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**July 2009**

**Position Paper:  
Accommodation & Women Navigating the Court System**

The Ottawa Coalition to End Violence Against Women (OCTEVAW) is a coalition of organizations and individuals dedicated to ending violence against women and, through leadership, education, advocacy and political action, to promoting a coordinated response to women and their children who have experienced abuse. Our members include women abuse and rape crisis agencies, victim services, child protection services, hospital and police representatives, the crown, academic researchers and other concerned community members.

OCTEVAW recognizes the need for equality for women navigating the court system who have experienced abuse and/or sexual assault. We support a woman's right to religious and cultural freedoms and believe that such rights must be respected in the judicial context. Supporting and accommodating women during the court process is of utmost importance in order to avoid their revictimization and to ensure an environment where women feel empowered and respected.

OCTEVAW believes in working collaboratively with individuals, agencies and institutions who strive to ensure that women complainants are able to exercise human rights, including but not limited to religious or cultural dress. We furthermore understand that there are important rights for the accused, but emphasize that this not be done at the expense of women's equality.

Ensuring that women are supported and accommodated within our judicial system creates a healthier community. When all members of the community are united in supporting anti-oppressive principles and are committed to understanding and valuing diversity, inclusiveness and the dignity of all women and their children, we are one step closer to ending violence against women.

Advocacy & Public Engagement Standing Committee  
OCTEVAW

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