

October 23, 2023

The Honourable Doug Ford, Premier of Ontario
Premier's Office
Room 281
Legislative Building, Queen's Park
Toronto, ON M7A 1A1

Dear Premier Ford:

RE: Motion to Recognize Gender-Based Violence as an Epidemic in Haldimand County

Please be advised that on October 16, 2023, Haldimand County Council adopted the following resolution:

WHEREAS gender-based violence (GBV) includes a wide scope of types abuse, including physical, sexual, emotional, spiritual, and financial abuse, violence, threats and control from a partner, former partner, family member, coworker, or acquaintance;

WHEREAS in Ontario and in our community, GBV is most likely to be experienced by a partner or former partner within the context of intimate partner violence (IPV);

WHEREAS there is a gender-based killing of a woman occurring in Ontario every week, with 42 femicides in Ontario between November 2022 and August 2023;

WHEREAS in 2015, Carol Culleton, Anastasia Kuzyk and Nathalie Warmerdam were killed in the rural community of Renfrew County;

WHEREAS in 2022 the jury of the Carol Culleton, Anastasia Kuzyk and Nathalie Warmerdam (CKW) Coroner's Inquest issued 86 recommendations to the Province of Ontario on Intimate Partner Violence;

WHEREAS recommendation #1 of the Inquest is for the Province of Ontario to declare Intimate Partner Violence an epidemic;

WHEREAS the Centre for Disease control defines an epidemic as an "occurrence in a community or region of cases of an illness, specific health-related behavior, or other health-related event clearly in excess of normal expectancy.";

WHEREAS on August 14th 2023, in official response to the CKW Inquest, the Federal Government of Canada declared GBV an epidemic that "has no place in our country.";

WHEREAS over one in three women in Canada aged 15 years and older will experience GBV in their lifetime;

WHEREAS Indigenous, Black and racialized survivors experience disproportionate rates of GBV and femicide, with 11.9% of femicide victims between November 2022 and August 2023 identified as Indigenous;

WHEREAS community members experiencing violence, or the threat of violence in rural communities often face increased barriers in relation to accessing support; and

WHEREAS GBV contributes to a wide range of negative and long-lasting health outcomes, including depression, anxiety, memory and concentration problems, neurological conditions and physical impairments;

WHEREAS the cost of GBV to municipalities includes those associated with ongoing use of justice, healthcare, social assistance, housing, and emergency services, while compounding pressure on already over extended systems;

WHEREAS gender-based violence is a major public health problem;

WHEREAS all types of GBV, including intimate partner violence and femicide are preventable with meaningful action by communities and community members;

AND WHEREAS between April 2021 and March 2022, Haldimand & Norfolk Women's Services (HNWS) received 632 crisis calls, 1130 counselling calls and provided community-based support to 611 families/youth/survivors and a safe place to stay for 116 survivors of GBV and their children, while also referring 227 survivors of violence seeking safe shelter elsewhere due to lack of capacity,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT Haldimand County Council:

- Recognizes the issues of GBV as serious to the health and wellness of community members, and the disproportionate rates of violence against Indigenous, Black and racialized women, girls, Two Spirit, trans, and gender-diverse individuals, with 11.9% of femicide victims between November 2022 and August 2023 identified as Indigenous;

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- Is committed to engaging with the H&N Justice for Women Review team to identify and pursue County service areas that could promote an increased awareness of community members related to GBV, IPV, and femicide and available supports;
 - Will work with H&N Justice for Women Review team to ensure trauma-informed GBV-focused awareness training is available to all Haldimand County employees;
 - Will advocate at all levels of government for the importance of GBV as an issue in our communities, and to prioritize and fund community-based, trauma-informed violence prevention strategies and supports; and
 - Declares, in accordance with Recommendation #1 of the 2022 CKW Inquest, that gender-based violence is an epidemic.

THAT Haldimand County will bring forth the following recommendations to the Haldimand-Norfolk Health and Social Services (H&SS) Advisory Committee, for consideration and further recommendation to the Board of Health for direction to:

- integrate GBV, with specific mentions of both IPV and femicide, into the Haldimand & Norfolk (H&N) Community Safety and Well-Being Plan, in alignment with #10 of the Renfrew County jury recommendations;
- commit to ongoing, meaningful engagement with the H&N Justice for Women Review team and local agencies providing GBV support, through quarterly consultations with the team focused on GBV;
- commit to continue to expand safe, reliable transportation services to assist individuals and families in accessing GBV-related supports;
- support and consider funding to train all public facing support positions within the H&SS team;

THAT Haldimand County will bring forth recommendations to the Haldimand County Police Services Board to bring focused attention on GBV and IPV statistics, and to follow-up on such statistics, when necessary, to encourage effective response to these issues;

AND THAT this resolution be circulated to The Honourable Doug Ford, Premier of Ontario; The Honourable Charmaine A. Williams, Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity; The Honourable Parm Gill, Minister of Red Tape Reduction; Bobbi Ann Brady, MPP; the Haldimand and Norfolk Board of Health; Haldimand County Ontario Provincial Police Detachment; the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities.

Should you require further information, please contact Megan Jamieson, General Manager, Corporate & Social Services at 905-318-5932, extension 6116.

Sincerely,



Evelyn Eichenbaum
Manager, Clerks Division / Municipal Clerk

EE/sst

cc Megan Jamieson, General Manager, Corporate & Social Services
The Honourable Charmaine A. Williams, Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity
The Honourable Parm Gill, Minister of Red Tape Reduction
Bobbi Ann Brady, Haldimand Norfolk MPP
The Haldimand and Norfolk Board of Health
Haldimand County Ontario Provincial Police Detachment
The Association of Municipalities of Ontario
The Federation of Canadian Municipalities
Haldimand Norfolk Health and Social Services Advisory Committee
Haldimand & Norfolk Justice for Women Review Team
Haldimand County Police Services Board