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A Primer on the Tort of Intimate Partner Violence

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On May 15, 2026, the Supreme Court of Canada ("SCC") released its landmark decision in *Ahluwalia v Ahluwalia*, 2026 SCC 16 (CanLII), which created the new tort of intimate partner violence ("IPV"). It is very clear now that practitioners must screen for power imbalances and IPV in every case. Coercive control is an extremely serious, gendered wrong linked to risk of death and harm to children. Coercive control is also very common – and signs and symptoms of coercive control are not always immediately disclosed or apparent at the first or second intake without a screening tool.

Historically, damages awards in the family law context have been too low; in cases of IPV, the baseline for compensation should be higher than damages awards under existing torts. The SCC in *Ahluwalia* clearly intended to facilitate access to family law justice for survivors, but putting this goal into practice is both a challenge and a significant opportunity for advocates.

This Primer offers guidance to practitioners with the hope that they feel better equipped to advise clients about IPV. It also urges practitioners to commit to working towards the legal changes required to realize the fine tradition of advocates working towards social justice by championing the dignity, autonomy, and equality of vulnerable persons.

Elements of the Tort of IPV 2
The Role of Lawyers in IPV Cases 6
Evidence & Challenges of Proof 10
The Limitation Period 14
Quantifying Damages 14
Conclusion 18
Appendix #1: IPV Training Opportunities 20
Appendix #2: IPV Screening Tools 21
Appendix #3: Resources for Survivors and Their Service Providers 23
Appendix #4: Resources for Persons Who Have Perpetrated IPV and/or Abuse 25
Appendix #5: Resources for Parents to Give to Children 26

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Elements of the Tort of IPV

1. The abusive conduct arose in an intimate partnership or its aftermath.

A defining feature of IPV is the intimate nature of the relationship. Abuse in this context violates the trust between partners and undermines the dignity, autonomy, and equality inherent in intimate relationships (*Ahluwalia v Ahluwalia*, 2026 SCC 16 (CanLII), at para 185). A non-exhaustive list of relevant aspects of an intimate partnership include (*Ahluwalia v Ahluwalia*, 2026 SCC 16 (CanLII), at para 102):

- Close personal connection;
- Sustained relationship;
- Mutual care, commitment, or interdependence;
- Emotional, financial, domestic, or physical intimacy;
- Independence from formal legal status (e.g., marriage or cohabitation); and,
- It may not be restricted to sexual and physical intimacy but may include psychological intimacy (*Mitchell v Mitchell*, 2026 ONSC 4259, at para 387).

The Court in *Ahluwalia* recognizes that children may, in some circumstances, have their own potential tort claims against parents, but limited its analysis to intimate partnerships (at para 173).

💡 **Practice Tip:** The Court recognized that coercive control does not necessarily end at date of separation and can continue in the aftermath of an intimate relationship. IPV includes post-separation abusive conduct such as litigation abuse.

2. The defendant intentionally engaged in that conduct.

The victim needs to prove that the perpetrator *intended* to engage in abusive and controlling conduct. However, they do not need to prove "nefarious intent", that the defendant subjectively intended to exercise coercive control over them through the abuse or intended to cause specific harm (*Ahluwalia v Ahluwalia*, 2026 SCC 16 (CanLII), at para 186).

Ahluwalia's articulation of the intention requirement has been referenced outside the IPV context. In *JC v Jugenburg*, 2026 ONSC 3061, class members were awarded aggregate damages arising from the tort of intrusion upon seclusion totaling $21,500,000 after a plastic surgeon made blanket use of surveillance cameras for non-health purposes. The Court cited *Ahluwalia* to illustrate that

intentional torts do not require proof that the defendant intended a particular harm or knew the conduct was legally wrongful. What matters is that the defendant intentionally engaged in the impugned conduct (at paras 200-201). The defendant must have turned their mind to the wrongfulness of the conduct or been reckless as to the consequences.

3. The conduct, on an objective measure, constitutes coercive control.

Intimate partner violence relates to systemic power imbalances of gender, race, disability, sexual orientation, and Indigeneity. Women are disproportionately affected by intimate partner violence, most often perpetrated by male partners (*Ahluwalia v Ahluwalia*, 2026 SCC 16 (CanLII), at paras 122-124).

Intimate partner violence is not confined to assault or battery but is focused on abusive conduct that coerces and controls the other and deprives them of their autonomy (*Ahluwalia v Ahluwalia*, 2026 SCC 16 (CanLII), at para 120). The key feature of coercive control is the breakdown of the plaintiff's will, manifested through a diminished ability to make important decisions about their own life or to meaningfully participate in decisions affecting the intimate partnership (*Ahluwalia v Ahluwalia*, 2026 SCC 16 (CanLII), at para 198). Coercive control directly interferes with the plaintiff's dignity, autonomy, and equality. While coercive control will often consist of a pattern of conduct, it may also arise from a single act that objectively has the effect of subordinating one partner to the other's control (*Ahluwalia v Ahluwalia*, 2026 SCC 16 (CanLII), at para 120).

A single act of abuse may be sufficient to satisfy the elements of the tort of IPV if that act has "the effect of 'teaching' the vulnerable intimate partner that if she falls out of line again, worse will happen" (*Mitchell v Mitchell*, 2026 ONSC 4259 at paras 380 & 450). Individual incidents may also be assessed cumulatively to determine whether they objectively form a pattern of coercive control (*Ahluwalia v Ahluwalia*, 2026 SCC 16 (CanLII), at para 207). Not all misconduct arising in an intimate relationship (i.e. dishonesty, infidelity, emotional neglect, and disagreements) will constitute coercive control (*Ahluwalia v Ahluwalia*, 2026 SCC 16 (CanLII), at para 121).

Some (non-exhaustive) indicators of coercive control include (*Ahluwalia v Ahluwalia*, 2026 SCC 16 (CanLII), at para 187; *Mitchell v Mitchell*, 2026 ONSC 4259, at para 386; & *Smith v Seyoum*, 2026 ONSC 3397 (CanLII), at paras 114-175; & Bill C-16, *Protecting Victims Act*, 1st Sess, 45th Parl, 2025-2026 (assented to June 18, 2026)):

- Physical, sexual, emotional, psychological, or verbal abuse;
- Controlling, monitoring, stalking, or surveillance behaviours;
- Intimidation, threats, or fear-based tactics;
- Gaslighting behaviour;

- Harassment, humiliation and denigration;
- Financial abuse or economic control;
- Social isolation from family, friends, or supports;
- Restrictions on work, education, access to health care, or activities;
- Litigation abuse or strategic misuse of legal processes;
- Threats involving children, self-harm, or suicide;
- False allegations or unfounded claims used to manipulate or exert control (i.e., to CAS or police);
- Denying access to a family residence and a child; and
- Communicating in a manner which is rude, belittling, threatening, critical, and controlling.

The inquiry is objective: would a reasonable person, informed of the relevant context, perceive the defendant's conduct as amounting to an assertion of control over the plaintiff? (*Ahluwalia v Ahluwalia*, 2026 SCC 16 (CanLII), at para 189). Consistent with the approach in *R v Tran*, 2010 SCC 58 (CanLII), at para 34, citing *R v Hill,* 1986 CanLII 58 (SCC), [1986] 1 SCR 313, the reasonable person standard must be informed by contemporary social norms and fundamental values, including the commitment to substantive equality in the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

Early Post-*Ahluwalia* Jurisprudence: Changing Law and Processes

The early jurisprudence following *Ahluwalia* demonstrates that its impact extends beyond the recognition of the IPV tort itself. Courts across Canada have already begun applying its principles in a range of contexts.

In *Amerakoon v Widyalankara*, 2026 ONSC 4428, Justice Finlayson relied on *Ahluwalia* in recognizing an exception to the recognition of a foreign divorce where a party was coerced by intimate partner violence into participating in, or refraining from contesting, the foreign proceeding. Lawyers have long sought change in this area through litigation (see *Mehralian v. Dunmore*, 2025 ONSC 649 (CanLII), at paras 1-3, 55-69, and 71-101), and by law reform work (see Ontario Bar Association, "Proposed Amendment to the Definition of Spouse in the *Family Law Act*" (2026)). Perhaps this decision will prompt a long-awaited statutory amendment.

In *Delgado v Bonas*, 2026 ONSC 3686, the Court considered *Ahluwalia* in relation to a proposed new tort arising from the deliberate underpayment of child support. Justice Kalajdzic found "some attraction" to the argument that the law should financially penalize parents who do not disclose their financial information, in part to "give teeth to the court's recognition of how the

underpayment of child support leads to hardship and contributes to the feminization of poverty" but could not do so on the record before it (at para 85). A retroactive child support order, prejudgment interest, and a higher scale of costs were proposed as remedies for the wrongful conduct.

In *Petras v Petras*, 2026 ABCJ 113, the Court relied on *Ahluwalia* to define coercive control and to underscore that cumulative patterns of psychological and emotional abuse may justify restrictions on parenting and decision-making. The Court in that case describes coercive control as including: making inadequate support payments so as to control, intentionally failing to make financial disclosure so as to cause psychological harm, cross-examining the mother about changing her surname, repeatedly disregarding the views of the children about their preferred plan of care, and making unfair allegations about the mother's lack of care for the children by going away for the weekend (at paras 44, 48-58). Stereotypical gendered views of the grandfather are suggested as a potential source of the father's coercive and controlling behaviour toward the mother and the children.

JMD v ADD, 2026 BCSC 1597 demonstrates the utility of *Ahluwalia* in the context of a protection order. The Court found that post-separation conduct (including surveillance-related behaviour, moving directly across the street from the claimant, and connecting with her estranged family) could objectively amount to coercive control. The Court rejected the father's claim that his choices were intended to promote positive co-parenting and the child's best interests. The Court recognized that IPV encompasses subtle and less visible methods of control and may continue after separation (at paras 50-53, 85-90).

In *EP v MKP,* 2026 MBKB 117, the Manitoba Court of King's Bench relied on *Ahluwalia* in considering the relationship between protection-order and parenting proceedings. The Court cautioned that separating these proceedings may produce incomplete or inconsistent assessments of family violence, particularly where the evidentiary record fails to capture prolonged patterns of less visible abuse. It read *Ahluwalia* as favouring a comprehensive assessment of family violence alongside children's best interests (at paras 7-9, 32).

Ahluwalia is also influencing the criminal law response to IPV. In *R v DM*, 2026 NLPC 1326A00116, the Newfoundland and Labrador Provincial Court relied extensively on *Ahluwalia* in sentencing an offender for offences including criminal harassment and threats against a former intimate partner, emphasizing the SCC's characterization of IPV as a serious social ill causing distinctive and far-reaching harm (at paras 1-2). Justice Gorman also cites the Court of Appeal for Ontario to confirm that former partners should be able to "live safely and independently after separation" (*R v Greer*, 2026 ONCA 222 at para 27).

The Court also acknowledged the importance of its hearing from those who have been impacted by abuse, citing *R v Friesen*, 2020 SCC 9 at para 85, to acknowledge that victim impact statements "will usually provide the 'best evidence' of the harm that the victim has suffered." The Court reproduced the statement from an adult child commenting, "Abused children have been taught that

love can co-exist with abuse. This shapes any adult perceptions of love. As we cling to the notion that those that hurt us as children loved us, we rationalize being hurt by other adults by insisting that they love us. I see now that this was not love. Love does not leave you broken beyond repair."

In *R v Nash*, 2026 ABCJ 85, the Alberta Court of Justice cited *Ahluwalia* as part of the evolving legal response to domestic violence and the need for meaningful accountability and denunciation (at para 47).

💡 **Practice Tip:** The post-*Ahluwalia* jurisprudence demonstrates that our understanding of IPV and coercive control has wide implications across a range of substantive and procedural contexts. Lawyers should screen for power imbalances not only when considering a claim for tort damages, but in considering the client's well-being, what is in children's best interests, the appropriate forum for dispute resolution, and the processes required to achieve the best possible long-term resolution for the client. Counsel must carefully consider their own litigation conduct in developing the theory of the case, drafting correspondence, taking instructions and giving advice, selecting witnesses and preparing court materials. For example, judges will be attuned to whether the "tone and language used in [] affidavit evidence is demonstrative of precisely the type of disparaging conduct the claimant alleges" (*JMD v ADD*, 2026 BCSC 1597 at para 61).

The Role of Lawyers in IPV Cases

IPV Training & Screening

Family violence training is essential for competent legal practice. It equips legal professionals with the skills necessary to understand and respond to intimate partner violence and coercive control using trauma-informed approaches (see #1 for a list of several Family Violence Training opportunities for legal professionals).

Family violence screening is necessary from the start of a file and ongoing throughout the life of a file. For further discussion, see the works of Deanne Sowter, Intimate Partner Violence and Ethical Lawyering: Not Just Special Rules for Family Law (2024) 102:1 Can Bar Rev 130, 2024 CanLIIDocs 886; "Lawyers' Incivility in Family Law and the Question of Systems Abuse," (2025) 47:2 Man L J 77; & "The Fabrication Myth: Intimate Partner Violence and Lawyers' Advocacy in Family Law", (2026) TMU L Rev (forthcoming; available on SSRN).

See also Appendix #2 for several IPV Screening Tools to help legal professionals identify IPV, coercive control, safety concerns, and risk, and determine appropriate next steps for clients.

💡 **Practice Tip:** It is expected that survivors of abuse may not be able to recount the history of their abuse promptly, and in a linear fashion, even with their own counsel. Litigating IPV is

difficult work for survivors and their counsel. To better understand trauma-informed lawyering, see Justice Medhekar's Report, "Harmonizing Ethics, Empathy, and Professionalism: A New Paradigm in Trauma-Informed Family Lawyering," Ontario Bar Association, 2025 CanLIIDocs 2522. Work in this area is ongoing by the author, as the 2026-2027 OBA Foundation Chief Justice of Ontario Fellow in Legal Ethics and Professionalism Studies.

Providing Referrals

Research indicates that survivors greatly appreciate when legal professionals provide them with referrals to services, programs, and websites. See, for example, the HELP toolkit and Appendix #3 for Resources for Survivors. Appendix #4 includes Resources for Parents Who Have Perpetrated IPV and/or Abuse. Appendix #5 has a collection of child-focused resources that parents can share with children to help them understand and cope with their involvement with family law matters.

Access to legal remedies for survivors of IPV must also be considered in light of broader systemic barriers. In *Building Inclusive and Accessible Family Justice: Practical Approaches to Innovate Family Law Systems in BC's Rural and Remote Communities* (Rise Women's Legal Centre, 2024), researchers identified significant obstacles to accessing family justice, including shortages of legal representation, financial insecurity, transportation difficulties and limited access to technology, particularly in rural and remote communities (at pp 6, 16–18). The report emphasizes the importance of collaboration between family lawyers and community support workers to address survivors' intersecting legal and non-legal needs, including housing, childcare, financial security and safety (at pp 7, 27–34). These findings reinforce the importance of trauma-informed, interdisciplinary legal practice when advising survivors about their legal options, including potential IPV tort claims.

Pursuing the Tort Claim in Family Proceedings

Family courts can consider tort claims within family law proceedings (*Ahluwalia v Ahluwalia*, 2026 SCC 16 (CanLII), at para 44). From an access to justice standpoint, it is generally unrealistic to expect survivors to pursue parallel family and civil proceedings to obtain financial relief (*Ahluwalia v Ahluwalia*, 2022 ONSC 1303 (CanLII), at para 47 & *Ahluwalia v Ahluwalia,* 2026 SCC 16 (CanLII), at para 35). But see, the approach adopted in Alberta as a result of a specific practice direction (at Court of King's Bench of Alberta, NPP 2026-03: Claims for Intimate Partner Violence (2026)) that appears to be inconsistent with the SCC's directive: *Htoo v Say*, 2026 ABKB 456. Note that Alberta has only just recognized the tort of intrusion upon seclusion in the context of an employee being surveilled while using the bathroom *BD v Germain*, 2026 ABKB 590.

It is important for lawyers to understand how to properly screen for IPV, plead, and advance claims on behalf of survivors. Working collaboratively with colleagues in other practice areas is invaluable. For family lawyers, reaching out to old friends with different expertise - and making new ones in other fields - will help ensure that survivors have access to the full range of remedies, without the added cost, delay, and burden of needing to commence a separate civil proceeding, except as appropriate.

Pleading the Tort of IPV

The SCC was clear that it is not necessary to label the "tort of IPV" in pleadings (*Ahluwalia v Ahluwalia*, 2026 SCC 16 (CanLII), at para 17). Rather, it is sufficient to plead the material facts showing a pattern of abuse and coercive control. The court is then responsible for applying the appropriate legal label and framework to the facts. Not requiring litigants to plead the specific name of the tort can improve access to justice, particularly for self-represented litigants, who may not be aware of the legal label for their experiences. In *Mitchell*, Justice Vella concluded that since the respondent was not caught by surprise, and all elements and facts had been addressed, she would formally amend the Application *nunc pro tunc* to add the tort of IPV out of an abundance of caution (*Mitchell v Mitchell*, 2026 ONSC 4259, at paras 8-10).

Similarly, in *Hagopian v Kechichian*, 2026 ONSC 4405, Justice Kraft permitted the applicant, shortly before a 14-day trial, to amend her pleadings to add claims for damages for IPV, assault, and battery. The applicant had consistently advanced the underlying facts throughout the litigation, including allegations of physical violence, intimidation, harassment, and financial control. The respondent had been questioned about family violence and therefore could not reasonably characterize the proposed tort claims as "trial by ambush" (at para 28). Justice Kraft held that, because the underlying material facts of IPV, assault and battery had been consistently pleaded, the amendments caused no surprise or actual prejudice (at paras 29-30). Her Honour refused proposed amendments to claim abuse of process and income loss, on the basis that these would cause prejudice that could not be remedied by costs or an adjournment (*Hagopian* at para 32).

In *Fang v Lu,* 2026 ONSC 3617, the applicant had not specifically pleaded a claim for IPV damages. Nevertheless, the Court exercised its discretion to consider the claim because the application sought compensation for the respondent's abusive behaviour, alleged that he had been abusive throughout the relationship and that she suffered as a result, and the respondent was aware of the tort claims and had an opportunity to cross-examine and lead evidence on the issue. Justice Tobin emphasized that family law courts can take a flexible approach to pleadings provided that the opposing party knows the case they must meet (at paras 222-224).

There is no need to plead specific monetary amounts for damages in a family law case (*Mitchell v Mitchell*, 2026 ONSC 4259, at paras 230-232) so long as the responding party is not taken off

guard. Even if the damages have been particularized, it is typically unnecessary that the quantum of damages itself be particularized, with civil courts allowing plaintiffs to increase their claim for damages at trial (*Mitchell v Mitchell*, 2026 ONSC 4259 at para 234).

💡 **Practice Tip:** When pleading IPV, focus on pleading the material facts, rather than a bare insertion of the words "coercive control" or "tort of intimate partner violence" to avoid relying on the court's flexibility. At the same time as it may be necessary to recognize a pattern of conduct, the SCC acknowledged that coercive control may arise from a single act that objectively has the impact of subordination (*Ahluwalia v Ahluwalia*, 2026 SCC 16 (CanLII), at para 120). As Justice Kraft recognized in *Hagopian*, there should not be an undue evidentiary burden imposed on survivors. Identifying every historical incident of IPV, together with the date, location, witnesses and supporting evidence for each incident, would be unrealistic given that IPV frequently occurs behind closed doors without third-party witnesses or independent documentary evidence. (*Hagopian v Kechichian*, 2026 ONSC 4405 at para 26).

Pleading Existing Torts

Where appropriate, survivors may want to plead traditional torts alongside the tort of IPV (including assault, battery, or Intentional Infliction of Emotional Distress ("IIED")). For further discussion, an excellent resource is Professor Mary-Jo Maur's chapter in N. Bala, et al., *Understanding Family Violence in Family Court Proceedings*.

Traditional torts that may also be pleaded include:

Assault (see *Warman v Grosvenor,* 2008 CanLII 57728 (ON SC), at para 58).

- The intentional creation of the apprehension of imminent harmful or offensive contact, even if contact never actually occurs.

Battery (see *Norberg v Wynrib,* 1992 CanLII 65 (CanLII), 1992 CarswellBC 155 (WL), at para 26).

- A battery is the intentional infliction of unlawful force on another person.

Intentional Infliction of Emotional Distress (IIED) (see *Prinzo v Baycrest Centre for Geriatric Care*, 2002 CanLII 45005 (ON CA), at para 48 & *Mitchell v Mitchell*, 2026 ONSC 4259, at paras 421-435).

1) Flagrant or outrageous conduct;
2) That is calculated to produce harm; and
3) Which results in a visible and provable illness.

False Imprisonment (see *Mughal v Medd*, 2012 CarswellOnt 7064, at para 28, citing *Kovacs v Ontario Jockey Club* (1995), CanLII 7397 (ON CTGD), at para 45).

1) The plaintiff must have been totally deprived of liberty;
2) This deprivation must have been against the plaintiff's will; and
3) Must be caused by the defendant.

Intrusion Upon Seclusion (see *Jones v Tsige*, 2012 ONCA 32 (CanLII), at para 71; *BD v Germain*, 2026 ABKB 590 at paras 31-36).

1) The defendant's conduct must be intentional (including reckless);
2) The defendant must have invaded, without lawful justification, the plaintiff's private affairs or concerns; and
3) A reasonable person would regard the invasion as highly offensive, causing distress, humiliation or anguish.

Intimidation (see *Weisenburger v College of Naturopathic Physicians of British Columbia*, 2024 BCSC 1047 (CanLII), at para 97, citing *Skybridge Investments Ltd. v Metro Motors Ltd.*, 2006 BCCA 500 (CanLII), at paras 27-28 & *Sauve v Canada*, 2011 FC 1074 (CanLII), at para 44).

1) The defendant threatens unlawful acts in order to coerce the plaintiff into doing or not doing certain acts;
2) The defendant intends that the plaintiff will suffer injury as a result;
3) The plaintiff submits to the threat by doing or not doing certain acts they were entitled to do; and
4) As a result, the plaintiff suffers actual damage.

Some other possible torts?

1) False light claims
2) Public disclosure of private facts
3) Economic interference
4) Cyber Torts / Internet Harassment
5) Misappropriation of Personality / Identity Theft
6) Defamation
7) Extortion

8) Negligence
9) Conspiracy

Evidence & Challenges of Proof

The Burden of Proof

As with other intentional torts, the burden of proof for the tort of IPV lies with the plaintiff on the civil standard of a balance of probabilities (*Ahluwalia v Ahluwalia*, 2026 SCC 16 (CanLII), at para 205).

Adducing Evidence of Coercive Control

A plaintiff must provide specific evidence of abusive conduct, but the court is permitted to assess that conduct cumulatively, as a pattern of coercive control, rather than isolated incidents that may appear less serious on their own (*Ahluwalia v Ahluwalia*, 2026 SCC 16 (CanLII), at para 207). The focus of the tort is whether the defendant's conduct was intended to control or restrict the plaintiff, and liability does not depend on proof of consequential harms such as a diagnosable injury or economic loss (*Ahluwalia v Ahluwalia*, 2026 SCC 16 (CanLII), at para 209).

Coercive control often occurs in an isolated environment, and courts must avoid evidentiary requirements that fail to account for the nature of IPV. While expert evidence, including testimony from therapists or physicians, may be helpful, such evidence should not be required to prove the tort of IPV. It had already been established that, even in relation to IIED, "the requirement of 'visible and provable illness' no longer requires a formal medical or psychiatric diagnosed ailment or disorder, nor is expert evidence required" (*Mitchell v Mitchell*, 2026 ONSC 4259 at para 423, emphasis added).

Requiring expert evidence risks increasing costs and undermining access to justice, particularly for self-represented litigants who do not have financial resources. At trial, Ms. Ahluwalia did not adduce expert evidence nor call her physician or counsellor yet was ultimately successful in her claims (*Ahluwalia v Ahluwalia,* 2022 ONSC 2169 (CanLII), at para 14 [trial decision]). In *Mitchell*, the survivor called the evidence of her family doctor and naturopathic doctor as participant experts (*Mitchell v Mitchell,* 2026 ONSC 4259). Relevant evidence may include testimony from witnesses, journal entries, medical or mental health records, police reports, photographs, and written or recorded communications, but it should not be too onerous.

As discussed above, in *Hagopian*, Justice Kraft limited the evidentiary demands on the claimant. The applicant may rely primarily on her oral testimony to establish the pattern of IPV (*Hagopian*

v Kechichian, 2026 ONSC 4405 at para 26). Incident-by-incident corroboration is unrealistic and unnecessary in cases involving coercive control.

Justice Vella notes that, in relation to IPV, "public policy favours the admission of recordings, surreptitious or not (provided they are reliable and authenticated), of events of alleged family violence (*Mitchell v Mitchell*, 2026 ONSC 4259). Similarly, in *Fang v Lu,* 2026 ONSC 3617, the Court considered video recordings to "assist the court in assessing whether the behaviour alleged occurred and whether it amounted to family violence" (at para 234-235).

Coercive control must be assessed contextually. In *Avelar v Barros*, 2026 ONSC 4493, the legally trained wife was the primary financial provider throughout much of the marriage while the father took primary responsibility for the children's care. The mother wished to return to Brazil, in the face of one child's serious medical needs which had prompted the move to Canada in the first place. Mutual allegations, mistrust, ongoing litigation, and repeated involvement of police and CAS did not, without more, establish a pattern of coercive control. The father was alleged to have filmed sexual activity with the mother non-consensually, but the Court held that the unresolved criminal charges should not be treated as proof of the underlying allegations (at paras 33-41). While *Ahluwalia* recognizes the seriousness of intimate partner violence by verbal and emotional abuse, fraught communications about parenting time will not, without more, constitute coercive control.

The interim parenting decision of *ANR v BAC*, 2026 BCSC 1427, focuses on the need to consider the *impact* of the perpetrator's conduct on the victim rather than nature of the violence itself. The Court "cautioned against putting all allegations of family violence in one box". The victim's subjective experience is a critical consideration: the same conduct may have significantly different impacts on different victims (at para 56). The Court held that the parties' communications were "strained", but the Court did not find them to be "hostile or violent" (at para 74). The police officer father had suffered from complex PTSD following a workplace incident, with symptoms triggered by his own children. The Court expanded his parenting time, given his much-improved mental health. The Court was most concerned about the father throwing a stroller almost five years earlier. The Court concluded that the mother should remain the primary caregiver with sole decision-making responsibility but did not characterize the parties' mutual allegations of child withholding as coercive control.

Urgency, Coercive Control and Court Reform

Court processes need to reflect the epidemic of IPV, with the assistance of government funding. Justice Kamal urges that courts reconsider the traditional approach to urgency when there are credible allegations of coercive control. In *Abu Kibash v Gamal*, 2026 ONSC 2969, the Court

recognized that abuse and power dynamics may impair meaningful settlement negotiations and that court delay itself may be used to further exert control over a vulnerable party (at paras 16-28).

In *Gomez Duque v Sanchez Hurtado,* 2026 ONSC 3744, Justice Breithaupt Smith agreed that evidence of family violence may make pre-motion settlement negotiations inappropriate, but cautioned that institutional delay alone is insufficient: there must be some evidence connecting the alleged controlling party to the manipulation of delay (at paras 5-10).

Justice Mountford in *Titus v Newell,* 2026 ONSC 3932 writes that "systemic delays are indeed real" and cautions against "breaking the system," noting the need for more judges and the meaningful introduction of a triage system (at paras 11-22). His Honour suggests that non-judges might be necessary to determine the appropriate litigation pathway of a matter.

Avoiding Myths & Stereotypes

Coercive control must be assessed objectively based on the defendant's conduct, not based on stereotyped assumptions about "normal" victim behaviour. A victim's ability to make some independent decisions, including leaving or returning to the relationship, does not negate coercive control, nor does a victim's delay in bringing a claim (*Ahluwalia v Ahluwalia*, 2026 SCC 16 (CanLII), at paras 198 & 208).

Recent research further highlights the importance of avoiding assumptions about why survivors remain in or return to abusive relationships. In *"Should I Have Just Stayed?" Improving Family Law Remedies for Survivors During BC's Housing Crisis* (Rise Women's Legal Centre, 2025), researchers interviewed 48 survivors of violence and 41 key informants and found that housing insecurity, economic abuse and the costs and delays associated with family law proceedings can prevent survivors from leaving abusive relationships or compel them to consider returning. The report underscores that remaining in an abusive relationship may reflect significant financial and structural barriers rather than an absence of coercive control or fear (at pp 9–11).

Defendants cannot rely on bald denials or rationalizations based on myths and stereotypes about intimate partner violence (*Ahluwalia v Ahluwalia*, 2026 SCC 16 (CanLII), at para 225; *Lock v Lock* 2026 ONSC 4100 (CanLII), at para 30; *Mitchell v Mitchell*, 2026 ONSC 4259, at paras 360-377 & 445; *Fang v Lu,* 2026 ONSC 3617 at paras 242-244). Some of those myths and stereotypes are:

> (a) the alleged victim did not leave the relationship and therefore there was no abuse or mistreatment;
>
> (b) the alleged victim must have consented to the offensive treatment because she/he/they did not leave the intimate relationship;

(c) the alleged victim did not tell anyone in authority, his/her/their family, or otherwise and therefore it did not happen;

(d) the person did not behave in a certain manner in response to the alleged mistreatment and therefore cannot be believed;

(e) women have a propensity to lie/ fabricate/ exaggerate; and
(f) women are hysterical/ "crazy" and therefore inherently untrustworthy.

Consider the impact of survivors' resilience on damages claims. If "liability does not depend on proof of consequential harms such as a diagnosable injury or economic loss," what are the appropriate damages if the survivor will be viewed by the court as highly "competent" and does not want to share her therapeutic records or has not undertaken therapy. What other stereotypes do we hold about "victims" who have experienced abuse? What are the invisible and generally non-quantified losses to survivors and communities?

The SCC noted with approval that it is "axiomatic that intimate partner violence must be recognized, denounced and deterred" (*Ahluwalia v Ahluwalia*, 2026 SCC 16 (CanLII) at paras 44, 221-227). Ms Ahluwalia "retained some ability to make decisions in her life" (at para 235) but that "the reasonable person [would understand the husband's behaviour] as a project to dominate the relationship and deprive Ms. Ahluwalia of her autonomy" (at para 232).

Emerging research is beginning to explain some of the hidden costs of IPV. In Canada, women who experienced non-physical IPV incurred 17% higher public healthcare costs, even in the absence of physical or sexual IPV (Nicholas Metheny et al., "Non-Physical Intimate Partner Violence and Long-Term Public Healthcare Costs in a Representative Sample of Canadian Women" (2026) 32:9 *Violence Against Women* 2893). In Australia, financial abuse was estimated to have cost victims $5.7 billion in 2020, including through lost productivity and mental health impacts (Deloitte Access Economics, 2022). See also Jennifer E. McIntosh et al., "Health, Legal and Security Costs Associated with Improved Safety from Family Violence During Family Court Involvement" (2026) *J Fam Violence* [forthcoming].

💡 **Practice Tip:** Reflect on literary and scholarly writing by survivors from marginalized communities to challenge your own discriminatory biases grounded in pervasive myths and stereotypes. Also consider developments in other areas of practice that address discriminatory myths and stereotypes and the requirements of substantive equality.

The Limitation Period

In Ontario, there is no limitation period for assault in an intimate relationship (*Limitations Act*, SO 2002, c 24, Sch B, s 16(1)(h.2)). However, surveillance, threats, and isolation tactics, which may

collectively constitute coercive controlling behaviour, do not necessarily meet the test for assault or other tortious conduct. Therefore, some acts may be actionable while non-physical forms of abuse risk being treated as time barred. This raises access to justice concerns, since survivors may be left without legal recourse for the full pattern of coercive conduct.

The SCC attempted to address this concern by conceptualizing intimate partner violence as a "continuing injury" (*Ahluwalia v Ahluwalia*, 2026 SCC 16 (CanLII), at para 158). However, legislative amendment may still be necessary to extend limitation period exemptions beyond traditional assault-based claims.

💡 **Practice Tip:** Explore claims of family violence at the start of your mandate, and in an ongoing manner, to avoid possible limitation period issues. Approach retainer agreements, boiler plate precedents and releases with caution.

Quantifying Damages

The SCC noted that coercive control "constitutes a serious breach of a victim's intangible interests" and that the "[v]iolence that occurs at the hands of one's intimate partner is arguably more harmful, or at least differently harmful, than violence at the hands of a stranger." (*Ahluwalia v Ahluwalia*, 2026 SCC 16 (CanLII), at para 227). Once the elements of the tort are established, compensable harm is presumed and does not require separate proof of consequential loss (*Ahluwalia v Ahluwalia*, 2026 SCC 16 (CanLII), at para 209). The assessment is guided by a restorative function, aiming to place the plaintiff in the position they would have been in *but for* the coercive conduct (*Ahluwalia v Ahluwalia*, 2026 SCC 16 (CanLII), at para 78). However, damages are also to be "corrective and strongly denunciatory" (*Ahluwalia v Ahluwalia*, 2026 SCC 16 (CanLII), at para 227). The tort of IPV is an intentional tort, from which damages flow from the wrong itself; and given the seriousness of the harm of IPV, the quantum of damages is not limited to the amount deemed sufficient to restore victims under the traditional torts (*Ahluwalia v Ahluwalia*, 2026 SCC 16 (CanLII), at para 239).

IPV causes distinct, compensable harms (*Ahluwalia v Ahluwalia*, 2026 SCC 16 (CanLII), at paras 56 & 141-142). That is, the "general damages award" in family law cases may include damages for coercive controlling conduct, as well as damages for other tortious harms, such as battery. IPV is recognized as an additional harm, and damages must not be discounted or minimized based on myths or stereotypes about such relationships (*Ahluwalia v Ahluwalia*, 2026 SCC 16 (CanLII), at para 227).

While there is no established body of precedent in relation to the tort of IPV, the parties in *Ahluwalia* agreed to fix damages at $100,000. While this quantum was not part of the appeal at

the SCC, the Court was clear that historically, awards in relation to abuse by a spouse have been too low (*Ahluwalia v Ahluwalia*, 2026 SCC 16 (CanLII), at paras 224-227, 294, & 363). Cases in 2024 such as *Barreto v Salema*, 2024 ONSC 4972 (CanLII), at paras 441 & 460, and *Zunnurain v Chowdhury*, 2024 ONSC 5552 (CanLII), at paras 215 & 253, had higher damage awards than in the past, but going forward, post-*Ahluwalia*, we should expect to see much higher damage awards. As held in *Mitchell v Mitchell*, 2026 ONSC 4259, "earlier awards are not a good measure of future damage awards for the tort of IPV as they are too low."

In *Bareto,* Justice Vella had relied on a Court of Appeal decision which set out a range of general damages for adult-on-adult sexual assault as a range of $144,000 to $290,000 in 2017 dollars. Toronto litigators with experience in civil sexual assault cases suggest that, in 2026, the range is now $200,000 - $425,000 for *settlement purposes*. While this provides a "useful general framework for how to assess psychological impacts committed within a betrayal of trust" (*Barreto v Salema*, 2024 ONSC 4972 (CanLII), at paras 440-441, citing *Zando v Ali*, 2018 ONCA 680 (CanLII), at paras 4, 15, & 20), the SCC has recognized that the repeated ongoing harms of IPV are more damaging and should attract even higher damage awards.

The factors to be considered in determining the appropriate quantum are:

> (a) The circumstances of the victim at the time of the events, including factors such as age and vulnerability;
>
> (b) The circumstances of the assaults, including their number, frequency, and how violent, invasive and degrading they were;
>
> (c) The circumstances of the perpetrator, including age and whether they were in a position of trust;
>
> (d) The consequences for the victim of the wrongful behaviour, including ongoing psychological injuries; and
>
> (e) in relation to aggravated damages on traditional torts, the circumstances or manner in which the abuse was committed (e.g., humiliating, undignified, or involving a betrayal of trust).

In the first case awarding damages for the IPV tort, *Mitchell v Mitchell,* 2026 ONSC 4259, Justice Vella would have awarded $300,000 of aggravated general damages under traditional torts, but increased the damages for the IPV tort to $400,000 plus punitive damages of $25,000 (at paras 522 & 534-552). During the lengthy marriage, the victim lived in constant fear for herself and the children and experienced fear of ongoing retribution (paras 264-267). Justice Vella recognized that "whatever damages may be warranted under the pre-existing traditional (personal injury) tort claims, they will be higher under the new tort of IPV." The tort of IPV addresses the newly recognized wrong of coercive and controlling behaviour as a distinct harm to the intimate partner's

dignity, autonomy, and equality within the intimate partnership (at para 227).

"[T]here is no personal injury cap with respect to the tort of intimate partner violence." (*Mitchell v Mitchell*, 2026 ONSC 4259 at para 228). Any compensatory damages under the traditional torts "must be enhanced to reflect the additional harm caused by the exertion of coercive control and the consequent violation to the abused partner's dignity, autonomy and equality." (*Ahluwalia v Ahluwalia*, 2026 SCC 16 (CanLII), at paras 222 & 239 & *Mitchell v Mitchell*, 2026 ONSC 4259, at para 397). The damages award needs to be significant to recognize the "deep affront to the abused intimate partner's dignity, as well as the losses associated with dignity, autonomy and equality resulting from coercive control" (*Mitchell v Mitchell*, 2026 ONSC 4259, at para 546, citing *Ahluwalia v Ahluwalia*, 2026 SCC 16 (CanLII), at paras 222 & 227).

Counsel must assist in providing guidance to courts as to quantification. In *Fang v Lu*, 2026 ONSC 3617 the parties had a short marriage lasting 16-months including her relocation from China to Canada with her teenage daughter. The coercive control consisted of the husband intentionally imposing financial and domestic restrictions on the applicant, exploiting her financial and immigration dependency, and seeking to control her conduct. Specifically, the Court found that the applicant was objectively deprived of her autonomy by the husband (at para 264) abandoning the wife and child after their long flight from China, refusing to let her enter the home unless she immediately signed a document that only his biological child could inherit his property; verbally abusing the wife while the child was present, controlling the wife's spending on groceries, heat, hot water and the internet, threatening to hit her, and on one occasion, grabbing and pushing the wife down on a sofa; on one occasion, attempting to rape her, resulting in scratches and bruising, throwing objects, speaking crudely and misogynistically, and threatening her with deportation, homelessness and the loss of custody.

The wife described ongoing harm to her physical and psychological well-being including difficulty with organization and concentration, diminished self-confidence, and physical health impacts. As for quantum, counsel did not provide the Court (at para 291) with any comparable cases and assessed the wife's general compensatory damages for the tort of IPV in the amount of $40,000, based on the circumstances and amounts awarded in *Ahluwalia* (being the amount agreed to by the parties of $100,000) and *Mitchell* ($400,000 compensatory). While the award of compensatory damages attempts to place the injured party in the position she would have been but for the tortious conduct, knowing that money will never truly ease the harm, it is noteworthy that the husband was ordered to make the full equalization payment of $411,499.45, despite the short length of the marriage, and that spousal support was granted in a quantum to be determined after financial disclosure was made. Although not specifically stated by the Court, the parties' entire financial picture may have affected the limited quantum of the damages award.

Note too, that the Court heard the direct testimony of the teenage child, tested under cross-examination, about the harm she experienced. The child deposed, and the Court accepted, that she had no safe place in the home, had stomach pain, cold sweats, chest tightness and a sensitivity to light and sound, and felt ashamed, scared and confused (at para 280). The child struggled with thoughts of harming herself. Still, no damages claim was made on the child's behalf. Query the Court's *parens patriae* responsibilities in these circumstances.

Interaction with Other Family Law Entitlements

How does the tort of IPV interact with other family law entitlements?

Equalization under the *Family Law Act* is grounded in compensatory principles that focus on each spouse's contribution to the acquisition and maintenance of family property (*Ahluwalia v Ahluwalia*, 2026 SCC 16 (CanLII), at para 212). Similarly, the purpose of spousal support is to recognize the economic advantages or disadvantages that arise from marriage or its breakdown, allocate the financial consequences of childcare responsibilities, and promote each spouse's path toward economic self-sufficiency (*Ahluwalia v Ahluwalia*, 2026 SCC 16 (CanLII), at paras 213-214).

Tort law remedies are designed to address wrongdoing by providing compensation to victims, deterring misconduct, and vindicating legal rights. Damages aim to place the injured party in the position they would have been in but for the wrongful act (*Ahluwalia v Ahluwalia*, 2026 SCC 16 (CanLII), at para 215).

It is imperative the courts avoid resorting to the "family discount" and that we recognize the necessity of providing appropriate redress to victims. Respectfully, survivors should not be shortchanged by considering the payor's limited financial means following an equalization payment. But see, *Mitchell v Mitchell*, 2026 ONSC 4259 at para 551. As the SCC stated in *Andrews v Grand & Toy Alberta Ltd.*, 1978 CanLII 1 (SCC), [1978] 2 SCR 229, "An award must be fair to both parties but the ability of the defendant to pay has never been regarded as a relevant consideration in the assessment of damages at common law. The focus should be on the injuries of the innocent party. Fairness to the other party is achieved by assuring that the claims raised against him are legitimate and justifiable." (at paras 243-244). I concur with Mary Jo Maur (personal communication with the author) in recognizing, "the statutory entitlements are what they are, and the tort entitlement is what it is. If this results in the defendant owing more money than he has, that is the cost of his behaviour."

In what order should judges address these entitlements?

Justice Kasirer, writing for the Majority of the SCC in *Ahluwalia*, noted that it will generally be helpful to address the tort claim first in family law cases, as a finding of IPV and coercive control may be directly relevant to other determinations such as parenting orders, post-separation decision-making, and support entitlements (*Ahluwalia v Ahluwalia*, 2026 SCC 16 (CanLII), at paras 218-220).

In *Mitchell v Mitchell,* 2026 ONSC 4259, Justice Vella addressed damages under traditional torts and then separately addressed damages under the tort of IPV. Rule 53.10 of the *Rules of Civil Procedure* sets out the presumptive prejudgment interest rate on non-pecuniary damages at 5% payable from the date the cause of action arose. Justice Vella stated that the cause of action for the tort of IPV did not arise until the SCC's decision in *Ahluwalia* (at para 572). Query whether this is correct, given that it involved a change to the common law, in accordance with *Charter* values, within a family law context in which remedies generally apply retrospectively.

Conclusion

The *Ahluwalia* decision is a testament to the bravery of Kuldeep Ahluwalia and Justice Mandhane. It also reflects the dedication of many survivors, intervener groups and their *pro bono* lawyers, academics, mental health professionals, and family lawyers who helped describe the harms of IPV.

As a self-represented litigant, Ms. Ahluwalia helped reshape the law. Her experience shows that family law lawyers should not be apprehensive about making tort claims part of their practice.

Survivors often do not disclose IPV because society still has a culture of skepticism and disbelief about gender-based violence, and we too often subscribe to damaging myths and stereotypes. Legal professionals need to make a practice of asking about IPV in every case, and that information should guide how the file is handled at every stage.

This is an important cultural moment. Bill C-16 has received Royal Assent and now criminalizes coercive control; Bill C-223, while controversial, seeks to strengthen protection for children impacted by family violence, and seeks necessary adaptations to court practices. Together, *Ahluwalia* and these law reform efforts reflect a broader shift in Canadian law toward recognizing that law must seek to remedy and prevent the harms of intimate partner violence to spouses, children, and the community at large.

With law and technology evolving rapidly, lawyers must be proactive in learning and applying new developments in their practice in a manner that works better for clients experiencing intense conflict and crisis. This Primer aims to provide some practical support to lawyers struggling with the responsibilities that the *Ahluwalia* decision imposes on the litigation bar.

We have an obligation for continuing professional development in relation to IPV, to consistently seek to improve our uniquely human skills of compassionate listening, and to work collaboratively with other members of the legal profession and other helping professions. We must expand our existing knowledge and skills, engage widely across practice areas, and be open to seeking to better understand our clients' experiences of IPV, as we work together for necessary reform.

Appendix #1: IPV Training Opportunities

Luke's Place online training:

Luke's Place is a leading Ontario organization specializing in the intersection of family law and violence against women. Luke's Place has a 4-to-5-hour lawyer-focused course, *Effective Lawyering with Clients Leaving Abusive Relationships*, which addresses challenges commonly encountered in family law files involving abuse. The course covers:

- Understanding intimate partner abuse
- Converging issues - cultural & legal
- Intake & screening
- Practice management
- Common issues in cases involving partner abuse
- Evidence
- Professional responsibility
- Emergency motions

Rise Professional Legal Education (RPLE):

RPLE is a social enterprise of Rise Women's Legal Centre, a non-profit family law centre in British Columbia. RPLE offers research-informed professional development courses and recorded webinars for lawyers, including training on *Ahluwalia v Ahluwalia*, financial abuse and barriers faced by survivors of IPV. Its courses are designed to meet the Law Society of British Columbia's CPD requirements, and proceeds support Rise's legal services for women and gender-diverse people.

Association of Family and Conciliation Courts (AFCC):

AFCC offers a variety of virtual training programs. From September 29-October 1, 2026, there will be a 3-day evidence-informed program on *Safety First: Family Violence in the Context of Family Law*.

10-Hour Update on IPV & Power Imbalance Screening for Family Arbitrators & Parenting Coordinators (2026 Edition):

An asynchronous CPD accredited program that provides family arbitrators, mediators and parenting coordinators with information and skills to comply with training obligations. Topics commonly include:

- New case law
- Emerging research on coercive control
- Updated screening methodologies
- Cultural and equity considerations
- Risk indicators and safety concerns
- Best practices in parenting coordination and arbitration involving IPV

Appendix #2: IPV Screening Tools

e-SAFeR:

A comprehensive framework used to assess family violence in the context of family law litigation. It is intended to be used by family law professionals following a disclosure of family violence during screening with family law litigants. Users are required to attend a one-day training session prior to using e-SAFeR.

Battered Women's Justice Project, Initial Domestic Abuse Screening Guide:

Designed to help family lawyers identify domestic abuse and coercive controlling behaviours in family law cases.

HELP Toolkit: Identifying and Responding to Family Violence For Family Law Legal Advisers:

Identifying and Responding to Family Violence for Family Law Legal Advisers: A Government of Canada resource that offers practical guidance to help legal advisers gather case information and connect clients to services that support their safety.

The Duluth Model - Power and Control Wheel:

A visual tool that illustrates the tactics used by abusers to maintain power control in abusive relationships.

The Women's Experiences with Battering Scale (WEB):

A 10-item screening tool that assesses a woman's perceived vulnerability to danger and loss of power and control in her relationship. Each statement is rated on a 1 to 6 scale (from strongly disagree to strongly agree), and the responses are summed into a total score. A score of 20 or higher

indicates a positive screen for intimate partner violence (IPV). The WEB was designed as a public domain tool for use by any victim service provider or other client advocate.

Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic, Intimate Partner Violence Risk Identification and Assessment Framework I: Risk Screening:

Designed to identify potential high-risk situations that may require more in-depth assessment and/or intervention to protect survivors from future harm. It consists of 13 yes-or-no questions based on 12 established risk factors.

Mediator's Assessment of Safety Issues and Concerns – Short (MASIC-S):

A screening tool used to identify abuse and related concerns between current or past intimate partners. The MASIC-S helps determine next steps after screening each party. These include whether a referral to a domestic violence advocate is needed, whether mediation is appropriate, and what conditions or accommodations are required to ensure a safe and voluntary process. It also guides decisions about the format of mediation, such as joint sessions, remote participation, or shuttle mediation.

Home – iDetermine

A quick and free new tool being shared during training for mediators.

Appendix #3: Resources for Survivors and Their Service Providers

Luke's Place:

A Canadian non-profit organization that supports women and their children who are navigating the family law system after experiencing intimate partner violence or abuse. It provides legal information, safety planning resources, family court support, training for service providers, and advocacy aimed at improving access to justice and safety outcomes.

Barbra Schlifer Clinic Risk Assessment Project - Safety Planning Tools:

The BSCC developed the Risk Identification and Safety Assessment (RISA) Tool, a research-informed resource for frontline service providers working with survivors of gender-based violence. The tool helps identify risk factors for future violence, supports individualized safety planning, and assists with case management.

Legal Aid Ontario – Domestic Violence Services:

Special services may be available to individuals who have experienced domestic abuse when they apply for legal aid. Domestic violence survivors in Ontario who need immediate advice and assistance in relation to family law matters can also receive two hours of free legal service from a certificate lawyer, and there is no financial eligibility requirement. Certificates may be available at some women's shelters, community legal clinics, and Family Law Services Centres.

iHEAL app:

A free, private, and secure app designed for women in Canada who have experienced abuse from a current or former intimate partner. The app provides self-assessments, safety-planning activities, health and well-being resources, and links to local support services.

Mulberry Finder:

An Ontario-based online platform that connects survivors, service providers, and community members with gender-based violence services and supports. Users can search for shelters, counselling services, sexual assault centres. Indigenous-focused supports, and other resources through a directory, interactive map, or guided questionnaire. The platform also provides safety-planning information and online safety resources.

Shelter Safe:

Provides a list of over 600 shelters across Canada that can support women experiencing abuse.

Assaulted Women's Helpline:

Offers a 24-hour telephone and TTY crisis line to all women who have experienced abuse. Provides counselling, emotional support, information and referrals.

Ontario Women's Justice Network – METRAC:

Provides information to help survivors of violence, and their supporters, better understand legal rights in Ontario.

Ontario Women's Legal Centre (Centre juridique pour femmes de l'Ontario):

Offers free legal information and general advice about family law in French to Francophone women in Ontario who are experiencing family violence.

Fem'aide:

Offers support, information, and referrals to French-speaking women in Ontario who have experienced gender-based violence.

Appendix #4: Resources for Persons Who Have Perpetrated IPV and/or Abuse

Caring Dads:

An evidence-based intervention designed for fathers whose behavior has harmed, frightened, neglected, or adversely affected their children or the children's mother. Its primary purpose is to improve child safety and well-being by helping fathers take responsibility for abusive, controlling, neglectful, or harmful parenting behaviours and develop healthier relationships with their children.

Changing Ways:

Helps men and women who are emotionally, psychologically, verbally, sexually and/or physically abusive to their partners. Topics include how to identify abusive behaviours, tools to prevent abuse, identifying the impact of abuse of partner and children, how to express feelings rather than acting them out, respectful communication, and developing a support and safety plan.

Appendix #5: Resources for Parents to Give to Children

Booklets for Kids: Coping with Separation, Divorce and Family Changes

A collection of free, downloadable, child-friendly resources designed to help children understand and cope with separation, divorce, and changes in family structure. The booklets address common issues including difficult emotions, living between two homes, parental conflict, family violence, feeling caught in the middle, attending family court, and adjusting to step-families. They provide practical coping strategies, encourage children to seek support from trusted adults, and reinforce that children are not responsible for their parents' conflict or separation

Families Change

A free, Canadian resource providing age-appropriate information and practical tools for families experiencing separation and divorce. The site has dedicated sections for children, teenagers, and parents/caregivers, offering guidance on coping with a family breakup, managing emotions and family changes, and understanding relevant legal issues. The content was developed with input from family counsellors, psychologists, lawyers, parents, teens, and children, and is funded by the Department of Justice Canada.

A Child's Views and Preferences

A concise guide explaining the importance of hearing children's views in parenting matters and how those views are considered under the *Divorce Act*. The resource outlines child-focused ways of obtaining children's views, including through social workers or other professionals, Views and Preferences Reports, parenting assessments, child-inclusive mediation, counsel for the child, and judicial interviews. It cautions parents against placing children in the middle of conflict or asking them to choose between parents.