



## National Action Day on Violence Against Women 2010 TALKING POINTS

### **Violence Against Women: Numbers and Costs**

- Violence against women is the world's largest human rights violation and Canada is no exception - 50% of females experience an incident of violence at some point in their lives.
- The cost of violence against women and its impacts have been estimated at \$4.7 billion a year including shelter and other social services, health care interventions, education and criminal justice costs and lost employment days.
- Personal costs are immense – lives are broken, women lose homes and employment, children are traumatized, their education is often disrupted and their capacity to learn undermined.

### **Violence and Women's Homelessness**

- Violence is the leading cause of women's homelessness.
- Violence and abuse annually drive over 100,000 women and children into emergency shelters in Canada, equivalent to a city the size of Thunder Bay, Moncton or Moose Jaw.
- Many abused young women and women struggling with mental health and addictions as a result of abuse, never make it to shelter.
- Living on the street of Canadian cities women are to exposed sexual assault, violence and murder, as in the Pickton murders and documented by Sisters in Spirit.

### **VAW shelters are a response, not a permanent solution:**

- Shelters are not a permanent solution. Women and children need to live safely beyond shelter, with dignity, without fear of stalking, abuse and homelessness.
- Women face large gaps in the shelter system:
  - In the Yukon, Nunavut and the Northwest Territories, there's often no access to shelter, getting to shelter means leaving your home community for the city.
  - Many shelters don't have accommodations needed by women with disabilities and Deaf women.
  - Cultural and language appropriate services are not always available.

### **Living safely beyond shelter:**

- Without access to affordable housing for themselves and their children on leaving shelter, women can face a choice of homelessness or return to an abusive situation.

- Without affordable housing, abused women and their children can get caught in a cycle of violence, homelessness and poverty.
- Mothers need access to childcare while they look for work and a new home.
- With social assistance levels set well below the poverty line, abused women and children who must depend on social assistance live deeply in poverty.

### **A responsive legal system:**

- In much of Canada the legal system does not take the realities of life for abused women and children into account. In various jurisdictions:
  - Women encounter “dual charging”, where they face criminal charges for defending themselves when attacked by a partner
  - Courts decide custody of children without taking violence in the home into account
  - Women are forced to seek support from an abusive ex-partner when they know it’s not safe to do so.

### **What MPs can do:**

- **Support a NATIONAL HOUSING STRATEGY as outlined in Bill C-304 that:**
  - Includes emergency, second stage and permanent housing for women
  - Incorporates safe design
  - Includes sectoral housing strategies for Inuit, First Nations, Métis and urban Aboriginal women, developed by their organizations.
- **Support strong federal leadership on a comprehensive poverty elimination strategy.**
- **Amend the federal Divorce Act to ensure family violence is taken into consideration in decisions on custody and access.**
- **Ensure continued funding for the Sisters in Spirit project.**
- **Call for a national Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women.**
- **Support scaling up, through national policy development, of successful education and prevention initiatives aimed at engaging men and boys to end violence against women.**

### **What men can do: Be an Ally**

- Learn about the issue and listen to women.
- Challenge sexist language and jokes that degrade women.
- Speak up when men talk lightly of violence against women.
- Learn to intervene with men who engage in violence.
- Support local women’s programs financially.
- Be a role model for boys and young men – teach them to respect women and girls.
- Advocate for gender equality with government.
- Work to ensure every woman has a safe home.

