



November 15, 2018

To: Members of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, [FEWO@parl.gc.ca](mailto:FEWO@parl.gc.ca)  
From: Marie-Claude Bouchard, Centre féminin du Saguenay, Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean  
Ph: 418-549-8058 Email: [directrice@cfsaguenay.com](mailto:directrice@cfsaguenay.com)

Re: The pressing need for safe houses for abused women

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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 the committee is going to focus on:

- 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 to you on behalf of the Centre féminin du Saguenay. We are a safe house with eleven (11) beds, located in Saguenay, in the borough of Chicoutimi. We mostly serve women and children affected by violence. Last year, we served 159 women (and 37 children) with accommodation services and more than 100 women with external services. Unfortunately, we turned away 160 women and children because we had no available space when they called.

In our view, safe houses do not receive equitable funding from one province or territory to another. In our case, we have seen no increase in our grants for more than 10 years. Our grants are simply indexed by an average of 1%, which is clearly inadequate to meet the needs of our public. The work that we do is essential, the lives of women and children are literally at stake. We provide more than a simple refuge from the violence, important though that is. As you know, in Canada, a woman is killed by her partner or ex-partner every 6 days. As well as ensuring the safety of women and children, we also provide programs such as in-house and external support groups, individual assistance services, awareness workshops for the general public, for various social groups, and for young people in order to prevent and defuse situations of violence in intimate relationships.

We have the following recommendations for you:

- Whereas violence against women continues at the level of an epidemic, we recommend that shelters and transition houses for abused women and their children must be recognized as an essential service.
- Currently, shelters and transition houses are seriously underfunded. We recommend a significant and sustainable increase in core funding. The funding would be intended to increase the number of available beds and transition houses, but it must also include hiring staff and providing services. Building transition houses without the staff they require is of no use.

- We support the call by Women's Shelters Canada 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, just like the National Housing Strategy, should involve the federal and provincial/territorial governments. In 2018, every woman in Canada should have access to comparable services, wherever she lives in the country.
- We also support the opinion sent to you by the FMHF, which calls for a significant increase in funding for the overall mission of our organizations. We have lost 20% of our funding in 15 years because operational funds have not been indexed. ● In short, we support the FMHF's recommendations.

We invite the members of the committee to visit our safe house if you ever travel to our region. Please also contact us by telephone if you have questions or if you would like more information about our work.

Sincerely,



Marie-Claude Bouchard

Director

Centre féminin du Saguenay

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cc. Andrée Laforest, MNA: [ministre@mamot.gouv.qc.ca](mailto:ministre@mamot.gouv.qc.ca)

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