

**FEDERAL STRATEGY ON GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE  
BRIEFING NOTES FOR STATUS OF WOMEN CANADA AND THE DEPARTMENT  
OF JUSTICE CANADA**

**ISSUE: Mandate and Support Provincial/Territorial Domestic Violence Death Review Committees and a National Death Review Initiative**

A Domestic Violence Death Review Committee is needed in every province and territory, and should be linked to a national Domestic Violence Death Review Initiative.

**KEY POINTS**

- Domestic violence homicides account for 1 in 5 homicides in Canada, and are the most preventable of all homicides.
- In many such cases, coroners or other investigators are able to point to what has gone wrong in the multiple systems tasked with responding to domestic violence. It is critical that we learn from the increasingly long list of tragic deaths related to domestic violence in Canada, not through laying blame, but through constructive analysis that can result in system-wide changes that could save lives. Any approach must take demographic factors into account, including particular factors affecting marginalized groups, and must document trends.
- Models of Domestic Violence Death Review Committees (DVDRCs) exist in Ontario, Alberta, Manitoba, and New Brunswick. Reviews of domestic homicides have begun to take place in Saskatchewan. In BC, a Domestic Violence Death Review Panel was convened in 2010 and 2016, but no ongoing committee exists.
- In BC, the Ending Violence Association of BC (EVA BC) has been tracking domestic homicides and gathering information in the public domain for three years to determine trends and gaps.
- The Ontario Domestic Violence Death Review Committee provides a model for DVDRCs across the country. It is a multi-disciplinary expert advisory committee that assists the Chief Coroner to investigate and review deaths that occur as result of domestic violence, in order to identify systemic issues and shortcomings and make recommendations to help prevent future deaths. It maintains a comprehensive database on domestic homicide offenders, victims and their circumstances; helps to identify trends, risk factors and patterns in order to recommend strategies for intervention and prevention; reports annually to increase public education; and conducts appropriate research.

## **SUGGESTED ACTIONS**

The Federal Government should:

- Mandate and support the establishment of a Domestic Violence Death Review Committee in every province and territory, based on one of the models already in use in Canada. Any model utilized must take into account factors affecting marginalized groups, including cultural and immigration factors, and document demographic trends. Domestic Violence Death Review Committees in every province and territory must include experts from community-based anti-violence organizations.
- Establish a national Domestic Violence Death Review Initiative based on findings from provincial/territorial Domestic Violence Death Review Committees. Such a national initiative could be coordinated, for example, by the Canadian Domestic Homicide Prevention Initiative (CDHPI), co-led by Drs. Peter Jaffe (Western University) and Myrna Dawson (University of Guelph), and involving a multi-disciplinary team of researchers, policy makers, advocates, and Coroners from across the country. Such a national initiative would assist in the development and implementation of recommendations that would prevent domestic homicides across Canada.
- Recommendations from provincial/territorial Domestic Violence Death Review Committees should be binding, and Coroners' services should be granted greater authority with respect to findings from their inquests related to domestic homicides and missing and murdered women.

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