

**NEEDS ASSESSMENT STUDY: SHELTER SERVICES IN THE HAMILTON-NIAGARA REGION FOR FRANCOPHONE  
WOMEN AND THEIR CHILDREN WHO ARE FLEEING A VIOLENT RELATIONSHIP**

# Convergence

NEEDS ASSESSMENT STUDY:  
SHELTER SERVICES  
IN THE HAMILTON-NIAGARA REGION  
FOR FRANCOPHONE WOMEN AND THEIR CHILDREN  
WHO ARE FLEEING A VIOLENT RELATIONSHIP

REPORT PRESENTED TO  
ACTION ONTARIENNE CONTRE LA VIOLENCE FAITE AUX FEMMES  
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FRANCOPHONE WOMEN AND THEIR CHILDREN WHO ARE FLEEING A VIOLENT RELATIONSHIP

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### **WHY A STUDY NOW?**

For several years now, the community of French-speaking women of Ontario has called for the establishment of women's shelters to better serve, in their language, women who deal with spousal violence and criminal harassment. This need was affirmed in the November 2004 *Forum*, in which close to 150 community and ministry representatives participated. This study examines the pertinence of the establishment of such a shelter in the Hamilton-Niagara region.

### **WHERE DOES THE DATA COME FROM?**

The results of this study are the fruit of a literature review, focus group discussions and individual interviews. The data, collected between June 12 and 23, 2006 reflect the contributions of 45 persons.

### **WHOM DID WE INTERVIEW?**

- 1) Francophone women fleeing violence:
  - Most of the nineteen (19) women consulted are between 25 and 39 years old, are currently single parents, and almost all of the women had an annual personal income of less than \$19,999 in 2005. The income of two-thirds of the women was less than \$9,999 in 2005.
  - The majority of the women consulted are first generation immigrants, originally from Africa and have lived in Canada less than 5 years; one-third are originally from Canada.
  - Two-thirds of the women have experienced spousal violence and half of the women have experienced family violence. The perpetrators were men except in two cases. Most of the women have experienced many forms of violence and sexual assault.
- 2) French language services (FLS) workers who deal with violence against women;
  - The thirteen (13) workers all work in the same organization that offers FLS and in which all the clients are Francophone.
  - These persons work at the two *Francophone Community Health Centre Hamilton/Niagara* service locations; they have worked an average of 5.2 years at the Welland location and an average of 1.8 years at the Hamilton location.
- 3) Francophone and Anglophone partners;
  - The thirteen (13) partners consulted work in a provincial or regional capacity and were solicited because of their significant knowledge of the issues in the area of spousal violence or FLS or the workings of the government.

### **WHAT ARE THE NEEDS OF FRANCOPHONE WOMEN FLEEING A VIOLENT RELATIONSHIP?**

- 1) *IN A WOMEN'S SHELTER:*
  - A wide range of counselling services for the women and their children;
  - Group counselling services;
  - Children's services upon arrival at the shelter;
  - Respite services;
  - Accompaniment services (immigration status proceedings, legal services, housing search, dealing with the *Children's Aid Society* and with *Ontario Works*);



- Follow-up services after the shelter stay;
- Referral services;
- Support line 24/7;
- French language resources and information;
- Workshops on various topics for women and sessions on building self esteem.

2) *RELATED SERVICES:*

- A food bank;
- Mediation services;
- Settlement and integration services including educational level assessment and employment search;
- Access to Francophone psychologists;
- Specialized services for survivors of armed conflict.

**WHAT ARE THE IMPORTANT FINDINGS?**

- Population percentage is not a good measure for determining whether or not FLS should be offered;
- The government of Ontario has obligations toward the Francophone minority;
- Francophone women come from many communities and their needs are very diverse;
- In FLS as well as in women's shelters in Hamilton, immigrant women and women from visible minority and ethnocultural communities are overrepresented while women of French Canadian origin are invisible.
- Francophone women who flee violence must overcome numerous obstacles, in particular:
  - Poverty;
  - Social assistance benefits below the poverty line;
  - The lack of affordable housing;
  - Insufficient and inadequate settlement and integration services;
  - Lack of space in women's shelters;
  - The inability of women's shelters to offer FLS;
  - The absence of FLS which has serious consequences for women and children fleeing violence.

**IN CONCLUSION**

*GIVEN THAT:*

- From 1994 to 2003, 77 % of the 2,600 persons murdered by their spouse were women and that 62 % of murdered women were killed by a husband or spouse;
- At least 3,015 Francophone women in the Hamilton-Niagara region will be assaulted by a spouse and 1,025 of these will fear for their life;
- No women's shelter in the Hamilton-Niagara region is designated to offer FLS and not one of these has the capacity to offer FLS on an ongoing permanent basis;
- Women's shelters are one of the potentially life saving measures for the women;
- The need for a shelter in the Hamilton-Niagara region for Francophone women fleeing a violent relationship is clear and well documented in this study;
- The *Beaulac* and *Montfort* decisions clearly demonstrated that the Ontario government should offer FLS in order to support the development of the Ontario Francophone community; they clearly stipulate that the provincial government should protect the Francophone minority, promote the evolution of the French language and encourage the equality of French with English;

- In 2004, the Ontario government published *A Domestic Violence Action Plan for Ontario* in which it asserted, “*In accordance with the French Language Services Act, access to French-language programs and services will be improved within all the components of the Domestic Violence Action Plan, including public education and prevention, early intervention, community supports and the justice system response.*” It also added, “*A French-language services strategic plan will be developed to address key service priorities and gaps over the next three to five years.*”
- In 2005, the Ontario government recognized that funding parity should exist between Francophone sexual assault centres (CALACS) and Anglophone rape crisis centres throughout the province. It is now the time to apply this principle to services dealing with spousal violence.
- The development of a women’s shelter in the Hamilton-Niagara region for Francophone women fleeing a violent relationship has been identified as a priority by the French-speaking Ontario community.

*FRANCOPHONE WOMEN FLEEING A VIOLENT RELATIONSHIP IN THE HAMILTON-NIAGARA REGION HAVE THE RIGHT TO:*

- Reliable, free and accessible services of a quality comparable to services offered in English;
- Services rooted in the right of each woman to equality, safety and freedom, rights that are guaranteed in the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*;
- A women’s shelter that takes a preventative approach and that uses all available means to prevent violence against women on a societal level;
- A women’s shelter that is Francophone, autonomous, free to act and to be in French, managed by and for Francophone women.

*GIVEN THE URGENCY OF TAKING ACTION, WE RECOMMEND:*

- 1) That a feasibility study be conducted between August 2006 and December 2006 and that it include the following elements:
  - The feasibility of the project;
  - An architectural study that would examine various housing models (for example: condominiums, houses that include both emergency shelter and second stage, etc.) and the costs of the different options;
  - Zoning information;
  - A community plan detailing how the community will be involved in the development and operation of the women’s shelter, also including how transportation will be provided for women and children seeking shelter;
  - The capital costs of establishing a women’s shelter and an estimate of its operating costs.
- 2) That research be initiated immediately on zoning for a property in the city of Hamilton belonging to the *Association canadienne-française de l’Ontario* (ACFO) Hamilton.
- 3) That the *Francophone Community Health Centre Hamilton/Niagara* (CSCHN) sponsor this initiative in collaboration with *Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes* (AOcVF).

## CHAPTER I : CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

### INTRODUCTION

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For a number of years, workers in Francophone organizations in the Hamilton-Niagara region have maintained that French-speaking women who are fleeing a violent relationship have significant needs that are not met by the existing network. On numerous occasions the urgency of establishing a women's shelter in the Hamilton-Niagara region has been raised. In May of 2006, *Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes* initiated a study to document the needs of Francophone women in the Hamilton-Niagara region who are fleeing violence.

The situation of these women was discussed with the research team in focus groups and individual interviews that took place during one week in June 2006. Through the women's descriptions of what happened when they tried to obtain help and support, we were better able to understand their needs and especially the consequences of the inadequate, insufficient and unhelpful responses they all too often received.

Before presenting the views of the women who participated in this study, we give a general overview of the context of this study. The first part of this chapter presents the wider national and provincial contexts. We first give a statistical portrait of the Francophone population in Ontario and briefly present characteristics specific to women from ethnocultural communities.

We also present some of the most recent data on the prevalence of violence against women in Canada and in Ontario, as well as the dangers faced by women who experience violence, the cost of violence against women and the impact of women's shelters. This part concludes with a description of the most recent commitments of the government of Ontario and *Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes* related to the issue of spousal violence.

In the second part, we look at some regional specific characteristics. First we present statistical data on the Francophone population of the Hamilton-Niagara region, followed by a report on the French language services that are currently being offered to women who are fleeing violence and on shelter services.

We conclude with information concerning shelter service usage and projections of waiting periods for social housing.

## PART 1 : THE PROVINCIAL SITUATION

### DEMOGRAPHICAL DATA ON THE FRANCOPHONE POPULATION OF ONTARIO

The Francophone women of Ontario are vulnerable to violence in a manner particular to them<sup>1</sup>. In order to present them, we consulted the statistical profile of Francophones in Ontario prepared by the Office of Francophone Affairs (1999 and 2005). The data given below is from the 1996 and the 2001 censuses.

Note that between 1996 and 2001, the Francophone population of Ontario increased by 6,600 persons. The number of Francophones increased in the Eastern and Central Regions and decreased in the other regions.

	1996 Census <sup>2</sup>	2001 Census <sup>3</sup>
Characteristics	Ontario	Ontario
Proportion of the Francophone population that are female	52.4 %	52.7 %
Women according to age groups		
▪ 0-34 years	40.7 %	55.2 %
▪ 35-64 years	59.4 %	44.8 %
Women according to education		
▪ Less than grade 9	15.0 %	11.7 %
▪ Grade 9-13	38.6 %	36.5 %
▪ Post secondary education without a diploma	34.3 %	36.7 %
▪ Bachelor's degree or more	12.4 %	15.1 %
Participation in the work force	57.8 % (Other women 60.0 % Francophone men 70.5 %)	59.2 % (Other women 61.5 % Francophone men 70.7 %)
Average income as a percentage of men's income	68.0 % (\$21,509 compared to \$32,915)	67.5 % (\$28,731 compared to \$42,593)
Proportion of women below the poverty line	18.3 % (Francophone men 15.2 %)	15.8 % (Francophone men 12.3 %)
Women who are most vulnerable to poverty		
▪ 20 to 24 years	30.7 %	24.6 %
▪ 65 years and over		22.8 %
▪ 75 years and over	33.5 %	29.9 %
▪ From a visible minority	Not available	33.7 %
Proportion of Francophones from a racial minority in the city of:		
▪ Toronto	22.5 %	33.2 %
▪ Ottawa	8.9 %	14.1 %
▪ Proportion RM Francophones living in Central Ontario	54.0 %	59.6 %

<sup>1</sup> Brunet and Garceau, (2004), p. 12-13.

<sup>2</sup> The data are taken from two Office of Francophone Affairs (OFA) publications, (August 1999), and (October 1999). The source of the OFA data is the 1996 Census.

<sup>3</sup> The data are taken from five OFA publications, (2005A), (2005B), (2005C), (2005D) and, (2005E), (28 p.). The source of this data is the 2001 Census.

While in 1994 few positions in organizations were filled by women of diverse origins, today their number has increased. Since then, because of the great needs, the *Mouvement ontarien des femmes immigrantes francophones* (MOFIF) has recently been established and an increasing number of immigrant women of diverse origins now participate in the various existing organizations, most particularly in the Hamilton-Niagara region, Ottawa and Toronto<sup>4</sup>. Because of this, organizations are learning more and more about the issues facing Francophone immigrant women.

Women who immigrate to Canada or who are part of a visible minority face many problems in addition to the experiences they share with women from “conventional” society who deal with violence, including the feeling of powerlessness, racism<sup>5</sup>, isolation<sup>6</sup>, loss of their support group, family of origin, and the loss of employment<sup>7</sup>.

The immigration process can create family conflicts, or intensify them if they already exist, because of culture shock, changes in family roles, loss of status and loss of a support network<sup>8</sup>. Once the women have immigrated, they may encounter many challenges and obstacles in seeking much needed resources. Immigrant women have had the experience of being refused Canadian job training services as well as second language courses, which limits their financial options<sup>9</sup>. The discriminatory manner in which countries treat their immigrants is possibly acquiescence to violence or an indicator of the ways that families in these cultures will be treated<sup>10</sup>. Some immigrant women have a great fear of authorities such as police and social workers because they fear the possibility of deportation<sup>11</sup>. This fear may originate in their experiences with the authorities in their country of origin<sup>12</sup>. This fear may on the other hand, prevent them from reporting spousal violence to the authorities or to services in their country of welcome.

Immigrant women have a number of valid reasons to not report violence to authorities such as the police. We list three main concerns: the potential impact of the criminal justice system on the immigration status of their husband; the belief that an arrest is equivalent to a criminal record; and the fear of seeing their husband arrested or deported, delaying citizenship proceedings. Women do not trust the Canadian criminal justice system to dispense justice or impose a fair and appropriate punishment<sup>13</sup>.

Brownridge and Halli’s secondary analysis of the 1999 General Social Survey data concludes that of the women who experienced the most severe family violence, a large number were immigrant women from developing countries, then Canadians, then immigrant women from

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<sup>4</sup> Brunet and Garceau, (2004), p. 30.

<sup>5</sup> Mann, (1995) ; Smith, (2004).

<sup>6</sup> MacLeod and Shin, (1990); Mehotra, (1999)

<sup>7</sup> Anderson, (1993).

<sup>8</sup> Gill & Matthews, (1995).

<sup>9</sup> Mann, (1995).

<sup>10</sup> Levesque, (1994).

<sup>11</sup> Tutty, Thurston, Christensen & Eisener, (2004).

<sup>12</sup> Mann, (1995).

<sup>13</sup> Tutty, (2006), p.13.

developed countries<sup>14</sup>. In addition the authors suggest that younger immigrant women, those who have children, those whose level of education is superior to that of their spouse and those whose spouse shows possessive sexual behaviour are most at risk for assault.

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<sup>14</sup> Brownridge and Halli, (2002).

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## THE PREVALENCE OF SPOUSAL VIOLENCE

Recent statistics on the prevalence of spousal violence in Ontario are for all practical purposes inexistent. We have however obtained some interesting data which we present here.

### AN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE ON SPOUSAL VIOLENCE

As an example of the serious nature and the prevalence of spousal violence, the World Health Organization, referencing the World Bank's *World Development Report 1993* noted in 1997: "Worldwide, it has been estimated that violence against women is as serious a cause of death and incapacity among women of reproductive age as cancer and a greater cause of ill-health than traffic accidents and malaria combined<sup>15</sup>."

### SPOUSAL VIOLENCE IN CANADA

According to the 2004 Statistics Canada *General Social Survey (GSS) - Victimization*<sup>16</sup>:

#### GENERAL STATISTICS ON SPOUSAL VIOLENCE

- 7 % of Canadian women are assaulted by a spouse. Of the women who were assaulted, 27 % were beaten, 25 % choked, 44 % injured and 13 % sought medical help. Without doubt the most informative point is that 34 % of abused women fear for their life in reaction to the violence;
- An examination of the most serious acts of violence that were declared in the survey reveals that a greater proportion of women than men reported having been beaten, strangled, threatened with a knife or a firearm, or attacked with a knife or firearm by an intimate partner (23 % versus 15 %);
- The women were also more likely to indicate that they had been the target of more than 10 violent incidents by their partner (21 % versus 11 %) and to state that they were injured because of the violence (44 % versus 18 %);
- In addition, the women who were victims of spousal violence were three times more likely than male victims of spousal violence to fear for their life (34 % versus 10 %) and three times more likely to take time off from their everyday activities because of the violence (29 % versus 10 %);
- Persons between the ages of 15 and 24 living common law for three years or less and whose partner is a frequent heavy drinker (that is, who consumed five or more drinks on one occasion at least five times per month) are at increased risk of becoming victims of violence by their intimate partner;
- The rate of spousal violence among gays or lesbians was double that declared by heterosexual persons (15 % versus 7 %). The results of the survey also reveal that persons who indicated

<sup>15</sup> Tutty, (2006), p. 1.

<sup>16</sup> Statistics Canada (2006), p. 8-11.

that their sexual orientation is gay or lesbian were more likely not to have a current partner than heterosexual persons (40 % versus 16 %);

- Survey data show that the rate of spousal violence is higher among common law couples and those who have an ex-spouse or ex-partner;
- Over half (58 %) of persons who indicated they had been stalked by a spouse, an ex-spouse, a common law partner or an ex-common law partner in the previous five years reported that they had also been victims of spousal violence during the same period. This applied in particular to women who are victims of criminal harassment by an intimate partner (61 %);
- 27 % of victims of spousal violence reported the incident to police, this percentage relatively unchanged from that of 1999 (28 %). A higher percentage of women victims of spousal violence than male victims informed the police of the incident (37 % versus 17 %);
- Close to one third (32 %) of the victims of spousal violence who reported the incident to police also obtained a protective order or a restraining order. Female victims of spousal violence who reported the violence to police were much more inclined than their male counterparts to ask for imposition of a protective or restraining order (38 % versus 15 %);
- In 1999 and in 2004, 47 % of women victims of spousal violence stated that they had sought help from an agency that deals with violence.

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#### *STATISTICS ON CRIMINAL HARASSMENT*

- According to data from the GSS of 2004, more than 1.4 million women 15 years of age or older (11 % of the population) were victims of criminal harassment in the five years preceding the survey to the extent that they feared for their life or for the life of someone they knew;
- Obscene phone calls (47 %), being spied on (28 %) and threats or attempts at intimidation (43 %) were the forms of harassment most often cited by women;
- The majority of the victims (80 %) were harassed by a male regardless of the sex of the victim. The most frequent victim-aggressor combinations were female-male (53 %) and male-male (28 %);
- To cope with criminal harassment, more than one-third of the women who are victims of criminal harassment (35 %) decided to not go out alone and 15 % of these women decided to move;
- Nearly one-third of harassment victims feared for their life, that is 31 % of women victims. The intensity of the fear was directly related to the relationship between the victim and the harasser. Nearly two-thirds of women who were harassed by an ex-partner feared for their life (60 %);
- Close to one-half of the victims stalked by a former intimate partner (45 %) reported the criminal harassment to the police while only 35 % of those harassed by a stranger and 36 % of those who were stalked by an acquaintance informed the police of this behaviour;



- Of the criminal harassment activities reported to police, charges were laid against the perpetrator in just under one-quarter (23 %) of the incidents. Charges included assault (50 %), uttering threats (49 %), criminal harassment (46 %) and other charges (24 %);
- Just over one in ten victims of criminal harassment (11 %) had a restraining or protective order imposed on the aggressor; 12 % of women victims obtained a restraining order. Just under one-half of these orders were violated (49 %).

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*STATISTICS ON SPOUSAL HOMICIDES*

- Between 1974 and 2003, the rate of spousal homicides against a female spouse was typically four or five times that of homicides against of male spouses. The homicide rate of a female spouse declined from 16.5 homicides per 1 million spouses in 1974 to 7.5 homicides in 2003 and the rate of homicides of a male spouse from 4.4 per 1 million spouses in 1974 to 1.7 in 2003;
- Women in common law relationships and women who are separated from a spouse were overrepresented as victims of spousal homicide relative to their population in Canada: 26 % of the separated women were killed by a spouse;
- Between 1994 and 2003, women between the ages of 15 and 24 had the highest rate of spousal homicides (22.5 homicides per million spouses). This rate is almost three times the overall rate of spousal homicides for the same period (7.7 homicides per million female spouses) and close to three times the rate of homicides of male spouses between the ages of 15 and 24 (8.5 homicides per million male spouses);
- Between 1994 and 2003, two thirds of solved murders of children and youth were committed by a family member (67 %), the vast majority of these being the father (58%) of the child;
- In 2003, the number of children and youth killed by a family member dropped to 4.4 per million children and youth, nearing the record low reached in 2000. The drop in 2003 was driven by a decrease in the number of young male victims;
- A disproportionate number of parents accused of killing their child are young. The accused killers between the ages of 15 and 24 account for 6 out of 10 homicides involving infants under 1 year of age and 13 % of parental homicides involving children and youth between the ages of 1 and 17 years.
- Homicide rates of infants under 1 year of age consistently account for the highest rate of homicide among children and youth killed by a family member. Moreover, male infants were more likely to be killed than female infants;
- Between 1994 and 2003, 4 out of 10 solved homicides of older adults (65 years and older) were committed by a family member, most often by the victim's adult son;
- Between 1997 and 2003, more than half (54 %) of the accused in spousal homicides had a previous conviction.

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#### *STATISTICS ON HOMICIDE-SUICIDES*

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- Three-quarters (76 %) of the homicide-suicides in Canada that occurred between 1961 and 2003 involved family members. More than half of these crimes were committed by a male spouse or an ex-spouse while 97 % of the victims were female spouses (N = 834 female victims). Homicide-suicides were most often committed with a firearm, regardless of the relationship between the victim and the chargeable suspect;
- Women between the ages of 15 and 44 who had an intimate partner had a higher rate of being victims of homicide-suicide (3.5 per million women in a spousal relationship) than women 45 years and older (approximately 2.5). Homicide-suicides between spouses were often characterized by jealousy, arguing and the dissolution of the relationship;
- Between 1961 and 2003 more than one-quarter (26 %) of murder victims of homicide-suicides were children and youth under the age of 18 (N = 517). The majority of these children and youth (N = 459 or 89 %) were killed by a parent or step parent. Of the victims that were killed by a parent, 69 % were killed by their father, 3 % by their step father and 28 % by their mother;
- Male infants under one year of age and girls between the ages of one and 5 year were most at risk of being a homicide-suicide victim at the hands of a parent;
- Older adults were least likely to be victims of homicide-suicide: 137 cases were reported between 1961 and 2003. Most of these were committed by a spouse.

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#### *STATISTICS ON FAMILY VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN AND YOUTH*

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- According to data from 122 police services, in 2003 children and youth under 18 years of age represented 21 % of all assault victims;
- In 7 out of 10 cases, parents were accused of assault against children.

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#### *STATISTICS ON FAMILY VIOLENCE AGAINST OLDER ADULTS*

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- In 2003, older adults (65 years or older) were the least likely age group to be victims of violent crimes reported to 122 police services. The rate of victimization of older women was 119 per 100,000 population;
- Older women were more likely to be victims of family violence than their male counterparts. Close to 4 out of 10 older female victims were assaulted by a family member, while 20 % of older males were victims of assault;
- Older persons who were victims of family-related assault most often were victims of common assault (55 %) and of uttering threats (19 %);
- In 2003 nearly 8 out of 10 family members accused of assaulting an older adult family member were male, one-third being the adult male son and 30 % a male spouses or ex-spouses;

- According to information given by police, in 2003 more than one-third of older adults victims of family-related assaults suffered minor injuries while 3 % of them suffered serious physical injuries.

### THE PREVALENCE OF SPOUSAL VIOLENCE IN ONTARIO

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According to a recent Ontario government publication, 25 % of Ontario women will be subjected to spousal violence at least once in their life<sup>17</sup>.

#### *WOMEN ASSASSINATED BY A SPOUSE IN ONTARIO*

Since June 1995, 226 women and 34 children have lost their lives through male violence. Since January 2006, spousal violence accounts for 27 murders in Ontario, that is, 16 women and 11 children of which two women and one child were from the Hamilton-Niagara region. At the same time last year, ten women (and no children) had been killed in Ontario.

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<sup>17</sup> Government Information Centre, (2005), p. 3.

## THE DANGER FACED BY WOMEN VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE

Unfortunately, leaving a violent relationship is not always in itself a guarantee of safety. It does happen that violence continues or escalates after the woman leaves her partner. Data shows that in Australia, Canada and the United States, a significant proportion of homicides by intimate partners in which the woman is the victim occur the moment the woman attempts to leave a violent partner<sup>18</sup>.

On June 1, 2006, YWCA Canada published the troubling results of a national study that showed that a high percentage of women seeking refuge in shelters for abused women were at risk of being killed. Of the 368 women who were interviewed at ten research locations across the country, 77 % were in extreme or in severe danger of death<sup>19</sup>.

The fact that three-quarters of the residents were in such great danger of death confirms that shelters potentially help save women's lives, at least in the short term. The generally accepted statistics are as convincing as the data collected in the YWCA study. Since 1974, nearly 2,600 spousal homicides (including married, divorced, separated or common law spouses) have been recorded in Canada. Seventy-seven percent of the victims were women. Sixty-two percent of murdered women between 1994 and 2003 were killed by their husband or spouse<sup>20</sup>.

Danger levels greatly increase the moment the women leave a violent relationship as is illustrated by the number of women who are stalked, threatened and killed after their separation. Violence often continues after separation. The dangers associated with the dissolution of the relationship can last for years, long after the limited stay in most of the women's shelters<sup>21</sup>.

Threats to women and their children begin again once they leave the safety of the women's shelter and must reintegrate into the community where they have no protection<sup>22</sup>. These threats and associated fears can result in returning to the violent spouse (without adequate legal protection, a woman can come to believe that she will be more safe by returning to the dangerous relationship). If a woman decides to leave her spouse, she must deal with many other decisions related to her needs and those of her children such as: finding housing, resisting pressures to return to live with her violent spouse, finding employment that allows her to meet her needs and those of her children, finding child care, etc.

In this manner, women are at a higher risk of being seriously wounded or even killed when they separate from their spouse. Researchers have shown a connection between spousal homicide and a higher incidence of spousal crimes in common law relationships, separation, belonging to an ethnic group, persons of aboriginal heritage and greater age differences. When the woman leaves the women's shelter, she can be the target of additional violence. Many women therefore incur considerable risks and suffer from anxiety long after having left the security of the transition house<sup>23</sup>.

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<sup>18</sup> Krug et al. (2002), p. 107.

<sup>19</sup> Tutty, (2006), p. 47.

<sup>20</sup> YWCA Canada, [http://www.ywacacanada.ca/public\\_eng/advocacy/Shelter/Q&A\\_FINAL\\_EN.pdf](http://www.ywacacanada.ca/public_eng/advocacy/Shelter/Q&A_FINAL_EN.pdf)

<sup>21</sup> Ellis, (1992), p. 178.

<sup>22</sup> Tutty, (1996), p. 427.

<sup>23</sup> Tutty, (2006), p. 10.

## THE COST OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

In 1995, Hankivesky and Greaves estimated the costs of violence against Canadian women. They took into account social services and education (preventative programs and transition houses); medical care, criminal justice (i.e. police inquests, preparation for trial and court proceedings, programs for offenders, legal aid, incarceration, parole hearings) and employment (i.e. sick leave, workplace counselling services). The authors estimate that violence against women costs 4.2 billion dollars annually for just three types of violence: incest or sexual assault against children, sexual assault or rape of women and violence against women in intimate relationships<sup>24</sup>.

## THE IMPACT OF WOMEN'S SHELTERS FOR WOMEN VICTIMS

The YWCA Canada study asked participants what they expected of women's shelters. The most often cited need is moral support or counselling offered by shelter personnel (81 %), followed by a safe place to live (80 %), suggestions for decreasing stress and anger (73 %), for improving self-image (71 %), and housing referrals (71 %). Safety is an essential aspect for all the women who participated in the study. Emergency crisis counselling personnel in the shelter was one of the greatest strengths expressed by the respondents and one of their most often mentioned concerns.

This study also shows a decline in the number of problems the women face once they leave women's shelters. This finding suggests that residents are better prepared to face the challenges that confront them when they return to the community, with most of them intending to leave the violent relationship.

Elsewhere, in its 2004 report, the Ontario Domestic Violence Death Review Committee recalls that in the three main Chief Coroner's inquests in the years 1998 to 2002, certain major recurring themes were found in the recommendations to prevent deaths due to spousal violence. Within these major themes, the Committee highlighted the importance of:

- Offering better access to essential services for the victims, the aggressors and their families, particularly the children who are exposed to family violence;
- Obtaining adequate financing for community based violence against women services<sup>25</sup>.

The Committee added that "adequate resources are required to institute programs that will help to ensure victim safety and reduce the perpetrator's risk." All the programs and services require resources to become operational. These resources include:

- Assistance in removing the victim from the situation;
- Affordable alternative housing;
- Counselling services for victims and their families;
- Other community based support systems and services for victims, aggressors and children exposed to family violence<sup>26</sup>.

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<sup>24</sup> *Idem.* p. 7.

<sup>25</sup> Domestic Violence Death Review Committee, (2004), p. 3.

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### ONTARIO GOVERNMENT COMMITMENTS IN THE MATTER OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

On December 13, 2004, the Premier of Ontario, Dalton McGuinty and Sandra Pupatello, Ontario Minister Responsible for Women's Issues, announced a new *Domestic Violence Action Plan for Ontario*. In this four-year plan, the provincial government commits to:

- Better community based supports for victims;
- Identifying women and children at risk and earlier intervention;
- Changing attitudes to prevent acts of violence;
- Strengthening the justice system response<sup>27</sup>.

The government promises improved access for abused women and their children to a continuum of supports in their communities to help them be safe, heal and to live independently and productively<sup>28</sup>.

The government recognizes that ensuring increased safety for women and their children involves improved access to French language services and targeted initiatives to address the unique needs of people with disabilities, seniors and aboriginal persons, ethnocultural/racial groups, rural/farm/northern communities<sup>29</sup>. It specifies that "Francophone women should receive services in their language in accordance with the *French Language Services Act*<sup>30</sup>."

In fact the last section of the Ontario action plan deals specifically with improving access to French language services. Among other references, we cite the following, "In accordance with the French Language Services Act, access to French-language programs and services will be improved within all the components of the Domestic Violence Action Plan, including public education and prevention, early intervention, community supports and the justice system response. Ministries will report on improved access to French-language violence against women programs and services<sup>31</sup>."

Among the initiatives that were announced, a strategic plan for French language services was promised. However as of June 2006, we have yet to see this plan. AOcVF however drew up its own four-year plan in April 2006.

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<sup>26</sup> Idem., p. 7.

<sup>27</sup> Ontario Women's Directorate, *A Domestic Violence Action Plan for Ontario*, press release, Toronto, December 13 2004.

<sup>28</sup> Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration (2005), p.3.

<sup>29</sup> Idem., p. 4.

<sup>30</sup> Idem., p. 7.

<sup>31</sup> Idem., p. 18.

### **THE 2004 FORUM**

From November 4 to 6, 2004, some 150 persons who participated in the Forum on the development of French language violence against women services outlined the priorities of each of the major regions of Ontario. In the Hamilton-Niagara region, obtaining a women's shelter for Francophone women fleeing violence was one of the three priorities identified by the participants<sup>32</sup>.

In addition to establishing women's shelters in Toronto and Hamilton for Francophone women fleeing violence, the participants also called for second stage housing, transition and accompaniment programs<sup>33</sup>.

### **AOCVF ACTION PLAN 2006-2010**

The AOCVF action plan is made up of six components, the second dealing exclusively with the development of French language services to deal with spousal violence. What follows is the preamble.

“There are significant gaps in access to Francophone services: only a handful of the hundred women's shelters offer FLS 24/7, and since it is often because of the shelters that related services are developed in the community, such as counselling, second stage support and other services, French language related services are far from adequate. The situation is particularly disastrous for women who do not speak English, often the case for immigrant women or women who have recently moved from Quebec for example, and who can live for weeks in a women's shelter before obtaining services. In addition, chronic under funding of shelter services causes serious problems, resulting in an inordinate proportion of their resources allocated to fundraising with disappointing results, and difficulty retaining and recruiting personnel. In the past few years, only one increase of 3 % was granted to women's shelters, far below the increasing needs for salaries, food costs, heating and electricity, taxes, etc.

(...) The French-speaking communities in the Toronto and Hamilton-Niagara regions call for the establishment of two Francophone women's shelters because of the great need and the lack of FLS in existing resources<sup>34</sup>.”

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<sup>32</sup> Garceau and Brunet, (2004), p. 31.

<sup>33</sup> Idem., p. 44.

<sup>34</sup> AOCVF, (2006), p. 5.

THE FRANCOPHONE POPULATION IN THE HAMILTON-NIAGARA REGION<sup>35</sup>

Although Francophones only account for 1.8 % of the total population of Central Ontario, this region is home to 25.6 % of the province's Francophone population<sup>36</sup>. In the Hamilton-Niagara region, the Francophone population totals 22,625 persons which represents 4.1 % of the Francophone population of Ontario. Immigration accounts for much of the growth of the Francophone population in the cities of Hamilton, Welland and Niagara Falls. In fact persons from visible minorities make up 8 % of the French-speaking population of this region and 3.1 % of Francophones belonging to racial minorities in Ontario.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE FRANCOPHONE POPULATION	HAMILTON REGION <sup>37</sup>	WELLAND REGION <sup>38</sup>	TOTAL HAMILTON-WELLAND
Regional Francophone population	9,230	13,395	22,625
Francophone population relative to the total regional population	1.8 %	4.2 %	2.7 %
Francophone population in the region in proportion to the total Francophone population of Ontario	1.63 %	2.37 %	4.0 %
Female population (and proportion of the regional Francophone population)	4,805 52.1 %	7,245 54.1 %	12,050 53.3 %
Francophone population belonging to a visible minority (and proportion of the regional Francophone population)	1,380 15.0 %	430 3.2 %	1,810 8.0 %
Female Francophone population belonging to a visible minority (and proportion of female Francophone population)	765 15.9 %	230 3.2 %	955 8.3 %
Female population married, separated but still legally married or in a common law relationship with a partner of the opposite sex (and proportion of the female Francophone population of the region)	2,635 54.8 %	4,350 60.0 %	6,985 58.0 %
Average employment income of Francophone females in 2000 (and proportion of average income of male Francophones)	\$18,570 76.5 %	\$15,346 58.9 %	\$16,958 67.4 %

<sup>35</sup> Data from Statistics Canada, *Portrait of official language communities in Canada*, 2001 Census, Ottawa, CDRom 94F004XCB.

<sup>36</sup> Office of Francophone Affairs, (2005A), p. 6.

<sup>37</sup> For purposes of this study, the Hamilton region includes the following three communities: Grimsby, Hamilton and Lincoln.

<sup>38</sup> For purposes of this study, the Welland region includes the following seven communities: Niagara Falls, Niagara on the Lake, Pelham, Port Colborne, St. Catharines, Thorold and Welland.



## EXISTING FLS IN THE HAMILTON-NIAGARA REGION THAT DEAL WITH VIOLENCE

The designation [of the Ontario government for French language services] applies to the city of Hamilton as well as the cities of Port Colborne and Welland in the regional municipality of Niagara.

The *Francophone Community Health Centre Hamilton/Niagara* offers services entirely in French. The *Centre* broadened its original mandate of sexual assault services to include services dealing with spousal violence and other forms of abuse. The *Health Centre* also offers transitional support services. Direct services and programs are adapted to the needs of immigrant women who are the majority of their clients. The services of the *Centre* are offered at two service locations, Hamilton and Welland.

In Hamilton and in the Niagara region, French language services in women's shelters are almost non-existent.

The regional crisis line *Elle-écoute* was created jointly in 1998 by *Oasis Centre des femmes* and the *Francophone Community Health Centre Hamilton/Niagara*. In the spring of 2006, *Elle-écoute* became the *Ligne de soutien pour femmes victimes de violence* that integrates all the French language regional telephone support lines for women who are victims of violence. The service is now jointly managed by three agencies: *Oasis Centre des femmes* in Toronto, *Centre Victoria pour femmes* in Sudbury and *Maison d'Amitié* in Ottawa.

### THE CHALLENGES AND NEEDS IDENTIFIED BY WORKERS

Twice yearly, *Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes* (AOcVF) holds meetings for Francophone workers in the field of violence. At these meetings, workers from the Hamilton-Niagara region identified the following challenges and needs:

#### THE CHALLENGES IN THE HAMILTON-NIAGARA REGION

- There is a lack of awareness of the needs of Francophone women in women's shelters that offer English language services in the Hamilton region;
- In the Welland region, there are no related Francophone services to which women can be referred<sup>40</sup>;
- The language barrier in women's shelters who consider the services offered by the *Francophone Community Health Centre Hamilton/Niagara* as interpretation services despite the fact that the workers have often clarified the true nature of the services<sup>41</sup>;
- The long waiting lists for subsidized housing, shelters and women's shelters; the women do not feel safe<sup>42</sup>; in addition, housing is inadequate, unsanitary and unsafe. For example, women on the priority list receive only one housing offer and if they refuse this offer, they do

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<sup>40</sup> AOcVF

<sup>41</sup> AOcVF, (2005B), p. 4.

<sup>42</sup> Idem.

not have the right to another housing choice, and at the same time they lose their priority status<sup>43</sup>;

- Transportation is a significant obstacle to service accessibility.

*THE NEEDS IN THE HAMILTON-NIAGARA REGION*

- French language legal services in the Welland region<sup>44</sup>;
- A Francophone women's shelter in order to offer direct service to Francophone clientele<sup>45</sup>.
- Means of transportation for Francophone women to access French language services in Hamilton<sup>46</sup>.

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<sup>43</sup> *Idem.*, p. 12.

<sup>44</sup> AOcVF, (2004), p. 13.

<sup>45</sup> AOcVF, (2005A), p. 5; AOcVF, (2005B), p. 4 and AOcVF (2006).

<sup>46</sup> AOcVF, (2006).

We were not able to identify the exact number of shelter services for women victims of violence offered in the Hamilton-Niagara region because the number varied depending on the source. According to Shelternet<sup>47</sup>, a service that provides information and resources to women victims of violence, there are currently 10 shelters in the territory covered by the Hamilton-Niagara region for women fleeing violence and six second stage houses for abused women.

The women's shelters in the Hamilton-Niagara region are:

- Ganohkwa Shelter (Ohsweken)
- Haldimand-Norfolk Women's Services (Simcoe)
- Inasmuch House (Hamilton)
- Interval House of Hamilton
- Martha House – Good Shepherd Women's Centre (Hamilton)
- Native Women's Centre (Hamilton)
- Nova House (Niagara Falls)
- Women's Place (St. Catharines)
- Women's Place of South Niagara (Welland)
- Women's Place: under construction (Niagara)

The second stage houses in the Hamilton-Niagara region are:

- Bethlehem Housing Projects of Niagara (St. Catharines)
- Ganohkwa SRA Next Step Housing (Ohsweken)
- Phoenix Place (Hamilton)
- Quetzal Family Homes (Simcoe)
- Second Stage Services of Hamilton Wentworth (Hamilton)
- West Niagara Second Stage Housing and Counselling (Grimsby)

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<sup>47</sup> <http://www.shelternet.ca/splashPage.htm>

### *WOMEN'S SHELTERS*

According to the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS), there are seven shelters for abused women in the region of Hamilton-Niagara. Together these shelters offer 146 beds for women and children<sup>48</sup>. In 2005-2006, 1,651 women and children received shelter services. The occupancy rate was 88 % in Hamilton and 74 % in the Niagara region. Some 1,814 requests were refused<sup>49</sup> in Hamilton in 2005-2006 and 106 requests refused<sup>50</sup> in the Niagara region (for a regional total of 1,920)<sup>51</sup>.

The Inasmuch House in Hamilton alone had to refuse 487 requests between April 2005 and March 2006 due to lack of space. The previous year, the shelter had to refuse 205 requests. At Women's Place of South Niagara (Welland), for the same period, it is estimated that 90 families were refused at the shelter due to lack of space.

There are two possible explanations for the lower occupancy rate in women's shelters in the Niagara region. One is that Nova House in Niagara Falls is so small and dilapidated that women only go there when they are desperate. However this shelter will move to a new building that will open its doors in September 2006 and will offer eight additional beds. The second is that last year the YWCA of Niagara Falls opened a shelter for women in difficulty that is more spacious and newer. It is possible that women from the Niagara Falls region who are fleeing a violent relationship choose to seek refuge at the YWCA because of the more attractive conditions.

### *SOCIAL HOUSING*

The waiting list for social housing in Hamilton is currently at 4,258 applications and there are more than 8,000 persons waiting for affordable housing in the Niagara region<sup>52</sup>. This translates into a waiting period of 3 to 7 years depending on the nature of the request.

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<sup>48</sup> This includes four women's shelters in the Hamilton region (100 beds) and three in the Niagara region (46 beds).

<sup>49</sup> It is possible that the number of refusals is incorrect because 2005-2006 was the first year this information was collected and the term "refused" was interpreted in different ways depending on the shelter.

<sup>50</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>51</sup> Ministry of Community and Social Services, numbers obtained by email June 29 and July 5, 2006.

<sup>52</sup> [http://www.mah.gov.on.ca/userfiles/HTML/nts\\_1\\_27026\\_2.html](http://www.mah.gov.on.ca/userfiles/HTML/nts_1_27026_2.html)

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## CHAPTER II : RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes in detail the methodology used to carry out the needs assessment study. We shall first describe the territory covered by the study and identify the characteristics of the research subjects. We shall then explain our data collection methodology, both the literature review and the collection of data directly from Francophone women fleeing a violent relationship, from persons who work with them and from Francophone and Anglophone partners in the field. The chapter will end with a summary of recruitment methods used for the study, the time line and the limitations of the study.

### THE TERRITORY AND THE STUDY SUBJECTS

For the purposes of this study, the statistical data of the Hamilton-Niagara region include the following ten communities: Grimsby, Hamilton, Lincoln, Niagara Falls, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Pelham, Port Colborne, St. Catharines, Thorold and Welland.

Many study subjects were chosen at the beginning of the research. The persons consulted are women fleeing a violent relationship, workers in services offered to women victims of violence and their children as well as potential Anglophone and Francophone partners. Each person contributed important data that assisted us to describe as accurately as possible the reality, the needs, the current environment and ideas for consideration that are presented throughout this report.

### DATA COLLECTION METHODS

#### LITERATURE REVIEW

On May 25, 2006, we began a review of documents, studies and articles dealing with Francophone women in Ontario fleeing a violent relationship.

The information collected was a starting point for a preliminary representation of the context of this needs assessment study. With this information we put together statistical data on Francophone communities as well as on the prevalence of violence against women in an intimate relationship. In addition we retrieved information regarding the commitments of the provincial government and of *Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes* to work to end spousal violence.

Other publications and information sources assisted us in preparing a preliminary representation of the danger facing women who are victims of violence, of the impact of women's shelters and

of French language services offered in the region. This preliminary representation was subsequently supplemented or refined with the fieldwork data.

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#### DATA COLLECTION FROM FRANCOPHONE WOMEN FLEEING A VIOLENT RELATIONSHIP

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We had originally planned to have four focus groups in the Hamilton-Niagara region. However, the organizers decided not to organize a focus group in the St. Catharines region because women in this region receive direct French language services only in Welland. In the city of Hamilton they decided not to organize a focus group because service users were not prepared to speak about these matters in a group setting. In Hamilton, only individual interviews were held on June 16, 2006. In Welland, a focus group meeting lasting two hours took place June 14, 2006 beginning at 6:00 p.m. The 19 participants completed a demographical profile and a questionnaire dealing with their experience of violence (see Chapter III for more information). Each person received \$30.00 for participating in the study.

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#### DATA COLLECTION FROM FRANCOPHONE WORKERS

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Three discussion groups had been originally planned but in the end only two could be scheduled. Given the two service locations of the *Francophone Community Health Centre Hamilton/Niagara*, no focus group was held in St. Catharines. The first group meeting was held in Welland on June 14, 2006 at 9:00 a.m. and the other in Hamilton on June 16, 2006 beginning at 1:00 p.m. The 11 workers completed a profile detailing their programs or services (consult Chapter III for more detail).

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#### DATA COLLECTION FROM FRANCOPHONE AND ANGLOPHONE PARTNERS

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Telephone interviews were held with Anglophone groups and with one Francophone partner. The telephone interviews varied in length from 30 minutes to 75 minutes.

## RECRUITMENT METHODS

At its semi-annual meeting in May 2006 in Ottawa, AOcVF presented the needs assessment project concerning a women's shelter for the Hamilton-Niagara region in order to recruit Francophone women to participate in the data collection. The executive director of AOcVF, Ghislaine Sirois, described the profile of the women they were seeking to interview in the context of the research. Convergence subsequently spoke by telephone and by email with all the workers referred by AOcVF in order to coordinate data collection in the region.

Persons working in various *Francophone Community Health Centre Hamilton/Niagara* (CSCHN) programs offering French language services for women and their children fleeing violence recruited from among their clientele women interested in participating in the study.

Violence against women workers were also invited to contribute to the research data during the semi-annual AOcVF meeting. Subsequently, Convergence communicated with both CSCHN service locations and asked a worker to recruit persons of interest for group discussions. Two workers, working as social workers or mental health workers participated in the group discussion.

The Francophone and Anglophone partner groups were referred by many sources, but mainly by AOcVF and by the two CSCHN program directors who are in contact with Anglophone groups in their community.

## TIME LINE

This needs assessment study took place over a six week period, from May 24 to July 5 2006.

## LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The short time frame we were given and the time of year in which the data collection occurred were the main methodological limitations of this study. Carrying out a feasibility study at the beginning of summer makes it more complicated to recruit clientele. This is the time of year when front line workers close files and prepare for summer vacation.

The short time frame available to complete the needs assessment study required us to simultaneously collect data from women, workers and potential partners. In addition it was difficult to contact certain key persons in Francophone and Anglophone partner organizations.

Finally, one of the other methodological limitations of this study arose from the sample of women victims of violence whom we interviewed. Comparing statistics on the Francophone population of the Hamilton-Niagara region to the demographical profile of study participants, it is clear that immigrant women or women from racial and ethnocultural minorities are overrepresented while women of Canadian origin are clearly underrepresented.

## CHAPTER III : RESPONDENTS' PROFILE

### INTRODUCTION

In this chapter we present the profile of the persons who participated in the data collection. First we profile the Francophone women who participated either in the focus groups or in individual interviews that took place between June 12 and 23, 2006. We then summarize the characteristics of the front line workers with whom we met in a discussion group on June 12, 2006. To conclude we give an overview of Francophone and Anglophone partners, working at provincial and regional levels, whom we interviewed between June 12 and 23, 2006.

The profile compilation of Francophone women fleeing a violent relationship and that of the workers interviewed are found in Appendix 3 of this report.

### THE PROFILE OF FRANCOPHONE WOMEN FLEEING A VIOLENT RELATIONSHIP

Nineteen (19) women were consulted during the data collection period in the region of Hamilton-Niagara. One focus group meeting took place in Welland on June 14, 2006 in which nine women participated. Nine women from Hamilton were interviewed in the offices of *Espace Entre-elles* on June 16, 2006 and another participated in a telephone interview.

Three-quarters of the participants are between the ages of 25 and 39 and are currently single parents. Two of the respondents live with their spouse. Half of the women (10) have two children or less aged 16 or under who live with them. Many of the women mentioned that they have children who stayed in their country of origin. All the immigrant women we interviewed are first generation immigrants. Three-quarters (9 out of 12) of the immigrant women have been in Canada less than five (5) years. One-third (7) of the participants are originally from Canada and another third (7) are originally from Guinea. The others come from Chad, Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi and France.

All the women are heterosexuals. Only one woman suffers from a dependence related either to alcohol, drugs and medication or gambling. One-quarter of the respondents (5) have not completed high school while one-half (10) have taken courses at the post-secondary level but have not necessarily received a diploma. Most of the respondents (16) have an annual income of less than \$19,999 and close to two-thirds (11) have an annual income inferior to \$9,999.

Approximately two-thirds of the respondents (12) have experienced spousal violence and half (10) have experienced family violence. Almost all of the women (11) have experienced many forms of violence and sexual assault. This experience of violence and aggression occurred in both childhood and adulthood and the perpetrators were family members as well as persons not known to the women. One-third of them (7) had experienced only one type of violence [spousal (3), family (10) or sexual assault as an adult (3)].



According to the profile completed by the participants<sup>53</sup>, men were the perpetrators of the violent acts and sexual assaults except in two cases. One of the respondents had witnessed sexual assault by a woman and another had been a victim of sexual assault by a female family member.

## THE PROFILE OF FRANCOPHONE WORKERS

Thirteen (13) workers contributed to the data. They all are from the *Francophone Community Health Centre Hamilton/Niagara* either in Hamilton (CSC) or in Welland. A discussion group took place in Welland on June 14, 2006 and one in Hamilton on June 16, 2006.

The following programs contributed to the data collection:

- Housing support and women's safety service
- Child and adolescent mental health
- Adult mental health
- Intake
- The *Grandir ensemble* program (for families with children under the age of six)
- Service for abused women and mental health
- Settlement and integration services for newcomers, immigrant and refugee women
- Counselling service
- *Espace entre-elles* (various services for women working toward autonomy)
- *Interval House of Hamilton* (a worker from the *Francophone Community Health Centre Hamilton/Niagara*)

All of the clients served by these programs are Francophone except for *Interval House of Hamilton* where 5 to 10 % of the clients are Francophone women.

Personnel employed by the CSC in Hamilton have worked there an average 5.2 years. In Welland there is greater staff turnover; workers have been employed there an average of 1.79 years.

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<sup>53</sup> Note that the profile of the experience of violence was quite complex and the participants often had difficulty completing the questionnaire.

PROVINCIAL ORGANIZATIONS

**Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes**

Ghislaine Sirois, Executive Director

Provincial coalition of regional networks that works to end the oppression of women. Advocates through network cooperation to better respond to the needs of the diversity of Francophone women of Ontario.

**Centre ontarien de prévention des agressions (COPA)**

Kathryn Penwill,

Provincial organization supporting the development of French language programs (training and consultation) for prevention of child and youth assault.

**Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS)**

Ginette Desmarais, Program Supervisor, Eastern Region

Mary Burnett, Program Manager, Hamilton-Niagara Region

Ruth Wells, Program Supervisor, Hamilton-Niagara Region

**Maison d'Amitié (Ottawa)<sup>54</sup>**

Anne Hodge, Executive Director

One of the two Francophone women's shelters in Ontario. It is located in the Ottawa region and offers its services at two sites. Founded in 1976, the shelter has a total of 30 beds (2 sites).

**Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses (OAITH)**

Eileen Morrow, Coordinator

Provincial coalition and spokesperson for shelters for abused women since 1977 in Ontario. Works to promote public policy and social change in matters related to violence against women and their children.

<sup>54</sup> Consulted as a member of AOcVF and because of 30 years operating as a women's shelter. *Needs assessment study: shelter services in the Hamilton-Niagara region for Francophone women and their children who are fleeing a violent relationship, Convergence, coopérative d'expertes conseils*

**Mission Services of Hamilton, Inc.**

Lori Willan, Director of Women's Services

Services for women include:

- Inasmuch House: 37 beds to assist women and children in crisis because of violence or homelessness. Individual or group support, community referrals, safe place, crisis line 24/7.
- Transitional support for housing: support and referral service.
- LEAF (Learning Effective Anti-Violence in Families) program: 10 week support group for children who witness violence and support group for mothers and other brothers and sisters while the session takes place.

Except for the crisis line, this agency served 165 women of which 131 women were housed between January and May of 2006. Ms. Willan does not have information on what percentage of these persons is Francophone.

**Francophone Community Health Centre Hamilton/Niagara**

Marcel Castonguay, Executive Director

Adèle Tanguay, Program Director (Welland service location)

Two service locations, one in Hamilton and one in Welland. The *Centre* offers a range of interdisciplinary services for the empowerment and well-being of individuals, families and groups. These services are free of charge. A medical clinic, counselling and support as well as a number of programs available for children, youth, newcomers, adolescents, older persons and women.

**Women's Place of South Niagara Inc. (WPSN)**

Tammy Falovo, Program Director

Operates two shelters for abused women and their children, one in Welland and the other in Niagara Falls (under construction). The Welland shelter served 198 women in the period from April 2005 to March 2006. Approximately 5 % of the clientele is Francophone.

**Women's Place of St. Catharines** (telephone message only)

Jillian Dooley, Director

Shelter for abused women and their children. The shelter has only served three Francophone women in the last five years.

**Interval House, Hamilton**

Clare Freeman, Director

Shelter for abused women and their children located in Hamilton. The occupancy rate was 90 % between April 2005 and March 2006. The shelter does not keep track of referrals to other shelters or women's shelters or of refusals.

## CHAPTER IV : HIGHLIGHTS OF THE DATA COLLECTED

### INTRODUCTION

In this chapter we will look at the types of shelter used by Francophone women in the Hamilton-Niagara region, their needs for support services and the type of approach they would like to see in a women's shelter.

We shall then present the needs as perceived by workers, strengths and weaknesses of FLS offered in the Hamilton-Niagara region, opportunities and threats that might influence the development of a women's shelter for Francophone women, issues to consider, the geographical location of a new women's shelter and the range of FLS required to assist and support women and their children when they flee violence.

Following this, the data collected from Francophone and Anglophone partners will be given: perceived needs, strengths and weaknesses of the existing network of women's shelters, issues and the eventual involvement of their organization in the establishment of a new women's shelter.

Note that the Francophone communities in the Hamilton-Niagara region are very different from those in the Welland region. The participants with whom we met in Hamilton are all immigrant women, while the Francophone women from the Welland region are mainly of French Canadian origin with the exception of three women who are recent immigrants to the region.

### WHAT THE WOMEN FLEEING VIOLENCE SAID

The type of shelter used by respondents varies. They used the following services:

- Shelters for abused women that offers English language services;
- Shelters for homeless families;
- Shelters for homeless adults.

### ABOUT THEIR EXPERIENCE OF SHELTER SERVICES

We wanted to determine both the positive and negative aspects of the shelter experience of Francophone women victims of violence.

#### *POSITIVE ELEMENTS*

The respondents indicated that there were positive aspects of their stay in a women's shelter. The most important is that they and their children felt safe. The respondents said that the shelters provided for their basic needs (food, clothing, toiletries, etc.). They were warmly received by personnel and their children were cared for. For some of the women, community life was a positive experience despite the fact that it was their first experience of group living.

### *NEGATIVE ELEMENTS*

Despite these positive elements, the women and their children often felt isolated in the women's shelters. For the respondents who speak little or no English, it was difficult to live with the feeling of exclusion from the group and consequently, the integration process was longer. The women did not receive services right away. Often they had to wait a number of days before meeting with an interpreter. Considering they were in crisis at the time, it was difficult for them to express their feelings in English. The lack of Francophone personnel in the agencies affected their emotional state. The Francophone women did not often have the opportunity of sharing and of receiving services in French, contrary to the experience of the English speaking women.

The women whose children had witnessed or been victims of violence did not like the fact they did not have access to French language counselling services from the Children's Aid Society. They had to communicate through an interpreter in order to speak about their experience of aggression. Many of the respondents believe that this situation worsened the traumatism for their children. The same respondents found that some of the security measures for their children were very burdensome to follow. One of the women had to wait several weeks before obtaining a change in the safety rating for her children. The children were thus not able to attend school during this period and were obliged to stay inside the shelter. The mother thought that it would be beneficial for her children to return to school as quickly as possible in order to be with their friends rather than staying in a place where they did not understand the language spoken by the workers.

The respondents who were not able to access services in a shelter for abused women who found themselves in shelters for homeless families encountered a number of difficulties. First, in their state of crisis and their emotional state, they did not appreciate sharing a room with strangers in mixed housing (women-men). In addition, they did not like the length of time it took to access services, in the case of one woman, 91 days. Another example reported to us is that of another woman with serious medical problems resulting from gang rape, who was not able to see a physician within a reasonable period. Given these examples, it is not surprising that women in shelters for the homeless identified the lack of communication with shelter workers as a contributing factor to their feeling of depression.

Some of the respondents from ethnocultural communities who found space in a shelter for homeless persons often had the feeling that some aspects of their culture were not taken into consideration or not understood by shelter personnel. Cohabitation with persons with different values or belonging to different clans in their country of origin often degenerated and conflicts ensued, even to the point of physical violence. Workers were not always equipped to deal with this type of situation. Immigrant women who felt that favouritism was being showed to members of some ethnocultural groups perceived this as discrimination against them.

Some of the respondents mentioned that some of the shelters' or women's shelters' rules were very strict even to the point of restricting their freedom.

## ABOUT THEIR EXPERIENCE OF FLS

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The respondents use the following main French language services available in the Hamilton-Niagara region:

- The *Francophone Community Health Centre Hamilton/Niagara*, (with its two service locations, that is in Hamilton and in Welland);
- The *Association canadienne-française de l'Ontario* (ACFO) in Hamilton although this service is not often used by the respondents (by 2 women).

## ABOUT THEIR SHELTER SERVICE NEEDS

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The respondents identified a number of French language services that according to them would help them to heal more rapidly and to integrate into a more normal life for them and their children. A clear priority for them is a Francophone women's shelter that would offer a wide range of counselling services for them and for their children. They also would like to see group counselling services in which they could share their experiences and create bonds of solidarity.

For women with children, caring for the children as soon as they arrive at the women's shelter is of the utmost importance. The women would also like to see services that would allow them respite from their children.

The immigrant women insisted on the need for accompaniment in certain areas such as immigration status procedures as well as legal proceedings or housing search. They specifically mentioned matters that involve the Children's Aid Society and *Ontario Works*.

The respondents would also like to receive follow-up services once they leave the shelter. Those who went to shelters and received no follow-up services felt ill equipped to deal with issues that remained unresolved. They indicate that referrals to other available resources are crucial given that a number of the women are not aware of what is available.

The women expressed a great need for a support line accessible 24/7. The respondents would like to have access to more French language information and documentation. Workshops on various issues and sessions on building self esteem, for example, and on other topics such as understanding the cycle of violence would help them and their children in their healing process.

## ABOUT THEIR NEEDS FOR RELATED SERVICES

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In addition to the services offered by the future Francophone women's shelter, the respondents would like to have access to a food bank because for most of them survival depends on social assistance benefits or on a small employment income. They would also like to be able to access mediation services, including among other services, "non-conventional" programs for adolescents who witness family violence.

The immigrant women highlighted the development of effective settlement and integration services including educational level assessment and the search for steady work. The respondents feel that there should be more Francophone psychologists and that specialized services for survivors of armed conflict should be offered.

## ABOUT THE DESIRED FLS APPROACH

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### *THE APPROACH*

The Welland and the Hamilton groups raised different points in discussions about the desired service approach for FLS. The women in Welland unanimously indicated that the services should be managed and offered by and for women using a feminist approach. They highlighted the fact that the groups in which they had participated in their community centre had helped them understand the cycle of violence. They recognized the fact that belonging to a small community often takes away anonymity and confidentiality. The women in Hamilton who are all immigrant women and newcomers to Canada insist upon the confidential nature of the desired FLS approach. They want to deal with workers who are competent, warm and capable of welcoming their respective diversity.

### *THE GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION:*

Regarding location of the women's shelter, all of the respondents think it is necessary to have a Francophone women's shelter in the Hamilton-Niagara region. The respondents from Welland understand that it would be difficult to obtain a women's shelter in Welland. However, they would be willing to go to Hamilton if necessary. A means of transportation would have to be established to compensate for the absence of a women's shelter, because many women do not have vehicles at their disposal.

## WHAT THE WORKERS SAID

### ABOUT THE NEEDS THEY PERCEIVE FOR SHELTER FOR FRANCOPHONE WOMEN AND THEIR CHILDREN WHO ARE FLEEING A VIOLENT RELATIONSHIP

When an abused woman needs a shelter service, the *Francophone Community Health Centre Hamilton/Niagara* (CSCHN) accompanies her to a women's shelter. However, in order to maintain their statistics, women's shelters in the region prefer to use interpretation services rather than call on the CSCHN. There are few older Francophone women in women's shelters.

For Francophone women, in-house counselling services at women's shelters use interpreters. Incidentally, interpreters are available once a week. Francophone women therefore only have access to one empowerment session per week compared with three sessions for the other women. Despite the fact that women feel safe in women's shelters, they feel isolated and misunderstood by workers. Because the Francophone women have many support needs, as soon as a Francophone worker from the CSCHN arrives at a shelter, her services are in great demand and she becomes involved in intervention, often beyond her mandate.

In women's shelters, Francophone women's history is less well documented than that of English-speaking women. As a result, their lived experience and relevant documentation are less well reflected in their intervention plan. The group noted that Francophone women from racial minority and ethnocultural communities encounter culturally related obstacles with the other residents and the workers in the shelter.

There is a difference between services. While being sheltered in Welland, women are referred to French language services and CSCHN staff work directly with Francophone women in the women's shelter. With respect to legal aid, only one counsellor speaks French and her main responsibility is to evaluate the clients' financial situation to determine their eligibility for legal services. In Hamilton, however, there is little or no collaboration between the CSCHN and women's shelters.

### ABOUT THE INTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

#### *STRENGTHS*

The CSCHN is made up of a multidisciplinary team and its services are all located in one building in Hamilton or in Welland. In this manner, the concentration of services assists in maintaining confidentiality, facilitates rapid access to services and saves women the necessity of telling their story many times.

The CSCHN has an excellent reputation in the area and the Francophone population has confidence in the services it offers. Their expertise in intervention, the global approach that has been developed and the quality of the relationship with the clients are all elements that are appreciated.

In Welland, the *Grandir ensemble* program (services for families with children under six years of age) provides an opportunity for identifying violence against women. Because the community is small, the workers become quite accessible and are regularly called upon outside

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of CSCHN activities. In addition, in this location, another program, *À mes côtés*, has been established. It is a ten (10) week group program for abused women and their children.

In Hamilton, the team has developed their knowledge of the different cultures. In March of 2006, the CSCHN created the *Espace entre-elles* centre that houses all the programs and services offered to abused women. The workers point out that they have developed a feminist analysis of violence.

#### *WEAKNESSES*

The workers indicated that women of French Canadian origin are bilingual and do not seek French language services. They use either private or English language services.

French language services in the region that deal with spousal violence are only offered during regular business hours and thus are not available evenings and weekends.

The community in Welland is very small, and it seems that some women, because they find it difficult to believe they can remain anonymous, do not use the CSCHN services. In this region, women from the immigrant community would rather create bonds with the majority Anglophone community than with the Francophone community. The Francophone community has learned that in order to survive in the region one must learn English and strengthen connections with the majority community.

In Hamilton, the workers report that there is significant staff turnover and burnout in the team. Awareness of violence against women seems to be a significant concern. They mention among other things, the need for training about the feminist approach for the extended CSCHN team, the lack of awareness programs for youth and the lack of funding for this work. In addition, awareness resources are not adapted to different cultures. Finally, the workers are not successful in reaching the community of persons of French Canadian origin.

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#### **ABOUT THE EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT**

#### *OPPORTUNITIES*

Many Francophones live in Welland. According to the group, the number of Francophones living in the territory and the wave of Francophone immigrants from other regions of Canada and from other countries in the world justify the establishment of a women's shelter. Offering more French language services will ensure the continuity of the Francophone community, because the Francophone population is aging.

Police services and the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration support the CSCHN spousal violence program. Many Francophone schools offer programs to end violence. In addition, a political action group composed of Francophones lobbies to maintain French language services and rights for Francophones in the Niagara region.

The workers in the discussion group in Hamilton report that their member of parliament is very supportive. In addition, there are a number of leaders in the region, such as the chairpersons of the *Assemblée des francophones de l'Ontario* and of the *Mouvement ontarien des femmes immigrantes francophones*, as well as allies on school boards and with the *Meilleur départ* network. They also said that the new CSCHN director has a good knowledge of Ontario government ministry programs and knows many senior government officials.

They point out that Hamilton has the third largest immigrant population in Canada and that a significant proportion of these persons are originally from Francophone African countries. A second stage house (*Family Services*) has just closed its doors in the city and the occupancy rate of women's shelters is probably close to 100 %.

#### *THREATS*

In the Welland region, it is easier for Francophones who speak English to receive English language services. The workers who participated in the group discussion fear that the Francophone community would not necessarily support the development of a women's shelter in Welland. In addition, in the Niagara region, *Women's Place* in St. Catharines recently received funding to relocate. Some Anglophone agencies are mandated to offer French language services but do not do so and they are not accountable for their services in this regard.

In Hamilton, there is little visibility for the Francophone community. Women of French Canadian origin use English language services. There is a perception that the Francophone community is one community among the others and that Francophones' needs and the needs of persons from immigrant communities compete for consideration. Some group members said that the argument of "Hamilton, a small city" risks being used to justify a refusal to establish a Francophone women's shelter. In addition, if the women's shelter fails to receive adequate funding, it will be difficult to raise money because five other shelters in the territory also organize their own fundraising activities.

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#### ABOUT REGIONAL SPECIFIC ISSUES CONCERNING THE DEVELOPMENT OF SHELTER SERVICES FOR FRANCOPHONE WOMEN FLEEING VIOLENCE

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In Welland, group discussion participants could not identify issues specific to the region.

In Hamilton, the Francophone community is small and hard to reach. Also, workers mentioned that it is difficult to find and retain Francophone personnel. There are long distances to travel and clients have small incomes. The workers ask themselves whether the "overflow" conditions that prevail in Hamilton shelters that offer English language services might result in persons being redirected to the Francophone women's shelter. If this were the case, they wonder about the impact a mixed clientele (from a linguistic viewpoint) would have on the shelter.

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#### ABOUT THE GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION OF THE WOMEN'S SHELTER

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According to the Welland workers, there should be two service locations. The principal shelter would be in Hamilton and a satellite service would be located in Welland.

For Hamilton, the workers suggested that Stoney Creek would be an ideal geographical location for the shelter. However there are no Francophone services nearby and no Francophone schools in this community. The city of Hamilton would be preferable because of the proximity of French language services. However, they are aware of the fact that Hamilton is at a distance from Welland. The workers believe they need to further reflect on this matter before answering this question.

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## ABOUT THE RANGE OF SERVICES TO OFFER AT THE SHELTER

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The two discussion groups (Welland and Hamilton) made it clear that the services should be safe and confidential. Other specific services identified by the workers are presented by locality.

In Welland they would like to see women supported throughout the healing process (prevention, crisis, autonomy). It is important to have a clean and healthy environment. The shelter should have a garden and trees and spaces for families to have privacy (small living spaces and a living room that is close to the kitchen so that mothers can watch over their children while they prepare meals). In addition it would be valuable for the women to have an office within the shelter for related services. Group participants spoke about providing a positive masculine role model for the women and children by including some male workers in the shelter; however, this male presence would be acceptable only 48 hours after a woman arrives at the shelter.

In Hamilton, the service should first and foremost be in French, but it should also be bilingual, with a nice environment and a warm welcome. It should be accessible to all age groups and particular efforts should be made to reach young women and older women. Those who manage the shelter need to recognize the diversity of the community and adapt practices and services to this effect. The shelter service should be accessible to persons with disabilities. The shelter should have a playroom for children. The shelter should take large families into consideration and have rooms available for women with many children. Workers believe that the region needs a shelter for women in difficulty given the size of the immigrant population and the housing problems these women encounter.

For the Hamilton workers, there needs to be a feminist approach that is multifaceted (multi-service and multi-resources). The women's shelter should offer many on-site services: group work for children and services for children who witness, transitional support program, advocacy service, public awareness program and peer support groups. In addition the shelter should provide expertise such as a children's worker, a mental health worker and a worker specialized in HIV and hepatitis. The shelter should use different strategies to reach Francophone women (for example, support groups, coffee houses, etc.). The shelter should also collaborate with the *Ligne de soutien pour femmes victimes de violence* (formerly known as *Elle-écoute*), with the *CSCHN* and with *Espace entre-elles*.

The Hamilton group stressed the need for adequate funding. In order to do this, the Ontario government must recognize that French language services cost more than English language services and that funding should reflect this reality.

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## ABOUT THE RANGE OF FLS TO OFFER WOMEN FLEEING A VIOLENT RELATIONSHIP

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In Welland, many services were identified as essential. They are the following:

- Legal aid;
- Medical services;
- Employment and unemployment assistance;
- Housing assistance;
- Individual and group counselling services;
- Prevention workshops;
- A documentation centre.

*Note:* Due to time constraints, the question about related services was not discussed in Hamilton.  
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## WHAT THE FRANCOPHONE AND ANGLOPHONE PARTNERS SAID

### ABOUT PERCEIVED NEEDS RELATED TO SHELTER SERVICES FOR FRANCOPHONE WOMEN AND THEIR CHILDREN WHO ARE FLEEING VIOLENCE

All of the potential partners with the exception of one person see a need for shelter services for Francophone women who have been assaulted by a spouse. The director of the St. Catharines women's shelter indicated that she does not consider there is a need because in the last five years only three Francophone women have received services at her shelter. The partners consider that Francophone women receive limited or inadequate services from the existing women's shelters.

#### *THE DIFFICULTY ACCESSING FRENCH LANGUAGE SERVICES*

It seems that no position in the women's shelter network has been designated bilingual (French-English). In the women's shelters in St. Catharines and in Welland there are no Francophone workers. The existing agencies are under the impression that all of the Francophones in the Hamilton-Niagara region are bilingual and therefore there is no need to offer them French language services. They are identified as "specialized services" and the creation of such services likened to ghettos.

However, women's shelters have more of a tendency to recognize the linguistic needs of Francophone women from visible minorities. They therefore use interpretation services available through an agency that is government subsidized, but it is difficult to obtain French language interpretation from this agency. Some shelters therefore call on the *Francophone Community Health Centre Hamilton/Niagara* (CSCHN) only for interpretation. Workers in women's shelters do not seem to know about intervention services offered by CSCHN despite the fact that the *Centre* regularly makes presentations about its services.

One of the partners explained that there is a real lack of understanding of the Francophone identity and cultures. The existing services do not seem to grasp the nature, composition or needs of Francophone communities resulting in French language services reduced to exchanging a only a few words in order to meet essential emergency shelter needs.

Information and support services that are an integral part of shelters for abused women (such as individual counselling, discussion groups for women, referrals and accompaniment, group sessions with children, etc.) are therefore, for all practical purposes, inexistent for Francophone women in women's shelters. At best, they have very limited access through an interpreter.

In addition there is no protocol to assess linguistic needs during intake in women's shelters. Because French language services are not actively offered, there is little demand for these services. Only Inasmuch House (Hamilton) has developed a protocol for exchange of services with CSCHN. This protocol does not apply to other women's shelters in the region.

### ABOUT THE INTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

#### *STRENGTHS*

When asked about the strengths of shelter services for Francophone women fleeing violence, the partners could identify only one, that is, the collaboration of the shelters with the CSCHN.

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These shelters use the CSCHN intervention services and consult the *Centre* when they provide services for Francophone women.

Another strength that was identified concerned women's shelter services in general. They stated that women's shelters in the city of Hamilton are beginning to integrate the fact that the community is pluralistic and the fact that this diversity requires hiring personnel from different communities.

#### *WEAKNESSES*

The weaknesses of the network seemed to be more apparent. They included misunderstanding about the Francophone culture, non-identification of Francophones when they arrive at women's shelters, lack of referrals to French language services offered by community agencies, lack of information and documentation in French, and lack of outreach services for Francophone women. In addition they add that in the last few years, Francophone outreach services have been concentrating on the immigrant population, leaving out the community of persons of French Canadian origin.

They also expressed their concern about the high assimilation rate of Francophones especially in the Welland region. Because the Francophone community there is small, there is another, particularly delicate, concern in offering services to abused women. Because almost all of the Francophones know each other, the lack of anonymity is seen as a barrier to services. Perhaps some women do not request French language services because they fear being easily identified in the community. Finally, in Hamilton, the proportion of Francophones in the population remains low even with successive waves of Francophone immigration from around the world.

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#### ABOUT REGIONAL SPECIFIC ISSUES RELATED TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF A SHELTER SERVICE FOR FRANCOPHONE WOMEN FLEEING VIOLENCE

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The partners outlined issues that can be grouped under five headings. The issues are political, organizational, financial, legal and related to the rationale for women's shelters.

The *political issues* revolve mainly around the perception of the lack of government will to create new French language services. Many partners believe that the current political climate is not favourable to the creation of new services. In principle there are no new funds earmarked for shelter services in the Ontario domestic violence action plan. This situation, according to some, only exacerbates the competition that is growing little by little between women's shelters that have only received small increases in their government subsidies in the last ten years. Unless new funding is allocated, the arrival of a new women's shelter could create additional tension in the network that is already having trouble making ends meet. In other respects, it is perceived that the current government prefers the one stop approach rather than specialized services.

This having been said, many persons see in a positive light the appointment of Madeleine Meilleur as Ontario Minister of Community and Social Services and Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs. They feel she has a solid commitment to Francophone issues and to services for abused women.

At the regional level, the region of Hamilton-Niagara is perceived as a region that is not open to Francophone issues or to visible minority communities. It is feared that the needs of Francophone women will vie for consideration with the needs of women from visible minority

and ethnocultural communities. Because a new women's shelter is under construction in Niagara Falls and because Women's Place in St. Catharines has just received funding to transform an old school into a women's shelter, one wonders whether the government might consider it has already done enough to address spousal violence in the Hamilton-Niagara region.

The **organizational issues** deal with the numerous requirements to which developing women's shelters must conform and the unavoidable partnerships involved. Some partners pointed out that the development of a women's shelter can be a very long, fastidious and onerous process. Experience shows that both zoning and funding negotiations at various government levels are processes that can be long and complicated.

Accessibility to services is more difficult for persons living outside of large centres, such as in Welland. Service access would be facilitated if the women's shelter for Francophone women had two service locations, one in Hamilton and the second in Welland. It is however feared that this approach is not realistic and that the shelter would be located in Hamilton.

The **financial issues** deal with the limitations that a new women's shelter might encounter in its fundraising activities. The Hamilton region already has four women's shelters (not including the two second stage houses) while there are three others in the St. Catharines-Welland-Niagara area. The fundraising activities of these shelters already compete with each other. The fact that for the last few years the region's manufacturing industry has been unstable must also be considered. Factories have been closed and it is feared there will be other closures. Even though the population in Niagara Falls has significantly increased, this increase is due to the exponential development of the tourism industry. Newcomers work mainly in insecure jobs at minimum wage in restaurants and hotels.

The **legal issues** highlight the importance of the women's shelter negotiating a protocol with the Children's Aid Society (CAS). Recent modifications to the Ontario *Child and Family Services Act* have resulted in stricter norms. Children who witness violence are now considered victims. Therefore, if a woman returns to live with the violent spouse, shelter workers would be obliged to report a child in need of protection to the Children's Aid Society. The fine for not reporting can be as high as \$10,000 per infraction. Some women's shelters apply the letter of the *Act* while others negotiate with the CAS to include accompaniment plans for women in this process in order to inform the women of their obligations and to equip them to communicate with the authorities. Some women therefore will hesitate before going to a women's shelter out of fear of losing custody of their children.

The **issues related to the rationale for women's shelters** are becoming more and more significant given the housing crisis in Hamilton that has persisted for many years. The lack of affordable social housing in Hamilton was discussed at length by the persons we consulted. They also mentioned that the increased deinstitutionalization of persons with intellectual disabilities who are placed in group homes will add to the numerous requests already in the system for social housing in Hamilton.

Because of the social housing shortage, women remain for longer periods in women's shelters because they have nowhere else to go. Because women's shelters operate at full capacity, many women are obliged to turn to shelters for homeless persons if they want to leave a violent relationship. Thus they find themselves in a place where they are not necessarily safe and where they do not receive services they need to end the cycle of violence.

Women's shelters exist to protect women who have been victims of spousal violence. However because of the housing shortage, women's shelters find it necessary to restrict their admission criteria to ensure that women who are in danger of death (a risk that increases when women leave a violent spouse) have immediate access to the shelter. This new reality means that women victims of violence who are not in immediate danger of death cannot leave a violent relationship or must find shelter elsewhere.

The great need for settlement and integration services for thousands of newcomers who land in Hamilton each year should be added to the picture. Some of the women are fleeing armed conflict or spousal violence. Others were victims of gang rape. Statistics clearly demonstrate the immigrant women are among the poorest. They are also overrepresented in shelters, women's shelters and support services for women victims of violence.

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#### ABOUT THEIR EVENTUAL SUPPORT OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF A SHELTER SERVICE FOR FRANCOPHONE WOMEN FLEEING VIOLENCE

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The potential partners we interviewed are open to eventual collaboration in the development and establishment of a women's shelter in the Hamilton-Niagara region for Francophone women victims of violence. The *Francophone Community Health Centre Hamilton/Niagara* is very committed to this project and is prepared not only to assume leadership but also to provide financial resources. Others are prepared to offer support to program development and intervention tools.

## CHAPTER V : ANALYSIS FUNDAMENTALS

### INTRODUCTION

The analysis framework for the data collected in this study is inspired by and rooted in the main current ideas and principles found in two documents recently published by *Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes*. These are the *Guiding principles for the development of French language violence against women services* and the *Portrait of an ideal quality French language service*. We include these documents here as a review of their concepts.

### GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF FRENCH LANGUAGE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN SERVICES<sup>55</sup>

These 13 principles were developed by the steering committee established by AOcVF to guide the preparation of the *Plan stratégique de développement des services en français en matière de violence, 1997-2001*. These principles have since constituted the cornerstone upon which rests the vision for the development of French language violence against women services.

1. Francophone women in Ontario have a right to French language violence against women services, regardless of where they live.
2. Women have a right to accessible services free of charge throughout the province.
3. FLS for women victims of violence must be autonomous, free to act and to be in French, and run **by** and **for** Francophone women.
4. French language violence against women services must be developed and managed within the framework of a feminist analysis of violence against women.
5. FLS must reflect and serve women in all their diversity.
6. French language violence against women services must remain community based and, in order to preserve their freedom to act and in order to demonstrate that violence against women is not a problem of individual health but rather a social problem, they must not be absorbed into healthcare institutions or services.
7. The ongoing survival of French language violence against women services must be guaranteed by the government.

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<sup>55</sup> Brunet and Garceau, (2004), p. 32-33.



8. The strategic plan prepared by AOcVF and its members must be addressed provincially and not by opposing the interests of the various regions.
9. French language violence against women services alone cannot eliminate violence against women. The strategic plan must recognize the complexity of the issue, and must intervene globally against the system upon which violence against women rests.
10. Prevention is at the heart of our intervention and includes all measures to prevent violence against women, on a societal, not individual basis.
11. The government and FLS providers must acknowledge their accountability to the Francophone community and commit themselves to it.
12. French language violence against women services must receive appropriate funding to enable them to meet the needs of Francophone women throughout the province.
13. All service delivery must be considered in the context of each woman's right to equality, security and freedom, rights guaranteed in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

## PORTRAIT OF AN IDEAL QUALITY FLS<sup>56</sup>

This portrait of an ideal quality French language service was developed in 1998 in the context of a study of French language violence against women services in Ontario (Brunet 1998). The study presented the defining elements of quality French language anti-violence services. This portrait describes an ideal to be achieved in order to ensure accessible, high quality FLS, and serves as a check-list for organizations and government ministries measuring the accessibility and quality of French language services that address violence against women.

1. The personnel speak French and are competent:
  - the service is managed by Francophone women who have the power to make decisions affecting services;
  - the quality of services offered in French is equal or superior to that of services offered to the Anglophone community;
  - all the personnel speak and write French fluently;
  - Francophone staff are found at all levels of the services offered by the organization;
  - staff are sensitive to the reality and the oppression of Francophones living in a minority environment and to their diversity;
  - staff are committed and demonstrate empathy and respect toward clients;
  - workers have the skills and training to offer quality services.
2. The human and financial resources are adequate:
  - the human and financial resources are adequate to meet the demand and to do the necessary community development work;
  - the continuity of service is assured;

<sup>56</sup> Brunet and Garceau, (2004), pp. 33 – 34.

- Francophone volunteers contribute to the organization's activities, but the service does not wholly or in part depend on them to operate.
3. All services are guaranteed and accessible at all times:
- service users may be served in French from beginning to end;
  - the full range of services offered is available in French;
  - access to service in French is guaranteed and not only when it is requested;
  - the services respond to needs;
  - the services are accessible to women who live in distant regions;
  - the services are permanent;
  - Francophone staff are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for emergency services;
  - staff turnover is minimal;
  - the service is free;
  - the service is confidential;
  - French language material is easy for all women to understand and to use.
4. There is a feminist and holistic approach to services that respects the diversity of women:
- services offered have a feminist orientation founded on respect, choices offered to women, prevention and social change;
  - a range of options is offered to women;
  - services are holistic and geared to the needs of users;
  - services are accessible to women in all their diversity and can meet the needs of women from racial and cultural minorities, women with a disability, and other women with special needs;
  - empowerment and individual and collective responsibility are encouraged.
5. The organizational structure supports offering and developing services:
- the structure is homogenous, Francophone and autonomous;
  - the organization takes seriously its mandate to serve Francophone women;
  - the organization actively offers services in French;
  - publicity material and media interactions are in French;
  - Francophone and Anglophone communities are well informed of the existence of the service;
  - management and staff create a climate in which users are encouraged to express themselves in French;
  - employees are supported by other French-speaking colleagues in the same field;
  - the board of directors and committees are composed of Francophone women representative of the community;
  - management and those responsible for the various services and programs are French-speaking and are sensitive to the reality of Francophone women living in a minority environment;
  - training for staff and volunteers is available in French and meets clients' needs;
  - networking and referral to related resources is done in French whenever possible;
  - the service is accountable to the Francophone community and reflects its values.

## CHAPTER VI : DATA ANALYSIS

### INTRODUCTION

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In this section we will make connections between what the women fleeing violence, the workers and the partners shared with the researchers and the social, economic and the political contexts. We will deal with the right to French language services and government obligations with respect to these rights. We will then describe characteristics of Francophone communities to be taken into account in offering services.

We will then describe the numerous obstacles encountered by women and children when they leave a violent relationship. Our findings will show that poverty, social assistance, housing and inaccessible support services are all obstacles and undermine women's efforts to put an end to the violence they experience.

We conclude by summarizing the impact that the absence of services has had on women, whether at the critical moment they left a violent spouse or the point at which they decided not to avail themselves of services.

## WHY THE PERCENTAGE OF THE POPULATION IS NOT A GOOD MEASURING TOOL FOR FLS

Considering there are no designated beds in the Hamilton-Niagara region and that the French-speaking population numbers 27,095 persons, it seems clear to us that this number justifies the establishment of a Francophone women's shelter. In fact, each of the following communities has one: Kapuskasing (with a *total* population of 9,238 inhabitants), Hawkesbury (with a *total* population of 10,310 inhabitants) and Wawa (with a *total* population of 3,668 inhabitants). The percentage of Francophones relative to the total population does not seem to us to be a valid argument.

## THE OBLIGATIONS OF THE ONTARIO GOVERNMENT TOWARD FLS

With the *1986 French Language Services Act*, the provincial government guarantees the public the right to receive French language services in 25 designated regions<sup>57</sup>. Recall that the designation applies to the city of Hamilton and the cities of Port Colborne and Welland in the regional municipality of Niagara.

The *Beaulac* and *Montfort* decisions demonstrated that the Ontario government should offer French language services (FLS) in order to encourage the development of the Ontario Francophone community. These services also should be offered to protect the Francophone minority of Ontario, to promote the evolution of the French language and to encourage the equality of French with English<sup>58</sup>.

These decisions are important because they highlight the government's obligation to offer access to FLS in the same manner as services offered to the population in general. In order to promote equality with English services, French language services should be reliable and of a quality comparable to English language services<sup>59</sup>. It is therefore unacceptable that the majority of women we interviewed had to wait long periods before obtaining French language services (in one case, 91 days) while women who speak English are able to access services within 24 hours of their arrival at an emergency women's shelter.

Furthermore, according to Article 1 of the *Human Rights Code*, each person has the right to equal treatment with regard to services. Many grounds for discrimination are listed, for example: sex, race, ethnic origin, ancestry, place of origin, etc.<sup>60</sup>. The *Ontario Human Rights Commission* has in the past upheld Ontario government's obligation to ensure equal access to services offered to the general public and that this government obligation extends to specialized services such as a service to children suffering from autism.

Shelters for women victims of violence are organizations mandated and subsidized by the Ontario government to offer specialized services. This study clearly demonstrates that Francophone women of the Hamilton-Niagara region have a desperate need for shelter services

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<sup>57</sup> Office of Francophone Affairs, <http://www.ofa.gov.on.ca/english/FLSA.html>.

<sup>58</sup> Guilbeault, (2005), p. 6.

<sup>59</sup> *Idem.*, p. 14.

<sup>60</sup> *Idem.*, p. 8.

when they leave their violent spouse. However the existing women's shelter network is not equipped to offer FLS. Not one women's shelter in the Hamilton-Niagara region is designated to offer FLS, and not one of them can offer FLS on an ongoing and permanent basis.

Given that they cannot offer the full range of support services to Francophone women, the shelters use interpretation services during intake. In the best of situations, some women and children were also able to receive counselling services, always through interpreters, but to a lesser extent (compared to the support services offered to residents who speak English). Recall however that the *Ontario Superior Court of Justice* recognized that French is a language that has official status in Ontario and that the presence of an interpreter does not meet the Ontario government's obligation to offer French language services<sup>61</sup>.

Faced with the absence of active offer of FLS and the network's inability to offer support services to Francophone women (beyond emergency housing and food), few Francophone women have access to services offered by women's shelters in the Hamilton-Niagara region.

## A CLIENTELE WITH A FACE AND MULTIPLE NEEDS

As mentioned in chapter IV, there is a real lack of understanding on the part of the majority English-speaking community of the Francophone identity and cultures and in this context, in women's shelters. It appears that existing services do not grasp the nature, or the composition or the needs of Francophone communities.

One of the strongest manifestations of this incomprehension is the use of interpretation services. While these services can help and provide for an initial contact, they only allow for minimal exchange of words. It is as though one forgets that being Francophone means more than just speaking in French. The collective imagination of the Anglophone community seems to make abstraction of the fact that the identity of a group or of a people is not only built around a language, but also around a number of cultural, artistic, emotional, historical, geopolitical and other reference points. It is not enough to translate words in order to have real communication. Take humour as an example. British humour is very different from Canadian and American humour, but these three peoples share the same language.

It is true that a good number of Francophone women in Ontario speak English. However, what is also true is that just as many women do not understand, understand little or are not fluent in English. They need to express feelings or deal with highly emotional and difficult topics in their mother tongue. Even with some English, it is difficult to understand the nuances that are often so important in the context of violence. It is essential, even crucial in moments of crisis to know how to understand what is not said, what is implied and what cultural references mean in order to intervene effectively and adequately.

Another common misconception about Francophone identity and plurality is the erroneous belief that Francophones are all of Quebec origin. Some women who insist on obtaining FLS are still being told that if they are not satisfied with what they are being offered, they can simply "return to Quebec". Must we be reminded that Francophones, of all ethnocultural origins, participated in the colonization of Ontario as in that of all of the other Canadian provinces and territories?

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<sup>61</sup> *Idem.*, p. 13.

Are we not aware that Canada adopted the *Official Languages Act* because we recognize the equal status of Francophones and Anglophones? Must we be reminded that Quebec is not the only territory that has linguistic obligations?

And while we are highlighting the importance of reference points and cultural baggage, we should deal with the changing nature of the Ontario Francophone community. In Hamilton it is probably more accurate to speak of Francophone communities. In the last ten years the profile of the population of Hamilton has been greatly transformed. It is estimated that 23.6 % of the population of Hamilton were born in another country. The Francophone community in Hamilton reflects this diversity and includes approximately 1,380 persons<sup>62</sup> mainly from Africa, the Arab countries and Asia<sup>63</sup>.

Succeeding waves of immigration brought many women fleeing armed conflict. Considering their experience in their country of origin, few women will seek assistance from police services or authorities. Those who have not yet obtained permanent resident status may fear deportation. A good number of the immigrant women we met live in conditions of extreme poverty and have no notion of Canadian laws or services to which they have the right. They therefore need access to settlement and integration services.

Even before beginning the healing process subsequent to the violence in their lives, the women need to meet their basic needs. Because many of these women do not speak English or have limited knowledge of the language, services for them should be offered in French. Their needs are so multiple and numerous that newcomers and women of visible minority communities are overrepresented in the FLS currently offered.

At the same time we report an obvious absence of women of French Canadian origin in the FLS offered in Hamilton. Even though they represent 85 % of the female Francophone population in the Hamilton region, they only make up 10 to 15 % of the violence against women service users. Where are they? To whom do they turn to get help and support?

Maybe they found it difficult to access FLS because the services were over-burdened and because the services are asked to respond to all the community's needs while at the same do not receive the necessary human and financial resources. Maybe they live in a small community where everyone knows everyone else, where news travels quickly so they prefer to receive anonymous services. Perhaps they too often arrived at places that promoted FLS and they found that FLS did not continue past the reception area.

Or maybe they have stopped asking for help because when they are in a situation in which their safety is in danger, they no longer have the energy to claim their rights as Francophone citizens; that asking for FLS would be equivalent to indefinitely postponing their access to services; that communicating through an interpreter could lead to a series of misunderstandings that could have serious consequences on their well-being; that obtaining services designed for Anglophones would result in not being understood, in feeling isolated, in the impression that they are losing themselves instead of rebuilding their lives.

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<sup>62</sup> This represents 15 % of the French speaking population of Hamilton and 8 % of the Francophone population of the Hamilton-Niagara region.

<sup>63</sup> Convergence, (2006), information sheet 6.

One thing is certain, that women of French Canadian origin are invisible in the existing network of women's shelters and in FLS offered by the main Francophone community agency in Hamilton. This leads us to believe that these women are simply not being served by existing systems.

In the Southern Niagara region, two-thirds of the clientele served by the *Francophone Community Health Centre Hamilton/Niagara (CSCHN)* at its service location in Welland are women of Canadian origin and one-third are women from visible minority communities. The Francophone community has long been established here and is concentrated in the Welland, Port Colborne and Fort Erie communities.

The proximity of persons facilitates service promotion and the persons who work at the CSCHN are known in the community. This reality makes it easier for some women to approach workers in an informal context, but for others who fear the lack of anonymity it has the opposite effect. The ease with which information is known and spread in a small community makes it far more difficult for some women to dare ask for the help they need<sup>64</sup>.

The lack of public transportation is typical of rural communities and presents problems for women who want to access services.

Another point about the Southern Niagara region is that immigrant women make more efforts to integrate into the majority English-speaking community because they are under the impression that there will be more opportunities to improve their socioeconomic conditions.

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<sup>64</sup>Mosher, Evans and Little, (2004), p. 78.

## THE OBSTACLES FACING WOMEN IN THE HAMILTON-NIAGARA REGION

Women seeking to end the violence they experience at the hands of a spouse encounter enormous obstacles. One of the most significant obstacles is, without doubt, the extreme poverty that threatens them as soon as they leave their violent spouse. Social measures and programs that should facilitate their transition to a healthy, safe and productive life instead act as barriers, resulting in many cases in difficult if not impossible choices for the women. Francophone women in Ontario also experience this reality; in some ways, their economic instability can result in increased vulnerability to violence.

In order to better grasp the extent of the financial difficulties Francophone women who are victims of violence must overcome and the impact that poverty has on the probability that they will succeed in living a healthy life free from violence, it is important to look at their economic situation, social assistance benefits and the housing situation.

### POVERTY

The following statistics are taken from the series of publications from the Ontario Office of Francophone Affairs (2005A, B, C, D, and E) and are from the 2001 Census. Although they do not deal specifically with abused women, they give a general picture of the economic situation of women from French-speaking Ontario.

CHARACTERISTICS OF FRANCOPHONE WOMEN IN ONTARIO	THE STATE OF THE MATTER
ALL FRANCOPHONE WOMEN OF ANY AGE OR ETHNOCULTURAL ORIGIN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Relative to their male counterparts, Francophone and non-Francophone women are overrepresented in income categories less than \$40,000 and underrepresented in income categories greater or equal to \$40,000;</li> <li>▪ In all of Ontario, the proportion of Francophone women living below the poverty line is slightly higher than that of non-Francophone women (15.8 % compared to 15.6 %).</li> </ul>
FRANCOPHONE WOMEN BELONGING TO A RACIAL MINORITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The proportion of Francophone racial minorities (FRM) living below the poverty line is twice that of Francophones (33.7% compared with 14.1 %). The proportion of FRM living below the poverty line is also higher than that of non-Francophone racial minorities as a whole (25.9 %);</li> <li>▪ The proportion of FRM living below the poverty line is higher for women than for men (34.8 % versus 32.5 %)</li> </ul>
YOUNG FRANCOPHONE WOMEN BETWEEN THE AGES OF 20 AND 24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Young women are more disadvantaged than Francophone and non-Francophone young men;</li> <li>▪ 24.6 % of Francophone women between the ages of 20 and 24 live below the poverty line compared with 20.1 % of Francophone men of the same age group;</li> <li>▪ Among non-Francophones, 21.4 % of young women live below the poverty line compared with 17.3 % of their male counterparts.</li> </ul>
FRANCOPHONE WOMEN 65 YEARS OF AGE AND OLDER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Older women are twice as likely to live below the poverty line as men; 22.8 % of women and 10.8 % of men 65 years and older live below the poverty line;</li> <li>▪ In the non-Francophone older population, the proportions are 18.4 % for women and 9.8 % for men;</li> <li>▪ The difference between the sexes is even more significant for Francophones 75 years of age or older than those who are between 65 to 74 years of age. Three Francophone women out of every ten (29.9 %) 75 years of age or more have an</li> </ul>



	income below or equal to the poverty line, which is almost three times the proportion observed among Francophone men of the same age group (9.6 %). Among Francophones between the ages of 65 and 74, 17.7 % of women and 11.4 % of men living below the poverty line. Francophones 65 years and over are most disadvantaged in the Central Ontario Region. More than 23.7 % of Francophone women and 15.3 % of Francophone men 65 years and older living in the Central Region live below the poverty line.
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This data paints a dismal picture of the economic situation of Francophone women in Ontario. Although this does not describe the situation of abused women, indications are that women who live with violence live in even more difficult economic conditions. Recall that almost all of this study's respondents had a personal annual income of less than \$19,999 in 2005 and almost two-thirds had an annual income of less than \$9,999.

### POVERTY IN HAMILTON

According to a recent publication from the city of Hamilton's social services department, there is an increasing problem of poverty and homelessness. The most recent statistics indicate that:

- In comparison with Ontario as a whole, the city of Hamilton has a much higher proportion of persons living under the poverty line; the rate of persons living under the poverty line is 18.8 % in Hamilton compared with 13.6 % in Ontario;
- Nearly one in five Hamilton residents live under the poverty line;
- Hamilton and Toronto record the highest poverty rates in Ontario;
- Hamilton has a higher rate of persons who receive benefits from the *Ontario Disability Support Program* than the Ontario average<sup>65</sup>.

### SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

In their report on abused women and their experience of Ontario's welfare system, Mosher, Evans and Little (2004) explain why social assistance benefits are clearly insufficient to allow women fleeing violence to get back on their feet.

First, it is important to recall that social assistance benefits were reduced by 21.6 % in 1995 and they have only since been increased by 3 %<sup>66</sup>. With the increase in the cost of living since 1995, the real decline in purchasing power is 34 %<sup>67</sup>. A look at some examples of the benefit rates illustrates the degree of poverty of women who depend on benefits.

<sup>65</sup> Hamilton Community Services, (2006), p. 8.

<sup>66</sup> In May of 2004, the Ontario government increased social assistance benefits by 3 %, the first increase since the 1995 cuts.

<sup>67</sup> Income Security Advocacy Centre, (2003) as cited in Mosher, Evans and Little, (2004), p. 13.

A single woman who is part of the *Ontario Works* program receives a maximum of \$520 per month, that is, a \$325 shelter allowance and a \$195 basic needs allowance. The permissible asset level for this same person is \$520. This means that asset depletion is a prerequisite to social assistance benefit entitlement. Current social assistance rates in Ontario for a single person are equivalent to 35 % of the poverty line. Conditions are slightly better for a single person in receipt of *Ontario Disability Support Program* benefits who can receive monthly benefits of up to \$930.

A woman who is a single parent with one child receives a maximum of \$997 per month. This amount is equivalent to approximately 58 % of the poverty line and she is allowed an asset level of \$1,457<sup>68</sup>. In Hamilton, 62 % of persons who use food banks said that they would lose their housing if they did not have access to food bank services<sup>69</sup>. In addition, the Canadian government created the *National Child Benefit* program to assist low-income families. However the poorest families do not benefit from this measure because some provinces, such as Ontario, granted themselves the right to deduct this amount from social assistance benefits<sup>70</sup>.

Moreover the lack of support from government agents who deal with the women, the suspicion with which they are treated, the degradation and humiliation they experience as well as the inability to access information and predict outcomes are all elements that contribute to the women's decision to return to their abusive relationship<sup>71</sup>.

Six of the 58 jury recommendations of the Hadley inquest deal specifically with income support<sup>72</sup>. The jury specifies that abused women need an adequate income and that the Ontario government should develop measures to respond to the specific needs of women and children fleeing a violent relationship. These measures should include intake and screening procedures for cases of violence, an increase in housing allowance, an allowance for moving and automatic deferral of *Ontario Works* participation for six months. In addition, recommendation 31 adds that the Ontario government should review the social assistance rates and ensure that these rates reflect the actual needs of the recipients considering the social and geographical environment in the location in which they reside<sup>73</sup>.

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## THE HOUSING CRISIS

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In 2005, the average rent for a two bedroom apartment remained at 2004 levels in the Hamilton CMA (Census Metropolitan Area), that is, \$791<sup>74</sup>. With social assistance benefits of \$997 per month, this only leaves a woman who is a single parent \$206 per month to buy food and meet her and her children's other needs. How is it possible to eat and live on \$3.43 per person per day?

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<sup>68</sup> Income Security Advocacy Clinic, (2003) and National Council on Welfare, (1999) as cited in Mosher, Evans and Little, (2004), p. 13.

<sup>69</sup> Hunger Count, Hamilton FoodShare, (2004), as cited in Hamilton Community Services, (2006), p. 10.

<sup>70</sup> Convergence, coopérative d'expertes conseils (2006), p. 21.

<sup>71</sup> Mosher, Evans and Little, (2004), p. 65.

<sup>72</sup> Recommendations 31 to 36 inclusive.

<sup>73</sup> Penwill, (2002), p. 6.

<sup>74</sup> CMHC, (2005A), p. 3.

The obvious answer would be that she should seek subsidized housing. However there are currently 4,258 requests for social housing in Hamilton and more than 8,000 persons are waiting for affordable housing in the Niagara region<sup>75</sup>. The waiting period is 3 to 7 years depending on the nature of the request.

According to the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) the vacancy rate in the St. Catharines rental market is 2.7 % and there is downward trend. All of the apartment categories recorded increases in the average rent in 2005. In all categories, rent increases exceeded the 2005 Provincial Tenant Protection Act Review Guideline increase for occupied units which was set at 1.5 percent<sup>76</sup>.

Despite the increase in vacant units, the average monthly rent for a two bedroom apartment is \$736 in the St. Catharines-Niagara CMA, an increase of 1.9 %. Stronger demand for one bedroom apartments translated into a 2.1 % increase in average rents for this type of apartment<sup>77</sup>. It is predicted that the benchmark two bedroom monthly rent will reach \$752 in 2006<sup>78</sup>.

Because there is a shortage of affordable housing in Hamilton and in the Niagara region, many persons are at risk becoming homeless. A recent study shows that:

- In Hamilton, 21.9 % of renters spend more than 50% of their income on housing;
- Women, immigrants of visible minorities as well as persons with a disability are more likely to spend more than 50 % of their income on housing<sup>79</sup>.

One of the direct consequences of the inability to access affordable housing in Hamilton in the Niagara region is that abused women remain in women's shelters for longer periods. Women's shelters are thus practically transformed into second stage housing.

As illustrated above, Francophone women are more likely to be poor. Many women leave abusive relationships with only the clothes on their backs. Even worse, some of them are dealing with large debts created by their abusive partner<sup>80</sup>. Social assistance benefits are clearly insufficient because they are not enough to pay the rent and to buy food. The affordable housing shortage is one of the most common reasons many women do not leave or return to their violent spouse.

The Ontario Chief Coroner's inquiry held following Gillian Hadley's murder (in June 2000) highlights the importance of immediate access for abused women to emergency shelter services that are safe and appropriate, of long term assistance and of access to adequate and affordable housing on a priority basis. Jurors were of the opinion that the long waiting list for subsidized housing was unacceptable<sup>81</sup>.

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<sup>75</sup> [http://www.mah.gov.on.ca/userfiles/HTML/nts\\_1\\_27026\\_2.html](http://www.mah.gov.on.ca/userfiles/HTML/nts_1_27026_2.html)

<sup>76</sup> CMHC, (2005B), p. 4.

<sup>77</sup> Idem.

<sup>78</sup> Idem., p. 7.

<sup>79</sup> Hamilton Community Services, (2006), p. 9.

<sup>80</sup> Mosher, Evans and Little, (2004), p. 68.

<sup>81</sup> Recommendations 23 to 30, as cited by the Ontario Women's Justice Network.

## SETTLEMENT AND INTEGRATION SERVICES

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Immigrant women who experience violence are met not only with the same obstacles as women of Canadian origin, but also countless other difficulties.

Canada likes to see itself as a country that welcomes diversity. Canadian embassies throughout the world promote a vast country full of riches, where all its citizens are equal under the law and have guaranteed rights and liberties, where two official languages exist side by side and are recognized. Each year thousands of immigrants arrive in Canada (mainly in Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver) in the hopes of rebuilding their lives and improving their situation. Persons who come to Ontario settle mainly in Toronto, Ottawa and Hamilton.

In many cases, reality quickly paints another picture of their welcoming country. The many obstacles women and their family face end up destroying any dreams they held. Instead of finding prosperity, many newcomers live in extreme poverty. Because their diplomas are not recognized and not having experience in the Canadian workplace is held against them, they are unable to obtain work. Many of these women do not know their rights, the laws, the institutions and services of their new country.

France and many other European countries have limited or closed their doors to immigration. The fact that Canada is a bilingual country is often a deciding factor for women from Francophone countries, particularly from the African continent, in immigrating to Canada. Many of these women do not speak English. Once they arrive in Hamilton, they are surprised and disoriented by the absence of French language services.

There do exist settlement and integration services that are mandated and financed by the Ontario and Canadian governments to welcome newcomers but they are too few to meet the demand. As in other areas, hardly any of these organizations offer French language services beyond the reception area. Some women who accessed these services were told it would be better for them to learn English than to persevere in their search for French language services. It is therefore not surprising to hear some women admitting that they prefer to establish bonds with the majority Anglophone community.

Some of the women we interviewed during this study have many traumatic experiences to overcome, many wounds to nurse. They are fleeing a violent relationship, have fled a country where there was armed conflict or have fled the experience of gang rapes in refugee camps. Some also have experienced different types of aggression all their life. But it is almost impossible for them to treat these wounds when they have no roof over their head, not enough to eat and only rudimentary knowledge of their rights.

## WOMEN'S SHELTERS

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According to the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services, there are seven women's shelters for abused women in the region of Hamilton-Niagara offering a total of 146 beds to abused women and their children<sup>82</sup>. In 2005-2006, 1,651 women and children received shelter

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<sup>82</sup> Four women's shelters in the Hamilton region (100 beds) and three in the Niagara region (46 beds).  
*Needs assessment study: shelter services in the Hamilton-Niagara region for Francophone women and their children who are fleeing a violent relationship, Convergence, coopérative d'expertes conseils*

services. The occupancy rate was 88 % in Hamilton and 74 % in the Niagara region. Some 1,814 requests were refused<sup>83</sup> in Hamilton in 2005-2006 and 106<sup>84</sup> in the Niagara region (for a regional total of 1,920)<sup>85</sup>.

The Inasmuch Shelter in Hamilton alone had to refuse 487 requests between April 2005 and March 2006 due to lack of space. The previous year, the shelter had to refuse 205 requests. At Women's Place of South Niagara (Welland), for the same period, it is estimated that 90 families were refused shelter due to lack of space.

There are two possible explanations for the lower occupancy rate in women's shelters in the Niagara region. One is that Nova House in Niagara Falls is so small and dilapidated that women only go there when they are desperate. However this shelter will move to a new building that will open its doors in September 2006 and will offer eight additional beds. The second is that last year the YWCA of Niagara Falls opened a shelter for women in difficulty that is newer and more spacious. It is possible that women from the Niagara Falls region who are fleeing a violent relationship choose to seek refuge at the YWCA because of the more attractive conditions.

Statistics from the women's shelters in Hamilton show that women remain for longer periods meaning there is less turnover. In 2004, the average length of stay in Hamilton women's shelters was 24 days<sup>86</sup>. In the shelter in St. Catharines, it is estimated that 50 % of the women and children seeking shelter were refused. In 2005-2006, this meant 224 women and children fleeing a violent were not able to obtain shelter because of lack of space. When there is no space in St. Catharines, women are referred to shelter services in the Burlington, Kitchener and Simcoe communities<sup>87</sup>. When women go outside their community, their regular support network is removed, thus increasing the isolation.

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#### WHAT HAS NOT WORKED WELL IN WOMEN'S SHELTERS OFFERING ENGLISH LANGUAGE SERVICES

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For women who have experienced much violence in their life, the women's shelter is meant to be a positive, welcoming place where they feel safe and where their children are protected from harm; a place where they do not feel isolated and alone but rather a place where they can meet other women who have also lived with violence and who are trying to rebuild their life; a place that gives them a new support circle; a place where they meet workers who listen to them, who understand and who assist them with social aid, housing, the legal system and many other services that will assist them in re-establishing themselves. In summary, women's shelters are lifelines for many abused women.

However, for Francophone women, women's shelters in the Hamilton-Niagara region offering English language services do not serve this role. This occurs neither out of contempt nor of ill will, but because their approach and their services were modelled to serve the majority

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<sup>83</sup> It is possible that the number of refusals is incorrect because 2005-2006 was the first year this information was collected and the term "refused" was interpreted differently depending on the women's shelter

<sup>84</sup> Idem.

<sup>85</sup> Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services, numbers obtained by email June 29 and July 5, 2006.

<sup>86</sup> Hamilton Community Services, idem.

<sup>87</sup> <http://www.womensplacestcatharines.ca/pages/newhome.html>

Anglophone culture and because the workers are English-speaking and are not able to communicate directly with the women.

The repercussions of inadequate access to quality, permanent and ongoing French language services are many and are very costly for women, their children and for the entire community.

Because women must communicate through an interpreter, shelter intake is slower and less well documented. It ends up that most of the Francophone women find themselves without an individual plan or with an inadequate plan. Support services such as discussion groups, group empowerment sessions and accompaniment are simply not accessible. The women become more and more isolated because they are left to themselves.

Women's shelters offer services that are both unique and essential to ending violence against women. They are not just a place to stay where women come to have a roof over their heads and food. If this were the case, a hotel room would suffice. Neither is their mandate limited to ensuring the safety of women and children. If this were the case, a security guard posted at their hotel door would suffice.

What distinguishes women's shelters from other emergency shelter services is the intervention that takes place, the information that is transmitted, the listening and the accompaniment that is offered, the advocacy on behalf of and with the women. All these are women's shelter services. And these are the services that are not accessible to Francophone women.

According to the workers' experience, intervention happens in the group, and thus the importance of a Francophone community environment in the shelter. As a result of not having an individual plan or counselling services (individual or group), the women deny the violence they experienced, are not made aware of the cycle of violence analysis and are not equipped to recognize the manifestations of violence. Because they cannot communicate with workers, women do not receive enough information and encounter problems that might have been avoided if only they had been given the information, particularly in the case of the *Child and Family Services Act* and involvement of the *Children's Aid Society*.

For the children, finding themselves in an Anglophone environment with strangers with whom they cannot speak has negative consequences on their well being. As is the case of their mother, they feel isolated. After leaving the family home in often difficult conditions, children can also be upset and experience feelings of abandonment, disorientation and instability. The children also need quality French language services if the cycle of violence is to be broken.

For the Welland community, this picture requires refinement. Women's Place of South Niagara, the women's shelter in Welland, and the *Francophone Community Health Centre Hamilton/Niagara* (CSCHN) have developed a protocol for services for Francophone women. Because of this agreement, Francophone women housed at Women's Place of South Niagara (Welland) have direct access to a CSCHN transitional support worker. Note that this protocol does not link the other women's shelters in the territory<sup>88</sup> that either rarely or do not access CSCHN services. In addition, the CSCHN in Welland offers a ten week discussion group for women.

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<sup>88</sup> The protocol does not apply to Women's Place St. Catharines and North Niagara and Nova House, Niagara Falls.

We noted important differences between women who accessed the above mentioned services and those who had not. The women who had participated in the women's discussion group (offered in the Welland region) had more fully integrated the principles of a feminist analysis of violence against women and recognized that they had experienced violence. They were more articulate and surer of themselves.

There was a clear distinction between what we observed here and our observations elsewhere in the region. This distinction illustrates the beneficial impact of using quality French language services within a framework of feminist analysis and intervention, created by and for Francophone women.

## THE IMPACT OF THE ABSENCE OF SERVICES AT THE CRITICAL MOMENT OF LEAVING A VIOLENT RELATIONSHIP

When FLS are not actively offered, the options for Francophone women are limited. Some will try to obtain shelter in an Anglophone women's shelter where they will only be provided with shelter and food. They will certainly appreciate the sense of security and the warm welcome that they will find, but because they are not able to communicate, they will feel the burden of isolation and exclusion, as well as powerlessness and frustration because they are not equipped to take action, to begin the healing process and to move forward in their lives.

Because women's shelters in the Hamilton-Niagara region, depending on the time of the year, often function at full capacity, others will find shelter in centres for homeless persons and families. There, they will be immersed in a universe where women, men and children with multiple difficulties and mental health problems live and share side by side. They will not feel safe and no one will offer them the support they need to rebuild their life.

Many women will choose to act by depleting their own resources. They will leave a violent spouse, change the locks or they will move, install a security system, and ask friends, boyfriends and members of their family to watch over their home or apartment. They will advise police services and will ask for a restraining order for the violent spouse. They will do all these things that in the end may expose them to great danger and put their lives at risk. Gillian Hadley did all these things with the dramatic result of which we are aware. The 2005 report (distributed in June 2006) of the Domestic Violence Death Review Committee indicates that one of the primary risk factors in homicides of spouses is an actual or a pending separation<sup>89</sup>.

In the absence of the active offer of French language services in women's shelters in the Hamilton-Niagara region, the majority of Francophone women probably remain in the hold of violence. Often in order to avoid extreme poverty for their children and also to avoid subjecting them to the maze of a system that risks hindering instead of helping, many women will decide to stay with a violent spouse. There will be a heavy price for them to pay, for those around them and for society as a whole.

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<sup>89</sup> Domestic Violence Death Review Committee, (2005), p. 6.



## CONCLUSION

The YWCA Pan-Canadian study shows that three-quarters of women's shelter residents are in grave danger of death. The fact that women find refuge in women's shelters confirms that women's shelters are potentially life saving for the women, at least in the short term. The generally accepted statistics are as convincing as the data collected as part of the YWCA study. Close to 2,600 homicides between spouses (married, divorced or separate or living common law) have been recorded in Canada since 1974. Seventy-seven percent of these were committed against women. From 1994 to 2003, sixty-two percent of murdered women were killed by their husband or spouse<sup>90</sup>.

According to a recent Ontario government publication, 25 % of women in Ontario will be subjected to spousal violence at least once in their life<sup>91</sup>. And according to the Statistics Canada 2004 General Social Survey: *Victimization*<sup>92</sup>, 34 % of women assaulted by a spouse fear for their life because of the violence. Based on these numbers, one can reasonably estimate that at least 3,105 Francophone women will be assaulted by a spouse in the Hamilton-Niagara region and that 1,025 of these women will fear for their life. However, no women's shelter in the Hamilton-Niagara region is designated for FLS and not one of them has the capacity to offer FLS on an ongoing permanent basis.

The need for a women's shelter in the Hamilton-Niagara region for Francophone women fleeing a violent relationship is evident and well documented in this study. The women who use the services, the partners and the persons who work in services that offer FLS all agree on this need.

The *Beaulac* and *Montfort* decisions clearly demonstrated that the Ontario government should offer French language services in order to support the development of the Ontario Francophone community. These services should be offered in a manner that protects the Ontario Francophone minority, promotes the evolution of the French language and encourages the equality of French with English. In this light, we believe that Francophone women in the Hamilton-Niagara region who are fleeing a violent relationship have the right to:

- Reliable, free and accessible services of quality comparable to English language services;
- Services rooted in the right of each woman to equality, security and freedom, rights that are guaranteed in the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*;
- A women's shelter that is prevention based and that uses all available means to prevent violence against women on a societal basis;
- A Francophone women's shelter that is autonomous, free to act and to exist in French, managed for and by Francophone women.

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<sup>90</sup> YWCA Canada, [http://www.ywacacanada.ca/public\\_eng/advocacy/Shelter/Q&A\\_FINAL\\_EN.pdf](http://www.ywacacanada.ca/public_eng/advocacy/Shelter/Q&A_FINAL_EN.pdf).

<sup>91</sup> Government Information Centre, (2005), p. 3.

<sup>92</sup> Statistics Canada (2006), p. 8.

In 2005, the Ontario government recognized that there should be financial parity throughout the province between the Francophone sexual assault centres (CALACS) and Anglophone rape crisis centres. It is now the time to apply this principle to services that address spousal violence.

The *Francophone Community Health Centre Hamilton/Niagara* (CSCHN) is prepared to sponsor, in collaboration with *Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes* (AOcVF) the development of a women's shelter for abused Francophone women. We therefore recommend that the CSCHN immediately take the necessary steps to conduct a feasibility study to include the following elements:

- The feasibility of the project;
- An architectural study that would examine various housing models (for example: condominiums, houses that include both emergency shelter and second stage housing, etc.) and the costs of the different options;
- Zoning information;
- A community plan detailing how the community will be involved in the development and operation of the women's shelter, also including how readily available transportation will be provided for women and children seeking shelter;
- The capital costs of establishing a women's shelter and an estimate of its operating costs.

Work on the feasibility study should begin in August 2006 and conclude with a definitive report in December 2006.

Finally, the *Association canadienne-française de l'Ontario* (ACFO) Hamilton owns a three storey house adjacent to the building that houses the offices of the *Francophone Community Health Centre Hamilton/Niagara* (CSCHN) in Hamilton. ACFO Hamilton would be prepared to transfer this property to the Francophone community. For this reason it is important that zoning research proceed quickly, because this opportunity could not only accelerate the process of developing a women's shelter for Francophone women, but could also represent significant financial savings.

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## APPENDIX 1 : DATA COLLECTION TOOLS

In this appendix, we present the tools that were used to gather data on the needs of Francophone women and their children in the Hamilton-Niagara region fleeing a violent relationship. The different tools include:

Facilitation guide for focus groups with women fleeing a violent relationship;

Individual interview guide for women fleeing a violent relationship;

Facilitation guide for discussion groups with persons working in the field of spousal violence;

The individual interview guide for Francophone/Anglophone partners;

Needs assessment study: shelter services for women and children fleeing a violent relationship  
Women's focus groups – facilitation guide

Time	Subjects Addressed
Welcome and snack	
10 minutes	<p>Welcome</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Introduction of facilitation team and participants (first names)</li> <li>▪ Presentation of AOcVF needs assessment study (objectives and methodology)</li> <li>▪ Presentation of session objectives and agenda: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Francophone women who have experienced spousal violence</li> <li>▪ Evaluate French language shelter service needs of abused women and their children</li> <li>▪ Understand the desired approach to service provision</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Mention confidentiality and anonymity of treatment of data and the allowance given at the end of the session</li> </ul>
15 minutes	<p>Experiences of shelter services</p> <p>We wish to find out about the shelter experiences of women and their children of the region who are victims of spousal violence.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Have you or someone you know used women's shelter services in the region?</li> <li>▪ If yes, what did you or the other woman appreciate the most about these services? Appreciate the least?</li> </ul>
25 minutes	<p>Other experiences of the services</p> <p>To help you in the healing process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What are the French language services you <u>use</u>, <u>have used</u> or to your knowledge <u>are available in the region</u>?</li> <li>▪ Have you used English language services? If yes, how do you describe your experience?</li> <li>▪ Would you have liked to have received other types of services?</li> </ul>
45 minutes	<p>Services you would like to see in women's shelters</p> <p>If you were in need of a shelter service, what are the services you would hope to have or receive? (And a description of the services)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Safe place (24/7);</li> <li>▪ Support services;</li> <li>▪ Mutual support services:</li> <li>▪ Accompaniment services (legal, medical, financial matters, etc.);</li> <li>▪ Support line;</li> <li>▪ Follow up services (after shelter stay);</li> <li>▪ Children's services;</li> <li>▪ Referral services;</li> <li>▪ External consultation services (without shelter).</li> </ul>
20 minutes	<p>Service approach</p> <p>Now that we have defined shelter services, what type of approach should these services have?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Type of welcome;</li> <li>▪ Confidentiality;</li> <li>▪ Feminist approach (overt or implied);</li> <li>▪ Offered by women</li> <li>▪ Accessibility of the service (geographical, physical, flexible schedule and rapidity of service);</li> <li>▪ Language of service;</li> </ul>
5 minutes	<p>Conclusion</p> <p>Word of thanks</p>
	Distribution of demographical profiles and participant allowance
	End of the session



Needs assessment study: shelter services for women and children fleeing a violent relationship  
Interview guide for women

Word of welcome (5 minutes)

- Presentation of AOCVF needs assessment study (objectives and methodology)
- Presentation of session objectives and agenda:
  - Francophone women who have experienced spousal violence
  - Evaluate French language shelter service needs of abused women and their children
  - Understand the desired approach to service provision

Mention confidentiality and anonymity and treatment of data and the allowance given at the end of the session

Experience of shelter services (5 minutes)

1. Have you used women's shelter services in the region?  
 yes                       no

If yes, what did you appreciate the most about these services? The least?

If no, is it because you did not need them? Or is it for other reasons? If yes, which reasons?

Experience of French language services (10 minutes)

2. What are the French language services in the region that you use, have used or are available to your knowledge to assist you in your healing process?
3. Have you used English language services? If yes, how would you describe your experience?
4. Would you have liked to have received other types of services?

Services you would like to see in a women's shelter (20 minutes)

5. If you needed a shelter service, what are the services you would hope to have or receive? (And description of the services)
  - Safe place (24/7);
  - Support services;
  - Mutual support services;
  - Accompaniment services (legal, medical, financial matters, etc.);
  - Support line;
  - Follow up services (after shelter stay);
  - Children's services;
  - Referral services;
  - External consultation services (without shelter)
6. What approach would you like to find in a women's shelter for Francophone women and children?
7. Distribution of the demographical profile and participant allowance.

Word of thanks

End of the interview

Needs assessment study: shelter services for women and children fleeing a violent relationship  
Discussion group with workers – facilitation guide

Time	Subjects Addressed
Before beginning	<p>Welcome and snack</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Distribution of profiles</li> </ul>
15 minutes	<p>Welcome</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Introduction of facilitator and workers</li> <li>▪ Presentation of AOcVF needs assessment study (objectives and methodology)</li> <li>▪ Presentation of objectives and session agenda                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Update on information related to FLS in the region that address violence against women;</li> <li>▪ Evaluate the French language shelter service needs for abused women and their children;</li> <li>▪ Analysis of the regional environment and the issues concerning French language shelter services for abused women and their children.</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Mention the anonymous treatment of data.</li> </ul>
10 minutes	<p>Update on FLS offered in the region What FLS exist in the region that deal with spousal violence?</p>
20 minutes	<p>Needs for French language shelter services for abused women and their children In your work dealing with spousal violence,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Have you received requests for shelter from Francophone women?                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ If yes, how did you deal with these requests?</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ If you made referrals to women’s shelters in the region, what was your experience of this intervention?</li> </ul>
45 minutes	<p><b>Regional environment</b></p> <p><u>Internal:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What are the strengths and weakness of FLS for abused women and children in your region?</li> </ul> <p><u>External:</u> Considering the regional political or social climate in addressing shelter services for abused women and their children:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What would favour their development?</li> <li>▪ What could impede their development?</li> </ul>
25 minutes	<p><b>Regional issues concerning violence</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Are there specific regional issues around the development of French language shelter services for abused women and their children?</li> <li>▪ What is the best location for a shelter for Francophone women and their children to cover the territory belonging to the Hamilton-Niagara region? Why would you choose this location?</li> <li>▪ If there was a Francophone women’s shelter in the region, should it have particular characteristics, and if yes, which characteristics?</li> <li>▪ In addition to a shelter for abused women, does the region need other FLS that address violence? If yes, what services?</li> </ul>
5 minutes	<p><b>Conclusion</b> Word of thanks</p>
	<p><b>End of the session</b></p>

**Needs Assessment Study: Shelter Needs of Women and Their Children Fleeing Violence**  
Interview guide for Francophone/Anglophone Organizations/Potential Allies

**Initial contact and general presentation**

Presentation of AOcVF's needs assessment survey and its objectives:

- Update information on French language services offered to abused women in the region;
- Assess needs for French language shelter services for abused women and their children;
- Analyze the regional environment and issues related to French language shelter needs of abused women and their children.

**Needs for French language shelter services for abused women and their children**

1. Are you aware of a need or requests for shelter on the part of French-speaking women fleeing violence?  
 Yes       No       Do not know
  - How do you know this? What is your source of your information?
2. What are the options offered to French-speaking women who require emergency shelter? Where are they referred? How does the existing service network deal with these requests?

**Regional environment**

3. With respect to French-speaking women fleeing violence, what are the strengths and weaknesses of existing shelter services in your region?
4. What aspects of the current political climate might facilitate the development of French language shelter services in your region?
5. What might impede the development of such services?

**Violence-related issues in the region**

6. What issues are specific to your region in terms of developing French language shelter services for women and their children fleeing violence?
7. In addition to a women's shelter for French-speaking women fleeing violence, does the region need other French language violence against women services? If so, what type of services?
8. What could be your organization's involvement in the development of shelter services for French-speaking abused women and children in your region?

**Respondent's profile**

Ask the respondent to complete the profile questionnaire

**Conclusion of interview**

Thank you

## APPENDIX 2 : PROFILE QUESTIONNAIRES

This appendix contains the profile questionnaire completed by the women who participated in the focus groups and in individual interviews. The summary compilation of the participant profiles is presented in *Chapter III* of this report and in more detail in *Appendix 3*.

# Needs assessment study: shelter services for women and their children fleeing a violent relationship

**NOTE : All your responses will remain confidential and anonymous.**

## DEMOGRAPHICAL PROFILE

For statistical purposes, we ask that you answer a few questions to give us a better picture of the participants in this needs assessment study.

In what age group do you belong?

- 15 - 19
- 20 - 24
- 25 - 29
- 30 - 34
- 35 - 39
- 40 - 44
- 45 - 49
- 50 - 54
- 55 - 59
- 60 - 64
- 65 - 69
- 70 - 74
- 75 - 79
- 80 and +

Where do you currently live?

\_\_\_\_\_

What is your sexual orientation?

- heterosexual (man)
- homosexual/lesbian (woman)
- bisexual (man and woman)

About your health and mobility, do you have:

- physical, motor or intellectual disabilities
- dependence (alcohol, drugs, medication, gambling, etc.)
- HIV positive
- no disability

What is your family structure?

- Woman living alone
- Woman-woman
- Common law spouses
- Wife-husband
- Single parent family
- Other, specify: \_\_\_\_\_
- without children
- without children
- without children
- with children
- with children
- with children

What is your country of origin? \_\_\_\_\_

If you were born outside of Canada, how long have you lived in Canada?

- less than 2 years
- between 2 and 5 years
- between 6 and 10 years
- 11 years or more

How many children (16 years or under) are currently living with you?

- none
- none, but pregnant
- 1 child
- 2 children
- 3 children
- 4 or more children

What is your highest level of schooling completed?

- lower than grade 9
- secondary school studies incomplete
- secondary school diploma
- professional studies
- college diploma
- university certificate
- university studies with no bachelor degree or graduate diploma
- university studies with bachelor degree or graduate diploma
- other, specify:

What was your personal annual income in 2005?

- no income
- less than \$5,000
- \$5,000 - \$9,999
- \$10 000 - \$19,999
- \$20 000 - \$29,999
- \$30 000 - \$34,999
- \$35 000 - \$39,999
- \$40 000 - \$44,999
- \$45 000 - \$49,999
- \$50 000 or greater

## EXPERIENCE OF VIOLENCE

In this part of the survey, we would like to find out about your experience of violence.

What type of violence have you experienced or witnessed? Please check all that apply to your experience.

Type of assault or violence	YES	NO	Did you witness?	Were you a victim?	The sex of the aggressor: (F) female or (M) male	Your age at the time of the assault
1. I have not been a victim of or witness to violence.			n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
2. I do not remember having been a victim of or a witness to a violent act.			n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
3. Incest by a family member						
4. Attempted sexual assault						
5. Sexual assault in childhood by a person not a member of the family						
6. Sexual assault in a relationship/dating						
7. Sexual assault by a person known to you						
8. Sexual assault by a person not known to you						
9. Sexual harassment (at work or elsewhere)						
10. Ritual abuse (satanic cults or others)						
11. Obscene phone call(s)						
12. Violence by a spouse (male or female) (including physical, verbal, sexual, financial, psychological violence)						
13. Family violence (from a family member other than a spouse)						
14. Sexual exploitation (participation in pornography, striptease, etc.)						

***THANK YOU for your valued collaboration***  
*From the research team and Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes*

## APPENDIX 3 : COMPILATION OF THE PROFILES OF STUDY PARTICIPANTS

### COMPILATION OF THE PROFILES OF WOMEN FLEEING A VIOLENT RELATIONSHIP

#### Respondent age groups

- (0) 15 - 19      (0) 50 - 54
- (1) 20 - 24      (1) 55 - 59
- (3) 25 - 29      (0) 60 - 64
- (5) 30 - 34      (0) 65 - 69
- (6) 35 - 39      (0) 70 - 74
- (2) 40 - 44      (0) 75 - 79
- (2) 45 - 49      (0) 80 and +

#### What is your family structure?

- (3) Woman living alone
- (0) Woman-woman      (0) without children      (0) with children
- (1) Common law spouses      (0) without children      (0) with children
- (2) Wife-husband      (0) without children      (2) with children
- (14) Single parent family
- (0) not answered

#### Number of children (16 years and over) currently living with you

- (3) none
- (0) none, but pregnant
- (5) 1 child
- (4) 2 children
- (5) 3 children
- (2) 4 or more children

#### Current residence

- (2) Niagara Falls
- (7) Welland
- (10) Hamilton

#### Highest level of schooling completed by respondents

- (1) less than grade 9
- (4) secondary school studies incomplete
- (2) secondary school diploma
- (2) professional studies
- (3) college diploma
- (2) university certificate
- (2) university studies with no bachelor degree or graduate diploma
- (3) university studies with bachelor degree or graduate diploma

#### Sexual orientation respondents

- (19) heterosexual (man)
- (0) homosexual/lesbian (woman)
- (0) bisexual (man and woman)

#### Health and mobility of respondents

- (0) physical, motor or intellectual incapacities
- (1) dependence (alcohol, drugs, medication, gambling, etc.)
- (0) positive HIV diagnosis
- (18) no incapacity

Respondent country of origin Canada (7); Guinea (7); Chad (1); Cameroon (1); Democratic Republic of Congo (1); Burundi (1); France (Turkish culture) (1).

#### If born outside of Canada, number of years living in Canada

- (5) less than 2 years      (7) not applicable
- (4) between 2 and 5 years
- (3) between 6 and 10 years
- (0) 11 years or more

#### What was your personal annual income in 2005?

- (1) no income
- (5) less than \$5,000
- (5) \$5,000 - \$9,999
- (5) \$10,000 - \$19,999
- (2) \$20,000 - \$29,999
- (1) \$30,000 - \$34,999
- (0) \$35,000 - \$39,999
- (0) \$40,000 - \$44,999
- (0) \$45,000 - \$49,999
- (0) \$50,000 or greater

## EXPERIENCE OF VIOLENCE OF THE WOMEN INTERVIEWED

Type of assault or violence	YES	NO	Did you witness?	Were you a victim?	The sex of the aggressor: (F) female or (M) male	Your age at the time of the assault
1. I have not been a victim of or a witness to violence.			n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
2. I do not remember having been a victim of or a witness to a violent act.			n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
3. Incest by a family member	5			2	M	6-12,21-28
4. Attempted sexual assault	7			4	M	6-30-36-20-30
5. Sexual assault in childhood by a person not a member of the family	2		1	1	M	21-30-18
6. Sexual assault in a relationship/dating	8		1	3	M and F	21 to 38-18-24-30-23
7. Sexual assault by a person known by you	5		1		M	6
8. Sexual assault by a person not known by you	5		1	4		36-30-31-20-adult
9. Sexual harassment (at work or elsewhere)	2					30
10. Ritual abuse (satanic cults or others)	1					30
11. Obscene phone call(s)	1		1	2	M	All her life
12. Violence by a spouse (male or female) (including physical, verbal, sexual, financial, psychological violence)	12		2	5	M	21-30-10-all her life-50-30-20 to 26-25-38-adult
13. Family violence (by a family member other than a spouse)	10		3	6	M and F	9-26-all her life-30-28
14. Sexual exploitation (participation in pornography, striptease, etc.)						



## COMPILATION OF WORKER PROFILES

### FRANCOPHONE COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE HAMILTON/NIAGARA, WELLAND SERVICE LOCATION

Nathalie Aubin, children's mental health program (100 % French-speaking clientele).

- This program served approximately 30 children in 2005.

Louise Bissonnette, transitional support program (clientele 100 % French-speaking)

- Housing and safety support services, awareness of rights, legal accompaniment services.
- This program served 20 women in 2005.

Alain Tra Dobi, counselling program (clientele 100 % French-speaking)

- Individual and group counselling.
- This program served 60 women in 2005.

Martin Dubé, adult mental health program (clientele 100 % French-speaking)

- Counselling services for adult men and women and workshops on various issues.
- This program served 60 women in 2005.

Athéna Madan, program for abused women and mental health (clientele 100 % French-speaking)

- Individual and group therapy and support services for women who are abused/survivors of violence. Services for children who witness. Liaison between the *Centre's* mother/child group program and community partners.

Fatoumata Sandkhon, intake, settlement and integration program for newcomers, immigrant women and refugees (clientele 100 % French-speaking)

- Support services for newcomers and immigrant women; to break the isolation and to integrate into the welcoming community and the workplace.

Jocelyne Bond, *Grandir ensemble* program (clientele 100 % French-speaking)

- Community services with families with children under 6. Liaison with other community services, intake, settlement services for newly arrived families.

Isabelle Cottenceau, *Espace Entre-elles* program (clientele 100 % French-speaking)

- Community outreach services.

Rosaline Ekwa-Ekoko, counselling and support program for children and adolescents (clientele 100 % French-speaking)

- Individual, family and group support and counselling service for children, adolescents and their family with mild to moderate mental health needs, including needs related to traumatism.
- This program served 307 women in 2005.

Elke El Fassi, *Grandir ensemble* program and *Hamilton Best Start* French language Network (clientele 100 % French-speaking)

- Service for families who have children under 6 years of age; home visits, prenatal services, resource centre, mothers' and fathers' groups.

Charlotte Muhorakeye, violence against women program (clientele 100 % French-speaking)

- Services for women (16 years of age or older) who are victims or survivors of violence, spousal violence or war victims or survivors.
- This program served 50 women in 2005.

Florence Ngenzebuhoro, health program, social services and violence against women services (clientele 100 % French-speaking)

- Services for women who are victims of sexual assault, of spousal violence or of war. Coffee houses, group services, individual counselling, workshops, etc.
- This program served 50 women in 2005.

Caddi Bowen, *Interval House of Hamilton* program (clientele 5 to 10 % French-speaking)

- Francophone counsellor in a shelter for women and children fleeing a violent relationship. Housing support services, advocacy with other related organizations, crisis line, counselling, crisis intervention.
- This program serves 100 to 300 women per year.

## APPENDIX 4 : EXAMPLE OF AN OPERATING BUDGET

**CAPACITY:** 16 beds

**REQUIRED HUMAN RESOURCES:**

- 1 director
- 1 administrator
- 5 permanent full time employees
- 1 permanent part time employee (24 hours/week)
- 3 on-call part time employees (48 hours/ month)

<b>BREAKDOWN OF EXPENSES, ANNUAL BUDGET</b>		
Salaries	\$348 000.00	
Benefits	\$53 000.00	
Transportation	\$8 000.00	
Training and hospitality expenses	\$12 000.00	
Programs	\$8 000.00	
Equipment	\$16 000.00	
Supplies	\$5 000.00	
Food	\$24 000.00	
Board of directors	\$4 000.00	
Purchase of services: administration	\$3 000.00	
Occupancy	\$20 000.00	
Repairs and maintenance	\$21 000.00	
Publicity, promotion, printing	\$5 000.00	
Membership fees	\$2 000.00	
Professional fees	\$30 000.00	
Insurance	\$20 000.00	
<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>\$579 000.00</b>	