

September 14, 2023



Niagara Region  
Attn: Council Members and Regional Clerk  
1815 Sir Isaac Brock Way,  
Thorold, ON  
L2V 4T7

Subject: Request to Address the Council Regarding the Urgent Need to Declare Gender-Based Violence an Epidemic

Dear Council Members,

I am writing to request an opportunity to speak before the council at the upcoming meeting on September 21, 2023. Specifically, I would like to discuss the pressing need to declare gender-based violence an epidemic within our Region.

Gender-based violence or domestic violence remains a deeply entrenched issue that affects countless individuals and families within our community. It encompasses various forms of physical, emotional, and psychological abuse, typically occurring within the context of intimate partner relationships. The devastating consequences of gender-based violence extend beyond the immediate victims and impact our entire community. It is essential that we take this step to declare it as an epidemic to mobilize our collective efforts towards prevention, intervention, and support.

Here are a few of the reasons why it is imperative for the council to formally declare domestic violence as an epidemic:

1. **Visibility and Awareness:** A formal declaration of gender-based violence as an epidemic will shine a spotlight on the severity of the problem. It will help raise awareness and reduce the stigma surrounding domestic violence, encouraging survivors to seek help and foster a culture of prevention.
2. **Resource Allocation:** Epidemic status can facilitate the allocation of essential resources and funding to address domestic violence comprehensively. These resources can be channelled into support services, educational programs, crisis intervention, and outreach efforts.

3. Community Engagement: Such a declaration can encourage community-wide engagement in addressing gender-based violence. It signals that our community takes this issue seriously and is committed to creating a safe and supportive environment for all residents.

4. Preventative Measures: With an epidemic declaration, we can develop and implement proactive measures aimed at preventing gender-based violence. These measures can include public awareness campaigns, educational initiatives, and policies to promote healthy relationships.

5. Support for Victims: Victims of domestic violence often face barriers to accessing support and safety. An epidemic declaration can lead to the enhancement of victim assistance programs and the development of more robust crisis intervention services.

I kindly request the opportunity to speak before the council on behalf of Birchway Niagara to present more information and data regarding gender-based violence in Southern Niagara and to discuss the potential benefits of declaring it an epidemic. I believe that with the support of the council, we can take meaningful steps toward creating a safer community for all residents.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue, and I look forward to the opportunity to speak before the council.

Sincerely,



Jennifer Gauthier,  
Executive Director