

Although it's unknown how much will filter down to agencies like theirs, Watson is optimistic specifics will be revealed soon.

In the meantime, every effort is being taken to ensure the women and their children — as well as the staff — at Victoria's Shelter are safe.

In addition to following the Ministry of Health's COVID-19 recommendations, Watson said the agency is now conducting outreach counselling by phone and videoconference instead of face-to-face and group sessions.

"We also have the capacity that, if someone did present with the virus, we can isolate them and work with public health and other health-care providers to ensure their needs are being met — while keeping others safe as well."

Unfortunately, said Watson, COVID-19 doesn't just pose health risks.

"This is unusual. No one's ever had to go through this and, because of that, the potential for increased violence in the home is there," said Watson. "There are so many unknowns. People are out of work, the financial implications could be severe and it's compounding the stress that is already there."

Watson encourages any women who need help to call the agency's 24-hour crisis line at [705-878-3662](tel:705-878-3662) or [1-800-565-5350](tel:1-800-565-5350) for support and safe options.