

NOTICE OF MOTION

Shining a Light on Intimate Partner Violence: Empowering Survivors Through Awareness, Support and Prevention

Moved by: Councillor

Cheng

Seconded by: Mayor

Chow

SUMMARY:

Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) is a pervasive and urgent issue that affects individuals, families, and communities across Toronto. It manifests in various forms—physical, emotional, financial, sexual, and coercive control—and its impact extends far beyond the individuals directly involved, leaving lasting harm on children, families, and communities.

There are many services available to Torontonians, including shelters, hotlines, and crisis programs—but many people don't know they exist, or feel too afraid or ashamed to reach out. Advocacy groups continue to sound the alarm that professionals are seeing increased cases of physical violence, confinement, and financial and emotional abuse in recent years. For example, Toronto's Barbra Schlifer Clinic alone served 18,000 survivors from April 2023-March 2024.

Recognizing the severity of this issue, Toronto City Council, led by Mayor Olivia Chow, declared intimate partner and gender-based violence an epidemic on July 20, 2023. This declaration was passed unanimously and aligns Toronto with over 30 Ontario municipalities that have made similar declarations, following the recommendations of the 2022 Coroner's Inquest into the deaths of Carol Culleton, Anastasia Kuzyk, and Nathalie Warmerdam. This inquest highlighted the urgent need for systemic change and called for formal recognition of IPV as an epidemic.

Despite Council's declaration, IPV incidents continue to rise in Toronto (from 2023 to 2024), with Toronto Police attending to 18,119 incidents in 2024. Many individuals still suffer in silence due to fear, stigma, and lack of awareness of available resources. A comprehensive public communications campaign is crucial for raising awareness, reducing stigma, and ensuring that every resident knows where to turn for assistance. Such a campaign would not only inform but also empower individuals to seek assistance, fostering a community-wide response to this epidemic. Survivors should be able to access key information across the city in the many places where they interact with city services.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. City Council request the Executive Director, Social Development in consultation with the Chief Communications Officer, Strategic Public and Employee Communications, the Chief Medical Officer, the Toronto Police Service, the Mayor's Champion to Eradicate Intimate Partner and Gender-Based Violence, and frontline Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) and Gender-Based Violence (GBV) organizations to deliver a citywide public education campaign in 2026 and 2027, within existing and approved budget, to address the ongoing epidemic of Intimate Partner and Gender-Based Violence in our city to both highlight resources, programs and services that support and empower survivors specifically targeting locations where survivors interact with city programs and services, and prevent IPV and GBV.

October 8-9, 2025