

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Women's Crisis Services of Waterloo Region Launches New Partnership with Loblaw and Shoppers Drug Mart to Ensure Safety for Women in the Community

[Kitchener, May 7th, 2024] – In an effort to help women, gender-diverse individuals and children move beyond violence, Women's Crisis Services of Waterloo Region (WCSWR) is proud to announce a new partnership called *Ask for Angela* with Canada's leading grocery and pharmacy retailer, Loblaw Companies Ltd ("Loblaw"). This innovative initiative marks the local adaptation of the highly successful *Ask for Angela* campaign, originally established in the United Kingdom in 2016.

The program revolves around discreetly approaching staff members at participating Loblaw and Shoppers Drug Mart venues and requesting "Angela" as a code-phrase. This will signal to staff that the individual needs support. Promptly and compassionately, staff members will guide the person to a secure and private location, allowing for open dialogue and an accurate assessment of their needs. Women's Crisis Services of Waterloo Region will be contacted for support. Women's Crisis Services has various partnerships in the community for referrals and to ensure those experiencing violence are getting the support they need including the Sexual Assault Support Centre's Anti-Human Trafficking program.

One in three women worldwide will experience either physical or sexual violence and over the past four years, violence has been increasing and escalating across Ontario. Since 2020, there has been a marked increase in the level of violence and injury to victims attending the hospital in Waterloo Region, including higher rates of assault with a weapon, strangulation, and forcible confinement.

"The more community awareness that is available, the more we can wraparound survivors of domestic violence to ensure their safety," said Jennifer Hutton, CEO of Women's Crisis Services, "*Ask for Angela* is providing women the opportunity to connect with local services to help support them in moving beyond violence."

"We're proud to be the first retailer in Canada to introduce *Ask for Angela* and offer a safe place for women, gender-diverse individuals and children who are urgently affected by violence," said Dean Henrico, SVP Asset Protection, Loblaw Companies Ltd. "WCSWR provides critical services that empower survivors to move beyond violence, and we couldn't think of a better partner for our *Ask for Angela* expansion to the Waterloo Region."

The *Ask for Angela* campaign has garnered widespread recognition throughout Europe for its remarkable ability to assist individuals who feel unsafe, vulnerable, or threatened. Through its collaboration with Loblaw and its stores – including Real Canadian Superstore, Loblaws, Shoppers Drug Mart, No Frills, Valu-Mart and Independent Grocers, WCSWR aims to extend the reach of this program to Waterloo Region, ensuring the safety and protection of women and children across the Waterloo Region.

By working together, WCSWR and Loblaw can foster a safer and more empowered community where everyone feels protected and supported.

For further information or to schedule a media interview please contact:

Lillie Proksch (*she/her*)

Prevention and Community Engagement Specialist

(519) 741-9184 ex 2012 | lillie.proksch@wcswr.org

24 Hour Support: (519) 742-5894 | (519) 653-2422

Loblaw Companies Limited

pr@loblaw.ca

About Women's Crisis Services of Waterloo Region:

WCSWR empowers women, gender-diverse individuals and children to move beyond violence through the provision of emergency shelter, transitional housing, education and outreach services. WCSWR operates two shelters, Anselma House in Kitchener and Haven House in Cambridge, in addition to offering regional outreach services and transitional housing. The organization serves women and children from all cities and townships in Waterloo Region.