



NATIONAL ADVOCACY.
COMMUNITY ACTION.



YWCA Toronto would like to express our utmost support for Mayor Olivia Chow's motion to declare gender-based violence and intimate partner violence an epidemic in the City of Toronto.

We know that this recommendation comes after advocacy led by violence against women organizations, advocates and survivors across the city, province and country. Moreover, this call to action is derived from the first of [86 recommendations from the 2022 Culleton, Kuzyk and Warmerdam \(CKW\) inquest](#) in Renfrew County and follows the more than 30 other municipalities across the province that have already made this declaration. We see this recommendation as a real opportunity, and necessity, for Toronto to show itself as a leader in addressing intimate partner violence (IPV) and gender-based violence (GBV). As Ontario's largest city, it is crucial that Toronto's City Council demonstrate leadership in addressing this crisis and encourage other governments to act as well.

Two weeks ago, following the [provincial government's rejection of the CKW inquest recommendation](#) to declare IPV an epidemic, we called on Mayor Chow to make the declaration here in Toronto and urged the province to reconsider. On July 12, we met with Mayor Chow and discussed the urgency of making this declaration a reality and are grateful for her thoughtful consideration and now action to address intimate partner violence (IPV). We also joined the strong and urgent [call to action](#) to address this epidemic of violence led by our colleagues at Aura Freedom and Women's Habitat of Etobicoke alongside more than 30 other organizations. We are grateful that Mayor Chow has both heard and acted on the pleas of her community and are hopeful that all of City Council will do the same and unanimously pass these recommendations.

While we know that this declaration will be merely a first step to addressing this epidemic meaningfully, we also know that we cannot change what we refuse to name. By naming this crisis for what it is, an epidemic, we are sending a clear message to the survivors and children fleeing violence, the frontline workers, advocates and organizations supporting survivors, and the loved ones of those lost to femicide – we see you, we believe you, we respect you, and your life matters. In sum, we are encouraged by the recommendations proposed by Mayor Olivia Chow and are committed to working with both her and the City of Toronto to advance our collective efforts to see a city, province, country and world free of violence. As civic partners, we are ready and willing to support City Council's efforts to eradicate gender-based violence, in all its forms.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Heather M. McGregor".

Heather M. McGregor
Chief Executive Officer
YWCA Toronto