

Economic Abuse

Economic abuse means having no access to the family's money. It implies that the abusive partner maintains control of the family finances, deciding without regard for the other person how the money is to be spent or saved, thereby reducing the woman to complete dependence for money to meet her personal needs. Even though a woman may live in a comfortable house, wear good clothing or have children who are well-equipped with toys and luxuries, she may have no control over what monies come into the family or over any decisions about what will be bought. Economic abuse can include withholding or restricting money needed for necessities like food or clothing, preventing her from getting or keeping a job, taking her money, denying her independent access to money or excluding her from financial decision-making.¹

"So I had to go to welfare because I wasn't able to go to work because he would find me ... and that was the one of the worst things I ever had to do in my life, one of the hardest things, I would rather starve to death. It affects your dignity, I feel that I have everything I need to go to work, I don't have to put my hand out for a handout, I've got to go to work and earn it [but it wasn't safe for me to do that]."

"So at the same time he was writing cheques on my business account and he was also collecting monies owing to the business and cashing them in as his own which literally bankrupted me ... he took all of the equipment from the business which was worth a fair amount of money and hid them so I couldn't sell them ... so I was faced with the dilemma of not only being in Transition House with five children but also the fact that I was totally bankrupt."

For many women the financial abuse continues after she has left the abusive relationship because her former partner withholds family money, she is unable to afford legal assistance to access family money or due to the nature or impact of the abuse, she is unable to work or to attain credit.

1. □ Prince Edward Island Woman Abuse Protocols, 2000

"I wasn't allowed to have money ... when I went to get the groceries, he'd give me the money, but I had to give him the receipt and the change."

"I found a part time job and he did everything in his power to keep me from taking this job, to the point of expecting and demanding that the person hiring me would have ... to phone him to see if it's okay, ... to say "is it all right that I hire your wife?"

Woman Abuse
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www.isn.net/~tha/womanabuseresearch/

The quotes in this document are from PEI women interviewed in 1999 during herStory of woman abuse and the PEI justice system, a project of the Woman Abuse and the PEI Justice System Research Team of the Muriel McQueen Fergusson Centre for Family Violence Research.