

Recommendations from the Renfrew County Inquest and Declaration of Intimate Partner Violence as an Epidemic

WHEREAS the jury that adjudicated the Carol Culleton, Anastasia Kuzyk, and Nathalie Warmerdam Inquest (The Renfrew County 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 every six days in Canada a woman is killed by her intimate partner;

WHEREAS on any given night in Canada, more than 6,000 women and children sleep in shelters because it is not safe for them at home;

WHEREAS this past year in Ontario, 52 women or one every week, were victims of femicide;

WHEREAS violence against Indigenous women (including but not restricted to intimate partner violence) is a national crisis, as evidenced by the findings of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, with Indigenous women (61%) experiencing some form of intimate partner violence in their lifetime compared with non-Indigenous women (44%);

WHEREAS gender- and sexually-diverse Indigenous women are particularly at risk, being five times more likely than non-Indigenous gender- and sexually-diverse women to experience intimate partner violence in their lifetime;

WHEREAS in Niagara Region in 2022, there were 5,160 Intimate Partner Violence calls for service made to Niagara Regional Police Service and 1,143 of those calls involved criminal investigations;

WHEREAS for the 2022-2023 fiscal year, Victim Services Niagara provided service to 749 victims of intimate partner violence, including 31 children; developed 91 safety plans for victims and had to revise 55 of those safety plans due to breaches;

WHEREAS for the 2022-2023 fiscal year, Victim Services Niagara provided service to 227 victims of sexual violence;

WHEREAS for the 2022-2023 fiscal year, Birchway Niagara received 2,571 crisis calls; supported 575 women through outreach services; 233 women and children stayed in shelter; and 278 women were turned away due to a lack of space;

WHEREAS for the 2022-2023 fiscal year, Gillian's Place received 10,383 crisis calls; supported 2,017 people through outreach services; 166 adults and 127 children lived in shelter; and 431 people were turned away due to lack of space;

WHEREAS violence against women costs the national justice system, health care systems, social service agencies, and municipalities nearly \$10 billion dollars per year; and municipalities are on the front lines in addressing gender-based violence;

WHEREAS more than 40 municipalities and regions across Ontario have declared a gender-based violence and/or intimate partner violence epidemic;

WHEREAS on August 16, 2023, Justice Minister Arif Virani described gender-based violence as an epidemic and stated this his government is committed to ending the gender-based violence epidemic “in all its forms, and is working to address any gaps in the Criminal Code to ensure a robust justice system response;”

WHEREAS on August 20, 2023, Ontario Big City Mayors (OBCM) and Mayors and Regional Chairs of Ontario (MARCO) passed a motion declaring intimate partner violence and gender-based violence epidemic; called on the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM), the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO), and all municipalities and regions in Ontario and Canada to do the same; and called for changes to the Criminal Code; and

WHEREAS Niagara Regional Council recognizes that issues of gender-based violence and intimate partner violence are matters of local importance, including public health, EMS, community services, and community safety, in all of our communities.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

1. That Niagara Region **RECOGNIZE** the issues of gender-based violence and intimate partner violence in Niagara as serious to the health and wellness of local residents and their families;
2. That Niagara Region **COMMIT** to engaging with community partners to educate and support our residents about the seriousness and long-term danger of violence in our communities;
3. That Niagara Regional Council **DECLARE**, in accordance with Recommendation #1 of the Renfrew County Inquest, that intimate partner violence and gender-based violence are epidemic;
4. That the Regional Chair **WRITE** a letter to The Honourable Doug Ford, Premier of Ontario requesting that the Province of Ontario re-consider their previous decision and declare intimate partner violence and gender-based violence as epidemic and act on all of 86 Recommendations from The Renfrew County Inquest;

5. That a copy of this motion **BE SENT** to each of Niagara's 12 Local Area Municipalities requesting they endorse the declaration of intimate partner violence and gender-based violence as epidemic; and
6. That a copy of this motion **BE SENT** to The Honourable Arif Virani, Minister of Justice; 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; Niagara four MPs; Niagara's four MPPs; the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO); the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM); Mayors and Regional Chairs of Ontario (MARCO); and Ontario's Big City Mayors (OBCM).