

# **CONNECT2ENDVIOLENCE CONVERSATION**

**REPRESENTATIVES OF KEY STAKEHOLDER GROUPS**

**SUMMARY REPORT  
OF THE  
MAY 5, 2009 CONSULTATION**

**JUNE 1, 2009**

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The overall purpose of the connect2ENDviolence Initiative is *to connect people, ideas and our community to combat violence and foster a safe and secure environment in the region of Peel.*

In keeping with this objective, representatives of key stakeholder groups were engaged in an effort to further explore the issue of violence and violence prevention in Peel.

On the morning of May 5, 2009, after a brief overview of the initiative and crime statistics, the forty-five (45) participants were asked to respond to three questions:

- Given the data you have heard & your perceptions, what might be some factors that seem to be contributing to the growing tolerance and acceptability of violence in Peel?
- Given your experiences and knowledge, what might be some strategies or specific activities (preventative and responsive) currently being used in your organization or elsewhere that could help to re-sensitize the current level of tolerance/acceptability of violence in Peel?
- What might be some effective ways of engaging the larger community and/or the more specific communities in Peel on the issue of violence?

Responses for each question revealed a *strong focus on youth*, and although there was recognition of the roles that family structure and parenting play, it did not appear to garner the same attention as youth.

*Community/citizen engagement*, or the lack thereof, also featured prominently in responses for each question. Community engagement, specifically at the neighbourhood level, appears to be “the way in” to productively involve front-line community members on the issue of violence and violence prevention. A number of engagement activities were put forward for consideration.

The need for *coordination and alignment of the spectrum of violence and violence prevention services and resources* proved to be of importance - this being done in an effort to ensure no gaps exist and duplication is avoided. However, it was not clear as to which organization might assume that coordination role.

The energy and commitment of the consultation participants were evident throughout the session. The sharing of ideas, current successes and areas of frustration were readily shared and explored.

In the end, the results of the consultation process were found to be consistent with the information and outcomes of other similar forums, and will serve as a key input into the development of Phase II of the connect2ENDviolence Initiative.

## BACKGROUND

In 2008, the Region of Peel experienced 27 homicides, its worst year on record and almost doubling the previous highest number. There was a corresponding and alarming increase in other forms of violent crime. In response, on October 21<sup>st</sup>, 2008 Emil Kolb, the Chair of the Regional Municipality of Peel Police Services Board announced a five-point plan to combat the increase in serious crime. This was the culmination of an eight-month process. The Plan addresses short and long term measures to combat crime, covering the gamut from enforcement to prevention.

A key component of the Plan involved engaging the entire Peel community. After considerable discussion, it was agreed that this should happen in at least two ways: through the use of modern communication techniques (i.e. a website) and by consulting with representatives of key stakeholder groups.

To support this work the Police Services Board established a small Steering Committee comprised of the Peel Police, Peel District School Board, Dufferin-Peel District Catholic School Board, Health Services at the Region of Peel and the Police Services Board. The connect2ENDviolence Steering Committee is co-chaired by Councillor Frank Dale, City of Mississauga and current member of the Peel Police Services Board and Councillor Gael Miles, City of Brampton and former Vice-Chair, Police Services Board.

The overall purpose of the connect2ENDviolence Initiative is *to connect people, ideas and our community to combat violence and foster a safe and secure environment in the Region of Peel.*

## CONNECT2ENDVIOLENCE CONVERSATION

On Tuesday, May 5th from 9:00 am until 12:00 noon at the Pearson Convention Centre forty-five (45) representatives of various stakeholder groups participated in a conversation on violence and violence prevention in Peel region. (See Appendix I for a list of participants.)

The morning session included background on the connect2ENDviolence Initiative, facts & figures on violence in Peel and a facilitated discussion using a process referred to as The World Café Protocol. (See Appendix II an overview of the facilitation process). The participants were asked to address the conversation objectives by responding to answering three (3) questions:

Objective	Question
<p><b>Objective 1:</b> To gather “on the ground” information and insights as to the growing tolerance and degree of acceptability of violence in Peel</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Given the data you have heard &amp; your perceptions, what might be some factors that seem to be contributing to the growing tolerance and acceptability of violence in Peel?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Objective 2:</b> To gather potential made-in-Peel solutions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Given your experiences and knowledge, what might be some strategies or specific activities (preventative and responsive) currently being used in your organization or elsewhere that could help to re-sensitize the current level of tolerance/acceptability of violence in Peel?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Objective 3:</b> To gather ideas on how to engage the larger community on this issue</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What might be some effective ways of engaging the larger community and/or the more specific communities in Peel on the issue of violence?</li> </ul>

## SUMMARY OF THE CONNECT2ENDVIOLENCE CONVERSATION

The facilitated discussion resulted in a number of responses for each question. Feedback for each question was analyzed in order to identify common responses, and then organized to reflect the most common to the least common response.

### QUESTION 1:

Given the data that you have heard & your perceptions, what might be some factors that seem to be contributing to the growing tolerance and acceptability of violence in Peel?

#### 1. Lack a Sense of Community & Community Ownership

Although several factors were cited as contributing to the growing tolerance and acceptability of violence in Peel, the most common factor identified by the participants was: lack a sense of community & community ownership.

The input that specifically spoke to *lacking a sense of community* included:

- globalization
- changes in social interaction – more electronic (internet/video) and less face-to-face
- urban planning practices
- rapid and dynamic population growth – elders, youth, culture, etc.
- lack of programming that engages and connects the growing diversity in Peel
- the “live here, but don’t belong here” sentiment
- inability to identify with other segments of the community
- individualism vs. community-focused
- isolation – by choice or by circumstance

The input that spoke to the *lack of community ownership* included:

- decreasing social expectation of community responsibility
- decreasing community accountability for both violence in the private & public realm
- the reluctance or inability to recognize that an entire community must work together
- dismissed or forgotten notion that “it takes a village...”
- Apathy – “it’s not my problem” or “it doesn’t affect me”
- Breakdown in process of accountability, e.g. silence of reporting crimes

#### 2. Inability to Address the “ISMs” and Social Determinants

The next most common factor identified focused on the systemic issues and social determinants, specifically:

- Racism – must be named and addressed
- Ageism - within all segments of the population
- Poverty – how it’s being addressed, the increase in poverty and the societal attitudes toward the “haves” and “have-nots”
- Adequate, affordable, available and community-oriented housing
- Employment & Training – for youth & adults

### **3. Influence of Media and Social Media in Normalizing Violence**

Based on participant input, both the media and social media are seen to contribute to the growing tolerance and acceptability of violence. A society once sensitive to violence is now desensitized by the constant spotlight on and glorification of violence, including:

- constant reporting and replaying of violent acts as news highlights
- reinforcement of the negative things instead of the positive things happening in a community
- increasing bombardment of violent imagery as entertainment and leisure (videos, movies, fight games, music, etc.)
- lack of respect depicted for authority in the media, on the internet, in video games, music, TV and movies
- “promotion” of violence as acceptable and even “adventurous” through media, entertainment and internet
- ease & access to negative/damaging social media

### **4. Sense of Helplessness**

Feeling helpless or powerless -- “I can’t do anything” or “nothing can be done” -- in the face of violence within the community was identified as the fourth most common factor. This factor also included the notion of a shift in power – from feeling protected to feeling unprotected.

### **5. Youth Lack a Sense of Belonging**

In terms of youth, participants felt that the sense of belonging, specifically their need for leadership & direction, options for positive involvement and a space that they “own” contributed to the growing tolerance and acceptability of violence in Peel. This lost sense of belonging, perhaps due to weakened family ties, was seen by the participants to contribute to low self-esteem, the fear of being a target & involvement with gangs.

### **6. Fear**

Plain and simple fear. Regardless of whether the fear is due to direct violence, not belonging, being targeted or the overall culture of fear that has emerged in Peel fear was seen as a factor.

### **7. Lack of Resources & Services**

In addition to service access, ongoing implementation of “band aid” solutions, neighbourhood based services/resources and diverse services for diverse populations, this contributing factor identified that the following types of resources and services were lacking:

- specialized services for families & youth
- more services in mental health and parenting support
- ethno-specific programming
- family doctors
- psychiatrists
- systemic resources that address resilience, life skills, prevention and mental health
- transit for youth in rural areas

## 8. Cultural Diversity & Norms

This factor highlighted that each culture brings with it different values & norms, parenting styles, discipline practices and media influences. This can be further complicated by the need & desire to belong and the lack of understanding and knowledge between people of different cultures

## 9. Lack of Relevant Parenting Skills

Inability to parent within the new and constantly emerging reality faced by children was deemed a contributing factor. It was put forward that parents need to focus on creating intolerance to violence at a much earlier age, instilling a core set of values to support decision-making, learning how best to be “a part” of their children’s lives and disciplining their children through boundary setting. Parenting is further complicated by the ever-changing family structure, the breakdown of family and any cyclical or existing family violence.

## 10. Stress

Stress, whether due to poor English language skills, the need for secure employment, maintaining two incomes, holding down multiple jobs, being responsible for raising children while caring for elderly parents or the economy in general, was deemed a factor.

### Other Contributing Factors

In addition to the above, the following factors were identified as contributing to the growing tolerance and acceptability of violence in Peel:

- Sense of entitlement & the “I want it NOW” Mentality
- Insufficient public education and awareness on factors that contribute to violence
- Denial - the belief that it doesn’t or won’t happen to me
- Consequences don’t match or address violent behaviours, particularly for youth
- People (including parents) are too busy with other issues
- Crime reporting – more reporting results in the perception of more crime
- Ease of access to firearms
- Lack of government accountability

### QUESTION 2:

Given your experiences and knowledge, what might be some strategies or specific activities (preventative and responsive) currently being used in your organization or elsewhere that may help to re-sensitize the current level of tolerance/acceptability of violence in Peel?

## 1. Positive Youth Engagement

In addition to general statements regarding youth programming and supports to engage youth, the following strategies and activities were identified:

### Multi-Faceted Youth Mentoring & Leadership Program

This includes a plan for youth of all ages, one-on-one mentoring and discussion groups.

### Providing “For Youth by Youth” Mental Health Promotion

This would be done with the hope of creating positive youth role models and building trust in order to get help early.

**Support Early Start in Recreation Programs**

Early in their development get children involved in structured recreation programs that will hopefully carry them through adolescents and young adulthood.

**For Youth by Youth Activities**

This includes programs, motivational speakers, concerts and other special events to unify youth – at no cost.

**Space for Youth Expression and Development**

Provide space and opportunity for youth to get involved in sports, music, dance, poetry, art, training and skill development.

**After School Programs**

Programs geared to youth that would be at minimal or no cost.

**Homework Clubs**

Succeeding in school would be the focus.

**Increase or Extend Current Services & Programs Available to Children & Youth**

This involves identifying what’s working and building on that success.

**Behaviour Management**

This involves establishing behavioural contracts with a focus on accountability to address forms of violence.

**2. Education and Awareness**

The overriding strategy of education and awareness was top of mind for participants. All aspects of violence and violence prevention and all possible audiences were identified as recipients of presentations, workshops and public campaigns.

The following is a summary of the topics and audiences:

Topics	Audiences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Crime prevention</li> <li>▪ Crime statistics</li> <li>▪ Women abuse/violence against women</li> <li>▪ Domestic Violence</li> <li>▪ Elder abuse</li> <li>▪ Parenting</li> <li>▪ Violence &amp; Violence Prevention</li> <li>▪ Bullying</li> <li>▪ Restorative Justice</li> <li>▪ Laws and their applicability (e.g. youth)</li> <li>▪ Advantages of a non-violent community</li> <li>▪ Stress Management</li> <li>▪ Conflict Management &amp; Resolution</li> <li>▪ Healthy Relationships</li> <li>▪ Factors contributing to violence with an emphasis on prevention</li> <li>▪ Power and control</li> <li>▪ Reframing masculinity and violence &amp; feminity and violence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Children</li> <li>▪ Youth</li> <li>▪ Adults</li> <li>▪ Parents</li> <li>▪ Seniors</li> <li>▪ Communities</li> <li>▪ School Administration</li> <li>▪ LINC class participants</li> <li>▪ General Public</li> </ul>

### 3. Collaboration and Coordination – An Ongoing Effort that's Working

Although some new ideas were put forward in this context, the information summarized below focuses on the established collaborative efforts currently underway.

- Active work with the Children's Aid Society on anti-oppression, racism and diversity
- Collaborative initiatives in place to counter violence, including:
  - Peel Youth Violence Prevention Network (PYVPN)
  - Peel Committee on Sexual Assault (PCSA)
  - Peel Committee Against Women Abuse (PCAWA)
- Children's Services in community shelters to work with parents & children
- Canadian Mental Health Association – Peel Branch delivers Youth Net, Focus Groups and Pens & Paints to help youth verbalize & seek support
- Life skills groups in housing sector
- Police in schools
- Guest speakers (i.e. police officer) from the Peel Regional Police Diversity Division

### 4. Community Engagement

Community engagement surfaced as a key strategy for addressing the growing tolerance and acceptability of violence in Peel. More specific community engagement activities are listed below.

#### **Create a Community Dialogue**

This can include a local network, a community-based planning table and/or working within community hubs to address violence and violence prevention, while ensuring all community members are involved and/or represented

#### **Partner and Support Residents**

Work with residents on issues that are of interest, and support them to create their own solutions. This would include having people become part of the solution, (i.e. youth for youth issues, elder for elder issues, cultural to same culture).

#### **Support Current Community Groups**

Supporting existing community groups that address specific community needs to deliver current programs & services as well as introduce more programs (educational & recreational) for vulnerable groups (i.e. seniors) limiting isolation and creating a better sense of community.

#### **Encourage Individual Citizens to Make a Difference**

Encouraging citizens in creating solutions at home, school and neighbourhood levels in an effort to build a sense of community accountability and ownership.

#### **Neighbourhood Information Exchange**

This might involve a newsletter, e-mail or regular gathering, where people exchange information regarding their neighbourhood.

### **Reverse the “Stop Snitching” Mentality**

This would involve promoting programs that support community members, especially youth, to contact the police or Crime Stoppers regarding a crime -- the “stop snitching” mentality in the United States has made its way to Canada, and many youth have adopted this value.

### **Neighbourhood Program & Events**

Establish or re-establish the Neighbourhood Watch Program or host a “Take Back the Street” Event.

## **5. Re-Focus on the Family & Parenting**

Recognizing the critical role of the family and parenting, several activities were identified, including:

- Parenting support on a large scale
- Family life education
- Working with the entire family unit not just youth, with a focus on prevention
- Parenting workshops to develop parenting skills required for each stage of child/youth development
- Emphasis on parental responsibility, including learning how to interrupt unacceptable behaviour and monitor children’s media choices
- Learning of values/virtues/character attributes

## **6. Communicate, Communicate, Communicate**

Open-minded, two-way, regular communication as a strategy was identified with respect to all relationships and at all levels (individual, family, community, organization, government, etc.) with the intent to acknowledge issues, make plans and act together for change.

## **Other Strategies & Activities**

- Create awareness of the consequences of violence
- Expand use of restorative justice
- Leverage current research to identify pivotal violence prevention strategies
- Undertake or leverage current public education campaigns
- Proactive advocacy & policy development
- Inter/intra cultural understanding, including diversity student leadership initiatives
- Professional development & training, including a focus on first-responder approach
- Positive and constructive use of media and social media
- Financial support for anti-violence initiatives
- Focusing on balancing the need to inform public/community without creating panic
- More focus on positive actions
- Building positive police-to-community relationships

**QUESTION 3:**

What might be some effective ways of engaging the larger community and/or the more specific communities in Peel on the issue of violence?

**1. The Youth Community**

- Change process of responding to violence - have youth engage in the process
- Focus on “how” the message is delivered to youth so that they listen
- Use communication mechanisms favoured by youth, i.e. text messaging, internet, social media – You Tube, Facebook, Twitter, etc.
- Use expressive arts, music and popular education
- Establish and/or host youth-to-youth forums
- Support youth in taking the initiative to organize something similar to “connect2ENDviolence”
- Peer mentorship
- Involve figures/leaders important to youth in promoting non-violence (like Raptors, famous singers, etc.)
- Involve companies producing goods for youth (e.g. West 49)
- Create space for young people, including community centres with drop-in activities

**2. The Neighbourhood Community**

- Mobilize small groups of citizens to take action at the neighbourhood level
- Dialogue within communities and between communities
- Support and/or host town hall meetings that are open to all residents (adults, youth, children) and focus on outlining issues, responsibilities and solutions
- Open forums for “community” dialogue – in local neighbourhoods
- Start with communities already engaged and active, including visiting/building relationships with social groups & associations for those specific communities
- “Locally” based engagement and information
- Drill down to the community level that residents they easily and clearly identify with, e.g. Cooksville, Malton, Springdale, etc.
- Use information already available to design & implement community activities
- Go to the community with programming – don’t expect them to come to you
- Reach out -- more “door knocking” to ask people about their opinions

- Work with neighbourhoods and people of all ages to re-define community
- Support community-based special events that include the family, e.g. block parties

### **3. The Community of Agencies & Organizations**

- Collectively ensure strategies focused at four key levels: individual, family, organization and community/collective
- Ensure comprehensive, coordinated strategy that encompasses all current initiatives across sectors (e.g. policy, education, advocacy, etc.)
- Less duplication through increased coordination of services, targeted efforts and pooling of resources
- Increased awareness of resources and other professionals in the field to communicate and collaborate on a more regular bases
- Better use of and interaction with existing organizations, including faith communities
- Involvement of agencies that are doing proactive community work
- Coordinated and consistent policies in all spheres (e.g. schools, workplaces, malls, etc.) regarding acceptable behaviours
- Re-organize all sectors that interact with youth – teachers, parents, Children’s Aid Society, youth works, etc.
- Work together to implement engagement strategies based on research and evidence

### **4. The School Community**

- Articulate and solidify the role at school boards in terms of violence and violence prevention
- Implement anti-violence program / curriculum in all Peel schools perhaps like the “Roots of Empathy”, which involves a series of learning components
- Create youth advisory committees in schools
- Strengthen the community / school working relationship

### **5. The Cultural Communities**

- Get “buy-in” from cultural community leaders to work within their own culture/communities
- Tap into and leverage the elders or role models in each of the ethnic communities
- Conduct focus groups with every ethnic & religious group to address needs
- Support and/or host “First Language” forums for seniors, women and people with language barriers

## 6. The Role of Media to Engage

- Use local media (e.g. Rogers Cable 10) to promote the positive community actions and to educate and inform the general public and specific Peel communities
- Optimize ethnic media vehicles, e.g. radio, publications, newspapers, internet, etc.
- Leverage social media vehicles to deliver message and build momentum

## SUMMARY & INSIGHTS

A *youth orientation* was identified in each list of responses, but a focus on youth might be further strengthened by recognizing and building on the role of the family and parenting.

*Community/citizen engagement*, or the lack thereof, featured prominently in responses for each question. Community engagement, specifically at the neighbourhood level, appears to be “the way in” to productively involve front-line community members on the issue of violence and violence prevention. A number of engagement activities were put forward for consideration, however it would seem that sustaining such community level involvement by the community members themselves still appear to be the more significant issue.

The need for *coordination and alignment of the spectrum of violence and violence prevention services and resources* also proved to be of importance - this being done in an effort to ensure no gaps exist and duplication is avoided. However, it's not clear as to which organization might play that larger coordination role.

## NEXT STEPS

This report will serve as a significant input into the connect2ENDviolence Phase I Final Report and support recommendations for Phase II of the connect2ENDviolence Initiative.

**APPENDIX I**  
**CONNECT2ENDVIOLENCE CONVERSATION**  
**PARTICIPANTS LIST**

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Gael Miles, Co-Chair &amp; Regional Councillor</li> <li>▪ Frank Dale, Co-Chair &amp; Regional Councillor</li> <li>▪ Fred Biro, Police Services Board</li> <li>▪ Inspector Gavin Francis, Peel Regional Police</li> <li>▪ Janette Smith, Health Services, Region of Peel</li> <li>▪ Tony Pontes, Peel District School Board</li> <li>▪ Ralph Borelli, Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board (Regrets)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Shari Nickle, Facilitator, Peel District School Board</li> <li>▪ Janine Elias Joukema, connect2ENDviolence Initiative</li> <li>▪ Shelley Porteous, Police Services Board</li> <li>▪ Lucy Wang, Website Coordinator</li> </ul>

## APPENDIX II

# THE WORK CAFÉ PROTOCOL - AT A GLANCE

- Seat **four or five people at small Café-style tables** or in conversation clusters.
- Set up **progressive** (usually three) **rounds of conversation** of approximately 20-30 minutes each.
- **Questions or issues that genuinely matter** to your life, work or community are engaged while other small groups explore similar questions at nearby tables.
- Encourage both table hosts and members to **write, doodle and draw key ideas** on their tablecloths or to note key ideas on large index cards or placemats in the center of the group.
- Upon completing the initial round of conversation, ask one person to remain at the table as the “host” **while the others serve as travelers or “ambassadors of meaning.”** The travelers carry key ideas, themes and questions into their new conversations.
- Ask the table host to welcome the new guests and briefly share the main ideas, themes and questions of the initial conversation. Encourage guests to **link and connect ideas** coming from their previous table conversations—listening carefully and building on each other’s contributions.
- By providing opportunities for people to move in several rounds of conversation, **ideas, questions, and themes begin to link and connect.** At the end of the second round, all of the tables or conversation clusters in the room will be *cross-pollinated* with insights from prior conversations.
- In the third round of conversation, people can return to their home (original) tables to **synthesize their discoveries**, or they may continue traveling to new tables, leaving the same or a new host at the table. Sometimes a new question that helps **deepen the exploration** is posed for the third round of conversation.
- After several rounds of conversation, initiate a period of sharing discoveries and insights in a **whole group conversation.** It is in these town meeting-style conversations that patterns can be identified, collective knowledge grows, and possibilities for action emerge.
- Once you know what you want to achieve and the amount of time you have to work with, you can decide the appropriate number and length of conversation rounds, the most effective use of questions and the most interesting ways to connect and cross-pollinate ideas.