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TO: Community Services Committee and Council

DESTINATAIRE : Comité des services Communautaire et Conseil

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FILE NUMBER: ACS2024-CSS-GEN-006

SUBJECT: Response to Direction to Staff on Strategic Plan to Reduce Intimate Partner Violence

OBJET : Réponse aux instructions au personnel sur le plan stratégique visant à réduire la violence conjugale

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this memo is to provide an update on Community and Social Services Department (CSSD)'s efforts to collaborate with community partners to identify strategic opportunities to reduce intimate partner violence in Ottawa. This memo is in response to the below [direction to staff](#), submitted by Councillor Hill on March 8th, 2023 at City Council:

That Crime Prevention Ottawa and the Community and Social Services Department collaborate with community partners to identify immediate strategic opportunities for the City to reduce Intimate Partner Violence in Ottawa and to report back to the Community Services Committee by no later than Q4 2023 with an implementation plan.

Crime Prevention Ottawa (CPO) and Community and Social Services Department (CSSD) were originally named to work together and collaborate with community partners to respond to the direction to staff. Since that time, CPO has merged with the City's Community Safety and Well-Being (CSWB) Office in CSSD for a more cohesive, integrated approach to crime prevention in the city per City Council motion [No. FCSC2023 - 06-03](#) on July 04, 2023.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Gender-based violence and violence against women includes physical, economic, sexual, and emotional abuse and victimization that is rooted in gender norms and unequal power dynamics.<sup>1</sup> Unequal access to social determinants of health (e.g., housing, good quality health care, and employment) as well as discrimination, marginalization and racism create conditions that place individuals at a greater risk of experiencing violence.

One main type of this violence is intimate partner violence (IPV). IPV specifically occurs within the context of intimate relationships, either current or past. It can be physical harm, emotional, sexual and/or psychological abuse. This form of violence is characterized by power imbalances and control tactics, and it is linked to societal gender norms and inequities.

The work to end gender-based violence includes efforts to end intimate partner violence. There is not one solution; it requires a range of approaches. This includes understanding the societal rules and beliefs about gender that contribute to power imbalances and reinforce harmful gender norms.

Through the [Community Safety and Well-Being Plan](#) and its gender-based violence (GBV) and violence against women (VAW) priority the City has re-committed to prioritizing working closely with community partners not only to support survivors but most importantly to prevent gender-

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<sup>1</sup> [United Nations, 2016](#)

based violence from occurring. This CSWB Plan's priority includes three main goals: ensuring every survivor has access to services and supports, preventing gender-based violence and violence against women, and providing alternatives to reporting for survivors.

Central to these efforts is the integration of a gender and women's lens across all City services, strategies and plans, as outlined in the City's [Women and Gender Equity Strategy](#) (WGES), aimed at improving the safety and well-being of women and gender-diverse people. The WGES presents a detailed action plan for building an inclusive city that protects every resident from gender-based violence.

Over the past year, the CSWB Office and WGES team laid the groundwork and the stakeholder engagement for GBV-VAW action planning. In 2024, a gender-based violence sector forum will bring together various stakeholders to kick-off the development of a cohesive community action plan against GBV-VAW, including intimate partner violence. This event will include a prioritization and implementation planning commitment for collective action moving forward.

In addition, in 2023, CSSD's dedication to supporting survivors was reinforced through a strategic investment of \$3.7M in 24 social services agencies, enhancing their capacity to provide crucial support and resources.

The upcoming year will see the City continue to leverage a gendered lens in funding allocations, ensuring that the resources effectively support the most vulnerable.

As we move forward, the commitment to eliminating GBV-VAW, including intimate partner violence, remains strong. Several service areas, including Housing Services, Children Services, and Employment and Social Support Services, will continue prioritizing the needs of residents impacted by GBV-VAW, making it easier for them to access the services they require.

The department will also work to leverage the Ontario government's four-year plan that it released in December 2023 to build on existing efforts to prevent, address, and respond to gender-based violence. The plan is called [Ontario-STANDS](#): Standing Together Against gender-based violence Now through Decisive actions, prevention, empowerment and Supports. The province is committed to work with municipal partners to implement the action plan which is built on five pillars:

1. Support stabilization of critical programs
2. Prevent gender-based violence
3. Improve transitions to recovery
4. Support safety and reduce recurrence
5. Promote economic security

With these efforts, CSSD, in collaboration with key partners and the provincial government, will not only help GBV-VAW survivors, but also create a city where everyone feels safe and supported. Staff will continue to work closely with community partners to find and use strategic opportunities to make Ottawa a safer and more inclusive place for everyone.

## BACKGROUND

Gender-based violence (GBV) is a widespread issue that includes many types of harmful behaviours and actions against individuals because of their gender. Unequal access to social determinants of health (e.g., housing, good quality health care, and employment) as well as discrimination, marginalization and racism create conditions that place individuals at a greater risk of experiencing violence.

One main type of this violence is intimate partner violence (IPV). IPV specifically occurs within the context of intimate relationships, either current or past. It can be physical harm, emotional, sexual and/or psychological abuse. This form of violence is characterized by power imbalances and control tactics, and it is linked to societal gender norms and inequities.

The work to end gender-based violence includes efforts to end intimate partner violence. There is not one solution; it requires a range of approaches. This includes understanding the societal rules and beliefs about gender that contribute to power imbalances and reinforce harmful gender norms.

## DISCUSSION

Community and Social Services Department (CSSD) stands united with community partners in a collective effort to support residents who are affected by GBV, including intimate partner violence. This section outlines the comprehensive programs and policies currently in place and identifies strategic opportunities for future action. This summary emphasizes CSSD's holistic approach, showcasing how each service area contributes to supporting survivors, and outlines its plans for continued, coordinated efforts to enhance these supports.

### Community Safety and Well-Being Plan

Gender-based violence and violence against women are one of the six pillars of the CSWB Plan. Gender-based violence and violence against women are mentioned separately in the Community Safety and Well-Being Plan to recognize the pervasiveness of violence against women and build public awareness about the alarming rise in hate and violence that gender-diverse people are facing. In June 2023, the CSWB Office provided Members of Council with the Community Safety and Well-Being Plan Progress Update ([ACS2023-CSS-GEN-009](#)), including on the GBV-VAW priority.

The CSWB priority dedicated to GBV-VAW focuses on social development and prevention, to prevent violence before it occurs and reduce the need for an incident response.

In 2023, the CSWB Office in collaboration with the Women & Gender Equity Secretariat, Unsafe at Home Ottawa and the Ottawa Coalition to End Violence Against Women (OCTEVAW), contracted an Ottawa-based firm with subject-matter expertise to conduct a scoping study to identify opportunities and gaps in services for survivors as well as actions that can be taken through a collective impact approach, emphasizing the City's role as an advocate, funder, and capacity builder. The study also collected information about culturally appropriate preventive and response services, key challenges in the sector, and organizations' capacity to collect, analyze, and share data.

Strategic Opportunities for 2024:

An expanded community-based Advisory Group has formed and is set to leverage findings from the asset mapping for forward momentum on the CSWB Plan. Key to 2024 will be a sector forum, aiming to work towards a unified prioritization and action plan based on the research and community consultations.

*For more information see Appendix A: VAW-GBV Goals, Strategies and Outcomes from the Community Safety and Well-Being Plan.*

## Women and Gender Equity Strategy

As a major service provider and employer in Ottawa, the City has great potential to prevent GBV-VAW through its programs and policies. The [2021-2025 Women and Gender Equity Strategy \(WGES\)](#) was developed to ensure that the City of Ottawa's services, strategies, and plans integrate a women and gender lens and promote women and gender equity. The WGES has just completed a mid-term evaluation and will be using the feedback collected from stakeholders and constituents to support in action planning for the next phase of implementation. It has a specific focus on ensuring safety from all types of gender-based violence. WGES staff play a crucial role in the City structure by offering technical support to all City departments, helping them incorporate a GBV-VAW perspective into their services and policies. The City also made an important commitment to working on safe public spaces for women and girls by signing onto the UN Women's [Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces for Women and Girls](#) in 2022 and is one of five Canadian cities to have done so.

Strategic Opportunities for 2024:

The WGES lays out a comprehensive set of actions that the City of Ottawa will take to improve the safety and well-being of women and gender-diverse people. The strategy includes:

1. Gender-based Analysis and Gender Lens on City's Policies and Strategies
2. Women and Gender-sensitive Data Systems
3. Meaningful Public Engagement of Intersectional Groups of Women and Gender Diverse Persons
4. Awareness and Training on Women and Gender Equity
5. Gender-based Resource Allocation

*For more information see Appendix B: GBV-VAW Actions from the Women and Gender Equity Strategy*

### Housing Supports for GBV-VAW

Housing Services, in collaboration with community partners, provides support to GBV-VAW survivors. While Housing Services does not have designated funding for gender-based violence-violence against women (VAW) shelters, as VAW shelters are mandated provincially, it acts as the overflow system for the VAW shelters. Residents fleeing violence are offered immediate placement in overflow shelters. Once placed, these households are connected to community based GBV-VAW supports through a case management plan.

Additionally, households on the social housing waitlist with a GBV-VAW history receive priority access to subsidized housing and housing benefits through municipal and provincial priorities. [The Social Housing Registry of Ottawa](#), also known as 'The Registry' works with households and the sector to determine eligibility for these priorities. The Registry ensures that eligible households get prioritized access to housing and community supports.

### Strategic Opportunities for 2024:

In 2024 Housing Services will collaborate with the provincially funded Violence Against Women (VAW) sector to provide additional training for City staff who handle intake processes for shelter placements. This informal cross training aims to improve the partnership with the VAW sector and ensure that best practices and procedures are followed when helping women fleeing violence.

### Childcare Support for GBV/IPV

Children's Services manages a [Child Care Fee Subsidy program](#) to help eligible families cover child care costs if they need extra support. For families facing health or safety issues that put a child at risk because of exceptional circumstances, staff can expedite the application process for this fee subsidy. Such circumstances include situations where a parent is currently facing abuse, has recently escaped abuse, or is fleeing from abuse within their immediate family. Additionally, Children's Services works together with the Anti-Racism Secretariat to ensure that families affected by gender-based violence are matched with case workers of the same gender.

## Employment and Social Supports for GBV-VAW

Employment and Social Supports (ESS), in collaboration with community partners, has two committees in place to ensure residents who are experiencing or have experienced GBV-VAW are supported through service navigation and wrap around supports.

The Victim of Violence (VOV) Committee includes staff from all services areas across CSSD. Its members collaborate to share information, invite community-based agencies to present and provide updates on VOV issues, trends and concerns. They also regularly participate in training and information sessions.

The High-Risk Domestic Violence Table is a collaborative effort where community agencies, including ESS, come together to review high-risk files. Their goal is to provide comprehensive support ("wrap around supports") to individuals in need. This collaboration involves assessing the needs of victims and ensure they receive necessary resources, information and support. The network includes Ottawa Victim Services, Western Ottawa Community Centre, Harmony House and Tungasuvvingat Inuit.

## Funding to Support GBV-VAW and Women's Safety

In 2023 CSSD (including Crime Prevention Ottawa (CPO)) invested \$3.8M in 24 social services agencies to address GBV-VAW and women's safety:

- Community Funding (CSSD) invested \$3.7M into 19 social services agencies that provide direct operations or wrap around supports for women's safety
- CPO invested \$92K in five social services agencies to support GBV-IPV prevention activities by addressing toxic masculinity among youth, providing culturally adapted services, and educating people on different forms of GBV

### Strategic Opportunities for 2024:

CSSD will maintain its commitment to applying a gender lens in funding allocations to social service agencies.

*For more information see Appendix C: 2023 Community Funding Investment in Women's Safety.  
For more information see Appendix D: 2023 Crime Prevention Ottawa Investment in GBV-IPV*

## CONCLUSION

Ending gender-based violence, including intimate partner violence, requires a sustained, multifaceted approach. CSSD is committed to improving internal policies and practices, collaborating with community partners, and advocating for sustained funding to increase safety and support for women and gender-diverse people through its strategic commitments in the Community Safety and Well-Being Plan and Women and Gender Equity Strategy.

Through coordinated efforts and strategic planning, including the development of an implementation plan by Q4 2024, CSSD will continue to contribute to community-led efforts to

build the necessary infrastructure to effectively address gender-based violence, including intimate partner violence.

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## SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

1. Appendix A: VAW-GBV Goals, Strategies and Outcomes from the Community Safety and Well-Being Plan
2. Appendix B: GBV-VAW Actions from the Women and Gender Equity Strategy
3. Appendix C: 2023 Community Funding Investment in Women's Safety
4. Appendix D: 2023 Crime Prevention Ottawa Investment in GBV-VAW



**Appendix A:** VAW-GBV Goals, Strategies and Outcomes from the [Community Safety and Well-Being Plan](#)

Goals	Strategies	Outcomes
1. Ensure every survivor in Ottawa is able to access and benefit from services and supports	1.1 Increase awareness and supports of programs and services for survivors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved awareness of services and supports for survivors</li> <li>• Improved access to services and supports for survivors</li> <li>• Improved system navigation of services and supports</li> </ul>
2. Create a City where everyone is engaged and committed to taking action to prevent gender-based violence and violence against women	2.1 Increase awareness and access to culturally appropriate, accessible education and supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduction in the number of people experiencing gender-based violence and violence against women</li> </ul>
3. Provide alternatives to reporting for survivors	3.1 Increase capacity for community accountability mechanisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raised awareness of alternatives to reporting for survivors</li> </ul>

**Appendix B:** GBV-IPV Actions from the [Women and Gender Equity Strategy](#)

Department	Action
Office of the City Clerk	Review of City policies regarding Council support staff and general policies related to sexual and gender-based harassment and violence
RCFS	Develop a strategy and mechanism to review and improve safety and security at RCFS Facilities
CSSD	Implement the Canada Ontario Housing Benefit to expand the number of affordable housing options available to women fleeing domestic violence, single women and lone-female led households
CSSD	Apply a women gender lens to the cost-benefit analysis of the capital and operating costs for a new family shelter
CSSD	Integrate a gender lens into CSSD Data Strategy
RCFS	Support the development of a toolkit to facilitate prevention and reduction of sexual assault, harassment, overdose and violence at music venues and festivals. The toolkit will include training and awareness-raising, planning tools, a safety and audit checklist, and resource lists among other items.
CSSD	Design and implement training, learning and awareness-raising activities on women and gender equity issues including design and implement awareness raising campaign around gender-based violence.
CSSD	Work with community partners to develop training session for City staff, which will include resources, online/ in-person workshop, and education on current initiatives taking place on the issue of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls

CSSD = Community and Social Services Department

RCFS = Recreation, Culture and Facility Services

## Appendix C: 2023 Community Funding Investment in Women's Safety

	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Amount</b>
1	Amethyst Women's Addiction Centre	\$47,253
2	Centre Espoir Sophie	\$273,874
3	City for all Women Initiative (CAWI)	\$71,400
4	Dress for Success Ottawa National Capital Region	\$40,800
5	EcoEquitable Inc.	\$71,400
6	Elizabeth Fry Society of Ottawa	\$116,864
7	Emily Murphy Non-Profit Housing Corporation	\$43,860
8	Belong Ottawa	\$572,203 <sup>2</sup>
9	Interval House of Ottawa (Unsafe at Home Program)	\$102,000
10	Minwaashin Lodge	\$253,396
11	Nelson House of Ottawa- Carleton	\$34,935
12	Ottawa Aboriginal Coalition	\$962,000
13	Ottawa Coalition to End Violence Against Women	\$101,252
14	Ottawa Rape Crisis Centre	\$113,590
15	Shelter Movers Ottawa	\$71,400
16	St Joes Women's Centre	\$419,989
17	St. Mary's Home	\$132,112
18	Up with Women (UWW)	\$71,400
19	Women's Initiatives for Safer Environments (WISE)	\$179,769
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$3,679,497</b>

<sup>2</sup> This is the prorated amount of the \$1.7M Belong Ottawa received to run three day programs, one of which is "The Well" which serves women

**Appendix D: Crime Prevention Ottawa Investment in GBV/IPV**

<b>Organization</b>	<b>Amount</b>
<b>Canadian Center for Women's Empowerment</b> Developing Culturally-Appropriate Resources for Economic Abuse / Financial Crime Victims-Survivors	\$35,500
<b>Nigerian Canadian Association Organization</b> Mental Health Support for victims of domestic violence and New Immigrants	\$21,275
<b>First Unitarian Congregation of Ottawa</b> Ajashki Food Security and Climate Change Learning Centre	\$15,000
<b>ManUp (Ottawa-Carleton District School Board)</b> ManUp Inspire Conference	\$5,500
<b>Odawa Native Friendship Centre</b> Justice Mural	\$15,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$92,237</b>