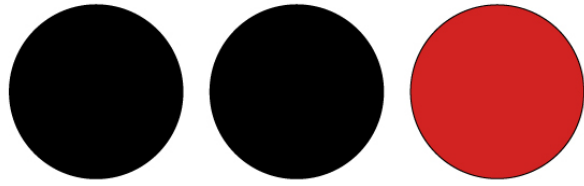




**BATTERED WOMEN'S
SUPPORT SERVICES**



Safety Changes Everything

August 1, 2023

TO: Mayor and Council

RE: A Municipal Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence

Dear Mayor and Council,

I am writing to you on behalf of Battered Women's Support Services (BWSS) to draw your attention to the lack of an actionable plan to end gender-based violence in your municipality.

BWSS provides education, advocacy, and support services to assist survivors of gender-based violence across B.C. We work from a feminist perspective to eliminate gender-based violence (GBV) and promote gender equity. For over forty years, we have been working towards ending violence against women, girls, femmes, LGBTQ2S and non-binary survivors of violence across the province. Our specialized services include crisis intervention, legal advocacy, long term counselling and support, and information and referral services to meet survivor's individual complex needs. We also provide GBV prevention and intervention services, as well as community education & training programs to end gender-based violence.

We are seriously concerned about the lack of a municipal plan to end gender-based violence.

Gender-based violence has reached epidemic proportions around the world, leading to what the United Nations has called "[a shadow pandemic](#)." In 2022, [184 women and girls were violently killed in Canada](#) due to their gender. According to the Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability, this represents an alarming [27 percent increase when compared to 2019](#). Over the past five years, over [850 women and girls](#) were killed in Canada. That means, on average, [at least one person every two days in Canada is killed due to their gender](#).

Additional statistics are equally alarming:

- At least [19 percent of femicides](#) in Canada in 2022 were of Indigenous women, despite Indigenous women comprising only 5 percent of the female population in Canada.

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- Home is often the most dangerous place for women, with [87 percent](#) of gender-related homicides of women and girls occurring at a residence.
- For [five consecutive years](#), rates of reported family violence and intimate partner violence have been increasing across Canada. In the past 11 years, [two-thirds](#) of gender-related homicides were perpetrated by an intimate partner, 28 percent by a family member, 5 percent by a friend or acquaintance, and 1 percent by a stranger.
- Women, youth, and children fleeing domestic, intimate partner, and/or family violence face huge barriers to safety. Over a 24-hour period in 2022, at least [571 women, youth and children](#) across BC who are unsafe in their homes were unable to access life-saving Transition Housing Programs and PEACE Programs.

In November 2022, federal, provincial, and territorial governments in Canada announced the endorsement of a [10-year National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence](#). Declaring gender-based violence to be “one of the most pervasive, deadly, and deeply rooted human rights violations of our time,” the National Action Plan is built on [five key pillars that will be implemented through bilateral agreements](#) based on regional realities: Support for victims, survivors and their families; Prevention; Responsive justice system; Implementing Indigenous-led approaches; and Social infrastructure and enabling environment.

Like the closely aligned [Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ People National Action Plan](#), this National Action Plan requires a strong role for municipal governments. Municipal governments maintain jurisdiction over key public infrastructure and services, such as housing, transit, childcare, and public safety. Dozens of municipalities such as Toronto, Ottawa, and Renfrew County have recently made important declarations on gender-based violence as an epidemic; however, no municipality in B.C. has taken any similar steps.

We call on you to develop a municipal action plan to end all gender-based violence. This requires a multi-stakeholder and intersectional response to identify core needs of survivors, with a particular emphasis on Indigenous, Black, newcomer immigrant/refugee, racialized, queer and trans, disabled, sex working, and rural survivors. It also requires a comprehensive plan across departments and organizations to ensure adequate housing, transition services, and wrap around supports for women, gender-diverse people, youth, and children fleeing violence.

We strongly urge you to take immediate action on a municipal plan to end gender-based violence. The lives of many in your region depend on it. I can be reached at director@bwss.org or 604-808-0507 to discuss further. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Yours sincerely,



Angela Marie MacDougall
Battered Women’s Support Services

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