



November 6th, 2018

Dear Members of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women,

We understand that the Committee is conducting a study on the network of shelters and transition houses serving women and children affected by violence against women and intimate partner violence and that it will examine:

- the current gap between the need for and available beds in shelters and transition houses;
- current federal programs and funding in support of shelters and transition houses; and
- possible solutions to address the gap between need and supply.

I am writing from the Ontario Association of Interval & Transition Houses. We are a province-wide association of 75 women's shelters, transitional housing and community-based women's organizations. OAITH's work is focused on government relations & advocacy, research, training and resource development and public awareness. Our members provide immediate shelter and transitional housing, legal, outreach, counselling and housing navigation for women and their children who've experienced violence. ***In the last year (17/18), shelters funded through the Ministry of Community and Children's Services have served:***

- 11,000 women and 6,800 children in shelter
- 40,000 women and 3,400 children received services through shelter and non-shelter counselling programs.
- Sadly, we've seen an increase of 6,000 crisis calls from women on our provincial crisis lines in the last 12 months, likely due to waiting lists and an urgent need for support, with a crisis line being the only option.

Further to this, we know that women accessing shelter require a number of supports due to the number of systems that become involved in their life because of the violence that's been perpetrated against them. ***Client Satisfaction Survey Data administered through the Ministry of Community and Children's Services outlines the following:***

- Women are accessing 2 or more services 29% of the time
- Women are accessing 5-7 services 39% of the time
- Women are accessing 8-9 services 22% of the time.

It is our understanding that shelters and transition houses do not have equitable funding across the provinces and territories. The work we do is imperative; the lives of women and children are literally at stake. We provide more than just safe shelter from abuse. As you know, in Canada, a woman is killed by

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her partner or former partner every 6 days. ***In Ontario, an average of 30 women are murdered by current/former partner every 12 months, or every 2 weeks.***

We are writing with the following recommendations:

- Given that violence against women is at an epidemic level, shelters and transition houses serving women and children affected by violence against women must be recognized as an essential service.
- Shelters and transition houses are currently grossly under-funded. We recommend a significant increase in core and sustainable funding. This funding should increase the number of beds and shelters available but must also cover staffing and service provision. Building a shelter without providing for its staffing is not helpful.
- We support Women's Shelters Canada's call for a National Action Plan. The Government of Canada should develop a National Action Plan in line with the United Nations recommendations. This National Action Plan, like the National Housing Strategy, should cover the Federal government as well as provincial/territorial governments. In Canada in 2018, every woman should have access to comparable services no matter where she lives.

We invite a member of the Committee to visit one of our member shelters in Ontario, when you are in our area and/or to connect with us by phone should you have any questions or clarifications about the work we do.

Sincerely,

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