

# Brief for The Standing Committee on the Status of Women

## System of Shelters and Transition Houses Serving Women and Children Affected by Violence Against Women and Intimate Partner Violence

Social emergencies and vulnerable people will always be among us. The best way to mitigate crises is to be prepared as best as possible and to learn from the experiences we encounter. Caring, both for others and for ourselves needs to be intentional, to help avert crises and to build up a stronger community. Thus, the SHADE Board respectfully submits recommendations for the above committee's upcoming study:

### 1. *'the current gap between the need for and available beds in shelters and transition houses:'*

In Winnipeg, Manitoba there are only **two shelters** – Willow Place and Ikwe-Widdjitiwin Inc. and **three Second Stage Housing [SSH] transition facilities**<sup>1</sup>: Bravestone Centre, capacity - 14 spots for women and children, Alpha House, capacity - 7 women with or without children, and Chez Rachel,<sup>2</sup> capacity - 5 women and their children, for a total of **26 women** + any children they may have in a city, **Winnipeg**, with a **current 2018 estimated population of 800,249**<sup>3</sup>. There is need especially for further SSH transition facilities to break the cycle of violence here in Winnipeg. Police-reported incidents of violence by a current or former spouse = 1.23% in Winnipeg versus 1.1% our national average. The majority of domestic abuse cases, 80% which happen to women, go unreported.<sup>4</sup> Each current facility is at capacity, more than often, with waiting lists.

**Recommendation #1:** Provide federal and provincial recommendations and incentives for S.H.A.D.E. (Safe Housing And Directed Empowerment) Inc. to move forward with its mandate to be the fourth Second Stage Housing organization with transition residence in Winnipeg to specifically address the unique needs of immigrant and refugee women and their children who are being/have been impacted by domestic abuse and/or family violence.

### 2. *'current federal programs and funding in support of shelters and transition houses':*

Each shelter and second stage housing facility in Manitoba receive a percentage of their operational funding from Status of Women's Family Violence Prevention Program [FVPP], ranging from 45% to 70%, some with no increase in dollar amount in ten+ years. Regardless of organization, the rest of operational monies required come from fundraising efforts, which are *"an ongoing struggle"* according to most executive directors. *"Staff are receiving terrible wages"* according to most E.Ds.' Renovations and project costs likewise are elicited through grants and fundraising, both time-consuming efforts. When much time is diverted to fundraising, the ones who lose out are the very victims for whom these shelters and SSH facilities exist to help!

**Recommendation #2:** Increase the funding formula Status of Women allots to the FVPP program in Manitoba/Winnipeg in order to decrease fundraising/grant research and writing time on behalf of every shelter and SSH facility to raise the integrity of each one's mandate to best serve the women and children

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.maws.mb.ca/where\\_can\\_i\\_go.htm](http://www.maws.mb.ca/where_can_i_go.htm)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.chezrachel.ca/en/home/>

<sup>3</sup> <http://worldpopulationreview.com/world-cities/winnipeg-population>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2014001/article/14114/section01-eng.htm>

victims of IPV/family violence. This will allow for retention of valuable staff who otherwise may opt for moving on to better paying employment, as well as allows for diverting funding to needed programming.

### 3. *'possible solutions to address the gap between need and supply:'*

Winnipeg has 2.2% of Canada's total population yet 4.3% of all recent immigrants,<sup>5</sup> with zero organizations responsive to the unique needs of Newcomer women in Winnipeg. Huge gaps for meeting the needs of immigrant and refugee women leaving IPV/family violence exist in Winnipeg – likely throughout Canada. There is a need to improve/increase accessibility to both shelters and SSH facilities. For professional immigrant women who do not require residency yet are isolated in domestic violent home lives, safe social spaces are lacking for them to meet women like themselves with whom they can gain confidence, break the isolation and silence of their abusive situations, and find resources and help/strength to leave. (\* conversation with an instructor at Red River College who stated there are thousands of such immigrant career women living like this in Winnipeg with nowhere to go). (Hidden) Homelessness is another possibility that many immigrant women fleeing IPV/family violence face.

Although there are a variety of support networks set up to assist vulnerable newcomers in Canada when facing IPV, the ability to streamline victims through a support system is halted when awareness of particular cultures is low among social workers and other frontline workers. There is a tendency among researchers and government programs to group vulnerable newcomer women into a homogeneous entity, which may, in fact, ward off otherwise potential consumers of these programs, whether that be due to cultural, stigma, fear, or isolation concerns.<sup>6</sup>

**Recommendation #:** a commitment to action research, that will assist in the development of strategies front line workers can use in not only reaching specific demographics of vulnerable immigrant and refugee women, but in making the process more culturally welcoming for those in need. Provide funding for S.H.A.D.E. (Safe Housing And Directed Empowerment) Inc. to partner with well-established partner organizations e.g. Seven Oaks Immigrant Services, RESOLVE at the University of Manitoba, to conduct a demographic study and pilot project to assist specific groups of vulnerable newcomer women experiencing IPV, to accommodate their specific needs, in order to achieve greater accessibility rates in helping them to safely and sustainably leave IPV or family violence.

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S.H.A.D.E. (Safe Housing And Directed Empowerment) Inc. or SHADE for short, is a new Second Stage Housing initiative in Winnipeg, MB with charitable status that has formed to support and meet the needs of immigrant and refugee women and their children who have been impacted by domestic abuse and/or family violence to rebuild their lives through safe housing, psychosocial programming, and practical supports. We have Letters of Support from the community, and would value a conversation with you in support of transition houses serving vulnerable demographics of women and children affected by IPV/family violence. We believe we can and will bring value to alleviating harm from IPV in Winnipeg.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/daily-quotidien/171025/dq171025b-eng.pdf?st=qMbl3q4G>

<sup>6</sup> Baker, L., Tabibi, J. (2017). Exploring the intersections: immigrant and refugee women fleeing violence and experiencing homelessness in Canada. Centre for Research & Education on Violence Against Women & Children. Retrieved from <http://www.vawlearningnetwork.ca/sites/vawlearningnetwork.ca/files/ESDC-CREVAWC-Meeting-Report-FINAL-August-9.pdf>