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## **Women's groups condemn incarceration of Noellee Mowatt**

YWCA Toronto and METRAC publicly denounce the detainment of abuse victim of Noellee Mowatt. At a time when only 36% of women who are victims of spousal violence and less than 10% of victims of sexual assault are actually reporting these crimes to the police,\* this extraordinary move by the prosecution throws good community cooperation on this issue back decades.

"Women need to be assured their abuser cannot track them down. Until they have real alternatives to his violence such as safe affordable housing, a decent wage, or adequate social assistance rates to mention a few, their real choices are severely limited", says Heather McGregor, CEO YWCA Toronto.

"This week we see the stark contrast of a man in Merrit, BC with a history of violence released from jail, and a woman in Toronto escaping violence placed into custody", says Wendy Komiotis, Executive Director, METRAC. "We are concerned about the message that this sends to other women who are currently awaiting the trials of their abusers and those experiencing violence who have yet to leave their situation. Children living in violent homes may fear that their mother too will be jailed."

It is not acceptable to criminalize victims of violence in this way. Not only does it serve to re-victimize them, and decrease their safety but it represents a deep gap in the justice system's understanding of the dynamics of violence against women and children. In this case, the criminal justice system has wound up showing its worst face –the one that can be part of the problem and not the solution.

We encourage policy makers and members of the criminal justice system to hear the public outcry over the jailing of Ms. Mowatt, a victim of crime. We ask them to work with us to address the real gaps in the response to violence against women.

YWCA Toronto is a turning point for women and girls, providing housing and support, employment and skills development and girls and family programs, and helps over 24,500 women in our community every year.

The Metropolitan Action Committee on Violence Against Women and Children (METRAC) is a not-for-profit, community-based organization that works to ensure women, youth, and children live free from all forms of violence and the threat or fear of violence. METRAC's programs seek to prevent and end all individual, institutional, and systemic forms of violence.

\* Statistics Canada 2006

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A TURNING POINT  
FOR WOMEN

