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Domestic assault program expanded

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A project aimed at determining whether a man accused of assaulting his spouse is a risk to reoffend is being expanded in Ontario over the next year.

A 13-point questionnaire was unveiled in January by the OPP, which, along with mental health experts, helped develop the Ontario Domestic Assault Risk Assessment.

It has been tested in recent months, before the formal launch of yesterday's pilot project in the North Bay area and Ottawa.

The OPP has spent the past 10 months training officers, crown attorneys and justices of the peace on the merits of the test — specifically designed for cases of men accused of assaulting women — and how to apply it when making decisions about whether men should be released from custody.

"The Ontario Domestic Assault Risk Assessment will help front-line police officers and prosecutors quickly determine whether an accused seeking bail is likely to commit another domestic assault," Community Safety Minister Monte Kwinter said in announcing the implementation of the pilot project in North Bay.

"Police or crown attorneys can then take appropriate action to protect the victim and her children."

The test consists of 13 questions that require a yes or no answer.

Included are questions about criminal history, substance use and whether the accused have previously violated any court orders barring them from contacting their victims.

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