

Wife Assault Prevention month

By Noel Duignan, MPP

This week I'd like to talk about Wife Assault Prevention Month. A few days ago I received a call from a constituent who complained about the money being spent on shelters for abused women and children. He was partly right. We shouldn't have to spend money on measures to protect women - there should be no need for shelters and transition houses. But until violence against women becomes relegated to the history books, our government will continue to fund shelters and programs and public education campaigns.

At the beginning of this month, Marion Body, Minister Responsible for Women's Issues, declared November as Wife Assault Prevention Month.

In her statement to the Legislature, the Minister made it quite clear that tough

Queen's Park Report

economic times are no excuse for this crime. She referred to an Angus Reid poll that showed that 67 per cent of Canadians surveyed felt that violence against women had increased over the past 10 years. And almost one quarter of the above respondents blamed unemployment and economic hardship for the increase. Yet wife assault occurs during good times as well as bad times, and outside influences - whether they be drugs, alcohol or economic hardship - shouldn't be seen as the causes for wife assault.

Public education is one way to address the misconceptions which persist and perhaps to enlighten the above constituent who seemed to think that wife abuse was a minor problem.

Nov. 1 marked the beginning of the eighth wife assault public education campaign.

Some will complain this is just another annual campaign like all the others. But every time we run our ads or provide funding to another community group to create its own prevention project, we continue to chip away at attitudes that allow violence against women to continue.

Let's debunk some of the misconceptions surrounding this issue.

Myth: Wife assault occurs more often among certain groups of people.

Fact: Wife assault occurs in all ethnic, racial, economic, social and age groups. However, violence in more affluent groups is often hidden because these women use shelters, legal clinics and other social services less often.

Myth: Men are abused by their partners as often as women are.

Fact: More than 93 per cent of charges related to spousal assault in Ontario are laid against men. Most charges laid against women are counter-charges laid by assaultive partners or stem from acts of self-defense.

Myth: Alcohol causes men to assault their partners.

Fact: Alcohol can make it easier for a man to be violent. But the real cause of wife assault is the batterer's desire for power and control over his partner. Batterers often use alcohol as an excuse to avoid taking responsibility for violent behavior.

Myth: Wife assault is not a

wide spread problem.

Fact: A 1989 study showed that one in five Canadian men living with a woman admitted using violence against her.

Myth: Assaulted women could leave their abusive partners if they wanted to.

Fact: A woman may stay in an abusive relationship for many reasons. Here are some examples: she may hope the relationship gets better; she doesn't want to break up the family; her partner's abuse isolates her from friends and family; she fears for her own and her children's safety; she depends on her partner's income; she has nowhere else to go; she has lost self-esteem because of her partner's abuse.

Myth: Women often provoke assaults and deserve what they get.

Fact: No woman deserves to be beaten.

The crises telephone number for Halton Women's Place in Milton is 878-8555.

Cops still not communicating

Halton region is still wrestling with how to pay for a new \$8 million mobile radio communications system for its police.

Police services board chair Barry Quinn asked Halton council to send the proposal back to the finance committee being held Nov. 24.

Quinn, who is a Burlington and regional councillor, said the board is still working on its budget and needs more time to consider the financial impact.

Quinn had told an earlier meeting of the administration and finance committee that police are working with an inadequate radio communication system which is 15 years old and breaks down on a regular basis.

The region is considering a system that eventually would link all emergency services, including fire and public works. Regional chairman Peter Pomeroy said he has "a whole lot of trouble" with the cost of the system being proposed.

GEORGETOWN MINOR HOCKEY



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