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Province commits \$80K to Muslim centre; DIVERSITY: Muslim Resource Centre for Social Support and Integration provides help to families

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The Ontario government is helping break the silence on domestic abuse in London's Muslim community through a new grant that will increase support for victims.

The Muslim Resource Centre for Social Support and Integration, headed by Londoner Mohammed Baobaid, will receive \$80,000 to provide immediate crisis assistance to Muslim women and families.

The resource centre will help connect the Muslim community to government programs and services.

"Social support and integration is missing in terms of programming in our society," Baobaid said.

Three London MPPs announced the funding last week at the University of Western Ontario.

"This is extremely important work and London has been a leader," Ontario Attorney General and London West MPP Chris Bentley said. "It's a proposal by the community for the community."

Domestic abuse is a concern for all families, not just Muslims, Baobaid said. "But the Muslim community is ready to take ownership and responsibility for this issue."

Deb Matthews, Ontario's minister of children's and youth service and MPP for London North-Centre, said, "I see it as a foundation in our community to end violence against women."

Muslim Family Support Service social worker Afrah Salem knows well the abuse experienced by Muslim women in the community.

"Our services are kind of limited, but now my clients can benefit by going to (Baobaid's) centre."

Muslim women are often unaware of their legal rights in Canada and what social programs are available to help them in cases of domestic abuse, said Wafa Dawoud, a board member for the London Council of Arab Women.