

## Board of Health Briefing Note

**To:** Chair and Members of the Board of Health  
**Date:** April 3, 2024  
**Topic:** **Endorsement of Public Health Sudbury & Districts Letter on Gender-based and Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)**  
**Submitted by:** Dr. Glenn Corneil, Acting Medical Officer of Health/CEO  
**Prepared by:** Lorna Desmarais, Public Health Promoter  
**Reviewed by:** Jocelyn Moreno, Research, Planning, and Policy Analyst  
Amanda Mongeon, Manager of Community Health  
Erin Cowan, Director of Strategic Services and Health Promotion/CNO

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### RECOMMENDATIONS

**It is recommended THAT the Timiskaming Board of Health (THU) Board of Health:**

1. Endorse the Public Health Sudbury and Districts calls for the provincial government to declare gender-based violence and intimate partner violence an epidemic (Appendix A)

2. Send a letter indicating this endorsement and urging the provincial government to declare gender-based violence and intimate partner violence an epidemic to Hon. Doug Ford, Premier of Ontario via email: [doug.fordco@pc.ola.org](mailto:doug.fordco@pc.ola.org)

cc:

Hon. Sylvia Jones, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health

Hon. Michael Parsa, Minister of Children, Community and Social Services

Hon. Paul Calandra, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing

John Vanthof, MPP – Timiskaming-Cochrane

Anthony Rota, MP – Timiskaming-Nipissing

Charlie Angus, MP – Timmins-James Bay

Dr. Kieran Moore, Chief Medical Officer of Health

Dr. Eileen DeVilla, Chair, Council of Medical Officers of Health (COMOH)

All Ontario Boards of Health

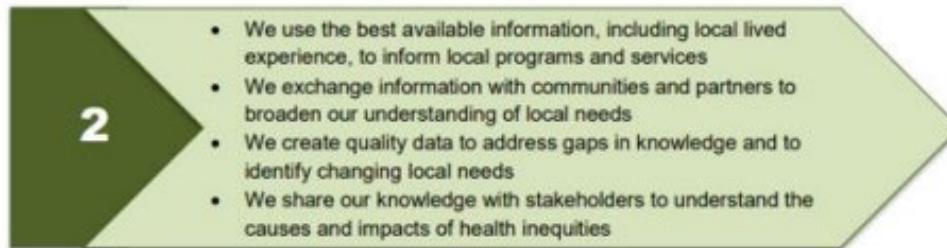
Association of Local Public Health Agencies (alPHA)

Health Unit Member Municipalities

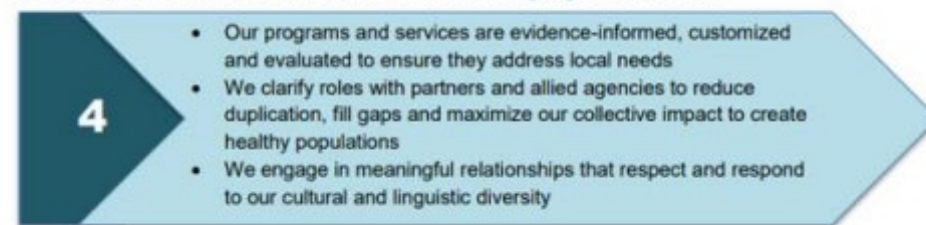
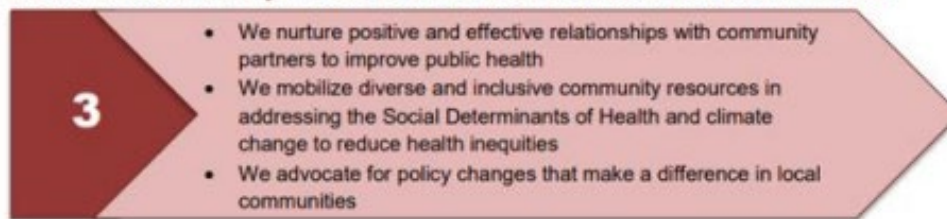
Melanie Ducharme, Chair of Temiskaming District Violence Against Women Coordinating Committee

## Links to Ontario Public Health Standards and THU Strategic Plan 2019-2023

This work contributes to meeting requirements and expected outcomes in the [Ontario Public Health Standards](#) (2021) and supports the following THU strategic directions:



### We collaborate with partners to make a difference in our communities



## Issue

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is a public health issue that affects millions of people around the world. It is a pattern of behavior used by one partner to control and dominate the other partner, often through physical, psychological, or sexual abuse. IPV can occur in any relationship, regardless of age, gender, or sexual orientation. Women, children, Indigenous peoples, people with disabilities, and people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, or questioning are at greater risk of experiencing family violence and its impacts. Women are more likely than men to be killed by an intimate partner, more likely to experience sexual abuse, and more likely to be exposed to severe and chronic forms of intimate partner violence, particularly forms that include threats and force to gain control. Women are also more likely to experience health impacts.<sup>1</sup>

Violence is recognized as a pervasive and destructive force in society.<sup>2</sup> It has devastating mental and physical impacts on the victims, witnesses, families, and society at large. It can be manifested as gender-based violence, elderly abuse, bullying, community violence, etc. In 2018, the topic of Violence was added to the Ontario Public Health Standards, acknowledging it as a public health priority and requiring

boards of health to address it by assessing risks and protective factors and collaborating with local partners to build on community assets.

## **Background**

IPV is associated with significant immediate and long-lasting health consequences, including physical health symptoms (e.g., injuries, chronic pain), mental health symptoms (e.g., depression, anxiety, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder), and reproductive health symptoms (e.g., sexually transmitted infections, prenatal complications), and can also lead to death. Violence leads to adverse health outcomes through injury, health risk behaviors initiated or escalated to manage violence-related emotions or stress, and cumulative burden from the chronic stress of violence that causes physiological changes implicated in the development of chronic diseases.

Two years ago, Ontario's chief coroner published the results of a jury inquest into the circumstances surrounding the deaths of Carol Culleton, Anastasia Kuzyk, and Nathalie Warmerdam, all of whom were killed by the same perpetrator on September 22, 2015, in Renfrew County. It included recommendations to address the systemic conditions that made these homicides possible and work toward preventing future cases. Some actions were geared towards education, such as public awareness programs and training for law enforcement personnel. Others focused on prevention, from registries for repeat offenders to survivor-informed risk assessments around pleas, bail, and sentencing. But the first of 86 recommendations was to "Formally declare intimate partner violence as an epidemic".

In November 2023, the Temiskaming District Violence Against Women Coordinating Committee requested that all municipalities follow this recommendation and declare violence an epidemic, not only to acknowledge the importance of this issue locally but to urge the Government of Ontario to make this declaration provincially.

## **Intimate Partner Violence Statistics**

- In Canada in 2019, of the 107,810 people aged 15 and over who experienced intimate partner violence (IPV) 79% were women. <sup>3</sup>
- In 2015, victims of IPV made up 28% of all victims of police-reported violent crime. <sup>4</sup>
- IPV costs Canadian taxpayers billions of dollars each year. <sup>5</sup>
- About once a week in Canada, a woman is killed by her male partner. <sup>6</sup>
- In 2022, the Temiskaming Shores and Kirkland Lake detachments of the Ontario Provincial Police received a total of 785 calls associated with intimate partner violence. Of those, 27% resulted in criminal charges and assault was the most common criminal charge. <sup>7</sup>

## **Local Public Health Action Related to Intimate Partner Violence Prevention**

Timiskaming Health Unit is a member of The Timiskaming District Violence Against Women Coordinating Committee. This community collaborative maximizes the capacity of service providers to respond to abused women's needs, improve access to an integrated service delivery system, and ultimately increase the safety and overall well-being for abused women and their children. Through this collaboration, community paramedics have been piloting a violence screening question. The screening tool is a practical resource for professionals to help aid in the prevention of violence against women. Asking the question helps professionals identify and respond to persons experiencing abuse or violence

in their relationships. Once the results of this pilot are evaluated, it will be modified as needed, and implementation will be expanded with other partners across the district. This committee also recently advocated for provincial and municipal partners to declare violence as an epidemic.

Community Safety Well-Being plans are provincially legislated for municipalities in Ontario.

Timiskaming's plan includes working collaboratively across sectors towards the goal of making Timiskaming a safer, more inclusive, and connected community where all residents thrive. One priority area identified by the stakeholders is community safety, which includes gender-based violence. Another priority area is housing, including transitional and supportive housing, which have been identified as important barriers to leaving a violent partner.

#### **Next steps:**

- Collect and analyze relevant data to identify trends and health inequities related to IPV.
- Scope and perform a situational assessment on the topic of violence to explore the local context and identify priority areas.
- Share findings with the Board of Health.

#### **REFERENCES**

- 1 The Chief Public Health Officer's Report on the State of Public Health in Canada 2016 - A Focus on Family Violence in Canada. <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/chief-public-health-officer-reports-state-public-health-canada/2016-focus-family-violence-canada.html>
- 2 Canadian Public Health Agency. (n.d.). *Violence in Society: A Public Health Perspective*. <https://www.cpha.ca/violence-society-public-health-perspective>
- 3 Conroy, Shana. 2021. "Section 3: Police-reported intimate partner violence in Canada, 2019." In *Family violence in Canada: A statistical profile, 2019*. *Juristic*. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 85-002-X.
- 4 Statistic Canada, 2017. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2017001/article/14698/03-eng.htm>
- 5 An Estimation of the Economic Impact of Spousal Violence in Canada, Department of Justice, 2009 [https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/cj-jp/fv-vf/rr12\\_7/rr12\\_7.pdf](https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/cj-jp/fv-vf/rr12_7/rr12_7.pdf)
- 6 Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability, 2019. <https://femicideincanada.ca/>
- 7 Kirkland Lake and Temiskaming Shores Ontario Provincial Police Data



February 21, 2024

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

The Honourable Doug Ford  
Premier of Ontario  
Legislative Building, Queen's Park  
Toronto, ON M7A 1A1

Dear Premier Ford:

**Re: Gender-based and Intimate Partner Violence**

On behalf of the Board of Health for Public Health Sudbury & Districts, I am writing to advise you that the Board of Health is adding its voice to the concerns your government and so many other share concerning the escalating crisis of gender-based violence (GBV) and intimate partner violence (IPV) in our province. We know that you agree that this is a matter of grave concern that demands immediate attention and collective effort.

At its meeting of January 18, 2024, the Board of Health for Public Health Sudbury & Districts resolved to endorse the November 7, 2023, City of Greater Sudbury [motion](#) declaring gender-based violence and intimate partner violence an epidemic:

*WHEREAS boards of health are required under the Ontario Public Health Standards to develop interventions to prevent injuries, including those caused by violence; and*

*WHEREAS police-reported family violence across Canada is increasing and locally, in 2022, the Greater Sudbury Police Service investigated 3,227 intimate partner violence reports, resulting in 867 intimate partner violence charges; and*

*WHEREAS in Sudbury, between 2018 and June 2023, there were 218 emergency department visits related to intimate partner violence; and*

*WHEREAS the [City of Greater Sudbury](#), [Northeastern Manitoulin and the Islands](#), [Billings Township](#), and [93 other municipalities in Ontario](#) have declared gender-based violence and intimate partner violence as an epidemic; and*

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[phsd.ca](http://phsd.ca)



Letter to the Premier of Ontario  
Re: Gender-based and Intimate Partner Violence  
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*WHEREAS calling out the urgency of the issue and denouncing violence contributes to changing norms and improving coordinated multi-sector action, ultimately improving health outcomes for those directly affected, as well as families and communities;*

*THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Board of Health for Public Health Sudbury & Districts endorse the November 7, 2023, City of Greater Sudbury [motion](#) declaring gender-based violence and intimate-partner violence an epidemic.*

As your government will be aware, gender-based violence and intimate partner violence cause immeasurable harm to individuals, families, and communities. These types of violence impact people of all genders, ages, socioeconomic, racial, educational, ethnic, religious, and cultural backgrounds. However, the rates of GBV and IPV are disproportionately higher among women, girls, and gender-diverse people. For many, this is often interconnected with broader societal and systemic issues, including poverty, discrimination, lack of access to resources, inadequate support systems and a legacy of colonialism.

The Board of Health urges the provincial government to allocate the necessary resources, funding, and policy frameworks to reinforce our health and social services. We thank you for your attention to and investment in this urgent public health issue, and we continue to look forward to opportunities to work together to promote and protect the health for everyone.

Sincerely,



René Lapierre  
Chair, Board of Health

cc: Honourable Sylvia Jones, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health  
Honourable Michael Parsa, Minister of Children, Community and Social Services  
Honourable Marci Ien, Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Youth  
Honourable Paul Calandra, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing  
France Gélinas, Member of Provincial Parliament, Nickel Belt  
Jamie West, Member of Provincial Parliament, Sudbury  
Michael Mantha, Member of Provincial Parliament, Algoma-Manitoulin  
Viviane Lapointe, Member of Parliament, Sudbury  
Dr. Kieran Moore, Chief Medical Officer of Health  
Dr. Eileen DeVilla, Chair, Council of Medical Officers of Health (COMOH)  
All Ontario Boards of Health  
Association of Local Public Health Agencies