

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Action Plan

Update - January 2007

 Ontario

A PERSONAL MESSAGE FROM THE PREMIER



On behalf of the Government of Ontario, I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation to everyone who has contributed their insights and expertise to the

Domestic Violence Action Plan (DVAP). We have made much progress since we first launched this plan in December 2004.

Our government remains strongly committed to helping women and children affected by domestic violence – through the empowerment of women and the promotion of economic independence. And our government has delivered on its commitment.

Since we launched the DVAP, there has been more funding for shelters and more counselling services for women. Front-line workers in hospitals, schools, courts and social service agencies are being trained to identify and act on the signals of domestic violence. We have taken steps to ensure that front-line police response is appropriate, and we have increased the number of specialized domestic violence courts.

Under the new Children's Law Reform Act, courts are now obligated to consider domestic violence in matters of parental custody or

access. We are also raising public awareness of this problem through public education campaigns. We have a new campaign focused on helping neighbours, families and friends recognize and react to signs of abuse. We also launched another one for children and youth, to help them form healthy relationships and avoid perpetuating the cycle of violence.

But, as much as I am proud of our government's accomplishments, domestic violence is a complex problem. There are no easy answers.

To those courageous women who have overcome the challenge of domestic violence: I wish you all strength as you go on to build new lives.

I would also like to take this opportunity to recognize the work of the front-line workers in our hospitals, schools, courts and social service agencies. Your dedication and professionalism are vital parts of our ongoing efforts to end the cycle of abuse.

It takes many hands to build strong and safe communities, and I invite everyone to be part of the solution. By working together, we will build a better Ontario for present and future generations.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which reads "Dalton McGuinty". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dalton McGuinty
Premier

FOREWORD

Addressing domestic violence is a priority for our government. With the December 2004 launch of the four-year Domestic Violence Action Plan, we sent the strong message that we will not tolerate violence against women.

Our government's four-year Domestic Violence Action Plan has reached the halfway mark. Our government is investing more than \$82 million in new funding over four years in the Domestic Violence Action Plan, which exceeds our original commitment of \$66 million.

Our investments are supporting a range of community services, including shelters, counselling services and community and housing supports.

We are also focusing on:

- Public education designed to change attitudes and mobilize communities to stop violence before it happens
- Early intervention and prevention strategies such as training, research and conferences in key sectors to help victims get the information and support they need
- Strengthening the justice system response to better protect women and children and hold abusers accountable for their violent behaviour.

At this important juncture, it is critical that we maintain efforts to help women and children at risk of abuse. Communities become safer when all parts of the community work together. Everyone, from the next-door neighbour to the local health care practitioner, has a valuable role to play. Our investments are supporting communities in their efforts.

We thank all not-for-profits, community and advocacy groups and front-line professionals who are working tirelessly to implement the plan. Looking forward, our government will continue to work in partnership to fundamentally change the attitudes and behaviours that perpetuate the violence, so that women and their children can live without the fear of violence in their own homes.

Let us all keep working together to make a difference in the lives of many.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello Minister Responsible for Women's Issues	Hon. John Gerretsen Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing	Hon. Madeleine Meilleur Minister of Community and Social Services Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs
Hon. Michael Bryant Attorney General	Hon. George Smitherman Minister of Health and Long-Term Care	Hon. David Caplan Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal
Hon. Monte Kwinter Minster of Community Safety and Correctional Services	Hon. Steve Peters Minister of Labour	Hon. Chris Bentley Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities
Hon. Rick Bartolucci Minister of Northern Development and Mines	Hon. Mary Anne V. Chambers Minister of Children and Youth Services	Hon. Gerry Phillips Minister of Government Services
Hon. Kathleen Wynne Minister of Education	Hon. Mike Colle Minister of Citizenship and Immigration	

INTRODUCTION

All women have the right to live in safety and dignity, free from intimidation and the threat of violence. This is the central principle of the Domestic Violence Action Plan and the goal that guides our package of reforms.

The plan provides a balanced approach that:

- Increases community supports to better protect victims of violence
- Focuses on public education, early intervention and training strategies to help prevent domestic violence
- Strengthens the justice system response, and
- Offers better access to French-language services for the francophone community.

Our government is investing more than \$82 million in new funding over four years in the Domestic Violence Action Plan, which exceeds our original commitment of \$66 million.

This report provides an update on some of the key initiatives that have been undertaken since the launch of the plan two years ago. While there is much more to do, significant progress has been made.

BETTER COMMUNITY-BASED SUPPORTS FOR VICTIMS

Since the launch of the Action Plan, our government has increased investments in core services and introduced new community supports for domestic violence victims. These investments have targeted a wide range of community services, including shelters, counselling services and transitional support programs, so that these service providers can better serve women and children in crisis.

Community Programs and Services

Front-line workers in shelters, counselling agencies and women's centres provide critical services and supports to women needing help. Better access to this assistance helps to increase abused women's safety.

- More women and their children fleeing violence will benefit from an annual funding increase of \$2.5 million to help women's agencies strengthen counselling services. This funding will help to address wait lists and gaps in service for francophone, rural and Aboriginal women, women with disabilities and those from diverse

cultural backgrounds, as well as children who have been exposed to violence at home.

- More than 70 women's shelters, second stage houses and community agencies that provide refuge and counselling for abused women and their children received an additional \$3.5 million annually under the Transitional and Housing Support Program.
- Women who live in affordable housing benefited from an additional \$1 million annually to the Transitional and Housing Support Program in 2006-2007 to provide additional counselling and support services. This brings funding for the Transitional and Housing Support Program to more than \$10 million annually.
- Nearly 100 women's shelters and second stage housing providers received \$2 million in March 2005 to help make security upgrades, accessibility improvements and health and safety renovations and to undertake efficiency and cost-saving projects.

Providing safe shelter is key to keeping women and their children safe in their communities. Bob Muir, former president of the board of directors of Women's Place of South Niagara Inc., explains how one Niagara Falls shelter is putting government financial support to good use.

"The new shelter will provide safety for women and their children and an environment where they will be able to establish a fresh start to a life free of violence and abuse," says Muir. "This funding will allow us to purchase furniture and equipment for the new shelter and enable us to enhance our playground facilities."

- More than 100 women's agencies received \$3.5 million in November 2005 to help improve their financial, human resource and structural capabilities.
- Women's shelters benefited in August 2006 from a \$1.52 million investment in new infrastructure funding to create 20 new beds and renovate 77 shelter beds for abused women.
- Women's shelters and counselling services delivered by second stage housing providers received a \$2 million boost in annual funding to cover

operational costs. The funding also supported one-time repair and maintenance expenses at women's shelters and second stage housing to help keep these facilities in good repair for the women and children who depend on them in a time of crisis.

- The government provided an additional 2 per cent increase in annual funding, totaling \$2 million, to improve support for community agencies that provide shelter and counselling services to women and children escaping violence in their homes.

Crisis lines provide emotional support, safety planning, information and referrals to women who have experienced abuse. As part of our efforts to improve services for women who have been abused, a review of the regional francophone crisis lines and the province-wide Assaulted Women's Helpline was conducted in 2005. As a result, funding for all lines was annualized.

We have also enhanced partnerships and service coordination among community, justice, education and health service providers by investing \$4.5 million over three years in local Domestic Violence Community Coordinating Committees, which are already in place in more than 30 Ontario communities.

Victims and survivors of sexual violence receive a wide variety of counselling, information and referral services from community-based sexual assault/rape crisis centres, including:

- Court, police and hospital accompaniment
- Supportive peer counselling services (one-to-one and group)
- Public and professional education regarding the nature and extent of sexual violence
- Information and referral services.

Sexual assault centres across the province have been strengthened through enhanced funding support. The province announced an investment of \$1.9 million in additional annualized funding in February 2005 to support 36 sexual assault centres across Ontario and to address inequities in the funding and availability of French-language services. The funding provides for increased annual operating costs at 36 centres, and for the establishment of two new French-language centres in Prescott-Russell and Southwestern Ontario as well as a satellite French-language service in Peel Region.

Sexual assault and domestic violence treatment centres across Ontario were also provided with an additional \$1.3 million in 2006, in one-time funding for public education, training and minor capital improvements.

Economic Independence

To help boost the personal security and economic independence of vulnerable women, in late 2006 the government invested in an employment training pilot program.

Ten pilot programs were announced in November 2006 to identify and develop best practices for providing employment training to women who are at risk or have

Anne Sado, President of George Brown College Applied Arts and Technology, a program partner, points out that a skilled trades career direction makes sound economic sense.

“A good education is an essential factor in helping women become economically independent, and the Residential Air Conditioning Systems Mechanic program is an ideal fit because the skilled trades offer well-paying jobs and flexible employment prospects,” she says. “Women in this program also will benefit from a learning environment sensitive to their needs as they recover from abuse.”

experienced domestic violence. Organizations across Ontario, including those serving Aboriginal, rural, immigrant, northern Ontario and francophone women, are receiving funding through a two-year government investment of \$4 million.

A few examples of these projects:

- Constance Lake First Nation will train 20 Aboriginal women in Aboriginal crafts/trades, customer service skills and employment in partnership with Jane Mattinas Health Centre, Northern College, Eagle's Earth Cree and the Ojibway Historical Centre tourism site.
- Niagara Women's Enterprise Centre will provide 50 women with training and work placements in food and hospitality services, and call centre and retail services. Sixteen community partners have signed on to this project, including Niagara College and Tourism Industry Development Centre, Women's Place St. Catharines & North Niagara, Women's Place South Niagara Inc., YWCA and Women's Resource Centre (Beamsville).
- George Brown College of Applied Arts and Technology will train 22 women as residential air conditioning systems mechanics. Partners include Direct Energy Essential Home Services, Toronto Rape Crisis Centre/Multicultural Women Against Rape, Nellie's and Parkdale Project Read.

A real strength of the employment training pilot program is the unique partnerships. Each project involves:

- A community organization with expertise in the prevention of violence against women
- A college, university or training organization, and
- One or more employers.

The community organization helps recruit women to the program and supports the women in their recovery from abuse by providing services such as counselling, information and referral.

The college, university or training organization provides skill-based training and assistance in finding employment.

The employer partner supplies placements so that the women can gain work experience and/or employment opportunities.

Policy and Research

Information and evaluation are critical to inform new direction in programs and services. Careful, comprehensive research serves as a foundation for making the right decisions on domestic violence prevention and appropriate intervention.

- The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH) is developing policy options and recommendations for regulatory amendments to improve priority access to housing for victims of abuse. Implementation of potential regulation amendments to strengthen the special priority policy under the Social Housing Reform Act, 2000 is anticipated by Spring 2007. MMAH is consulting with a broad representation of stakeholders including the domestic violence sector before developing recommendations for potential regulation changes.
- Through the publication, *Hospital Report, Emergency Department Care*, Ontario is tracking the use of clinical practice guidelines that have been developed to assist health care providers in emergency departments to respond appropriately to the needs of victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. The last report was released in September 2005.
- Through the Ontario Women's Health Council, an extensive study is underway across diverse health care settings to evaluate the effectiveness for female patients of universal screening — versus no screening — on outcomes such as preventing repeat violence and improving women's quality of life. The project will be completed in Winter 2007 and follow-up training of health care professions will be undertaken to disseminate the results of the study.

IDENTIFY WOMEN AT RISK AND INTERVENE EARLY

The government has invested in training, research and conferences in key sectors so that professionals, community leaders and front-line workers are equipped with the skills to identify women at risk and to step in earlier to assist.

Conferences

A broad range of conferences gathered professionals and front-line workers together to address domestic violence in depth and explore promising approaches and best practices.

- The first-ever Ontario government-led conference on domestic violence, “Finding Common Ground,” was held in Toronto in November 2005. The conference offered participants the opportunity to share innovative approaches and promising practices to address domestic violence.
- “Finding Common Ground” featured more than 100 speakers, with a keynote address by Gloria Steinem and a preview of “Let’s Talk About It,” a documentary on domestic violence

directed by well-known Canadian filmmaker Deepa Mehta. Session sponsors included the Elementary Teachers’ Federation of Ontario, the International Association of Fire Fighters, the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association, the Ontario Provincial Police Association and the Police Association of Ontario.

- Over 550 professionals and front-line workers attended in person, representing a cross-section of community service, justice, education, police and health sectors. Another 1,000 people logged on to the live webcast.
- In 2005, the Ministry of the Attorney General funded a symposium to examine different models of integrated service delivery and information sharing systems, including the models developed in San Diego, New York and Duluth.
- Ontario sponsored a delegation to the federal policy forum on “Aboriginal Women and Violence: Building Safe and

Healthy Families and Communities” held in Ottawa in March 2006. Along with government officials, Ontario’s delegates included 21 representatives from Aboriginal organizations throughout the province. Ontario delegates dialogued and networked with colleagues from across the country on promising practices for addressing violence against Aboriginal women in Canada.

- More recently, a provincial conference focused on female empowerment through sports. The “Sport and the Empowerment of Females” conference gathered leaders from sport, education, health promotion and violence prevention communities in September 2006 to share ideas on how to engage and empower women and girls through sport and how to address abuse in sports.
- “In Her Shoes: Shifting Perspectives on Working with Women in Conflict with the Law” focused on women in institutional and community care. The conference, held in October 2006, looked at ways that programs, policies and practices could better respond to these women’s needs.
- The Partner Assault Response (PAR) program — an intervention program for abusers — in conjunction with

Probation and Parole Services held a provincial conference in November 2005. The conference focused on processes, planning, practices and collaboration between probation and parole and Partner Assault Response agencies to improve protection for victims of domestic violence.

Training for Professionals

New initiatives are focusing on training professionals in the health, education, justice and community service sectors. Training initiatives are also addressing the unique needs of Aboriginal communities, women with disabilities, multicultural, rural, northern and francophone communities. All of these training initiatives are the result of provincial funding.

Examples of how this investment is generating community action:

- As of January 2006, Ontario Works providers have been trained to assist Ontario Works staff to better respond to the needs of abused women and their children. Ontario Works staff in First Nations communities received specialized training to recognize and respond to the unique challenges of Aboriginal women and children in Ontario.

- The Ministry of Community and Social Services is conducting workshops throughout Ontario to train social housing providers on woman abuse issues and related community supports and services. These professionals can then provide women with greater access to the information and services they need as they transition to a new life for themselves and their children, free of violence. This includes workshops tailored to the Aboriginal and francophone communities.
- As part of its plan to reform Ontario's child protection system, the Ministry of Children and Youth Services is working with the province's 53 Children's Aid societies to enable them to be effective in matching their level of response to the individual needs of families. This revised model for providing child protection services will include a supportive approach to children and families who have experienced domestic violence, and allows for a more flexible response so that children who have been victims or who have been adversely affected by witnessing violence will receive appropriate supports.
- The Ontario Police College presently delivers training on domestic violence in four major areas: Basic Constable Training, Advanced Patrol Training, Front Line Supervisor and Domestic Violence Investigator - Train the Trainer. Each course addresses the role and responsibility of the officer designated and recognizes the level of experience and understanding in the course design. Local police Domestic Violence Investigator Trainers have expanded and enhanced training to meet community needs.
- Springtide Resources (formerly Education Wife Assault) has delivered training, research and evaluation to more than 190 Ontario professionals and service deliverers supporting women with developmental disabilities who are abused or at risk of abuse.
- Equay-wuk Women's Group is currently developing a family violence prevention kit. This tool will provide a holistic, community-based model and training curriculum to help prevent violence against women in First Nations communities in the Nishnawbe-Aski Nation. The curriculum is expected to be completed in Spring 2007.
- Legal Aid Ontario is in year two of implementing its Domestic Violence Response Training Project in partnership with the Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic. This project offers training to front-line legal aid providers on ways to better identify and

assist women who are survivors of domestic violence. To date, a total of 79 legal aid application officers participated in training sessions held in London, St. Thomas and Thunder Bay.

- Judges from all levels of Ontario courts who hear cases involving violence against women will receive support from an education program now being developed by the National Judicial Institute.
- The Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants has trained more than 190 settlement service providers and other workers who provide services to immigrant, refugee and undocumented women who are victims of violence. The training is designed to empower these workers so that they can implement innovative programs to support at-risk women.
- More than 550 health care providers, hospital staff, community service providers and members of professional perinatal-care associations have been trained by the Perinatal Partnership Program of Eastern and Southeastern Ontario to recognize and respond effectively to woman abuse in the perinatal period.
- Shelters for Abused Women has trained over 75 senior executives of shelters in order to enhance the service delivery and business capacity of all Ontario shelters.

Expert Panels

Expert panels have been established to help people in key sectors to detect early signs of woman abuse and offer appropriate responses.

- The expert training panels for the English and French education sectors are creating training materials to help school teachers, principals and counsellors identify students who may be exposed to domestic violence at home and to provide these students

Dr. Robin Mason of the Women's College Research Institute is co-chair of the expert panel for emergency department personnel, which is supported by provincial investments.

"The funding allows us," she says, "to make important strides in improving the ability of front-line health care workers to respond to cases of domestic violence. With it, women who live in abusive relationships will be more likely to encounter doctors, nurses and emergency service personnel who understand the issues and have the tools and resources to help them."

with appropriate supports. The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto (OISE/UT) and l'Association des directions et directions adjointes des écoles franco-ontariennes (ADFO) are coordinating the panels.

- The expert training panel for emergency department personnel is being coordinated by Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre (formerly the Sunnybrook and Women's College Health Sciences Centre). The panel has undertaken research, workshops and surveys with a wide range of associations to develop English and French-language e-based training materials and core competencies that can better enable these professionals to support women and children at risk of abuse.
- Another expert panel developed the Neighbours, Friends and Families public education campaign, designed to help people to recognize the warning signs of woman abuse and know what to do. The panel was coordinated through the Centre for Research and Education on Violence Against Women and Children.
- The campaign includes public service announcements, a comprehensive community kit and a website (www.neighboursfriendsandfamilies.on.ca) featuring downloadable promotional

tools. Communities can use these resources to launch their own campaigns. Brochures have been distributed to public libraries, public health units, LCBOs, early childhood centres and government information sites.

- Kanawayhitowin, an Aboriginal adaptation of the Neighbours, Friends and Families campaign, is currently being developed by a separate panel and is set to launch in 2007.

How do you know when a woman is being abused? What do you do if you suspect she is? The Centre for Research and Education on Violence Against Women and Children partnered with the government on the public education campaign, Neighbours, Friends and Families, to answer those questions.

"Identifying risk signs is vitally important," says Barb MacQuarrie, the centre's community director. "This funding allows the centre to prevent injury and death resulting from woman abuse by providing information about warning signs and safety planning to those people who are close to an at-risk woman. The campaign is also beginning to address how non-violent men can help to stop woman abuse."

CHANGE ATTITUDES TO PREVENT VIOLENCE FROM HAPPENING IN THE FIRST PLACE

Patterns of violence and victimization typically start long before adulthood. To break the cycle of violence, the government has launched a public education campaign aimed at girls and boys aged eight to 14 years.

Healthy, Equal Relationships

This public education campaign has several elements. The centrepiece is an interactive website — “EqualityRules.ca” — designed to help today’s youth learn about healthy, equal and respectful relationships. The site provides scenarios so that kids can learn to problem-solve and to identify abusive behaviour, know how to respond appropriately and know how to get help. Television and movie theatres will also feature an advertisement on the campaign.

In addition, 14 community organizations across Ontario are implementing a host of initiatives with the help of a \$1.2 million government investment announced in May 2005. Here are a few examples:

- Minwaashin Lodge/Aboriginal Women’s Support Centre in Ottawa has produced a hip-hop video written and performed by Aboriginal youth to promote healthy relationships and violence prevention. Seventy-five Métis, Inuit and First Nation youth took part in the project, together with Elders, community members and organizations such as the Children’s Aid Society of Ottawa, the Ottawa Police Service and the Ottawa-Carleton School Board. The music video and educational tip sheets to promote healthy, equal relationships are available at: www.loveyougive.org.

Castille Troy is the executive director of Minwaashin Lodge/Aboriginal Women’s Support Centre, which developed a unique resource for young people with government support.

“This funding,” says Troy, “empowered these Aboriginal youth to create a powerful hip-hop music video, “Love You Give,” drawing on traditional teachings about respect and equality to break the cycle of violence against women and girls.”

- Mujer has trained over 30 young Latin-American women as peer educators who can deliver programs on violence prevention and healthy relationships to children and youth in the Greater Toronto Area's Latin-American community.
- Family Services à la famille Ottawa is conducting violence prevention leadership training and designing an educational tool kit for youth, as well as a local media campaign.
- Equal Relationships Teacher Kit: Springtide Resources has been working with partners to implement teacher workshops, interactive resource materials, and opportunities for youth to produce their own resources as part of a comprehensive kit to promote respectful, healthy, equal relationships in grades 3 to 5. The project also has resources on girls' conferences, tip sheets in multiple languages and curriculum materials. A newsletter on prevention will highlight current initiatives and resources. Information is available at www.springtideresources.org and English-language products will be ready in March 2007.

The funding is also supporting the development of resources for use in schools and other settings, including:

- RePlay Video Games: The Metropolitan Toronto Action Committee on Violence Against Women and Children has been working with partners to create two video games on healthy equal relationships for youth aged eight to 14 years. Resource booklets for youth, educators and parents accompany the video games, which will be available in January 2007. More details are available at www.metrac.org.

STRENGTHENING THE JUSTICE SYSTEM RESPONSE

The government continues to make improvements to Ontario's criminal and family justice system to better protect women and children from domestic violence and to ensure the seamless delivery of services from the justice system.

Courts

Women affected by domestic violence now have improved protection in Ontario's courts. Domestic violence courts will soon be available in all court jurisdictions and work is underway on other safety measures.

- Ontario's domestic violence court program is a key part of our government's commitment to improving supports and services to victims of domestic violence. Specially trained police, Crown attorneys and victim/witness staff work together with community partners to keep victims safe while holding abusers accountable. The program has now been expanded to 49 court jurisdictions across the province and will be operating in all 54 Ontario court jurisdictions by early 2007.
- An independent evaluation of services provided through the domestic violence court program was recently completed. Working with stakeholders, the evaluation included an examination of the experiences of women from diverse communities. Recommendations will be used to make improvements to the program.
- The Ministry of the Attorney General has undertaken stakeholder consultations on improving civil protections for abused women, including improvements in restraining orders and the enforcement of breaches. Standardized provisions for restraining orders are being developed to ensure consistency across the province.
- To improve communication and coordination between family and criminal courts, the Ministry of the Attorney General is developing protocols. Ministry staff is working with court staff, police and Crown attorneys to improve the flow of family court restraining orders from family court to police and bail court.

- The Bail Safety Pilot project is an innovative approach to identifying high-risk situations for victims of domestic violence. Victims are interviewed by specially trained police, victim services personnel and Crown attorneys. The results of the interviews may help Crown attorneys make better recommendations at bail hearings to help prevent further victimization. This pilot is currently operating in 10 sites.
- In February 2006, the Children's Law Reform Act was amended to require that courts consider domestic violence when making orders relating to the custody of or access to a child.
- The government has continued to urge the federal government to improve funding for family and civil legal aid.
- Dual charging occurs when the police lay charges against both parties following a domestic violence incident. This has resulted in some victims of domestic violence being charged with a crime. To address this problem, the Dual Charge Investigative Aid has been developed for police. The Investigative Aid outlines the problem of dual charges and provides procedures for investigation and consultation when dual charges are being considered. It also presents information to assist police in identifying the dominant aggressor and describes injury patterns on men that may indicate that a woman acted in self-defence.
- The Canadian Police Information Centre (CPIC) system provides all Canadian law enforcement agencies with computerized access to inter-jurisdictional information police related issues. Government staff in policing, justice and correctional services are working together to improve the time required to place probation orders, convictions and changes in offender status on the CPIC system.

Policing

- The Model Police Response to Domestic Violence is being evaluated in municipal and provincial police services to ensure that domestic violence policies and procedures are implemented appropriately and required improvements are made. Fifty-three Ontario Provincial Police services have been evaluated to date, and as of January 2007 evaluations of all 59 municipal sites will be completed. The OPP evaluation will continue into 2007.

Corrections

- In partnership with Springtide Resources, the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services has updated the Violence Awareness Program for female offenders, both in

institutions and on probation, who have been abused or are at risk of violence.

Implementation of the enhanced program is expected by Fall 2007, following a pilot planned for Winter/Spring 2007.

- An enhanced telephone management system has been implemented to help prevent offenders in jail from making harassing or threatening phone calls to abused women.
- A technical and literature review of electronic monitoring systems is underway to assess the impact on persons who have abused their partners. It will be completed in Spring 2007.

Education and Support

The following initiatives focus on providing key information and support to vulnerable women. They also address how to change abusers' attitudes toward domestic violence.

- The Ontario Women's Directorate is working with a consortium of key stakeholder organizations to develop public legal education material and community outreach activities to increase vulnerable women's awareness of their rights and options under Ontario and Canadian laws. This

initiative supports the Family Statute Law Amendment Act passed in February 2006, which mandates that all family law arbitrations in Ontario are to be conducted only in accordance with Canadian law.

- The Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic provides counselling, legal and interpretation services, and information and referral services to women who are survivors of violence. Annualized funding of \$300,000 has been provided to the clinic to continue its work offering specialized legal services for assaulted women.
- The Partner Assault Response program includes a victim-support component, offering safety planning, referrals to community resources, information about the program and other supports. The government has provided \$1.4 million in new annualized funding, starting in 2005-2006, to strengthen the victim-support component.
- The effectiveness of the Partner Assault Response program, a specialized counselling and educational program for individuals who have abused their partners, has been evaluated. This evaluation demonstrated the effectiveness of this program in changing abusers' attitudes about domestic violence.

BETTER ACCESS TO FRENCH-LANGUAGE SERVICES

Improvements to French-language programs and services, as the previous sections indicate, have been integrated throughout the entire Domestic Violence Action Plan — including community supports, public education and prevention, early intervention, and the justice system response.

Below are more details on some of the French-language initiatives.

Community Supports

Women experiencing violence have better access to French-language programs and services in Ontario.

- Sexual assault centres received a \$1.9 million annual investment starting in February 2005. Some of this funding from the Ministry of the Attorney General was designated to support francophone sexual assault centres and French-language support services.

As a result of this investment:

- A new French-language sexual assault centre in Prescott-Russell began offering services in Spring 2006 and will soon be fully operational.
- A new satellite office began offering French-language sexual assault services in Peel Region in Fall 2006 to help address the needs of a rapidly increasing population of French-speaking immigrant women.
- A new French-language sexual assault centre will be established in early 2007 in London to serve Southwestern Ontario.
- The government has also improved access to French-language telephone crisis support by annualizing funding for regional French crisis lines and by creating a toll-free number to act as a single point of access for francophone violence-against-women crisis services.

- An additional \$1 million will fund three regional French-language crisis lines, a new mobile Transitional and Housing support service, and a study on the shelter needs of francophone women living in Toronto and Hamilton.
- Le Centre ontarien de prévention des agressions (COPA) is working with community partners to expand and share French-language approaches on preventing violence against women and girls, to reach children and youth.

Public Education and Training

The Action Plan's public education and training initiatives feature a number of initiatives that target francophone communities:

- Voisins, amis et familles includes public service announcements, brochures and wallet cards as tools for organizations so that they can mobilize francophone communities across Ontario to recognize the signs of domestic violence and know how to help. For more information visit www.voisinsamisetsfamilles.on.ca.
- Egal-Egale.ca is an interactive website on healthy, equal relationships for girls and boys aged eight to 14. On this site, promoted through a television advertisement, youth can learn about behaviours and attitudes in order to form respectful relationships — and find out where to go for help. Jeunesse, J'écoute is partnering on the campaign.

- La Fédération de la jeunesse franco-ontarienne (FESFO) is developing an outreach program on healthy, equal relationships that will be delivered in francophone schools.

In the francophone community, abused women and their children will be able to find more services and supports in their own language as a result of new government investments.

“The three new crisis lines mean that francophone women experiencing partner violence or sexual violence will have better and faster access to services when they seek support to end the violence in their lives,” says Céline Pelletier, vice-president of Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes and director of Maison Interlude House in Hawkesbury. “These critical improvements to French-language services in anti-violence organizations demonstrate that the Ontario government has listened to the needs expressed by the francophone community.”

- Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes has worked closely with Laurentian University to deliver crisis intervention and legal education training (through online and in-person sessions) to 130 front-line staff from francophone organizations in Ontario to better support abused or at-risk women. They are also developing a report on best practices in working with women with disabilities and are working to establish a postsecondary credit program for abused women and for children's counsellors and advocates.
- La Cité des affaires de La Cité collégiale in Ottawa is one of the partners delivering a government-supported employment training pilot project to help abused women succeed in the workforce and gain independence. The women will take part in the college's fast-track vocational skills training program and will have work placement and job search support.

The Office of Francophone Affairs' Violence Against Women Prevention Public Education Program continues to support francophone community-based violence prevention projects. In 2006, seven Ontario organizations in francophone communities received project grants for a range of public education activities.

CONCLUSION

Much has been accomplished — and much more still needs to be done. Encouragingly, the difference the Domestic Violence Action Plan is making to the lives of abused women and children and those at-risk in Ontario grows every day.

As we move forward, our government will continue to work in partnership with service providers and women’s groups to better protect women and children affected by domestic violence.

To learn more about the Domestic Violence Action Plan and other ongoing activities relating to women’s issues, visit our website at www.citizenship.gov.on.ca/owd/