

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Monday, November 5th 2018

**CORNERSTONE SHELTER OPERATING OVER CAPACITY AND STRUGGLING
TO KEEP UP WITH DEMAND**

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY - Within the first eight months of 2018, 106 women and girls were killed in Canada, as a result of gender based violence. On average, this means that one woman or girl is killed every other day in this country, with almost half of the femicide victims being killed in their homes; this means that women are at greatest risk where they should feel safest.

Violence against women is an issue that is far too prevalent in our world today, and the demand for Cornerstone's services is reaching historic rates.

Cornerstone's shelter program is now at a point where we are turning away more women and children than we are able to provide service to in a year; we are also turning down more requests than we accept to provide education to youth and the community about prevention on topics such as consent, harassment and supporting survivors. During the #MeToo movement, the need for public education and support services is so high and having adequate supports is vastly important.

"Declining an offer to discuss prevention or having to turn away women and children is not the place Cornerstone wishes to be," says Cornerstone Executive Director, Nancy Johnston. "But this is our current reality as the shelter has operated over 100 per cent capacity for 4 out of the last 5 years, going as high as 134 per cent," Johnston adds.

At this peak time in history when there is an interest from the community, and society, about the issues surrounding gender based violence, and at a time when Cornerstone's services are needed most, no one can afford to be declining or denied service.

"Often, a woman has struggled to decide whether or not she's going to open up to anybody about what's happened to her. When she is ready she reaches out and is told that there are no rooms, or there is a wait time to get in to see someone, she may never resurface again," says Johnston. "The strength and courage it takes a woman to reach out just once, this may have been that moment to make a connection and now it is lost."

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To break the cycle of violence, and to alleviate the stresses on our shelter system, it is imperative to bring domestic violence further into the open, and let go of the stereotypes and misconceptions that allow people to believe it couldn't happen to them, or here in Northumberland County. The roots of domestic violence are deep and broad, surpassing the bounds of culture, economics, race or gender, and defying stereotypes of what an abuser or victim looks like.

On the heels of #MeToo and #TimesUp we need to show our support and create opportunities for dialogue between activists, policy-makers and the public, now more than ever. We need to have conversations about domestic violence and abuse, and recommit ourselves to understanding that we have an obligation, as a community, to care about the issue of gender based violence – not just when it is a personal experience, not just when it happens to someone you know, but when it occurs in our own community.

As a community, we need to stand together and understand that family violence is a community issue, which requires community solutions. We owe it to the victims and family members to do a better job in preventing these tragedies, and we owe it to ourselves to make every effort we can to create a violence free future where hope can take root and grow.

November is Woman Abuse Prevention Month. It is every woman and girls fundamental right to live in safety and security in her home and community – free from the threat of violence. Cornerstone encourages the community to participate in the provincial wide campaign Wrapped In Courage by purchasing a purple scarf or tie. The purple scarves and ties are a symbol of courage and show women and their children that their community supports them and they are not alone. Scarves and ties are for sale for \$20 at Cornerstone, 40 Swayne St. in Cobourg.

If you, or someone you love, are struggling with abuse, stand up and seek support any time of the day by connecting with our 24-hour support line: 905-372-0746.

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For more information please contact,

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