



La Traverse

Women's Shelter

November 20, 2018

Standing Committee on the Status of Women

House of Commons

To the 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 it will examine:

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

I am writing on behalf of Maison d'accueil La Traverse. We are a women's shelter with 12 beds located in Joliette in the Lanaudière region. We cater mainly to women fleeing domestic violence and their children. Last year we sheltered 113 women and 49 children. Unfortunately, we had to refuse 257 women and 150 children because of a shortage of space available and because we were not adapted for women with reduced mobility.

We also offered consultation, intervention, information and referral services to 4,631 people (practitioners, family and friends, women, professionals and children). There again, we were unable to meet everyone's needs completely because of a lack of human and financial resources.

Testimonials

"I knew I would be OK because I was determined that my life would change for the better."

"They told me to feel at home, look around, take what I needed and rest. I felt like somebody, because I had somewhere I belonged."

"I'm very thankful for the strength I was able to draw from your organization."



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In our opinion, shelters do not receive fair funding from one province or territory to the next. The work we do is crucial: the lives of women and children are literally at stake. We offer more than mere shelter from violence even though that is an extremely important part of what we do. As you know, one woman is killed by her partner or ex-partner every six days in Canada.

In addition to ensuring the safety of women and children, we also offer programs such as a 24-hour help line, support during proceedings (police, lawyer, court, youth protection), individual meetings (at La Traverse or nearer the person's home), follow-up after they leave the shelter, group meetings and awareness and prevention meetings with all stakeholders.

We make the following recommendations:

- Since violence against women still exists in epidemic proportions, shelters and transition houses for abused women and their children must be recognized as an essential service.
- Shelters and transition houses are currently severely underfunded. We recommend a significant and sustainable increase in core funding. This should allow for an increase in the number of beds and shelters available, but it should also include staffing and service delivery. Building a shelter without staffing it with the necessary personnel is futile.
- We support the call by Women's Shelters Canada for a national action plan. The Government of Canada should develop a national action plan based on United Nations recommendations. Like the National Housing Strategy, the action plan should be a joint federal, provincial and territorial effort. In 2018, every woman should have access to comparable services regardless of where in Canada she lives.

Sincerely,

Caroline Caron
Acting Coordinator