



**YWCA**  
TORONTO

A TURNING POINT  
FOR WOMEN



**Media Advisory**  
**For Immediate Release**  
**October 4, 2007**

### **Toronto's Largest Women's Organization Calls on Provincial Candidates to Address Violence Against Women in their Platforms and Funding**

YWCA Toronto, the city's largest multi-service organization by, for and about women and girls is stunned by the 64<sup>th</sup> and 65<sup>th</sup> murders of the year, two women both under the age of 30, but is not surprised that not one political candidate has addressed how his party will work to end violence against women in the province. One victim, Jocelyn Dulnuan, a 27-year-old woman living as domestic worker in a tony Mississauga neighbourhood, the other 25-year-old Aysuen Sesen, was seven months pregnant when she was allegedly stabbed to death by her common law husband.

The details of these crimes speak to the overwhelming swell of systemic violence against women in our city, and a missed opportunity for Ontario's provincial candidates to address the issue of violence against women in their campaigns. In fact, party leaders have been conspicuously silent on issues of violence against women, focusing instead on publicly decrying gangs, guns and the importance of community crime prevention, rather than addressing the root causes of woman abuse – including inadequate affordable housing, income inequality, and lack of access to affordable child care.

“At YWCA Toronto we see causes of violence against women as they affect each of the services we provide,” says YWCA Toronto Chief Executive Officer Heather McGregor. “We see the connections between abuse and the factors that prevent women from leaving abusive partners including insufficient post-shelter funding; inadequate access to safe, affordable and permanent housing; and the overwhelming lack of affordable, high-quality childcare. With a week left before Ontarians head to the polls, what are the parties' positions on the development of a more effective domestic violence action plan?”

Some facts to consider from YWCA Canada ([www.ywacacanada.ca](http://www.ywacacanada.ca)):

- In Ontario, between 1995 and 2005, 231 women were murdered by their partners or former partners, many of whom then killed themselves. From January to November 2006, 24 women and 12 children in Ontario were murdered in acts of violence against women. Unfortunately, these numbers – in Ontario and across Canada, are not decreasing;
- Canada's more than 550 shelters for battered women remain full; many with waiting lists;
- According to a recently released study by Statistics Canada, approximately one in ten abused women use a shelter;
- The same report found that approximately 100,000 women and children used battered women's shelters in the 12 month period beginning April 12, 2005;
- Ontario's Domestic Violence Death Review Committee, which reports to the Office of

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the Chief Coroner, noted in its 2004 report that 100% of the victims in the cases it reviewed were women and 91% of the perpetrators were men, concluding that domestic violence is not gender neutral. The most common risk factor was actual or pending separation, followed closely by a prior history of violence, which was present in 8 of the 11 cases reviewed by the committee in its first year.

The brutal murders of Jocelyn Dulnuan and Aysuen Sesen serve to remind all Ontarians that the root causes of violence against women deserve the same media and political attention given to other aspects of the provincial election campaign. YWCA Toronto urges provincial candidates to hear this message and begin to address in their platforms the conditions that trap women and children in violent homes. Adequate child care, employment supports, anti-discrimination laws, affordable and permanent housing, and an end to the baby bonus clawback are just some of the issues that parties should be focusing on in the remaining campaign period.

YWCA Toronto is a turning point in the lives of more than 26,000 across the Greater Toronto Area. We help women achieve equality, economic independence and lives free from violence through our four program areas: housing and support, employment and skills development, girls' and family programs, and advocacy. We welcome women of all faiths, sexual orientations, races, cultural affiliations and creeds.

Between October 15-20<sup>th</sup> YWCA Toronto will host its 11<sup>th</sup> annual **Week Without Violence**, a weeklong series of free events throughout the GTA aimed at eradicating violence and envisioning peaceful communities including: **girlJAM5**, an all-ages festival of music aimed at raising awareness about violence in young women's lives; **Bully2U**, a speaker, author and performance series for 400 high school students on violence and bullying in popular culture; **BU: The Power of Being a Girl**, an all-day conference for 200 girls and young women ages 14-22 on anti-violence, self empowerment and self care at the North York Civic Centre; and a host of other internal events for women in YWCA Toronto shelters and after shelter programs. For more information visit [www.weekwithoutviolence.com](http://www.weekwithoutviolence.com)

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