



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

# Violence Against Women Shelters Face Unprecedented COVID-19 Crisis

York Region, March 18, 2020 — Sandgate Women's Shelter of York Region provides 24-hour services, including shelter, counselling, crisis lines, and advocacy to hundreds of women and children each year across the region.

Amidst the current pandemic of COVID-19, Violence Against Women (VAW) Shelters in Ontario are also responding to the existing Gender-Based Violence Pandemic. We know survivors of gender-based violence are most at-risk of violence in their own homes. We are facing a **complicated and unprecedented situation**, when **"self-isolating at home"** is both the primary advice to respond to our **current public health crisis, yet the most common location of harassment, violence and lethality for women and children** experiencing or at risk of gender-based violence.

All Violence Against Women Shelter's in Ontario have received directives from local public health authorities to create and implement screening plans. Each shelter in Ontario offers a range of services responding to the unique needs of their communities that will need to reflect a new and changing context over the coming weeks. Shelters will continue to receive the advice of The Public Health Agency of Canada; Ministry of Health Ontario, Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services; and, local public health units, as we work through these unprecedented times and do our best to keep women and their children safe in Ontario.

Our shelters may require support from our community over the coming weeks through donations of essential items and financial donations to assist in our day-to-day operations. Please visit [sandgate.ca](http://sandgate.ca) for contact information, to make a donation or for more information about how you can support the women and children in our shelters.

If you're seeking safety from a harmful situation, please reach out by calling our 24 hour crisis/support line at 1-800-661-8294, or call 911 if you're in immediate danger.

To talk with someone immediately about your safety needs and safety planning you can also contact the following confidential and anonymous provincial crisis lines.

1. [Assaulted Women's Helpline](http://www.assaultedwomen.ca) 1-866-863-0511
2. [Talk4Healing](http://www.talk4healing.ca) 1-855-554 HEAL
3. [Fem'aide](http://www.fem'aide.ca) 1-877-336-2433 (French language assistance)

### For media inquiries, please contact:

Michelle Smith, Executive Director

[MichelleS@sandgate.ca](mailto:MichelleS@sandgate.ca)

905-722-4043

P.O. Box 248, Sutton West, ON L0E 1R0 | [www.sandgate.ca](http://www.sandgate.ca) | Tel: (905) 722-4043 | Fax: (905) 722-8416 [info@sandgate.ca](mailto:info@sandgate.ca)