

**Minister
Responsible for
Women's Issues**

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November 4, 2002

Heather McGregor
Executive Director
YWCA of Greater Toronto
80 Woodlawn Avenue East
Bongard House
Toronto ON M4T 1C1

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Heather".

Dear Ms. McGregor:

Thank you for your letter to myself and my colleague, the honourable David Young, Attorney General, regarding our recent announcement of new funding for domestic violence initiatives in Ontario.

I am pleased the YWCA is supportive of the government's efforts to end violence against women, and I appreciate your willingness to work with us to implement these initiatives.

As you noted, the government is reviewing the provincial Children's Law Reform Act to ensure that the impact of domestic violence is taken into account in custody and access decisions. As well, we are encouraging other jurisdictions to examine this issue with respect to their legislation.

I recently had the opportunity to discuss the concerns of women's groups regarding proposed federal changes to custody and access related legislation with my federal/provincial/territorial ministerial colleagues at our annual fall meeting. Ontario's Ministry of the Attorney General has communicated to the federal government that we have serious concerns about this issue.

I expect that Mr. Young will respond directly to your concerns regarding the domestic violence courts. However, I would like to note that the government is currently expanding the Domestic Violence Courts program to cover every court jurisdiction in Ontario.

In your letter you raised concerns about the transfer and priority criteria for subsidized housing.

As you know, since 1995, victims of domestic violence have been assigned top priority for subsidized housing vacancies. Tenants who request a transfer because of an abuse situation are given top priority on the waiting list for internal transfers as well as top priority to all other housing in the service area by having their names placed on the centralized waiting list.

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The Special Priority Policy does require women who are no longer living with the abuser to submit their application within three months from the date they ceased to live together. However the regulations further allow municipal service managers the discretion to accept application received after this date.

Community proponents will be able to use funding established under the Affordable Housing Program to create new units of affordable housing. The initiative will create an estimated 10,000 additional units over five years, in partnership with municipalities, private developers and the non-profit sector. Permanent and "second stage" housing units for victims of domestic violence will be eligible for funding under this program.

Please be assured that we do not intend to allocate all of the funding announced for public education to advertising agencies. The money allocated for the public education prevention campaign is meant to engage all Ontarians in helping to prevent domestic violence against women and children.

As we indicated in our announcement of this initiative, the campaign will focus on children and youth to help them build the skills they need to cope with and break the cycle of violence, as well as on the special needs of Ontario's francophone and diverse communities. Schools, childcare centres and community agencies will have an important role to play in that process. Campaigns will be developed in collaboration with community organizations and experts from across Ontario.

The support and participation of the YWCA in this campaign would be much appreciated. Staff of the Ontario Women's Directorate will be in contact with you as part of our consultation process to develop campaign priorities.

As you know, funding has also been allocated to regional and provincial conferences on domestic violence, bringing together community leaders, experts and service providers. We hope that some of these conferences will also help to inform our public education initiatives.

Thank you for bringing your concerns to my attention. I hope that we can count on your continued support and participation as we forward on the implementation of these new initiatives.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dianne Cunningham". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Dianne Cunningham
Minister