

Family Transition Place holds a candlelight vigil recognizing victims of gender based violence

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Family Transition Place (FTP) held an outdoor ceremony to recognize the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women on Thursday, Dec. 4. The gathering recognized that gender based violence remains an ongoing crisis across Canada and beyond.

A moment of silence was held shortly after the start of the ceremony, a vigil for women killed for simply being women. Candles were lit for the memorial.

Lynette Pole-Langdon, a board member for FTP, thanked those in attendance for their moment of silence.

"Thank you, everyone, for recognizing that moment of silence, but lighting the candles reminds us that today isn't just about remembrance, it's a call to action," she said. "Over the past few years, we've seen some important shifts. Municipalities, including our own, have declared gender based violence an epidemic."

"I think we all here tonight agree that women, children, and families deserve far more than the management of violence. There really is so much work still to be done. We see it every day. The sad reality is our services remain chronically underfunded," Pole-Langdon added.

Despite the funding gap, Pole-Langdon thanked the shelter's supporters, whose time and money have helped keep it running, despite a lack of funding.

The evening ceremony then shifted, with shelter supervisor Tiffany McMillan coming forward to recognize and honour the victims of the École Polytechnique massacre in 1989. She said that since that massacre, violence against women has remained a deeply rooted problem in society.

"Thank you, everyone, for recognizing the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence against Women and pausing while we remember the 14 young women who lost their lives at École Polytechnique," she said. "We also recognize the many women, girls and gender diverse peoples whose lives continue to be shaped or lost because of gender-based violence in Canada."

She continued by reminding those in attendance that while the statistics can paint a grim picture, it's important to remember that every number is a person, a woman, a child, families that have to sacrifice so much just to be at peace. But with real action and support, the cycle can be broken,

"One in three women in Canada will experience intimate partner violence in their lifetime. Every six days, on average, a woman is killed by her intimate partner. These are more than statistics for our shelter. These are people coming to us for support. Gender-based violence is preventable, and it takes all of us. It requires sustained investments, and it requires the courage to speak openly about a problem that thrives in silence."

Pole-Langdon continued by calling out all the supporters of the shelter, whose support and advocacy have been instrumental in their mission.

"We feel so blessed that we have our wonderful volunteers and our wonderful community that supports us," Pole-Langdon said. "We appreciate all our donors that stand beside and support us, and all of you that came out here in the freezing cold."

She continued by making a call to action to the community.

“Each of us here has a role to play, whether you're a door, a volunteer, a neighbor, a parent, a service provider, anyone that believes we should all have a safer future,” she said. “Your voice, your advocacy, your willingness to stay engaged matters. We need coordinated, sustained, and structural change. We need to refuse anything less than safety, dignity and justice for every woman, every child, and every survivor.”

Family Transition Place concluded its Dec. 4 ceremony with a heartfelt message - no matter how reality might seem, there is always hope and a light at the end of the tunnel. Gender-based violence is not an invincible reality. It can be challenged, changed, and prevented.

FTP provides critical services to women and their children who have experienced abuse and unhealthy relationships. These services include shelter services for those who need to leave home, counseling services, and outreach campaigns to educate and inform.

For more information, go to FTP's website at familytransitionplace.ca.