

This content is available in alternative formats upon request by contacting 905-683-4550 or emailing [contactus@ajax.ca](mailto:contactus@ajax.ca)

# Town of Ajax and Partners' Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) 2024 Report



# Motion

The following motion regarding Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) was unanimously carried at the April 15, 2024 Ajax Council Meeting.

## Renewed Call to Recognize and Combat the Intimate Partner Violence Epidemic

### Moved by:

Regional Councillor Crawford

### Seconded by:

Councillor Bower

**WHEREAS** Intimate partner violence (IPV) is physical, sexual and emotional abuse and aggression that occurs in an intimate relationship;

**AND WHEREAS** in 2019, of the 107,810 people who reported Intimate Partner Violence to police, 79% were women;

**AND WHEREAS** on March 14th, 2018, Krassimira Pejcinovski and her children, 15-year-old Roy and 13-year-old Venellia, were murdered by Krassimira's boyfriend in an act of Intimate Partner Violence;

**AND WHEREAS** on March 30th, 2024, Jennifer Polak of Ajax was allegedly murdered by her boyfriend in an act of Intimate Partner Violence;

**AND WHEREAS** between 2014 and 2019, despite accounting for about 5% of all women in Canada, Indigenous women accounted for 21% of all women murdered by an intimate partner;

**AND WHEREAS** the Town of Ajax passed a motion on April 17th, 2023, calling on the Ontario Government and Region of Durham to declare an Intimate Partner Violence epidemic, per recommendation #1 of the Renfrew County Inquest; and

**AND WHEREAS** the Legislature of the Province of Ontario is currently considering Bill 173, Intimate Partner Violence Epidemic Act, 2024 which, if enacted, would recognize Intimate Partner Violence as an epidemic;

### NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

**THAT** the Town of Ajax renew its call to the Province of Ontario to recognize Intimate Partner Violence as an epidemic through the passage of Bill 173, Intimate Partner Violence Epidemic Act, 2024;

**AND THAT** Town of Ajax staff be directed to facilitate a roundtable discussion with subject matter experts and local service providers for survivors of IPV to provide guidance on actions the Town can take to combat Intimate Partner Violence in Ajax;

**AND THAT** this motion be distributed to Ajax MPP Patrice Barnes, the Ministry of the Attorney General, the Ministry of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity, the Region of Durham and Durham municipalities, Renfrew County, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, Luke's Place and Herizon House.

# Message from Mayor Collier

On behalf of Ajax Council, I am pleased to present the Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) 2024 Report and see essential action initiated from the Town through September's Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) Workshop and Discussion. The IPV Workshop and Discussion was a result of a [motion](#) unanimously carried by Ajax Council in April 2024 to renew its call to the Province of Ontario to recognize IPV as an epidemic. It is significant actions like this that will help provide necessary support and a path forward to improved advocacy and prevention of IPV, as well as provide guidance on actions the Town and community can take to address IPV.

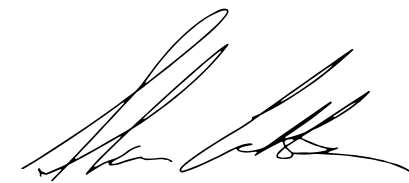
### September's session shared:

- Insights on strengths and successes
- Challenges and barriers and collaborative opportunities for advocacy
- Intervention and prevention of IPV

The full IPV Round Table Discussion & Workshop Report outlines strengths and successes of the IPV workshop and initiatives, challenges and barriers to advocacy, intervention and prevention supports, various opportunities for collaboration and potential prevention strategies and 13 action items listed between the Town, upper levels of government, service providers and community members.

I look forward to continuing to see collaboration among service providers, community members and municipal leaders, so we can create a more supportive environment for victims and help reduce the prevalence of IPV.

### Mayor Shaun Collier



# Workshop & Discussion Participants

On Tuesday, September 24, 2024, the Town of Ajax hosted an IPV Workshop and Discussion with leading service providers, frontline workers and legal professionals at the Quaker Meeting House in Ajax (457 Kingston Road West).

The workshop consisted of 26 individuals engaged in stimulating activities, discussion and reflection about a path forward through improved advocacy, interventions and prevention of IPV.

## Participating organizations at the September 24 IPV Workshop and Discussion included:

- Victim Services of Durham Region
- Durham Regional Police Service - Domestic Violence Unit
- Region of Durham - Family Services Durham
- Region of Durham
- Denise House
- Bethesda House
- Luke's Place
- Herizon House
- Women's Multicultural Resource & Counselling Centre
- Lakeridge Health - Domestic Violence Sexual Assault Care Centre (DVSACC)
- Durham Mental Health Services
- ALF Law Firm
- Rituals for Recovery
- Spa Sedona



September 24, 2024 Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) Workshop and Discussion, hosted by the Town of Ajax

# IPV Discussion & Workshop Report

## Summary

The IPV Discussion & Workshop Report below provides details on key findings from the Workshop, including defining IPV, some strengths and successes, challenges and barriers to advocacy, intervention and prevention supports and opportunities for collaboration and potential prevention strategies. The report details a total of 13 action items for the Town, upper levels of government, service providers and community members – it is through these action items that continued advocacy, education and open dialogue are essential for creating meaningful change.

## Defining IPV

- **Intimate Partner Violence:** Is domestic violence by a current or former spouse or partner in an intimate relationship against the other spouse or partner. IPV can take a number of forms, including physical, verbal, emotional, economic and sexual abuse.
- **Overlooked Forms of Abuse:** Beyond emotional and physical abuse, spiritual and psychological abuse were highlighted as often overlooked aspects of IPV.

## Key Findings

### Current Statistics

- Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses (OAITH) femicide definition includes a gender-based killing of a woman, child, trans woman, 2-Spirited Person, or gender non-conforming individual where a man has been charged in relation to the death: Since November 26, 2023, 59 femicides have been confirmed throughout the province.
- In October, six femicides were confirmed in Ontario through media reports. (OAITH)
- The Government of Canada is working to increase its knowledge about this form of violence. Police-reported data show that women are overrepresented among those who experience IPV, including among victims of intimate partner homicides. As is the case with many forms of violence, those who experience IPV often do not report it to the police for a variety of reasons, including: fear of stigma/shame, the belief that abuse is a private matter, fear of court system intervention, or lack of trust in the criminal justice system. ([Government of Canada: Fact Sheet: Intimate partner violence](#))

## Strengths and Successes

- **Community Engagement:** Declarations of IPV as an epidemic across nearly 100 municipalities have raised awareness and legitimacy.
- **Support for Shelters:** There is existing community support for women's shelters, leading to increased visibility and education about IPV.
- **Positive Community Discussions:** Events like the Community Walk to End Intimate Partner Violence (took place on September 21, 2024 at Durham Regional Headquarters) increase advocacy and foster dialogues between residents, families and youth, promoting awareness and changing mindsets. The walk was a collaborative agency initiative hosted by Bethesda House, Safety Network Durham, Luke's Place, Herizon House, Victim Services of Durham Region, Y's Wish, Denise House and WMRCC (Women's Multicultural Resource and Counselling Centre).

## Challenges & Barriers to Advocacy, Intervention and Prevention Supports

- **Misunderstanding of Abuse:** Many victims may not recognize what constitutes abuse, leading to underreporting. There are also misunderstandings or limited knowledge among service providers and others in the community, including those who victims may turn to for help.
- **Justice System Barriers:**
  - Reporting abuse is often impacted by fear of:
    - Retaliation
    - Shame and stigma
    - Lack of knowledge of supports and resources
    - Inconsistent understanding of IPV within law enforcement
    - Inappropriate charges against victims
    - Gender bias
    - High costs of legal action
    - Burden of proof
    - Lack of specialized legal supports
    - Complexity of family law issues
    - Lengthy processes
    - Increased risk of violence after reporting/leaving the relationship
    - Lack of legal representation for victims combined with a limited understanding and awareness on issues of IPV from professionals within the legal system

- **Funding Inequities:**

- Service providers expressed frustration over disparities in funding between existing services and calls for new initiatives, often feeling that existing programs are overlooked in favour of new initiatives.
- Important components expressed include:
  - Scarcity of funds
  - Burden of small/local organizations for grant applications and processes
  - Lack of sustainability of funding and challenges in measuring the impact of funding to inform future opportunities

- **Siloed Services:**

- Lack of coordination and information sharing between organizations creates:
  - Gaps in communication
  - Fragmented services
  - Inefficient resource use
  - Duplication in efforts
  - Confusion and impediments for clients/survivors
  - Loss of collective impact

- **Engagement of Male Victims:**

- While women are disproportionately affected by IPV, male victims also face unique barriers to reporting and seeking support, such as stigma, lack of resources and societal expectations of masculinity. Acknowledging their experiences and providing accessible services is essential for a comprehensive approach to IPV prevention and support.
- It is crucial to prioritize resources for women, given that they are more likely to experience severe forms of IPV. However, it is equally important to ensure that services remain inclusive and responsive to the needs of male victims, without diminishing the focus on women's safety and support.

- **Cultural Implications:**

- In some cultures, domestic violence may be viewed as a private matter or normalized through relationship dynamics, which can create barriers for individuals seeking help and for communities to intervene. This cultural perspective can contribute to the continuation of cycles of violence.
- Diverse communities and newcomers may also face language challenges or other intersectional barriers that hinder effective communication with service providers. Misunderstandings can prevent victims from accessing the help they need or expressing their experiences accurately.
- Cultural beliefs about gender roles can shape attitudes toward IPV. For example, in some cultures, traditional gender expectations may discourage women from leaving abusive relationships or seeking outside help.



## Opportunities for Collaboration & Potential Prevention Strategies

- **Community Education:** Engaging community members about IPV and healthy relationships is crucial. Creating conversations around male allyship and educating youth in these discussions is important to consider.
- **Interagency Communication and Collaboration:**
  - A few ideas expressed by the discussion group include:
    - Facilitate networking opportunities
    - Develop shared resources
    - Implement joint training program opportunities
    - Encourage collaborative projects and initiatives
  - By breaking down silos, service providers can improve their effectiveness, enhance community support and ultimately create a more integrated approach to addressing IPV.
- **Curriculum Development:** Introducing education on IPV in schools to address social norms and teach healthy relationship dynamics from a young age.
- **Ongoing Multi-Agency Support Groups:** Establishing continued support for program participants beyond initial interventions to reinforce learning and behavioural changes.
- **Cultural Competency Training:** Service providers should undergo training to understand the cultural backgrounds of the communities they serve. This can help them recognize and respect differing cultural norms regarding relationships and family dynamics.



## Action Items

### Federal & Provincial Government (or "Upper Levels of Government")

1. **Improve Funding and Grant Stream Processes:** Consult local service agencies for updated data, trends and current needs to inform improvements to disparities in funding between existing services and calls for new initiatives.
2. **Create Equitable, Accessible and Sustainable Funding Opportunities:** Improve methods of comprehensive data collection on the local impact of IPV, utilizing the statistics alongside intersectional ground level implications to address the urgent need for sustained financial support and resources for existing services.

### Town of Ajax

1. **Enhance Community Awareness Campaigns:** Utilize local media, community centres and spaces and businesses to disseminate information about IPV resources. Include accessible resources and information in various forms and languages on online platforms for the public to reference and share.
2. **Facilitate Training Opportunities for Capacity Building:** Collaborate with local service provision organizations to develop and deliver training for frontline staff on IPV dynamics, focusing on sensitivity, identification and understanding. Incorporating Durham Regional Police Service (DRPS) and/or Ajax Fire is a crucial consideration.
3. **Facilitate Interagency Meetings:** Regularly convene organizations working on IPV to share resources and strategies, reducing service silos.
4. **Continued Advocacy & Calls to Action:** Advocate to upper levels of government for increased funding and recognition by presenting comprehensive information on the local impact of intimate partner violence, highlighting the urgent need for sustained financial support and resources for existing services, while emphasizing the unique challenges faced by communities in Ajax.

## Service Providers

1. **Strengthen Interorganizational Collaboration:** Create a platform or system that securely houses data, shares best practices and coordinates resources to improve service delivery. Collaboratively implement joint training program opportunities, encourage collaborative projects and initiatives.
2. **Continue to Engage in Public Advocacy:** Use collective voices to push for policy changes and funding allocations that support existing programs.
3. **Conduct Community Workshops & Trainings:** Facilitate workshops aimed at educating the community, with a focus on men/young males and diverse communities, about IPV and promoting healthy relationships. Collaborate with education systems and religious establishments to extend the reach of impact and information.
4. **Implement Feedback Mechanisms:** Develop processes to gather insights from clients on program effectiveness and areas for improvement.
5. **Improve Cultural Relevancy:** Actively involve diverse and marginalized groups in the development of programs and services – by gathering feedback and insights, providers can tailor interventions that resonate culturally and address specific barriers. Foster open discussions about IPV that include diverse perspectives; encourage community forums where individuals from different backgrounds can share their experiences and insights, helping to normalize conversations around IPV.

## Community Members

1. **Become Advocates & Educate Others:** Encourage individuals to participate in community discussions and advocate for victims of IPV. Share knowledge about the signs of IPV and available resources within personal and professional spaces.
2. **Promote Safe Spaces:** Identify and communicate safe spaces where victims can seek help without fear of judgment.

## Conclusion

The workshop provided valuable insights into the ongoing issue of IPV, highlighting both the progress made and the challenges that remain. By fostering collaboration among service providers, community members and municipal leaders, we can create a more supportive environment for victims and work towards reducing the prevalence of IPV in Ajax and beyond. Continued advocacy, education and open dialogue are essential for creating meaningful change.

## Testimonial

“ I would like to take this opportunity to follow up on the Violence Prevention session. In response to Part 2 of the Closing activity, I would like to say that I understood what it must feel like to have won the lottery. The event is something that I have dreamt about for many years, and, given the current climate and mindset, didn't foresee happening for several years to come. ”

– *Debije Jules, Public Health Nurse, Healthy Family Dynamics Working Group, Durham Region Health Department*



TOWN OF AJAX  
Intimate Partner Violence  
Workshop & Discussion  
SEPTEMBER 19TH, 2024

Town of Ajax  
IPV Workshop & Discussion  
DENYK JULES  
Public Health Nurse

Town of Ajax  
IPV Workshop & Discussion  
SOLY SAHIB  
Public Health Nurse

[ajax.ca](http://ajax.ca)