

Quebec City, November 8, 2018

Standing Committee on the Status of Women
House of Commons
Ottawa

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

We understand that the Committee is conducting a *Study on the System of Shelters and Transition Houses Serving Women and Children Affected by Violence Against Women and Intimate Partner Violence* and that the Committee will focus on:

- the current gap between the number of beds required and the number of beds offered in shelters and transition houses;
- existing federal programs and funding for shelters and transition houses; and
- possible solutions to fill the gap between supply and demand.

I am writing you on behalf of the Maison pour femmes immigrantes. We are a 14-bed shelter located in Quebec City, in the neighbourhood of Sainte-Foy. We serve primarily immigrant and Quebec women and their children who are victims of partner violence. We also host female victims of family violence. Last year, we accommodated 130 women and children and had to refuse 65 women and children because of a lack of space.

In our view, safe houses do not receive equitable funding from one province or territory to another. In our case, we have not had an increase in funding for several years. The work that we do is essential; the lives of women and children are literally at stake. We offer more than a simple shelter from violence, a very important aspect in itself. As you know, one woman is killed by her partner or former partner every six days in Canada. In addition to ensuring the safety of women and children, we also offer one-on-one and group interventions, administrative support (social assistance, legal proceedings, housing searches, subsidies and financial assistance and so on), nutritional support, activities for mothers and children, outside consultations for women who do not need or are not prepared to come into a shelter, and so on. We also have a program on prevention, awareness and screening for partner violence intended primarily for newcomers, and a community action plan for children. This program enables us to provide one-on-one and group interventions for children, as well as organize various children's activities.

We would like to make the following recommendations:

- Since violence against women persists at an epidemic level, shelters and transition houses for abused women and their children must be recognized as an essential service.
- Shelters and transition houses are currently seriously underfunded. We recommend a significant, sustainable increase in core funding. This funding should increase the number of available beds and safe houses as well as cover staffing and services. Building a safe house without the necessary staff is futile.

We support the appeal of Women's Shelters Canada in favour of a national action plan; the Government of Canada should develop a national action plan aligned with the United Nations' recommendations. This national action plan, like the National Housing Strategy, should involve the federal government as well as the provincial and territorial governments. In 2018, every woman should have access to comparable services wherever she lives in Canada.

We invite the Committee members to visit our safe house if you are passing through our area and/or contact us by telephone if you have any questions or would like further information on the work that we do.

Sincerely,

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For the Maison pour femmes immigrantes team