

December 13, 2023

SENT ELECTRONICALLY

The Honourable Doug Ford
Premier of Ontario
Legislative Building, Room 281
Queens Park
Toronto, ON M7A 1A1

The Honourable Sylvia Jones
Minister of Health / Deputy Premier
777 Bay Street, College Park, 5th Floor
Toronto, ON M7A 2J3

Michael Parsa
Minister of Children, Community and Social Services
438 University Avenue, 7th Floor
Toronto, ON M7A 1N3

Dear Premier Ford, Minister Jones, and Minister Parsa:

RE: Intimate Partner Violence and Public Health Action

On behalf of the Board of Health for North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit (Health Unit), please accept this correspondence highlighting the need to advance local and provincial action on monitoring, preventing, and reducing Intimate Partner Violence, and adverse events experienced by children with violence or abuse in the family unit. As a local public health unit, we are engaged in this work as per the following Ontario Public Health Standards: Healthy Growth and Development (including Health Babies Healthy Children Program); Substance Use and Injury Prevention; and Foundational (such as Population Health Assessment and Health Equity). At its meeting on November 22, 2023, the Board of Health carried the following resolution #BOH/2023/11/04:

WHEREAS, the Ontario Public Health Standards identifies violence as a topic for consideration within the Substance Use and Injury Prevention Standard and requires public health units to use a comprehensive health promotion approach that addresses risk and protective factors to reduce the burden of preventable injuries in the health population;

WHEREAS, the Ontario Public Health Standards require public health units to monitor and assess trends related to injuries;

WHEREAS, public health units and their programs, such as Healthy Babies Healthy Children and Sexual Health, respond to disclosure of Intimate Partner Violence or support disclosing of Intimate Partner Violence within individual client care using best practices;

WHEREAS, it is well documented that Intimate Partner Violence is a serious preventable problem that significantly impacts victims and their children with effects across the lifespan and has considerable societal costs associated with medical and mental health services, lost productivity, and criminal justice and child welfare costs;

WHEREAS, responding to and preventing Intimate Partner Violence requires urgent and sustained evidence-based interventions by multisectoral agencies at a local and provincial level that are effective in preventing violence, and effective in changing risk and increasing protective factors, especially in adolescents and young adults;

WHEREAS, Intimate Partner Violence is generally underreported. Locally reported police, victim, and healthcare service data likely does not represent the full extent of Intimate Partner Violence, nor the risk and nature of the abuse and how it varies across specific population groups (e.g., 2sLGBTQ+, Indigenous) and age groups. Local level survey data is not available on Intimate Partner Violence, as collected through the Statistics Canada General Social Survey on Canadian's Safety (Victimization), or Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs);

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, That the Board of Health for the North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit is committed to being a member on the Violence against Women Coordinating Committee (VAWCC) of Nipissing and VAWCC of Parry Sound, and support the efforts of staff to research and consult with local, regional, and provincial experts and community partners to enhance surveillance methodologies, knowledge of effective prevention strategies, promotion of local services, and capacity for collective action and evaluation; and,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, That the Board of Health call on the Province of Ontario to invest in surveillance and analytical methodologies at a provincial and local public health unit level to gain a better understanding of the prevalence of Intimate Partner Violence and Adverse Childhood Experiences and to permit monitoring of trends, and data-informed action; and,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, That the Board of Health call on the Province of Ontario to develop a Provincial Intimate Partner Violence strategy to support the identification, implementation, evaluation, and monitoring of effective violence prevention strategies; and

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, That the Board of Health call on the Province of Ontario and the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS) to increase the funding allocated to the Healthy Babies Healthy Children Home Visiting program that is operated out of local public health units. The program directly services individual parents who need more support. Within this work, staff respond to disclosure of Intimate Partner Violence or support disclosing of Intimate Partner Violence. The annual budget for the Healthy Babies Healthy Children program has not increased in over 10 years.

Intimate Partner Violence which can include physical, sexual, and/or emotional harm toward a current or former intimate partner, is a serious preventable problem that significantly impacts victims and their children with effects across the lifespan.

On an individual level, exposure to Intimate Partner Violence has been associated with negative impacts to social functioning, mental health, and physical health. In addition, it has been well established through research, that children exposed to violence in the family either directly, or through witnessing interparental violence are at increased risk of intimate partner violence experiences in adolescence and adulthood. Domestic abuse is recognized as an Adverse Childhood Experience. Adverse childhood experiences, otherwise known as ACEs is a term used to describe negative, stressful, traumatizing events that occur before the age of 18 years. They are associated with risk of serious physical, mental health, and neurobiological problems, and more exposure to adverse events predicts greater risk in later years. There is a need to invest in interventions that are effective in preventing violence, or effective in changing risk and increasing protective factors. Research indicates that Intimate Partner Violence starts early in the lifespan, in adolescents and young adults, highlighting the need for early prevention efforts, and interventions targeting this population.

The Board of Health respectfully urges the Provincial Government to invest in surveillance and data-informed strategies at a provincial and local level that will help to monitor trends, prevent and reduce intimate partner violence; reduce adverse childhood experiences; and, increase resilience and protective factors to decrease the likelihood of future risk, such as becoming a victim, or perpetrator of violence.

Sincerely,



Rick Champagne
Chairperson, Board of Health



Carol Zimbalatti, M.D., CCFP, MPH
Medical Officer of Health/Executive Officer

Copy to:

Vic Fedeli, MPP, Nipissing
Graydon Smith, MPP, Parry Sound-Muskoka
John Vanthof, MPP, Timiskaming-Cochrane
Ontario Boards of Health
Health Unit Member Municipalities
The Honourable Michael Kerzner (Solicitor General of Ontario)
Josée Bégin (Assistant Chief Statistician, Statistics Canada)
Chairs of the VAWCC of Nipissing and VAWCC of Parry Sound

References:

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2. Cotter, Adam. "[Intimate partner violence in Canada, 2018: An overview.](#)" *Juristat*. 2021. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 85-002-X.
3. Statistics Canada, [Brief: Statistical profile of intimate partner violence in Canada](#). 2022 Feb. 15.
4. Public Health Agency of Canada. [The Chief Public Health Officer's Report on the State of Public Health in Canada 2016: A focus on Family Violence in Canada](#). 2016 Sept. 30.
5. Public Health Agency of Canada. [Canada's Road Map to End Violence Against Children](#). July 15, 2019.
6. Finnie RKC, Okasako-Schmucker DL, Buchanan L, Carty D, Wethington H, Mercer SL, Basile KC, DeGue S, Niolon PH, Bishop J, Titus T, Noursi S, Dickerson SA, Whitaker D, Swider S, Remington P; Community Preventive Services Task Force. Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Prevention Among Youth: A Community Guide Systematic Review. *Am J Prev Med*. 2022 Jan;62(1):e45-e55.
7. Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion (Public Health Ontario). Carsley S, Oei T. [Interventions to prevent and mitigate the impact of adverse childhood experiences \(ACEs\) in Canada: a literature review](#). Toronto, ON: Queen's Printer for Ontario; 2020.