

## Press Release

### For immediate release

#### THE CITY OF HAMILTON AND THE NIAGARA REGION DECLARE INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AN EPIDEMIC

Acknowledging that "intimate partner violence and gender-based violence are an epidemic" is much more than a symbolic metaphor to highlight the scale and severity of this problem at a societal level. It is a call to action to keep up the pressure on the province to recognize the need for adequate and stable funding for all organizations providing support services in the area of violence and sexual assault. This will require a significant financial investment and annual commitment to help change policies, mobilize resources and protect vulnerable people affected by this issue.

"In Ontario, nearly 47 municipalities, including Peel Region, Halton Region, the City of Ottawa and Renfrew County, have already declared intimate partner violence an epidemic," says Loubna Moric, Director of Violence Against Women Programs at Centre de santé communautaire Hamilton/Niagara (CSCHN).

"The City of Hamilton and the Niagara region have finally been added to this list. The Ontario government should understand the importance of this statement by continually reviewing the statistical evidence provided by organizations such as the Women Abuse Working Group in Hamilton (WAWG) and the Coalition to End Violence Against Women in Niagara (CEVAW) to ensure a continuum of services with adequate and stable funding. The large number of calls received by crisis lines, the high number of women without access to shelter due to the shortage of beds in emergency shelters, and the upward trend in statistical figures underscore the urgent need for action. In 2022, women's emergency shelters received 7,660 calls to their crisis lines, the Sexual Assault Centres received 1,973 calls to its crisis line, 4,498 women were unable to access shelter due to a shortage of beds, and the figures continue to rise in 2023."

Intimate partner and gender-based violence can take many forms, including physical violence, emotional abuse, sexual violence, financial coercion, and other forms of abusive behavior. It affects people of all ages, socio-economic backgrounds, sexual orientations and genders.

Moreover, femicide is often the end result of gender-based violence and abuse, and one of the unfortunate results of a system that does not take allegations of abuse and harassment seriously, a statistic on the rise in Ontario and Canada. A woman is killed by her current or former partner every six days. The most dangerous time for a woman in an abusive relationship is when she leaves, which is why support for victims and survivors is crucial during this period.

Many organizations, such as the CSCHN and its partners, are actively working to raise awareness of this issue, offer support to victims and survivors, and put in place strategies to prevent and combat intimate partner violence and gender-based violence.

"At the CSCHN, in our violence against women and sexual assault programs, we witness the strength, perseverance, resilience, determination and hope these women have to get on with their lives, heal and ultimately thrive. Our users are absolutely incredible, and I am in awe of them every day. This statement is a commitment to survivors to continue our efforts, to raise community awareness to change the mindsets and cultures that perpetuate gender-based violence. Women in our regions can contact us for personalized services in virtual or face-to-face mode, whether for information, therapeutic support or practical assistance," concludes Loubna Moric.

For further information, please contact

Loubna Moric, Interim Director

Program to end violence against women and sexual assault

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