

Women’s Place of South Niagara Inc.

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**WOMEN’S PLACE TO PROVIDE IMPROVED SERVICES TO WOMEN AND CHILDREN EXPERIENCING ABUSE BY COMBINING ITS EMERGENCY SHELTERS**

NIAGARA FALLS, ON, September 8, 2021 –– As the demand for domestic violence services continues to increase each year in South Niagara, the need for shelter beds has never been greater. This is why, earlier this year, Women’s Place started work on an expansion project that will double the size of their Niagara Falls shelter from a 20-bed to a 40-bed facility. This larger building, which is expected to be completed in the spring of 2022, is part of the agency’s plan to consolidate all of its emergency shelter services under one roof and increase their total shelter capacity by 25%, resulting in fewer women being turned away due to lack of space. The expanded location will provide safe shelter for women and children from all of South Niagara’s communities, including Welland, Niagara Falls, Fort Erie, Port Colborne, Wainfleet and Pelham. Serenity Place, the agency’s 10-bed shelter in Welland, will close its doors in early 2022.

“While the decision to close the Welland shelter was a difficult one,” explains Women’s Place Board President Teresa Quinlin, “we realized after looking at multiple options that continuing to operate two shelters was unsustainable. By placing all of our emergency shelter beds in Niagara Falls, where we have the space to expand, there will be fewer overhead expenses and less duplication of services, allowing us to ensure that more resources are available to help women and children experiencing domestic violence in our community.”

The move to combine the shelters also means that Women’s Place will be able to improve the safety of its staff and clients. For instance, the staffing resources required to operate two facilities has meant that, for some shifts, each location has only one frontline worker available. It will now be possible ensure that at least two counsellors will be in the shelter at all times.

The consolidation will also reduce some of Women’s Place’s reliance on fundraising. While the agency still hopes to raise over $550,000 annually in donations and grants, fewer of these dollars will be spent on existing programs and shelter expenses. With fewer pressures on the operational budget, Women’s Place will be able to look at using some of its fundraising revenue to expand its services to better support women and children across South Niagara.

One of the areas that the organization is committed to expanding is its outreach services at its offices in Port Colborne and Fort Erie. Women’s Place will also open a new outreach office in Welland to ensure that women in that community continue to have local domestic violence supports when Serenity Place closes its doors. Outreach counselling staff will assist women with safety planning, counselling, legal support, housing support and other critical services.

“Decades ago, the community of Welland came together to support women and children experiencing domestic violence by bringing Serenity Place into being (which was originally known as “Women’s Place (Welland & District) Inc.,” explains Executive Director, Jennifer Gauthier. “We plan to continue the important work that was started in that community by making sure as many women as possible find the help they need. We look forward to continuing to work with our donors and partners in Welland, and across South Niagara, and are grateful for their support.”

The agency is extremely grateful to the financial supporters who have made this expansion possible, including the Wise Guys Charitable Fund, the Niagara Community Foundation, the Branscombe Family Foundation, the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation, a very generous anonymous donor, and a thoughtful member of our community who made a considerable legacy gift in their Will.

For additional information about this project and its impact on our community, please contact Executive Director, Jennifer Gauthier at 905-356-3933 ext. 223 or [execdir@wpsn.ca](mailto:execdir@wpsn.ca). We also invite you to visit our website at [www.womensplacesn.org](http://www.womensplacesn.org) or our [Media Relations](https://womensplacesn.org/about/media-relations/) page for more information about Women’s Place.

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