



women's support network  
of york region

January 22, 2009

Dear Mayor Frank Scarpitti and Members of Council for the Town of Markham,

As we welcome in 2009, WSN is pleased to be working with a newly developed strategic plan aptly titled: "Back To Basics – Ensuring a Strong Foundation". This overriding theme for our agency's Strategic Directions, is one of grassroots inspiration. It speaks to the common need for all of us to periodically *stop, breathe, and reassess* before proceeding towards a respective vision.

WSN's vision is a world free from sexual violence. Applying a "Back to Basics" approach to this vision, reminds us of the fundamentals. It is imperative to provide support, and encourage healing and empowerment for survivors. Equally important, is prevention by promoting widespread awareness and thorough understandings of the complex issues involved regarding sexual violence: a truly a societal issue. Only then can we begin to create a strong and unified movement towards ultimately eliminating not only sexual violence, but all forms of violence, abuse and oppression. Indeed, there is much work to be done, but the vision is unyielding, the determination steadfast, and the strength and courage of so many survivors, a continuous source of inspiration.

Last year, with great enthusiasm, WSN organized its first region-wide fundraising walk to raise awareness about sexual violence. Inspired by the night commuters of Northern Uganda, a relatively small, yet determined group of women and men, walked a long, dark stretch of Woodbine Road, over two nights, from the south end, to the north end of York Region. Following the walk, participants and organizers used such words as "cathartic", "moving", "consciousness-raising", "humbling", and yes, "challenging", to describe their experiences.

Over a year later, the time has come to organize our second annual political action/fundraising walk, which is scheduled to take place during "Sexual Assault Prevention Month, on May 29<sup>th</sup>, and 30<sup>th</sup>. In keeping with WSN's Strategic Plan, this year's walk is themed – **"Back To Basics: Ensuring a Strong Foundation - One Step At A Time"**. All those involved in this 60km walk, are participants within a larger movement towards raising awareness, prevention of sexual violence and ensuring healthier and safer communities for everyone in York Region. Of utmost importance, is for this annual political action event to be a truly community- building endeavour, with lasting impact, welcoming all in York Region to be participants in real social change.

It is our hope, that as many York Region service providers, organizations, and Municipalities will be visibly represented and actively involved in this event. It is vital for everyone in York Region to get a sense that there is a cohesive movement to end violence, as well as an accessible circle of resources and supports available, in their own communities. We must join in sending a unified message to the Region and beyond that violence, abuse, and oppression will not be tolerated.

It is with great excitement then, that we invite representatives from York Region's Municipalities to the first information and planning meeting for the 2009 "Back To Basics" walk. We are seeking partnership, your expertise, and visible representation from as many individuals, agencies and organizations as possible. Please join us at the first meeting to discuss possible ways your Municipality can be involved.

**WHEN: Wednesday February 4<sup>th</sup> at 2:00pm**

**Or Thursday February 5<sup>th</sup> at 2:00pm**

**WHERE: Women's Support Network of York Region**

**1110 Stellar Drive, Newmarket**

Please RSVP with your availability at your earliest convenience to:

[susandobson@womenssupportnetwork.ca](mailto:susandobson@womenssupportnetwork.ca)

I also hope to visit each of the 9 Municipalities in York Region in the form of a deputation to respective Mayors and members of Council, in order to provide further information and appeal for collective regional support of this event.

We look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

Susan Dobson

Public Education Outreach Worker/Counsellor

Women's Support Network of York Region