



## MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MR# 2020005

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RE: Family Violence Prevention Week proclaimed in the Town of Amherst

**AMHERST, Nova Scotia** – Mayor David Kogon has declared Feb. 9, 2020, to Feb. 15, 2020, as Family Violence Prevention Week in the Town of Amherst.

“Family violence, in its many forms, affects all people in the Cumberland region,” Kogon said as he signed the proclamation. “It causes physical and psychological harm, violates the victim’s rights and freedoms, and harms the healthy development of children.

“It is a public health issue, a criminal justice issue and a human rights issue. That is why I invite all the citizens of the Town of Amherst to share in the responsibility of ending the silence surrounding family violence by addressing violence in all its forms because we all benefit from a safe community.”



Sarah MacMaster and Dawn Ferris, members of the Cumberland County Interagency Committee on Family and Sexual Violence witnessed Mayor David Kogon proclaim Feb. 9, 2020, to Feb. 15, 2020, as Family Violence Prevention Week in the Town of Amherst. (Tom McCoag / Town of Amherst)

Sarah MacMaster, chair of the Cumberland Count Interagency Committee on Family and Sexual Violence and executive director of Maggie’s Place Family Resource Centre, and Dawn Ferris, the executive director of Autumn House and a committee member, witnessed the



proclamation signing.

“Family Violence Awareness Week is the one week each year that we can bring awareness to the issues around family violence, which includes elder abuse, child abuse, parent abuse, spousal abuse and sibling abuse,” Ferris said. “It is any form of physical, emotional, mental or financial abuse that happens within a home and can be caused by any family member.

“In Cumberland County, we want all homes to be violence free. Highlighting all the different forms of abuse is an important component to educating the public.”

Ferris noted there are resources available within the Cumberland region for anyone wanting help. Among those resources is Autumn House.

While the primary mandate of the house deals with domestic/intimate partner violence, Ferris said there is still an urgent need to address all types of family violence because it remains very prevalent in today’s society.

Pointing to the work her organization does as an example, Ferris said, “From May of last year until December 2019, Autumn House was in ‘overflow’ more often than not. That means we turn the living room into a bedroom, and we had more children stay at Autumn House with their moms than we’ve had since I began in December 2017.

“That is not a good trend at all.

“The more we can make it easier for people to talk about family violence in all its forms, the more likelihood victims will seek help.”

MacMaster agreed.

“Family violence affects more people than you think and the cost to children, families, workplaces and communities can have devastating effects,” MacMaster said.

“Community members, neighbours, employers and co-workers play a crucial role in eradicating family violence by learning what signs to look for and how to safely intervene.”

Family Violence Prevention Week is promoted by the Interagency Committee on Family and Sexualized Violence, a collaboration of the RCMP, the Amherst Police Department, the Department of Justice, Public Health, the local ministerial association, Mental Health, Autumn House, New Directions, Victim Services, Maggie’s Place, Nova Scotia Community College, the Cumberland Sexual Health Centre, the Cumberland Sexual Violence Outreach Program, the Community Bystander Empowerment Project, Addiction Services and Restorative Justice.

The committee has been working for more than two decades to make people aware of the harm family violence causes as well as the resources in the community that support



those impacted by family violence.

Autumn House's crisis line is 902-667-1200. It is a 24-hour service for people dealing with an abusive relationship.

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