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Domestic violence progress probed; CORONER'S OFFICE: A committee wants to know how many of its recommendations have been followed

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Frustrated by similarities leading to domestic violence deaths every year, Ontario's Domestic Violence Death Review Committee wants the province to audit responses to its recent recommendations.

The request for a review of "all community, agency and government responses" since the group was formed five years ago came as the committee of the Ontario Coroner's Office released its latest annual report yesterday.

The report, which includes a review of three cases from the London area, includes 33 recommendations for change.

Committee member Peter Jaffe of London said last night the group wants to know how many of its recommendations have been adopted "and to what extent are they falling on deaf ears?"

That three of the 15 cases reviewed in the report occurred in the London area, a city considered a leader in domestic-violence research and activism, shows work needs to be done, said one community leader.

"Even though we've done really groundbreaking work . . . (domestic violence) is in our community and those cases show that," said Barb MacQuarrie of the Centre for Research and Education on Violence against Women and Children.

She disputed criticism that recommendations --largely focused on educating the public and service providers -- shift blame away from the perpetrators.

"The domestic violence death review process is really important," she said. "Rather than seeing each of these cases in isolation, we can look at them together and see what is happening over and over again. What are the common themes?"

In 14 of 15 cases reviewed in the latest report, the victim was female. In all but two, the perpetrator was a male.

Area cases reviewed:

- John Daubs, a Londoner, drove his car into a dump truck, killing his daughters, Ashley and Stephanie, in 2006.

- In 2003, Melissa Babineau of Woodstock, killed her partner's daughter, two-year-old Rebbecca Haney.

- The London case of Emerson Dominguez, who shot and killed Vanessa Bol, 17, in 2003.

In all three cases, the report found, others had been aware of the perpetrator's controlling or abusive behaviour.

"Every year, we see recurrent themes," said William Lucas, regional coroner for central Ontario and chairperson of the committee. Sometimes, he said, people feel it's "not their place to meddle" or professionals see "risk factors," but lack the training to intervene.

Progress has been made, said Jaffe, citing the London-based Neighbours, Friends and Families education campaign, now adopted provincewide.

Still, he said, better awareness is needed.

"It's like when you read a book and you see something tragic happen at the end, but you go back and every chapter is a missed opportunity," he said.