

PROVINCIAL SERVICE COMMITTEE
NOVEMBER 2024 ON-LINE NEWSLETTER
Ontario Provincial Council of The Catholic Women's League of Canada

Service Chair: Sue Lubowitz

"Going out to others in order to reach the fringes of humanity does not mean rushing out aimlessly into the world. Often it is better simply to slow down, to put aside our eagerness in order to see and listen to others, to stop rushing from one thing to another and to remain with someone who has faltered along the way."

Pope Francis, Joy of the Gospel s.46

Gender-Based Violence and Mental Health

Violence affects mental health, which in turn affects all elements of health and well-being. The World Health Organization and Public Health Agency of Canada recognize gender-based violence as a significant public health issue. From trouble sleeping, anxiety, and depression, to substance use to cope, to post-traumatic stress, and many other concerns, effects are wide-ranging, varied, and individual.

The scope of the impacts is large; given the reality that gender-based violence is so prevalent. Forty-four per cent of all women in Canada have experienced at least one incident of physical or sexual violence since the age of 15.

What can councils do? Here are some suggestions.

1. The 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence is an annual international campaign that begins on November 25, the [International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women](#), and goes until December 10, Human Rights Day. This campaign started in 1991 to call out and speak up on gender-based violence, and to renew our commitment to ending violence against women and girls.
2. In Canada, we also observe the [National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women](#) during the 16 Days to remember the women who were murdered during the tragic mass shooting at Polytechnique Montréal on December 6, 1989.
3. Use this document on domestic violence against women prepared by the National Council of Catholic Women (NCCW) of the United States may be used by councils
<https://www.wucwo.org/phocadownload/NCCW%20USA%20Domestic%20Violence%20English.pdf> It is a very useful document and can be easily adapted to our Canadian concerns.

In 2022, inquest into the 2015 triple-femicide of three women in the Ottawa Valley included 86 recommendations to address the systemic conditions that made such a

horrific situation possible. The first of the 86 recommendations is for the province to “formally declare intimate partner violence as an epidemic”. The provincial government took no action on the recommendations. To date, 95 municipalities across Ontario have declared intimate partner violence an epidemic. My community is one of the 95. Is yours?

In April of this year, the provincial government agreed to support a private members bill, Bill 173 the Intimate Partner Violence Epidemic Act (https://www.ola.org/sites/default/files/node-files/bill/document/pdf/2024/2024-03/b173_e.pdf) by passing it through second reading. However, the bill’s progress has been slowed by its deferral to the Justice Policy Committee for review. As the legislature resumes sitting in the next few weeks, councils are urged to remind their MPs to pass this bill so it becomes law.

Pope Francis, in his 2016 exhortation, The Joy of Love (Amoris Laetitia), acknowledges that domestic violence exists in families in our Church and our parishes, and declares that it is not something we can turn a blind eye to. He reiterates Canon 1153, saying that in cases where a spouse and children are experiencing violence and abuse, “separation becomes inevitable” and even “morally necessary” for their safety. The League has a pamphlet for those who find themselves in this difficult situation. Councils are urged to make Resource #311 Annulment Brochure available to members.

Submitted by Sue Lubowitz