

Time to stamp out family violence, expert says

By Joe Fantauzzi

April 13, 2011

For Naila Butt, there has been a lot of talk about family violence. Now it's time for action.

As the number of domestic violence calls to police increases regionwide, Ms Butt, the executive director of Social Services Network in Markham, has become a driving force to stamp out family violence and its destructive toll.

Social Services Network, a not-for-profit agency which delivers cultural and linguistic programs and services to York Region's South Asian community, is set to host a forum, called Impact of Family Violence... A South Asian Perspective, at Queen's Park May 5.

"Everybody knows that there is violence, partner abuse, elder abuse and children are victims — what are we going to do about it?" Ms Butt said in an interview last week.

"The objective is to find solutions and then have resolutions to do something about it."

York police responded to 6,558 domestic violence-related calls last year, an increase from 5,000 in 2009, the force's statistics indicate. More than 38,000 family violence incidents were reported to police in Canada, Statistics Canada reported in 2006.

Three murders last year in York Region were classified by police as domestic violence homicides.

York police have created an integrated domestic violence unit, which has a long-term goal of providing services, such as support, counselling, police investigators and referrals to victims of domestic violence under one roof.

The Queen's Park forum is not intended to single out one community as more problematic than any other, Ms Butt stressed.

"Violence against women (and) partner abuse is a serious issue and a global issue," Ms Butt said. "It's across all cultures, races, religions."

But some communities face language and cultural barriers that prevent them from accessing social services, Ms Butt noted.

Supporters of the Queen's Park forum include York, Toronto, Peel and Durham police, along with York Region Children's Aid Society, the Social Services Network said.

Meanwhile, family violence, including emotional abuse, can also have long-lasting social, psychological and physical effects on children, according to Michael Bowe, the supervisor of diversity and outreach at the York Region Children's Aid Society.

As children raised around family violence reach adulthood, it may difficult for them to reach their full potential, he added.

That can put stress on the Canadian economy, social services and the health-care sector, he said.

York Children's Aid typically sees an increase in family violence after business hours, on the weekend and late at night, he said.

Tough economic times, coupled with unemployment or under-employment, strain families. But that's not an excuse for violence, Mr. Bowe said adding next month's forum will lead to positive change.

This article is for personal use only courtesy of yorkregion.com - a division of Metroland Media Group Ltd.
