March 27, 2008

Town of South Bruce Peninsula
315 George Street
Box 310
Wiarton, Ontario
NOH 2T0

Dear Mayor G. Gilbert & Council Members:

Women and children fleeing an abusive relationship count on the Women’s House Serving Bruce & Grey to be their shelter in their moments of crisis. We provide shelter and services to women and children fleeing abusive relationships. We rely on donors like the Town of South Bruce Peninsula to help us.

The need for a structure to help provide safe shelter for women and their children experiencing violence in their homes was identified in the early 1980’s through the grassroots community. The Women’s House Serving Bruce & Grey incorporated in June of 1984 and the house opened in 1985 with the majority of funding coming from the Ministry of Community and Social Services the remainder from annual fundraising activities.

The physical shelter is located in the town of Kincardine. We serve all of Bruce County (4,155 square kilometers *) with our Residential and Community programs and areas of Grey County (4,508 square kilometers *) with our Community Counselling Program. Women’s House is a 13 bed residential emergency shelter with free, confidential in house and outreach counselling services covering a large geographic area. The Women’s House is currently serving a population of approximately 65,500* in Bruce County and 92,500* in Grey County. We are a non-profit corporation governed by a volunteer board of directors, employ thirty-one staff and approximately fifty volunteers.

Since our incorporation we have seen the shelter program, use of our crisis lines and occupancy has grown immensely. We operate 3 crisis lines. A local line and a 1-800 line for all of the 519 area allocated for abuse clients. Our third line is for sexual assault clients. All lines are for free confidential counselling and operate 24/7. Programs that have been added since our opening include:

- **Transition Worker.** This program is to ease the transition from the shelter to a violence free life in the community & working with other agency referrals. The program assists with referrals, housing, furnishings and a multitude of other concerns.
- **Child Witness Worker - Bruce County.** The program started in 2001 to support children who have witnessed the abuse of their mother. This is counselling done on a one on one basis to help children give voice to their feelings and concerns about the abuse the witness. The counsellor also gives support and guidance to the mothers while their children go through their process. This counselor travels to schools throughout Bruce County that call for our service.
- **Child Witness Worker-Grey County.** A newer part of a continuing program in 2005 is the Child Witness Worker operating in the Owen Sound area. This program in Grey County provides the same program as in Bruce County.

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Working towards awareness and elimination of violence
2. **Community Counselling-Bruce County.** The program offers free and confidential in Port Elgin, Kincardine, Walkerton, Wiarton, and Hanover. This allows a woman to access counselling services in her community when she may not require our residential service. She can explore all her concerns within easier reach of her own community or a neighbouring community.

**Community Counselling-Grey County.** In 2005 Women's House assumed the delivery of community counselling in Grey County. The communities we have offices in include Meaford, Durham, Markdale, and Owen Sound. We offer the same confidential free service as in Bruce County.

**Support Groups for Abused Women & Children.** We offer these groups where needed so they move around the communities we serve where the numbers indicate they are needed. Groups include "Pattern Changes", "Rebuilding when the Relationship ends" or child groups through our Child Witness Program. Most of these groups run for 8 to 10 weeks.

**Community Development.** The addition of a Community Development Program in the early years of Women's House has helped to educate the public on our services, their vital need and how Women's House can help women and children in crisis. We educate the public through public speaking engagements and presentations to area organizations and public groups. Education is part of our mission statement. We have a number of requests throughout the year for this service.

**Volunteer Program.** We have a volunteer board of directors, volunteer drivers and a number of other volunteers that perform a variety of tasks as photocopying, answering business phones and doors, help with donations and admail campaigns, maintenance and a host of other duties. This program has been functioning since 1984.

**Sexual Assault Counselling.** On July 1, 2006 the Ministry of the Attorney General awarded this program to the Women's House. This is free and confidential counselling for women with sexual assault issues and has safe locations throughout Bruce and Grey Counties to help women with issues of sexual assault.

**OUR CAPITAL COMMUNITY PROJECT: SECOND STAGE HOUSING.**

Currently Women's House is only able to offer emergency shelter but needs to provide more permanent forms of housing. The length of time a woman can stay in the shelter has been increased from 6 weeks to approximately 3 months, in some cases, due to a lack of affordable, secure longer term housing in Bruce County. Studies have shown that there is a great need for affordable and safe housing for abused women and their children. According to Statistics Canada, Bruce County has a lower average and median household income than both the provincial and national averages.

Second Stage housing is safe, secure affordable housing for up to a year after the initial crisis phase that we service through our shelter program. Each facility will consist of 4 apartment units, a supervised play area and a secured entrance. The transition from second stage housing to permanent housing will be easier and most beneficial to all users. It will also help them learn to become more independent, confident and self-reliant.

Second Stage Housing allows the women and families to access secure housing and further counselling and support provided by our outreach workers while going through a difficult time. Our first build is in the spring of 2008 in Port Elgin. Other builds will follow in Wiarton, Kincardine and Walkerton. Each unit will cost approximately $580,000 to build. We have already had commitments of some lands, fees, community & corporate sources and some building supplies for this initiative.
3.

The Canada–Ontario Affordable Housing Program is our major funding source for this project. We are working on securing and have secured more commitments from municipal, provincial and private sources to accomplish the completion of this project. But our need for this project is on-going also.

This is a special multi-year project for our county. Bruce County is one of the few counties in Southwestern Ontario that has no second stage housing. Our goal with this project is to be mortgage free and therefore allowing more affordable rent to the women and children residents starting their new life safe from abuse.

Women’s House continues to grow both in physical size and in programs offered. Funding for our shelter and outreach programs comes from the Ministry of Community & Social Services and from our own fundraising. Our fundraising goal in this fiscal year of 2008-2009 for the shelter programs is $138,000 year. The Ministry of the Attorney General funds our Sexual Assault program. We depend on community support and donations to keep our services operating. We are also depending on community support and donations to help build our Second Stage Housing Capital Project and provide services there. Dollars raised this year will go to enhance our shelter programs or towards our Second Stage Housing Project.

Now that you have some history and information about on-going programs and our current project we hope the Town of South Bruce can help. Women’s House Serving Bruce & Grey is respectfully requesting the Town of South Bruce for help with a donation of $10,000.

I would like to thank you for your consideration of this letter and look forward to hearing from you. Please contact me if you have any further questions.

Yours respectfully,

[Signature]

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*From Statistics Canada 2006*