

Safer for women ... Safer for everyone

Powers that be:

linking authority & violence

Bi-Annual Newsletter
**Fall 2005
Edition**



Message from the President

Stephanie Dutrizac (President)

I am honoured to assume my new role as President of the Board of METRAC, a dynamic organization whose hard work and advocacy has made a significant contribution to creating safer communities in Toronto and beyond.

I am also pleased to introduce this newsletter focusing on the connection between authority and violence – a challenging but fundamental topic. To do any work that addresses violence prevention, issues of power and authority are necessarily confronted. Although it's important to focus our attention on helping those most vulnerable to violence, it's also important to shift our gaze to powerful institutions, systems, and relationships that shape experiences of violence and, in some cases, serve to perpetuate them. METRAC works hard to develop programming that addresses violence against women, youth, and children as a power issue, in its many forms.

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To support this vital work, we are seeking new METRAC Members, Board Committee participants, and Board Members. If you are interested in contributing to METRAC and developing skills in fundraising, communications, strategic planning and

visioning, social justice and activism, human resources, or accounting, we would love to hear from you!

I am happy to report that Sandra Noe, a volunteer on our Fundraising Committee, and Donna Hepkin, another volunteer, have recently joined our Board. I also want to thank our departing Board Members who have contributed their time, skills, and energy to METRAC in countless ways: Deborah Niles, Marilyn Oladimeji, and Shahnaz Uddin.

And thank you to the many individuals, foundations, organizations, and corporations who support METRAC and help fund our excellent programs that fight violence against women, youth, and children every day.

metrac's mission

The Metropolitan Action Committee on Violence Against Women and Children works towards the goal of eliminating all forms of violence against women and children. It is committed to the right of all women and children to live free from violence and the threat of violence. METRAC's work is informed by anti-oppression principles which recognize that women and children within and among diverse communities experience violence in different ways and forms, and which recognize that anti-violence measures must address the distinctive realities of women and children within and among diverse communities.

Farrah Bykalo-Khan,
ReAct Coordinator

Elizabeth Chen,
Summer Outreach
Assistant

Pamela Cross,
Legal Director

Stephanie Ehret,
Volunteer Coordinator
& Resource Developer

Andrea Gunraj,
Outreach Manager

Wendy Komiotis,
Executive Director

David Lewis,
Summer ReAct
Coordinator

Alana Lowe,
ReAct Coordinator

Christine Luza,
Summer Safety Assistant

Ginny Santos,
Justice Coordinator

Puja Suri,
Youth Safe Nite Coordinator

Shahnaz Uddin,
Admin. Assistant

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Jerry Bonnah,

Darryl Bucar,

Fatima Chamalia,

Elizabeth Chen,

Farzana Islam,

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Christine Luza,

Bruno Matos,

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ReAct Youth
Peer Facilitators

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Message

from the Executive Director

Hello and a warm welcome to METRAC's Fall 2005 newsletter. Our theme for this issue is authority and violence against women. Articles featured here speak to the work of METRAC's Board, staff, and volunteers to address multiple factors of authority as they impact women's safety and experiences of violence. In these pages, we hope you find new possibilities for taking action to end a social problem that diminishes the lives, dignity, and human rights of 55% of the population in our city, province, country, and world.

For more than 25 years, I have observed that despite the prevalence of violence against women, the issue has failed to command consistent public attention and action. It carries little status in the way that other social and health issues do. It is as if women don't matter. One could say the issue of violence against women has no authority. Although partner assault is against the law in Canada, it is still often regarded as a private family affair. It is a crime in which women's suffering is tolerated in silence by society until it becomes a public tragedy.

At METRAC, we've been working as a team to raise the profile of violence against women on the agenda of authorities to shift institutional norms and practices and make them more responsive and accountable to women's safety. Specifically, some of METRAC's work with authorities includes active participation on the City of Toronto Violence Against Women and Policing Working Group, addressing Toronto Police Service's plans, policies, and daily practices in relation to violence against women.



Our Justice Program recently piloted a new Court Watch on Sexual Assault to monitor legal proceedings that either support or undermine justice for women who have been raped.

Respect in Action (ReAct), our youth program, has been working with youth across the city to promote non-violent models of masculinity and femininity. Peer facilitators have been challenging youth attitudes in workshops about violence against women in film, television, music videos, song lyrics, and advertisements and the portrayal of violence as normal. Watch out for more news on how we have been crafting a new vision of popular media to provide children and youth with alternatives to violence against women.

Ending violence against women will not only depend on giving authority to the issue by changing institutional norms and practices that tolerate and dismiss women's deaths and suffering. Ending violence against women will call for a fundamental shift in the cultural attitudes and beliefs that give rise to violence towards women in the first place, and that will depend as much on the influence of authorities as it will depend on the actions of individual women and men.

You are invited to METRAC's Annual General Meeting



Thursday October 27, 2005 from 6:00 to 8:30 PM
St. Andrew's United Church (117 Bloor St. E.)



With special panel discussion:
Media and Violence Against Women

Including guest panel speaker Nicole Cohen
(Co-Editor of Shameless Magazine,
<http://shamelessmag.com>)

For more information, please call 416-392-3135 or
email info@metrac.org

Mary Higgins (Volunteer) & Communications Committee

Understanding authority

When we think of the word 'authority', we tend to focus on things like the law, government, education system, and mass media. These influence how violence against women is addressed and understood in complex ways that can be both helpful and harmful. But throughout history, other forms of authorities such as societal norms, customs, and religion have also served to regulate our day-to-day lives as well.

Authority is related to power – social authorities reinforce power relationships between people, making women and other marginalized groups more vulnerable to violence. And violence strengthens the power of authorities as well, who often remain unquestioned. We have to challenge how violence, authority, and power work together to create inequity between people and make sexism and violence against diverse women, youth, and children seem normal and acceptable.

**Become a
Member
of METRAC**

If you would like to make a difference for women, youth, and children, become a METRAC Member. Benefits include: a special quarterly members' e-newsletter, voting privileges at the Annual General Meeting, 10% discount on publication orders, and an invitation to a members-only *What's New in the Law Forum*. For info, see the back page or contact METRAC.

Community Safety and authorities

METRAC's Community Safety Program is designed to increase participation of individuals and different authorities to enhance public safety through the development, implementation, and evaluation of safety plans, training, policies, and procedures.



We have continued to work with universities and colleges with particular emphasis on improving the physical and social environment of campuses, including an acknowledgement of the role of discrimination and harassment in public violence. Our most recent initiative has been delivering Workplace Violence Prevention training to more than 400 staff across several campuses of a local community college.

METRAC's work with the City of Toronto and policy makers to build a safer Toronto has been successful in educating people about safety strategies, providing opportunities for local action, and helping communities identify and respond to local tensions and problems. We have undertaken several Community Safety Audits in partnership with local City Councilors and groups to build safer neighbourhoods and decrease fear of violence.

For the past five years, METRAC has organized its Annual Community Safety Night in collaboration with the City of Toronto, which involves outreach, training, and support to neighbourhoods. This year, our Safety Night will provide an opportunity for Toronto youth between 13 and 21 years of age to evaluate the safety of their neighbourhoods, make important recommendations, and work together to address their specific safety needs.

Youth: Join METRAC's

YOUTH SAFE NITE 2005
RECLAIM YOUR SPACE!
Thursday, October 20, 2005

STOP
the VIOLENCE
in your community

TORONTO
toronto
community
foundation

Help make Toronto SAFER for youth

Free training week of October 3-7
Youth Jam week of October 24-28

Info on how to get involved:
416-392-3137
sassist@metrac.org

Law, Authority, and violence against women

For many women dealing with issues of violence, the law is an alien authority wielding power over their lives, not unlike the power held by their abusers. METRAC's Community Justice Program continues to work to change this dynamic through its key initiatives:

Law Reform: We are actively involved in working for reforms to laws that have a direct impact on women experiencing violence and their children. Current focuses include: custody and access, restraining orders, and religious arbitration of family law disputes.

Court Watch: Under the able direction of Lee-Ann Siu, a Pro Bono Fellowship Intern, we have established Toronto's first sexual assault Court Watch program, in which trained volunteers are observing sexual assault trials and collecting data on sentencing patterns.

Legal Information Training in Toronto: Our annual training for service providers on legal issues has been expanded this year to three full days. The October training was full within a few weeks of being announced.

Province-Wide Training: We will be training workers in the immigrant and settlement services and women with disabilities and Deaf women sector across Ontario over the fall and winter, with funding from the Law Foundation of Ontario.

Women from Marginalized Communities: Also with funding from the Law Foundation, we are developing new legal information materials aimed at young women and older women who are experiencing violence.

The Justice Program works for systemic change and empowers women with the goal of dismantling the authoritarian nature of the law.

For more info, contact METRAC's Justice Program at cleric@metrac.org or 416-392-3138.

a night out

with a difference

support
METRAC's work
to end violence
against women
& children

monday september 26, 2005
6:00 to 9:30 pm
located at the
DRAKE HOTEL
1150 queen st. w.
(west of dovercourt rd.)
\$85.00 per person

drinks, hour d'oeuvres
live entertainment
from Shelley Hamilton
& silent auction

info/details at
www.metrac.org or
contact 416-392-4286
or fundraising@metrac.org

Calling all community members

we need your valuable input!

Come to METRAC's

Community Planning Meetings

Learn what METRAC is doing!

*Share your ideas & your
community's needs!*

*Help create a better future for
women, children, & youth!*

**Thursday, December 1st, 2005
at The 519 Church St. Community Centre**

2:00-4:00 PM for organizations & individuals

5:00-6:30 PM for youth & youth agencies

Snacks and interpretation provided – please
let us know your language needs!

Please RSVP by Friday, November 25th, 2005

For more info and to RSVP, contact 416-392-4760 or outreach@metrac.org

Andrea Gunraj (Outreach Manager)

Unlearning Violence: outreach & education at METRAC

Traditional views of gender-based violence say it's a private matter between women and men, which takes attention from the problem's seriousness and leaves survivors blamed, silent, and isolated. All kinds of authorities, including media, educational, legal, and governmental institutions, repeat that traditional view constantly. METRAC makes great efforts to reach out to Toronto's communities with a different view, one that understands that violence is a deeply rooted social issue that needs to be "unlearned" by everyone.

METRAC's Community Outreach and Education Program is starting projects that encourage a non-traditional understanding of violence against women, youth, and children. We're launching the RePlay project for children 8 to 14 years old. RePlay will work with diverse children, educators, and parents in Ontario to create video games and resources to help children challenge mainstream views of gender violence that they have already learned and encourage them to think differently.

We're also starting a great urban arts project for high school aged women living in marginalized neighbourhoods in Toronto, called the Rise Project. Here, young women from Rexdale, Malvern, and Jane-



Finch will connect with urban women artists and METRAC's Youth Peer Facilitators. They will work together to learn about violence against young women and use their knowledge to create violence-challenging art like spoken word pieces, dance routines, skits, and hip hop songs. This conscious art will be shared with other youth and Toronto's public, bringing the 'unlearning' process to everyone.

Of course, METRAC's Outreach Program is continuing its ongoing prevention initiatives – our informative website (www.metrac.org), our ReAct Program, creation and distribution of accessible written resources on violence issues, referrals for women to places they can get help, facilitating THRIVE: the Multicultural Women's Coalition Against Violence and Oppression, providing important input in anti-violence coalitions and projects, and hosting outreach events like our successful Community Open House in June 2005.

Through METRAC's new and already proven Outreach and Education work, our consistent goal is to give the public tools to unlearn violence against women, youth, and children once and for all.

For more info, contact the Outreach and Education Program at outreach@metrac.org or 416-392-4760.



The "community canvas", made at our Open House

You a young woman 14-18 living in Malvern, Rexdale, or Jane Finch?
You interested in using urban arts to challenge violence?

Then join METRAC'S

Rise

project
2005

You'll work with urban women artists to learn about violence & use art like spoken word, hip hop, & dance to send a positive message.

You'll get volunteer hours, honorariums, training, & a chance to make a difference.

Info on how to apply:
416-392-4760 or outreach@metrac.org

Supported by: **torontodartscouncil**
An arm's length body of the City of Toronto

Authority in the Lives of Youth: Respect in Action (ReAct)

(formerly the Young Women's Anti-Violence Speakers Bureau)

Youth encounter various forms of authoritative influences in their lives, from family, school, the streets, and community programs to the media. For many young people, it can feel like there is little room out in the community where their voices can be heard. Youth aren't often given the opportunity to be in positive, youth-focused (and youth-led) spaces.

It's this very thing that makes Respect in Action (ReAct) unique. Our program is run by youth, for youth. ReAct workshops help create spaces for youth to freely speak with one another about the violence that impacts their lives. Instead of imposing what we believe youth should know on them, ReAct holds firm to the belief that all youth have their own particular knowledge and expertise and can learn from one another.



(formerly known as METRAC's Young Women's Anti-Violence Speakers Bureau)

Recently, ReAct joined a Youth Police Advisory Committee. We hope that we can help bring attention to the concerns of Toronto youth about the role of police authorities in their lives and promote the importance of putting gender-based violence on the agenda.

Also, ReAct has been looking critically at the role of the media as an authority in creating gender stereotypes of young women and men. We are examining music videos, popular television shows, and movies to show the ways that young women and men, especially youth of colour, get boxed into stereotypes through the media. ReAct Peer Facilitators David Lewis and Alyssa Asomani are working with local filmmaker Ash Yoon to create a short documentary that explores the link between gender stereotypes and violence in dating relationships.

Alyssa explains that "youth try desperately to be like what they see in the media, but it affects us negatively so we should dismiss it more than embrace it." Our hope is that the ReAct documentary will help give youth empowering tools to be critical of these negative media stereotypes. But the issue isn't simple. "This doesn't mean that we should just throw away music or movies we like to listen to and watch," Alyssa says. She talks about how some kinds of media are blamed as "the problem", such as hip hop and R&B music videos, while others forms of media are ignored. Often, society focuses on certain aspects of mass media to further marginalize already marginalized youth of colour. "They don't care to understand that we as a community translate and receive the music as a refuge in a way those with privilege can't identify with".



ReAct facilitators & participants at a recent workshop series

ReAct challenges how popular media is an authority that can perpetuate gender, race, and class stereotypes. But we are also exploring the different meanings media can have in the lives of diverse youth. We believe that this approach will positively address the complex issue of youth violence and its connection to the media, rather than playing the same old blame game.

For more info, contact ReAct at speakersbureau@metrac.org or 416-397-0258. You may also apply online for a ReAct workshop by going to www.metrac.org/programs/info/wkshop_order.htm.

Stephanie Brown (Volunteer)

Media & Understandings of violence against women: Media Watch

Newspapers are not often thought of as an authority, but they heavily influence society's understanding of issues like violence against women. They guide our opinions and affect how big of a problem we believe it to be.

Through METRAC's *Media Watch* research, it's clear that violence against women is underreported in newspapers. When it does get covered, the violence usually involves famous people. These stories receive front-page attention. But we rarely read about the thousands of women killed by their partners every year or the abuse that affect millions of women worldwide. Even when we do read about it, stories are often trivialized as 'personal matters' or stereotyped as a product of 'cultural norms'.

News media focuses on sensationalized violence. For example, stories about 'stranger rapes' receive more coverage than stories related to violence against women in their homes. Generally, stories about sexual violence focus on individual women, especially if they fit the profile of the 'marketable victim' – conventionally attractive, white, middle or

Introducing ...

Replay

violence prevention project

Thanks to funding from the Ontario Women's Directorate (OWD), METRAC is launching *RePlay*, a video game project for children & youth 8 to 14 years old. It will challenge violence and promote healthy relationships. METRAC will officially launch *RePlay* at its *A Night Out With a Difference* event on September 26, 2005 at The Drake Hotel.

high income, and able bodied. The focus is then placed on putting women on trial, as the news media pays attention to women's sexual histories more than men's violence.

Other labeling occurs. Women are identified first by their ages, relationship to their abusers (wife, girlfriend, mother), and ascribed role in the story ("victim", "prostitute", "drug addict") before they are identified as people by their names.

How violence against women is addressed in news media is directly connected to how women are viewed and treated in society. Women are often shown as victims or sexual objects and language is used to mask, minimize, and make the violence seem normal, acceptable, and expected, focusing on the "pathological" aspects of the perpetrator.

The next time you read a story about violence against women, change all the female references to male references and see how the story reads. Would such media coverage ever be printed?

Stephanie Ehrst (Volunteer Coordinator)

Volunteering to challenge authority



Volunteers link METRAC to Toronto's diverse communities and they are integral to our work to promote, educate, and challenge people and organizations, particularly those in positions of authority, to work towards ending violence against women, youth, and children. We have a wonderful group of volunteers supporting us in a variety of ways, including administration, special events and fundraising, research, video editing, participating in our Court Watch project, and sitting on our special Committees and Board of Directors. We appreciate the dedication and efforts of our fantastic team of volunteers so much. Thanks for your ongoing support!

Our most recent Volunteer Training and Orientation Session was held on the evening of Thursday, June 16th, and the next session is going to be in fall of 2005.

METRAC works to ensure that its volunteers reflect the diversity of Toronto. We encourage all women to volunteer, including those with diverse life experiences, sexual identities, and ethno-cultural and income-level backgrounds. We welcome you to join our team of volunteers!

For more info, contact METRAC's Volunteer Coordinator at volunteer@metrac.org or 416-392-4286. You may apply online to volunteer online by visiting www.metrac.org/about/volunt.htm#vol.

Some Thoughts from a METRAC volunteer

Helen Anderson joined METRAC as a volunteer with METRAC's Respect in Action (ReAct) program last October. She shared some of her thoughts with us.

Q: How did you become involved with METRAC's ReAct Program?

A: I've had some previous experience facilitating workshops on understanding violence against women as a systemic issue, so when I came across ReAct, I was interested in continuing with a similar project.

Q: What are you doing with ReAct?

A: I have found media resources that can be used in the youth workshops, and I'm putting together short clips from popular movies, music videos, and television shows specific to each workshop. We hope to encourage participants to reflect upon and discuss how violence against girls and women and family violence is represented within popular media. We also want the to think further about systemic issues that are tied to violence, such as issues related to gender, race, class, and sexuality ... I think it's important for individuals to be able to look critically at the media and to be able to analyze the images and ideas that we are being presented with. I think it's also important that we are given the opportunity to see popular media as a potential tool for empowerment and social change.



Q: How have you come across issues of authority and violence?

A: Working with the media raises the question of what sort of authority it has in establishing social norms. How are we being influenced by images and ideas around us? Also, I've become more aware of how issues of authority and violence may play out within particular relationships, which has made me more aware of the need to address these issues in order to allow individuals a sense of authorship over their own lives.

Q: How do you think METRAC reaches out to diverse communities to address the issue of authority and violence?

A: Within an anti-oppression framework, METRAC aims to make seeking help from social authorities more accessible to diverse communities, while also offering resources and workshops to help individuals examine some of the roles that authority and violence play within their own lives ... ReAct works to empower women and youth to examine their relationships with others and to become authors of their own choices. I think the workshops give participants the knowledge and tools to make healthier choices for themselves.

METRAC sends many thanks to Helen and our entire team of volunteers for their help.

Profile of a METRAC Board Member

The Board of Directors is an important aspect of METRAC. We interviewed Shelanda R. Wilson, one of our Board Members.

Q: How long have you been with METRAC as a Board member?

A: I have been involved as a Board Member at METRAC since January 2004 and I serve on the Communications Committee as well.

Q: What experiences and skills do you bring to the organization?

I've always had opinions about social issues, especially those critical to women's lives. I have great people skills; I have been involved in various communities over the years. I love people and I like being progressive. I have an in depth understanding of the lives of women and children in Toronto and am able to see the long-term effects of certain laws and how it will affect families. In the past I have been involved with the Canadian Cancer Society, Amnesty International's Letter Writing Campaign, and The Women's Action Network. Presently, I volunteer making sandwiches for needy kids across Toronto in day camps; we make up to eight hundred sandwiches at a time!

Q: Thus far, what has been one of your most rewarding experiences at METRAC?

One of my most rewarding experiences with METRAC is seeing a group of women from all races, ages, and social groups come together and commit to embracing communities in Toronto ...

Q: What are you hoping to see METRAC achieve in the future?

A: METRAC started something big in the early 80s when there were few real avenues for women facing violence; I want that to go on.

Platinum Films in partnership with
Woman Abuse Council, METRAC,
COSTI Immigrant Services,
Barbara Schlifer Clinic, and
Education Wife Assault present
a community film screening of



Looking
for
Angelina

A Feature Film Production by
Alessandra Piccone, Frank Caruso,
and Sergio Navarretta

Thursday September 22, 2005
at The Royal Cinema
608 College Street (near Euclid)
Tickets cost \$10.00

Introductions 6:35 PM
Film Screening 7:00-8:30 PM
Panel Presentation 8:30-9:15 PM

Info: 416-944-9242
wact@womanabuse.ca
www.lookingforangelina.com





It would be great to have more of our publications in different languages to reflect Toronto's diverse population. I think we're at a point where we need to make a banner and declare our presence and plans of actions.

Q: Do you see METRAC as an alternative resource to traditional channels of authority for people who are seeking to deal with violence in their own lives and in society? If so, how?

A: METRAC is definitely an alternative resource. To have an organization that solely focuses on promoting the rights of women and children to live free from violence and threats of violence is very non-traditional. People are afraid of violence; they don't want to talk about it and oftentimes, don't know how to deal with it. This coupled with the power of authority is even scarier. METRAC works with institutions like the courts, hospitals, police, and schools to promote awareness in diverse communities to reduce and eliminate violence.

Q: In what ways do you feel that METRAC, as an organization, tries to avoid taking on the traditional trappings of authority inherent in many existing systems?

A: First, METRAC is a feminist organization that deals with violence and oppression; there is no room for hierarchies. We have a Board of Directors made up of women from all walks of life, skills, and knowledge. One problem that small organizations often face is the need for funding and the conflicts that arise due to this need. We constantly remind ourselves what we are doing, why we are doing it and we always question if the organization truly reflects its own mission and values. Race, sexual identity, age, ability, income, and language barriers are just some of the issues that women and children in Toronto face. METRAC listens and takes the cue from communities, and from women, taking into account the law and also the diverse cultures in Toronto.

We thank Shelanda for her work on METRAC's Board, as well as all of our dedicated Board Members.

Photos & Graphics

Page 1: *Eye of the Storm 2* by Shelia Juan;
Hands 4: Holding a Poster by Davide
Guglielmo
Page 3: *Team* by Teak Sato
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Horvath
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(2005)

Thank you

for supporting METRAC

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Ontario Women's Directorate



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THE ONTARIO TRILLIUM FOUNDATION



LA FONDATION TRILLIUM DE L'ONTARIO



Donors



Volunteers & Interns

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New & Departing Staff

METRAC thanks Susannah Dainow, Izabela Stec, Hongli Wang, and departing ReAct Peer Facilitators for their hard work.

METRAC welcomes Puja Suri, Shahnaz Uddin, and our Summer Staff Members, Elizabeth Chen, David Lewis, and Christine Luza. Thank you for joining us!

Our Community Partners

METRAC thanks our many community partners (organizations and individuals) who have supported our programs and who are contributing their efforts to helping us make safer communities for women, youth, and children.

METRAC Membership Form

Please mail or fax completed form back to METRAC.

A non-tax deductible receipt will be sent to you. Thank you for getting involved!

- YES! I understand METRAC is committed to promoting the rights of diverse women and children to live free from violence, and I endorse this mission!**

Name: _____ Organization (if applicable): _____

Full Address: _____ Email: _____

Phone Number(s): _____ Fax Number: _____

- I'm a new member I'm a returning member Send me volunteer info

Annual Membership Options and Fees (choose one that applies):

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$10 (sliding scale \$0-\$10): youth 15-24, students, seniors, under/unemployed individuals | <input type="checkbox"/> For-profit organizations (one delegate can vote at AGM), based annual budget: |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$25: other individuals | \$50,000 or less: \$100 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$35: non-profit organizations (one delegate can vote at the AGM) | \$50,000 - \$1,000,000: \$250 |
| | \$1,000,000 or more: \$500 |

METRAC Donation Form

Please mail or fax this completed form to METRAC. A tax-deductible receipt will be sent to you. Donations of \$10 or more are fully tax receiptable. Thank you!

- YES! I want to support METRAC with a donation of (choose one):**

- \$10 \$25 \$50 \$100 \$200 Other: \$ _____

Name: _____ Email: _____

Full Mailing Address: _____

Phone Number(s): _____ Fax Number: _____

Payment Information (choose all that apply):

- Please send invoice I want my donation kept anonymous
- I am paying by cash – total enclosed: \$ _____
- I am paying by cheque, made payable to METRAC – total enclosed: \$ _____
- I am paying by Visa – total enclosed: \$ _____ Cardholder name: _____
Card number: _____ Exp. date on card: _____



158 Spadina Rd., Toronto
ON, Canada, M5R 2T8
www.metrac.org

Phone: 416-392-3135
Fax: 416-392-3136
info@metrac.org