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## **COVID-19 online chat and text service expanding to serve the LGBTQ2S+ community and Lanark County**

**September 29, 2020 (Ottawa)** — Ottawa's safe text and chat line for people living with domestic violence and abuse is pleased to announce that it will offer its services to more people in need and extend operations to March 2021. **Unsafe at Home Ottawa** launched in April 2020 at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic to give women trapped at home with their abusers a safe way to access help while in isolation.

United Way East Ontario, Crime Prevention Ottawa and Women's Shelters Canada are providing additional funding so the service can continue through the winter months. The service will now also be offered to members of the LGBTQ2S+ community who are experiencing violence in the home, with the support of Kind Space.

"It is often difficult for members of LGBTQ2S+ communities to report intimate partner violence to police because they fear stigmatization around revealing their sexuality," says Carling Miller, Executive Director of Kind Space. "Yet we know that 1 in 3 of them will experience violence in their relationships. Unsafe at Home Ottawa gives them a safe place to turn to for support."

Since April, Unsafe at Home Ottawa has held nearly 700 secure text and chat sessions, with staff from Ottawa Victim Services, Western Ottawa Resource Centre, Interval House of Ottawa and the Eastern Ottawa Resource Centre providing bilingual support and offering resources. Available 7 days a week from 8:30 am to midnight, the service uses encrypted technology to ensure that conversations are confidential and secure.

"With today's announcement, we are also welcoming new service partners and expanding our service to Lanark County," explains Keri Lewis, Executive Director, Interval House of Ottawa. "We're thrilled to welcome the support and expertise of the Western Ottawa Resource Centre, KIND Space and Lanark County Victim Services to Unsafe at Home Ottawa."

Crime Prevention Ottawa and the Ottawa Coalition to End Violence Against Women (OCTEVAW) played key leadership roles in the launch of the service.

**Unsafe at Home Ottawa - Text (613) 704-5535**  
**Chat online [unsafeathomeottawa.ca](https://www.unsafeathomeottawa.ca)**

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