

It is possible to end intimate partner violence

This is a public health crisis that must not be ignored, Allison Branston, Thea Symonds and Patricia O'Campo write.

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By Allison Branston, Thea Symonds and Patricia O'Campo



Women hold signs calling for an end to domestic violence at a rally outside Hamilton City Hall in 2018 to remember victims Holly Hamilton, Natasha Thompson and Tania Cowell.

John Rennison, The Hamilton Spectator file photo

As researchers working to identify and address systemic housing barriers to prevent intimate partner violence in Canada, we applaud the efforts of the Woman Abuse Working Group and the Hamilton city

council joining over 65 other municipalities across Ontario to unanimously declare intimate partner violence an epidemic.

With November being Woman Abuse Prevention Month and Saturday the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, it is important we raise awareness and the role each of us has in ending the violence.

Strategies exist to end violence. It is possible to end.

In Canada, approximately every six days, a woman is killed by her intimate partner and many more require medical treatment. This is a public health crisis that must not be ignored.

We need innovative, partnered solutions grounded in scientific evidence and shaped by the expertise of intimate partner violence survivors.

As researchers at St. Michael's Hospital's Map Centre for Urban Health Solutions in Toronto, we are piloting several projects designed to address gaps and barriers for survivors, including a series of screening and safety planning web tools. They can be found here: <https://maphealth.ca/with-apps/>.

More recently, we have been working with community partners to help bring women-centered housing programs to Canadian cities. One of our pilot projects involves working together with social service, shelter, housing, and criminal justice providers in Hamilton to safely house women and children experiencing violence.

Intimate partner violence does not discriminate in who it affects and encompasses all types of controlling and coercive behaviours, including emotional, physical, and sexual abuse. Intimate partner violence has long been normalized and that is why it remains hidden in plain sight.

From the impact on the health and social care systems to the justice system, the total cost of IPV in Canada is \$7.4 billion, amounting to \$220 per Canadian each year. The ramifications on the personal lives of women and children in this situation are vast and can span generations.

We commend municipalities like Hamilton and Toronto, which have already declared intimate partner violence and gender-based violence an epidemic, and call on the other municipalities in Ontario to do the same.

We encourage everyone to be involved in the solution. We all have a part to play.

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