem; and, to support data collection, research and evaluation efforts to identify effective interventions. The 11 federal departments that participate in this strategy address issues related to health, social policy, housing, culture, Aboriginal peoples, justice, law enforcement and corrections, gender equality, immigration, and national data collection and dissemination.

The federal strategy was designed to facilitate the exchange of information and ideas among all those working toward the elimination of violence, such as provincial, territorial and municipal governments, Aboriginal peoples, as well as NGOs, professional associations, academic institutions and the private sector.

Under the present Family Violence Initiative, a number of important activities have been undertaken to date. For example, a policy focus group on violence against women was held to share information and identify priorities in areas such as public awareness, prevention, intervention and research, and an expert group on costing violence against women was also convened. Research was carried out on the issue of homelessness and family violence, and two projects are currently under way to review the impact of conditional sentencing in cases of family violence, and to examine the effectiveness of model family violence treatment programs for offenders.

Federal, provincial and territorial officials responsible for work being carried out in their jurisdictions regarding family violence met in the Fall of 1997, and again a year later, to share information on activities undertaken within their respective jurisdictions and to discuss a variety of issues, such as the impact on children of their exposure to violence, the service needs of ethnocultural and minority communities, the importance of effective planning for data collection, research and evaluation, etc.

A five-year report summarizing and evaluating the achievements of the current Family Violence Initiative will be prepared in 2002 for Treasury Board Secretariat.

Other Canadian initiatives place priority on issues related to the safety, health and well-being of women, and help address violence against women, although they are not specifically directed to the prevention of family violence.

The National Strategy for Community Safety and Crime Prevention is designed to promote the integrated action of key governmental and non-governmental partners to reduce crime and victimization, and to assist communities in developing and implementing community-based solutions to problems that contribute to crime and victimization, particularly violence against youth, women and Aboriginal people. Its aim is also to increase public awareness, and support effective approaches to crime prevention. Phase I, launched in 1994, consisted primarily of coordinating a range of federal initiatives that emphasized a proactive and social development model of crime prevention. It also emphasized building federal, provincial/territorial and community partnerships.

Phase II, announced in 1998, enables the federal government to broaden its partnerships and support communities in designing and implementing innovative and sustainable ways of preventing crime. The strategy has four components: a Safer Communities Initiative, a Promotion and Public Education Program, a Private Sector/Non-Profit Strategy on Crime Prevention, and a National Crime Prevention Centre.

Under the Safer Communities Initiative, there are three funding programs. The Community Mobilization Program helps communities undertake activities that deal with the root causes and complements activities that are already under way within communities in the provinces and territories. The Crime Prevention Investment Fund aims at identifying and supporting the development of promising and innovative crime prevention programs and approaches in diverse communities and supports their rigorous evaluation. Under this Fund, a number of community-based projects will be selected to serve as demonstration projects. The third program, the Crime Prevention Partnership Program, aims to support the involvement of national and international non-profit, non-governmental organizations in the development of crime prevention tools and information sharing activities.

Addressing violence in First Nations' and Inuit communities is also a major priority for the federal government. Federal support is provided to community-based services to help in the prevention, intervention and treatment of violence against women, and for research, evaluation and professional training that increase recognition of abuse and explore healing models.

In addition to the violence prevention initiatives described, the federal government, through the work of many programs, supports activities that also contribute to the reduction of violence against women. In 1997-98, federal government funding specifically allocated to family violence amounted to \$30.7 Million. This figure, however, is just a portion of spending, since it does not reflect other federal expenditures to carry out the regular work of departments. Examples include, the ongoing work of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Correctional Services of Canada, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, and many other departments delivering programs related to health, equality, child care, child support, community development, and other programs that complement efforts to prevent violence against women.

### **3.2 Provincial and territorial initiatives**

All provincial and territorial governments have placed great emphasis on the elimination of violence against women. Some provinces started to address the issue of family violence in the 1980s. Ontario introduced its first initiative in 1986. Since then, many provinces have developed specific strategies to prevent violence. Others are currently working toward introducing initiatives to address the issue.

There are many common features among existing provincial and territorial strategies. They focus on prevention through awareness and education, ensuring the safety of women and enhancing the delivery of services to victims, and enhancing the response of the justice system. Normally, responsibility for the implementation of the strategies rests on co-ordinating teams whose members represent various government departments. Often subcommittees exist that are composed of government and non-government representatives. Their approach is multidisciplinary and gender-sensitive.



The initiatives recognize the needs of specific populations, such as Aboriginal women, women with disabilities, women from visible minorities, and women from different ethnic backgrounds. Some jurisdictions, for example Saskatchewan and Ontario, have introduced special initiatives to address the needs of Aboriginal women. They provide a more holistic response to violence for victims, offenders, the family, and the community.

The province of Saskatchewan adopted the first *Victims of Domestic Violence Act* in Canada in February 1995. This civil legislation is designed to provide an alternative, non-criminal response to victims of family violence. The provisions include Emergency Intervention Orders (which may include exclusive victim occupation of the home, restraint of the abuser from communicating with or contacting the victim or members of the victim's family), Victims' Assistance Orders (which may include monetary compensation from the abuser) and Warrants of Entry that allow police officers to obtain entrance to a home where family violence is suspected. The second phase of an evaluation of the effectiveness of the *Victims of Domestic Violence Act* will be completed in 1999.

Other jurisdictions in Canada have enacted similar legislation. Prince Edward Island's *Victims of Family Violence Act* is the first provincial Act to include emotional abuse as a form of violence. Manitoba's *The Domestic Violence and Stalking Prevention, Protection and Compensation and Consequential Amendment Act* is the first Act to address civil remedies for stalking. The Yukon Territory has enacted a *Family Violence Prevention Act* and a *Crime Prevention and Victim Services Trust Act*. Alberta's legislation, the *Protection Against Family Violence Act* was introduced in the Legislature during the 1998 Spring sitting.

British Columbia recently developed a provincial policy on sexual assault that strengthens the response of the justice system to better support victims and prosecute offenders. It is expected that this policy will be announced soon. *A Safer Future for BC Women* is a prevention program recently developed in the province that is rather unique in that its focus is primarily on systemic change, addressing societal attitudes, commonly accepted behaviours or social structures that lead to, or support, violence against women.

### **3.3 Criminal justice measures**

Responsibility for criminal law matters in Canada is divided between the federal and provincial governments. The federal government has responsibility for the criminal law and the provinces have responsibility for the administration of justice, including enforcement of the criminal law. Accordingly, both levels of government must work closely in developing criminal reforms, including any reforms relating to violence against women.

Since 1994, the federal government has amended the Criminal Code through several measures to provide enhanced protection to women and children from violence and sexual abuse.

Bill C-42, (omnibus amendments), proclaimed in 1995, included over 100 amendments to the Criminal Code. These amendments included making peace bonds (protective court orders) easier to obtain and more effective, and increased the maximum penalty for a breach from six months to two years. They also included the reclassification of certain offences (known as dual procedure or hybrid offences) which allows the Crown prosecutor to choose to proceed summarily or by way of indictment. Proceeding by way of summary conviction is sometimes preferred in some cases involving violence against women because it can avoid having the victim testify twice.

Bill C-72, (self-induced intoxication), proclaimed in 1995, clarified the criminal law to indicate that intoxication is not a defence to any general intent crimes of violence such as sexual assault and assault.

Bill C-41, (sentencing), proclaimed in 1995, included amendments to the sentencing provisions of the Criminal Code. These amendments provide that where an offender, in committing the offence, abuses his spouse or child or a position of trust or authority, this shall be considered an aggravating factor for sentencing purposes. They also amended the restitution provisions to entitle a victim to seek restitution for actual and reasonable expenses for moving out of the offender's home to avoid bodily harm.

Bill C-27, (child prostitution, child sex tourism, criminal harassment and female genital mutilation), proclaimed in 1997, included provisions to facilitate the testimony of young victims and witnesses of sexual exploitation. In addition, the legislation allows for the prosecution of Canadians who travel abroad and sexually exploit children; strengthens penalties against those who exploit juvenile prostitutes and those who kill the victims they have stalked; and clarifies that the practice of female genital mutilation is an offence.

Bill C-46, (production of records in sexual offence proceedings), proclaimed in 1997, protects sexual offence victims by restricting the production of personal information records, such as psychiatric, therapeutic and counselling records.

In 1996, the federal government introduced the *Firearms Control Act*. Key elements of the Act include licensing possession of firearms; a national registration system for all firearms; and a mandatory minimum sentence of four years of prison and a lifetime prohibition against the possession of a restricted or prohibited firearm upon conviction of specific violent offences, including sexual assault with a weapon and aggravated sexual assault. These measures, intended to ensure greater community safety, will have an impact on women's safety. Registration of firearms will enhance women's safety by alerting police to the presence of firearms in scenes of family violence. In dealing with applications for issuance of Firearms Acquisition Certificates, risk factors associated with incidents of family violence must be considered and applications require consent of the spouse.

The Criminal Code's provisions relating to the defences of provocation, self-defence and defence of property are currently under review as a result of concerns expressed by a judicial inquiry and women's groups that these provisions are not being applied in a gender-sensitive manner.

The federal government is also reviewing an ad hoc process which has been in existence since 1992 to respond to requests from victims who are trying to change their identity to escape life-threatening spousal abuse. Through this process, victims are provided with a new, delinked (no computer links) Social Insurance Number (SIN). Canada Pension Plan (CPP), tax and social benefit records are also securely recreated under the new SIN. Because of concerns about client safety, the federal government has initiated an interdepartmental project to complete in-depth work with the provinces and territories to determine whether a nationally co-ordinated New Identities Program can be implemented. This initiative seeks to support victims' services strategies by addressing the concerns of victims of extreme family violence in relation to safety, restitution and the prevention of further violence.

Other justice system initiatives include seeking to improve the criminal justice system by making it more accessible to vulnerable groups, including Aboriginal women, and women with disabilities.

In recent years, provincial and territorial governments have developed and implemented numerous policy procedures for responding to violence against women throughout all areas of the justice system. The procedures are based on a pro-arrest, pro-charge, and pro-prosecution policy. This requires that charges will be laid where there is evidence to support them, and that the case will proceed to trial as soon as possible where there is evidence to support a conviction. Guidelines for police and Crown prosecutors reflect this zero tolerance policy.

It is not within the scope of this report to describe all of the initiatives taken to enhance the response of the justice system, however, some examples are provided.

Manitoba and Ontario have established family violence courts. In Manitoba, the Family Violence Court handles first appearances, remands, guilty pleas and trial for partner abuse,

child sexual abuse and elder abuse cases. The courts exist in four locations, and provide a specialized response to victims, acknowledging the unique issues and dynamics for each of the offences and the need to proceed through the Court process as quickly as possible.

In 1997, Ontario opened two Domestic Violence Courts, based on different models. One uses highly specialized prosecution methods for serious and violent domestic assault cases, such as the use of 911 (emergency number) tapes, photographs of victims' injuries, audio and video tapes of the victim's initial statement, crime scene photographs, and medical records. This technique helps reduce the reliance on the victim's testimony to successfully prosecute offenders. The second court model focuses on cases involving first time offenders, where no injuries or minor injuries were sustained by the victims. The courts include services such as victim/witness support and cultural interpreters. There are plans to open three additional courts of each model.

Several jurisdictions have established central registries for restraining orders. These are registries of all orders and non-communication and weapon restrictions, which are accessible to all law enforcement agencies. Some have also put in place tracking systems that allow for the evaluation of policies and program initiatives in the area of family violence to measure the justice system response.

Other initiatives include the development of computer databases of cases involving violence against women to support the effective prosecution of cases, the improvement of computer systems for corrections to assist in information sharing and monitoring of offenders, and new phone systems for correctional facilities to prevent harassment of victims. Another example is the development of information systems that permit Corrections personnel to put together a profile of offenders to assess responses to interventions, determine the incidence in the use of weapons, and the frequency of alcohol and drug use.

#### **4. STATISTICAL DATA ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

Federal agencies, such as Statistics Canada's Canadian Centre for Justice (CCJS), have primary responsibility for gathering and disseminating crime statistics. Every year since 1962, police agencies in Canada report criminal incidents that have come to their attention through the Uniform Crime Reporting (I) Survey. The survey was revised in 1988. The Revised Uniform Crime Reporting (II) Survey collects detailed information on victims and the accused. Information is available in areas such as weapon use, location and time of an incident, victim-accused relationship, and the age and sex of victims and the accused. Police departments representing 47% of the national crime volume are reporting through the revised survey.

There are other surveys such as the General Social Survey on Personal Risk - Criminal Victimization and Accidents which, every five years, collects victimization information to

complement officially recorded crime data. Currently, activities are under way to modify the General Social Survey on Personal Risk, to include questions to measure spousal abuse and abuse of older persons. It is expected that the survey will be implemented in February 1999.

The first major data collection and analysis exercise in Canada on the incidence of violence against women was carried out in 1993. *The Violence Against Women Survey* was the first of its kind in the world. *The Violence Against Women Survey* established a national base of information on the extent of violence against women in Canadian society.

From February to June 1993, approximately 12,300 Canadian women 18 years of age and older were asked, through a telephone interview, about their experiences with violence. The survey asked a wide variety of questions related to women's fear of violence and steps women take to protect themselves. It also included questions about the impact of violence on a woman's life, whether she reported the incidence to the police and whether she used any services. Only behaviours considered an offence under the Canadian Criminal Code were addressed in the survey.

As indicated in the Background section, the survey results showed that 51% of all Canadian women had experienced at least one incident of physical or sexual violence since age 16. Twenty-nine percent of women who had ever been married or lived in common law relationships had been physically or sexually assaulted by their partner at some point during the relationship. Children witnessed violence against their mothers in four out of ten marriages where violence was reported<sup>5</sup>.

Female victims reported using the services of a social agency in only 9% of violent incidents. The percentage was highest in the case of wife assault: a total of 24% used a social service, 8% contacted and 6% stayed at a transition house<sup>6</sup>.

The survey showed that young women aged 18-24 were four times (12%) as likely as women overall to have reported experiencing spousal abuse in the year before the survey. A similar proportion (13%) of young men in the 18-24 age group were violent toward their partners. The data showed no major differences in relation to income or education<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> Rodgers, Karen. *Wife Assault in Canada*, Canadian Social Trends, No. 34, Autumn 1994

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

Since then, the data base on family violence has broadened. As part of the federal Family Violence Initiative, the CCJS produces a new annual report entitled, *Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile*. The report provides the most up-to-date data on the nature and extent of domestic violence in Canada. The first report, released in 1998, provides a general overview of the most recent information on the abuse of spouses, children and older adults. Some of the findings are provided here.

In 1996, 21,901 cases of spousal assault were recorded in a sample of 154 police departments across Canada. The proportion of female victims of spousal assault was 89%, compared to 11% of male victims. In the same year, approximately 80% of victims of criminal harassment or stalking were women. Over half of all female victims were harassed by ex-spouses or other intimate partners<sup>8</sup>.

The strongest predictors of wife assault are the young age of the couple (18 to 24 years), living in a common law relationship, chronic unemployment on the part of male partners, women and men who witnessed abuse as a child, and the presence of emotional abuse in the relationship. In fact, the greatest predictor of wife assault is the use of emotional abuse by male partners. When the effects of these risk factors were taken into consideration, level of education, consumption of alcohol and income level lost significance in terms of predicting the presence or absence of wife assault<sup>9</sup>.

Overall, girls were the primary victims of sexual assault by family members (79%) and were also the victims in over half of physical assaults (56%)<sup>10</sup>.

Statistics Canada conducted a third Transition Home Survey in 1995. It is a survey of residential services for abused women, such as transition homes, shelters, second-stage housing, etc. It allows for the collection of data on services dispensed during the previous 12 months, and provides a one-day snapshot of the characteristics of the residents on a specific day. A fourth Transition Home Survey was conducted in 1998. Results will be released in the Spring of 1999.

The Ontario Government funded a research project that produced a 1997 report entitled, *Woman Killing: Intimate Femicide in Ontario 1991-94*. The report states that, from 1991 to 1994, at least 159 women in Ontario were killed by a current or former partner. In one-third of the cases, the couple had contact with police before the killing, and half of the killers had attacked or threatened the victims in the past.

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<sup>8</sup> Statistics Canada. 1998. *Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile*. Ottawa: Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

## **5. TRAINING PROGRAMS**

### **5.1 Training and education in the criminal justice system**

In 1994, the Canadian Judicial Council passed a resolution endorsing a comprehensive, in-depth judicial education program designed to increase judges' awareness of equality issues affecting various groups who feel disadvantaged or inadequately understood by the Canadian justice system. The National Judicial Institute (NJI) was charged with the implementation of this resolution.

Since January 1997, the NJI has carried out a needs assessment and delivered faculty development programs on social context issues such as gender and racial equality, and Aboriginal rights. This training is available to both federally and provincially appointed judges. During the 1996-97 fiscal period, the NJI offered 31 programs covering 79 course days. The number of registrants, which has been increasing steadily, climbed to 1,234. All programs are evaluated on an ongoing basis to ensure that the educational needs of the judiciary are being met and that a high standard of content and delivery are maintained

The federal government provides training on family violence issues within its jurisdiction in the justice sector. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) receive training to improve their capacity to respond to family violence. Corrections personnel are trained on family violence issues when recruited, and there is an intensive family violence training program for front-line corrections personnel. Training is also provided to members of the National Parole Board to ensure that a history of violence against women is seriously considered in decisions to grant parole.

Federal departments responsible for issues related to the administration of justice have developed a variety of training and skills development tools that address violence against women issues. One such tool is an Investigative Guide for Sexual Offences, developed by the RCMP for its officers, to provide information on appropriate sexual assault investigations. The RCMP also supports community-based workshops on victims' issues, sexual assault and violence in relationships, and assists communities in using problem-solving approaches to family violence issues.

The Department of Justice Canada hosted a Federal/Provincial/Territorial Forum on Spousal Abuse Cases, in March 1998, to discuss and exchange best practices by police, Crown prosecutors, victims' services and policy experts relating to spousal abuse cases.

Provincial and territorial governments have instituted training programs for police, Crown prosecutors, correctional staff, probation and parole officers, and members of parole boards, to strengthen their ability to make appropriate interventions. In Ontario, Crown prosecutors' training provides annual training to Crown attorneys who have been designated as specialists in prosecuting sexual and family violence assault cases. Some provinces, like Nova Scotia, have achieved 100% training of all police, prosecutors and correctional staff in the application of a vigorous arrest, pro-prosecution policy in family violence. Saskatchewan also provides training on its Act, *The Victims of Domestic Violence Act*, to justice and community-based personnel who deal with situations of violence.

Provinces and territories have also prepared a number of training and development materials, including practice manuals for Crown attorneys, resource manuals and booklets for correctional workers, and publications to help people working in the justice system share ideas.

## **5.2 Prevention – Awareness and education initiatives**

In addition to training programs for the people who work in the justice sector, Canada has put great emphasis in designing and implementing initiatives that raise consciousness about violence against women in other sectors and groups in society and in the general public. A large number of the initiatives undertaken in Canada to prevent violence through awareness and education have been the result of collaborative efforts between all levels of government, non-government organizations, and the private sector.

Across Canada, numerous anti-violence programs have been developed and implemented in primary and secondary schools, to raise consciousness and break the cycle of violence by intervening in the early years. The impact on children who have witnessed or experienced abuse is recognized as an important problem needing interventions from all sectors. These children need counselling programs to help them lead healthy lives.

Provincial and territorial governments fund a variety of counselling programs for children who have been exposed to violence. These programs are often delivered through school boards and children's centres. There are also other programs to assist teachers, school counsellors, children and parents recognize the impact of violence on children.



Another important priority has been training on violence prevention issues for health care professionals to promote health care practices for the benefit of women who are victims of family violence and sexual assault, and the development of protocols for health professionals to ensure effective medical documentation of family violence cases and assist in prosecution. Training on issues related to violence against women is also provided to social service workers.

Federal, provincial, and territorial governments also provide and support a range of educational programs for abusers. They are community and institution-based intervention programs to help men charged with assaulting their female partners learn to take responsibility for their behaviour and change it. For example, Manitoba provides three types of programs. One is a short-term, 24-hour group-counselling program which is offered in six languages. There is also a long-term intensive therapeutic program, 84 hours for those on probation and 300 hours for those in correctional institutions, as well as an individual counselling program. Other programs exist throughout Canada for sex offenders in institutional and community settings.

In addition, several provincial and territorial governments operate funding programs to support pilot projects and local community projects that address prevention of violence against women. For example, in 1996, British Columbia's Ministry of Women's Equality announced *A Safer Future for BC Women*. This community-based prevention program primarily focuses on systemic change and looks at addressing societal attitudes, commonly accepted behaviours or social structures that lead to, or support, violence against women.

Reducing the risk of violence against women in the workplace is another issue that provincial and territorial governments are addressing. In 1996, Manitoba launched a province wide initiative, *Keeping Safe at Work*, which focuses on the safety of women who work alone, or travel to and from work alone, and provides tips on awareness of potentially threatening situations and assists employers and employees in planning responses to such situations.

The violence prevention initiatives described are just some examples of the many actions that provinces and territories are taking to create awareness and prevent further violence against women. Several provinces and territories already have, or are planning, media campaigns and annual prevention weeks dedicated to the prevention of violence against women. For example, in October 1998, Québec launched a three-year multi-media public education campaign on violence against women and equality between women and men. The key activities of the campaign include roundtables, workshops and symposia, production of print materials and media campaigns.

Provinces and territories also produce numerous information materials, such as brochures, resource kits, posters, etc., and support the work of women's groups and other voluntary organizations in their efforts to create awareness and develop public education programs on violence against women. Many of these voluntary groups address the particular needs of women from various ethnocultural backgrounds, and the programs are operated in several languages.

The Department of Justice Canada has developed various information materials to inform Canadians about their rights and responsibilities under the law, including a booklet entitled *Stalking is a Crime Called Criminal Harassment*, and a guide which explains how to do gender equality analysis in the prosecution of family violence cases. The Department of Justice Canada has also developed information materials on spousal abuse for immigrant women and their service providers, and on the use of peace bonds.

In 1995, the federal interdepartmental Working Group on Female Genital Mutilation supported community consultations on female genital mutilation and the development of a literature review, and in 1998, a workshop training module for communities to address the health, legal and cultural aspects of this practice.

In April 1994, the federal government, in partnership with the Canadian Association of Broadcasters, launched a two-phase national campaign aimed at raising awareness about violence and changing people's attitudes toward violence. One major element of the "*Speak Out Against Violence*" Campaign was the broadcast, on a national scale, of a series of radio and television public service announcements (PSA). Phase I of the campaign focused on messages designed to raise awareness of the issue of violence in general.

Phase II of the campaign, which lasted a year, was launched in April 1996 and was entitled "*Violence: You Can Make a Difference*". This campaign went beyond raising awareness of the issue of violence to giving practical tips to Canadians for action against violence. It revolved around a new series of dramatic television and radio announcements on the themes of violence against women, violence against children, and media literacy. To support this campaign, print materials were developed and distributed to communities across Canada. The materials expanded on the spots' key messages and provided practical, user-friendly tips for action against violence. Broadcasters were asked to expand on the tips through their own special programming and community initiatives.

An evaluation of Phase II of this initiative was carried out and concluded that the campaign was successful. Some of the findings were that violence issues, including family violence, are of concern to Canadians; that the television and radio public service announcements were well-received; and that the print materials were useful to a wide variety of front-line workers, service agencies and other intervenors.

The Federal/Provincial-Territorial (FPT) Forum of Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women, established in 1982, continues to provide leadership in promoting issues affecting women, including violence against women. The sharing of information between jurisdictions has been a key element in the work of the FPT Forum. In June 1996, the Ministers released a resource guide entitled *Beyond the Violence: Reaching for Higher Ground*. The publication is an annotated bibliography of provincial and territorial initiatives and resources, developed through governmental and non-governmental initiatives, aimed at empowering women, youth and children. It shares best practices and good ideas that can be adapted to each jurisdiction's strategies, programs and materials, aimed at preventing violence against women.

At the 1997 FPT Forum, Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women agreed to develop a *Framework for the Prevention of Violence Against Women*. The framework is being developed to guide policy and program development in the ongoing work to counter violence against women. It is based on the vision of equality of women and men and the right of women to live in safe communities free of violence and the threat of violence. It provides a context in which federal, provincial, and territorial initiatives can be undertaken and evaluated, and outlines three major strategies: effective public education and awareness programs, and initiatives to change societal attitudes and promote balanced relationships; effective support and information for victims; and sanctions for violent behaviour and treatment programs for abusive men.

To mark this year's National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women (December 6), the *Iqaluit Declaration of the Federal/Provincial/Territorial Status of Women Ministers on Violence Against Women* was issued. The *Declaration* reflects the Status of Women Ministers' shared vision of safe, healthy communities in every region of Canada and their governments' commitment to end violence against women.

## **6. SUPPORT SERVICES FOR VICTIMS**

In Canada, provincial and territorial governments have primary responsibility for the development of policies and the administration of social services, education and health care. They determine the types of support services for abused women that are developed, as well as the level of funding to be provided. Through the Canada Health and Social Transfer, which was introduced on April 1, 1996 to replace the Canada Assistance Plan, the federal government provides financial support to provinces and territories for health and social services, such as shelters for abused women and their children. The federal government also provides a subsidy under the non-profit housing program to support shelters for victims of violence.

Community groups have played a major role in the development of support services for victims of violence, by raising awareness about their housing and other needs. It is through the combined efforts of these groups and of all levels of government, over the years, that there exists a significant network of support services across Canada.

## **6.1 Safe housing**

The establishment of emergency shelters to provide temporary safe refuge for abused women and their children dates back to the 1970s in Canada. Since that time, the combined efforts of the federal government, provincial/territorial governments and community groups have resulted in the establishment of over 500 shelters and transition homes across the country, many operated by non-profit groups, with the capacity to accommodate about 90,000 women and children annually. In addition, more shelters now exist in First Nations' communities and rural areas.

In the first two phases of the federal government's Family Violence Initiative, from 1988 to 1995, the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation delivered programs that significantly increased the supply of transition homes for victims of violence. The Project Haven Program established emergency shelters for women fleeing from abusive relationships, increasing the capacity of these shelters in Canada by about 20% over four years. Under the Next Step Program, longer-term (second stage) housing increased by one third, to almost 500 units. An evaluation of the Next Step Program found that for many women in second stage housing, having access to these facilities was critical to their decision not to return to an abusive relationship.

In addition, through the federal Shelter Enhancement Program, since 1995, 3,000 shelter units have been enhanced to ensure that they provide safety and security, have acceptable standards of health, are accessible to women with disabilities, and address the needs of children.

Despite this growth, the demand for safe shelter is still larger than the supply. The need is greater in rural areas, and also for those populations who have particular needs, such as women with disabilities, Aboriginal women, and women from various ethnocultural backgrounds.

Women and children who do not have access to safe housing upon leaving an emergency shelter receive priority placement for social housing units managed by provincial housing corporations, and in some jurisdictions, for example in Saskatchewan, housing corporations work with community groups to provide temporary accommodation in rural areas.

In some provinces, for example in Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, Ontario and British Columbia, victims are provided with free cellular phones to call 911, to enhance the safety of high risk victims of criminal harassment (stalking) and of those women exposed to extreme domestic violence. In Nova Scotia, in some circumstances, it is also possible to obtain a monitored home alarm system.

## **6.2 Crisis intervention and support**

In addition to residential services, shelters and second stage housing programs provide other services such as referrals, information, emotional support, donations of clothing and household items, emergency transportation, and crisis intervention. Some shelters also provide child care services for the children of abused women.

Other agencies provide a variety of services and programs to women victims of violence and to their children. The following are examples of the types of supports that are provided in Canada.

Crisis Lines to provide telephone crisis counselling to women in distress are available, to a greater or lesser degree, throughout the country. In some provinces, for example in Quebec, they exist throughout the province.

Across Canada, there exist many community-based counselling programs to deal with the trauma of women who have been abused and to increase their self-reliance. Provinces and territories also support services based in the community for women who are victims of sexual assault, and to adult survivors of childhood sexual assault. Sexual assault treatment centres provide hospital-based support to victims of sexual assault. Currently, a project in Ontario is under way to expand the services of sexual assault treatment centres to serve family violence victims in six pilot sites.

Canada is diverse in the ethnic, cultural, and linguistic composition of its population. As a result, in some areas, services to women victims of violence and their children have been adapted and are being expanded to meet their needs. Several transition houses in British Columbia, for example, provide counselling, referral and support; educational programs on family violence; and consultation and education for professionals who work with women from ethnocultural minority communities. Ontario has cultural interpreters' programs to provide interpretation service to non-English/non-French speaking women who are victims of violence to facilitate access to social services and the justice system.

Significant effort has also been made to address the needs of abused women with disabilities and to make emergency shelters, sexual assault centres, and treatment centres more accessible.

Over the years, there has been growing recognition also that it is best for Aboriginal communities to develop their own solutions to the issue of violence against women. British Columbia provides funding to regional Aboriginal Health Councils for intervention projects to end violence against women and to provide sexual abuse counselling to youth. Other jurisdictions, like Ontario, have specific initiatives, or support programs and services that assist Aboriginal women victims of violence.

In order to attain economic independence, and to avoid re-victimization, many abused women need access to training and employment to support themselves and their children. Pre-employment bridging programs provide women victims of violence with training and support to acquire employment skills to enter and remain in the labour force. There are many of those programs available throughout Canada.

Provincial criminal injuries compensation programs provide varying types of financial assistance to women who are victims of violence for such expenses as therapy or counselling, lost wages, or other reasonable expenses.

### **6.3 Supports throughout the justice system**

When women are subjected to violence, there exists the risk of victimization. In Canada, a range of services are available to abused women to prevent and minimize such potential re-victimization, including police-based and Crown-based victims services, and community-based services, which provide information on victims' rights, orientation to the courts, legal aid, and other services, such as assistance with obtaining stand alone restraining orders on an expeditious basis.

Spousal Violence Follow-Up Teams in the province of Alberta offer information and advice to victims, help them understand the legal system and help victims arrive at the decisions they need to make. These Teams are composed of police officers and social workers. Evaluations of these programs have demonstrated that complainants supported by the Teams showed up for their trials almost 100% of the time. In Ontario, the Victim/Witness Assistance Program supports and helps victims of family violence through the different stages of the court process, including the preparation of victim impact statements and testimony in court.

## **7. CONCLUSION**

In the last two decades, Canada has made significant progress toward the elimination of violence against women in our society. Initiatives by federal, provincial, territorial and municipal governments, as well as those of the voluntary and private sectors have resulted in a better understanding of the dynamics of the problem. The measures that have been implemented in various institutions, such as the legal, health and school systems, to counteract and prevent violence, have contributed to finding effective responses to the

problem. Although there has been steady progress, violence against women is still a serious societal concern and many challenges still remain before it can be eradicated.

Chief among the interventions that are still required is the development of policies that address the general issue of women's inequality. Also key is continuing public education and awareness to change attitudes and behaviours. Education is a vital element. Violence against women needs to continue figuring prominently in school curricula and in the public's concerns. Given the influence that the media have in shaping attitudes, positive images are essential. Culturally-appropriate and community-based solutions that take into account linguistic, cultural and geographic diversity, that respect Aboriginal values and culture, and that reflect the particular needs of vulnerable groups are also important. There is a need to continue to build on the expertise of women's groups and other community partners and, together with all levels of government and other sectors of society, to improve the effectiveness of our efforts through continuing partnership, consultation, evaluation and research.

On many fronts, our governments have shown their determination to end violence against women. Through our policies and initiatives across the country, and our leadership at the international level in ratifying United Nations conventions and supporting United Nations action plans, we have clearly articulated the unacceptable and intolerable nature of this violence.