



**Ottawa Coalition to End
Violence Against Women**

**Coalition d'Ottawa contre la
violence faite aux femmes**

RE: 'HO 89.9' name contest striking discord among listeners

April 14, 2010

Dear Editor,

The Ottawa Coalition to End Violence against Women (OCTEVAW) is disappointed to find that Hot 89.9 has changed their radio station name to “Ho’ 89.9” because they have been a “victim of theft”. Disregarding the fact the National Victims of Crime Awareness Week is coming up (because making light of victims’ experiences is a whole other essay); the term “ho” seriously offends us.

The normalization of sexist language is a huge problem. When we as a culture accept the use of derogatory terminology, we are accepting the fact that women are not yet truly equal in our society. Whether Hot 89.9 believes they are using “ho” in this contest in a degrading way or not, they need to face the fact that by saying “ho” repeatedly over the radio everyday for a week is normalizing the degrading term that is used for women. We do not believe for one minute that Hot 89.9 doesn’t know that “ho” can be misinterpreted as highly offensive, since they edit it out of songs that say the word on their station.

More disappointing to us was the fact that Hot 89.9 supported the Ottawa Coalition to End Violence against Women in our event “ManTalk”, co-hosted by the Sexual Assault Network (SAN). They provided prizes, sent a representative both days of the event and engaged the youth. In this event, we had young men sit down and discuss way they could end violence against women. One of the most important and easiest ways we told these young men about was to challenge sexist language and jokes. Hot 89.9 was there when we encouraged this shift in language. OCTEVAW was also very supportive of Hot 89.9 when they stopped playing Chris Brown’s music after he assaulted Rihanna. Hot 89.9 had been there for us. We believed that they were our partners in the fight against violence towards women.

This double standard seriously bothers us. It bothers us that there are some people in our city that think this contest is perfectly acceptable. It bothers us that no one who works for Hot 89.9 said that using this term in a city wide contest would bother them- surely this must have come up when brainstorming this contest. What may be even more disturbing is that someone may have spoken up- but they were overruled. We don’t even think that a woman (or a man for that matter) needs to identify as feminist to be offended by a term that specifically works to prohibit women’s sexual freedom.

We at OCTEVAW have not lost our sense of humour. This joke is simply not funny.

Sincerely,

The Public Engagement Committee of the Ottawa Coalition to End Violence against Women