



CITY OF HAMILTON
HEALTHY AND SAFE COMMUNITIES DEPARTMENT
Children’s and Community Services Division

TO:	Chair and Members Emergency and Community Services Committee
COMMITTEE DATE:	February 6, 2025
SUBJECT/REPORT NO:	Community Safety and Well-Being: Gender-Based Violence and Intimate Partner Violence (HSC25004) (City Wide)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
PREPARED BY:	Rachelle Ihekwoaba 905-978-2680 Kristy Tadeson 365-323-4985
SUBMITTED BY:	Brenda Bax, Acting Director Children’s and Community Services Division Healthy and Safe Communities Department
SIGNATURE:	<i>B Bax</i>

RECOMMENDATION

- a. That, on condition that the 2025 Capital Budget as submitted is adopted by Council and the Mayor, staff be authorized to provide one-time funding in the amount of \$100,000 from the Health & Human Services Integration Project ID 6502553101 to support the Women’s Abuse Working Group to implement activities on their 2025 workplan, including recommendations submitted to city staff by the Women’s Abuse Working Group in November 2024, and other priorities to increase education, training and awareness of gender based violence and intimate partner violence, in Hamilton.
- b. That the Women’s Abuse Working Group identify a lead agency to receive the funding and distribute to organizations according to the coordinated work plan.
- c. That the General Manager of the Healthy and Safe Communities Department or designate be authorized and directed to execute the one-time funding agreement with the treasurer of the Women’s Abuse Working Group in a form that is satisfactory to the City Solicitor.
- d. That staff support the Women’s Abuse Working Group to report back to the Emergency and Community Services Committee in Q4 2025 outlining the

OUR Vision: To be the best place to raise a child and age successfully.

OUR Mission: To provide high quality cost conscious public services that contribute to a healthy, safe and prosperous community, in a sustainable manner.

OUR Culture: Collective Ownership, Steadfast Integrity, Courageous Change, Sensational Service, Engaged Empowered Employees.

SUBJECT: Community Safety and Well-Being: Gender-Based Violence and Intimate Partner Violence (HSC25004) (City Wide) - Page 2 of 7

distribution of funding, progress and outcomes and updated recommendations to address gender-based violence and intimate partner violence in Hamilton.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Hamilton City Council declared gender-based violence and intimate partner violence an epidemic in August 2023, and allocated \$30,129 from the City Enrichment Fund Reserve to support the Women’s Abuse Working Group’s efforts in identifying and addressing service gaps, collaborating with City staff and community partners, and advocacy to upper levels of government. Since this direction, the City through the Children’s and Community Services division and the Community Safety and Well Being Plan has engaged in various collaborative efforts with community partners, including the Women’s Abuse Working Group, to better understand the needs in the sector, and develop recommendations and strategies for enhanced support. Staff have also engaged in partnerships with community organizations on key initiatives, including gender-based safety audits conducted through the YWCA.

In September 2024, the Ministries of Children, Community and Social Services, and Women’s Social and Economic Opportunity issued a call for proposals to address gender-based violence across Ontario. The grant referred to as Ontario STANDS: **Standing Together Against** gender-based violence **Now** through **Decisive** actions, prevention, empowerment and **Supports**, could provide critical funding for the sector if local applications are successful. In addition to individual applications submitted by member organizations, the City submitted an application focused on community planning, service integration, early intervention, and outreach support, particularly for vulnerable populations. If awarded funding, the majority of funding would flow directly to community organizations, with the goal of supporting a coordinated and collaborative system approach to gender-based violence and intimate partner violence in Hamilton.

Looking ahead, the City proposes continued partnership with the Women’s Abuse Working Group to support community organizations to address gaps in the gender-based violence system, with a focus on securing stable funding through upper levels of government for this important work.

Alternatives for Consideration – See Page 7

FINANCIAL – STAFFING – LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Financial: That on condition that the 2025 Capital Budget as submitted is adopted by Council and the Mayor, staff be authorized to provide one-time funding in the amount of \$100,000 from the Health & Human Services Integration Project ID 6502553101 to support the Women’s Abuse Working Group

implement coordinated activities in their 2025 workplan to strengthen coordination amongst providers, and increase education, training and awareness of gender based violence and intimate partner violence in Hamilton.

Staffing: N/A

Legal: N/A

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Gender-based violence refers to violence or abuse directed at women, girls, or gender-diverse individuals based on their gender, gender expression, gender identity, or perceived gender. Globally, approximately one in three women (30%) have experienced physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence at some point in their lifetime¹. Violence against women is preventable and necessitates a cross-sectoral approach to develop effective solutions that will address and reduce this issue for women and girls.

In 2023, Hamilton Police Services received over 12,000 calls related to domestic violence and intimate partner violence. A significant number of women who report abuse and conflict with a partner, spouse, or parent subsequently face higher rates of housing instability. Despite this, nearly 6,000 requests for shelter for women experiencing violence were declined in 2023 due to shortage of available beds. This highlights a significant gap in support for marginalized women experiencing both violence and homelessness².

In August 2023, in response to the increase of gender-based violence and intimate partner violence, Hamilton City Council declared gender-based violence and intimate partner violence an epidemic in the community. Council resolved to allocate one-time funding of \$30,129 to the Women's Abuse Working Group from the City Enrichment Fund Reserve to support efforts in identifying and addressing service gaps, collaboration with City staff and community partners, and advocacy to upper levels of government.

Since the declaration, the 2023-24 Funding Agreement with the Women's Abuse Working Group was administered, City staff have worked with Women's Abuse Working Group co-chairs and membership to better understand the needs within the sector. The

¹ World Health Organization. "Violence Against Women." *World Health Organization*, 2024, <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/violence-against-women>.

² Women's Abuse Working Group. "Snapshot." *Women's Abuse Working Group*, <https://wawg.ca/snapshot>.

SUBJECT: Community Safety and Well-Being: Gender-Based Violence and Intimate Partner Violence (HSC25004) (City Wide) - Page 4 of 7

co-chairs have also joined the Community Safety and Well-Being System Leadership Table ensuring strategic alignment across community groups. The Mayor has engaged with federal and provincial government representatives to advocate for sustainable investments and legislative changes, including the inclusion of femicide in the Criminal Code. This advocacy has extended to local Members of Parliament and provincial representatives, stressing the urgency of addressing gender-based violence. City staff also supported a successful delegation at the 2024 Association of Municipalities of Ontario conference.

In May 2024, the Community Safety and Well-Being Plan Annual Report (HSC24015) was presented to the Emergency and Community Services Committee. One of the priorities of Hamilton's Community Safety and Well-Being Plan is violence with a particular focus on increasing awareness of gender-based violence and the development of safety resources for women, including Indigenous women, and 2SLGBTQ+ communities. Staff have supported activities to address this community-identified priority, in partnership with the System Leadership Table, including recent gender-based safety audits conducted by the YWCA, work which will be coming forward to Committee and Council in March 2025.

At the May 2024 Emergency and Community Services Committee, a motion was approved, directing City staff to further collaborate with Women's Abuse Working Group and report back to the Emergency and Community Services Committee in Q3 2024 with recommendations to address service and support gaps in the gender-based violence and intimate partner violence sector in Hamilton, including options and resourcing.

In August 2024, Women's Abuse Working Group co-chairs submitted draft recommendations reflecting input from member organizations and programs, and a list of needs and resource requests from among the 20 community organizations, ranging from small one-time requests to permanent funding for full time staff equivalents. City staff met with the Women's Abuse Working Group co-chairs to provide initial feedback and in November 2024, the Women's Abuse Working Group membership approved a list of specific recommendations and resource requests which were sent to the City and informed this report. Staff also engaged with the working group for their important feedback on the revision of the Community Safety and Well-Being Plan.

Overall, City staff and the Women's Abuse Working Group agree that current funding is insufficient to address growing community challenges (e.g., lack of shelter space, rural support) and the following gaps in services exist:

- o Community collaboration
- o Awareness and training
- o Intervention
- o Prevention and public education

- o Intergovernmental relations

Below are the recommendations provided to City staff from the Women's Abuse Working Group in November 2024:

1. Annualize unrestricted funding in the amount that the City provided WAWG in 2023, \$30,129.00 (with increases to reflect inflation/cost of living, etc) with WAWG reporting back to the City how the funding will be used; and cover cost of annualized commitments of WAWG:
 - A. Permanently cover the bi-annual cost of putting up WAWG's banners in May (for Sexual Assault Prevention Month) and November (Woman Abuse Prevention Month) at City Hall.
 - B. Make funds available for an annual community event in November to commemorate the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women and/or pay for the venue. Suggested amount is \$1,500 to start.
2. Agree to GBV/IPV/SV training, onboarding and ongoing, for City staff, including City Councillors on an annual basis. WAWG to coordinate and facilitate training and/or coordinate member organizations to deliver training as already available. Participating agencies to receive a minimum of \$10,000 annually from the City for this training.
3. Formally adopt WAWG's suggested definition of femicide and implement usage. "Femicide is the misogynist killing of women, girls, and gender diverse individuals because of their gender, overwhelmingly committed by men."
4. Ensure \$9,000 available annually for traditional Indigenous knowledge keepers and necessary materials at events put on or supported by WAWG; and annualized funding for Sisters In Spirit (SIS) Committee demonstrating commitment to SIS events in the amount of \$5,000.
5. Provide up to \$6,000 for WAWG's publications to be translated into French, and \$4,000 for purchase of services for interpretation on an annual basis.
6. Prioritize a plan to support women and gender-diverse people living in rural areas of Hamilton and experiencing gender-based violence.

The above recommendations total \$65,639. In recognition of the needs in the sector and additional priorities that were part of the initial set of the August 2024 resourcing requests, the City proposes allocating an additional \$34,371 to WAWG to fund activities aligned with their annual work plan, bringing the total recommended funding allocation for 2025 to \$100,000. This would be funded one time from the Health & Human Service Integration project funding, which specifies that funds be used to enhance the coordination of services between community partners and City divisions, with the ultimate goal of improving access to coordinated care, reducing duplication, and addressing needs based on community input.

While no ongoing source of funding has been identified, during the period of staff working on Council direction, the Ministries of Children, Community and Social Services, and Women’s Social and Economic Opportunity issued a call for proposals to address gender-based violence across Ontario, with submissions due by October 11, 2024. The program is called **Ontario STANDS Application: Standing Together Against** gender-based violence **Now** through **Decisive** actions, prevention, empowerment and **Supports**. The funding opportunity covers the period from Fall 2024 to March 2027 with a range of \$100,000 – \$5M available per award for applicants, depending on the scope of each submission.

The City engaged with the Women’s Abuse Working Group to develop a collaborative submission, however, timelines were tight and the working relationship relatively new. The Women’s Abuse Working Group did not endorse the City’s application, and individual organizations submitted their own proposals. The City submitted an application that focused on community planning, service integration, education and awareness, and early intervention and prevention, prioritizing support for vulnerable populations, including Indigenous communities, and individuals living in rural areas – groups that are particularly susceptible to experiencing gender-based violence due to systemic inequalities, social isolation, and limited access to resources.

The outcome of the Ontario STANDS program is still pending and would provide critical resources to Hamilton for those who are successful in receiving funding.

In January 2025, Healthy and Safe Communities leadership met with the Women’s Abuse Working Group co-chairs to identify opportunities to strengthen our working relationship. As a key takeaway from responding to Council direction, staff recognize the Women’s Abuse Working Group members as the experts working in this sector in Hamilton. The City remains committed to collaborating with the sector and lending support for the critical work being done by organizations who are dedicated to making progress on this important issue.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND LEGISLATED REQUIREMENTS

N/A

RELEVANT CONSULTATION

City staff have worked with the Women’s Abuse Working Group co-chairs and membership since the declaration of the epidemic. This collaboration included meetings with the co-chairs to review the details of the motion and funding agreement, regular attendance at monthly Women’s Abuse Working Group meetings as well as ongoing engagement through the Community Safety and Well-Being Plan System Leadership Table. Internally, Finance, Government Relations and Housing Divisions were also

consulted in the development of this report, and discussions were had with the City Manager.

ANALYSIS AND RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

Significant work is being undertaken by service providers and Women's Abuse Working Group within the community. Staff also believe that the development of a coordinated and comprehensive approach to address gender-based violence would benefit Hamilton. Such an approach would clearly outline current investments in the system, identifies existing gaps and includes a shared vision for addressing increasing need, as well as a multi-year plan that prioritizes initiatives and work across the sector. Such coordination would optimize existing resources, and strengthen opportunities for communication and advocacy, and delivering comprehensive support. To address these challenges, staff are recommending that City funding support the existing 2025 WAWG work plan, and that, subject to resources, a comprehensive gender-based violence plan be developed long-term within the sector to streamline efforts, advocate for the needs of the community and prioritize available resources and investments to address critical gaps in service provision.

In 2025, one-time funding is recommended through the Health & Human Services Integration Capital Budget. Beyond 2025, staff support the sector's recommendation for ongoing provincial funding, to ensure the sustainability of these efforts. Should Hamilton applicants be successful in the Ontario STANDS: Standing Together Against gender-based violence Now through Decisive actions, prevention, empowerment and Supports application, provincial resources would be made available until 2027 to fund this work. Absent this provincial program, no other funding source has been identified to expand the important local work being done by community organizations.

ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION

Council could decide to provide annual funding to Women's Abuse Working Group. The source of this funding would need to be determined.

APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED

N/A