



We're stronger together

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Letter to the Editor re: Boys and men must do the right thing — it will save female lives

The Toronto Star, Opinion • Commentary, August 15, 2017

In his Opinion Commentary, Glen Canning addresses the results of a recent survey from the Canadian Women's Foundation that states "93% of Canadians say they want men to take a more active role in ending violence against women."

But Mr. Canning questions who, if anyone, is working with men or talking to boys about self- and peer-monitoring to protect women and girls from all forms of violence.

It is important to note that Family Service agencies across Ontario are actively working with boys and men to end violence against women (VAW) — not only through VAW programs, but with several programs for men — in tandem with other provincial agencies.

Encouragingly, men are completing court mandated treatment programs and subsequently enrolling in Anger Management groups or independently seeking ongoing personal counselling. In fact, the number of men seeking personal counselling is increasing.

Almost 50 per cent of clients seeking Quick Access Mental Health Walk-in Counselling services at Family Service agencies are men. Of those, 30 per cent are between the ages of 18-35 years, and a portion of these men identify that they are abusive in their relationships. These men work with graduate level psychotherapists to co-develop a recovery-oriented, evidence- and strength-based plan that they leave with the very same day.

The education of boys is a relatively untapped, preventative growth area that affords the greatest potential return in changing how they view their responsibility in preventing the perpetration of — or participation in — unsafe situations leading to VAW. Indeed, educating boys and changing their patterns of behaviour is paramount in reducing the incidents of VAW in future generations.

With 120 highly accessible storefronts across Ontario and a long history of serving men, Family Service agencies are an integral part of a network that is doing what it can to close the gap in services for men, helping reduce VAW and understanding that boys and men can also be victims of violence, which can perpetuate the cycle.

We applaud Mr. Canning's call to Canadians to do the right thing, and Family Service agencies want Ontarians to know that there is help — and hope — if we all work together to end violence against women.

Sincerely,

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