

November 9, 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 Agape House-Eastman Crisis Centre. We are a 16-bed shelter located in Steinbach, MB. We primarily serve women and their children fleeing family violence. Last year, we had almost 2000 bednights.

It is our understanding that shelters and transition houses do not have equitable funding across the provinces and territories. For us, we have not had an increase in funding in 12 years. 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, which is also important. As you know, in Canada, a woman is killed by her partner or former partner every 6 days. In addition to ensuring the safety of women and children, we also offer programming such as non-residential and follow up counselling, art therapy, children's programming, interim housing units, crisis line support, public education, etc.

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.

Sincerely,



Tracy Whitby
Executive Director
Eastman Crisis Centre Inc. – Agape House