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# **Doing so much with so little...**

## **Overview and profile of French- language violence against women services (1994-2004)**

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**Final version**

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# List of acronyms

AFMO	Association française des municipalités de l'Ontario [Francophone Association of Municipalities of Ontario]
AJEFO	Association des juristes d'expression française de l'Ontario [Association of French-Speaking Jurists of Ontario]
AOcVF	Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes
CAS	Children's Aid Societies
COPA	Centre ontarien de prévention des agressions [Ontario's Francophone Assault Prevention Centre]
FAFO	Fédération des aînés et jeunes retraités francophones de l'Ontario [Federation of French-speaking seniors and young retirees of Ontario]
FESFO	Fédération de la jeunesse franco-ontarienne [Federation of Franco-Ontarian Youth]
FLAVS	French-language anti-violence services
FLS	French-language services
MAG	Ministry of the Attorney General
MCSS	Ministry of Community and Social Services of Ontario
METRAC	Metropolitan Action Committee on Violence Against Women and Children
MNDM	Ministry of Northern Development and Mines
MOFIF	Mouvement ontarien des femmes immigrantes francophones [Association of Francophone immigrant women in Ontario]
MOHLC	Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care
OAITH	Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses
OCRCC	Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres
OFA	Office of Francophone Affairs
Opale	Group of Francophone women with disabilities in Prescott-Russell. The name is an acronym in French for "giving, sharing, acting, liberating, and evolving."
OPP	Ontario Provincial Police
OWD	Ontario Women's Directorate
SAC	Sexual assault centres
SWC	Status of Women Canada
TFFCPO	Table féministe francophone de concertation provinciale de l'Ontario [Coalition of Francophone Feminist Groups in Ontario]

# Summary

The goal of *Doing so much with so little... Overview and profile of French-language violence against women services, (1994-2004)* is to encourage reflection in preparation for Forum 2004 on the development of French-language anti-violence services to be held in November 2004. The result of numerous consultations outlined in the methodology described in chapter 1, the overview paints a portrait of the evolution of French-language services (FLS) in the area of violence during the last decade, and proposes various elements which may guide future development.

Chapter 2 exposes the current situation with respect to violence in Canada and in Ontario. It also includes definitions of violence against women and of the feminist approach. The philosophy and values common to sexual assault centres and women's shelters<sup>1</sup> and guiding their work with clients are also touched upon. Statistics demonstrate that violence against women and children continues to be omnipresent in society. Though the rate of violence appears to have remained steady, its manifestations have evolved, some men having found new ways to abuse women.

It is encouraging to note that in recent years, consciousness-raising and education has borne fruit. While violence remains a taboo subject, it is apparent that Francophone women victims of violence—regardless of their age—are better able to recognize and denounce violence. They are more aware of services and more inclined to call upon them in crisis situations or when they need support to build new lives without violence or to continue to heal.

On the other hand, however, the statistical profile of women in French-speaking Ontario and the interiorized oppression related to their minority status demonstrate the degree to which they are disadvantaged—which makes them increasingly vulnerable when they are confronted with violence. An analysis of the various violence-related issues highlights the numerous challenges confronting women leaving a violent relationship. The 21% reduction to social assistance benefits, implemented by the Conservatives in 1995, forced many women to remain in at-risk situations rather than subject themselves and their children to poverty. The lack of safe subsidized housing, the lack of support for families in crisis, the effects of amendments to the *Child and Family Services Act* and the provisions of the *Divorce Act* are other obstacles for women who wish to leave an abusive partner.

At the same time, there exists significant backlash against women, and particularly against the women's movement. This phenomenon, combined with the trivialization of violence, makes the role of sexual assault centres and shelters even more important. These independent community groups are often the only voices raised to denounce violence against women, to defend women's fundamental rights and to call for legislative and social reforms.

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<sup>1</sup> In this document the term "shelters" is used to refer to women's shelters.

In the third chapter, as the retrospective of the development of French-language anti-violence services underlines, this took place in the context of the waves of investment by successive provincial governments. These investments do not compare to those offered to English-language anti-violence services. Of the 96 shelters in Ontario, only five (Habitat Interlude in Kapuskasing, Centre de ressources familiales in Sturgeon Falls, Maison Interlude House in Hawkesbury, Maison d'amitié and La Présence in Ottawa) offer a range of full-time anti-violence services. A handful of other shelters offer minimal services in French. Among the 33 SACs, only four (Ottawa, Toronto, Sudbury, and Cornwall, as well as anti-violence services at the Centre de santé communautaire of Hamilton/Niagara), are equipped to offer a range of FLAVS at all times. There are a few other SACs that offer FLS, but most are partial services whose availability and quality leave much to be desired.

One of the primary conclusions of the overview is that the government of Ontario's policy to give so-called bilingual organizations the mandate to offer anti-violence services in French has had, in most cases, unfortunate, sometimes disastrous results with regard to the quality and availability of French-language services and accountability to the Francophone community. With the exception of the Eastern region, most of these services have not even survived. The provisions of the *French Language Services Act* of 1986 have been applied sporadically and inadequately in the past ten years by ministries that have not required that these organizations actively offer FLS.

Despite efforts to redress these inequities, it is clear that with respect to anti-violence services in French, successive Ontario governments have not met their legislative and constitutional obligations to the Francophone minority. The discrepancy in funding between French-language and English-language services is so significant that, according to some, legal recourse against the government of Ontario would be justified.

Experience has shown that quality, accessible, and accountable services are found first and foremost in independent organizations run **by** and **for** Francophone women. Wherever possible, it is important to favour the creation of independent FLAVS. The autonomy of services does not mean requiring French language structures to match all Anglophone anti-violence organizations, but rather that FLS must be custom-developed according to realities and needs identified locally and regionally.

We've come a long way since the 1994 provincial forum on sexual assault, "Sensibiliser, décider, agir". There have certainly been gains: more Francophone women have access to French-language anti-violence services than did ten years ago and, despite government cutbacks, the number of FLS has increased. The network of organizations run **by** and **for** Francophone women is larger and stronger, but remains far from complete.

Under the leadership of Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes (AOcVF), a provincial umbrella organization created in 1988, anti-violence organizations have worked together to make government agencies aware of the needs of Francophone women and to lobby for equity in the funding of services as well as for legal and social reforms. The thirteen guiding principles and the description of an ideal quality French-language service have formed the foundation of the development of FLAVS. With the support of AOcVF, a number of research projects have been carried out, and publications, working material and training tools produced.

In the field, organizations have developed innovative alternative service delivery models to meet the particular needs of each region. As examples, Francophone organizations in the

North and South-Central region chose to offer hybrid domestic violence/sexual assault services, a formula appropriate for the reality of the Francophone minority in those regions.

The last decade has seen the emergence of increasing awareness regarding immigrant and refugee women and women survivors of war and the creation of a few services adapted to meet their needs, as well as the founding of the Mouvement ontarien des femmes immigrantes francophones (MOFIF). The majority of clients and staff of Maison d'amitié in Ottawa, Oasis Centre des femmes in Toronto, and the anti-violence services of the Centre de santé communautaire de Hamilton/Niagara are now offered by women from various racial and ethnocultural communities. Women with disabilities also have special needs, but to date little has been done to meet them. Anti-violence organizations will have to adapt their services to serve various emerging clientele in the coming years.

At the provincial and local levels, a number of partnerships have been established between Francophone and Anglophone organizations. Only rarely, however, do Anglophone organizations refer French-speaking women to organizations offering FLS. Among the other community agencies or institutions offering related services to women victims of violence (the courts, for example, or the police, social assistance, health services, the Children's Aid Society), few can offer French-language services and few refer women to existing services in French. Francophone workers in anti-violence organizations are thus required to do a great deal of translation, interpretation, and awareness-raising.

In the last decade, many organizations have offered, despite their limited means, prevention programs for children and youth, most notably in the school system. Of particular note is the work of the Centre ontarien de prévention des agressions (COPA), which, since 1992, has reached nearly 40,000 women and young people throughout Ontario via prevention programs offered in partnership with local organizations. The Fédération de la jeunesse franco-ontarienne (FESFO) has made thousands of youth aware of the issue of violence.

The feminist approach, coupled with the community approach, is a winning strategy. These two approaches run counter to an institutional approach which often medicalizes and infantilizes, and together allow women to take power in their lives and in society. In future it will be necessary to continue with these approaches and to ensure that the experience of women survivors is heard and reflected in the orientation and operation of organizations.

The results achieved in the last ten years are due to several factors, including: collaboration and the mutual support of organizations offering FLS; perseverance in lobbying; collaboration with allies in provincial and federal departments who have supported the development of FLS; the leadership and professionalism of the staff of AOcVF and other anti-violence organizations; the willingness to innovate in service delivery; and the ability to adapt the feminist discourse to serve women in all their diversity.

The fourth chapter presents the results of a survey conducted by the research team among 19 organizations offering FLAVS. The resulting provincial portrait presents several facets of these services: description and types of services offered, accessibility of services, clientele served and to be served, needs of clients, funding, human resources, and priorities for the future development of FLS. As the title *Doing so much with so little...* suggests, organizations offering French-language anti-violence services perform miracles despite chronic underfunding. The list of priorities identified by participating organizations

and AOcVF's *Plan stratégique 2004 de développement des SEF en violence contre les femmes* establish the foundation for the development of FLS in the coming years.

Regional mini-portraits in chapter 5 highlight the particular character of FLS in each large region and underline the importance of the need for the government of Ontario to adapt its policies and programs to local realities and to meet local and regional needs.

The sixth chapter touches upon the role of government and traces the evolution and impact of three successive governments at Queen's Park since 1994. The government of Ontario's positions with respect to French-language anti-violence services is analyzed, the efforts of certain ministries are highlighted, and remaining challenges are identified.

Beginning in 1991, the New Democratic Party established a province-wide network of SACs. It was the first to recognize the principle of independent French-language services when it created a few SACs run **by** and **for** Francophone women.

The first *Plan stratégique de développement des services en français 1997-2001* by AOcVF was established under the Conservative government. This plan, which foresaw eight pilot projects, encouraged the creation or expansion of Francophone organizations run **by** and **for** women, including two regional lines in the South-Central region and in the North. New programs (transitional support, child witnesses and victims of violence, shelter renovations) were announced in 2000. However, most funds allotted to fight violence were invested in the judicial system rather than in services that reach women directly. In 2002, funding to the eight pilot projects was annualized and the underfunding to three SACs rectified.

In its 2003 Throne Speech, the Liberal government indicated that it would present a plan of action to fight violence against women. Various measures to combat violence were announced, but the impact on FLS remains unclear. With the addition in 2004 of a regional line in the East, the three regional crisis lines can now meet the needs of women victims of domestic violence and sexual assault throughout Ontario.

Forum 2004 to be held in November is an opportunity to come together and reflect in order to define the key elements of a medium- and long-term development plan for French-language anti-violence services. The new development plan could be an opportunity for collaboration between the government of Ontario, AOcVF and other Francophone organizations working in the area of violence against women and children.

The following are some of the key priorities identified in the overview:

1. A political commitment from the provincial government to redress historic inequities in the funding of FLS and to implement a service development plan ensuring that all Francophone women throughout the province have access to FLS and that priority is given to independent Francophone structures.
2. Increased funding to community organizations offering anti-violence services to women and children in order to improve existing programs, offer new programs, increase the number of workers, and offer them competitive salaries.
3. The implementation of measures to ensure accountability to the government as well as to the Francophone community, for English-language or bilingual services.

4. An increase in the core funding for the 24 hours/day, 7 days/week crisis lines and for promotion and coordination of the lines at the regional and provincial levels.
5. For the development of the SACs: the priority creation of autonomous Francophone SACs in Timmins and in Prescott-Russell; the extension to 52 weeks per year of funding for anti-violence services in Thunder Bay and area; the development of a plan for the creation of FLAVS in underserved areas. In addition, it is important that funds received by bilingual organizations for services in French be managed by independent Francophone organizations. Note that the mandate of SACs is not limited to direct services to clients, and it is incumbent upon them to also work toward mobilizing the community to effect social change.
6. For shelters: in addition to the projected opening of a second Francophone shelter in Ottawa, the creation of shelter services run **by** and **for** Francophone women in Toronto and Hamilton; the identification of underserved regions and measures to rectify the situation in the medium and long term; the creation of French-language second stage housing.
7. Increased investment and development in conjunction with community-based anti-violence groups at the local and provincial levels, of a province-wide plan for prevention, awareness-raising, education and community development programs.
8. The establishment of plans for the development of services for current and emerging clientele, including immigrant and refugee women, women survivors of war, women with disabilities, young women, older women, marginalized women, lesbians, women with multiple challenges, etc.
9. Core funding to enable AOcVF to continue its work to develop and coordinate FLS, analyze issues, and produce tools and French language training sessions on intervention.
10. A review of the methods for managing anti-violence programs which vary from one provincial ministry to another in order to reduce the administrative load of Francophone organizations.
11. The negotiation of equitable agreements and contracts between the provincial government and Francophone organizations, in order to make these agreements comparable to those signed by Anglophone organizations, in a similar area, with equitable financial resources.
12. Ongoing training programs for the staff of the network of French-language anti-violence services, as well as the creation of college and university programs for the professional development of a sufficient number of multi-skilled workers to meet the needs of the numerous programs to be offered.

Forum 2004 in November offers a unique opportunity to take stock of the successes, challenges and best practices of the past ten years. It is important that the Forum inspire the creation of optimal conditions for the harmonious development of French-language anti-violence services in the coming decade.



# Introduction

By way of introduction, we offer you a brief look at the context in which this document, *Doing so much with so little... Overview and profile of French-language violence against women services (1994-2004)*, was prepared, followed by a review of its objectives and structure. We will conclude with a reflective exercise in preparation for the November Forum 2004.

## Context

Ten years ago, in October, 1994, workers from various Francophone women's groups in Ontario organized a provincial forum dealing with sexual assault, "Sensibiliser, décider, agir". The forum allowed participants to review the different forms of violence experienced by French-speaking women in Ontario. It was also a critical moment in the development of FLS to combat sexual assault and domestic violence: the orientation and scope of the campaign to bring an end to violence in the years to come were determined at this meeting.

Ten years later, *Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes* (AOcVF) was given the mandate to lead the preparation and organization of Forum 2004 on violence against women in French-speaking Ontario to be held in Ottawa on November 4-6, 2004<sup>2</sup>.

This provincial forum will bring together member groups of the Francophone violence against women movement<sup>3</sup>, organizations working closely with this movement and that work to end violence against women, various other organizations, and provincial and federal ministries. Forum 2004 affords an opportunity to review the last ten years and to come together to flesh out a plan to develop French-language anti-violence services for the coming years.

## Objectives of the document

The title of the document, *Doing so much with so little... Overview and profile of French-language violence against women services (1994-2004)*, is very revealing of the

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<sup>2</sup> AOcVF retained the services of two researchers, Marie-Luce Garceau, professor in the School of Social Work at Laurentian University in Sudbury, and Lucie Brunet, community-based researcher from the firm of Brunet Sherwood Consultants of Ste-Anne-de-Prescott, to write this report.

<sup>3</sup> Throughout the document, we will use the expression "Francophone violence against women movement". For the purposes of this document, it is the group of Francophone organizations working to eradicate violence against Francophone women in Ontario, and organizations offering services in French in the areas of domestic violence, sexual assault, and other forms of violence against women and their children. The Francophone movement against violence against women includes, for example, sexual assault centres (SACs), shelters, MOFIF, COPA, FESFO, OPALÉ, AOcVF, and many other organizations that support this movement.

accomplishments of workers who offer FLS in Ontario for women dealing with violence. They do wonders with the grants they receive. You will discover them as you read this document.

The objectives of this document were adopted by the Forum 2004 steering committee<sup>4</sup>. They are as follows:

1. contribute to reflection within the community and by the government of Ontario on violence against women and French-language services;
2. foster collaboration and coordination before Forum 2004 on the development of French-language violence against women services;
3. draw a portrait of the issue of violence against women and the development of French-language services provincially and regionally, and identify successes, difficulties, missing elements and priorities;
4. evaluate the degree to which the recommendations of the “Sensibiliser, décider, agir” forum of 1994 on sexual assault have been implemented and identify successful and unsuccessful strategies ;
5. propose ways to support the identification of priorities for the development of a solid network of French-language services in the coming years.

### **Structure of the document**

In order to meet these objectives, we propose the following plan. In the first chapter, we will briefly present the methodology employed throughout this document. In the second, we will review the current situation in the area of violence in Canada and in Ontario. We will begin with a few definitions, first that of violence against women, secondly that of the feminist approach. We will also review the common values and philosophy of sexual assault centres (SACs) and shelters. They are the foundation of these two types of organizations, and they guide the services they offer daily to French-speaking women in Ontario. In order to get to the heart of the issue discussed in this overview, we will present some statistics on violence against women in the second chapter. In order to better understand the particular situation of French-speaking women in Ontario dealing with violence, a profile of these women will be presented. It will be followed by an analysis of the issues related to violence that have an impact on these women when they try to leave violent situations.

The third chapter briefly addresses the brief history of French-language anti-violence services in Ontario. Since FLS are dependent on government support, we will identify critical moments. Since French-language services cannot be compared to English-language services in either number or funding, we will analyze them briefly in the second section. In the third section, readers will be invited to assess the 1994 forum on sexual assault, “Sensibiliser, décider, agir”. Finally, we will present the elements guiding the actions of FLS in recent years, as well as the successes and the challenges met by workers and organizations.

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<sup>4</sup> The Forum 2004 steering committee was composed of the following individuals: Isabelle Cotteceau, Diane Dupont, Geneviève LaTour, Jeanne Françoise Mouè, Céline Pelletier, Gaëtane Pharand, Ghislaine Sirois, Éric Stephenson, Lisa Weintraub and researchers Lucie Brunet and Marie-Luce Garceau.

In the fourth and fifth chapters, we will present a provincial portrait and regional portraits of services currently offered in French by SACs, shelters, and certain institutions offering French-language anti-violence services. Our aim throughout this presentation is to take stock of the needs of Francophone women and to explore how better to serve them.

In the sixth chapter, we will review government positions in the area of violence against women. We will consider the challenges, problems, and efforts of certain ministries that promoted and agreed to develop FLS, contributing in this manner to rectifying the imbalance between French-language and English-language services.

We are both researchers and community workers, and have closely monitored the development of French-language services in Ontario for a number of years. We had the privilege of preparing this document, and in chapter 7 would like to share some of our observations. They may, we hope, contribute to your reflection in preparation for Forum 2004 next November. Most of these observations will be based on this document, as well as a review of the literature on French-language anti-violence services and research conducted on violence against women in French-speaking Ontario. In truth, however, this conclusion will belong to you as participants in Forum 2004 that will consider the future of FLAVS.

### ► Opportunities to reflect

*At different points in the document, you will be offered opportunities to reflect upon issues concerning the future development of FLAVS. If you wish, you may do these exercises with your colleagues in preparation for Forum 2004.*

### ► Reminder



*Elsewhere we have identified definitions or principles you might find useful in your work and in the management of organizations. You will find them in boxes like this one.*

### **To guide your reflection in preparation for Forum 2004**

This document hopes to encourage reflection and discussion at Forum 2004 in November. Critical questions for the development of FLAVS will be addressed during the Forum. Here are some of them which will also guide your thinking as you read this document.

### ► Opportunity to reflect

#### **Questions to prepare for Forum 2004**

*This exercise may be useful during team meetings in your organization in order to promote discussion during Forum 2004.*

1. What must be developed in French-speaking Ontario in the coming years to combat domestic violence, sexual assault, and all other forms of abuse?
2. What would be the priorities of a plan for the local, regional, and provincial development of FLAVS in the following areas:
  - a. direct services;
  - b. awareness-raising, prevention, and education;
  - c. community development;
  - d. training;
  - e. analysis of issues and research;
  - f. collaboration and coordination;
  - g. clientele to be served.
3. What criteria should be developed and used in order to establish priorities for the development of French-language services?
4. What strategies and courses of action should be prioritized in the development of French-language services?
5. What commitment would we like to see from governments with respect to violence against women and French-language services?

# Chapter 1: Methodology

All chapters in this document, *Doing so much with so little... Overview and profile of French-language violence against women services (1994-2004)*, were prepared following several consultations and an exhaustive review of the literature on violence against women. Several data collection methods were used to support the content of the report.

- A **survey** questionnaire on services offered in French, access to services, the clientele of services, funding, human resources, partnerships, and priorities was distributed in all the regions of Ontario. The questionnaire was filled out by directors or coordinators of SACs and shelters, and directors and workers in certain institutional organizations offering French-language anti-violence services. Nineteen questionnaires were completed.
- **Individual interviews** were conducted with directors or coordinators of ten organizations offering services in French to women victims of violence, and with the executive director of Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes.
- **Individual interviews** were conducted with government of Ontario and federal government employees who have knowledge of and experience in French-language anti-violence services.
- A **survey** and a **consultation** were conducted with some hundred delegates from French-language secondary schools in the province during the general assembly of the Fédération de la jeunesse franco-ontarienne (FESFO) in May 2004.
- **Consultations** were conducted with two AOcVF partners, the Mouvement ontarien des femmes immigrantes francophones (MOFIF) and the Centre ontarien de prévention des agressions (COPA).
- An **interview** was conducted with the director of OPALE, a group of Francophone women with disabilities in Prescott-Russell.
- A **discussion group** was held with 20 workers offering French-language services in shelters and sexual assault centres.
- A **literature review** and an **analysis of material** produced in the last ten years on the phenomenon of violence against women and on French-language anti-violence services were also done.



# Chapter 2: The current situation in the area of violence

This chapter considers the state of violence against women. It briefly outlines the evolution of violence in Canada and in Ontario. It begins with a presentation of the definitions of violence against women, the feminist approach, and feminist intervention. We examine the philosophy of sexual assault centres (SACs) and shelters. In order to grasp the phenomenon of violence against women, some recent statistical data on domestic violence and sexual assault are presented. Having noted an evolution of the issue of violence against women in the last ten years, workers were asked to tell us what has changed, and it is their view of the situation that we have presented. Since there are issues specific to Francophone women in Ontario that make them vulnerable to violence, we describe their profile. In addition to violence, these women face poverty, a lack of housing, a lack of support for families, etc. We will examine the impacts. Finally, in French-speaking Ontario as elsewhere, groups of women fighting for women's rights face a backlash, and we discuss some aspects of this backlash.

## 2.1 Definition of violence

SACs, shelters, and institutional organizations offering French-language anti-violence services all use a definition of violence against women. The following is the one used by a number of Francophone organizations.



This definition of violence is taken from the *Declaration on the elimination of violence against women*, adopted by the United Nations in 1993:

### Article 1

For the purposes of this Declaration, the term "violence against women" means any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.

### Article 2

Violence against women shall be understood to encompass, but not be limited to, the following:

(a) Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family, including battering, sexual abuse of female children in the household, dowry-related violence, marital rape, female genital mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women, non-spousal violence and violence related to exploitation;

(b) Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring within the general

community, including rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment and intimidation at work, in educational institutions and elsewhere, trafficking in women and forced prostitution;

(c) Physical, sexual and psychological violence perpetrated or condoned by the State, wherever it occurs.

## 2.2 Definition of the feminist approach

The expressions “feminist approach” or “feminist analysis” and feminist intervention are used several times in this document. They are inseparable, and many organizations, including SACs and shelters offering FLS to women victims of violence, use them. They guide their work with women and their social and political work.



**Feminist analysis** or the **feminist approach** considers violence against women not as an isolated incident but as a social problem. Its objective is to simultaneously transform the person and society, an objective shared by that of the women’s movement in French-speaking Ontario<sup>5</sup>, which has incorporated the needs of individual women and the need to transform social institutions. It is hand in hand with feminist analysis and its political action, which is to say to reorganize power between men and women and between women and the State. This attempt to take power, **by** and **for** women, gives them back the power to manage their lives. For Francophone organizations with a feminist analysis, to engage in political action is to ground one’s analysis in women’s real lives, to develop a discourse anchored in reality, to find the necessary arguments to recommend social changes, and to work collectively to change the social inequities women confront (Penwill, Pharand, Sirois et Toone 1997).

**Feminist intervention** is founded upon an equal relationship between the worker and the assaulted woman in order to allow her to regain control of her life. Its aim is to help women to become aware of their situation, to support them in their journey toward a life free of violence, and to help them to find solutions that allow them to take charge of their lives, collectively and individually, while respecting their choices. Social involvement and activism are also seen as collective solutions to the oppression experienced by women as a social group<sup>6</sup>.

## 2.3 Philosophy and values common to sexual assault centres and shelters

Though SACs and shelters are different from one another and have different mandates, they share a philosophy and values. Most SACs and shelters offering FLS in Ontario grew

<sup>5</sup> The feminist movement in French-speaking Ontario includes a number of Francophone organizations who have adopted a feminist analysis and approach to violence against women.

<sup>6</sup> On the subject of feminist intervention in Francophone Ontario, see: Penwill, Kathryn 2002a.

out of the need to serve Francophone women. They are operated **by** and **for** Francophone women, established in response to the inability or lack of institutional services to meet the needs of women victims of violence. They are alternative services.



#### **These organizations stand out because they...**

- are independent, have their own boards of directors, and are administered not by institutions but by women firmly based in their own communities;
- grew from the grassroots and adopted a feminist analysis and practice of intervention and a community-based approach;
- work with women by offering them practical help to increase the power in their lives and to reduce or eliminate the violence they experience;
- do public awareness, prevention, and education work to increase awareness of violence, to bring about changes in the relationship between men and women, to change the traditional socialization of women, to foster communication between women, and to find alternatives in order to counter violent situations;
- do community development to encourage the community to work to prevent and eliminate violence;
- have chosen to collaborate and to work politically to defend the right of French-speaking women and children in Ontario to live in a society free of violence;
- fight, lobby, apply pressure in order to achieve the social changes necessary for women's equality;
- struggle to have their expertise and autonomy recognized through adequate funding.

It should be noted that other organizations such as community health centres, family services, or community resource centres may share and practice the philosophy described above, though seldom does an organization adopt these values at all levels.

In addition to providing front-line services to women victims of violence, SACs and shelters serve as beacons in their communities. Their role remains critical in 2004 at a time when the exploitation of women and children continues daily.

## **2.4 Data on violence**

The incidence of domestic violence and sexual assault is beyond proof. The facts speak for themselves:

- Half of Canadian women (51%) are victims of at least one act of physical or sexual violence after the age of 16 (Status of Women Canada 2004).
- In 2000, women represented 85% of reported victims of domestic violence, or 28,833 of 34,000 (Status of Women Canada 2004).
- In 2000, 85% of victims who reported domestic violence to the police were women (Statistics Canada 2001).
- In 1999, some groups of women were found to be more vulnerable to domestic violence: young Canadian women between the ages of 15 and 24, common-law

partners, persons whose partner abuses alcohol, aboriginal women, women from visible or linguistic minorities, women experiencing a separation (Statistics Canada 2002).

- In 2001, murders between spouses represented 47% of all family homicides (Statistics Canada 2002a). Four out of five victims of spousal homicide are women (Status of Women Canada 2004). In Canada, the number of men accused of murdering their wives or ex-wives went from 52 in 2000 to 69 in 2001 (Statistics Canada 2002a).
- On 15 April 2002, there were 34,588 persons in shelters in Ontario. Of them, 18,066 were women and 16,522 were children (Statistics Canada 2003).
- There are an estimated 855,000 women with disabilities in Ontario. Of this number, it is estimated that 700,000 have experienced some form of assault, that 630,000 have been assaulted by someone known to them, and that 229,000 have been assaulted more than once (handicaps.ca August 2004).
- In a 1992 study, one woman in five aged 45 to 64 in French-speaking Ontario revealed having experienced one or more forms of violence (Garceau *et al.* 1992). Since then there appears to be no more recent data on this age group.
- In 2000, 27,154 sexual offences were reported in Canada, including 24,046 sexual assaults; 86% of victims were women and 54% were under 18 years of age (Status of Women Canada 2004).
- In 2000, 40% of female victims of sexual assault over 18 years of age were assaulted by a friend or an acquaintance, 23% by a stranger, and 23% by a member of the family (including a current spouse or ex-spouse) (Status of Women Canada 2004).
- Since 1996, sexual harassment crimes are on the rise. In Canada, cases increased by 16% between 1990 and 2000 (Statistics Canada 2001). Eighty-eight percent of harassers are men and 80% of their victims are women. In most cases (57%), harassers are partners, spouses, or ex-spouses and in 28% of cases, friends or work colleagues. Only 58% of charges come before the courts and 75% of harassers found guilty are not sentenced to prison (Statistics Canada 1998).
- In 1999, at least half a million Canadian children witnessed violence between their parents (Statistics Canada 2000a) and “there is emerging evidence that witnessing violence is associated with aggression and anxiety in young children and that these problems persist in both the shorter- and longer term” (Moss 2004: 18).
- Nearly half of women who are victims of mistreatment by their husbands turn to a social service (support centre, crisis line, counsellor or psychologist, community centre, refuge or shelter, women’s centre, victims’ services). A significant number of those who do not use these services indicate that it is because they are unaware of them (Statistics Canada 2000).
- In December, 2003, it was estimated that, in Ontario, 30% of women dependent on social assistance had experienced physical or sexual abuse; this represents 61,000 women, not counting children. According to the authors, this is a modest estimate (Mosher *et al.* 2004: 2).
- Violence against women costs 4.2 billion dollars per year. This includes the cost of social services, education, criminal justice, work and employment, health care and medical care (Joint Committee 1999).

This overview demonstrates the sad reality of violence against women throughout Canada. This violence is a crime and society must act to protect these women and their children by

creating the services they require in order to live safely. There is a great—and still unmet—need for services for Francophone women in Ontario.

## 2.5 Evolution in the forms of violence



*Our position has changed over the last ten years, the analysis and the approach have changed, women are more aware of existing services and less hesitant to approach us. (a worker<sup>7</sup>)*

Much of the statistical data on violence is well-known. Less known, however, is the manner in which violence has evolved in French-speaking Ontario in the last ten years. We asked directors and coordinators of SACs and shelters how they perceived this evolution. The following is a summary of their observations based on their experience in the field.

- There seems to be a consensus that the incidence of violence has remained constant, that there is no more or no less violence than there was ten years ago. What has changed is that the general public is talking about it more and that there is less denial. People are better informed and there is more information available on the forms of violence. They are more familiar with the cycle of violence.
- Victims themselves are better able to disclose abuse and seek help. Thanks to awareness-raising and education campaigns, there is less tolerance for violence than there once was. Discussion of some forms of violence such as domestic violence is less taboo than in years past. Still, violence remains largely hidden from view, and sometimes only the tip of the iceberg is seen. This is especially the case in isolated communities or in immigrant communities. Sexual assault remains secret and disturbing, and few women come forward. Some believe that the Franco-Ontarian community has yet to have a real debate about violence and that the issue remains marginal.
- Younger victims are seeking help and more older women are being reached. These are positive indicators that awareness campaigns are bearing fruit.
- The general public is more aware that the perpetrators of incest and child sexual abuse are not necessarily strangers.
- There is ongoing confusion about sexual assault and domestic violence. Judging by announcements of government investment in the issue, domestic violence seems to be in the forefront at the moment. Unfortunately, sexual assault continues to be an issue.
- The face and form of violence are changing. There is more talk of criminal harassment or sexual harassment. Rapists and abusers are going beyond physical, psychological, and verbal violence and finding new ways to “hurt”

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<sup>7</sup> The texts in italics are quotes from interviews and consultations conducted and questionnaires filled out during the research for this report, with the exception of quotations taken from various studies conducted in French-speaking Ontario, in which case the source is given.

- women, among them date rape, ritual abuse, date rape drugs, cyberbullying, violence in video games and internet pornography, to name but a few.
- One of the unfortunate side effects of the increased discussion of violence is that the message can get trivialized and people can become indifferent. Francophone anti-violence organizations must adapt to these new forms of violence by, among others, using new technologies to address them and to reach out to young people experiencing violence (excerpts from interviews with directors or coordinators).

## **2.6 Profile of Francophone women in a minority context**

Francophone women in Ontario are vulnerable to violence in a manner particular to them. The statistical profile of Francophone women in Ontario (1999) and the statistical profile of Francophones in Ontario (1999a), both by the Office of Francophone Affairs, form the basis of this section. Data, the most recent available on the subject, are from the 1996 census and are from these documents.

- Women represent 52.4% of the Francophone population.
- Francophone women are underrepresented in the age groups from 0 to 34 years and overrepresented in the remaining groups, those from 35 to 64 years and over.
- As is the case for the Francophone population as a whole, the level of education of Francophone women is lower than that of women in the overall population of the province (less than grade 9: 15%, grades 9 to 13: 38.6%, postsecondary studies without a diploma: 34.3%, Bachelor's degree or higher: 12.4%).
- The percentage of Francophone women in the labour market is lower than that of the general female population (57.8% to 60%). A lower percentage of Francophone women participates in the labour market than that of their male counterparts (57.8% compared to 70.5%), a situation highly similar to that of women in the population as a whole (60% to 73%).
- The average employment earnings of Francophone women are 68% of those of their male counterparts, \$21,509 versus \$32,915.
- The proportion of Francophone women in all regions living below the low income cut-off is greater than that of Francophone men (18.3% compared to 15.2%). The most vulnerable Francophone women are those between 20 and 24 years of age, 30.7% of whom live below the low-income cut-off, and those over 75, of whom 33.5% live below the cut-off.
- A greater proportion of Francophones live in rural areas (21.9%) than do Ontarians in general (16.7%).
- Francophones from racial minorities represent 22.5% of the Francophone population of Toronto and 8.9% of the Francophone population of Ottawa-Carleton. The majority (54%) of Francophones from a racial minority is concentrated in Central Ontario.
- Women from developing countries experience unemployment, under-employment, and difficulty exercising their rights. Racial discrimination, problems with the language, social isolation, the non-recognition of their diplomas and work experience are at the root of these problems. Women of colour are doubly disadvantaged because they are often ghettoized in service jobs with no benefits and little job security (Bassolé *et al.* 2004).

- Sponsorship of immigrant women opens the door to various situations of dependence on their partners (Bassolé *et al.* 2004).

As this statistical profile reveals, compared to the female population of Ontario as a whole, Francophone women are more vulnerable when they need to leave a violent situation, join the labour market, and earn a decent income. They are older, less educated, and less involved in the labour market. They are more likely to live in rural areas, and are thus geographically isolated, particularly when public transit is unavailable. Francophone women experience cultural and social isolation when they cannot live in their culture in French and speak with other Francophone women. The statistical review also reveals that the Francophone population in Ontario is changing and renewing itself through immigration.

Francophone women in Ontario also live in an environment where they are a linguistic minority. As Sirois points out, for women:

Growing up in oppressive conditions does have an impact on one's way of being in the world. As women we are well aware of this : some are passive, some seek justice, many are afraid and would rather disappear than say « I am woman and I want you to respect my rights » (..) there are a thousand and one ways of living interiorized oppression. These choices are survival mechanisms in a climate of intolerance. (1999 :12)

In a minority environment, language can be a vehicle for oppression. Not all Francophone women, in particular immigrant women who want to work and integrate into Ontario society, are bilingual. They are not the only women who do not speak English well. Older women, women with disabilities or in isolated areas, and women from Québec who move to Ontario are among those who find it difficult to communicate their needs when confronted with violence. We know that it is easier for a woman to heal when she can take the necessary steps in her own language.

To counter this oppression and discrimination against women, Francophone women's anti-violence groups try to be as visible as possible, establish independent organizations, and develop working tools in French to meet the needs of Francophone women and serve them properly.

## **2.7 Impact of issues related to violence**

In addition to the oppression and discrimination experienced by Francophone women in Ontario, women living in a violent situation or attempting to leave one are confronted with other challenges that play an important role and add to their difficulties. We wanted to understand the impact of poverty, the lack of safe and affordable housing, amendments to the *Child and Family Services Act* (2002) and the increased involvement of the courts on women experiencing violence. We addressed the question in our consultations with workers and directors of organizations.

### 2.7.1 The harmful effects of poverty



*When in a society as rich as ours abused children and women living on social assistance are kept in extreme poverty... and go hungry at the end of the month – this is violent (a director).*

It is increasingly difficult for a woman to leave an abusive situation and to build a new life free from violence. Women's economic situation is the principal obstacle to their leaving. Many women who leave their partners are forced to survive on social assistance benefits far below the poverty line in Ontario. In 2003, for example, a single woman would have received \$6,838 in benefits at a time when the poverty line was set at \$19,795. A woman with a disability would have received \$11,765, or 59% of the amount at the poverty line, and a single mother with a child would have received \$13,917, or 56% of amount at the poverty line of \$24,745. (National Council of Welfare 2003). These small amounts condemn women and their children to subsistence living and reliance on food banks and used clothing stores. Women are unable to pay for legal services, have trouble rejoining the labour force, are confronted with the high cost and lack of availability of child care, etc.

Mosher *et al.* (2004) have argued that while social assistance should be considered a refuge for women wanting to escape from violence, it is an obstacle course and a difficult and undermining experience for women.

Poverty puts women at risk and leads to great social costs, as described by Cholette:

Abused women are confronted with significant problems. They worry for their children. If enduring violence is the price to pay for ensuring the wellbeing of their children, most will make that choice rather force their children into poverty [...] This decision may entail enormous costs for society, the most important of which are certainly the premature death of women and the emergence of serious trauma in their children (2002: 31 and 74).

In order to break the never-ending cycle of poverty, more and more low-income women are forced to turn to prostitution to survive and meet their basic needs. Others live with abusers rather than face homelessness. Ontario Works requires women to work in businesses where they are not protected from abusive practices and where their incomes are often so low that they are unable to afford adequate childcare. Even when an organization can provide bus tickets or money for childcare, little changes for poor women trapped in abusive relationships or without money at the end of the month to feed themselves and their children.

Women's poverty touches upon the question of oppression and limits women's access to services. There has been a drop in the occupancy rate of some shelters, a reduction linked to cuts to social assistance benefits. A broad range of services is required in order to meet the needs of often marginalized poor women dealing with several issues simultaneously. Government policies are not always favourable to the needs of these clients.

Some workers wonder whether the increase in the number of murders of women and their children is a direct consequence of the cuts to social assistance announced by the Conservative government in 1995, cuts that put women at greater risk of being killed by

their spouses or ex-spouses. Data from Statistics Canada support this contention: the number of men charged with killing their current or ex-spouse went from 52 in 2000 to 69 in 2001. Much of this increase took place in Ontario (Statistics Canada: 2002).

In the wake of the weakening since 1995 of the social assistance “safety net” in Ontario<sup>8</sup>, there has been a staggering increase in poverty among women and children and an increase in mental health problems, depression, and substance abuse.

### **2.7.2 The shortage of subsidized, affordable, and safe housing**

The shortage of subsidized, affordable, and safe housing represents a serious challenge for women leaving abusive relationships. The near-total lack of second stage housing for women leaving transition houses and requiring support to rebuild their lives without violence has a major impact on the length of stays in shelters. Though a shelter’s policy may favour six week stays, women often remain in some houses for three months or more. The time in the shelter and the transitional support are insufficient for many women, and they would require second stage housing and support to help them to face problems they have with social assistance, legal aid, school, housing, etc.

As Cholette has pointed out, the shortage of social housing creates other problems:  
The crisis in shelters and social housing threatens the security of women and children, limits women’s choices with respect to self-determination and exacerbates the pressure on community services and frontline workers (2002: 42).

### **2.7.3 The lack of support for families in crisis**

As a rule, women who leave violent partners are in crisis. In these time we observe that families face a number of difficulties such as poverty, instability at the core of the family, and a violent environment. All of these situations provoke crises within the family. Women are frequently isolated from their own families. In many communities there are few services for women and children, and fewer still in French. There are now fewer services in schools for children in need, for example, and subsidized childcare spaces are hard to find.

Anti-violence organizations have noted the courts’ tendency in custody disputes to act as though the *Divorce Act* has already been amended; they increasingly order shared custody, without considering the abusive spouse’s history. It is not easy for women to achieve independence when they flee abuse.

### **2.7.4 Impact of the *Child and Family Services Act***

Offering services to children and youth is very complex. The whole issue of children exposed to violence is closely tied to the child protection system in Ontario. Organizations are required to report incidents of violence when children are involved. This duty to report has an impact on women and their children, as explained by Penwill:

Though there is consensus with respect to the harmful impact of domestic violence on children exposed to it, in the current social and political context, the direction of the current reforms seems unfair and somewhat limited. The proposed strategies

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<sup>8</sup> According to the National Council of Welfare (2003a), between 1986 and 2003, social assistance benefits in Ontario dropped by 21.3%.

do not implicate all sectors and systems involved in measures to increase the safety of women and children in violent situations. They increase the power of the State, allowing it to intervene in situations where children are in need of protection while denying families the necessary resources to protect and care for children (2002:79).

These amendments appear to have harmful effects and to penalize abused women<sup>9</sup>. On the one hand, when a woman turns to a shelter, workers are required to report children exposed to violence. An investigation must then be conducted. This may be helpful to the woman or may harm the child who will be removed from her care and placed in a foster family for a time. On the other hand, women who choose to return to the abuser may find that the Children's Aid Society (CAS) determines that the children are to remain in care until the violence abates and women conform to the expectations of the agency. Women are thus in a way held accountable for their partner's violence.

Abused women who find housing may make themselves vulnerable to the abuser who will continue his violence toward them and their children. If a woman cannot find adequate housing and meet her children's needs, she could lose custody of them. The various possibilities create a vicious circle which serves only to revictimize abused women: they can lose custody of their children if they fail to protect them, and they can lose custody when they act to protect them.

Workers in anti-violence organizations devote considerable time to sorting out the workings of the CAS with women. The *Child and Family Services Act* and the amendments to it inevitably affect the relationship between the abused woman and the worker. Since the worker is required to report any suspected abuse, the principle of confidentiality between the woman and the worker is threatened and the climate of trust between them is affected.

All shelters, some SACs, and other organizations funded by the Ministry of Community and Social Services, including the Francophone organizations operating the regional crisis lines were required to sign agreements with Children's Aid Societies in their service areas. Significant differences have been noted in the manner in which the law is interpreted and there is a significant power imbalance between the signatories. In the future, it will be important to evaluate the impact of these measures on women and on the demand for anti-violence services.

### **2.7.5 Support for immigrant women, refugee women, and women survivors of war**

FLAVS must invest considerable time in supporting women in survival mode, to help them to get organized and meet their basic needs. Intervention is even more complex for immigrant women. The client's situation must first be stabilized—thus reducing the time available to address the abuse itself—and she must be helped to find ways to leave the abusive situation. Women who are not preoccupied by their survival can work more quickly on their healing.

Before their arrival in Canada, many immigrant and refugee women were unaware of their rights with respect to violence. Many are survivors of war. Some are experiencing

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<sup>9</sup> See Penwill 2002. The author examines obstacles associated with the reform of the child protection system in Ontario.

domestic violence, and others are dealing with several forms of violence simultaneously. In addition, an immigrant woman's status may determine whether or not she can leave an abusive relationship. A woman without status has no rights and does not have access to services. If she is sponsored, she may be under the impression that she does not have the right to leave her partner or is not entitled to social assistance.

A woman who needs to obtain refugee status or to annul diplomatic status will require considerable help because the immigration issues are complex. This will demand a considerable investment of time on the part of the anti-violence organizations assisting her, particularly if she does not speak English. Navigating the social service system, the legal system and immigration services, etc., is extremely complicated, and there are few bridges between anti-violence services on one hand and immigrant services and community agencies on the other.

### **2.7.6 Judicialization of violence against women**

The government of Ontario has invested significantly in the legal system and the criminalization of violence in the last ten years. Impressive amounts of money have been poured into the courts, the police, the justice system, and services to victims and witnesses, but there appears to have been little benefit to women. Only an estimated 6% of women victims of sexual assault turn to the justice system (Penwill 2004, forthcoming). Legal and judicial instruments do not seem at all useful to women. Despite a number of critiques of the manner in which the legal system deals with sexual assault, there has been little innovation or development of alternative methods, and long-term vision is lacking. Workers in anti-violence organizations point out that notwithstanding the changes, abusers are getting off lightly, and argue that the system should be more strict in this respect.

There appears to be a general feeling in community groups that they have not broken through to the legal system, either in criminal law or family law, and that they have been unable to educate and raise the awareness of the various players, most notably judges, about the experience of women dealing with violence. Biases and a tendency to disbelieve women's testimony exist within the justice system, which can lead to an apparent conflict between the rights of the accused (the abuser or the perpetrator of the assault) to be presumed innocent and to an adequate defense on the one hand, and the rights of women victims of violence on the other.

## **2.8 Backlash against the women's movement**

Despite the successes of anti-violence groups, and though there is more and more public discussion in Ontario society of violence against women and children, there is a disturbing backlash against women's rights. It can take several forms, from "fathers' rights" groups, to the false memory syndrome group, to the U.S.-based religious right that does not recognize women's rights and denies the existence of violence. Even the Vatican is involved when it blames feminists for the destruction of the family (Ratzinger and Amato 2004). Where then is the responsibility of violent men or perpetrators of incest for fostering healthy family life? At the same time, various levels of government are withdrawing in many different ways from women's issues, and the media, increasingly in the hands of fewer persons, is attempting to smother and discredit the women's movement.

There is a shift in the media and public opinion toward “gender neutral” language. The effect of this language is to remove from view the concerns of women’s groups about the enduring inequality between the sexes. It is used for example to demonstrate that violent men are victims as much as are women, and that they too have rights. There is a similar shift with the use of the expression “family violence” which when used obscures the fact that women are the primary victims. These shifts have a negative impact on services, which some decision-makers would like to make “neutral”. There is a feeling among some workers that feminists are being accused of having talked too much about violence, of being too radical, when in truth it is thanks to them that the issue is spoken of publicly at all.

Confronted with this backlash, anti-violence activists and the women’s movement are somewhat stymied. They are under attack on several fronts, and there appears to be a political vacuum in Ontario and Canada, with the exception of Québec where women’s issues remain at the forefront. Many feminist groups are exhausted or have closed their doors following cut-backs and the constraints imposed upon them. Yet, if there have been important reforms over the years, it is thanks to them and their hard work.

Bringing an end to violence is about more than money. Beyond the hundreds of millions of dollars invested to this end in Canada, the voices of women and the men who support them must be heard. It is difficult to remain indifferent to:

- an increase in the number of murders and assaults, most notably against young girls, young women, and prostitutes, for the purpose of male gratification ;
- an increase in sexism in fashion, which encourages, among other things, the sexualization of young girls, girls, and young women ;
- the trivialization of intimate relationships through television and pornography ;
- an increase in slavery and sexual exploitation, in particular of minors and immigrant women;
- the sexualization of advertising in which women’s bodies are used to sell cars, beer, and other consumer goods, even in the information media;
- the increased responsibility of women for the well-being of their children;
- the obscene poverty in which women and children live and which makes it impossible for them to leave violent situations, and this in one of the richest countries in the world.

Who is speaking out against these things in 2004? We note that a number of organizations are not doing so, and violence against women groups in the community are increasingly playing this role. It takes a great deal of courage to run counter to the prevailing ideology. In the Francophone anti-violence against women movement we have seen some organizations gradually distance themselves from the initial mission and vision of the sexual assault centres and shelters to be activists and to provide leadership in their communities.

This shift in the mission may not be all that surprising when one considers that our society is more and more concerned with profitability. The economic system benefits enormously from social inequality, and at the same time leaves very little room for equality between the sexes and between peoples.

Ten or twenty years ago, the Francophone anti-violence against women movement spoke of the oppression of the patriarchy. The discourse has changed, and today there is more

talk of human rights. Despite certain advances, women remain disadvantaged in this respect. It is for this reason that it seems important to us that community organizations in a position to defend the rights of women victims of violence assume the role of counterbalance to civil society.

In a political, social, and economic climate less favourable to women than that of ten years ago, it is surprising and noteworthy that the activist and feminist AOcVF has achieved such significant results.

In conclusion, take a few moments to jot down your comments on the questions addressed in this chapter.

## ► An opportunity to reflect

### Questions on the issue of violence

Questions	Comments
What do you think of the definition of violence? Is it the one you use in your organization, with all of its components?	
What do you think of the definitions of feminist analysis, the feminist approach, and feminist intervention? Are they used in your organization? Are there elements you would like to add?	
Does the philosophy of SACs and shelters suit you? What would you add?	
What would you add to the perspective on the evolution of the issue of violence in Ontario?	
What is characteristic of Francophone women in your region? Are they at greater risk of being victims of violence than are members of other linguistic groups? If so, why?	
Among the different problems that have an impact on the lives of Francophone women in Ontario who are experiencing violence, which do you notice in your region? Are there, according to you, other problems? How is it possible to resolve these problems?	
What do you think of the backlash against the women's movement which is working to bring an end to violence against women? How do you experience this daily? Are there other points you would like to add?	



# Chapter 3: Retrospective on the development of French-language services



*We are community groups who grew piecemeal, from grant to grant, but our growth needs to be planned [...] and it must be remembered that our objective is to serve women, despite obstacles. Women themselves developed this objective. (a director)*

The history of French-language anti-violence services is relatively recent; there has been rapid growth in the last ten years, coinciding with financial support from the government. However, when this investment is compared to the funds injected into English-language services, FLS can be said to have received only the smallest share, and with so little it is difficult to meet the needs of all the Francophone women in Ontario. The challenges and difficulties of FLS will be discussed in the next chapter.

Since the 1994 “Sensibiliser, décider, agir” forum on sexual assault, sexual assault centres (SACs) and shelters have come together and collaborated to implement mechanisms to combat violence against Francophone women in Ontario. They developed, among others, the elements that subsequently guided the development of French-language anti-violence services, which made it possible to draw up an ideal portrait of a quality service in French. The history of the Francophone anti-violence movement is dotted with successes and the results are convincing, despite the omnipresent backlash.

This history is described in the following pages.

## 3.1 Waves of government investment in French-language services

Adoption of the *French Language Services Act* in Ontario in 1986 made it possible for Francophone women to mobilize to lobby for health services and community and social services, including services for women victims of domestic violence or sexual assault. While there were a few anti-violence services at that time, it wasn't until 1994, then 1997, then 2003, that a network of new anti-violence services for Francophone women in some parts of the province emerged. Over the years, however, expansion has remained chronically underfunded.

Presently, French-language anti-violence services are not being established in the communities as quickly as they should be. Their development is not consistent, with services still not available in some parts of the province. The brief history that follows provides a glimpse of the waves of investment that led to the creation of French-language anti-violence services, and of some of the turning points that marked the Francophone anti-violence against women movement and brought together Francophone women anti-

violence activists. Finally, some government decisions critical for the development of FLS are outlined.

#### **First wave of investment: 1976 – 1990**

- Shelters are founded, such as Maison d'amitié in Ottawa (1976), Maison Interlude House in Hawkesbury (1983), and Habitat Interlude in Kapuskasing (1983). This development of FLAVS was rather accidental, and there was no obvious willingness on the part of the government to offer FLS.
- Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes (AOcVF) is founded in 1988.

#### **Second wave of investment: 1991 – 1995**

- In 1991, in the context of the *Initiative for the Prevention of Violence Against Women*, the NDP government announces the creation of a network of sexual assault centres. Needs assessments led to the creation of three entirely Francophone SACs—Oasis Centre des femmes in Toronto, Centre Victoria pour femmes in Sudbury, and the Calacs (SAC) francophone in Ottawa—and sexual assault services at the Centre de santé communautaire de Hamilton/Niagara. The government created and mandated nine other SACs to offer FLS in Barrie, Chatham-Kent, Cornwall, North Bay, Pembroke-Renfrew, Sault Ste. Marie, St. Catharines, Timmins, and Windsor. Some of these SACs receive funds specifically to permit them to meet their mandate of offering FLS.
- An education program administered by the Office of Francophone Affairs is instituted in 1991. Its objective is to support prevention and awareness-raising initiatives in the Francophone community.
- Various services for women victims of violence are funded in community resource centres, community health centres, agencies offering mental health services, etc.
- The forum “Relevons le défi”, the first forum on feminist intervention in Northeastern Ontario, takes place in 1991 in Sudbury. Over 200 women from throughout French-speaking Ontario attend. It is followed in 1994 in Ottawa by the provincial forum on sexual assault, “Sensibiliser, décider, agir”.
- In 1995, the Conservative government makes cuts of 5% to the budgets of anti-violence services and of 21% to social assistance benefits.
- S.O.S. Femmes, a province-wide distress and information line in French is launched in Toronto in 1992. It closes its doors in 2003.

#### **Third wave of investment: 1996 – 2000**

- In 1997, the Conservative government announces funding of \$27 million over four years for anti-violence initiatives.
- From 1997 to 2001, AOcVF implements the *Plan stratégique de développement des services en français en matière de violence, 1997-2001*, with funding for eight pilot projects. Regional lines are created in the North (Fem-Aide) and in the South-Central region (Elle-écoute) to ensure that isolated women have access to FLAVS. The Centre des femmes francophones du Nord-Ouest de l'Ontario in Thunder Bay can henceforth offer partial services in domestic violence and sexual assault. In 2000, the Centre Victoria pour femmes in Sudbury launches Projet Passeport (emergency intervention and support services in domestic violence and sexual assault) and opens a satellite office in Sault Ste. Marie. A FLS worker is hired in Dubreuilville. The strategic plan calls for support services for immigrant women in Hamilton/Niagara, Ottawa, and Toronto.

- In 1997, Sudbury welcomes nearly 300 women from throughout the province for the “Visibles et partenaires” forum on feminist research and practices in the Francophone community.
- In 1998, following the recommendations of the Coroner’s jury in the murder of Arlene May by her ex-spouse, the government creates a Joint Committee on Domestic Violence with a mandate to advise the government on the establishment of priorities. The government would subsequently improve the judicial system through massive investments.
- In 2000, the government announces a transitional support program, programs for child witnesses and victims of violence, and building projects in shelters. It commits itself to funding a new Francophone shelter in Ottawa.
- Francophone women from throughout Ontario gather in Ottawa for the World March of Women in the year 2000.

#### **Fourth wave of investment: 2001 – 2004**

- In 2001, AOcVF tables a second *Plan stratégique de développement des services en français en matière de violence, 2001* throughout Ontario.
- In 2002, the underfunding of the three Francophone SACs (Oasis Centre des femmes in Toronto, Centre Victoria pour femmes in Sudbury, and the Calacs francophone in Ottawa) and sexual assault services at the Centre de santé communautaire de Hamilton/Niagara is partially resolved and the funding allocated to the eight pilot projects launched in 1997 is annualized.
- In its 2003 Throne Speech, the Liberal government announces that it intends to produce an action plan to combat violence against women. In 2004, it announces measures to fight domestic violence, including \$3.5 million for second-stage housing and \$4.9 million for a public awareness campaign. It remains unclear what proportion of these funds will be reserved for FLAVS.
- In 2003, the outreach service for women in Prescott-Russell-Stormont-Dundas-Glengarry counties is launched in partnership with three shelters from the five Eastern counties.
- The regional crisis lines in French will henceforth provide sexual assault and domestic violence services to the entire province. Funding for the Elle-écoute and Fem-Aide lines is increased, and in 2004 a line is created to serve the East.
- AOcVF tables a third *Plan stratégique 2004 de développement des services en français en violence contre les femmes*.
- In 2004, the Liberal government of Ontario discusses service delivery models for services in French in Timmins and regions, and appears to support the first step towards the creation of a French-language SAC in Prescott-Russell.
- In August 2004, the McGuinty government announces a 3% increase in funding to community groups offering shelter, counselling services for women and children fleeing domestic violence, and the crisis lines.
- In November 2004, AOcVF hosts Forum 2004 to review the development of French-language violence against women services.

### **3.2 Comparison of the funding of French-language and English-language services**

In the 1970s and 1980s, the government of Ontario made the necessary resources available to community groups and to certain institutions to establish shelters and SACs. With few exceptions, these new services did not concern themselves with serving a French-speaking clientele. When, supported by the *French-language Services Act* of 1986, Francophone women began organizing between 1988 and 1992, a significant number of the current organizations were already operating.

There are now some 96 subsidized shelters and transition houses in Ontario offering services to abused women and their children 24 hours/day, 7 days/week. Four of these offer round the clock FLS: Maison d'amitié in Ottawa, Habitat Interlude in Kapuskasing, Maison Interlude House in Hawkesbury, and the Centre de ressources familiales in Sturgeon Falls. La Présence, a shelter operated by a religious order in Ottawa, offers FLS but is closed during the summer months. There is no French-language second-stage housing for women leaving shelters who require ongoing support while they create new lives free of violence.

There are 34 rape crisis centres or sexual assault services. Of these, three (known as Calacs, or Centres d'aide et de lutte contre les agressions à caractère sexuel) offer FLS exclusively: Centre Victoria pour femmes in Sudbury, Oasis Centre des femmes in Toronto, and the Centre francophone d'aide et de lutte contre les agressions à caractère sexuel of Ottawa. In addition, the Centre de santé communautaire de Hamilton/Niagara offers sexual assault services. These centres are operated by Francophone boards of directors, and the three SACs are autonomous centres. Other SACs in Dubreuilville and Cornwall have permanent French-speaking staff and offer some FLS. SACs in Barrie, North Bay, and Windsor offer FLS on a very limited basis because of the small number of French-speaking staff.

The St. Catharines and Chatham-Kent SACs, which had received funding to serve the Francophone community, demonstrated courage when they informed the government that they were unable to offer quality FLS and preferred to respect the principle that funds for FLS should be administered by Francophone women's organizations.

For some ten years, the Timmins SAC has received additional funding in order to serve the French-speaking community, though it did not meet the requirements of the *French-Language Services Act* and did not adequately serve that community. Following repeated complaints, the government is exploring models for service delivery in French in the region. Finally, when it was founded, the SAC in Renfrew seemed to want to offer FLS, but have since entirely backed away from that position.

The limited access to French-language violence against women services throughout the province, despite the requirements of the *French-Language Services Act*, raises the question of equity. A thorough study of each service would be necessary in order to understand the difference in funding between services in French and services in English, a task impossible to undertake in this overview. There are enough examples, however, to demonstrate that funding is inequitable.

While SACs in Renfrew, Nipissing, and Kenora, whose populations vary from 62,000 to 95,000, are awarded core funding of between \$213,000 and \$222,000, in Prescott-Russell with a roughly similar but largely French-speaking population (74,900), women victims of sexual assault do not yet have access to a SAC.

The Sudbury Sexual Assault Crisis Centre receives core funding of \$287,082, and in Ottawa, where there are two Anglophone sexual assault centres, the Ottawa Rape Crisis Centre receives core funding of \$349,406 and the Sexual Assault Services Centre funding of \$347,619. In contrast, the Centre francophone d'aide et de lutte contre les agressions à caractère sexuel d'Ottawa was initially awarded core funding of \$194,000, the Centre Victoria pour femmes in Sudbury, \$117,706, and Oasis Centre des femmes in Toronto, \$118,278. Core funding for the three centres was increased by \$50,000 in 2002 following sustained lobbying by the community and as a result of worker exhaustion. These Francophone organizations are asked to offer the same range of services as do the Anglophone organizations serving the same geographical area—a 24/7 line, emergency services, direct services, prevention, community awareness, etc.—with significantly lower funding.

The argument that the smaller number of Francophones justifies the lower funding of FLAVS, that is, that funding should be proportional to the number of Francophones in a given area, gives rise to the following questions: How does one explain the difference between the Anglophone centre offering so-called “bilingual” services in Timmins (with a population of 43,690, of whom 17,920 are Francophones) with a budget of \$325,000, and Oasis Centre des femmes in Toronto (with a budget of \$168,000 for sexual assault) for a French-speaking population of 42,780 in the metropolitan Toronto area alone? Why is it that in Toronto and Hamilton there isn't a single shelter able to welcome Francophone women at all times, while in North Bay (population 52,770), Sturgeon Falls (population 5,978), Hawkesbury (10,310), and Marathon (4,415) there are shelters?

The absurdity of the argument that funding should be calculated according to the percentage of the population was clearly demonstrated in 2003 when the government offered the Francophone community \$56,000 (5% of the announced amount) to improve the crisis lines at a time when it had just increased funding to the Assaulted Women's Help Line by \$800,000 to make its line available throughout the province. After considerable lobbying and with a total budget of less than \$600,000, the funding of the Francophone crisis lines has certainly improved; it remains inadequate, however, and overnight workers must be volunteers or be satisfied with a token payment in lieu of a real salary.

Research has demonstrated repeatedly that in addition to receiving the best possible services, Francophone women require services in their language. It has also shown that Anglophone organizations are not equipped to offer a complete range of French-language services. As English-speaking workers have pointed out, not to do so is unjust to Francophone women and represents a failure to recognize their unique situation and their needs:

otherwise it is another form of abuse [...] I think it is very important to have this service in the French language. [...] So you put that into a woman trying to come into an organization and to have enough, to be brave enough, to reach out for help and then to have that help in English, I think that's very difficult, I think there are emotions and feelings that she can't express in English. She can express them in her language she has every right to do that.

I think that when someone has suffered a very great trauma, you want to be treated in your mother tongue, you know even if you are fluently bilingual and I say in psychiatry all the time whereby people can be fluently bilingual but have a psychotic break or just even be a very, very scared person, and they refer right back to their mother tongue and they need somebody in their own language [...] And if you are in a crisis situation, you want to feel comfortable speaking with whomever you are speaking to. And we have to go through this, try and figure each other's languages. It is a lot of translation and that's just adding to the stress of the victim [...] and I'm wondering what it's like for that person who has to try to pour her heart out and you say ok stop, I'm going to try to interpret this, you know, I can imagine how you feel. It's almost like on demand stop expressing yourself until I translate and then (Garceau and Charron 2001: 39).

In light of comments such as these, the need for equity in the development of FLS is clear. Not only is it imperative, but funding must be appropriate, guaranteed, and ongoing, and the funding must make it possible to offer services to Francophone women of the same quality as services to Anglophone women. The impact of temporary pilot projects is limited; they create expectations in both the population and workers, and an almost unbearable uncertainty. Only true French-language services, knowledgeable about the culture of Ontario's Francophone population, can resolve these problems. Everywhere, FLS are considered essential:

The violence women experience gives rise to emotions and feelings that can only be expressed in one's mother tongue. For women to be able to speak in French of their history of violence, for them not to experience further violence because of language, it is important that they have access to services in French and that they be welcomed into a linguistically and culturally Francophone environment. Without that, the healing will never be complete. (Garceau and Charron 2001: 125).

### **3.3 Impact of the 1994 "Sensibiliser, décider, agir" Forum**

The 1994 forum on sexual assault, "Sensibiliser, décider, agir", was a pivotal moment in the development of FLAVS in Ontario. This large gathering was an opportunity for public discussion of violence, in particular sexual assault, and for determining the scope of what was needed to end such violence in Francophone communities. The following brief summary of the forum will highlight its impact on the development of organizations and of French-language services.

#### **3.3.1 Context and goals of the 1994 forum**

"Sensibiliser, décider, agir" was the culmination of a collaboration begun in 1990 between groups of Francophone women working in the area of sexual assault, the Ministry of the Attorney General, and the Office of Francophone Affairs. Following a study of the needs of French-speaking survivors of sexual assault throughout the province, core groups of women in Hamilton/Niagara, Cornwall, Toronto, Sudbury, and Ottawa, among others, began organizations offering French-language sexual assault services.

Government funding also made it possible to develop the range of educational tools on violence against women that were introduced at the forum. Participants spoke of the painful experience of Francophone women victims of domestic violence or sexual assault, and together they set out the direction, the scope of their demands, and regional, provincial, and national strategies required to support women in Francophone communities in Ontario.

The “Sensibiliser, décider, agir” forum marked a transition from thought to action, a privileged moment that has since 1994 nourished the development and solidarity between FLAVS. The broad lines of the action plan and the recommendations, since expanded and improved upon, are outlined below.

### **3.3.2 Action plan and recommendations of the “Sensibiliser, décider, agir” forum**

Though the forum was about sexual assault, participants also discussed domestic violence. Service delivery was central to the action plan and recommendations of the 1994 forum, which also incorporated awareness-raising, prevention, training, and resource development. Collaboration, coordination, and communication were to be foundational to this plan; political action was to be the engine moving the agenda forward in the media and in the political arena.

The forum action plan and recommendations are compiled in the following exercise. Take a few moments to make a checklist of the actions undertaken since 1994 by your organization, in your region, or provincially. Feel free to add comments in the margins.

## ► An opportunity to reflect

### Action plan and recommendations of the 1994 forum

Action plan and recommendations	Yes	In part	No
⇒ <b>Service delivery:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ let the survivors of violence speak, so that their knowledge is valued and respected;</li> <li>○ guarantee access to quality services in French that meet the needs of women and children in all parts of the province, and particularly in unserved regions;</li> <li>○ acknowledge the violence experienced by women of different origins and recognize the needs of certain groups of women.</li> </ul>			
⇒ <b>Awareness-raising and prevention:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ integrate awareness-raising and prevention of sexual assault into school, college, and university curricula;</li> <li>○ present initiatives and prevention and information models to the general public and to local and provincial governments;</li> <li>○ develop awareness-raising and training tools that deal with the oppression experienced by the various communities of Francophone women;</li> <li>○ make groups of women and other related groups aware of the issues of sexual assault and of the different forms of oppression ;</li> <li>○ develop an analysis of the sponsorship system for immigrant women.</li> </ul>			
⇒ <b>Training and resource development:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ use the expertise of Francophone women to conduct research and to develop resources and tools to meet the needs of victims of sexual assault;</li> <li>○ create a Francophone computerized provincial information and resource centre;</li> <li>○ offer women universal access to self-defense courses;</li> <li>○ ensure representation of Francophone women in the specialized training of judges and prosecutors.</li> </ul>			
⇒ <b>Collaboration, cooperation, and communication:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ create an electronic network for Francophone women;</li> <li>○ hold an annual gathering of women working to eradicate sexual assault;</li> <li>○ develop a series of thematic television and radio programs on the diversity of Francophone women ;</li> <li>○ facilitate regional autonomy in the campaign to eradicate sexual assault.</li> </ul>			

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ ensure that there is provincial and regional collaboration and coordination to develop services that address violence and create resources and tools adapted to the needs of survivors and to those of diverse groups of women;</li> <li>○ support of the coordinating role of AOcVF.</li> </ul>			
<p>⇒ <b>Political action:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ obtain the political and financial commitment of decision-makers to meet the needs of the various communities of French-speaking women;</li> <li>○ advocate for the legal and social reforms necessary to bring an end to sexual assault and the oppression experienced by women from the various Francophone communities in Ontario (for example, the subpoenas of survivors' records, the defense of intoxication, access to legal aid, reforms to the <i>Criminal Code</i>, discriminatory practices of the justice system).</li> </ul>			

Source: *Coopérative Convergence* 1994.

**3.3.3 Follow-up to the action plan and recommendations from 1994**

The action plan developed during the “Sensibiliser, décider, agir” forum was largely followed by concerted and concrete action at the provincial level, particularly by AOcVF or through action undertaken at the local and regional levels.

In the years following the forum, existing anti-violence organizations gained strength, despite the financial challenges they faced. The network of services grew through the establishment of new autonomous services. Many organizations integrated awareness-raising and prevention of domestic violence, sexual assault, and other forms of violence into their services, but this multiple-service delivery was affected by budgetary constraints. All of this development took place in the context of the chronic underfunding of the development of French-language anti-violence services.

When considering the development of FLS, it is interesting to note that in a minority environment, the network serving the Francophone minority is never a given, far from it. It develops only when Francophone communities mobilize and through political action give themselves the institutions to meet their needs (Breton 1995). The Anglophone community already has a complete network of organizations. Over the years, communities of Francophone women created contexts in which they could, they hoped, negotiate with government ministries as equals, in order that they not be condemned once again to assimilate into Anglophone organizations, and so that they might defend the rights and needs of Francophone women, and the importance of services **by** and **for** them.

The last decade has also seen a movement toward the institutionalization of anti-violence services. For example, in the past shelters focused on the experience of women who had survived violence to offer services. Over time, this was overshadowed by the professional model. Some services for victims of sexual assault were institutionalized when sexual assault treatment centres, most of them located in hospitals, were created.

Workers in organizations are now more aware of the difficult situation of immigrant women, though much work remains to be done before these women have access to services adapted to their needs. The study of immigrant women and sponsorship conducted in

1999 by the Table féministe francophone de concertation provinciale de l'Ontario (TFFCPO) may not have achieved all of its stated goals, but it did shed light on aspects of these women's lives. Knowledge of and intervention with women from diverse origins continued to expand. The staff of anti-violence organizations is now much more heterogenous than in 1994 when few women of diverse origins held positions. Because of the great need, the Mouvement ontarien des femmes immigrantes francophones (MOFIF) was recently established and an ever greater number of immigrant women of diverse origins participate in the various existing organizations, most notably in Hamilton/Niagara, Ottawa, and Toronto.

Over the last ten years, workers in all of the groups associated with AOcVF have participated in research projects on needs, services, service delivery models, or the evaluation of anti-violence services. A number have also participated in the analysis of the particular issues affecting Francophone women in Ontario. Anchored in the grassroots, in the realities and needs of women, documents have been produced throughout the province. Whatever their objectives, all have demonstrated, again and again, that Francophone women have very important needs that must be met in order to end the violence of which they are victims. Some of these documents were widely circulated in local, regional, and provincial networks and in the government ministries involved in combating violence, and they have been taken into consideration when decisions are made regarding funding.

In the normal course of events, all of this work should have been followed by funding for FLAVS. Under the previous Conservative government, however, most of the funds were invested in the courts, the justice system, hospitals, etc., to improve these systems and for the presumed benefit of victims. Organizations offering services to Francophone women victims of violence are certainly not among those who most benefited, and the funds granted could not meet the demand for services in French or the generally higher costs associated with working in a minority environment.

At the same time, many workers in organizations developed documents or FLAVS promotional material reflecting the particular situation of Francophone women. They developed training material and offered this training to various groups in order to meet the needs of other workers or survivors.

Since 1994, small groups of activists have mobilized locally with limited resources to develop French-language anti-violence services. Regional coordination, proposed during the 1994 forum, has proven difficult, with geographical distance and limited funding for transportation limiting the participation of some organizations. Still, efforts have resulted in strong alliances, friendships, fruitful partnerships, and the sharing of resources. The cooperation between the Mid-North and North-West regions is an example of a successful collaboration.

Provincially, the efforts at collaboration and coordination led by AOcVF, though hampered by insufficient means, have been essential to the development of anti-violence organizations. AOcVF has advanced a cogent, consistent and supported argument for the development of anti-violence services for Francophone women. With the support of some public servants, and in particular of the Office of Francophone Affairs, some employees of the Ministry of the Attorney General or of the Ministry of Community and Social Services, Status of Women Canada, and with the dynamism of its member groups, AOcVF has over the years shaken the legendary political complacency with respect to FLAVS.

AOcVF is now invited on occasion to participate in consultations hosted by the government, and there is greater awareness than in 1994 of the needs of Francophone women. Consider this example of the impact of the 1994 forum: the Office of Francophone Affairs invited AOcVF and its member groups to present a strategic plan for the development of French-language services for the period from 1997 to 2001. This first provincial planning exercise was followed by a period of development. AOcVF and its member groups tabled a second strategic plan in 2001 and a third in 2004. Significantly more detailed than the first, these two strategic plans put forward the requirements for the development of FLS for domestic violence, sexual assault, and violence prevention in all regions of the province.

Notwithstanding the obstacles and pitfalls encountered, in the last ten years FLAVS have managed, through coordination, collaboration, and creativity, to influence decision-makers within the government. In addition to their mandate to offer services to women victims and survivors, with the help of AOcVF, they have succeeded in developing an analysis of the broader political issues affecting women, and an action plan. Women working in FLS have presented a common front for the greater well-being of Francophone women or for the development of FLS **by** and **for** Francophone women. Together, they have taken the lead on important issues. An example of this would be the leadership of AOcVF and its members in the area of the legal and social reforms critical to ending domestic violence, sexual assault, and the multiple forms of oppression women experience.

We recall, among others: papers on reforms to the general section of the *Criminal Code* (1995), on Bill C-46 (record subpoenas) (1997) or on the reform of defense strategies set out in the *Criminal Code* (1999). We also recall documents on issues such as: provocation and self-defense (July 1999), the national consultation on equality between the sexes (December 1999), pornography (March 2000), family law and child custody reform (October 2000), the 2000 Domestic Violence Prevention Act (March 2002), a critique of the specialized domestic violence courts (2003) and finally, the critique of the justice system with respect to sexual assault (Penwill 2004, forthcoming).

So many hours spent advocating and so much energy expended to persuade!  
Such a long road traveled since the “Sensibiliser, décider, agir” forum of 1994!  
Thanks to all of those who played a part in moving the agenda forward!

### **3.4 Elements guiding the development of French-language services**



*The first strategic planning exercise in 1997 was an important beginning. It brought us together, we saw the bigger picture and we built on that (a director).*

In the last decade, AOcVF has seen that the majority of FLS offered by so-called “bilingual” organizations (primarily those located in regions where Francophones are very much a minority) leave a lot to be desired. Many of these agencies, offering a bare

minimum of services, have not survived. Francophone workers experienced considerable oppression and were not provided with the resources necessary to offer quality French-language services. Despite the support of AOcVF, they were unable to properly fulfill their mandate to the Francophone community and many ultimately resigned.

This reality only served to increase the commitment of AOcVF and the Francophone violence against women movement to lobby FLS run **by** and **for** Francophone women. Two documents provided the framework for the development of these services: the guiding principles and the ideal portrait of a quality French-language service.



### **3.4.1 Guiding principles: cornerstone of the development of French-language services**

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 FLAVS.

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.
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, scale.
11. The government and those who provide French-language violence against women services 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.



### **3.4.2 Portrait of an ideal quality French-language service: an ideal to be achieved**

This portrait of an ideal quality FLAVS was developed in 1998 in the context of a study of French-language anti-violence services in Ontario (Brunet 1998). The study presented the defining elements of quality French-language anti-violence services. This portrait sets out an ideal to be achieved in order to ensure accessible, high quality FLS, and serves as a check-list for organizations and government ministries considering the degree to which FLS are accessible and of quality.

1. The staff are French-speaking and competent:
  - the service is managed by Francophone women who have the power to make decisions affecting services;
  - the quality of the services offered in French is equal or superior to that of services offered to the Anglophone community;
  - all staff members 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 to 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;
  - continuity of service is assured;
  - Francophone volunteers contribute to the activities of the organization, but the service is not wholly dependent upon them to operate.
3. All services are guaranteed and accessible at all times:
  - users may be served entirely 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 service meets needs;
  - the service is accessible to women who live at some distance;
  - the service is 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;
  - the material in French is easily understood and used by all women.
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 presented 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 materials and dealings with the media are in French;
  - Francophones and Anglophones 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 made up 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.

### **3.5 Successes of the Francophone violence against women movement**

We wanted to find out how the Francophone violence against women movement viewed its history. With the help of interviews with ten directors or coordinators of organizations offering anti-violence services and the director of AOcVF and a discussion group of workers in organizations offering services, we compiled a list of the movement's successes that we also consider as achievements.

Thanks to its work over the last ten years, the Francophone violence against women movement has succeeded in:

1. offering a broad range of FLS to women victims of violence;
2. collaborating provincially and speaking with one voice;
3. influencing decision-makers in government ministries;
4. gaining recognition of the importance of FLS;
5. being acknowledged by and collaborating with the Anglophone violence against women movement;
6. innovating service delivery;

7. increasing knowledge, resources, and support for workers and directors or coordinators of organizations;
8. developing prevention programs for children and youth;
9. developing an increased capacity to serve and to adapt to the diversity of women;
10. establishing partnerships with other community groups;
11. building alliances with other sectors of the Francophone community in Ontario.

### 3.5.1 Offering a broad range of services in French to women victims of violence



*The variety of services we can now offer our clients means that we can meet more and different needs. We have several options to offer them. (a worker)*

The last ten years have seen a steady growth in the number of programs offered by FLS, contrary to what has occurred in so called “bilingual” organizations which have cut back or eliminated the FLS they were offering. The number of Francophone staff has risen since 1994. Over the years there have been increases in budgets and other programs have been added, making it possible to serve a broader geographic area and more women. The catching-up period begun following the *Plan stratégique de développement des services en français en matière de violence, 1997-2001*, the annualization of some funds, and the funding of the regional crisis lines which made it possible to hire paid workers to take calls (thus correcting situations in which such an essential service was almost wholly dependent on volunteers) gave organizations more secure financial footing.

This evolution is all the more remarkable for having occurred in a climate of cutbacks under a Conservative government. There has been no real stabilization, as most organizations continue to develop new services, sometimes with new funders, and continue to want to innovate.

According to the information gathered, women receiving FLAVS are apparently very satisfied with them, and the services contribute significantly to their ability to prevent or leave violent situations. Since they are satisfied with the services, they promote them to other women. Survivors have a voice in the Francophone violence against women movement, whether as volunteers on crisis lines, as members of boards of directors, or in other ways.

### 3.5.2 Collaborating provincially and speaking with one voice



*There is a desire to share resources, and it comes from the fact that we don't have many. Action ontarienne does the work that bureaucrats should do to develop services in French and it doesn't cost the government much. (a director)*

AOcVF was created in 1988. The provincial organization was able to mobilize local organizations throughout the province offering direct services to women and children

dealing with violence. Access to FLS has improved because of AOcVF's vision of the bigger picture and its steadfast determination.

AOcVF has a dual mandate. On one hand, it provides services to anti-violence organizations (for example, training, the production of material, provincial collaboration and coordination), and on the other, it acts as a provincial spokesperson on violence issues on behalf of Francophone women. In addition, it works on both sexual assault and domestic violence issues. With the breadth of its mandate and the issues it addresses, the AOcVF does, in French and with few resources, the work of at least four other provincial organizations:

- Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres (OCRCC) – mandate to do political advocacy primarily;
- Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses (OAITH) – mandate to do political advocacy;
- Metropolitan Action Committee on Violence Against Women and Children (METRAC) – mandate to produce awareness-raising and prevention material;
- Education Wife Assault – mandate to produce awareness-raising and prevention material.

### 3.5.3 Influencing decision-makers in government ministries



*We haven't been given all of the resources we require, but we have earned the acknowledgement by governments that Francophones need resources in French adapted to our needs and not bilingual services. This acknowledgement and this understanding are not the same across the province, few bureaucrats would dare to say: "You speak English, you don't need services in French" (a director).*

The lobbying and advocacy of the Francophone violence against women movement has achieved some important results, and the question of FLAVS is increasingly before decision-makers. After numerous meetings with ministers, deputy ministers, assistant deputy ministers, and directors, in recent years AOcVF representatives have noticed a change in the attitude of certain ministries who are increasingly recognizing the rights of Francophones. They are more aware that there is catching up to do in FLS and that discrimination exists because funding is lower for French than for English language services. The operating budgets of some underfunded organizations have been adjusted for this reason.

Some ministries have begun to understand the need for parallel FLS managed **by** and **for** Francophone women. The need for Francophone shelters in cities such as Toronto and Hamilton has not yet been understood, however.

### 3.5.4 Gaining recognition of the importance of French-language services



*Action ontarienne is a movement that started from nothing some fifteen years ago. We've come a long way to having French-language services recognized (a director).*

AOCVF and its members have developed an analysis of the issues related to violence, have clearly expressed the needs of Francophone women, have formulated a consistent message, and have created solid coalitions. The presence of FLAVS and the community awareness work have borne fruit locally and regionally. Francophone organizations have for the last ten years served as the beacons and watchdogs in their communities and have developed partnerships and agreements with school boards, SACs, Anglophone shelters, etc.

In discussions with provincial ministries, it is increasingly recognized that Francophones bring expertise to the table. At the same time, however, it is clear that nothing should be taken for granted when it comes to FLS, and that the struggle is ongoing.

### **3.5.5 Being acknowledged by and collaborating with the Anglophone movement**

Despite its more limited resources, AOCVF works alongside its sisters in the Anglophone anti-violence movement, and is respected by them. The alliances it has forged with Anglophone provincial organizations have made it possible to develop joint projects, such as publications and videos, and shared campaigns. The resources developed in French are useful to Anglophone organizations. A part of AOCVF's budget now comes from purchased services with Anglophone organizations to adapt resource material produced in English into French.

### **3.5.6 Innovating service delivery**



*Action ontarienne coordonnée, poussée, et encouragée par les communautés pour croître, les rendre autonomes et les soutenir. (une directrice)*

Alternative service delivery models were developed to meet the particular needs of each region. The Francophone violence against women movement acknowledged that in a minority environment, there is a limit to the programs government ministries can (or want) to fund, and it has endeavored to meet needs by proposing new ways of delivering services.

Consider the outreach service in Prescott-Russell-Glengarry-Stormont-Dundas and that of the former Projet Passeport of the Centre Victoria pour femmes in Sudbury which, in addition to its awareness-raising work on violence, offered services to women dealing with domestic violence but who did not want to go to a shelter. Opening a satellite office in Sault Ste-Marie, notwithstanding the challenges this structure presents to Centre Victoria, is an innovative approach to meeting needs in distant parts of the Mid-North.

Another example is the manner in which Oasis Centre des femmes, Centre des femmes francophones du Nord-Ouest de l'Ontario, and Centre Victoria pour femmes have integrated domestic violence, sexual assault, and other forms of violence. The approach they have taken is more flexible and better geared to the needs of their regions and the clients they serve than had they separated the issues. Such innovative models may have

their disadvantages and detractors, but the courage of organizations who venture off the beaten path to meet the needs of women must be acknowledged.

### 3.5.7 Increasing knowledge, resources, and support for workers and directors of organizations



*We've given the workers confidence, we know the issues as well as the Anglophones. We've developed our analysis. (a director)*

When, in the mid-1990s, the Ontario Women's Directorate stopped producing anti-violence material in French, AOcVF filled the void. Over the years, the organization has invested considerably in research and in the development of publications, its website, and other resources. Many groups have also produced widely circulated material (the *Fiches atouts!* of the Centre Victoria pour femmes in Sudbury, for example). The resources and tools produced are useful and appreciated by workers and users. All of this material is developed according to needs identified in the field. Workers are involved in its development, they participate in the research, and its results are presented to them in order that they might make it their own. The Francophone violence against women movement has thus contributed significantly to improving the level of knowledge and expertise within its own ranks.

Every year since 1993, AOcVF has organized meetings and training for the SACs to which since 1995 shelters have been invited. These gatherings of workers and directors of organizations have been opportunities to identify skills, to facilitate the forging of bonds and the sharing of resources, and to develop great solidarity throughout the province. Were it not for AOcVF's coordination of this collaboration and of the development of resources and expertise, SACs and shelters in French-speaking Ontario would have precious few resources in French. AOcVF's moral support, which has broken the isolation of organizations and helped them through difficult periods, is also noteworthy.

### 3.5.8 Developing prevention programs for children and youth

The Centre ontarien de prévention des agressions (COPA) established in 1995 made a series of prevention programs for children and youth available to the Francophone violence against women movement. Programs such as ESPACE, Riposte, Instincts, and others have been offered for several years in communities in the North, the South-Central region, and Greater Toronto. More recently, communities in the East and South-West have received training in ESPACE, and they will soon offer the program. These programs are based on a feminist philosophy and use an empowerment-based approach. COPA creates and distributes resources for assault prevention and supports partner organizations throughout Ontario by offering them tools, technical support, and training. It has touched nearly 40,000 Francophone women and youth with its prevention programs offered in partnership with various Francophone anti-violence organizations, and these persons are now better equipped to exercise their right to be served in French.

The Fédération de la jeunesse franco-ontarienne (FESFO) has for over ten years organized awareness-raising workshops for young men and women in secondary schools. Thousands of young Franco-Ontarians have thus been made aware of the issues.

Experience has shown that by involving workers from outside the schools, prevention programs open the door to children and youth who then feel comfortable disclosing abuse and asking for help. The result is a reduction in their feeling of powerlessness and dependence. Even more children and youth could be reached by building on existing prevention initiatives.

### 3.5.9 Developing an increased capacity to serve and to adapt to the diversity of women



*The arrival in the movement of immigrant women has contributed a richness, a sensitivity, and a complexity to our discussions. Their lived experience as survivors of war has increased our understanding of violence. (a director)*

The arrival in large cities of a large number of French-speaking immigrant women has changed the face of Francophone Ontario. Racial and ethnocultural minorities now represent nearly 10% of the total French-speaking population. Confronted with a demographic shift which has had a significant impact in some communities, some anti-violence organizations have adjusted their services and programs as well as their hiring practices. The efforts of three organizations deserve particular mention: Maison d'amitié in Ottawa, Oasis Centre des femmes in Toronto, and the anti-violence services of the Centre de santé communautaire de Hamilton/Niagara. In these organizations where the majority of clients served are immigrant women, more than half the staff reflects this ethnocultural diversity, and more and more immigrant women are in leadership positions. The Mouvement ontarien des femmes immigrantes francophones (MOFIF) is considered a great accomplishment, and this new organization was created in part thanks to the support of AOcVF and its members.

Immigrant women have particular needs, and considerable effort is necessary before they can speak of violence. Organizations are now being called on to respond to a new type of clientele, war survivors. To support women wanting to obtain immigrant or refugee status to begin a life without violence is complex, and few community organizations are in a position to do it in French.

There is great diversity among FLS clients. Many organizations have developed the necessary knowledge and have been able to adapt their services to respond to the requirements of many other groups of women in special circumstances or with special needs (women with disabilities, lesbians, marginalized women, etc.). Much has yet to be done, however, before all women are well-served, because information, training, and resources remain insufficient.

### **3.5.10. Establishing partnerships with other community groups**

On a local scale, French-language anti-violence services have developed a large number of partnerships with other community groups. They have raised the awareness of many community organizations to the issue of violence against women and have demonstrated that violence is as important an issue as any other.

New players are getting involved. School boards for example are recognizing that in partnership with schools, they have a role to play in identifying and offering services to address family violence, sexual assault, and other forms of violence, whether they occur in the family or in the schools. Healthcare organizations are devoting resources to the issue. Faced with the involvement of these new actors, the Francophone violence against women movement sometimes wonders what framework of analysis these groups use and whether their approach is compatible with the principles of feminist intervention that have guided the development of French-language anti-violence services to date.

### **3.5.11. Building alliances with other sectors of the Francophone community in Ontario**

Other Francophone organizations are increasingly recognizing AOcVF's expertise. With the support of the French-language services coordinator of the Ministry of the Attorney General, AOcVF has created strategic alliances with the Association française des municipalités de l'Ontario (AFMO) to develop and sign a memorandum of understanding with the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP). Though the process was demanding and the negotiations took years, the memorandum is considered a success because the OPP has finally admitted its responsibility to provide FLS.

AOcVF collaborated with AFMO and the Association des juristes d'expression française de l'Ontario (AJEFO) to develop a strategic plan for the "justice sector". It is working with the Fédération des aînés et jeunes retraités francophones de l'Ontario (FAFO) to produce a booklet on violence against older women. In addition to its ongoing collaboration with the Mouvement ontarien des femmes immigrantes francophones (MOFIF), AOcVF has played a leadership role in projects of the Table féministe francophone de concertation provinciale de l'Ontario (TFFCPO), among them research on the sponsorship of immigrant women and the World March of Women in the Year 2000.

Partnerships such as these with other organizations in French-speaking Ontario raise the awareness of actors unfamiliar with the issue of violence and demonstrate to the community that fighting violence is also the responsibility of men and that there are men involved in the cause. It would be to AOcVF's benefit to expand these alliances to other sectors of the Francophone community including youth, teachers, healthcare professionals, etc.

## **3.6 Factors in the success and winning strategies of the Francophone violence against women movement**

The successes in FLAVS in the last ten years are not the result of happenstance. According to the directors or coordinators of organizations, workers in those organizations, and public servants from various government ministries who participated in this research, the successes rest on a combination of several factors. The successes were always

accompanied by strategies developed by the Francophone violence against women movement, and in particular by the SACs and shelters. The following have been factors in these successes:

- The ability to mobilize and rally the community and to maintain the vision of services in French **by** and **for** Francophone women, by establishing principles to guide them.
- Solidarity and coordination between organizations to develop and maintain a common front while finding means to negotiate differences.
- The collaboration of allies in government ministries, public servants who believe fundamentally in the importance of FLS and who as much as possible support the work of organizations to provide quality services.
- Perseverance in their political work and the ongoing presence of AOcVF steering committee, whose message to all levels of government ministries through regular meetings, calls, and letters has been clear and consistent.
- An acute political sense, an ability to analyze current events and government policies and programs, and a talent for making that information accessible.
- A certain openness on the part of the three governments of the last ten years.
- Participation at meetings of representatives from all regions and all parts of the Franco-Ontarian community who serve as a reminder of the need to adapt programs to the reality and needs of all regions and of specific groups such as immigrant women.
- The great generosity, the commitment, the consensus approach, the ability to compromise, and the mutual support of organizations inclined to think of collective interests and the needs of other regions, going so far as to divide the pie into small pieces and to tighten their own belts.
- The participatory leadership and professionalism of the AOcVF staff and its member groups in their work with both government decision-makers and workers at the grassroots.
- AOcVF's ability to listen to the real grassroots needs, to meet them, and to offer steadfast support to organizations.
- The administrative skill of organizations and their ability to stretch the limited funds available.
- The spirit of mutual support and the openness of organizations to sharing the tools they produce and to help one another.
- The willingness of organizations to create a development plan in partnership with the government.
- The philosophy of feminist intervention and the flexibility to adapt that vision to represent and serve all women.
- The willingness and ability of organizations to adapt and innovate to respond to the needs and to explore alternative models, and the respect for regional autonomy in the search for creative and adapted solutions.
- The creativity of the women's movement, with the *Ontario Women's Declaration* (1995) produced by the Table féministe francophone de concertation provinciale de l'Ontario and supported by AOcVF, following cut-backs by the Conservative government, and the document of the Cross-Sectoral Violence Against Women Strategy Group on emergency measures for women (2000), signed by the Liberals and the New Democrats.

These successes may appear numerous and they highlight some of the achievements of the Francophone violence against women movement. While they are important for organizations, they are also not without difficulties, as we shall see in the following chapter.

## Chapter 4: Provincial portrait of services that address violence

The provincial portrait of French-language services in domestic violence and sexual assault presented in this section highlights services offered daily in 2004 in the province's SACs, shelters, and some institutions offering French-language anti-violence services that were consulted. Attention is drawn to missing elements in service. Each of these missing elements represents an unmet need, an instance where the French-speaking women of Ontario are not adequately served.

We would have liked to present data from SACs, shelters, and the institutions offering French-language anti-violence services on the number of users or contacts. Unfortunately, data collection is not uniform from one organization to another, and this data cannot be presented.

The provincial portrait is divided into sections. The first presents a profile and an analysis of:

- emergency intervention services offering intervention to women in a crisis. The intervention is usually short-term and solves an immediate problem;
- direct services to women, that is intervention services offering help, generally face-to-face, to users of the services. This intervention is normally offered for the short- or medium term;
- shelter services, that is settlement and housing services, and intervention services offering temporary help and support to women and children;
- services for young victims or witnesses of violence under 16 years of age, that is face-to-face intervention services with young people admitted to shelters or who use sexual assault services. This is normally short- or medium term intervention and can also be offered by telephone;
- prevention, awareness-raising, and education services, that is the programs, workshops, or projects developed to prevent violence or sexual assault in all social environments. Awareness-raising services increase knowledge of the multiple issues related to violence against women, whereas education services permit sharing information about violence against women and children;
- resource and support services, that is financial aid for transportation, childcare, or documentary and audio-visual material and resources for women.

The second section describes the clientele currently served by organizations and identifies emerging clientele who will need to be more adequately served in the future. Particular attention will be paid to immigrant women and women from ethnocultural backgrounds, and women with disabilities.

Section three addresses funding, staffing, weaknesses in human resources, and training. It also examines the contribution of volunteers. Section four concerns partnerships and describes criteria for their success as well as the challenges they present at the regional and provincial levels.

The fifth section of the portrait summarizes the challenges and difficulties confronting organizations offering French-language anti-violence services, and the sixth, the priorities for the development of FLS as identified by the organizations consulted. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the autonomy of FLS, a recurring theme in the completed questionnaires and the interviews conducted for the research.

## 4.1 Services offered by organizations

The first section of chapter 4 addresses emergency services, direct services, shelter services, prevention, awareness-raising, and education services, and the resource and support services offered by organizations in 2004.

**Important note:** *It is important to note that percentages presented in the text and the tables include data from only those organizations consulted in the research. They do not represent rates of service usage throughout the province. The rates of use are unknown at this time. Because sexual assault remains largely taboo, for example, a woman will only rarely choose to go before the courts and request accompaniment to the police and to court, though most organizations offer this service.*

### 4.1.1 Emergency intervention services



*After the strategic plan in 1997 we told ourselves that we were crazy to have done so much work for so little. The lesson we learned from that experience was to make sure that when the government approaches us, there is enough funding... We got caught again with the regional crisis lines... (a director).*

The principal emergency intervention services include:

- the regional crisis lines and the other information and support lines;
- the crisis intervention done by workers when women are confronted with an obstacle that is difficult to overcome and that prevents them from dealing with a stressful event;
- accompaniment to the hospital or to the police after a sexual assault or a violent incident, and,
- the translation and interpretation done by Francophone workers in emergency or crisis situations.

#### a) **Regional crisis lines and information and support lines**

The three regional crisis lines offer services 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. They serve the North, the South-Central region and the East, and now cover the entire province. All other organizations offering FLS refer women who need them to the lines. They can meet

the needs of women throughout the province, and in particular isolated women or women living in rural or remote areas. These lines are a success, despite the challenges they present to the organizations coordinating them. They represent savings through worker training, a shared data base and best practices.

According to the organizations managing them (Oasis Centre des femmes, Centre Victoria pour femmes, and Maison d'amitié, in collaboration with the Centre de ressources de l'est d'Ottawa), one of the challenges relates to their operating funds. Despite a short-term grant, these funds are insufficient to make possible ongoing, long-term promotion of the lines. Extensive, province-wide promotion of the lines is critical if Francophone women are to know of the service and use it. Without promotion, how can potential users of the lines be made aware of them, and how can the lines justify their funding and fulfill their mandates? To these questions, workers respond that additional funding is necessary and promotion of the regional lines must be done at the local, regional, and provincial levels.

A second challenge related to financial resources concerns human resources; they are insufficient to ensure the proper (24/7) staffing of the lines. As a result, instead of regular, properly paid evening or night staff, some organizations must offer workers a token payment, paltry compensation for the service provided, or on occasion must rely on volunteers to meet staffing needs. Funding of the regional crisis lines must be stabilized and must be equitable in relation to that of Anglophone organizations.

A third challenge relates to the nature of the questions addressed on the lines. In addition to fielding calls about domestic violence, sexual assault, and other forms of abuse, workers must deal with a variety of other issues. They are confronted with the very complex needs of women who, in addition to violence or sexual assault, are dealing with other equally serious problems such as mental illness, alcohol or substance abuse, etc. For Francophone women in some regions, the regional crisis lines are the only services available. Workers on the lines must thus have a broad base of knowledge, but they may not have all of the resources, knowledge, and expertise necessary to respond to all needs, hence the importance of ongoing training to support them. It is difficult to offer this training when workers are spread throughout the province and when many cannot travel for lack of time or because the FLS would not be offered should they leave for a few days.

A final challenge is the contact between the regional crisis lines and the local and regional organizations offering services to women. For Francophone women, the crisis lines are often the point of entry to face-to-face services. The regional lines are characterized by a community development model. This decentralized model seeks to facilitate the creation of partnerships between the line and local or regional agencies in order to refer women to appropriate services, hence the need for a community development worker not only to promote the lines but also to forge links with local organizations. In addition, the broad territory covered by the regional crisis lines requires workers to refer women to other organizations when the callers live outside the immediate area. There are gaps in FLS in all parts of the province, and particularly in the North and in rural or isolated areas, and workers may not be able to refer women to FLS because they simply do not exist.

For now, despite three year funding for promotion, the success of the regional lines will depend on their extensive and ongoing promotion and on liaison with community organizations.

In addition to the regional lines, there are other information and support lines operated by anti-violence organizations. For example, in the East there is the line run by Maison d'amitié, those of the community resource centres, that of Maison Interlude House in Hawkesbury, and that of the Calacs francophone d'Ottawa, as well as the line operated by the Services d'aide aux survivantes d'agression sexuelle de Stormont-Dundas-Glengarry & Akwesasne. The latter two continue to operate an information and support line on which trained volunteers field calls on sexual assault related questions. There is no province-wide consensus on the use of volunteers to offer direct services to victims and survivors. There is also a lack of unanimity on the integration of the issues of domestic violence and sexual assault, a practice that meets the needs of organizations in regions where Francophones, faced with tremendous gaps in services, have chosen to offer hybrid services (domestic violence and sexual assault) within a single agency. These issues, which directly affect the regional lines, would benefit from further discussion and study.

**b) Emergency accompaniment and crisis intervention**

Organizations provide emergency accompaniment locally 24 hours a day, 7 days a week in conjunction with the regional crisis lines and the services they offer. In some organizations it is provided by workers during the day or by a stand-by service of workers or volunteers at night.

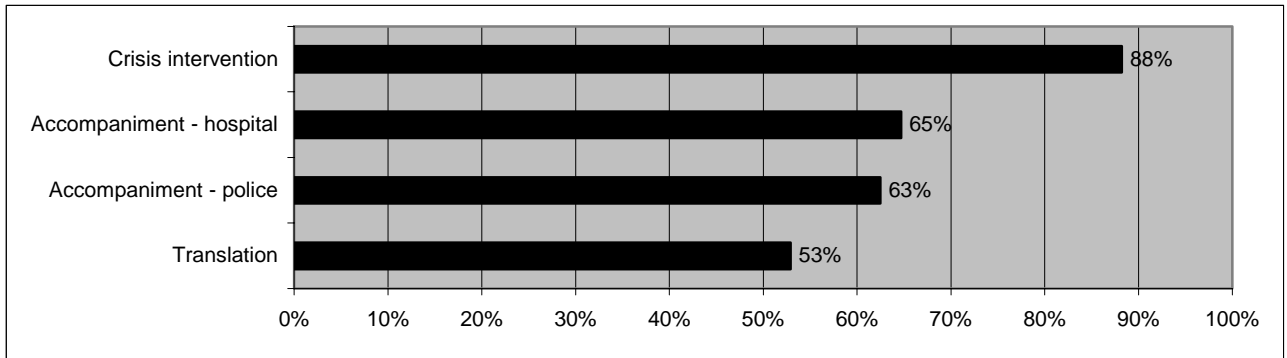
For workers and volunteers in some organizations, this means adding these on-call hours to their regular work week. The situation is substantially the same in shelters. The impact on some workers is that they can almost never get a break from their work. They experience constant stress, they are always alert, rarely able to rest, which for some leads to vicarious traumatization and eventually burn-out.

Women in some of the organizations consulted have no access to emergency accompaniment: because of staff shortages, the service is not offered. In others, emergency accompaniment is unavailable outside regular working hours, in the evenings, at night, or on weekends. Finally in some regions where workers may be required to appear before the courts as witnesses, emergency accompaniment services have been closed. This would appear to be another example of the backlash discussed earlier. In fact, the effect of the lawyers' tactic of having workers testify is to deny women the support of the workers involved in their cases.

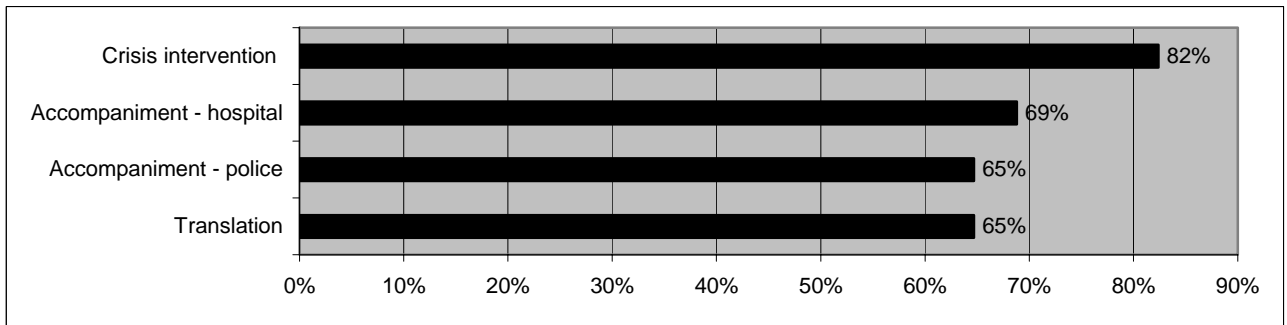
Table 1 demonstrates that 65% of French-language sexual assault services offer emergency accompaniment to the hospital and that 63% offer emergency accompaniment to the police. Table 2 shows that 69% of French-language domestic violence services offer emergency accompaniment to the hospital and that 65% offer emergency accompaniment to the police. Conversely, both tables demonstrate that nearly one third of organizations offer no emergency accompaniment, probably because this service is not part of their mandate.

Table 1 reveals that crisis intervention is offered by 88% of organizations providing sexual assault services, and Table 2 that 82% of organizations providing domestic violence services offer it. Workers have pointed out the need for ongoing training on this type of intervention as well as on the issues they encounter in calls to the crisis lines.

**Table 1 Percentage of FLS in the area of sexual assault offering emergency services, 2004.**



**Table 2 Percentage of FLS in the area of domestic violence offering emergency services, 2004.**



**c) Translation and interpretation**



*I was never able to heal completely from incest and sexual assault as long as I couldn't get it out in French and speak about it in French. I did the whole process in an Anglophone environment here in Thunder Bay and elsewhere, and I never reached the point of healing until I was able to speak of it in French (Garceau and Charron 2001: 41).*

Workers in most organizations consulted translate and interpret on a regular basis. Many Anglophone anti-violence services seem to take it for granted that Francophone women speak or understand English, which is not necessarily the case. Workers who offer translation or interpretation free of charge provide an invaluable service to Anglophone organizations which are not required to make an effort to meet the needs of Francophone women. When this service is provided for them, are Anglophone organizations absolved of the responsibility to serve all women, whatever their language, while exploiting Francophone workers?

In domestic violence, everything happens as though we [Francophone women] had to pass a language test, not to ensure that the person will be served properly in her mother tongue, but so that Anglophone services don't feel too uncomfortable when

we communicate in English. So they [Anglophone agencies] always check Francophones' ability to speak English, to cross the linguistic divide in some manner to communicate with the Other, the Anglophone, who becomes the norm. It's only if this level [of communication in English] is too low or if these means are lacking that they [the Anglophone agencies] consent to actively seek out a Francophone service (Garceau and Charron 2001: 62)

When it comes to working with Anglophone partners, it is usually the Francophone workers who must translate all of the documentation necessary for all parties to understand each other. The following example is revealing.



*I'll give you an example I experienced: a Francophone woman in a shelter wrote an 11 page letter to explain her experience. As the Francophone worker, I was called to the shelter to translate the letter for the Anglophone worker. In addition, she asked me to translate her answer to the woman's letter. Why not just refer the woman to an existing French-language service? (a worker).*

There are obvious difficulties with translation and interpretation services. It is a sign of respect to Francophone women who disclose their abuse to serve them in their own language. From a practical standpoint, calling upon an interpretation service or bilingual staff in bilingual or Anglophone organizations presents several organizational problems, such as the availability of staff when the need arises, or the loss of information and meaning due to translation. Not only is something lost in translation, in interpretation, but the lines of communication are interrupted, the free expression of hurt, of pain, of the emotions associated with situations of abuse is affected. Furthermore, the presence of a third party represents a breach of confidentiality.

The related services a woman must deal with are very complicated. The rules of the legal system, social assistance, child protection, etc. are difficult to understand and the services are often offered only in English. Legally, they should be offered in French. But workers deal daily with women who use the services of several agencies whose mandates, terminology, services, and legal aspects differ widely, and the users must understand them because they affect the decisions they must make for themselves and their children. For FLAVS, the way to overcome these obstacles is, in the absence of an alternative, to provide translation and interpretation free of charge. But is this the best solution?

Just over half the organizations offering emergency services in sexual assault (53%) and 65% of organizations offering emergency services in domestic violence must provide translation and interpretation for Francophone women who deal with Anglophone services (Tables 1 and 2). When there is a request for their services, workers are routinely told that they are there only to interpret, not to intervene. They are there only to translate though they are capable of meeting the needs of women. Where is the cooperation between Anglophone and Francophone organizations in situations such as these?

In emergency situations, translation and interpretation are not as a rule part of the mandate of Francophone organizations, increasing as they do the workload of staff. Furthermore, translation is not easy. It must be quite accurate in order that the person is not misled, that the statements of either party be rendered accurately. This adds to the

stress on Francophone workers offering this service, yet most Francophone organizations are called upon every day to provide translation in emergency situations. Do they have any choice in these situations but to respond to the needs of Francophone women? Only real French-language services which provide access to women's Francophone culture can resolve these difficulties.

#### **4.1.2 Direct services to women**

Numerous direct services are offered to women dealing with domestic violence, sexual assault, or other forms of violence. We will attempt to identify the most important.

The direct services include:

- intake and referral;
- accompaniment to legal aid, to the police, to court, to the hospital, to the welfare office, and support in the search for housing or help with immigration;
- needs assessment, short, medium, or long-term intervention and support groups;
- advocacy;
- translation and interpretation;
- transitional support;
- outreach and home visits.

Except for those in the East, most organizations currently offer hybrid services, integrating issues related to sexual assault, domestic violence, and other forms of abuse. Over the years, many FLS have received such requests for assistance from women, services being rare or lacking entirely. Organizations, particularly in such regions as the South-Central, the Mid-North, the North-West, or the North-East have had no choice but to integrate the two issues. On one hand, some FLS cover a large territory; on the other, funding in some parts of the province is too low to permit the development of autonomous Francophone organizations. Organizations thus offer one-stop service and an alternative model for abused or sexually assaulted women. This merging of the two issues allows some SACs to reach a greater number of women.

In contrast, only very few Anglophone organizations offer hybrid services. On the contrary – there is a solid, extended, and specialized network of SACs or shelters that makes doubling-up services unnecessary. In Québec, there are separate services for sexual assault and domestic violence, and they have separate provincial organizations. There is no consensus in French-speaking Ontario on this subject. Each region is independent and decides for itself its priorities and the manner in which it offers its services.

For example, given the high concentration of Francophone women in the East and the presence there of a greater number of services than elsewhere in the province, the SACs prefer to keep domestic violence and sexual assault services separate. The SACs can thus make referrals to other organizations, depending on the need.

There are consequences for FLS when sexual assault services and domestic violence services are merged. The issues are different and governed by different laws. When the two issues are brought together, workers are asked to combine a tremendous amount of knowledge and intervention skills in both areas. The challenge for workers is to make both issues a priority in the development of services and activities and not to privilege one over the other.

**a) Direct services in sexual assault**

Table 3 demonstrates that most organizations offering sexual assault services do referrals (94%), needs assessments (94%), and intake (94%), thus offering important information to women. Most do accompaniment to legal aid (77%), the police (75%), court (73%), or hospital (71%). They do short-term intervention (75%), and of course translation and interpretation (75%). They provide advocacy (71%) and support groups (67%).

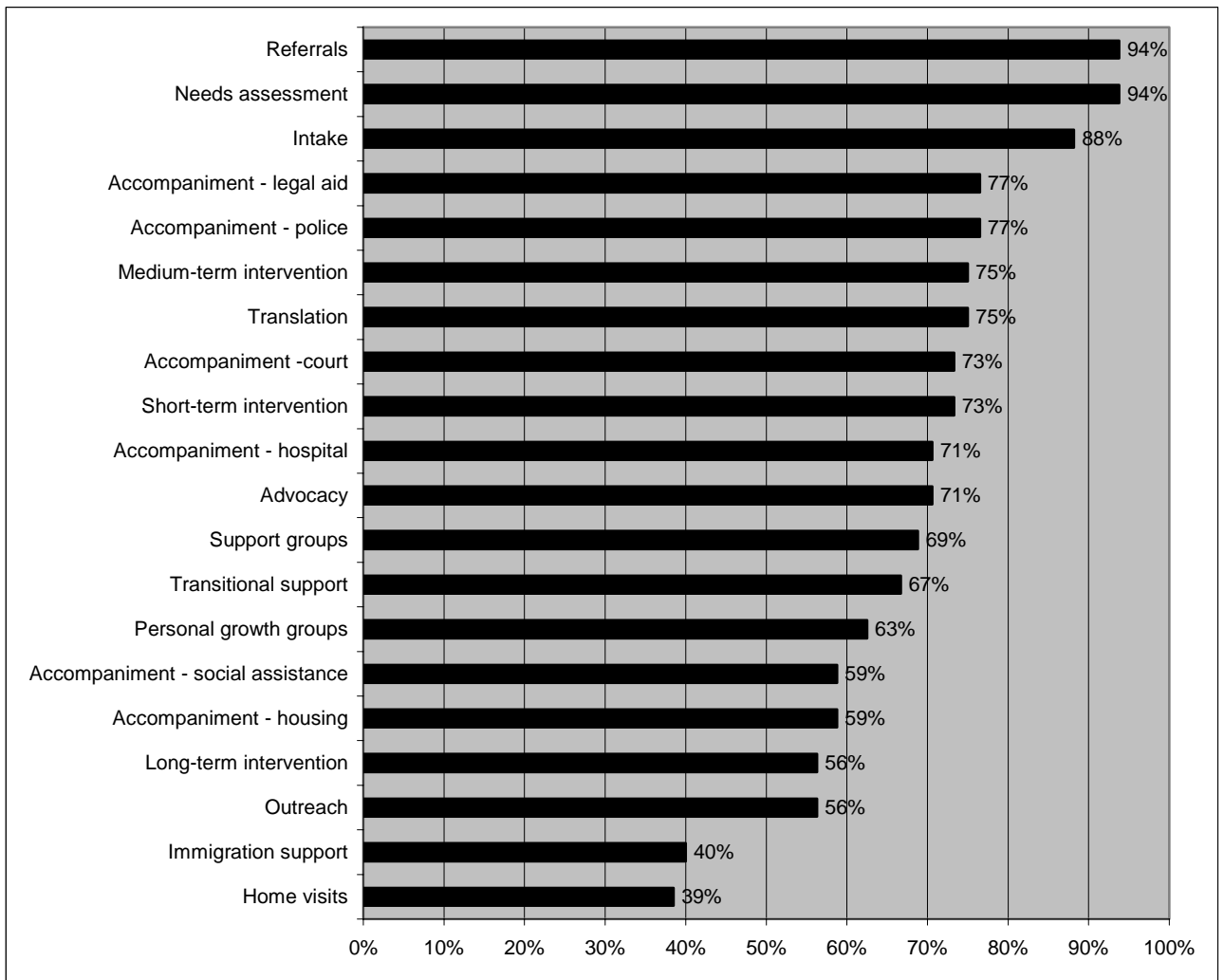
Some services are less used in situations of sexual assault because users' needs are different: transitional support (67%), support groups (63%), accompaniment for housing (59%) or for social assistance (59%). Though the demand for long-term counselling for victims of sexual assault is very high, only 56% can offer it. There is a significant need for long-term intervention because we know, for example, that SACs serve a number of survivors of childhood sexual assault or women who experienced numerous assaults before turning to the SAC and whose healing requires a commitment over a prolonged period.

The same is true of outreach services whose purpose is to offer support, information, and prevention in the community. In fact, only 56% of organizations offering sexual assault services do outreach (Table 3). Both long-term intervention and outreach suffer from a shortage of human and financial resources. These services are offered only when staff is available, and consequently do not benefit from a development plan which would ensure continuity in the community.

Forty percent of FLS in sexual assault provide accompaniment to women wanting immigration or refugee status and support for immigrant women. (Table 3) It should be noted that these services are concentrated in organizations located in large communities, such as Oasis Centre des femmes in Toronto, Maison d'amitié in Ottawa, and the Centre de santé communautaire de Hamilton/Niagara. Though accompaniment of this type is part of the mandate of these organizations, their limited financial and human resources dramatically affect their ability to offer it.

Finally, home visits represent only 39% of services offered by sexual assault organizations. It should be understood that the lack of resources makes it impossible for organizations to make this service more available, and that sexual assault victims have not necessarily expressed a need for it.

**Table 3 Percentage of FLS in the area of sexual assault offering direct services, 2004.**



**b) Direct services in domestic violence**

Most organizations offering services in domestic violence offer the full range, with few exceptions (Table 4). The majority provide accompaniment to the police (94%), the hospital (94%), or to legal aid (94%). There is a slight drop in the number offering support with housing and social assistance, with 88% offering this service. Short-term intervention and group intervention are also offered by 88% of organizations, as are referral and intake.

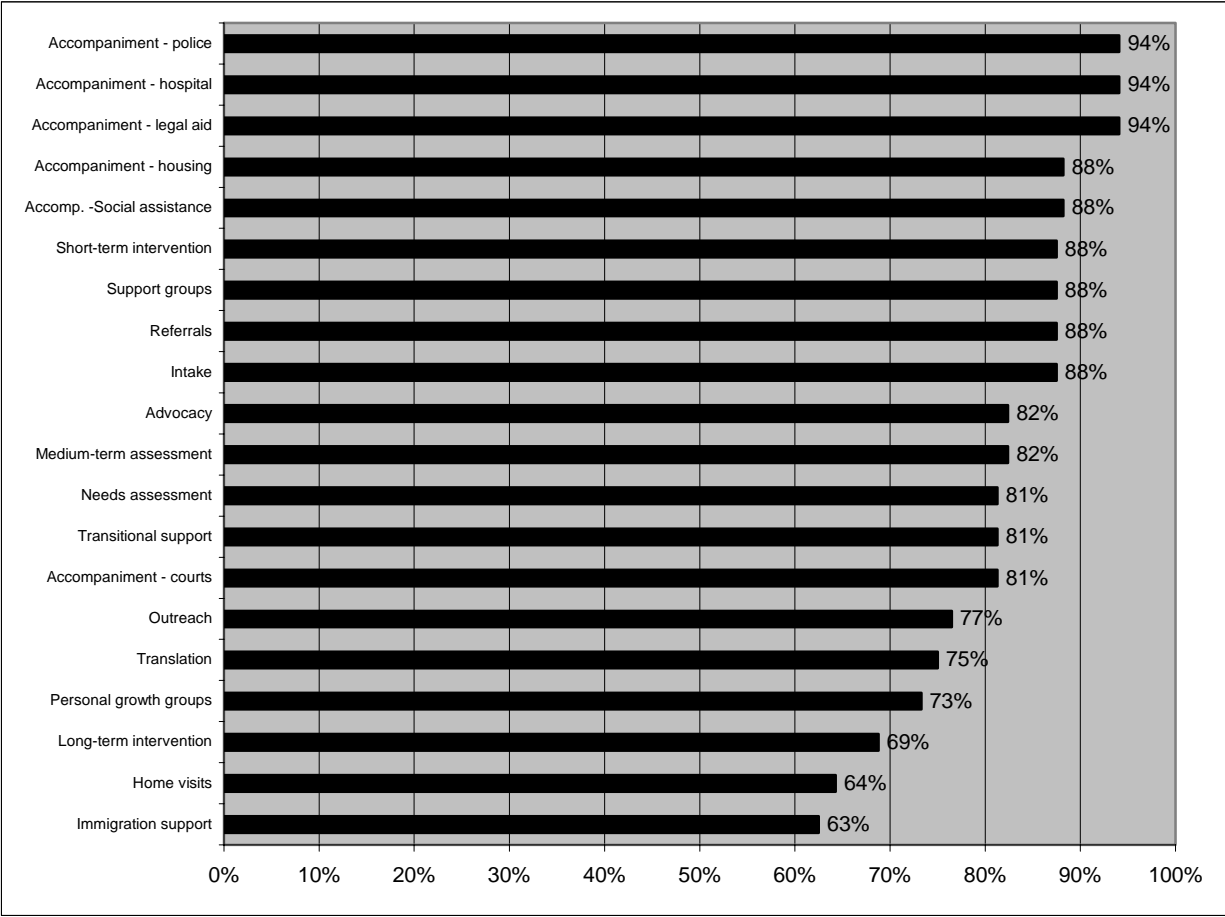
Among organizations offering services in domestic violence, most do advocacy (82%), medium-term intervention (82%), needs assessments (81%), and transitional support (81%). Transitional support is very helpful for women who have spent time in shelters and require support to rebuild their lives free of violence. The same number of organizations (81%) offer accompaniment to court and slightly fewer (77%) offer outreach services (Table 4).

Once again, most organizations offer translation and interpretation (75%). Fewer organizations offer support groups (73%), long-term intervention (69%), home visits (64%), and immigration support (63%) (Table 4).

In conclusion, we should add that though organizations indicate that they offer services, it does not mean that they do so without daily difficulty. In fact, the number of workers does not necessarily make it possible to offer the services on an ongoing basis or to meet the needs.

Finally, it is important to point out that though it is not part of their mandate, 75% of organizations offering sexual assault services and 75% of those offering domestic violence services translate and interpret in order that Francophone women might receive services.

**Table 4 Percentage of FLS in the area of domestic violence offering direct services, 2004.**



**4.1.3 Shelter services**

Shelters provide temporary help and support to women and children. As discussed earlier, they provide a wide range of direct services and emergency services in addition to doing prevention. This section addresses the length of stay of women and children in shelters, the clientele served, and the referral system.

**a) Length of stay**

In the current year, shelters report offering almost the full range of emergency services, direct services, and as will be discussed, services to youth, prevention services, and resource services<sup>10</sup>.

With one exception, the average length of stay of women in shelters is approximately one month (Table 5). When their stay is extended, it can vary from three to four weeks to 90 days, depending on women’s needs, in particular with respect to their security, their emotional wellbeing, the complexity of their legal situation, and their access to safe and affordable housing.

There is no means by which Francophone women in Ontario can receive FLS in second stage housing, and there is no second stage housing in French.

**Table 5 Length and stay and clientele served by shelters, 2004.**

	Status of the shelter	Average length of stay	Clientele served			
			Francophones	Anglophones	Immigrants and refugees	Others
Maison Interlude – Hawkesbury	Bilingual	1 month	85%	14%	1%	
Habitat Interlude – Kapuskasing	Bilingual	1 month	80%	20%		
Family Resource Centre – Sturgeon Falls	Bilingual	1 month	29%	71%		1% First Nations
Maison d’amitié – Ottawa	Francophone	1 month	10%	15%	75% <sup>11</sup>	
CMHA shelter in Matheson	Anglophone offering FLS	14 days	40%	40%		20% First Nations

**b) Clientele served**

The shelters serve different clients. Two shelters serve Francophone women primarily (Maison Interlude House in Hawkesbury and Habitat Interlude in Kapuskasing), while Maison d’amitié in Ottawa, the only Francophone shelter, serves a majority of immigrant or refugee women. The shelter in Matheson welcomes Francophone and Anglophone women in equal numbers (40%) as well as a number of First Nations women (20%), while the Family Resource Centre in Sturgeon Falls serves Anglophone women primarily (Table 5).

Many women who are victims of domestic violence have also been victims of sexual assault and as a result some shelters address the needs of women victims of sexual assault. It is out of the question for them to close the door on these women. This service

<sup>10</sup>In the survey, the Canadian Mental Health Association, Cochrane-Timmins branch, mentioned managing the shelter in Matheson. This management is assumed by the Centre des ressources familiales (CRF). The CRF offers French-language anti-violence services at the shelter through its violence against women programme.

<sup>11</sup> Immigrants and refugee women may have French as the language spoken at home.

must be acknowledged and Francophone SACs must be established in communities where they do not exist.

**c) Referrals**

The organizations consulted in the study who do not offer shelter services refer Francophone clients to nearby Francophone or bilingual shelters or to Anglophone shelters when there is no alternative. Many Francophone organizations develop protocols and agreements with Anglophone shelters to provide services in French to women in those shelters. It would seem, however, that beyond support in principle for partnership and beyond political correctness, there is resistance to making these partnerships as effective as they could be.

On one hand, some Anglophone shelters do not seem very interested in implementing these agreements and referring women to Francophone organizations. According to respondents, there are very few referrals. On the other hand, many Anglophone organizations fear losing funding. This fear undermines the spirit of the agreements by introducing a competitive element. In fact, in the race for funding many Anglophone organizations will choose to offer so-called “bilingual” services in the hope of increasing their funding and the number of clients they serve, at the risk of offering poor or no FLS, as we have seen in some parts of the province.

**4.1.4 Direct services to young victims**

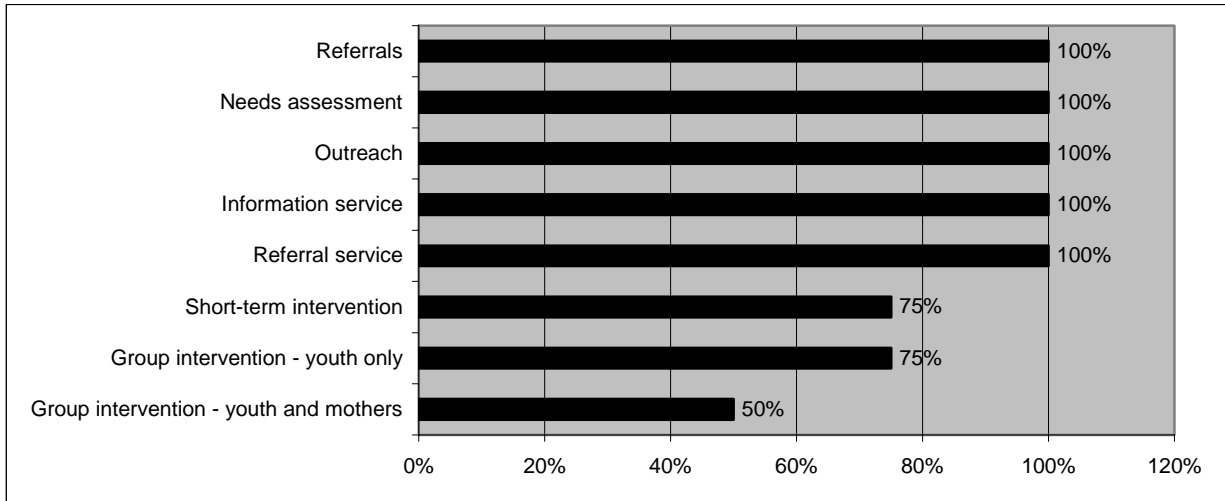
All organizations consulted underlined the urgency and importance of offering direct services to young victims or witnesses of domestic violence or sexual assault. There are few services available in French-speaking Ontario for young survivors of sexual abuse, incest, pedophilia, ritual abuse, or other forms of violence, despite the large number of victims who may not know who to speak to or where to turn for help.

**a) Services offered by shelters to young victims or witnesses**

Young victims or witnesses of violence often experience short- and long-term behavioural problems (aggressiveness, anxiety, etc.). Intervention with young victims or witnesses is very important in order to help them to heal from the violence to which they were subjected or which they witnessed and its related traumatic effects. Intervention helps to prevent further incidents of violence in the youths’ current environment or in adulthood.

Shelters are mandated to offer the full range of essential direct services to children and youth residing there. All shelters offer referrals (100%), information (100%), or referral services according to need (100%), and outreach services (100%). Most offer short-term direct intervention (75%) or groups for youth only (75%), but only few can offer groups for mothers and their children (50%) (Table 6).

**Table 6 Percentage of shelters offering services to young victims of or witnesses to violence, 2004.**



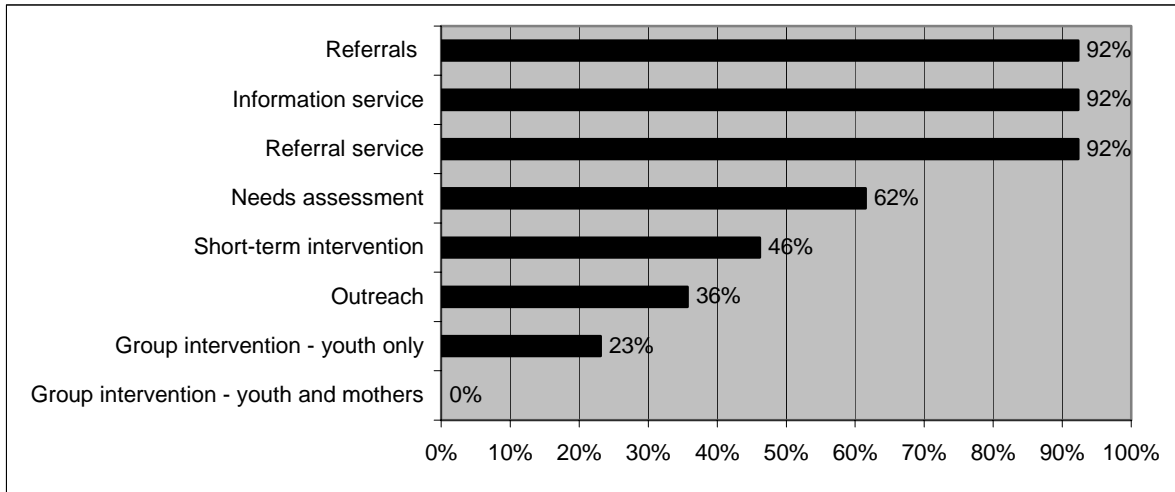
**b) Services offered to young victims or witnesses by other FLS**

SACs are not mandated to serve young people under the age of 16. As a result, they inform (92%), refer (92%), and referral services (92%). (Table 7)

Support groups are provided primarily by institutional organizations offering sexual assault programs, such as family resource centres, Catholic Family Services, community health centres, etc. Frequently, they are offered in French only when sufficient numbers of participants justify it; otherwise, they are offered in English only.

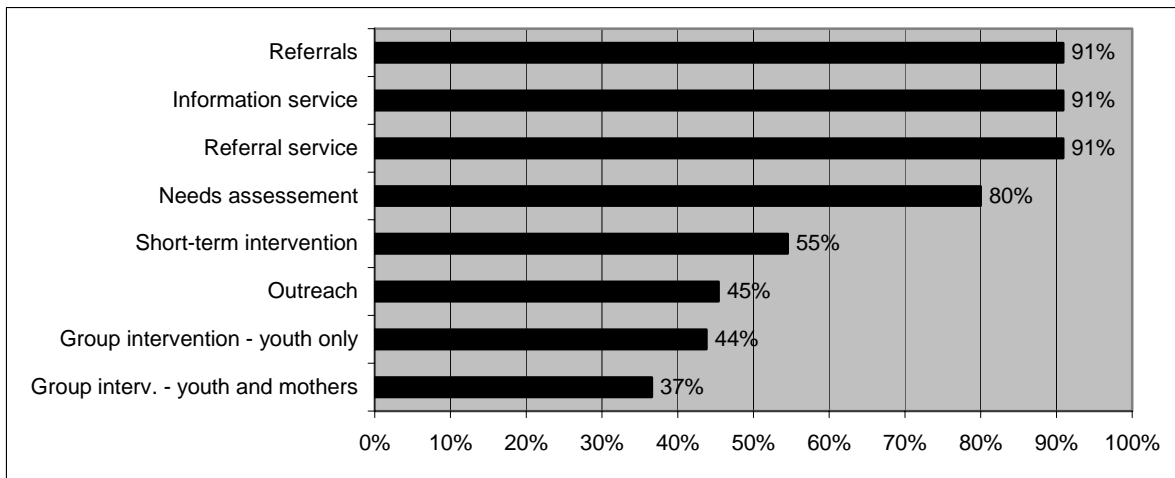
For lack of human and financial resources, only a few sexual assault centres offer outreach services to youth (36%) (Table 7). It is difficult for them to intervene and do youth prevention. Often outreach and prevention services are only available in schools when they are funded by the Ministry of Education at the request of school boards. A lack of funding prevents workers in FLS from being proactive in schools and hiring workers to promote the service, and they can do little more than respond to requests.

**Table 7** Percentage of FLS in the area of sexual assault offering services to young victims or witnesses under 16 years of age, 2004<sup>12</sup>.



The situation is similar for FLS in the area of domestic violence (Table 8). Most do needs assessment (91%), provide information (91%), referrals (91%), and offer a referral service (80%). For the reasons discussed above, few organizations offer short-term intervention services (55%), outreach services (45%), youth groups (44%), or groups for youth and their mothers (37%) (Table 8).

**Table 8** Percentage of FLS in the area of domestic violence offering services to young victims or witnesses under 16 years of age, 2004<sup>13</sup>.



<sup>12</sup> Shelters are not included in this table.

<sup>13</sup> Shelters are not included in this table.

#### 4.1.5 Prevention awareness-raising, and education services



*Prevention... we do not have the money to have someone do awareness-raising in schools and in organizations. We do a little with small projects (a director).*

Organizations offer prevention, awareness-raising, and education through their intervention with women and youth or with various social groups. This work can take different forms: counselling, programs, workshops, advertising, dealing with the media, meetings, projects, etc. The aim of all of these services is to prevent violence or sexual assault in all social environments.

With very limited means and great creativity and energy, workers in FLS have for the past ten years done tremendous work to raise public awareness of domestic violence and sexual assault. We can safely say that the Francophone population of Ontario is now more aware of these issues, though sexual assault and other forms of sexual abuse remain largely taboo. There is very little discussion of other types of violence such as sexual or criminal harassment, ritual abuse, sexual assaults committed under the influence of pills or drugs, intimidation, sexual exploitation, etc.

##### **a) *Prevention, the neglected element***

For ten years and in all organizations consulted, prevention, awareness-raising, and education have been and remain neglected. There are enormous weaknesses in this area. Here again, limited financial and human resources in FLAVS are to blame.

When one considers the attention that abuse prevention and sexual assault, sexual violence and other forms of abuse committed against children and adolescents deserve, the conclusion is clear: needs are not being met. Prevention can reduce significant social costs in the long term.

In order to provide an analytical framework for prevention, we have borrowed the definitions of the three levels of prevention conceptualized in the ESPACE project and provided by the Centre ontarien de prévention des agressions (2001). Primary prevention generally refers to direct intervention with victims or survivors of violence (for example, crisis lines, SACs, shelters, etc.). These services offer immediate or more long-term support and are designed to keep the trauma from worsening. Secondary prevention involves activities whose purpose is: to acquire new skills or to reach those most vulnerable to assault in order to ensure that they not become victims (for example self-defense classes, prevention programs, workshops, etc.). Finally, tertiary prevention refers to activities that target comprehensive change (for example, the criminalization of conjugal sexual assault, public discussions of sexual assault, changes in gender-based roles and responsibilities, changes in the way in which children are educated, etc.).

Shelters, SACs, and other organizations require additional grants specifically to enable them to hire permanent staff to go beyond the primary prevention which should be ongoing and systematic.

Under-investment in awareness-raising and public education has disastrous results. It slows attitudinal change and the breaking-down of social stereotypes. It reduces the visibility of organizations in their community or renders them invisible. In the last ten years, FLAVS have reached out to Francophone women who need their services by being visible in the community, and it is through prevention that youth will be encouraged to disclose or denounce abuse.

**b) Services offered**

All French-language domestic violence and sexual assault services are currently focusing on awareness-raising with the general public. They advertise their services and are visible in the media. Workers frequently appear on television or on the radio to discuss the oppression of women, violence, social policies, etc. FLS also engage in prevention, awareness-raising, or public education by organizing special events (Tables 9 and 10).

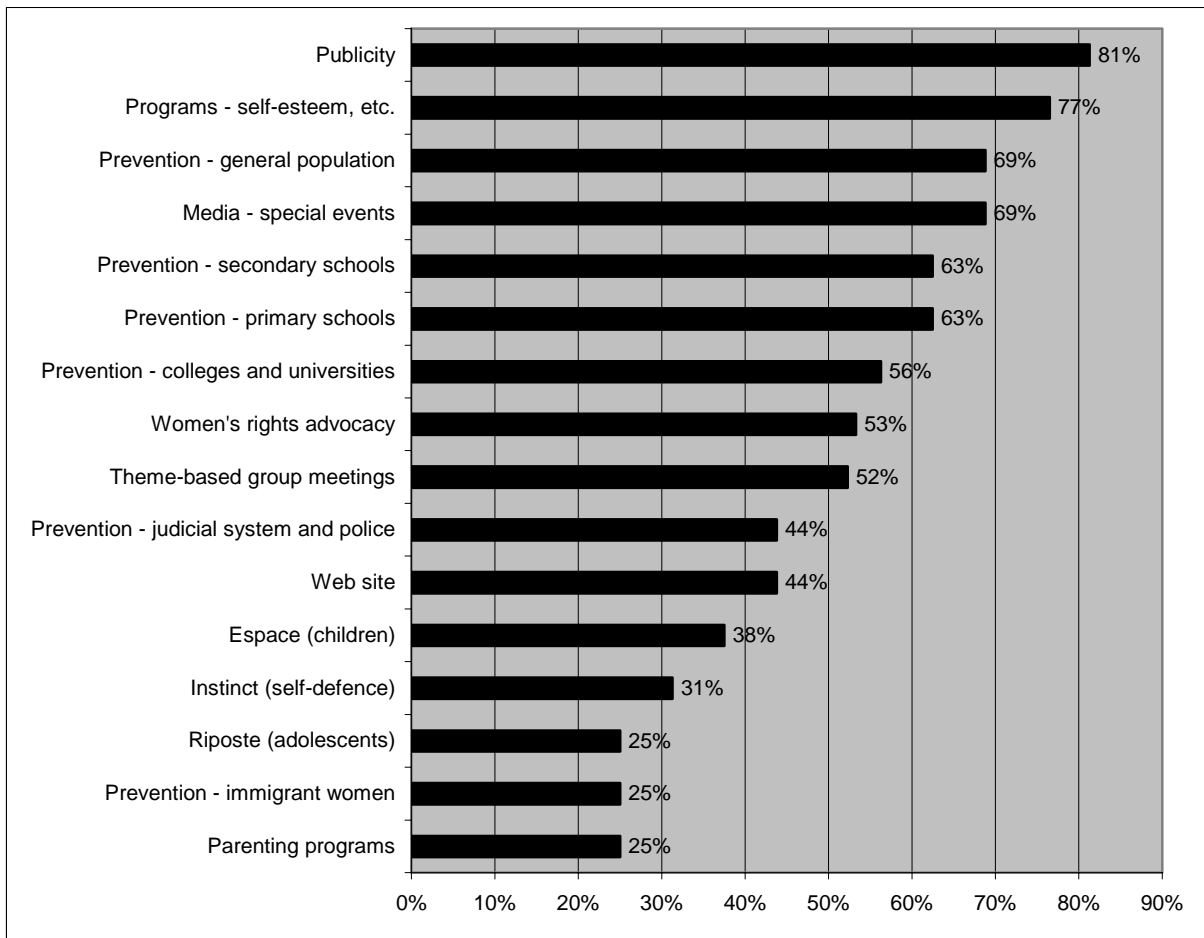
FLS provide prevention, awareness-raising, and education services to clients by offering self-esteem workshops or programs on themes related to violence. Roughly half of the domestic violence or sexual assault organizations do advocacy work on behalf of women to ensure that their rights are respected, for example those of immigrant women or other clients (Tables 9 and 10).

Organizations also try, albeit with limited resources, to make connections with educational institutions. When primary, secondary, and post-secondary prevention initiatives are considered together, it can be said that 62% of FLS succeed in making the connection (Tables 9 and 10). However, workers are unanimous in saying that they do too little, that they do it sporadically, and that investment in this work is urgently required. Faced with limited staff and financial resources, it is difficult for organizations to offer such exceptional prevention programs as Riposte, Espace, and Instinct.

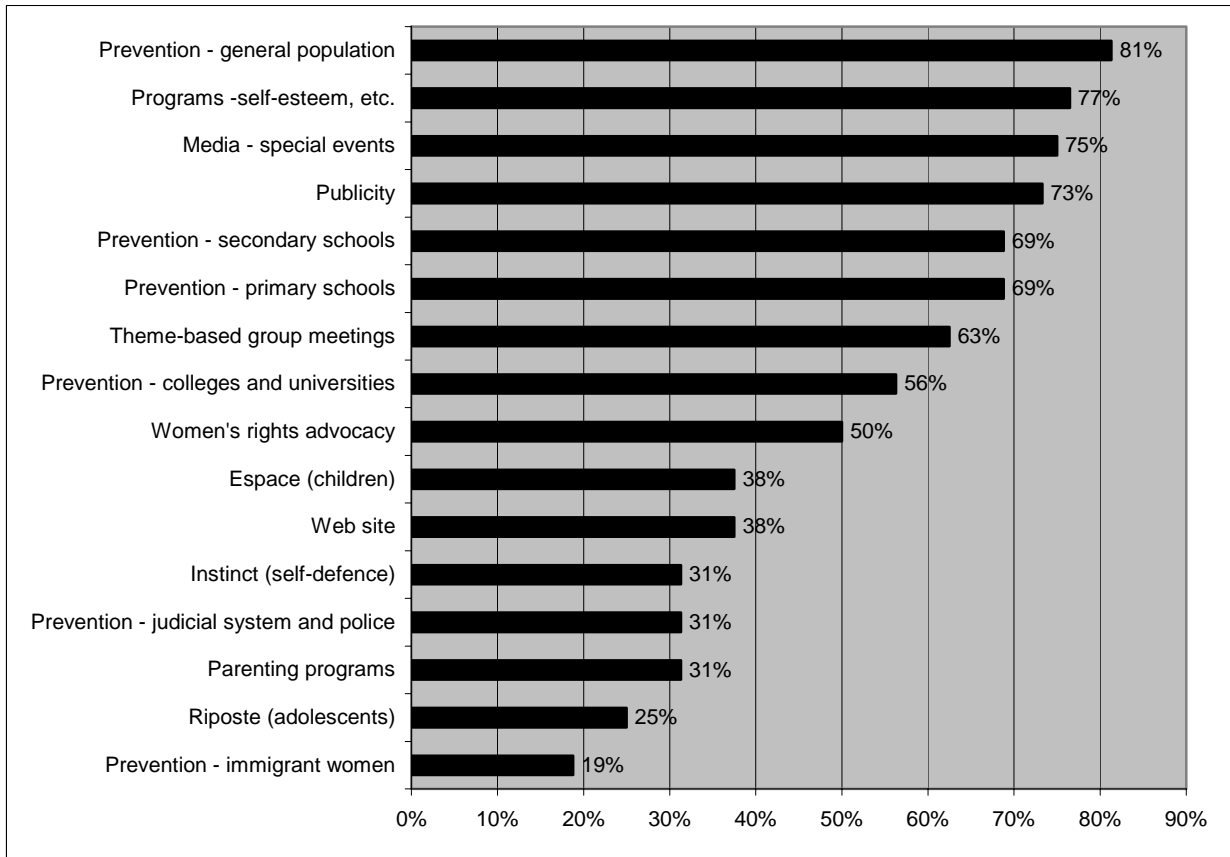
Only 44% of French-language sexual assault services and 31% of French-language domestic violence services do prevention, awareness-raising, or education in the judicial system or with the police. Finally, some 40% of FLS have a web site.

Despite the figures presented in tables 9 and 10, workers indicate that they have only a limited ability to offer prevention services in sexual assault or domestic violence. They add that little is done for children and youth, and that they have little time to invest in prevention in the judicial system or with the police. They point out that they are too few to do prevention with immigrant women, women with disabilities, and other new groups of clients.

**Table 9** Percentage of FLS in the area of sexual assault offering prevention, awareness-raising, and education services, 2004.



**Table 10 Percentage of FLS in the area of domestic violence offering prevention, awareness-raising, and education services, 2004.**



**c) Consultation with Franco-Ontarian youth**

A consultation conducted in May 2004 by the Fédération de la jeunesse franco-ontarienne (FESFO) generally confirmed the need for prevention, awareness-raising, and education for adolescents and young women and men. This consultation concerned violence against women, young women, and adolescent girls<sup>14</sup>.

The results of the consultation describe the daily realities in the lives of young Franco-Ontarian women and adolescent girls. Respondents noted that young women and adolescent girls in schools deal daily with all forms of violence, including verbal violence and inappropriate comments, psychological violence, emotional abuse, intimidation and manipulation, physical violence, sexual touching, inappropriate behaviour, sexual comments and sexual violence, sexist, criminal and sexual harassment, discrimination, sexism, and racism. They are also victims of stereotypes surrounding adolescent girls and young women. Male and female respondents indicated that outside the schools, adolescent girls and young women experience substantially the same forms of violence.

<sup>14</sup> The FESFO consultation was in two parts. For the first, FESFO distributed a written questionnaire to all delegates, female and male, at its annual general meeting in May, 2004. Secondly, a survey of members, youth between 14 and 18 years of age, was conducted during a plenary meeting. In total some 100 young people from throughout the province responded. They represented some 40 of the 77 French-language secondary schools in Ontario. The consultation report was written by Éric Stephenson of FESFO.

Action to address all of this behaviour is necessary because the consequences for adolescent girls and young women are serious.

The FESFO consultation is interesting from the standpoint of prevention in that it presents potential avenues for eradicating all forms of violence.

- *Awareness-raising, prevention, and education*  
The avenues suggested are as much needs as they are solutions: awareness-raising workshops, advertising, information, discussions, places where they can speak about their experiences, presentations about violence, its effects and consequences, education on the subject, self-esteem workshops, an awareness-raising week, access to information, etc.
- *School policies*  
The following avenues were suggested: training workshops (for students of primary and secondary schools), a support program for young people in schools, anti-violence policies that include more severe consequences or penalties, the introduction into the curriculum of awareness-raising and violence prevention, a place where abusers can be denounced, training for teachers, counsellors in schools to offer direct services and awareness-raising, the involvement of community workers, access to services outside school hours, etc.
- *Direct services*  
A number of services are requested, including centres or places from which to obtain services, psychological support, support groups, telephone lines or a web site where experiences can be discussed, presentations on violence, self-defense courses, lists of services for young people experiencing violence, support tools, discussions in the community, counsellors in schools, services available outside school hours, etc.
- *Social change*  
Study participants requested “changes in the media”, “a demonstration that life isn’t like a video”, “eliminating the taboo associated with speaking of violence”, and “an examination of stereotypes” (Stephenson 2004).

Study respondents indicated that in order to offer services to young women and adolescents, various people should be involved in these programs, workshops, projects, or actions, including young people, workers, school leaders, teachers, guidance counsellors, school boards, youth groups, FESFO, the municipal government, etc.

Prevention, awareness-raising, and education are critically important for ending violent behaviour in schools in the short and long term. Participants in the FESFO study were very clear on this point. While many schools already offer some of these services, respondents suggested that despite these efforts they were insufficient. Delegates to the FESFO annual general meeting mentioned repeatedly that schools are usually safer than society at large, and that this openness depended on the general climate in the school. This begs the question: What makes a school an open—and thus safe—place, in particular for young women and adolescent girls?

#### **4.1.6 Resource and support services**

Few of the organizations consulted are able to offer the full range of resource and support services. For many of them, these services are not a part of their mandate.

##### **a) *Transportation***

Francophone women in Ontario, particularly those living in rural and remote areas, must travel great distances to obtain services. Many are unable to do so because they do not have access to transportation, childcare, etc. They must also ensure their own security and that of their children in situations where they still live with the abuser. In many parts of the province, services are too far away for women to have access to them. The situation is even worse for women living in poverty. Are they not the forgotten ones in the system?

Sixty-nine percent of FLS offering sexual assault services can provide transportation for women who require it (Table 11), while 80% of FLS in domestic violence can do so (Table 12). Their resources are limited, however, and they are generally able to help only in the most urgent situations. The lack of transportation can be a real obstacle to doing outreach, particularly when home visits are not possible.

Regarding transportation the following question could be raised: “How can FLS with no transportation budget make it possible for women in need to have access to their services?”

##### **b) *Audio-visual and documentary resources***

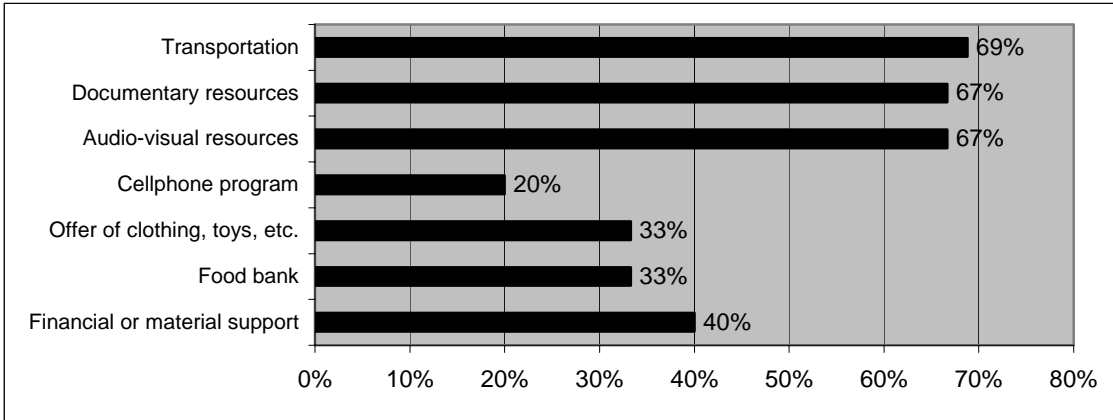
Most organizations make audio-visual or documentary resources available to their clients, although some do not (Tables 11 and 12). The limited access to resources, and particularly to resources in French, is a problem, compounded by the higher cost of updating and purchasing them.

##### **c) *Practical assistance***

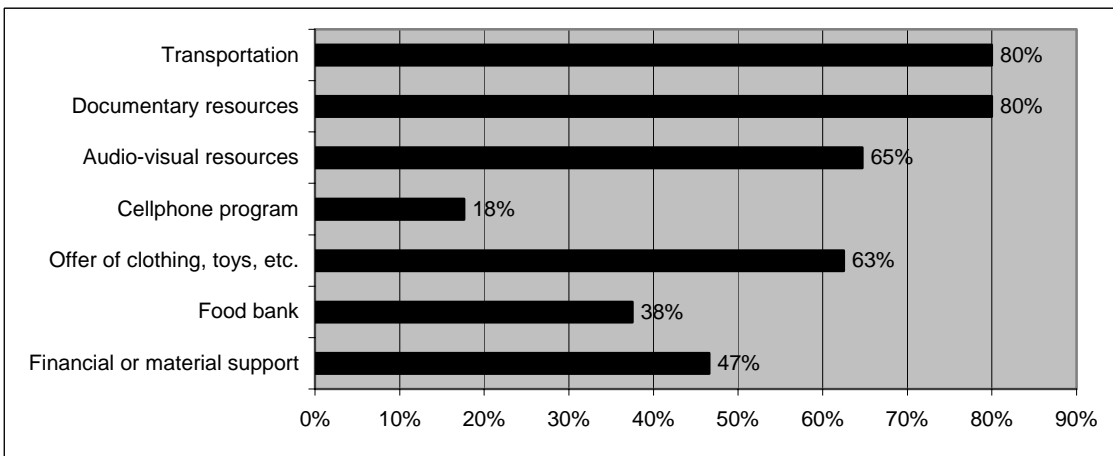
The organizations consulted do amazing work to provide clothes, toys, etc. They work with food banks and used clothing stores, and develop other means to pay for basic needs, including holding fundraising events to undercut costs. They also raise money in order to offer babysitting services while women heal.

Only a few organizations (18% and 20%), in partnership with the police, can offer the cell phone service that provides access to emergency services to ensure their safety (Tables 11 and 12).

**Table 11 Percentage of FLS in the area of sexual assault offering resources and practical assistance, 2004.**



**Table 12 Percentage of FLS in the area of domestic violence offering resources and practical assistance, 2004.**



## **4.2 Clientele served and to be served in the future**

This section addresses the clients currently served by the organizations which participated in the study, and the clients they would like to serve in the future. There are groups of women victims of violence in French-speaking Ontario with special needs. We would like to draw particular attention to immigrant or refugee women, survivors of war, and women with disabilities. Discussions were held with the leaders of two organizations, MOFIF and OPALE. Their thoughts are presented below.

#### 4.2.1 Clientele currently served



*The more we open up our services, the more women know us. And yet, that increases our numbers. (a worker)*



*We serve according to needs, we don't refuse. We expect to serve all women who need our services. (a worker)*

All of the literature on domestic violence and sexual assault shows that every woman is at risk of being a victim. Violence affects all women, regardless of age, ethnic origin, language, culture, race, colour, national origin, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, political belief, and geography. That said, the survey sought to identify the groups of women currently served by FLS.

FLS provide support to all women who request it, and they never know who will appear at the door looking for help. Workers must be prepared to assist women at all times. However, each client group is different, and workers must have a broad range of skills and intervention techniques that they can adapt to clients' needs.

Table 13 highlights the vast array of clients served by the organizations consulted for this provincial portrait, though some use the services more regularly than others. The percentages for the various client groups cannot be expected to be the same in all categories. On the contrary, in some instances the difference in the number of clients served is a function of their numbers in the French-speaking population of Ontario.

Among the regularly or occasionally served clientele, that is those groups of women who represent more than 50% of responses to the questionnaire, are the following: women with mental health problems (94%); women with multiple problems (94%); young women between 17 and 25 years of age (94%); women victims of sexist, sexual, or criminal harassment (83%); adolescent girls (72%); women with alcohol or substance abuse problems (72%); women living in rural or isolated regions (72 %); young women (single parents or not) (65%); lesbians (65%); Anglophone women (61%)<sup>15</sup>; girl children (under 12 years of age) (56%); boy children (under 12 years of age) (56%); older women (56%) and finally, women from ethnocultural communities (53%) (Table 13).

Among the less regularly served groups of women, that is those who are rarely or never seen by the responding organizations, are allophone women (6%), that is women who speak neither French nor English; and First Nations women (28%). These groups are generally served by bilingual organizations (Table 13).

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<sup>15</sup> The 61% of Anglophone women served by shelters is noteworthy. This number is the result of the bilingual mandate of the shelters. In this instance, it reflects the experience of the shelters in Matheson and Hawkesbury (Table 5).

FLAVS also serve transgendered women (11%) and sex-trade workers (18%). These groups are certainly less numerous in FLS and in the general population, but their presence must nonetheless be noted. Women with disabilities are less frequently served: visually impaired women (6%), hearing impaired women (12%), women with a language disability (12%), physically disabled women (35%), or women with an intellectual disability (39%). (Table 13). Though they are not numerous, they do use the services and their needs must be met.

Just over one third of the organizations surveyed serve homeless women (33%) and women victims of ritual abuse (39%). Half (50%) serve women in conflict with the law. A similar number of FLS, in particular shelters and institutions offering French-language anti-violence services, assist adolescent girls from 13 to 16 years of age. (Table 13)

Finally, the significant presence of immigrant and refugee women bears mention. Forty-four percent of the organizations surveyed serve immigrant women, 35% serve refugee women, and 33% serve women survivors of war. Most of these clients are seen by FLAVS in urban centres, and much less frequently in FLS in less urban areas. Immigrant women have special needs, and considerable effort is necessary before they can speak of violence. Survivors of war present new challenges which organizations are trying to meet despite a lack of expertise in this area. It should be pointed out that MOFIF has conducted research on the experience of women survivors of war (Bassolé *et al.* 2004) and that training is currently available. Intensive efforts are required to support women seeking immigrant or refugee status and requiring help to rebuild their lives, and few community-based groups are in a position to provide the necessary support in French.

In addition to this linear description of clients served, a number of trends emerge from which conclusions can be drawn.

- FLAVS increasingly serve women with mental health problems or with multiple problems.
- FLAVS serve many young women or young single mothers.
- Services are seeing more and more marginalized women (itinerant, homeless, etc.) or women in conflict with the law. They had not previously been regular users of services.
- There are growing numbers of immigrant and refugee women, women without status or survivors of war requiring FLS adapted to their many needs, particularly in large urban centres.
- FLS are responding increasingly to the needs of women victims of criminal harassment.
- Ritual abuse seems more visible and FLS sexual assault centres are dealing with it more frequently.
- FLS are increasingly responding to the needs of women in rural or isolated areas, primarily through the crisis lines.
- The demand for services on the part of older women and lesbians is rising.
- A number of women with disabilities request FLS.
- FLS, in particular bilingual shelters, often serve Anglophone women. They also serve allophone and First Nations women. It should be pointed out that some Aboriginal and Métis women are French-speaking and wish to access services in French.

**Table 13 Percentage of FLS in the areas of sexual assault and domestic violence by clientele currently served and their frequency, 2004.** <sup>16</sup>

	Clientele served	
	Regularly or occasionally	Very little or never
Women with mental health problems	94%	6%
Women with multiple problems (for example, mental health + substance abuse, etc.)	94%	6%
Young women (17 to 25 years of age)	94%	6%
Women victims of sexist, sexual, and criminal harassment	83%	17%
Adolescent girls (13 to 16 years of age)	72%	28%
Alcoholic or drug-dependent women	72%	28%
Women in rural or isolated areas	72%	28%
Young mothers (single parents or not)	65%	35%
Lesbians	65%	35%
Anglophone women	61%	39%
Female children (under 12 years of age)	56%	44%
Male children (under 12 years of age)	56%	44%
Older women	56%	44%
Women from ethnocultural communities	53%	47%
Adolescent boys (13 to 16 years of age)	50%	50%
Women in conflict with the law	50%	50%
Immigrant women	44%	56%
Women victims of ritual abuse	39%	61%
Women with intellectual disabilities – learning difficulties	39%	61%
Refugee women	35%	65%
Women with a physical disability – motor handicap	35%	65%
Homeless women	33%	67%
Women survivors of war	33%	67%
First Nations women	28%	72%
Women sex trade workers	18%	82%
Hearing impaired women – deaf and hard of hearing	12%	88%
Women with a language disability – problems with communication	12%	88%
Transgendered women	11%	89%
Allophone women (who can communicate in neither French nor English)	6%	94%
Visually impaired women	6%	94%

<sup>16</sup> Table 13 is designed in such a way that each client group served obtains a total of 100% when the “regularly or occasionally” and “very little or never” responses are added together. Thus, for women with mental health problems, for example, 94% of FLS consulted report that they regularly or occasionally serve these women, and 6% report that they serve them only rarely or never.

#### 4.2.2 Clientele requiring additional service in the coming years

It is clear to FLS that all Francophone women must receive service in French. Organizations surveyed were asked which groups of clients they felt would require more service in the future. These clients have special needs, not because of their membership in a particular social group, but because they are dealing with the aftermath of violence. This is the case for older women (92%) who are experiencing or who have experienced violence and who are trying to survive it, young mothers (90%) who, according to research, are more vulnerable to violence after the birth of their first child, women living in rural or isolated regions (83%) who use the services of the regional crisis lines, to name but a few (Table 14).

Given the results of the FESFO report (section 4.1.5), it comes as no surprise that organizations hope to pay greater attention to the needs of 17 to 25 year old women (94%). Sexist, sexual, and criminal harassment having been for so long swept under the carpet, it is increasingly talked about (83%). Lesbians (80%) experiencing violence are another group to whom more attention should be paid in future.

As discussed earlier, women are requesting more assistance from French-language anti-violence services. FLS expect to provide additional services to women with mental health problems (73%) or substance abuse problems (73%). These women face multiple problems, often the result of the violence they have experienced or are currently experiencing.

Table 14 demonstrates, as did Table 13 that women from ethnocultural communities, immigrant women, refugee women, women survivors of war, or even allophone women need or will need more services in the future. The same is true for women with disabilities, regardless of their disability and who often have no way out. Female and male adolescents and all children together can be viewed as a future target group that at the risk of being repetitive, requires additional direct services and prevention programs.

**Table 14 Percentage of FLS in the areas of sexual assault and domestic violence by clientele to whom additional service will be offered in the future, 2004.**

Older women	92%	Women with a language disability – problems with communication	60%
Young mothers (single parents or not)	90%	Immigrant women	58%
Women in rural or isolated areas	83%	Refugee women	58%
Lesbians	80%	Women with an intellectual disability – learning disability	50%
Young women (17 to 25 years of age)	80%	Survivors of war	50%
Homeless and itinerant women	78%	First Nations women	50%
Women victims of sexist, sexual and criminal harassment	75%	Visually impaired women	50%
Women with mental health problems	73%	Women in conflict with the law	40%
Alcoholic or drug-dependent women	73%	Women victims of ritual abuse	38%
Women from ethnocultural communities	73%	Transgendered women	33%
Women with a physical disability – motor handicap	70%	Adolescent boys (13 to 16 years of age)	33%
Women with multiple problems (ex. Mental health and drug abuse, etc.)	67 %	Anglophone women	30 %
Sex-trade workers	63 %	Female children (under 12 years of age)	25 %
Adolescents girls (13 to 16 years of age)	62 %	Male children (under 12 years of age)	25 %

Hearing disabled women – deaf and hard of hearing	60 %	Allophone women (who can communicate in neither French nor English)	11 %
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### 4.2.3 Consultation with communities of immigrant Francophone women



*For an immigrant woman, ten years isn't a long time, because it takes a long time to adapt to her new environment (a worker).*

Immigrant women, refugee women, women survivors of war, and from various ethnocultural origins are among current and developing client groups. We will take a moment to review their particular concerns.

In June 2004, the Mouvement ontarien des femmes immigrantes francophones (MOFIF) gathered ten representatives of immigrant communities in Toronto. The meeting began with a discussion of the various aspects of the violence experienced by these women and the development of FLS tailored to their needs.

There are no precise indicators in French-speaking Ontario to measure the evolution in the last ten years of violence in immigrant and ethnocultural communities. The issue has only relatively recently drawn attention, and research and the development of resources adapted to the needs of immigrant and refugee women is only beginning. Research conducted to date has reached the same conclusion: these women receive little service from organizations. (Bassolé *et al.* 2004, TFFCPO *et al.* 1999).

There have been a number of successes and there are encouraging signs. For example, according to workers, immigrant women are increasingly able to identify the symptoms and causes of violence, and they are more aware of the existence of shelters and other services. Many are actively involved in the development and delivery of anti-violence services.

Governments are beginning to acknowledge the problem and to fund projects such as the study *L'impact du conflit armé sur l'intégration des femmes immigrantes et des réfugiées francophones en Ontario* (Bassolé *et al.* 2004). Pilot projects to provide service to immigrant women were launched in three organizations offering FLAVS in Hamilton, Toronto, and Ottawa in the context of the *Plan stratégique de développement des services en français en matière de violence, 1997-2001*. These are now permanent, and defending the rights of immigrant women and advocating on their behalf is an important part of the work of employees in these projects. Finally, the creation of MOFIF in 2001 represents a great achievement.

These are but a few of the successes, but the challenges remain numerous and the needs complex. In the MOFIF consultation, workers highlighted a few of the challenges facing immigrant women. For example, immigrant women continue to encounter systemic and institutional barriers in their host country: a lack of knowledge of their legal rights in Canada and Ontario, problems with integration, with language, with racism, with discrimination, with the recognition of credentials, etc. Women who lived through war in their country of origin have been profoundly affected by the violence they experienced

(mass rape, for example) or the atrocities they witnessed. They have known grief and many losses. Faced with the enormity of the violence to which these women have been subjected, workers are often at a loss. Conventional intervention techniques must be adapted to help women who have survived the horrors of war.

Within ethnocultural communities themselves, the view is that the situation has not necessarily improved. Violence remains a taboo subject:



*We don't talk about sexual violence in the communities [...] In many cases, marriages are arranged and forced [...] We perpetuate the idea that it's a marital duty [...] Women are afraid to speak up and denounce the violence in their lives because fingers are pointed at them when they use services, including by other women in their own communities (a worker).*



*Men who abuse find ways to get around the law and to continue to abuse without getting caught [...] The possibility of an Islamic tribunal based on sharia law represents a threat to Muslim women, and by extension, to all women (a worker).*

To counter these problems, many strategies have been identified to better meet the needs of immigrant women:

- to have structures that help immigrant women to gain control of their lives and to achieve financial independence (job preparation classes, for example);
- provide specialized resources and services adapted to meet the needs of women survivors of war;
- raise the awareness of institutions (for example hospitals, Ontario Works, the police) to the needs of immigrant women;
- change the mandates and policies of organizations to make them more consistent with the experience of immigrant clients and call upon—and respect—expertise in immigrant communities;
- encourage hiring women from immigrant communities;
- do more than raise the awareness of organizations that work with immigrant women by proposing the creation of concrete partnerships and coalitions of organizations and emergent groups in various environments;
- educate the community of immigrant women and society through prevention, awareness-raising, and education programs about violence and sexual assault, and on their rights and the resources available to them;
- educate children to prevent violence and to effect long-term social change;
- create shelter services in French for Francophone immigrant women, specifically in Toronto and Hamilton; and finally,
- pursue and expand upon training and conduct research (excerpts from the consultation with MOFIF).

#### 4.2.4 Women with disabilities

In Ontario, 15.7% of women 15 years of age and over are disabled (Office for Disability Issues 2003). They may have one or more disabilities, ranging from mild to severe. There are also several forms of functional limitations: sensory, auditory, visual, motor, mobility, emotional, intellectual or developmental, language, and learning. Confronted with violence, women with disabilities are doubly vulnerable because they are women and they are disabled.

This survey sought to establish the degree of accessibility of FLS to women with disabilities. It revealed that several women with disabilities use French-language services. However, as Table 15 demonstrates, few of these services are totally accessible to all types of disabilities. Organizations must improve accessibility to better serve women, either face-to-face or through the crisis lines. Here again, the financial resources necessary to permit these improvements are hard to come by.

**Table 15 Percentage of FLS in the areas of sexual assault and domestic violence by type of disability and degree of accessibility of services, 2004.**

	Totally accessible	Partially accessible	Little accessible	Not at all accessible
Women with physical disabilities – motor problems	50.0%	38.9%	5.6	5.6%
Visually impaired women	12.5%	43.8%	31.3%	12.5%
Hearing impaired women – deaf and hard of hearing	17.6%	47.1%	29.4%	5.9%
Women with a language disability – problems with communication	17.6%	52.9%	11.8%	17.6%
Women with an intellectual disability – learning disability	18.8%	56.3%	18.8%	6.3%
Women with an emotional disability – mental health problem	31.3%	37.5%	25.0%	6.3%

Needs vary enormously from one organization to another. The following short list emerged from interviews with representatives of FLAVS.

- *Physical disability*: accessible offices and meeting spaces, accessible elevators, renovations, access to washrooms, programs and tools adapted to meet clients' needs, etc.
- *Visual disability*: programs and tools adapted to meet clients' needs, training of workers, specialized resources, material in Braille, audiocassettes, etc.
- *Hearing disability*: programs and tools adapted to meet clients' needs, TDDs/TTYs on the crisis lines and on organization phone lines, access to interpreters, training of workers and sign language training, etc.
- *Language disability*: programs and tools adapted to meet clients' needs, training of workers, specialized resources, audio-visual material in French, etc.
- *Intellectual disability or learning disability*: training on the issue, development of programs adapted to meet clients' needs, resources, development of tools adapted to meet clients' needs, audio-visual material in French, etc.

- *Emotional disability or mental health problems*: intervention adapted to clients' needs, development of mental health resources where none are available, human resources and training of workers, audio-visual resources in French, etc.

As a general rule, FLAVS will assist women with disabilities to the extent that they can. If necessary, workers will attempt to refer them to other services when such services are available, but in the vast majority of cases, women will have access only to Anglophone services. When clients do not speak English fluently, workers provide what support they can.

Women with disabilities are a growing client group given the aging population. It is expected that within 20 years, one person in five will have a disability. Interviewed in June, 2004, a representative of OPALE, a group of French-speaking women with disabilities in Prescott-Russell, pointed out there are no regional or provincial statistics available on the number of Francophone women with disabilities in the various regions of the province.

According to OPALE, one of the factors explaining the low demand for anti-violence services on the part of women with disabilities is that in many cases women are dependent on the abuser who is also their principal source of support. They believe that they must remain in the abusive situation in order to survive and to receive the care they require. They thus choose silence. It is very difficult for FLS to reach women with disabilities who do not wish to disclose abuse on the part of an abuser upon whom they are dependent. This is further complicated by the fact that women with disabilities are socialized from an early age to be grateful to their caregivers, even when these caregivers abuse them.

Reviewing the last ten years, OPALE has arrived at the following conclusions:

*Regarding government commitment*

- Too few resources have been invested to develop prevention and awareness-raising services on violence against women with disabilities.
- Too few shelters have received funding to make their services completely accessible.
- Available statistics are outdated.
- Women with disabilities have not been involved in the Ontario-Canada-Community Agreement (Entente Canada-Communauté-Ontario), which limited their access to greater funding and consequently limited the development of resources adapted to meet the needs of French-speaking women with disabilities.
- The justice system is not always adapted to the reality of women with disabilities and few of them turn to the courts.

*Regarding organizations offering anti-violence services*

- Though women with disabilities who are victims of violence do not often use anti-violence services, organizations offering these services are more aware that this clientele must be approached and served in a manner adapted to its needs, and that for lack of human and financial resources they are not always well equipped to serve it.

*Regarding awareness-raising efforts*

- A few years ago, in partnership with AOcVF, OPALE conducted workshops

throughout the province on the particular needs of women with disabilities who are victims of violence and the manner in which to intervene. The training could not be repeated because of a lack of funds.

- OPALE, in collaboration with organizations working to end violence against women, developed a web site ([www.handicaps.ca](http://www.handicaps.ca)). There is a whole section with information on violence against women.

There are very real weaknesses with respect to services and to the degree of awareness. One of the challenges is to find creative ways to reach women with disabilities where they are, and to inform them of their rights and the recourse available to them, while recognizing the precarious situations in which they find themselves. It isn't enough for OPALE that anti-violence services be accessible: the other barriers which women with disabilities confront must also be eliminated, in particular those related to employment, low incomes, poorly accessible housing, prejudice on the part of landlords and the legal system, etc.

### **4.3 Organization funding**

As discussed above, it is important that the government increase core funding to SACs and shelters and to the regional crisis lines to enable them to offer the full range of necessary services to Francophone women. While it is true that FLAVS have received some additional funding since 1994, it is altogether inadequate. The requests of organizations are based on real needs.

We had hoped to present data on the funding of organizations in this provincial portrait, but this information is very difficult to come by, some organizations remaining silent on the subject. Only a study in which all organizations offering FLAVS chose to participate would bring this information to the fore.

#### **4.3.1 Every penny counts!**

*Doing so much with so little...*, the title of this study, accurately describes the situation of organizations offering FLAVS. They do amazing things with the funds they are given! Getting these grants requires a tremendous amount of work, and they spend hours writing proposal after proposal. Some are accepted, others refused.

In this overview of FLS, it is important to thank those funders who believe in the importance of offering services to Francophone women in Ontario dealing with domestic violence and sexual assault. The following are the principal Government of Ontario funders of the organizations who participated in this study:

- Ministry of the Attorney General.
- Office of Francophone Affairs.
- Ministry of Community and Social Services.

Several other ministries, municipal governments, or foundations have in the past number of years contributed financially to the development of anti-violence programs and services in French. They are, in alphabetical order:

- Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation.

- Canadian Women's Foundation.
- Citizenship and Immigration Canada.
- Heritage Canada.
- Human Resources and Skills Development Canada.
- Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration.
- Ministry of Education and Training.
- Ministry of Justice.
- Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing.
- Ministry of Northern Development and Mines.
- Municipal governments.
- Ontario Women's Directorate.
- Status of Women Canada.
- Trillium Foundation.
- Young Canada Works.

FLAVS also make considerable efforts to diversify their funding sources or to solicit donations in kind. Every penny does indeed count, but such funds do little more than make ends meet and make it possible to offer some programs or services on a one-time basis.

Among the sources:

- United Way;
- donations from individuals;
- interest;
- fundraising;
- revenue from contracts with various organizations;
- revenue from contracts with schools or school boards, or grants from those organizations;
- subletting office space.

#### 4.3.2 Organization staff



*In my centre, there is only one Francophone worker. I should add that one Francophone worker does the work of five Anglophone workers with a broader mandate to serve all clients of Francophone origin (an Anglophone worker).*

Need we repeat that FLS have insufficient numbers of staff? No, it is a fact, and an issue raised year after year by organizations.

But in how many ways can we say that:

- to serve the Sault Ste. Marie region in French, a single Francophone worker is not enough...
- to serve the North Bay region in French, a single part-time worker is not enough...
- to meet the needs of the Francophone women in the Simcoe County shelter, a single worker is not enough...
- to offer services in French in Thunder Bay, it takes much more than part-time workers, and that a grant covering 52 weeks of operation per year is needed...

- to meet the needs of the regional crisis lines 24/7, paid workers are needed for every shift...
- everywhere in Ontario, Francophone women have a right to anti-violence services...

The litany could go on, but the message could not be clearer: the current FLS and their existing staff are too few to meet the needs of Francophone women in the province.

### **4.3.3 Average salary**

In interviews with organizations, we enquired about staff salaries. The average salary of a worker in 2004 was \$37,321. Salaries are higher in organizations offering French-language anti-violence services that are affiliated with community health centres, mental health centres, or family services, with salaries averaging \$41,430, and lower in SACs and shelters, with average salaries of \$34,572. In other words, staff in SACs and shelters earn only 83.4% of the salaries of workers in other anti-violence services, and yet all work as much. There is nothing to justify this salary gap.

Some organizations are unable to offer salary increases within the context of the grants they receive, with the result that workers with over ten years of experience are underpaid given their responsibilities, and their salaries are far from competitive. In order to attract qualified staff to SACs and shelters, it is critically important that salaries be competitive and indexed to the cost of living.

### **4.3.4 Fragility of human resources**

The Francophone violence against women movement and the organizations serving women owe their success largely to the women working in them. It is estimated that 150 women are employed in the various anti-violence organizations offering FLS throughout Ontario.

Many organization directors or coordinators have held their positions for at least ten years. There is also a significant degree of professional exhaustion among staff. Both phenomena are in part the result of the desire to do good work with too few resources. The small size of organizations or the departure of a director or a member of the staff can weaken an organization. In addition, workers are confronted every day with complex and very emotional problems. Vicarious traumatization is also an issue, and may result in workers requesting long-term leave.

Leadership and continuity present significant challenges. It is difficult to recruit experienced workers who are bilingual, versatile, with extensive knowledge and skills, trained in feminist intervention and in community development. It is equally difficult to train and retain staff, particularly in a minority environment. Since employees must acquire and perfect their skills, organizations must invest in training them for a year or two. Once trained, many go elsewhere, to where the working conditions are better. The lack of a large pool of qualified staff leads some people within the movement to argue that all future development of FLAVS must be planned over several years.

Some organizations already involve young women locally. It is absolutely essential to ensure a continuity of leadership in the Francophone violence against women movement

and to ensure that the experience, knowledge, and wisdom of our elders are shared with the younger generation.

The isolation of Francophone workers in bilingual organizations is evident, and the support they get from management and their Anglophone colleagues is often very limited. They must respond to all of the needs of the Francophone women they serve and develop an entire network of services to support them. Alone, they offer the same range of services, and they often carry the double burden of meeting the needs of both Francophone and Anglophone women in their organization. They must also deal with the lack of supervision in French, the lack of intervention and documentary resources in French, and the lack of professional development in French.

There is a significant turnover of volunteers on some boards of directors. Recruiting committed and available women who can contribute to the organization over and above attending meetings and publicly representing the organization is not easy. Staff is overworked, and as a result, members of boards of directors take on additional responsibilities and burn themselves out in the process.

#### **4.3.5 Professional development for workers**

As a general rule, most workers in FLAVS possess a tremendous wealth of knowledge as a result of their experience as women. Some, however, lack professional training (university or college level), with the result that workers hired by FLS may not be familiar with the phenomena of violence or with intervention methods when they assume their duties. Anti-violence organizations must then take on the sometimes onerous task of training them.

The time has come to collaborate with post-secondary institutions to include courses in social service curricula that are flexible and accessible across Ontario. These courses must cover feminist and community-based approaches, intervention methods, domestic violence, sexual assault, and other forms of violence against women and children, etc. They must also demonstrate that students can have a future in this type of work.

Over the last decade, AOcVF and some FLS have developed several training programs and material in French to assist workers and volunteers. Staff shortages in organizations, however, often make it difficult to free staff to participate in training, a situation still more complicated in bilingual organizations offering FLS where there are fewer Francophone employees.

#### **4.3.6 Contribution of volunteers**

FLS, and in particular SACs and shelters, could not have survived the last ten years without the support of volunteers. They have made, and continue to make, enormous contributions to boards of directors, to fundraising, to prevention programs, to crisis lines, to direct intervention, etc. It is important to recognize the role of volunteers in the creation of services and their tirelessly efforts in working to ensure quality FLS and their expansion in communities.

We are currently witnessing a drop in the number of volunteers in organizations. In some parts of the province, it is increasingly difficult to recruit them, in part because more women are involved in the labour force and have less time to volunteer, which makes

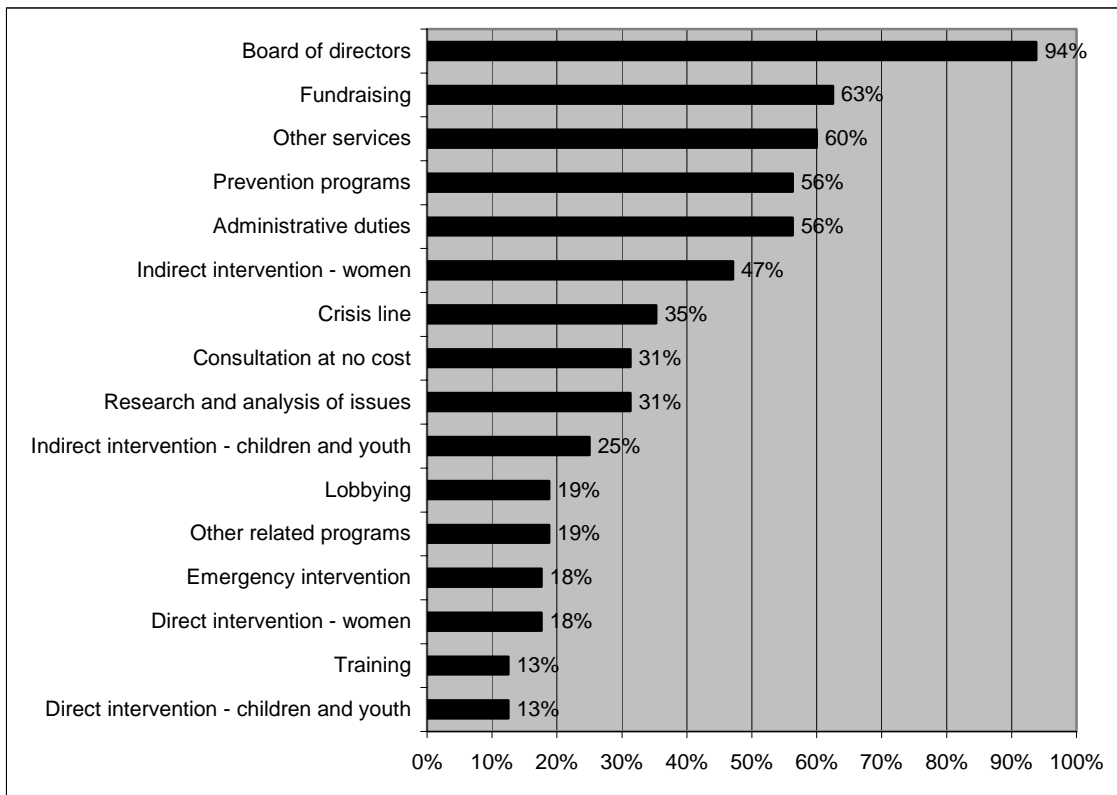
recruitment difficult. In addition the work to be done in organizations requires training and skills that may not be easy for volunteers to acquire, given the time they have available for volunteering. Furthermore, many volunteers are not entirely comfortable working on crisis lines or doing direct or indirect intervention with women and children.

Regional realities vary, and each region can develop services appropriate to its needs. For example, some organizations rely on volunteers to offer direct services, while others choose to distance themselves from that service delivery model. Within the Francophone violence against women movement there is discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of this practice. Launching the three regional crisis lines raised questions, among others about whether using volunteers on an information and support line was the best use of SAC resources at a time of shortages.

All organizations that rely on volunteers, regardless of the responsibilities assigned to them, face the great challenge of recruiting and retaining qualified and committed volunteers. Given the large turnover among volunteers, the tremendous staff effort required to recruit, train, support, acknowledge, and follow-up with volunteers must be noted.

Despite difficulties with recruitment and the training demanded of them, Francophone women continue to volunteer. Among the organizations consulted for this provincial portrait, shelters and SACs rely more on the contributions of volunteers (69.5%) than do organizations affiliated with institutions such as community health centres, mental health centres, or family services (30.5%).

**Table 16** Percentage of FLS in the areas of sexual assault and domestic violence by type of contribution of volunteers, 2004.



As demonstrated in Table 16, volunteers serve on boards of directors of organizations (94%), participate in fundraising (63%), provide childcare, contribute to publicizing and promoting the organization (60%), participate in prevention, awareness-raising, and education programs (56%), and provide administrative support (56%). Fewer work on the crisis lines, offer direct or indirect services to women and children, offer free consultation, do research and analysis of issues, lobby, or offer programs or training.

#### 4.4 Partnerships



*When it comes to creating partnerships in my community, I feel like an elastic band pulled in all directions. I can't be everywhere at once, I have to prioritize. If I don't, I'll snap. My priority is to serve women (a worker).*

All FLS have established partnerships, either with other organizations working to end violence against women and children, or with partners in social, health, and community services, in the areas of education, workplace, judicial, legal, and police services, immigration, etc. They develop partnerships with both Francophone and Anglophone organizations.

The goals of these partnerships are many and varied. Some are written, others are verbal, still others are imposed by funders according to the needs and structures of the partner organizations.

The following, presented in alphabetical order, are the most common:

- agreement for shelter and services to be offered in French;
- awareness-raising, prevention, and public education and service delivery in schools;
- collaboration with Children's Aid Societies;
- computer courses;
- consultation, collaboration, and coalitions on specific current violence-related issues;
- exchange of information;
- help to find housing;
- identification of Francophone women and then offer of access to FLS;
- increase in the security of women and their children;
- offer of services in other organizations;
- offer of support groups for youth;
- offer of transportation, clothing, food, etc.;
- program delivery to women and youth (Instinct, Ici pour aider, Espace);
- reduction in the isolation of older women;
- research and analysis of the issues;
- response to the needs of Francophone women using Anglophone services;
- support to immigrant women, women without status, or survivors of war;
- support to incarcerated women;

- translation and adaptation of material into French, etc.
- women's rights advocacy.

Investing in partnerships is considered beneficial for organizations. Partnerships allow access to information, break the isolation of organizations and of women, establish intervention and prevention networks, improve local, regional, or provincial coordination between organizations, provide access to additional resources, offer training or opportunities to engage in political action, etc. On the other hand, the time and resources invested in order to establish these partnerships add to the workloads and responsibilities of the workers charged with implementing them (administration, management, and coordination of agreements and partnerships). In addition, they have to follow-up with partners, rekindle inactive partnerships, and ensure that agreements are respected.

#### 4.4.1 Criteria for the success or failure of partnerships

For the organizations that were consulted, there are criteria for measuring the success, there are challenges, and there are criteria for measuring the failure of partnerships. The following are their criteria according to which partnerships were judged successful. Take a few minutes to review them and consider whether they match your experience.



##### Criteria for successful partnerships

- ❑ The success of partnerships depends on the **goodwill** of partners, especially with respect to FLS.
- ❑ Success depends on the nature of the **commitment to FLS**. The partnership must include: an open exchange; equitable sharing of work; clear expectations and objectives; regular meetings; means to evaluate and measure the results, and a commitment to offering FLS and to promoting them.
- ❑ The **effectiveness** and success of partnerships is seen when: our services are well-received and appreciated; we are respected by the partner; we see an increase in demand and an increase in referrals; we notice an improvement in the relationship between the partners and that the partnership is contributing to the credibility and reputation of the organizations.
- ❑ The success of the partnership allows **improved access** to FLS by women.
- ❑ Success depends upon the **acknowledgement of the existence** of a Francophone population and of its needs.
- ❑ Success depends on hiring **Francophone staff** or staff speaking several languages in Anglophone organizations.
- ❑ Success happens when **needs** are met because they were identified by local partners and because partners share values.
- ❑ Success is when **services** in French are delivered by Francophones and when Francophones can work together.
- ❑ Success comes when there is **mutual support** between Francophone and Anglophone organizations in order to make ourselves and our services known.
- ❑ Success comes when **outreach** and service delivery strategies are developed that take into account the challenges facing FLS.
- ❑ Success comes from the experience and expertise of the Francophone partners from FLS or from universities who offer **training**.

- ❑ Success comes when we have the financial and human resources necessary to develop protocols with partners and when our expertise is respected.

The challenges or measures of failure are, of course, the opposites of partnership success. Organizations offering FLAVS indicate that some partnerships failed for the reasons listed below. Here again, take a few minutes to review them and consider whether they match your experience.

- ❑ The partnership is a failure because there was no real willingness to participate or there was a superficial commitment on the part of the partner.
- ❑ The partnership agreement is a failure because there was no result.
- ❑ The partnership is a failure when the partner identifies Francophones as bilingual.
- ❑ The partnership is a failure when the partners do not have the same view of FLS.
- ❑ Certain partnerships are a failure because they were forced.
- ❑ It is difficult to develop partnerships between institutional services and community services that have different missions and values.
- ❑ Partnerships are a failure when they require time that can not always be spared.
- ❑ Partnerships that always have to be started over are often failures.
- ❑ Partnerships are a failure when one of the partners imposes standards and requirements, generally applicable to the Anglophone population, on the delivery of FLS.
- ❑ Partnerships are a failure when one of the partners does not take into account the specificity of the delivery of FLS.
- ❑ Partnerships are a failure when there is discrimination against services which adopt a feminist approach.
- ❑ Partnerships are a failure when there is a spirit of competition between partners and a lack of transparency.

For Francophone organizations, establishing partnerships with Anglophone or bilingual organizations means working largely in English and constantly demanding, in the name of Francophone rights, access to services in French. In these networks, the equality of partners is far from evident, and Francophones are not always fully included. Competition for grant money, the protection of the client base, different philosophies and mandates, etc... All contribute to making partnerships difficult for Francophone organizations.

#### **4.4.2 Difficulties of regional collaboration and coordination**

Regional partnerships and regional collaboration and coordination are necessary if we are to build a strong network of French-language anti-violence services. A lack of ongoing funding to sustain the work of Francophone organizations through any given regional coordination structure can slow regional collaboration and coordination. The Comité Réseau, which brings together Francophone workers from anti-violence organizations in the Ottawa area, has for some time not received operating funding, which affects its effectiveness. The Comité de coordination en matière de violence faite aux femmes de Prescott-Russell was dissolved for lack of means to fund coordination. There is a need to come together regarding the development of FLAVS in the North-West (Thunder Bay and surrounding area), the North-East (Cochrane district), and the Mid-North (Sudbury, North Bay, and Algoma district).

It would be naive to think that collaboration between organizations offering FLS is a given everywhere. Instead of exploring together how to maximize resources and knowledge to better serve women, some organizations are tempted to go it alone to ensure their own survival. For regional collaboration and coordination to succeed, willingness and solidarity, as well as human and financial resources for coordination are necessary, in addition to funds to defray transportation costs in far-reaching regions such as the North.

#### **4.4.3 The challenge of establishing provincial partnerships**

Partnerships with other elements of the Francophone community in Ontario (for example, justice, health, community and social services, etc.) are desirable because they contribute to coordination, collaboration, and consultation on violence against women. Partnerships also lead to community accountability for the issue. Together, they make it possible to improve the quality and increase the number of services offered to Francophone women victims of violence in Ontario, and raise the profile of the Francophone violence against women movement.

Partnerships are not without challenges, however, as discussed above. It is not easy to be acknowledged as a partner. Provincially, AOcVF, with only two employees, has neither the human nor the financial resources to develop and maintain these partnerships. Developing partnerships with organizations whose mandate is not to fight violence against women is difficult to do without putting aside feminist principles and values. AOcVF brings together a number of organizations offering French-language violence against women services throughout the province. Some workers would like to see a campaign to expand the membership. In the same vein, it would be advantageous to consolidate the relationships between provincial organizations concerned with violence against women (for example, AOcVF, FESFO, COPA, OPALE, and MOFIF) in order to increase provincial collaboration and strengthen the Francophone violence against women movement.

### **4.5 Challenges and difficulties**

In Ontario, SACs, shelters, and anti-violence organizations are key partners as service providers. They offer women an invaluable range of services. A look at the province as a whole reveals large gaps in French-language service delivery, with some regions poorly served and others not at all. There are also huge challenges and difficulties.

#### **4.5.1 Chronic underfunding**

Challenge number one is the underfunding of organizations. They are entirely dependent on the government and a few other funders to offer their services.

In most organizations, workers underscore the importance of equity in the funding of FLS and Anglophone organizations offering the same services to enable them to meet the demand for services and develop essential services. Funding must take into consideration human resources needs and must be guaranteed and ongoing.

Operating budgets have not reflected increases in the cost of living. There has been no real increase in the budgets of shelters and SACs since the cutbacks under the Conservative government, with the exception of a one-time correction and the annualization of funding for organizations that participated in the eight pilot projects in the context of the *Plan stratégique de développement des services en français en matière de violence, 1997-2001*, and a more recent 3% increase for community organizations offering shelter and counselling to women and children fleeing violence at home. This makes it impossible to develop new services or offer wage increases to employees. As a result, for example, some shelters have had to cut back services, primarily in advocacy and prevention.

Some organizations have had to invest energy in fundraising simply in order to survive, but this is not their purpose and such activities reduce the time available to serve women. Shelters have expanded their services, increased staff and introduced new programs without broadening their administrative base. The result is a high level of staff burnout.

Francophone organizations are concerned about the quantitative measures used by government to evaluate services (the per call cost on the regional lines, for example). Too great a dependence on quantitative evaluation will penalize Francophone organizations which do not serve as large a population base as do Anglophone organizations. Performance measures better suited to the reality of the Francophone community, going beyond statistics to good practices, should be developed.

Government ministries are increasingly demanding regarding performance and paperwork has increased dramatically without a corresponding increase in organizations' resources. Existing services are not well-equipped to serve clients with complex needs, for example immigrant or refugee women, women survivors of war, or marginalized women, and new services also suffer from underfunding.

Over the years, some organizations able to offer services only in extremely difficult financial situations have had to "make a scene" in order to make the government understand the gravity of their distress. Having to resort to this type of action is unacceptable. It is up to the government to avoid this type of situation by implementing a long-term development plan for FLAVS.

In order to obtain an increase in funding, FLS have appealed to the responsibility of the government and the various ministries to establish a long-term action plan for the development of FLS and to create, where necessary, autonomous FLS run **by and for** Francophone women.

#### **4.5.2 Investment in prevention**

Organizations speak with one voice when they say that additional investment in prevention is necessary. They want to raise awareness, educate, teach people other ways to resolve problems and develop healthy relationships. Violence is considered a determinant of health. To reduce the number of front-line services for abused women in the future, work must begin with children and youth. The costs of violence against women are phenomenal when its impact on health and social services is considered, not to mention the individual suffering and relationship problems that ensue. Children and women victims of violence will be affected to various degrees throughout their lives.

### **4.5.3 Fragility of human resources**

The success of organizations rests largely on a number of devoted, but for the most part underpaid, women. Organizations deal with, on one hand, burnout, professional exhaustion, the need for a reasonable salary, and on the other, training the next generation, recruitment, the development of services, etc.

Given that workers in organizations are recognized and respected in their field because of their expertise, they are sought after, which increases their already heavy workloads.

There is volunteer turnover in FLS. It is difficult to find committed and available women who can contribute to the organization.

For Francophone organizations, maintaining and developing partnerships requires considerable time and energy. Several organizations may not necessarily have the resources. Partnerships show their willingness to avoid duplication of services by forging links between agencies with a view to greater efficiency.

### **4.5.4 Absence of professional training**

There are consequences to the lack of professional training at the university or college level on the feminist approach and on feminist intervention, on the community-based approach and on the different facets of violence against women and children. It is therefore time to collaborate with postsecondary institutions. Further, despite all efforts to better equip workers, they require additional training on the many issues they confront daily in the course of their work. It is important to continue to train them in order to meet the needs of FLAVS.

### **4.5.5 Availability and quality of resources in French**

The vast majority of organizations offering French-language anti-violence services do so in largely English-speaking environments. As a result, it is difficult for workers to refer clients to other agencies offering FLS. The lack of translation and interpretation services often forces workers to serve as interpreters when their clients use other services, thus significantly adding to their workloads.

Observations in the field and research on FLAVS suggest that Anglophone agencies are sometimes reluctant to refer Francophone women because they do not want to “lose” them. Francophone women experiencing violence are not statistics... They are women who need FLS to confront the violence to which they are subjected and to escape it as quickly as possible.

Material in French is considerably more expensive to purchase and, apart from resources produced by some organizations and by AOcVF, there is virtually no material produced in French in Ontario.

### **4.5.6 Assimilation and its effects on the delivery and evaluation of French-language services**

In some regions, such as Northern Ontario, the population must be taught to ask for FLS and reminded that it is their right to do so. After being told repeatedly by bilingual or

Anglophone agencies that FLS are not available, Francophones have become accustomed to making do with services in the majority language. However, despite assimilation, many Francophone women cannot speak English or speak it too poorly to receive services in English.

#### 4.6 Organization priorities

We attempted to determine the needs of consulted organizations in order to move forward in the development and delivery of FLAVS<sup>17</sup>. Responses have been grouped together in the exercise that follows.

The exercise we are asking you to do is at the very heart of Forum 2004, which will take place in November 2004. It concerns the development of French-language violence against women services in the coming years. It is very important that you spend time on it in order to prepare for the forum.

All organizations are unique and have their own needs with respect to the development of FLS, but the priorities proposed by the consulted organizations may also apply regionally or provincially.

From the proposed list, try to answer the following question:

- **How does your organization rank the following priorities for the development for French-language services in each category?**

If you have other priorities, do not hesitate to write them in the appropriate space. Use 1 for the most important, 2 for the second most important, and so on in *each of the categories*.

Do not hesitate to photocopy this exercise or to consult your colleagues if you feel it necessary. Write your comments in the margin.

#### ► An opportunity to reflect

#### **Priorities for organizational development and the development of French-language services at the local, regional, and provincial levels**

	Priorities	Order of priorities for each category
<b>Funding of organizations</b>	1. To increase annual and equitable core funding in order to offer the full range of FLS in domestic violence or sexual assault.	
	2. To increase funding to raise the number of Francophone workers, where necessary, to fulfill the mandate, meet the need for services, and develop new services.	

<sup>17</sup> Seventeen of the 19 organizations answered questions on their priorities for their own development and on their priorities for the development of their services.

	<p>3. To increase funding to allow full accessibility to services for all types of clients.</p> <p>What are your other priorities for funding?</p>	
<b>Human resources</b>	<p>1. To increase the number of workers in order to better meet the needs of Francophone women in existing FLS.</p> <p>2. To increase funding in order to decrease staff turnover and pay staff adequately.</p> <p>3. To increase the number of Francophone workers working in Anglophone or bilingual services to allow them to fulfill their duties properly.</p> <p>What are your other priorities for human resources?</p>	
<b>Training</b>	<p>1. To guarantee funding for training.</p> <p>2. To offer ongoing training to FLS workers throughout the province.</p> <p>3. To develop training on issues workers are currently dealing with and on emergent issues.</p> <p>4. To establish flexible and accessible university and college programs throughout the province.</p> <p>What are your other priorities for training?</p>	
<b>Services</b>	<p>1. To increase funding in order to offer workshops on particular themes.</p> <p>2. To increase funding in order to offer support groups and therapy groups.</p> <p>3. To increase funding in order to offer additional medium- and long-term intervention.</p> <p>4. To establish a plan to develop services for immigrant or refugee women or survivors of war and to consolidate existing French-language resources.</p> <p>5. To give greater importance to community development and outreach.</p> <p>6. To provide transitional support programs.</p> <p>7. To implement a local, regional, and provincial plan for ongoing services and programs on prevention, awareness-raising, and education for youth and other social groups.</p> <p>8. To explore alternative models for offering FLS province-wide.</p> <p>What are your other priorities for services?</p>	

<b>Regional 24/7 crisis lines</b>	1. To increase core funding for the three regional crisis lines.	
	2. To provide a sufficient number of permanent, well paid and well trained workers.	
	3. To provide funding for liaison and supervision of the regional crisis lines.	
	4. To ensure funding to promote the regional crisis lines.	
	5. To ensure that there is funding to permit the organizations coordinating the regional crisis lines to do regional and provincial coordination.	
	6. To provide training for workers on the regional crisis lines on the issues they are called upon to deal with and on emergent issues.	
	What are your other priorities for the regional crisis lines?	
<b>SACs</b>	1. To establish a Francophone SAC in Prescott-Russell.	
	2. To guarantee French-language anti-violence services by establishing a Francophone SAC in Timmins.	
	3. To ensure service throughout the year and with full-time workers in Thunder Bay.	
	4. To ensure that new SACs become accessible to Francophone women in all regions.	
	What are your other priorities for SACs?	
<b>Shelters</b>	1. To open the second Francophone shelter in the East as soon as possible.	
	2. To ensure that shelters developed by and for French-speaking women are opened in the Hamilton and Toronto areas.	
	3. To establish services based on innovative models where there are no FLS in order that all women have access to services and to safe spaces.	
	4. To ensure the opening of second-stage housing offering FLS and developed by and for Francophone women.	
	What are your other priorities for shelters?	
<b>Provincial collaboration and coordination</b>	1. To provide funding for provincial collaboration and coordination between all organizations offering French-language anti-violence services.	
	2. To guarantee core and operating funding for the provincial coalition, AOcVF.	

	<p>3. To ensure that AOcVF and its member groups can participate in all provincial and regional initiatives aimed at improving French-language access and all initiatives related to the rights of Francophone women in Ontario.</p> <p>What are your other priorities for provincial collaboration and coordination?</p>	
<b>Promotion of organizations and their services</b>	1. To ensure that there is funding to promote French-language anti-violence services and the organizations offering them, in urban as well as distant regions.	
	2. To ensure that information about FLS can reach all women, in particular underserved groups of women.	
	3. To ensure local, regional, and provincial coordination of FLS in order to ensure the greatest possible visibility of FLS.	
	What are your other priorities for promotion?	
<b>Partnerships</b>	1. To ensure that there is funding to permit workers to sustain existing partnerships and develop new ones.	
	What are your other priorities for partnerships?	
<b>Material and electronic resources</b>	1. To ensure that there is funding for the necessary computers and software to collect the statistical data for which FLS are accountable.	
	2. To ensure that material and software is kept up to date.	
	3. To increase technical resources in French to make it possible to intervene and offer training, and to better serve women and young people.	
	4. To establish a provincial resource centre to meet the needs of organizations.	
	5. To ensure funding in order to improve the accessibility of offices and meeting space and to better meet the needs of women with disabilities.	
	What are your other priorities for resources?	
<b>Governance</b>	1. To engage in strategic planning to better direct services and their development.	
	2. To evaluate the organizational structure and function in order to better focus or reorient services and to do organizational development.	
	3. To recruit members and to facilitate the work of the board of directors.	

	4. To establish performance measures suited to organizations in a minority environment.	
	What are your other priorities regarding governance?	
<b>Application of the French Language Services Act</b>	1. To ensure that workers in bilingual organizations can work increasingly in French.	
	2. To recommend the creation of new and autonomous FLS.	
	3. To implement mechanisms to evaluate bilingual or Anglophone organizations receiving funding to offer FLS.	
	4. To increase Francophone staff in related services working with women dealing with violence.	
	What are your other priorities regarding the <i>French Language Services Act</i> ?	

#### **4.7 A conclusion to the provincial portrait: autonomy of French language violence against women services**

We have drawn the provincial portrait of the services offered and the shortcomings in services. Much has been accomplished in the last decade and much remains to be done. Organizations want to be heard. One theme came up repeatedly in the survey, the interviews, the consultations, and the discussion groups: the autonomy of French-language anti-violence services.

Workers underscored the importance of autonomous FLAVS. According to them, Francophone women in bilingual or Anglophone organizations do not necessarily receive the services to which they have a right. In addition, bilingual or Anglophone organizations have too few Francophone staff to meet the needs, to offer direct services or do prevention, to develop new FLS, etc.

Recent years have shown that most FLS integrated into so-called “bilingual” organizations have produced disappointing, and in some cases disastrous, results for the Francophone community. In fact, only rarely have bilingual structures been in a position to offer the full range of FLS equivalent in quality and accessibility to those offered to Anglophone women.

In organizations run **by** and **for** Francophone women, such as SACs and shelters, there is no “surface bilingualism” and the situation is completely different. Though they are not necessarily all designated organizations under the *French Language Services Act*, they meet the five criteria for designation under the law. In other words, organizations run **by** and **for** Francophone women are in a position to guarantee: the permanence and quality of services, the availability of services, Francophone representation on the board of directors and in management, and accountability to the Francophone community. They are models on which to base the future development of FLAVS.

In some regions, the availability of anti-violence services in multidisciplinary or multiservice environments may be a means of facilitating access to services and preserving the anonymity of users, but only to the extent that the services operate with a feminist philosophy and a community-based approach within an organization whose workers are specialized in violence.

Complementary anti-violence services offered by various organizations other than shelters and SACs are necessary but have limits. For example, a Francophone worker may do excellent work with women victims of violence, but she may have other responsibilities or be required to offer services in English much of the time. In addition, most of these organizations are institutional and it is not in their mandate to advocate for reforms to the criminal justice system and other measures to eliminate violence. SACs and shelters have always done so, and with other organizations in the Francophone violence against women movement, have helped to bring about the changes we have witnessed since the 1970s. Furthermore, the latter are autonomous and community-based women's organizations who have advocated for "zero tolerance" policies with respect to violence, legislative changes in the area of sexual assault, etc.

In conclusion, it may be useful to note that ministries dealing with sexual assault and domestic violence have for a long time drawn on the resources of Francophone organizations, including AOcVF, to help them to understand the issues, to see the bigger picture and to seek out the experience of groups combating violence. The unconditional commitment of SACs and shelters demonstrates their involvement, their determination, and their willingness to eradicate violence against women and children. They are also the voices of this movement and for the development of resources in French in Ontario. The case for autonomous French-language anti-violence services is well founded.

## Chapter 5: Regional portraits of services

To complement the provincial portrait, we will present mini-portraits of French-language anti-violence services in each of the large regions in the province. Resources do not permit a thorough updating of information on the groups inventoried in the 1998 report by Lucie Brunet, *French Language Services for Addressing Violence against Women : Clearing a Tortuous Path*. Consequently, the list of Anglophone or bilingual organizations that follows is incomplete.

According to the information gathered in the 2004 survey of 19 organizations offering FLS and based on our knowledge of anti-violence organizations in Ontario, we can confirm that some things have changed since the publication of the report in 1998. Among the changes and new FLS since added are:

- the expansion of services in Sudbury, Toronto, and Hamilton/Niagara, where organizations are now dealing with sexual assault, domestic violence, and other forms of abuse;
- new support services in the North-West and in the District of Algoma;
- additional services for immigrant women in Hamilton, Toronto, and Ottawa;
- following the closing of the information and distress line S.O.S. Femmes, the crisis lines in the North and Centre-South were expanded and a new regional line created in the East. These lines serve as the Francophone counterpart to the province-wide Assaulted Women's Helpline;
- a pilot project to establish a Francophone sexual assault centre (SAC) in Prescott-Russell;
- exploration of models for the delivery of French-language anti-violence services in Timmins.

As each of the large regions of the province is presented, a few pertinent statistics about a certain number of Francophone communities will be drawn to readers' attention.

Total population of Ontario	Francophone population of Ontario	Percentage of Francophones in Ontario as per total population <sup>18</sup>
11,410,046	548,940	4.8%

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<sup>18</sup> Population statistics presented in the section are drawn from the 2001 Census of Statistics Canada - Statistics on the Francophone Population of Ontario and Community Profiles. See the sites of the Office of Francophone Affairs: <http://www.ofa.gov.on.ca/english/map.html> and Statistics Canada: <http://www12.statcan.ca/english/profil01/PlaceSearchForm1.cfm>

## 5.1 North-West Region

The city of Thunder Bay is not designated under the *French Language Services Act*, though several neighbouring communities are.

North-West	Total population	Francophone population	Percentage of Francophones
Thunder Bay	109,015	3,025	2.8%
Greenstone (Geraldton, Longlac, Nakina, Bearmore)	5,660	1,840	32.5%
Manitouwadge	2,950	475	16.1%
Marathon	4,415	570	12.9%
Ignace (District of Kenora)	1,710	180	10.2%

- There is but one Francophone anti-violence organization in this vast region. The Centre des femmes francophones du Nord-Ouest de l'Ontario has since 1998 offered support services in domestic violence and sexual assault, with four part-time staff and the assistance of volunteers.
- The Centre des femmes francophones du Nord-Ouest de l'Ontario is located in Thunder Bay and has one satellite each in Marathon and Geraldton which serve neighbouring communities.
- Annualized funding is granted for only 42 weeks per year.
- Since 1998, it has participated in the development and management of the regional crisis line now managed by the Centre Victoria pour femmes in Sudbury.
- The large distances between members prevent the regional board of directors from meeting frequently.
- FLS in the three Anglophone shelters are virtually non-existent.
- The lack of related services in French in health, social services, and justice is a major obstacle in the region.

## 5.2 North-East Region

For the purposes of this report, the North-East region includes primarily the communities along Highway 11 in the Districts of Cochrane and Timiskaming. The entire region is designated under the *French Language Services Act*. Though Francophones are the majority in several communities, French-language anti-violence services remain minimal.

North-East (Districts of Cochrane and Timiskaming)	Total population	Francophone population	Percentage of Francophones
Timmins	43,690	17,920	41.0%
Kapuskasing	9,240	6,135	66.4%
Hearst	5,825	5,180	88.9%
Cochrane (Glackmeyer, Cochrane and Cochrane non-organized north)	5,690	2,595	45.6%
Kirkland Lake	8,615	1,580	18.3%
New Liskeard	4,905	1,570	32.0%

- In this vast region, there is only one so-called “bilingual” SAC, Timmins and Area Women in Crisis. For ten years this organization received an annual grant to offer FLS. Following repeated complaints about the lack of FLS and their poor quality, the

government, with the community, is exploring other delivery models for FLS in the region.

- The Canadian Mental Health Association Cochrane-Timiskaming chapter serves the District of Cochrane-South, the city of Timmins, and the District of Timiskaming. With a central office in Timmins and offices in New Liskeard and Kirkland Lake, the CMHA offers programs in two areas, 1) mental health and 2) violence against women. The violence against women program includes a range of services, including the Family Resource Centre (a shelter in Matheson), the Outreach program (in Timmins), the transitional support program in Cochrane-South (Matheson and Iroquois Falls), support groups for children and special projects with school boards in the region. The CMHA is designated under the *French Language Services Act* and serves both linguistic communities, but receives no specific funding for services offered in French.
- The Hearst, Kapuskasing & Smooth Rock Falls Counselling Service manages Habitat Interlude, a shelter in Kapuskasing offering shelter services in French 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- The Pavillion Family Resource Centre, a shelter in Haileybury, offers partial FLAVS.
- Other organizations, among them the Centre Jeanne-Sauvé in Kapuskasing and the Centre de counselling familial de Timmins, offer counselling in French.
- In the Timiskaming region, prevention and support services for Francophone victims are obviously lacking, and the situation is worse still for youth.

### 5.3 Mid-North Region

This region includes the Highway 17 corridor between North Bay and the North Shore. For the purposes of this report, Sudbury is included.

Mid-North (District of Nipissing, Greater Sudbury, District of Algoma)	Total population	Francophone population	Percentage of Francophones
North Bay	52,770	8,645	16.4%
Nipissing West (Sturgeon Falls, Springer, Cache Bay, Caldwell, and Field)	13,115	9,495	72.4%
Greater Sudbury (Sudbury, Nickle Centre, Walden, Rayside Balfour, Onaping Falls, Valley East, Capreol, Sudbury non-organized and Wahnapipei)	155,215	46,475	29.9%
Elliot Lake	11,955	2,400	20.1%
Sault Ste. Marie	74,565	3,315	4.4%

- Amelia Rising Women’s Collective Sexual Assault Centre of Nipissing is situated in North Bay. It is a bilingual centre, with FLS offered but a few hours per week.
- The Family Resource Centre in Sturgeon Falls is a shelter with a range of FLS.
- Created in 1993, the Centre Victoria pour femmes in Sudbury is 100% managed **by** and **for** Francophone women. Its original mandate to offer sexual assault services has been expanded to include domestic violence and other forms of abuse. It offers support and outreach to women victims of violence and now manages Fem-Aide, the regional crisis line in the North. The Centre Victoria pour femmes also provides prevention, awareness-raising, and education services in Algoma through a satellite office in Sault Ste. Marie.
- In recent years, Geneva House, the only shelter in Sudbury, has improved the availability and quality of the partial services it offers in French.

- The Service familial catholique de Sudbury is a Francophone organization offering individual and group counselling in domestic violence in English and French.
- Algoma Women’s Sexual Assault Services has a worker providing FLS in Dubreuilville.
- Chadwick House in Wawa is the shelter serving the Dubreuilville region. It offers some service in French.

## 5.4 East Region

The East is divided into several sub-regions: Ottawa, Prescott-Russell, and Stormont-Dundas-Glengarry. All meet the criteria for designation under the *French Language Services Act*, with the exception of Dundas County where only Winchester township is designated.

	Total population	Francophone population	Percentage of Francophones
<b>Ottawa</b> (includes Osgoode, Cumberland, Gloucester, Vanier, Rockcliffe Park, Nepean, Rideau, Ottawa [city], Goulbourn, Kanata, and West Carleton)	774,070	128,620	16.6%

- In 1976, Maison d’amitié became the first Francophone shelter in Ontario. Its clientele is now mainly made up of immigrant women victims of domestic violence, to whom follow-up support is offered upon their departure from the shelter.
- La Présence offers shelter services in French for ten months a year and is administered by a religious order.
- Two other shelters in Ottawa offer very partial services in French.
- In 2002, the government approved the construction of a second Francophone shelter.
- The new regional crisis line, Femme-écoute, is managed by Maison d’amitié in cooperation with the Centre de ressources de l’Est d’Ottawa.
- The Centre francophone d’aide et de lutte contre les agressions à caractère sexuel d’Ottawa has since 1993 offered counselling and support to victims of sexual assault, and manages an information and support line with the help of volunteers. There are also two Anglophone SACs in Ottawa.
- Several agencies offer anti-violence services in French (counselling and support groups, for example), among them Catholic Family Services of Ottawa and the various community resource centres in Ottawa.
- Centre Espoir Sophie offers FLS to marginalized Francophone women, most of whom have experienced violence.

<b>Prescott-Russell</b>	Total population	Francophone population	Percentage of Francophones
Prescott-Russell counties (total)	74,980	51,320	68.4%
Hawkesbury	10,310	8,545	82.9%
Clarence-Rockland	19,615	13,740	70.0%

- Maison Interlude House in Hawkesbury offers a complete range of shelter services in French 24 hours/7 days a week.
- There is no sexual assault centre in Prescott-Russell. Victims and survivors of sexual assault thus turn to the centres in Ottawa and Stormont-Dundas-Glengarry-Akwesasne which are not mandated to serve them.

- In response to pressure from the community, the government approved a three-year pilot project to establish a Francophone SAC in Prescott-Russell.
- Sexual assault counselling is offered by one lone worker of the Centre Royal Comtois. Despite having a waiting list, the service was reduced to four days/week.
- Les Services aux enfants et adultes de Prescott-Russell (created following the merger of five organizations) has only one worker to provide counselling to women victims of domestic violence. Her intervention is limited by the new agency's child protection mandate.

<b>Stormont-Dundas-Glengarry</b>	Total population	Francophone population	Percentage of Francophones
Stormont-Dundas-Glengarry counties (total)	107,545	25,665	23.9%
Cornwall	45,640	13,925	30.5%
Glengarry North (Alexandria, Lochiel, Maxville, Kenyon)	10,590	4,390	41.5%

- In 2003 Following restructuring of services and the closure of the Francophone shelter La Montée d'elle in Alexandria because of under-use, an outreach service was launched to serve women victims of violence in Prescott-Russell-Stormont-Dundas-Glengarry who did not want to go to shelters. The program is managed by Maison Interlude House in Hawkesbury, in cooperation with the two other shelters in the five counties.
- The shelters in Cornwall (Baldwin House) and Winchester (Naomi's Family Resource Centre) offer only partial services in French.
- A bilingual SAC, Sexual Assault Support Services for Women, Stormont, Dundas, Glengarry & Akwesasne, has only four workers to serve the Francophone and Anglophone communities. It is thus impossible to offer individual counselling, and support groups, or to do much awareness-raising. Teams of volunteers and employees field calls on the Francophone and the Anglophone support lines.
- The Équipe psychosociale pour francophones de Stormont, Dundas et Glengarry, a mental health centre, offers long-term counselling.

## 5.5 South-Central Region

The entire cities of Toronto and Hamilton, the city of Mississauga, as well as the cities of Port Colborne and Welland in the regional municipality of Niagara are designated under the *French Language Services Act*. The city of Penetanguishene and the townships of Tiny and Essa in Simcoe County are designated. The South-Central region also includes cities such as Oshawa, Brantford, Cambridge, Kitchener-Waterloo, Guelph, and Burlington, all of which have Francophone populations but none of which are designated.

<b>South-Central region (Toronto, Peel, Hamilton/Niagara, Simcoe County)</b>	Total population	Francophone population	Percentage of Francophones
Toronto (Toronto [City], Scarborough, East York, North York, York, and Etobicoke)	2,481,495	42,780	1.7%
Mississauga	612,925	10,570	1.7%
Oshawa	139,050	3,910	2.8%
Hamilton (Hamilton, Stoney Creek, Glanbrook, Ancaster)	490,265	8,070	1.6%
Regional municipality of Niagara (total)	404,590	15,895	3.9%

*Doing so much with so little...*

*Overview and profile of French-language violence against women services (1994-2004)*

Welland	48,400	6,255	12.9%
Port Colborne	18,175	1,290	7.1%
Simcoe County (total)	372,325	11,185	3.0%
Penetanguishene	8,320	1,385	16.6%

- In Toronto, Oasis Centre des femmes is the only organization to offer a complete range of anti-violence services entirely in French. The Centre de santé communautaire de Hamilton/Niagara offers services entirely in French. Both organizations have expanded their original mandates providing sexual assault services to now include addressing domestic violence and other forms of abuse. Both also offer a transitional support program. Their direct services and programs are adapted to meet the needs of the immigrant women who are the majority of their users.
- With the exception of a few isolated workers, no shelter among the approximately 20 in the Toronto area actively offers FLS, and few refer Francophone women to Oasis, despite continued efforts to make them aware of the importance of offering FLS to their Francophone users.
- FLS are quasi non-existent in shelters in Hamilton-Niagara.
- Elle-écoute, the regional crisis line, was created in 1998 by Oasis Centre des femmes and the Centre de santé communautaire de Hamilton/Niagara. It is now managed by Oasis Centre des femmes.
- Rosewood House is a shelter located in Midland. Though it is funded to serve the Francophone community of Huronie or Simcoe County, through Women's Resources of Simcoe County in Barrie, it does not actively offer FLS. Apparently there are few workers in a position to offer FLS.

## 5.6 South-West Region

The cities of London and Windsor, as well as rural communities in Kent and Essex, are designated under the *French Language Services Act*, though Sarnia is not.

<b>South-West (London, Windsor, communities in Kent and Essex counties)</b>	Total population	Francophone population	Percentage of Francophones
London	336, 535	5,680	1.7%
Sarnia	70,875	2,485	3.5%
Windsor	208,405	8,295	4.0%
Lakeshore (Maidstone, Belle River, Rochester, Tilbury West, and Tilbury North)	28,750	3,435	11.9%

- The Chatham-Kent Sexual Assault Care Centre, which discontinued offering FLS upon the departure of its Francophone employees in 2001, called on Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes (AOcVF) to develop a FLS plan for the South-West region, including Sarnia, London, Chatham-Kent, and Windsor. The government is currently studying the AOcVF proposal.
- A single worker offers FLS in sexual assault at the Windsor-Essex Sexual Assault Centre.

## 5.7 Other non-served or underserved regions

Despite the fact that the regional crisis lines will soon cover the entire province, in several areas access to direct services remains extremely limited or even non-existent.

For example, the city of Pembroke and Stafford and Westmeath townships to the west of Ottawa are designated under the *French Language Services Act*. The Bernadette McCann shelter however has no Francophone worker and FLS are dependent on volunteers. No permanent service in French is offered by the Women's Sexual Assault Centre in Eganville.

To our knowledge, there are no French-language anti-violence services in the non-designated regions of Kingston, Belleville, or Trenton, where there are concentrations of Francophone women.

	Total population	Francophone population	Percentage of Francophones
Pembroke	13,490	1,000	7.4%
Kingston (former city of Kingston, Pittsburgh, Kingston County)	114,195	4,420	3.9%
Belleville	86,315	2,510	2.9%

The brief regional portraits we have just presented identify the organizations offering FLAVS in the various regions. We have clearly witnessed an expansion of services in the last decade in some regions. However, the availability of FLS remains uneven from one region to another. The demographic data reveal that the Francophone population in regions such as the North-East and South-West is very poorly served. When the network of FLS in Francophone and bilingual organizations is compared to the network of services available to the Anglophone majority, the disparity is flagrant and illustrates ongoing iniquities.



## Chapter 6: The role of governments

The provincial and regional portraits reveal gaps in the services available to Francophone women. As pointed out previously, in order to operate, services are dependent on government support.

This section will attempt to analyze the role of the government and some of its ministries in the campaign against violence against women and the struggle for French-language services to meet the needs of Francophone women victims of violence. Within this framework it is important to examine the role of the State, in this case, the Government of Ontario, in the development of French-language anti-violence services. Three different parties have formed the government in the last decade. We will therefore begin with a presentation of a few critical points regarding the nature and impact of government policies on violence and on French language services, and the relationship between government bodies and the Francophone violence against women movement. We will then analyze the positions of the provincial government regarding FLAVS and, finally, the commitment of the various ministries to FLS and the network of organizations offering them. We will also consider briefly the contribution of the federal government to the expansion of French-language anti-violence services.

### 6.1 Evolution and impact of the policies of three successive governments at Queen's Park

#### 6.1.1 Consultative approach of the NDP government



*With the NDP we felt an openness to the Franco-Ontarian community and to diversity. The NDP were comfortable working with women's groups (a director).*

The New Democratic Party, under the leadership of Bob Rae, came to power in 1990. The NDP's policies on women's issues developed from a feminist analysis. The Ontario Women's Directorate (OWD) regularly consulted women's groups. The Rae government's most important contribution to the violence issue was the *Initiative for the Prevention of Sexual Assault*, and it is thanks to this initiative that a network of SACs was established across the province.

With respect to FLAVS, the NDP government was sensitive to the particular needs of the Francophone community and committed itself to supporting the implementation of the *French Language Services Act*. It entrenched the idea of parallel organizations run **by** and **for** Francophone women by funding three Francophone SACs and the anti-violence services offered by the Centre de santé communautaire de Hamilton/Niagara. It injected

additional funds into other SACs and bilingual organizations offering FLS. Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes (AOcVF) was involved in the needs assessments that supported the development of the FLS.

### 6.1.2 Devastating impact of the Conservative government



*The wave of cutbacks by the Harris government had a huge impact on clients, over and above the cutbacks to services. The line in agencies was: everyone front line in direct services. It made you wonder how clients were going to eat. (a director)*

After the election in 1995 of the Conservative Party led by Mike Harris, the struggle against violence against women no longer had the same priority. The OWD shifted its focus to women's economic independence. The political climate had changed dramatically. Because advisory committees had been eliminated, women's groups no longer had a way to be heard.

Grants to all shelters and SACs were cut by 5%, which affected the ability of already underfunded organizations to offer quality services. Francophone anti-violence organizations, whose budgets were smaller to begin with, were disproportionately hurt. Funding for second stage housing was eliminated, counselling for women victims was cut back, awareness-raising and prevention programs in shelters were cut.

The network of anti-violence services was further seriously threatened with the recommendations of the McGuire report commissioned in 1996 by the Harris government<sup>19</sup>. The recommendations of this internal report would have decimated the Francophone violence against women movement and reduced its services to women. The intent was to dismantle shelters by cutting stays to 24 to 48 hours and eliminate SACs altogether by leaving the care of victims to hospitals. Services would be generic, not geared to truly meeting the needs of women. Implementation of the report's recommendations would have represented an enormous step backward for services, and a reversal of the philosophy of the feminist groups who created services **by** and **for** women precisely because women were not well-served by these institutions. Thanks to the courage of the women who borrowed a copy of the report and distributed copies in the community, the government backed down in the face of protests. As a result, women's groups regained power and remained vigilant.

The cutback that most affected women and children was the reduction of social assistance benefits by 21%. This measure forced many abused women fleeing violent partners into extreme poverty. Those who turned to anti-violence organizations required more support to confront the systemic violence of reduced access to social assistance, of a lack of subsidized, affordable, and safe housing, etc. Workers were forced to do additional advocacy with other agencies on behalf of their clients. In addition, the cuts forced many women to remain in abusive situations, thus threatening their lives and those of their children.

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<sup>19</sup>The McGuire report was not published subsequently.

The media contributed a great deal in this period to raising public awareness of the vulnerability of women abused by intimate partners by highlighting a series of murders of women by their spouse or ex-spouse. In March and November 1996, the *Toronto Star* published the results of its investigation, *Hitting Home: Spousal Abuse*, on the outcome of domestic violence charges before the courts in Toronto. The investigation found that only 55% of men accused of a domestic violence-related offence were found guilty and that they received only light penalties. In the other cases, the victim either did not appear or changed her version of events in order to absolve her partner. By denouncing the inaction of the police and the courts in protecting women from abusers, the media affected the public's perception of the government and led it to take measures to increase women's security.

In the same vein, the two reports of the Coroner's jury on the deaths of Arlene May and Randy Iles (1998) and of Gillian and Ralph Hadley (2002) recommended in-depth changes to the criminal justice system. Despite having filed complaints with the police, both women were murdered by an ex-spouse who had breached a restraining order with the victim and their bail conditions. The two men committed suicide immediately afterward. These two premeditated murders highlighted the failure of measures in place to keep the accused from communicating with the victim, harassing her, or assaulting her. The May/Iles report contains over 200 recommendations to improve the manner with which the police and the courts treat domestic violence complaints. The Hadley inquest supported the recommendations of the May/Iles inquest and drew attention to the need for social support as well as social services to meet the essential needs of women leaving abusive partners.

In the wake of these events, the Conservative government chose to go forward with a law and order approach rather than strengthening the network of community-based women's groups offering front-line services to abused women. It preferred to invest in generic victim support associated with the criminal justice system, such as the Victim Witness Assistance Program (VWAP) and the Victim Crisis Assistance and Referral Services (VCARS). Women victims of violence do not appear to be using these services in great numbers because of the numerous systemic barriers preventing them from doing so. In fact, it has been noted that few women file complaints with the police (Statistics Canada 2003), that most men charged with sexual assault are not convicted, and that sentences in domestic violence cases are less severe than in other assaults (Statistics Canada 2004).

In 2000, AOcVF joined a broad provincial coalition, the Cross-Sectoral Violence Against Women Strategy Group. In response to the large number of women in Ontario assassinated by their partner or ex-partner, the group drafted a series of emergency measures to eradicate violence against women. The Liberals and the New Democrats agreed to endorse these measures. The Conservatives did not, but found themselves in an awkward situation. In the face of growing pressures, they proposed various measures: 300 new or renovated shelter beds, a provincial crisis line, a transitional support program for women leaving shelters, and some improvements to FLS.

In retrospect, the cutbacks appear not to have affected anti-violence organizations as a whole as much as they did other sectors because the Francophone violence against women movement fought unceasingly for a decade to get its message across and not to lose ground. Most notably, it succeeded in preventing the institutionalization of services offered by community-based women's organizations.

Regarding FLS, many designated Francophone jobs in ministries and bilingual organizations were cut or downgraded during the Mike Harris government, and after 2002 by the government of Ernie Eves. Many FLS coordinators saw their influence reduced and their staff cut. The Office of Francophone Affairs experienced cutbacks to its staff. In the face of a lack of political will and the absence of uniform means in the ministries to ensure its application, the *French Language Services Act* was applied with laxity under the Conservatives.

It should be noted, however, that funding for the *Plan stratégique de développement des services en français en matière de violence, 1997-2001* was granted under the Conservatives and that Francophone organizations were thus able to expand FLAVS. The contribution of the Office of Francophone Affairs to these efforts is noteworthy.

### 6.1.3 The beginning of a new approach with the Liberal government



*It is clear that the Liberal government wants to develop an action plan on violence and that it's open to the Francophone community. What we want is a five-year plan to develop French-language anti-violence services that the community could develop in conjunction with the government. (a director)*

It remains to be seen what the election in 2003 of a Liberal government under Dalton McGuinty means for French-language anti-violence services. The new government is currently in a transitional period and claims to be confronting a greater than anticipated deficit. As a result, decisions on new investments and new directions are on hold.

The Francophone violence against women movement has noticed an openness in the McGuinty government to working with community groups and greater attentiveness to issues of violence. There seems to be a change in attitude regarding the law and order approach of the Conservative government to breaking the cycle of violence. In the spring of 2004, the Liberal government announced \$3.5 million for second stage housing and \$4.9 million for a public awareness campaign over the next four years. In August 2004, it announced a further expenditure of \$3 million for shelters, organizations offering counselling, community groups, and crisis lines for women victims of violence.

In its first Throne Speech, the Liberal government declared that it intended to develop a plan of action on violence. Consultations conducted in the last year by Laurel Broten, M.P.P. for Etobicoke-Lakeshore and Parliamentary Assistant to the Premier and responsible for women's issues, are a first step leading to a plan of action on violence to be presented in the fall of 2004 by the Honorable Sandra Pupatello, Minister Responsible for Women's Issues and for Community and Social Services.

When it comes to FLS, however, in the government as in Ontario in general, French is often considered one language among many. There seems to be a kind of inertia. There are many reasons for this inaction: apathy, a lack of understanding of FLS, a lack of conviction and the absence of a vision among decision-makers, the view that all Francophone women are bilingual, the inability to understand that most Francophone women who have immigrated to Ontario in recent years do not have a good command of English and thus require FLS. Education about the rights and the real situation of Francophones, that is that there are two founding peoples and two official languages in

Canada, is required in order to eliminate this bias. The government must also promote the French language and the importance of FLS.

The Francophone violence against women movement hopes that the presence of a French-speaking Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs from the Francophone community, the Honorable Madeleine Meilleur, will incite the government to honour its responsibilities and obligation to serve Francophones by respecting the spirit and letter of the *French Language Services Act*, whose application has been somewhat battered in recent years. The impact of the recent creation of an advisory committee of committed Francophones to advise the Minister remains to be seen. Several Ministers and MPPs speak French and it is the Liberals who introduced the *French Language Services Act* in 1986, which augurs well for the Francophone community.

The apparent willingness of the Liberal government to invest in anti-violence services is promising, and it is hoped that it will prove equally willing to reduce the disparity in funding between FLS and English-language services. According to various sources outside the Francophone violence against women movement, the gap appears so discriminatory that legal remedies would be possible against the government of Ontario by virtue of the *French Language Services Act*, the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, and the *Ontario Human Rights Code*. Fortunately, there are others means of redressing historic wrongs and ensuring that Francophone organizations receive their fair share.

## **6.2 Analysis of the positions of the provincial government regarding French-language services**

Having addressed the decisions of three successive governments with respect to violence against women, we will now consider the consequences of positions taken by the government regarding French-language anti-violence services.

### **6.2.1 Lack of government leadership and vision**



*If the government had worked with us to develop a long-term plan, we would not have invested as much energy in political lobbying to be heard. Instead, we would have worked on the development and implementation of services. (a director)*

In the last decade, AOcVF has done a significant part of the spadework and development that the government should have assumed. As a result of a flagrant absence of leadership, FLS were developed piece-meal. If there is a network of French-language anti-violence services in Ontario, however fragile and incomplete, it is only because of demands for equality between the two linguistic communities and repeated protests against chronic underfunding.



*After years of asking politely, rationally, calmly, we finally understood that the government wouldn't budge unless we got really upset. They paid attention only when front-line services threatened to close their doors because of a serious lack of funding. (a director)*

It is neither normal nor acceptable that organizations are forced to stage confrontations or “crises” in order to express their frustration with government inaction. Unfortunately, however, on some difficult issues these have been the only strategies that have borne fruit. Had there been a political commitment to planning services and to a long-term vision for the development of anti-violence services in French, this tension could have been avoided. In addition, the growth of FLS has been hampered by a shortage of Francophone public servants responsible for this issue at all levels.

Finally, one of the effects of this absence of leadership is that women in FLS devote an incredible amount of time to lobbying funders. This, according to organizations offering FLAVS, is time taken away from clients.

### **6.2.2 Lack of core funding for provincial anti-violence organizations**

In handing over responsibility for planning the development of FLAVS to AOcVF, it seems to us that the government has shirked its responsibilities and has been negligent by failing to fulfill its obligations to the Francophone minority. The government has saved itself a considerable sum by refusing to fund FLS equitably and by refusing to grant core funding to AOcVF to acknowledge the development and service coordination work it does in the government's stead to preserve FLS.

The lack of adequate core funding for AOcVF and the resulting uncertainty makes the work of fundraising very stressful, as all funding, with the exception of a small grant from Heritage Canada, is project funding. Strategizing or lobbying is only a small part of AOcVF's work; in fact, most of its efforts go to coordinating anti-violence organizations on the provincial level and offering services. The coordination of services makes it possible to centralize and to offer training to workers, to produce material in French adapted to the Francophone community, etc., at an affordable cost. Despite the existence of a network of contract workers, the organization has only two permanent employees to implement the double mandate of addressing domestic violence and sexual assault with respect to service to organizations and lobbying. Its ability to support the development of FLS is obviously limited.

AOcVF's skill at managing several projects at once and its responsible administration of public funds given to it to coordinate and develop FLAVS has led to its being treated by certain ministries as an important community partner rather than a lobby group. Despite its own challenges, AOcVF has proven its worth. This special relationship between AOcVF and the government must continue, and ideally lead to the joint development of policies, programs, and services adapted to Francophone clients and regional requirements.

The Centre ontarien de prévention des agressions (COPA), the only Franco-Ontarian organization with a mandate to do violence prevention, also does not receive core funding

and is thus dependent upon government grants. This may in the long term compromise its work with children and youth.

### 6.2.3 Need for equity vis-à-vis the Anglophone majority



*An Anglophone woman victim of violence in theory has access to services from among the 96 shelters and 33 SACs throughout Ontario. In addition, she has access to a panoply of related violence services in organizations such as family services, hospitals, community health centres, mental health centres, community resource centres, etc. A Francophone woman can only get decent services in French in a handful of shelters, SACs, and agencies. Where's the fairness in that? (a director)*

Equity must remain a primary goal of the government. Would the government not be vulnerable if a Francophone woman was killed because she was unable to obtain anti-violence services? It is important to note that, according to the leadership of the Francophone violence against women movement, equity does not mean that all FLS must be parallel to and in all ways identical to English-language services, but rather that the Francophone community must be given its fair share so that it can offer a full range of custom-designed quality FLS to meet local needs.

### 6.2.4 What is expected of the government



*The gap between the funding of Francophone and Anglophone organizations serving the same area is so great that some Francophone organizations get the feeling that the government treats us like cheap labour. As Francophones, we feel penalized for being resourceful and for accomplishing much with little. (a director)*

There is no doubt that a key element in the improvement of French-language anti-violence services in the last decade has been the presence of a handful of public servants who believe in the importance of FLAVS, but this alone will not ensure the future development, stability, and quality of services. The new political climate offers the opportunity to rethink the government's approach and gives all parties the chance to start anew. We believe that for a comprehensive and consistent vision and a solid five-year development plan for French-language anti-violence services, the government should, among other things:



- a) ensure a political commitment on the part of concerned ministries to a long-term development plan for all regions of Ontario, whether designated or not under the *French Language Services Act*;
- b) increase the number of Francophone public servants capable of providing support and expertise in French to Francophone organizations;
- c) give AOcVF core funding to coordinate and deliver services to anti-violence organizations offering FLS;
- d) ensure ongoing funding for COPA, FESFO, OPALE, MOFIF, etc., in order to develop prevention programs adapted to the needs of the population;
- e) integrate the question of FLAVS in the identification, planning, and

- development of new initiatives in all future development of anti-violence policies and programs;
- f) develop partnerships between provincial organizations fighting violence against women;
  - g) issue clear directives specifying that the Francophone community must be consulted and involved from the outset and that programs should reflect regional realities;
  - h) ensure that ministries rigorously apply the *French Language Services Act* to improve the quality and accountability of services by adding clauses into contracts with transfer payment agencies and by directly investigating to ensure themselves that the quality of FLS “purchased” from so-called “bilingual” organizations is of sufficiently high quality;
  - i) demonstrate openness and flexibility to create, with AOcVF, alternative FLS delivery models, and adapt the criteria for existing and future programs to meet the particular needs of the Francophone community;
  - j) develop, with AOcVF, performance indicators that reflect and are adapted to the real experience of Francophones living in minority environments;
  - k) explore means of simplifying the paperwork and the possibility of creating a consortium of funders where organizations such as, for example, SACs, could present a single proposal and where one public servant (in the Victim Services Secretariat of the Ministry of the Attorney General, for example) could negotiate with other ministries the funding of a prevention project designed to respond to the needs identified by the organization. The public servant would serve as coordinator and could advocate for the project with other ministries. In this manner, it would be possible, for example, to avoid the crafting of three proposals to create one staffing position to do prevention.

Several other expectations could form part of this plan to develop FLAVS.

### **6.3 Commitment of ministries to French-language anti-violence services**

We did not have access to the documents required to conduct a thorough analysis of the commitment of various ministries to FLAVS. As a result, the analysis that follows is based on interviews with public servants in various ministries and with directors or coordinators, various Web sites, and recently published documents on FLS.

#### **6.3.1 Ministry of the Attorney General**

There is a growing acknowledgement within the Ministry of the Attorney General (MAG), the ministry funding SACs, of the importance of FLAVS run **by** and **for** Francophone women. The operating budgets of some underfunded Francophone SACs were thus adjusted and their core funding annualized in 2002. The MAG provided some of the funding for the regional crisis lines and released funds for a pilot project for a Francophone SAC in Prescott-Russell. In addition, it agreed to conduct a thorough review of the services of the Timmins SAC and is analyzing alternative FLS delivery models for Timmins and the surrounding area. The funding awarded remains unstable and inadequate, however, and was obtained only after prolonged efforts. Francophone organizations have yet to gain

access to the monies of Victims' Justice Fund administered by the Victim Services Secretariat.

The Ministry's leadership in creating, in 2004, on its own initiative, two interministerial committees on French-language anti-violence services, is worthy of mention. The goal of the committees, composed of directors and officials, is to have the various ministries draw up an inventory of French- and English-language programs they fund in the area of violence, and to identify gaps in FLS. The work of the committees will form part of Minister Papatello's plan of action to be tabled in the fall of 2004.

### **6.3.2 Ministry of Community and Social Services**

The Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS) funds shelters and some related anti-violence services (individual counselling, support groups, outreach, transitional support, services to child victims and witnesses of violence, for example). These services are offered by various organizations, among them women's groups specializing in violence, family services, community resource centres, community health centres, etc. The MCSS also funds the Assaulted Women's Helpline in addition to the Francophone regional crisis lines.

It is very difficult to make the MCSS aware of the work and the needs of Francophone women's organizations in any region save the East. The Ministry's decentralized structure and the autonomy of its eight regions make it difficult to convince MCSS of the need for a long-term development plan for FLAVS. In the absence of clear direction from the top, regional offices have until now gone largely unchallenged if they proved to be unwilling or uninterested in ensuring that FLS are offered equitably.

During the last two years, the MCSS has worked to make its staff aware of the need to serve the Francophone population and to ensure that transfer payment agencies subsidized by the Ministry understand and respect their obligations with respect to FLAVS. The Minister has tabled guidelines, but it remains to be seen how they will be applied in practice. The response to AOcVF's calls for Francophone shelters in cities such as Toronto and Hamilton where they are warranted by the number of Francophone women suggests that the message has yet to get through.

### **6.3.3 Office of Francophone Affairs**

The Office of Francophone Affairs (OFA) has for a decade exercised leadership and played an important role as an intermediary with other ministries and in keeping FLS at the forefront. The OFA played a key role in the development of the *Plan stratégique de développement des services en français, 1997-2001*. As a result of this initiative, several community groups were able to increase services in various parts of the province. The OFA also facilitated interministerial meetings between AOcVF and various ministries, thanks to which there has been an effective dialogue between AOcVF member groups and funders. In addition, the OFA has supported the training offered in the last five years. Without the OFA's support, French-language violence against women services might still be in their infancy.

Launched in 1991, its education program has survived several rounds of cutbacks and, at certain points in the last decade, has represented the only funding available for prevention and awareness-raising programs in French.

#### **6.3.4 Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care**

The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLC) funds sexual assault care centres in hospitals and some other programs such as long-term counselling for women victims of violence. A Francophone woman cannot easily get FLS in a hospital, as few hospitals have full-time Francophone staff to admit sexual assault victims. FLAVS have only had limited success in obtaining funding from the ministry to offer medium- and long-term counselling. However, all forms of violence experienced by women and children have significant short-, medium-, and long-term effects on women's physical and psychological health. The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care must be a more active partner in French-language anti-violence services.

#### **6.3.5 Ontario Women's Directorate**

The relationship between Francophone anti-violence organizations and the Ontario Women's Directorate (OWD) has been problematic for a number of years. In the past, the vast majority of funding requests presented by Francophone groups for violence-related projects were rejected. The Francophone community believes that the high rate of staff turnover and the almost total absence of public servants able to communicate in French have left the OWD unable to recognize the vibrancy of the French-speaking community and of the Francophone organizations deserving support.

The OWD should have been the ideal vehicle for helping Francophone organizations to begin to catch up. However, as a result of OWD's lack of interest, Francophone organizations have ceased presenting funding requests to the OWD. All attempts by AOcVF to build bridges with the OWD have failed. It is to be hoped that the change of government and the hiring of Francophone staff at the OWD will improve the situation.

#### **6.3.6 Ministry of Northern Development and Mines**

The Ministry of Northern Development and Mines (MNDM) has made small project development funds available to anti-violence organizations in the North. Though the sums involved are modest, they have made it possible to distribute prevention and awareness-raising material in French.

#### **6.3.7 Ministry of Education**

Prevention with elementary and secondary school-age children and young people is essential if violence against women is to be reduced in future generations. The Ministry of Education has a key role to play in the area of prevention. Some school boards have already requested funding from the Ministry in order to purchase French-language anti-violence services to provide certain programs or workshops to children. In the long term, a strategic plan for ongoing intervention or prevention programs for students would be appropriate.

All schools, at all levels, should have prevention programs. The Ministry of Education could work in partnership with the Centre ontarien de prévention des agressions (COPA), the Fédération de la jeunesse franco-ontarienne (FESFO), the Mouvement ontarien des femmes immigrantes francophones (MOFIF), Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes (AOcVF), and French-language school boards to establish province-wide prevention programs in French.

### **6.3.8 Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities**

The need for improvements in the training of workers and the challenges associated with it has been addressed previously. In order to improve the quality of front-line services in French, it would be helpful if professional training in social services were adapted, flexible, and accessible, and offered in French by the province's colleges and universities.

## **6.4 Federal government intervention in the matter of French-language anti-violence services**

The federal government does not fund direct anti-violence services, which are a matter of provincial jurisdiction. Apart from a small core funding grant from Heritage Canada, the federal government, through Status of Women Canada, funds only short-term projects designed to further thinking and research. The Women's Program of Status of Women Canada has for a number of years provided great support for research. It has also supported several important projects in the area of violence against women. In recent years, AOcVF has produced analyses of issues of concern to Francophone women. In 2004, the federal government renewed its family violence initiative for five years, allowing SWC to continue its partnership with AOcVF.

The Francophone violence against women movement has noticed a lack of openness on the part of Justice Canada to French-language projects from Ontario. It would appear that despite funding requests, FLS are consistently refused, leading one to believe that there is a lack of openness to their needs. Access to these funds would greatly ease the work of FLS.

In conclusion to this chapter, we have seen that the NDP, Conservative, and Liberal governments which succeeded one another at Queen's Park in the last decade have, through their policies, influenced the evolution of French-language anti-violence services. There have been gains and a modest expansion of services for Francophone women, despite government cutbacks and the difficult task of making governments understand the need to redress the historic funding disadvantage experienced by Francophone organizations.

There are many shortcomings in the application of the *French Language Services Act*. A lack of leadership and long-term vision on the part of the provincial government considerably hinders the expansion of FLS and could make it vulnerable to legal challenges for its failure to meet its legislative and constitutional obligations to the Francophone minority. We encourage the Liberal government and its ministers to devise a coherent vision and a solid development plan for French-language anti-violence services in the coming years.

Though direct anti-violence services are a matter of provincial jurisdiction, the federal government, through Status of Women Canada and Heritage Canada, has contributed to the development of FLS, most notably through research.

## Chapter 7: Observations of the research team

Forum 2004, scheduled to take place in November 2004, will be an opportunity to reflect together, a decisive moment to take stock, to collaborate and to lay the groundwork for the next wave of development of French-language anti-violence services. As researchers and workers in the system, for several years we have monitored the evolution of anti-violence organizations and their services and of the issues of sexual assault and domestic violence. We have also had the good fortune to work closely with the organizations consulted in the course of this research. As this lengthy process draws to a close, we would like to contribute some of our own observations to the discussions to follow within the Francophone community and within the Government of Ontario.

1. We have identified the major challenge of the last ten years as the chronic underfunding of sexual assault centres, shelters, and some institutions offering anti-violence services in French. There is a discriminatory variance in the funding awarded by successive Ontario governments to French-language and English-language anti-violence services. It is clear to us that the development of FLS has run up against provincial governments which have not respected their legislative and constitutional obligations to the Francophone community.

A political commitment from the Ontario government to devise and implement a medium- and long-term development plan for FLAVS is of prime importance. Such a plan would right the discriminatory funding of French-language domestic violence and sexual assault services, both with respect to provincial organizations such as Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes and the Centre ontarien de prévention des agressions as well as to local organizations.

The priorities identified by the organizations which participated in the survey and the *Plan stratégique 2004 de développement des services en français en violence contre les femmes* presented by Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes and its member groups can serve as a springboard for the development a new province-wide development plan for French-language anti-violence services. This could be done jointly by the Ontario government, Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes and its member groups and any other Francophone organization that deals with violence against women. This plan must treat all regions of the province equitably, must not depend on one community's ability to mobilize to the detriment of another, and must take into account the different situations and experiences of the various communities of Francophone women to be served.

In this action plan, the government must include the means of administering its anti-violence programs. On one hand, they differ from ministry to ministry with respect to contracts with Francophone organizations. On the other, the contractual obligations of the various Francophone organizations vary. Further, in order to reduce the administrative burden of Francophone organizations, it is clear to us that the agreements and contracts signed must be equitable, that is that all Francophone organizations offering similar services should have similar contracts,

and that they should be comparable to the agreements between various ministries and Anglophone organizations. For Francophone organizations, this means offering services in a comparable geographic area and with equitable financial resources.

2. Most so-called “bilingual” anti-violence organizations have failed to offer high quality, accessible services accountable to the Francophone community. Experience has proven that quality, accountable FLAVS are available first and foremost in autonomous organizations run **by** and **for** Francophone women. It is important to favour, whenever possible, the establishment of autonomous FLS run **by** and **for** Francophone women. Complementary domestic violence and sexual assault services offered in French by institutions should not, however, be reduced.

The autonomy of FLS does not mean that all Anglophone anti-violence organizations should have a parallel Francophone structure, but rather that FLS should be developed taking into account local, regional, and provincial realities and needs.

3. The integrity of services **by** and **for** Francophone women would be compromised should French-language services in domestic violence or sexual assault be integrated into institutions which do not adopt feminist and community-based philosophies, principles, and strategies of action.

The experience of workers highlights the difficulties and challenges posed by the merger of French-language anti-violence organizations and organizations offering support to children. Without for a moment minimizing the importance of child protection, the fact remains that the philosophies of the two types of organization are significantly different. They must, however, remain steadfast partners in the struggle against violence.

4. FLAVS prevention, awareness-raising, education, and community development have been neglected in the last decade. The importance of these services can no longer be ignored; to do so is to accept immediate, short-term solutions to the problems of violence rather than bringing about lasting social change.

Prevention, awareness-raising, and education must be considered a community priority and must be part of the future plan for the province-wide development of FLAVS. These services cannot be offered piecemeal as they currently are and they must be granted the necessary resources.

In the coming years, the priorities of the annual plans of organizations should include prevention, awareness-raising, and education. For want of human and financial resources and a lack of tools, organizations appear to have set aside community development, though it formed an important part of their original approach. A great deal of energy is now invested in survival and in maintaining threatened services, and workers do not necessarily have time to invest in community development.

5. A consensual approach and solidarity within the Francophone violence against women movement fostered the emergence of a solid network of FLS. Sexual assault centres, shelters, and a number of other organizations came together over

the years in the fight against violence against women. In anticipation of the next waves of development of FLAVS, we urge the violence against women movement to give itself the means to make the best possible decisions and to identify the priorities that will guide the consolidation and equitable development of FLS throughout the province.

At the government and ministerial level, a tendency to put organizations offering FLAVS in emergency situations, that is situations where they are forced to make decisions quickly because funds suddenly become available, must be curbed. Organizations must be able to take time to engage in longitudinal planning. A long-term development plan for FLAVS would resolve this situation.

6. The feminist approach has proven itself in sexual assault centres, shelters, and some institutions offering French-language anti-violence services. It is at the heart of their intervention with women victims of violence, and remains relevant.

The next challenge will be to ensure that agencies offering FLAVS remain true to those feminist roots. It will be important to ensure that existing and future services retain the participatory management model and continue to recognize the real-life experience of women survivors and to ensure that the experience of women survivors is heard and reflected in the orientation and operation of organizations.

We believe that a feminist approach in conjunction with a community-based approach is best for the delivery of anti-violence services. Applied together, they have proven their worth. They differ significantly from an often medicalizing, psychologizing, even infantilizing institutional approach.

The feminist and community-based approaches allow women to regain power in their lives and in society, while others disempower them, treating them as objects rather than as subjects with rights. Given the coming expansion in FLAVS, it should be recalled that these approaches make it possible to identify and address the real issues and needs of women dealing with violence.

7. In the last decade, feminist research has nourished the violence against women movement in French-speaking Ontario and vice-versa. Addressing issues from the point of view of women, researchers have contributed to creating a context where many varied voices are heard and in which the multiple forms of oppression experienced by Francophone women, such as women from ethnocultural communities, are rendered visible. Researchers have also addressed the social inequalities that affect women, spoken of violence, advocated the independence of anti-violence services, developed support material for intervention, etc. Research on women from this community nevertheless remains in its infancy. It must continue and receive sufficient financial support.

This research is an essential resource for training and provides important information to organizations and workers in French-language anti-violence services.

8. The strength and quality of French-language anti-violence services depend on the individuals who provide them. Two points stand out: there is high staff turnover and a degree of personal burnout. On one hand, salaries are low, which negatively

affects staff retention. On the other, workers deal with very difficult issues which can lead to vicarious traumatization and, in the long term, burnout.

New blood is obviously necessary, but FLAVS must be able to offer salaries and benefits commensurate with those offered by similar organizations and institutions. It is up to the Government of Ontario to establish, in the context of a long-term plan, a more equitable salary scale for FLS workers in sexual assault centres and shelters.

9. The province-wide creation of flexible and accessible college and university level programs is essential in order to train a sufficient number of multi-skilled and competent workers. Such programs would also allow current staff to upgrade their skills.
10. There are many organizations or related services meeting the needs of Francophone women in Ontario dealing with violence (social and health services, hospitals, the justice system, police, social assistance, and many others). In principle, most of these organizations should offer services in both languages. In practice, the situation is completely different: these organizations routinely tell women dealing with violence who use their services that they cannot serve them in French.

In all of these situations, it is the workers in French-language anti-violence services who support women who access these other services and who are called upon to provide translation or interpretation. They do this over and above their regular workloads. The Government of Ontario, its ministries, and organizations should have the necessary resources to meet the needs of Francophone women and thus respect the requirements of the *French Language Services Act*.

11. Sexual assault centres, shelters, institutions offering French-language anti-violence services, and many other organizations, among them the Mouvement ontarien des femmes immigrantes francophones, the Fédération de la jeunesse franco-ontarienne, OPALE , the Centre ontarien de prévention des agressions, and Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes have for a decade raised awareness of the issues of sexual assault and domestic violence. All of these organizations work to eliminate them and all have known successes.

We have observed that despite the range of organizations fighting violence, there is a need to increase collaboration and coordination among all of these Francophone organizations, while respecting their autonomy. Drafting a development plan for French-language anti-violence services could be a perfect opportunity to bring them together.

It is also important that there be real collaboration between the Government of Ontario and the federal government to increase the resources available for the future development of FLAVS in Ontario.

# Conclusion

Our purpose in drafting *Doing so much with so little... Overview and profile of French-language violence against women services, 1994-2004*, was to foster reflection by presenting a report on the current situation and how it evolved in the last decade, and by raising questions which could guide the future development of French-language services in domestic violence, sexual assault, and other forms of violence against women in Ontario.

In this overview of the development of French-language anti-violence services, we have followed its often circuitous path since the 1994 forum on sexual assault, “Sensibiliser, décider, agir”. There have been gains, and more Francophone women now have access to anti-violence services in French than did ten years ago. Violence is less taboo a subject than it was, and victims are better aware of services in French and use them in greater numbers.

As the title of this report, *Doing so much with so little...*, suggests and as the provincial and regional portraits reveal, sexual assault centres, shelters, and some institutions offering French-language anti-violence services do miracles with the grants they receive. The Francophone violence against women movement can be proud of its successes. Solidarity and persistence on the part of all organizations which consistently lobbied government decision-makers brought them together and led to improvements in some existing programs and a modest expansion of FLS in some regions where services in French are poor or non-existent. We have a long way to go, however, before we can claim that there is a complete network of French-language anti-violence services in French run **by** and **for** Francophone women.

In closing, we extend our best wishes for a productive, successful Forum 2004. May the determination and energy you have invested to date continue to drive the development of French-language violence against women services.



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