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The Regional Municipality of Durham Information Report

From: Office of the Chief Administrative Officer
Report: #2026-INFO-019
Date: April 2, 2026

Subject:

Community Safety and Well-Being (CSWB) Plan Implementation Update: 2025 Intimate Partner Violence and Gender Based Violence Initiatives

Recommendation:

Receive for information

Report:

1. Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the implementation of the Community Safety and Well-Being (CSWB) Plan, by providing an overview of community engagement and awareness-raising initiatives focused on the elimination of intimate partner violence (IPV) and gender-based violence (GBV). The majority of these activities took place in November 2025, in recognition of Woman Abuse Prevention month, including the Second Annual Community Awareness Walk to End Intimate Partner Violence.

2. Background

2.1 Victimization, including IPV, GBV and human trafficking, is one of the seven priority risk factors in Durham Region's [Community Safety and Well-Being Plan](#).

2.2 Intimate partner violence, also known as spousal or domestic violence, is a prevalent form of gender-based violence. It refers to multiple forms of harm (including physical, economic/financial, sexual, spiritual, emotional/psychological abuse) caused by a current or former intimate partner or spouse.

3. Previous Reports and Decisions

3.1 The CSWB Secretariat has undertaken a variety of coordination activities and sector partnerships aimed at strengthening the Region's response to GBV and IPV.

- a. This work has been documented in the following ways: On April 26, 2023, a [motion](#) was approved by Council to: declare IPV an epidemic and call on the Ontario Government to do the same; and encourage that prevention of IPV be integrated into every municipality's Community Safety and Well-Being Plan.
- b. On September 21, 2024, the inaugural Community Awareness Walk to End Intimate Partner Violence (IPV), was held at Durham Region Headquarters ([#2024-INFO-81 Community Awareness Walk to End Intimate Partner Violence 2024](#))
- c. On December 17, 2025, Council adopted the Gender-Based Violence and Intimate Partner Violence Action Plan for Durham Region (2025 to 2030) ([#2025-COW-39 Gender-Based Violence and Intimate Partner Violence Action Plan for Durham Region \(2025 to 2030\)](#))

4. Second Annual Community Awareness Walk to End Intimate Partner Violence

- 4.1 Addressing intimate partner violence requires coordinated leadership and sustained community engagement. Awareness initiatives help residents recognize the signs of abuse, reduce stigma, and ensure those experiencing violence are met with safety and support.
- 4.2 The Second Annual Community Awareness Walk to End Intimate Partner Violence took place on Saturday, November 1, 2025, at Durham Region Headquarters, 605 Rossland Road East, Whitby. The purpose of the event was to raise awareness on the epidemic of intimate partner violence and demonstrate solidarity with survivors.
- 4.3 The event was organized collaboratively by eight GBV responding agencies, in partnership with the Region of Durham. These agencies include:
 - a. Bethesda House
 - b. Herizon House
 - c. Luke's Place
 - d. Safety Network Durham
 - e. The Denise House
 - f. Victim Services Durham Region
 - g. Women's Multicultural Resource and Counselling Centre of Durham Region
 - h. YWCA Durham
- 4.4 Other key partners included Durham Regional Police Service, Durham Region Transit, and Region of Durham Paramedic Services, who ensured the safety, mobility and health of participants.
- 4.5 A robust communications plan was developed and implemented to ensure awareness of the event, including a social media campaign and bus advertisements. Registrants were encouraged to wear the colour purple at the event, in honour of Woman Abuse Awareness Month.

- 4.6 The event commenced with an Indigenous opening ceremony led by Susan Byrne-Osso, a Crisis Intervention Counsellor with Victim Services of Durham Region and Vice President of Bawaajigewin Aboriginal Community Circle. A land acknowledgement was then shared by Hilda Moe, Administration and Community Coordinator, Herizon House, who also served as the event emcee. Opening remarks were delivered by Lily Pourzand, former Executive Director, Luke's Place, and Elaine Baxter-Trahair, Chief Administrative Officer, Region of Durham.
- 4.7 Over 400 community participated in the event, a significant increase from the previous year's inaugural event, which drew approximately 200 community members.
- 4.8 The event featured educational displays from various GBV organizations, providing valuable information on support services, and opportunities to make donations. Participating organizations also contributed handmade signs with key messages highlight the prevalence and impact of intimate partner violence, and affirming solidarity with survivors.
- 4.9 Through the generous supports of GBV responding agency sponsors, including Shoppers Drug Mart Bowmanville, nine registered participants were the recipients of prize baskets. Event sponsor Sobey's South Ajax contributed refreshments for participants.
- 4.10 The Event Planning Committee, comprised of representatives from the partnering organizations and the CSWB Secretariat, met post-event to evaluate the event's impact, and identify areas for improvement for the Third Annual Community Awareness Walk to End Intimate Partner Violence in 2026 (date TBD). The following recommendations were identified:
- a. Increase male involvement by engaging community groups such as Scouts Canada and local sports teams.
 - b. Maintain the 2.4 kilometer walk distance.
- 4.11 Event Planning Committee meetings will resume in Summer 2026.

5. Additional Gender-Based Violence and Intimate Partner Violence Awareness-Raising Activities

- 5.1 The month of November is recognized as Woman Abuse Prevention Month in Canada. November is dedicated to driving awareness, education, and a willingness to help end violence against women in Ontario and globally. It also includes the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, which is observed on November 25. This date also marks the beginning of 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence, an annual international campaign aimed at raising awareness and mobilizing action to end violence against women and girls. In support of this initiative, the following activities took place with support from the CSWB Secretariat:

5.2 Proclamation and Flag Raising Ceremony

- a. On November 25, 2025, a proclamation and flag raising ceremony were held at Regional Headquarters. Regional staff, members of Durham Regional Police Service, and representatives of GBV responding agencies were in attendance.
- b. Remarks were shared by Vanessa Falcon, Executive Director of Herizon House. Whitby Mayor and Regional Councillor, Elizabeth Roy, on behalf of Regional Chair and CEO, John Henry, proclaimed November 25 as the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women.
- c. Following the proclamation, the [Wrapped in Courage](#) flag remained raised for seven days.

5.3 Additional Awareness Activities

- a. In acknowledgement of Woman Abuse Prevention Month and International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, on the evening of November 25, 2025, Regional Headquarters was illuminated purple.
- b. Luke's Place, in partnership with the Region of Durham's CSWB Secretariat, launched a social media campaign, [a three-part webinar series and a community resource toolkit](#). This campaign ran during the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence, commencing on November 25, 2025 and concluding on December 10, 2025. These resources are aimed at friends, family, and neighbours who want to help someone experiencing intimate partner violence. The webinar series and toolkit cover topics including:
 - Understanding Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)
 - Being an Effective Ally
 - Safety Planning and Emergency Preparedness
 - Navigating Family Court

6. Relationship to Strategic Plan

6.1 This report aligns with/addresses the following Strategic Direction(s) and Pathway(s) in Durham Region's 2025-2035 Strategic Plan:

- a. Healthy People, Caring Communities
 - H1. Implement preventive strategies to support community health, including food security.
 - H2. Collaborate with partners to respond to complex social issues that improve community safety and well-being, including mental health and addictions.
 - H7. Prepare for and respond to local health emergencies in partnership with the community.

b. Strong Relationships

- S1. Enhance inclusive opportunities for community engagement and meaningful collaboration.
- S2. Build and strengthen respectful relationships with First Nations, Inuit, Métis, and urban Indigenous communities.
- S3. Collaborate across local area municipalities, with agencies, non-profits, and community partners to deliver co-ordinated and efficient services.

6.2 This report aligns with/addresses the following Foundation(s) in Durham Region's 2025-2035 Strategic Plan:

- a. Processes: Continuously improving processes to ensure we are responsive to community needs.

7. Conclusion

7.1 Strengthening community engagement and cross-sector partnerships remains essential to addressing the ongoing epidemic of intimate partner violence in Durham Region. Meaningful awareness-raising efforts help residents recognize the signs of violence, reduce stigma, and foster intervention by friends, neighbours, and service providers.

7.2 These initiatives also reinforce a shared regional commitment to prevention and safety, aligning directly with the Community Safety and Well-Being Plan and the Gender-Based Violence and Intimate Partner Violence Action Plan (2025-2030).

7.3 Continued collaboration with community partners, local organizations, and residents will be critical in building safe, responsive, and informed communities where individuals and families can access the right services at the right time.

7.4 For additional information, contact: Tineka Levy, Policy Advisor, at 905-668-7711, extension 1768.

8. Attachments

Attachment #1: Photos of Second Annual Community Awareness Walk to End Intimate Partner Violence took place on Saturday, November 1, 2025, at Durham Region Headquarters, 605 Rossland Road East, Whitby

Respectfully submitted,

Original signed by

Elaine C. Baxter-Trahair
Chief Administrative Officer

Attachment #1: Photos of Second Annual Community Awareness Walk to End Intimate Partner Violence took place on Saturday, November 1, 2025, at Durham Region Headquarters, 605 Rossland Road East, Whitby



Participants hear opening remarks prior to commencing the walk.



A Durham Region transit bus, which displayed key statistics highlighting the prevalence of intimate partner violence, was available to support participants with mobility needs.



Participating organizations contributed hand made signs with key messages highlighting the prevalence and impact of intimate partner violence, and affirming solidarity with survivors.



Participants completed a walk of approximately 2.4 kilometers in distance.