

violence is a problem for their daughters, their wives, their girlfriends, their mothers, their sisters, and their neighbours. It is not somebody else's problem. A public education campaign against woman-abuse, analogous to that employed in the national initiative against drunk driving, was advocated. Sheila McIntyre, of the Women's Legal Education and Action Fund, described her thinking on the national program against drunk driving as follows:

The government used the coercive power of the criminal law and the preventive power of RIDE programs, and did a massive campaign that has fundamentally changed attitudes in the course of the last seven years. It is no longer socially acceptable to drink and drive. (4:38)

A campaign of this nature is regarded as having a number of advantages. It appeals to and involves many different sectors of society and thus broadens consciousness of the issue. It encourages the development of peer pressure and thereby renders the behaviour in question socially unacceptable. Ultimately, it has a preventive impact on behaviour.

There was a consensus among witnesses that campaigns to raise public awareness of violence are absolutely necessary. However, heightened awareness results in disclosures and there are too few community resources to accommodate all the new cases. An influx of referrals to shelters for battered women, to sexual assault centres, to programs for men who batter, to mental health centres for children and adults, and to substance abuse treatment facilities generally follow an awareness campaign. While campaigns give the impression that help is available, they rarely provide increased funding to these agencies to cope with the increased numbers who seek assistance. When women leave a violent relationship and seek shelter, they often find there is no room to accommodate them and their children. And, when they seek counselling and treatment for the sexual abuse they suffered as children, and find there is a waiting list of six months to a year, they are re-victimized.

Diane Lemieux, spoke of the outcome of a public education initiative in the province of Quebec:

Last year in Quebec there was a campaign on wife battering, and as a result, the social affairs network was swamped with calls from women. Rumour has it that the campaign was ended because the existing structures could no longer respond to the demand. (13:16)

The demand for services nearly tripled as a result of an awareness campaign in Winnipeg. Marlene Bertrand, Director of Osborne House in Winnipeg, told the Committee: