



Women and Gender
Equality Canada

Femmes et Égalité
des genres Canada



CANADIAN CENTER
FOR WOMEN'S
EMPOWERMENT

CENTRE CANADIEN
POUR L'AUTONOMISATION
DES FEMMES

To:

Her Worship Olivia Chow

Mayor, City of Toronto

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From:

Canadian Center for Women's Empowerment (CCFWE)

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August 3, 2023

Subject: Declaring Gender-Based Violence and Intimate Partner Violence an Epidemic in the City of Toronto

Dear Madam Mayor,

The Canadian Center for Women's Empowerment (CCFWE) wants to congratulate you on your recent election as Mayor of Toronto.

CCWE is the only non-profit organization in Canada that solely focuses on Economic Abuse in the context of domestic violence through research, advocacy and system change. As a direct consequence of Economic Abuse and coerced debt, survivors are often highly indebted, without a regular income and a low credit score. In addition to the multifold discrimination that women can face due to their status as low-income women, as survivors, and potentially as members of the BIPOC or other marginalized communities, survivors face numerous systemic barriers, including finding safe and affordable housing in the current rental market.

We are excited that you immediately show your commitment to ending gender-based violence (GBV) and intimate partner violence (IPV). As one of the organizations that endorsed the call to action, we commend you for using your leadership to introduce 7 recommendations on this crucial issue that affects so many women, children and gender-diverse communities.

Declaring GBV and IPV an epidemic validates survivors' countless experiences and struggles and the tireless work of front-line staff, advocacy groups and women's organizations such as CCFWE.

CCFWE was also delighted when in 2022, the city of Toronto agreed to our request and proclaimed November 26 Economic Abuse Awareness Day. It demonstrated its commitment to

this prevalent but often overlooked form of abuse. We would be delighted to see your office continuing its support and proclaim November 26 Economic Abuse Awareness Day in 2023.

This current declaration is a crucial acknowledgment and the first step to developing a comprehensive strategy to end GBV and IPV in Toronto and make the city inclusive and safe for all. CCFWE wants to ensure that Economic Abuse is included in this work and is happy to assist the city of Toronto in understanding this component of GBV and IPV.

The Canadian context lacks sufficient data on Economic Abuse, which is why CCFWE is advocating for government support at all levels to close this data gap. To support this work, we have conducted our own research study in Greater Ottawa with survivors. The study found that 74% of survivors stated they were worried about their housing situation, and 80% of victims said their abusers displayed more controlling, manipulative, and coercive behaviours about their finances and economic stability after the COVID-19 pandemic. Victim-survivors mention a lack of financial resources and safe shelter as the main barriers to leaving abusive relationships.¹

In line with recommendation 6 to consider the best ways to actualize this declaration, CCFWE sees Toronto as having the opportunity to create its own data set around GBP and IPV. Through this work, Toronto can fully understand how GBP and IPV, including Economic Abuse, impact people living in the city and find ways to address this epidemic.

CCFWE can provide our expertise, research findings and resources on Economic Abuse to the city of Toronto so survivors can recover and regain (financial) control over their lives.

We would be grateful for the opportunity to meet with you and your office to discuss further steps to address Economic Abuse in Toronto. Please contact Michaela Mayer to schedule an appointment.

Congratulations again, and we look forward to working with you,

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¹Chandrarajan, N, Bedard, T, Thomas, Haileyesus, M. P, Lucente, G,(2021). Access to Economic Resources of Economic Abuse Victims During COVID-19 in the National Capital Region, Canada. Canadian Centre for Women's Empowerment, 2021."; FreeForm. "Support Every Survivor"