

Ottawa Journal: Taking action in our community to end violence against women and girls

As the Member of Parliament for Dufferin-Caledon, I strongly encourage everyone to participate in this year's 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence campaign. It began on November 25th with the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women.

This annual campaign provides a reminder of the many women and girls for whom violence and the threat of violence are daily realities. As Canadians, we each have a role to play in eliminating gender-based violence because it affects us all. It ruins lives, destroys families, and takes a heavy toll on the economy.

The need for action is clear. Consider these disturbing statistics: on average, every five days, a woman in Canada is killed in a domestic homicide. The costs associated with spousal violence against women in Canada are estimated to be at least \$4.8 billion per year. In addition to spousal violence, women and girls are particularly vulnerable to other forms of violence, including sexual violence and stalking.

In response, our Government has taken significant actions to make our communities safer for women and girls. The Government has recently introduced legislation that will give police and prosecutors new tools to address cyberbullying. This legislation would create a new criminal offence prohibiting the non-consensual distribution of intimate images.

Recently my colleague, the Minister of Status of Women, the Honourable Dr. Kellie Leitch, announced a call for proposals entitled Cyber and Sexual Violence: Helping Communities Respond. This funding will support projects at the local level to help prevent violence against women and girls.

In addition, our Government passed the Safe Streets and Communities Act to improve the safety of all Canadians, launched the National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking, and increased penalties for violent crimes.

Since 2007, we have provided more than \$62 million through Status of Women Canada for projects ranging from engaging men and boys in ending violence to addressing violence against women and girls in rural and remote communities. We have also supported projects focused on reducing violence on post-secondary campuses, and in high-risk neighbourhoods.

This year, please take some time to participate in the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence by observing a moment of silence, attending a vigil, or joining in another local event. Doing so will show support for victims of violence, raise awareness, and help inspire change.

By working together, we can get closer to our goal of eliminating violence against women and girls, and make our communities safer for all.

By David Tilson,

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