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CANADA

SURVIVING ABUSE AND BUILDING RESILIENCE—A STUDY OF CANADA'S SYSTEMS OF SHELTERS AND TRANSITION HOUSES SERVING WOMEN AND CHILDREN AFFECTED BY VIOLENCE

**Report of the Standing Committee on the Status
of Women**

Karen Vecchio, Chair

**MAY 2019
42nd PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION**

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**Karen Vecchio
Chair**

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Reports from committee presented to the House of Commons

Presenting a report to the House is the way a committee makes public its findings and recommendations on a particular topic. Substantive reports on a subject-matter study usually contain a synopsis of the testimony heard, the recommendations made by the committee, as well as the reasons for those recommendations.

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THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

has the honour to present its

FIFTEENTH REPORT

Pursuant to its mandate under Standing Order 108(2), the Committee has studied the system of shelters and transition houses serving women and children affected by violence against women and intimate partner violence and has agreed to report the following:

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SUMMARY

Violence against women is a public health crisis in Canada. The physical and psychological effects of violence are profound and long-lasting. When escaping violence, women and children need access to safe housing and appropriate support services. However, shelters and transition houses across Canada do not have enough beds or services to meet demand. Levels of service provided across the country are also different.

The House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women (the Committee) held hearings between October and December 2018 on the system of shelters and transition houses serving women and children affected by violence. The Committee heard testimony from 36 organizations, seven individuals, and five federal departments and agencies. In addition, the Committee received 53 written briefs from individuals and organizations.

Witnesses described the gap between the supply of and demand for shelter and transition house beds. They noted the need for increased funding for shelters and transition houses to meet demand. However, witnesses added that preventing violence against women is crucial to reduce the demand for services in shelters and transition houses.

The lack of services may force some women and children to return to or remain in violent situations. Women and children affected by violence may face further challenges when they leave shelters and transition houses. These challenges include long waiting times for, and difficulty accessing, transitional housing, and a lack of safe and affordable permanent housing.

The recommendations included in the report are intended to provide guidance to the Government of Canada on ways to improve access to beds and appropriate services in shelters and transition houses serving women and children affected by violence.

The main goals of the Committee's recommendations are to:

- address the gap between supply of and demand for space in shelters and transition houses in Canada serving women and children experiencing violence;
- ensure that women and children living in urban, rural and remote communities experiencing violence, including Indigenous women, have

access to comparable levels of services in shelters and transition houses across Canada that meet their specific needs; and

- increase women's access to safe and affordable housing and appropriate supports.

The Committee applauds the important and difficult work being carried out by staff working in shelters and transition houses in Canada. The Committee believes that the implementation of its recommendations will support shelters and transition houses in meeting the needs of women and children escaping violence, and help women and children affected through their healing process.

LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

As a result of their deliberations committees may make recommendations which they include in their reports for the consideration of the House of Commons or the Government. Recommendations related to this study are listed below.

Recommendation 1

That the Government of Canada increase funding for construction, repairs, renovations, and expansion of shelters and transition houses serving women and children affected by violence, with a focus on improving the capacity and accessibility of shelters and transition houses..... 18

Recommendation 2

That the Government of Canada consider adding an urban Indigenous housing stream, developed in collaboration with Indigenous peoples and communities, to the National Housing Strategy. 20

Recommendation 3

That the Government of Canada, through the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, explore the possibility of providing front-end funding to organizations that they contract with to build affordable housing units. 20

Recommendation 4

That the Government of Canada consider changing the funding model of the Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS) and *Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy* to provide multi-year funding for successful programming, rather than requiring providers to submit an ongoing annual application. 23

Recommendation 5

That the Government of Canada, in collaboration with the provinces and territories, develop a national framework on shelter and transition house services for women and children affected by all types of gender-based violence and who are experiencing homelessness to ensure that women and children across the country have access to comparable levels of services, and that this framework:

- ensure that women and children, particularly Indigenous women and children living in urban, rural and remote communities, have access to comprehensive, culturally appropriate, intersectional, and trauma-informed services and continuing support to help them heal from trauma;
- ensure that women and children from diverse backgrounds have access to services and support that meet their specific needs;
- address barriers to accessing beds and services in shelters and transition houses for women’s particular needs, including but not limited to, women living with all types of disabilities; women with mental health and substance use struggles; transgender women and non-binary individuals; immigrant and refugee women; and women who are victims of human trafficking; and
- create funding agreements between the federal, provincial and territorial governments to provide shelters and transition houses serving women and children affected by violence with increased and ongoing operational funding..... 34

Recommendation 6

That the Government of Canada ensure that information on receiving benefit payments through the Canada Revenue Agency, such as the Canada child benefit, is readily accessible to women who are in, or have left, an abusive relationship, or women staying in a shelter..... 34

Recommendation 7

That the Government of Canada, in partnership with Indigenous peoples and communities, work with provinces and territories to:

- develop strategies to deal with gender-based violence and to ensure police and prosecutors use a common set of practices in dealing with female survivors of gender-based violence; and

- lead national coordination of a review of the justice system to ensure equal access to protection and justice across the country for survivors of violence against women and girls. 35

Recommendation 8

That the Government of Canada increase funding for on-reserve shelters serving women and children affected by violence to ensure that First Nations women and girls living on-reserve who are experiencing violence have access to comparable shelter services and support as women and children living off-reserve. 38

Recommendation 9

That the Government of Canada work with Inuit governments and communities to explore options, such as expanding the eligibility criteria for funding under the Family Violence and Prevention Program, with a view to providing adequate and long-term funding for shelters and transition houses serving women and children affected by violence in Inuit communities..... 38

Recommendation 10

That the Government of Canada continue to work with Indigenous governments and communities to ensure that safe housing options and culturally appropriate support and services are available for Indigenous women and children victims of violence who live in communities where no shelters are available. 38

Recommendation 11

That the Government of Canada facilitate the collaboration among women’s organizations and Indigenous organizations to develop and implement, in partnership with Indigenous women who have lived experience of homelessness or violence, a culturally appropriate and competency-based staff training curriculum specific to the needs of First Nations, Inuit and Métis women. 38

Recommendation 12

That the Government of Canada facilitate research to identify best practices regarding protocols or screening questions to recognize possible traumatic brain injuries, acquired brain injuries, post-traumatic stress disorder or other mental illnesses or disabilities resulting from violence among women entering shelters and transition houses and provide funding for this research where necessary. 40

Recommendation 13

That the Government of Canada in collaboration with the provinces, territories and Indigenous governments, fund transportation for women living in urban, rural, remote, and northern communities, including in Indigenous communities, who are fleeing violence and do not have access to safe shelter services in their home community. 43

Recommendation 14

That the Government of Canada provide funding, through the National Housing Strategy, for the creation of housing support specifically designed for survivors of human trafficking..... 44

Recommendation 15

That the Government of Canada, in collaboration with the provinces and territories, examine measures that could increase access to affordable housing and transitional support, such as flexible rental supplements or benefits. 51

Recommendation 16

That the Government of Canada provide support to organizations working in the affordable housing field to operate as social enterprises to sustain their operational needs. 51

Recommendation 17

That the Government of Canada, with the goal to continue to address the housing affordability crisis, work with provinces and territories to ensure the efficient release of funds allocated to affordable housing under the National Housing Strategy. 51

Recommendation 18

That the Government of Canada, in collaboration with provinces and territories, continue its efforts to create a national action plan on gender-based violence and consider including access to shelters and transitional houses and to safe and affordable housing in this action plan. 57

Recommendation 19

That the Government of Canada encourage the provinces and territories to consider incorporating gender-based violence prevention into school curricula at all levels of schooling to teach children about gender-based violence, human rights and healthy relationships, with an emphasis on engaging boys in the issue..... 57

Recommendation 20

That the Government of Canada work with community organizations to take substantive action on the recommendations made in the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women’s report entitled *Taking Action to End Violence Against Young Women and Girls in Canada* regarding the implementation of culturally sensitive, locally informed and community-oriented awareness campaigns and education programs for various groups, including young people, men and boys, and those living in Indigenous and northern communities. 57



INTRODUCTION

Violence against women in Canada is a public health crisis.¹ Violence, including intimate partner violence, can have profound long-term physical and physiological impacts on women and children across Canada. The healing process can take several years, as women experiencing violence can go through horrific experiences: “Women have been kicked out of their homes in the middle of the night with no shoes or boots in the winter; they've been beaten and left for dead; they've been choked and pursued as they fled for help.”² Violence is also a significant barrier to women’s full and equal participation in Canadian society and a significant financial burden for the country.³

Fleeing an abusive relationship takes strength and courage, as the moments after women and children flee an abusive relationship is the most dangerous time for them.⁴ It is therefore crucial that housing options and support services be available so that women and children fleeing abusive relationships have somewhere safe to go. Some women who are in this situation may go to a shelter. However, accessing a bed in a shelter can be difficult: shelters are often operating at capacity and frequently turn away women and children because of a lack of space. As well, some communities do not have shelters for women and children experiencing violence; in this situation, women might have to travel to access shelter services. Some women might hesitate to go to a shelter; for instance, women living in small communities might hesitate to go to a shelter because word easily spreads in small communities. In addition, shelters and transition houses have difficulty offering a continuum of comprehensive support and services to women and children affected by violence because of a lack of funding. Lack of access to shelters and transition houses’ services can make the healing process difficult for women and children.

1 House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women (FEWO), *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 29 October 2018, 1630 (Megan Walker, Executive Director, London Abused Women's Centre); FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 7 November 2018, 1625 (Diane Beaulieu, Executive Director, Halton Women's Place) and 1635 (Joanne Baker, Executive Director, BC Society of Transition Houses).

2 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 24 October 2018, 1635 (Lyda Fuller, Executive Director, YWCA NWT).

3 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 15 October 2018, 1545 and 1615 (Justine Akman, Director General, Policy and External Relations, Office of the Co-ordinator, Status of Women).

4 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 24 October 2018, 1555 (Jennifer Lepko, Chief Executive Officer, YWCA Lethbridge and District); and FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 5 November 2018, 1550 (Donna Smith, Executive Director, Tearmann Society for Abused Women).



Recognizing the devastating effects of violence on women and children, as well as difficulties in accessing support and services, the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women (the Committee) agreed on 19 June 2018 to undertake a study on the network of shelters and transition houses serving women and children affected by violence against women and intimate partner violence. The Committee adopted the following motion:

That the Committee study, for the duration of eight meetings, the system of Transition houses and shelters serving women and children affected by violence against women and intimate partner violence; that the study include an examination of the current gap between need and available beds in shelters and transition houses; that the study include an examination of current federal programs and funding in support of shelters and transition houses; that the study consider possible solutions to address the gap between need and supply; that the Committee report its findings to the House; and that the Committee request a government response to its report.⁵

The Committee received testimony from 50 witnesses, seven of whom appeared as individuals, with the remainder representing 36 organizations. In addition, the Committee was briefed by officials from the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, the Department of Employment and Social Development, the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, the Office of the Co-ordinator, Status of Women,⁶ and Statistics Canada. The testimony was received during 10 meetings held from 15 October 2018 to 3 December 2018. As well, the Committee received 53 briefs from organizations and individuals, along with speaking notes and follow-up responses to questions from Committee members. Appendix A includes a list of all witnesses and Appendix B includes a list of all submitted briefs.

The Committee's report provides an examination of:

- 1) sources of funding available for shelters and transition houses;
- 2) challenges facing women and children affected by violence in accessing shelters and transition houses, such as factors preventing women from leaving abusive relationships, barriers impeding access to housing services and social support and services offered by shelters and transition houses; and

5 House of Commons, FEWO, *Minutes of Proceedings*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 19 June 2018.

6 Status of Women Canada (Office of the Co-ordinator, Status of Women) is now the Department of Women and Gender Equality.

- 3) barriers facing women and children affected by violence when they leave the network of shelters and transition houses, including obstacles to accessing transitional housing, finding safe and affordable permanent housing, and owning a home.

The Committee's report is intended to provide guidance to the Government of Canada on measures that could be implemented to help to address the gap between the supply and demand of beds in the network of shelters and transition houses that serve women and children affected by violence against women and intimate partner violence in Canada. Committee members greatly appreciate the contributions of witnesses who offered their knowledge, ideas and insights to the Committee during its study.

OVERVIEW OF THE SYSTEM OF SHELTERS AND TRANSITION HOUSES SERVING WOMEN AND CHILDREN AFFECTED BY VIOLENCE

Intimate partner violence is one of the most prevalent forms of violence against women in Canada.⁷ It includes any form of violence committed by a former or current spouse or dating partner or by any other intimate partner. Violence might occur during a relationship, while it is breaking down or after it has ended.⁸ In many cases, “the most dangerous place for women is not in a back alley but in their own homes.”⁹

Reported rates of intimate partner violence have increased by 4% since 2014; they are the highest in Manitoba and Saskatchewan and in the three territories.¹⁰ Many victims of intimate partner violence do not report the violence they have experienced to authorities. For instance, data from the 2014 General Social Survey on Canadians’ Safety (Victimization) showed that 70% of victims of spousal violence did not report the violence to police.¹¹

“[T]he most dangerous place for women is not in a back alley but in their own homes.”

Megan Walker

Some women who experience intimate partner violence might leave abusive relationships and seek refuge in shelters. When referring to shelters and transition houses, witnesses described a variety of organizations providing housing services to individuals in need of a place to stay. Witnesses differentiated between “emergency shelters” and “violence against women shelters”. Emergency shelters are usually geared towards people experiencing homelessness, not violence, and few of them provide services to women only. While women in violence against women shelters are also

7 Marta Burczykca, “Family violence in Canada: A statistical profile, 2016,” [Section 3: Police-reported intimate partner violence](#), Juristat, 85-002-X, Statistics Canada, 17 January 2018.

8 Department of Justice, [About Family Violence](#).

9 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 29 October 2018, 1630 (Megan Walker).

10 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 19 November 2018, 1635 (Yvan Clermont, Director, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Statistics Canada).

11 Marta Burczykca, “Family violence in Canada: A statistical profile, 2016,” [Section 3: Police-reported intimate partner violence](#), Juristat, 85-002-X, Statistics Canada, 17 January 2018.



homeless,¹² being in a specialized shelter can allow them to receive “support from shelter staff who have developed extensive expertise” about violence against women.¹³

Violence against women shelters can also be grouped under two categories: first- and second-stage shelters. Lise Martin, Executive Director of Women’s Shelters Canada, explained that first-stage shelters usually provide housing and services to women and children affected by violence. The length of stay at a first-stage shelter may be days, weeks or a few months. Second-stage shelters provide longer term accommodation to women and children, usually between a few months and up to two years.¹⁴ Second-stage shelters are similar to what some witnesses described as transition houses (longer-term accommodations offering ongoing support to women and children affected by violence).¹⁵ Unless noted otherwise, the wording “shelters and transition houses” throughout this report refer to shelters and transition houses offering specialized support and services to women and children affected by violence.

Data from the 2014 Transition Home Survey, the most recent comprehensive data available, showed that 627 shelters provided services for abused women in Canada, providing a total of 12,058 beds. Figure 1 shows that the distribution of shelters varies across Canada. Even though rates of policed-reported violent crimes committed against women are high in the three territories, there is a “low number of shelters” in this part of Canada.¹⁶

12 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 17 October 2018, 1605 (Tim Richter, President and Chief Executive Officer, Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness).

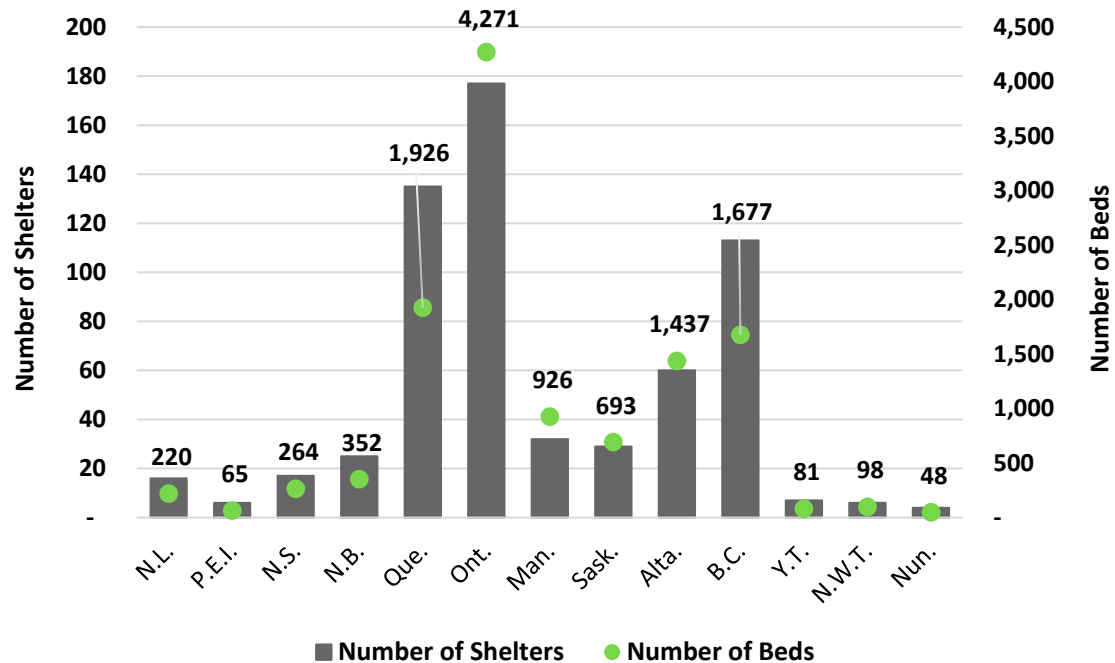
13 New Brunswick South Central Transition House and Second Stage Coalition, Inc., [“The Current Gap Between the Need for and Available Beds in Transition Houses,” Submitted Brief](#), November 2018.

14 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 17 October 2018, 1535 (Lise Martin, Executive Director, Women’s Shelters Canada).

15 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 7 November 2018, 1635 (Joanne Baker).

16 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 17 October 2018, 1535 (Lise Martin).

Figure 1—Number of Shelters and Beds Providing Services to Abused Women by Province and Territory, 2014



Note: Numbers shown in Figure 1 include data from transition homes, second-stage housing, women’s emergency centres, emergency shelters, safe home networks and other residential facilities offering services to abused women.

Note: Data from the 2018 [Survey of Residential Facilities for Victims of Abuse](#) should be available in Spring 2019. Data from this survey will give a more up-to-date overview of the system of shelters and transition houses serving women and children affected by violence in Canada.

Source: Table prepared by the Library of Parliament using data obtained from: Sara Beattie and Hope Hutchins, “Shelters for abused women in Canada, 2014,” [Number of shelters, beds, and women and children residents, provinces and territories, April 16, 2014](#), Juristat, 85-002-X, Statistics Canada, 2015.

In contrast to the Statistics Canada data from 2014, Lise Martin told the Committee that, according to Women’s Shelters Canada’s database, approximately 550 first- and second-stage shelters offer services to women experiencing violence in the country.¹⁷

Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) also collects data on homeless people service providers through the National Homelessness Information System. The most recent data available is from 2016; however, a representative from ESDC told the

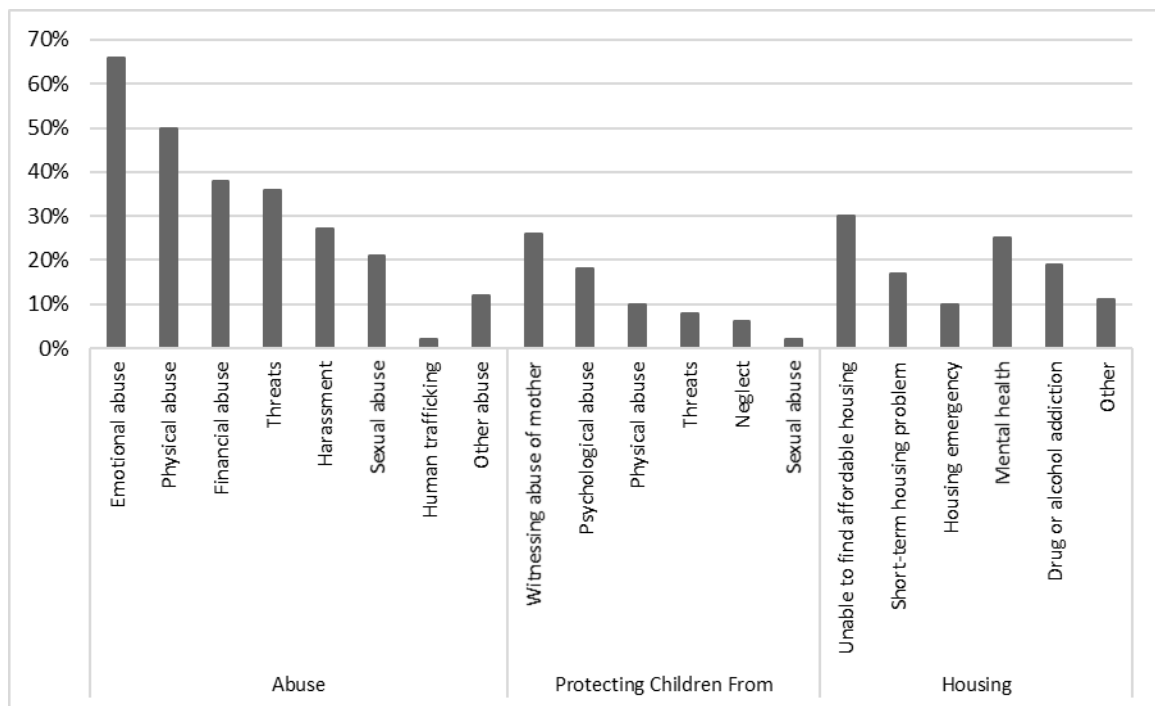
17 Ibid.



Committee that violence against women shelters are under-represented in ESDC’s database as few have data-sharing agreements with ESDC.¹⁸

Women’s reasons for accessing shelters can include fleeing abuse, wanting to protect their children or being unable to access affordable housing (see Figure 2). On 16 April 2014 (the snapshot day for Statistics Canada’s Transition Home Survey), abuse was the most common reason for seeking shelter cited by women, with emotional abuse and physical abuse being the most common forms of abuse reported.¹⁹

Figure 2—Women’s Reasons for Seeking Shelter on 16 April 2014



Note: Data shown in Figure 2 include data from transition homes, second-stage housing, women’s emergency centres, emergency shelters, safe home networks and other residential facilities offering services to abused women.

Source: Table prepared by the Library of Parliament using data obtained from: Sara Beattie and Hope Hutchins, “Shelters for abused women in Canada, 2014,” *Table 3: Women’s reasons for seeking shelter, provinces and territories, April 16, 2014*, Juristat, 85-002-X, Statistics Canada, 2015.

18 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 15 October 2018, 1530 (Catherine Scott, Director General, Community Development and Homelessness Partnerships Directorate, Department of Employment and Social Development).

19 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 19 November 2018, 1635 (Yvan Clermont).

FUNDING FOR SHELTERS AND TRANSITION HOUSES SERVING WOMEN AND CHILDREN AFFECTED BY VIOLENCE

The Committee heard that shelters and transition houses serving women and children affected by violence are underfunded²⁰ and often rely on funding that is project-based and limited in time.²¹ Many witnesses told the Committee that the funding received for their shelters or transition houses has not increased in several years and that current funding levels are not sufficient to cover all of the organizations' expenses.²² With the exception of some on-reserve shelters, shelters and transition houses in Canada receive the majority of their funding from provinces and territories.²³ The Committee was told that this creates disparities in funding levels for shelters and transition houses across Canada, which results in women and children not having access to comparable services across the country.²⁴ As well, the Committee was told that shelters and transition houses located in rural or remote communities must overcome additional challenges to secure funding for their operations; shelters and transition houses in these communities must often fundraise to cover expenses, which is difficult in smaller communities, and the cost

20 Office of the Federal Ombudsman for Victims of Crime, "[Submission to the House of Commons' Standing Committee on the Status of Women: Study on the System of Shelters and Transition Houses Serving Women and Children Affected by Violence Against Women and Intimate Partner Violence](#)," *Submitted Brief*, November 2018.

21 Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, "[Briefing Note Submitted to House of Commons 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](#)," *Submitted Brief*, November 2018.

22 See, for example: Yellow Brick House, [Submitted Brief](#), November 2018; Maison Simonne Monet-Chartrand, "[Subject: Pressing needs in women's shelters](#)," *Submitted Brief*, November 2018; Three Oaks Foundation, [Submitted Brief](#), November 2018; Centre féminin du Saguenay, "[Re: The pressing need for safe houses for abused women](#)," *Submitted Brief*, November 2018; and FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 24 October 2018, 1635 (Lyda Fuller).

23 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 19 November 2018, 1625 (Dawn Clark, Acting Executive Director, Haven Society); New Brunswick South Central Transition House and Second Stage Coalition, Inc., "[The Current Gap Between the Need for and Available Beds in Transition Houses](#)," *Submitted Brief*, November 2018; and FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 17 October 2018, 1535 (Lise Martin).

24 See, for example: FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 17 October 2018, 1535 (Lise Martin); Havre l'Éclaircie, [Submitted Brief](#), November 2018; Passe-R-Elle des Hautes-Laurentides, [Submitted Brief](#), November 2018; South Central Committee on Family Violence Inc., [Submitted Brief](#), November 2018; and Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses, [Submitted Brief](#), November 2018.



of living is often higher, especially in northern communities.²⁵ Witnesses stated that the provision of funding should be more uniform across Canada, so that women and children have access to similar support and services no matter where they live.²⁶

Several witnesses spoke about the lack of ongoing operational funding for shelters and transition houses and stressed the need for them to be fully funded so that they are able to offer comprehensive and timely services and support to women and children affected by violence, and recruit and retain employees.²⁷ Some witnesses suggested that the federal government could provide funding to provinces and territories via the Canada Social Transfer,²⁸ for example by including shelter and transition house services as a mandatory service.²⁹

Witnesses stressed the need for all levels of government (municipal, provincial, territorial and federal) to work collaboratively and take a “horizontal” approach to shelter and transition house funding.³⁰ Jeff Morrison, Executive Director of the Canadian Housing and Renewal Association, suggested that the federal government also consider “direct federal-to-municipal transfers.”³¹

Recommendation 1

That the Government of Canada increase funding for construction, repairs, renovations, and expansion of shelters and transition houses serving women and children affected by violence, with a focus on improving the capacity and accessibility of shelters and transition houses.

25 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 17 October 2018, 1535 (Lise Martin); and FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 24 October 2018, 1700 (Lyda Fuller).

26 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 24 October 2018, 1700 (Lyda Fuller).

27 See, for example: *Ibid.*, 1600 (Kristal LeBlanc, Executive Director, Beausejour Family Crisis Resource Centre); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 19 November 2018, 1550 (Dawn Clark); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 29 October 2018, 1635 (Megan Walker); and FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 3 December 2018, 1540 (Viviane Michel, President, Quebec Native Women Inc.).

28 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 22 October 2018, 1725 (Jeff Morrison, Executive Director, Canadian Housing and Renewal Association); and FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 31 October 2018, 1650 (Louise Riendeau, Co-responsible, Political Issues, Regroupement des maisons pour femmes victimes de violence conjugale).

29 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 24 October 2018, 1635 (Lyda Fuller).

30 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 22 October 2018, 1610 (Bonnie Brayton, National Executive Director, DisAbled Women's Network Canada, as an individual); and FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 29 October 2018, 1735 (Megan Walker).

31 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 22 October 2018, 1725 (Jeff Morrison).

FEDERAL FUNDING PROGRAMS FOR SHELTERS AND TRANSITION HOUSES SERVING WOMEN AND CHILDREN AFFECTED BY VIOLENCE

The Committee heard about some federal funding programs available to shelters and transition houses serving women and children affected by violence. However, the federal government mostly offers capital funding, except for on-reserve shelters funded by Indigenous Services Canada.³² Witnesses explained that federal funding programs are not always easy to navigate and that funds are not released fast enough.³³

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation

The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) is leading the implementation of the National Housing Strategy (NHS), a 10-year plan to “create a new generation of housing in Canada.”³⁴ The federal government has announced \$40 billion of funding for the NHS.³⁵ Charles MacArthur, Senior Vice-President, Assisted Housing at CMHC, stated that the NHS “will aim for 33% of all investments to support projects that specifically target women, girls and their families, recognizing the unique vulnerabilities they face.”³⁶ Charles MacArthur explained that priority clients are identified in the project intake process and projects that serve these clients are prioritized.³⁷

The National Housing Co-Investment Fund (the Fund) was launched in May 2018 and is part of the NHS.³⁸ The federal government announced that the Fund will provide \$4.7 billion in financial contributions and \$11.2 billion in low-interest loans for up to 60,000 new housing units and for up to 240,000 repaired housing units.³⁹ The federal

32 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 17 October 2018, 1535 (Lise Martin).

33 New Brunswick South Central Transition House and Second Stage Coalition, Inc., “[The Current Gap Between the Need for and Available Beds in Transition Houses](#),” *Submitted Brief*, November 2018; FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 13 June 2017, 1000 (Violet Hayes, Executive Director, Island Crisis Care Society); also FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 31 October 2018, 1605 (John Gerrard, Chief Executive Officer, Habitat for Humanity Halton-Mississauga) and 1545 (Melpa Kamateros, Executive Director, The Shield of Athena - Family Services).

34 Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, [What is the strategy?](#).

35 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 15 October 2018, 1540 (Charles MacArthur, Senior Vice-President, Assisted Housing, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation).

36 Ibid.

37 Ibid., 1655.

38 Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, “[Federal government launches multi-billion dollar National Housing Co-Investment Fund](#),” *News release*, 2 May 2018.

39 Government of Canada, [Canada's National Housing Strategy: A Place to Call Home](#), pp. 10-11.



government has announced that at least 4,000 shelter spaces for victims of family violence would be created.⁴⁰ Lise Martin said that funding from the Fund should encourage the creation of more first- and second-stage shelters serving women and children affected by violence.⁴¹

The Committee heard several concerns with regards to the NHS, including the difficulty for housing providers to meet the Fund's standards for units' accessibility; the lack of an urban, rural and northern Indigenous housing strategy; and "the lack of measures to address the social support that are still required, particularly for women and children, for social housing."⁴² Jeff Morrison recommended that an urban Indigenous housing stream be added to the NHS, developed by and for Indigenous peoples. He also stated that it is essential that the NHS be aligned with municipal, provincial and territorial housing strategies.⁴³ As well, witnesses told the Committee that there is a need for more transparency in how funding under the NHS is allocated and which organization is eligible to receive it.⁴⁴ John Gerrard, Chief Executive Officer, Habitat for Humanity Halton-Mississauga, told the Committee that "[t]he biggest challenge for many not-for-profit organizations is cash flow. Not having good, strong financial funding up front is what slows many of us down. If that funding were moved to the front of a project, I think you'd see a lot faster results."⁴⁵

Recommendation 2

That the Government of Canada consider adding an urban Indigenous housing stream, developed in collaboration with Indigenous peoples and communities, to the National Housing Strategy.

Recommendation 3

That the Government of Canada, through the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, explore the possibility of providing front-end funding to organizations that they contract with to build affordable housing units.

40 Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, [*National Housing Co-Investment Fund – New Construction Stream*](#).

41 FEWO, [*Evidence*](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 17 October 2018, 1540 (Lise Martin).

42 FEWO, [*Evidence*](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 22 October 2018, 1645 and 1655 (Jeff Morrison).

43 *Ibid.*, 1650 and 1705.

44 FEWO, [*Evidence*](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 24 October 2018, 1545 (Kristal LeBlanc); and FEWO, [*Evidence*](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 17 October 2018, 1555 and 1625 (Lise Martin).

45 FEWO, [*Evidence*](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 31 October 2018, 1605 (John Gerrard).

Indigenous Services Canada

Indigenous Services Canada's Family Violence Prevention Program (FVPP) provides operational funding to 41 shelters for women and children living on-reserve across the provinces and Yukon. These 41 shelters serve approximately 330 First Nations communities, which represent approximately 55% of all First Nations communities.⁴⁶ Representatives from the CMHC and the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development told the Committee that the Government of Canada invested \$10.4 million in the construction of five new shelters, providing 40 beds in total, that will receive operational funding under the FVPP; their construction should to be completed by March 2019.⁴⁷ However, the Committee heard that shelters funded through the FVPP receive less operational funding than shelters funded by provinces and territories.⁴⁸ Witnesses told the Committee that this difference in funding has negative consequences on staffing (including employee burn out, high employee turnover rate, difficulty in recruiting employees and low pay), on the availability of culturally appropriate resources for First Nations women, on the space available for shelter clientele, and on the availability of second-stage housing.⁴⁹ Anita Olsen Harper, who appeared as an individual, stated that the federal government reimburses provincially funded shelters at a higher rate than it reimburses shelters located on-reserve, a practice she qualified as discriminatory.⁵⁰

As well, Samantha Michaels, Senior Policy Advisor at Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, explained that since Inuit communities are not reserves, shelters in Inuit communities are not eligible to receive operational funding through the FVPP.⁵¹ The organization

46 Government of Canada, *Family Violence Prevention Program*.

47 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 15 October 2018, 1540 and 1655 (Charles MacArthur) and 1555 (Margaret Buist, Acting Assistant Deputy Minister, Education and Social Development Programs and Partnerships Branch, Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development).

48 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 17 October 2018, 1535 (Lise Martin); FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 5 November 2018, 1700 (Daisy Kler, Transition House Worker, Vancouver Rape Relief and Women's Shelter); and Atlohso Native Family Healing Services Inc., *Submitted Brief*, November 2018.

49 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 19 November 2018, 1540 (Anita Olsen Harper, Research Consultant, National Aboriginal Circle Against Family Violence, as an individual).

50 Ibid.

51 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 3 December 2018, 1640 (Samantha Michaels, Senior Policy Advisor, Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada).



recommended that shelters in Inuit communities be able to receive operational funding from the FVPP.⁵²

The FVPP also provides funding for proposal-based violence prevention projects and core funding to the National Aboriginal Circle Against Family Violence.⁵³ A representative from the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development told the Committee that the Government of Canada invests \$37.8 million “on an ongoing basis to support” the FVPP.⁵⁴

Employment and Social Development Canada

The Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS) is an Employment and Social Development Canada program “aimed at preventing and reducing homelessness by providing direct support and funding to 61 designated communities and to organizations that address Aboriginal homelessness across Canada.”⁵⁵ Under the HPS, organizations can receive funding for projects whose goal is to reduce homelessness. The HPS is focused on the Housing First approach, an approach “designed to get more individuals experiencing long-term homelessness into permanent housing and then providing them with wrap-around support as quickly as possible,”⁵⁶ that is now used for other demographic groups such as women and families.⁵⁷ According to a representative from the Department of Employment and Social Development, between April 2014 and October 2018, the HPS provided \$40.4 million for 225 projects, one third of which targeted women fleeing domestic violence.⁵⁸ Arlene Hache, a community advocate who appeared as an individual, told the Committee about community organizations’ concerns with regards to HPS funding in Yellowknife:

All of a sudden, the federal government decided to change the whole thing and make it city hubs. Now the city controls it. There's a hub. They disbanded the community committee. It became a very bureaucratic, non-inclusive, silencing kind of body where they decide who gets the money.... We have to really keep in mind that the voice of

52 Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, “[Briefing Note Submitted to House of Commons 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](#),” *Submitted Brief*, November 2018.

53 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 15 October 2018, 1555 (Margaret Buist).

54 Ibid.

55 Government of Canada, [Homelessness Partnering Strategy](#).

56 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 15 October 2018, 1535 (Catherine Scott).

57 Ibid.

58 Ibid.

people with lived experience is excluded by service providers, by government, by decision-makers.⁵⁹

A representative from the Department of Employment and Social Development told the Committee that *Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy* will replace the HPS on 1 April 2019. The Strategy will maintain the community-based approach from the HPS but “will give communities greater flexibility to address local priorities and invest in homelessness prevention and programming designed to meet the needs of different vulnerable populations, including women and children fleeing violence.”⁶⁰

Violet Hayes, Executive Director of the Island Crisis Care Society, told the Committee that her organization received funding through the Rural and Remote Homelessness funding stream of the HPS in 2014, but that they did not receive funding the year after, which made it difficult to continue offering programming. She recommended that recipients of funding through the HPS Rural and Remote Homelessness funding stream not have to make an ongoing annual application;⁶¹ rather that funding be allocated for a three- to five-year period. She also recommended that capital funding be available through the HPS.⁶²

Recommendation 4

That the Government of Canada consider changing the funding model of the Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS) and *Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy* to provide multi-year funding for successful programming, rather than requiring providers to submit an ongoing annual application.

Status of Women Canada

The Committee heard that Status of Women Canada's⁶³ Women's Program provides project-based funding to violence against women shelters. Projects funded usually focus on “best practices and improving services that can then be shared across the country

59 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 22 October 2018, 1615 (Arlene Hache, Community Advocate, as an individual).

60 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 15 October 2018, 1535 (Catherine Scott).

61 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 13 June 2017, 1000 (Violet Hayes).

62 Ibid.

63 Status of Women Canada (Office of the Co-ordinator, Status of Women) is now the Department of Women and Gender Equality.



with similar organizations.”⁶⁴ Jennifer Gagnon, Executive Director of the South Shore Transition House Association (Harbour House), suggested that the fact that funding received must be for new programs “fails to address one of the greatest needs:” building the staffing capacity to meet the demand for services.⁶⁵ Melpa Kamateros, Executive Director of The Shield of Athena – Family Services, suggested that funding for projects that show great results be continued.⁶⁶

64 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 15 October 2018, 1605 (Justine Akman).

65 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 5 November 2018, 1535 (Jennifer Gagnon, Executive Director, South Shore Transition House Association (Harbour House)).

66 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 31 October 2018, 1605 (Melpa Kamateros).

CHALLENGES FACING WOMEN AND CHILDREN ACCESSING SHELTER AND TRANSITION HOUSES' SERVICES

Women and children affected by violence can face a number of barriers preventing them from accessing shelters and transition houses' services, including difficulties leaving abusive relationships; not being able to access housing services provided by shelters; and not being able to access shelters and transition houses' support and services. These barriers are described in sections that follow.

LEAVING AN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP

Not all women in abusive relationships choose to leave them to go to shelters.⁶⁷ Some women might stay with family members or friends,⁶⁸ while some might stay in the relationship. Various factors affect women's decisions to leave an abusive relationship.

Lack of financial autonomy or low incomes can mean that some women have to make a choice "between remaining with an abuser and falling into poverty and/or homelessness."⁶⁹ Witnesses recommended that the Government of Canada consider implementing additional measures to help alleviate poverty for women leaving abusive relationships,⁷⁰ such as implementing "a living wage"⁷¹ or a universally accessible "guaranteed livable income."⁷² Witnesses also stated that the Government of Canada

67 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 19 November 2018, 1555 (Eva Kratochvil, Survivor and Frontline Worker, Hiatus House, as an individual).

68 Ibid., 1710 (Kathy AuCoin, Assistant Director, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Statistics Canada); and FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 5 November 2018, 1535 (Cynthia Drebot, Executive Director, North End Women's Centre).

69 Victoria Women's Transition House Society, "[House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women](#)," *Submitted Brief*, November 2018.

70 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 22 October 2018, 1710 (Jeff Morrison).

71 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 24 October 2018, 1635 (Lyda Fuller); and Ishtar Women's Resource Society, "[House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women](#)," *Submitted Brief*, November 2018.

72 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 5 November 2018, 1700 (Daisy Kler).



should establish strong “national standards for social assistance” along with cost-sharing agreements and enforcement measures with provinces.⁷³

As well, women wanting to leave abusive relationships might not be able to find safe and affordable housing,⁷⁴ which can put them “in the difficult position of staying with family, staying with someone and possibility offering favours in order to stay there, or potentially facing the street.”⁷⁵ Women leaving abusive relationships with their children may also worry that their children might be apprehended by child protective services because of the unstable situation they are in.⁷⁶ For instance, women going to a shelter not specifically designed for women or families might fear having their children taken by child protective services because the environment in which they live is not ideal for children.⁷⁷

Leaving abusive relationships can also result in employment loss for women: women may have to travel out of town or take time off work to seek support and services, especially in rural communities.⁷⁸ According to Fiona Cunningham, a mental health counsellor at Iris Kirby House (St. John’s and Carbonear), in Newfoundland and Labrador; “there are no shelters to be accessed locally, meaning that a woman may have to choose between safety and employment.”⁷⁹ Some witnesses suggested that paid domestic violence leave could help women leaving abusive relationships to seek the services they need, “rebuild their lives and regain power.”⁸⁰

73 Ibid.

74 See, for example: FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 19 November 2018, 1550 (Eva Kratochvil); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 22 October 2018, 1635 (Lisa Litz, Director of Stakeholder Relations, Horizon Housing Society); and Cowichan Women Against Violence, “[Transitional Housing Needs for Women Leaving Abusive Relationships in the Cowichan Valley: Status of Women Canada study “Better support for transition houses and shelters serving women and children affected by violence against women”](#),” *Submitted Brief*, November 2018.

75 Prince Edward Island Family Violence Prevention Services, *Submitted Brief*, November 2018.

76 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 24 October 2018, 1635 (Lyda Fuller); and FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 5 November 2018, 1725 (Daisy Kler).

77 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 22 October 2018, 1710 (Martina Jileckova, Chief Executive Officer, Horizon Housing Society).

78 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 24 October 2018, 1530 (Kristal LeBlanc).

79 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 5 November 2018, 1650 (Fiona Cunningham, Mental Health Counsellor, Iris Kirby House).

80 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 31 October 2018, 1615 (Marie-Ève Surprenant, Coordinator, Table de concertation de Laval en condition féminine); and FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 24 October 2018, 1625 (Kristal LeBlanc).

ACCESSING HOUSING SERVICES

Availability of Beds

The Committee heard that violence against women shelters and transition houses often operate at capacity. Almost every witness told the Committee that shelters and transition houses often turn away women and children fleeing violence because of a lack of space.⁸¹ Jennifer Lepko, Chief Executive Officer of the YWCA Lethbridge and District, told the Committee:

Imagine having to run for your life in the middle of the night to escape being beaten to death. For many, escaping is the time when they would be most at risk of losing their life. You show up at the front door of a shelter with nothing but the clothes on your back. You then have to share your story with complete strangers, and tell them about the horrors you have experienced, all the while blaming yourself for much of the abuse you have endured. You are then told that the shelter is full. Now what? You will likely return to your abuser, not because you want to but because if you had any other option you would have tried it before coming to a shelter.⁸²

According to a representative from Statistics Canada, on 16 April 2014 (the snapshot day for Statistics Canada's Transition Home Survey), "more than 300 women and 200 of their children were turned away from a shelter," more than half of them because the shelter was at capacity.⁸³ In a written brief, the Regroupement des maisons pour femmes victimes de violence conjugale stated that the lack of available beds in violence against women shelters reflects a larger lack of access to essential support and services for women affected by violence.⁸⁴

Faced with a lack of available beds in violence against women shelters, women might return to abusive relationships or sleep in their cars.⁸⁵ Some women will access

81 See, for example: Maison Simonne Monet-Chartrand, "[Subject: Pressing needs in women's shelters](#)," *Submitted Brief*, November 2018; Women's Place of South Niagara Inc., *Submitted Brief*, November 2018; Three Oaks Foundation, *Submitted Brief*, November 2018; FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 7 November 2018, 1625 (Diane Beaulieu); and Courteney Paquette, *Submitted Brief*, October 2018; and Island Crisis Care Society, *Submitted Brief*, October 2018.

82 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 24 October 2018, 1535 (Jennifer Lepko).

83 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 19 November 2018, 1640 (Yvan Clermont).

84 Regroupement des maisons pour femmes victimes de violence conjugale, "[The Duty to Protect Abused Women: Increasing the number of spaces in safe houses](#)," *Submitted Brief*, November 2018.

85 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 24 October 2018, 1600 (Jennifer Lepko); and Maison d'hébergement pour Elles des Deux Vallées, *Submitted Brief*, November 2018.



emergency shelters, which might not be adapted to their needs.⁸⁶ The Committee heard that if violence against women shelters are not available to take a woman in, they sometimes try to transfer the woman to another shelter in the area or find support and services for her.⁸⁷ Such a transfer might be difficult in areas of the country where the supply of shelter beds is limited.⁸⁸ Some witnesses recommended implementing a centralized intake system to ensure that women who need to access shelters are able to do so, along with transportation plans for women who need to travel to shelters.⁸⁹

“For many, escaping is the time when they would be most at risk of losing their life.”

Jennifer Lepko

Witnesses also told the Committee that shelters might take in women even if they are already full. For instance, Lyda Fuller, Executive Director, YWCA, Northwest Territories, said: “we also do overflow in our shelters, so we might take more women than we have space for. For example, we have a list of women who are so high-risk that no matter when they present, we would take them in, even if we have to put mats on the floor.”⁹⁰ Operating above capacity means that shelters provide services to more women than for which they receive funding.⁹¹

Witnesses stressed the need for more spaces in violence against women shelters or safe spaces for women to respond to the demand.⁹² Bonnie Brayton, National Executive

86 See, for example: Salvation Army, [“The Salvation Army Submission to the House of Commons Status of Women Committee Study: System of Shelters and Transition Houses Serving Women and Children Affected by Violence Against Women and Intimate Partner Violence,” Submitted Brief](#), November 2018.

87 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 5 November 2018, 1725 (Jean Fong, Transition House Worker, Vancouver Rape Relief and Women's Shelter).

88 Ibid., 1545 (Donna Smith, Executive Director, Tearmann Society for Abused Women).

89 SAVIS of Halton, [“Barriers of Access in Shelters and Transitional Housing for Survivors of Human Trafficking,” Submitted Brief](#), October 2018; and Salvation Army, [“The Salvation Army Submission to the House of Commons Status of Women Committee Study: System of Shelters and Transition Houses Serving Women and Children Affected by Violence Against Women and Intimate Partner Violence,” Submitted Brief](#), November 2018.

90 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 24 October 2018, 1640 (Lyda Fuller).

91 Regroupement des maisons pour femmes victimes de violence conjugale, [“The Duty to Protect Abused Women: Increasing the number of spaces in safe houses,” Submitted Brief](#), November 2018; and FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 29 October 2018, 1635 (Jayce Beaudin-Carver, Executive Director, Windsor-Essex Transgender and Allied Support).

92 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 24 October 2018, 1535 (Jennifer Lepko) and 1645 (Lyda Fuller); also FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 7 November 2018, 1630 (Linda Lafantaisie Renaud, Director, Horizon Women's Centre).

Director of the DisAbled Women's Network Canada, told the Committee that creating more shelter spaces requires “resources and funding for infrastructure, and a coordinated infrastructure that allows for thinking through full accessibility and inclusion, in terms of the approach.”⁹³ The Committee heard that Habitat for Humanity Halton-Mississauga is currently building housing that will be managed by local women’s organizations. John Gerrard explained how a collaborative approach between community organizations and governments might result in better outcomes: “By simply collaborating with our partners, we can focus our resources and spend more time doing what's best, reducing the need for more government funding and allowing funding and government donors to also focus funding in specific areas.”⁹⁴ John Gerrard noted the difference between capital and program delivery components of a project: “Don't ask the specialists of programming to build housing, the bricks and mortar. At the same time, don't ask your bricks and mortar folks to deliver programming.”⁹⁵

Criteria to Access and Stay in Violence Against Women Shelters and Transition Houses

The Committee also heard that some women might not fit criteria to access violence against women shelters. Shelters might have to turn away women because the shelters are not adapted to some women’s needs.⁹⁶ In a written brief, the YWCA Hamilton explained that “women who identify as abused and homeless, often get streamed through the homeless sector” which prevents them “from accessing the appropriate trauma informed support.”⁹⁷

Conversely, women who are homeless, but are not victims of violence, often do not have a place to go since they do not meet the criteria to access violence against women shelters and women-only emergency shelters are rare.⁹⁸ However, women might avoid emergency shelters because they may not be safe for them or because women do not want to risk

93 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 22 October 2018, 1550 (Bonnie Brayton).

94 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 31 October 2018, 1535 (John Gerrard).

95 Ibid.

96 Maison La Traverse, *Submitted Brief*, November 2018; Halton Women's Place, *Submitted Brief*, November 2018; and Carrefour pour Elle, “[Brief on the system of shelters and transition houses serving women and children affected by violence against women and intimate partner violence](#),” *Submitted Brief*, November 2018.

97 YWCA Hamilton, “[Barriers of Access to Shelters and Transition Houses for Marginalized and Homeless Survivors of Violence](#),” *Submitted Brief*, November 2018.

98 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 5 November 2018, 1650 (Fiona Cunningham).



having their children taken away by child protective services.⁹⁹ Eva Kratochvil, a survivor and frontline worker at Hiatus House, noted that shelters serving homeless individuals “were not constructed to be secure facilities meant to protect women from danger.”¹⁰⁰ Tim Richter, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness, explained that there is no national definition of homelessness. Usually, definitions used are narrow and include individuals in shelters for people experiencing homelessness, which excludes women in violence against women shelters.¹⁰¹

In addition to criteria that must be met to access services, shelters often have a set of rules that residents must follow. The Committee recognizes that shelters develop rules in order to create a safe environment for all residents. However, these rules might have unintended consequences for some women; in some instances, the rules might make it difficult for shelters to accommodate women who have complex needs while maintaining a safe environment for all residents.¹⁰²

As well, the Committee heard that policies barring pets can be a barrier for women with pets who are trying to leave abusive relationships.¹⁰³ Some women might not leave a violent relationship for fear that their pets might be abused or neglected if they leave them behind; pet-friendly shelters could make a difference for these women.¹⁰⁴

ACCESSING SOCIAL SUPPORT AND SERVICES

In addition to housing, shelters and transition houses offer a variety of support and services to women and children affected by violence, such as referrals, counselling and advocacy, outreach and administrative services.¹⁰⁵ However, witnesses explained that shelters and

99 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 17 October 2018, 1615 (Tim Richter).

100 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 19 November 2018, 1530 (Eva Kratochvil).

101 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 17 October 2018, 1605 (Tim Richter).

102 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 22 October 2018, 1545 (Arlene Hache); YWCA Hamilton, “[Barriers of Access to Shelters and Transition Houses for Marginalized and Homeless Survivors of Violence](#),” *Submitted Brief*, November 2018; and SAVIS of Halton, “[Barriers of Access in Shelters and Transitional Housing for Survivors of Human Trafficking](#),” *Submitted Brief*, October 2018.

103 See, for example: Dawson Women's Shelter, *Submitted Brief*, November 2018; and Office of the Federal Ombudsman for Victims of Crime, “[Submission to the House of Commons' Standing Committee on the Status of Women: Study on the System of Shelters and Transition Houses Serving Women and Children Affected by Violence Against Women and Intimate Partner Violence](#),” *Submitted Brief*, November 2018.

104 Ishtar Women's Resource Society, “[House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women](#),” *Submitted Brief*, November 2018.

105 See, for example: La Gigogne, *Submitted Brief*, November 2018; Fédération des maisons d'hébergement pour femmes (QC), “[Re: Recommendation for the Study on the System of Shelters and Transition Houses](#)”

transition houses are sometimes unable to meet women's needs or offer high-quality services because of a lack of financial resources, capacity or space.¹⁰⁶

For instance, shelters and transition houses can have difficulty recruiting and retaining experienced employees trained to deal with the complex needs of the shelters and transition houses' clientele.¹⁰⁷ In addition, lack of funding means that shelters and transition houses sometimes resort to "single-staffing," which can put employees in dangerous situations or interrupt client's counselling sessions because the employee must fulfil other tasks.¹⁰⁸ Low staffing levels negatively affect both women accessing services and employees, who can burn-out because of the amount of work they have to complete.¹⁰⁹ Witnesses stressed the need for shelters and transition houses to receive funding to hire additional employees to meet the needs of women and children affected by violence.¹¹⁰

As well, the difficulty of accessing comprehensive and holistic support and services in some cities or regions can create a "revolving-door phenomenon where women are referred from one resource to another, reinforcing the cycle of instability and threatening their safety."¹¹¹ Some women might have to travel to multiple locations in a city or outside of their city or region to access specialized services.¹¹²

Having access to a continuum of comprehensive and holistic support and services is key for women and children affected by violence to be able to rebuild their lives and move

[Serving Women and Children Affected by Violence Against Women and Intimate Partner Violence](#)," *Submitted Brief*, November 2018; Maison pour femmes immigrantes, *Submitted Brief*, November 2018; Centre féminin du Saguenay, "[Re: The pressing need for safe houses for abused women](#)," *Submitted Brief*, November 2018; and Willow Place Inc., "[Re: Members of Standing Committee on the Status of Women](#)," *Submitted Brief*, November 2018.

106 See, for example: FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 13 June 2017, 0955 (Violet Hayes); and Maison d'hébergement pour Elles des Deux Vallées, *Submitted Brief*, November 2018.

107 See, for example: FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 5 November 2018, 1620 (Donna Smith); and FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 7 November 2018, 1715 (Joanne Baker).

108 See, for example: FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 5 November 2018, 1545 (Jennifer Gagnon) and 1620 (Donna Smith).

109 Ibid., 1705 (Geneviève Latour, Associate Director, Crossroads for Women Inc.).

110 See, for example: Ibid., 1620 (Donna Smith), 1540 (Jennifer Gagnon) and 1720 (Caithlin Scarpelli, Director, Communications and Fund Development, Atira Women's Resource Society).

111 Table de concertation de Laval en condition féminine, "[Brief from the Table de concertation de Laval en condition féminine – Submitted as part of the study by the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women on the System of Shelters and Transition Houses Serving Women and Children Affected by Violence Against Women and Intimate Partner Violence](#)," *Submitted Brief*, November 2018.

112 Westcoast Community Resources Society, *Submitted Brief*, November 2018; and FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 24 October 2018, 1610 (Kristal LeBlanc).



forward.¹¹³ Witnesses recommended that shelters and transition houses receive adequate funding to increase their ability to provide such a continuum of support and services, and that the federal government invest in social support.¹¹⁴ In particular, witnesses spoke of the importance of investing in training and skills development for women affected by violence.¹¹⁵ For instance, Travis DeCoste, Housing Support Worker at A Roof Over Your Head, Antigonish Community Transit, recommended that the Government of Canada specifically include, under the Employment Insurance (EI) program, the possibility for women who have experienced domestic violence or intimate partner violence to take training while still receiving regular EI benefits.¹¹⁶

Samantha Lacourse, Coordinator of A Safe Place at the Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre, highlighted two federal policy areas that may impede access to social assistance for women who are experiencing violence. Firstly, the 90-day waiting period for a person to change their status to single under Canada Revenue Agency policies can impede women from leaving abusive relationships, as they may not be able to access social assistance if still officially in a relationship. Secondly, in situations where both partners receive social assistance through Indigenous Services Canada, both partners must provide a written notice to change their status to single if the relationship dissolves.¹¹⁷

As well, witnesses spoke of the need for legal support and services, such as access to legal representation and legal advocacy for women experiencing violence, and training for professionals in the justice system on family violence.¹¹⁸

113 See, for example: Vancouver and Lower Mainland Multicultural Family Support Services Society, "[Brief to Standing Committee on Housing and Women/Children Affected by Violence Against Women and Intimate Partner Violence](#)," *Submitted Brief*, November 2018; FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 7 November 2018, 1655 (Ann Decter, Director, Community Initiatives, Canadian Women's Foundation); also FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 5 November 2018, 1710 (Fiona Cunningham) and 1555 (Samantha Lacourse, Coordinator, A Safe Place, Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre).

114 See, for example: FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 31 October 2018, 1545 (Marie-Ève Surprenant) and 1545 (Melpa Kamateros); also FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 24 October 2018, 1610 (Kristal LeBlanc).

115 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 31 October 2018, 1635 (Travis DeCoste, Housing Support Worker, A Roof Over Your Head, Antigonish Community Transit); and FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 24 October 2018, 1540 et 1610 (Jennifer Lepko).

116 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 31 October 2018, 1635 (Travis DeCoste).

117 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 5 November 2018, 1555 (Samantha Lacourse).

118 See, for example: *Ibid.*, 1650 and 1655 (Fiona Cunningham); Victoria Women's Transition House Society, "[House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women](#)," *Submitted Brief*, November 2018; and FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 3 December 2018, 1540 (Viviane Michel).

Furthermore, some witnesses stressed the importance of offering services focused on children's needs, for instance trauma-informed mental health services and youth caseworkers, to help children heal from the violence they have experienced or seen.¹¹⁹ In a written brief, the Table de concertation de Laval en condition féminine recommended that the federal government ensure the development of shelters that can accommodate and respond to children's needs.¹²⁰

Finally, witnesses recommended investing in skills development and in training for trauma-informed practices for service providers, police and frontline workers dealing with female victims of violence.¹²¹

Lise Martin explained that shelters serving women and children affected by violence are not considered to be providers of an essential service.¹²² In their written briefs, several witnesses recommended that shelters and transition houses serving women experiencing violence be recognized as providers of an essential service.¹²³

Recommendation 5

That the Government of Canada, in collaboration with the provinces and territories, develop a national framework on shelter and transition house services for women and children affected by all types of gender-based violence and who are experiencing

119 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 5 November 2018, 1600 (Donna Smith); and Regroupement des maisons pour femmes victimes de violence conjugale, "[The Duty to Protect Abused Women: Increasing the number of spaces in safe houses](#)," *Submitted Brief*, November 2018.

120 Table de concertation de Laval en condition féminine, "[Brief from the Table de concertation de Laval en condition féminine – Submitted as part of the study by the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women on the System of Shelters and Transition Houses Serving Women and Children Affected by Violence Against Women and Intimate Partner Violence](#)," *Submitted Brief*, November 2018.

121 See, for example: DisAbleD Women's Network Canada, "[Women with Disabilities and Access to Shelters and Transition Houses](#)," *Submitted Brief*, November 2018; FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 24 October 2018, 1540 (Jennifer Lepko); and Victoria Cool Aid Society, "[Better support for transition houses and shelters serving women and children affected by violence against women](#)," *Submitted Brief*, November 2018.

122 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 17 October 2018, 1540 (Lise Martin).

123 See, for example: Fédération des maisons d'hébergement pour femmes (QC), "[Re: Recommendation for the Study on the System of Shelters and Transition Houses Serving Women and Children Affected by Violence Against Women and Intimate Partner Violence](#)," *Submitted Brief*, November 2018; Dawson Women's Shelter, *Submitted Brief*, November 2018; FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 7 November 2018, 1625 (Diane Beaulieu); and Maison d'hébergement le Rivage, "[Re: The great need for safe houses for abused women](#)," *Submitted Brief*, November 2018.



homelessness to ensure that women and children across the country have access to comparable levels of services, and that this framework:

- **ensure that women and children, particularly Indigenous women and children living in urban, rural and remote communities, have access to comprehensive, culturally appropriate, intersectional, and trauma-informed services and continuing support to help them heal from trauma;**
- **ensure that women and children from diverse backgrounds have access to services and support that meet their specific needs;**
- **address barriers to accessing beds and services in shelters and transition houses for women’s particular needs, including but not limited to, women living with all types of disabilities; women with mental health and substance use struggles; transgender women and non-binary individuals; immigrant and refugee women; and women who are victims of human trafficking; and**
- **create funding agreements between the federal, provincial and territorial governments to provide shelters and transition houses serving women and children affected by violence with increased and ongoing operational funding.**

Recommendation 6

That the Government of Canada ensure that information on receiving benefit payments through the Canada Revenue Agency, such as the Canada child benefit, is readily accessible to women who are in, or have left, an abusive relationship, or women staying in a shelter.

Recommendation 7

That the Government of Canada, in partnership with Indigenous peoples and communities, work with provinces and territories to:

- **develop strategies to deal with gender-based violence and to ensure police and prosecutors use a common set of practices in dealing with female survivors of gender-based violence; and**

- **lead national coordination of a review of the justice system to ensure equal access to protection and justice across the country for survivors of violence against women and girls.**

BARRIERS FACING WOMEN FROM DIVERSE BACKGROUNDS

While women from any background can be affected by violence,¹²⁴ certain groups of women face greater risks of violence and homelessness than others.¹²⁵ In addition to increased rates of violence, these women may face further barriers in accessing shelters and transition houses' services.¹²⁶ They may be subject to violence and conflict within the shelter system, either from other residents or from staff, or they may be discharged from shelters if they are unable to integrate into the shelters or transition houses' communities¹²⁷ or if they "break a minor rule."¹²⁸

Indigenous Women

Indigenous women face higher risks of violence than non-Indigenous women in Canada, with Inuit women experiencing the highest rates across the country.¹²⁹ Indigenous women and children who flee violence often do not have access to equitable services in shelters and transition houses when compared to non-Indigenous women. Shelters located on-reserve are "chronically underfunded" and operate above capacity.¹³⁰ In many

124 Regroupement des maisons pour femmes victimes de violence conjugale, "[The Duty to Protect Abused Women: Increasing the number of spaces in safe houses](#)," *Submitted Brief*, November 2018; and Ishtar Women's Resource Society, "[House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women](#)," *Submitted Brief*, November 2018.

125 Eva's Initiatives for Homeless Youth, "[Standing Committee on the Status of Women](#)," *Submitted Brief*, October 2018.

126 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 15 October 2018, 1545 (Justine Akman); and FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 19 November 2018, 1545 (Dawn Clark).

127 YWCA Hamilton, "[Barriers of Access to Shelters and Transition Houses for Marginalized and Homeless Survivors of Violence](#)," *Submitted Brief*, November 2018.

128 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 29 October 2018, 1640 (Jayce Beaudin-Carver).

129 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 3 December 2018, 1635 (Rebecca Kudloo, President, Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada); and FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 15 October 2018, 1600 (Margaret Buist).

130 See, for example: FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 19 November 2018, 1540 (Anita Olsen Harper); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 3 December 2018, 1640 (Samantha Michaels); and Native Women's Association of Canada, "[Violence Against Women Shelters and the Experiences of Indigenous Women: Policy Brief for the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women](#)," *Submitted Brief*, November 2018.



Indigenous communities, there are simply no shelter or safe spaces for women and children affected by violence. For instance, “[d]espite Inuit Nunangat¹³¹ experiencing the highest rates of violence in the country, greater than 70 per cent of the 52 Inuit communities across Inuit Nunangat do not have a safe shelter for women, and often the

homes of family and friends are overcrowded due to the lack of available and affordable housing.”¹³²

“Despite Inuit Nunangat experiencing the highest rates of violence in the country, greater than 70 per cent of the 52 Inuit communities across Inuit Nunangat do not have a safe shelter for women.”

Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada

Lack of access to shelters within their communities can force Indigenous women to travel to find a safe place to stay, if transportation is available and accessible.

Since Indigenous communities are usually small, confidentiality is a significant concern for Indigenous women fleeing violence.¹³³

Indigenous women living in such communities may hesitate to report

violence and to seek shelter services.¹³⁴ In some cases, shelters in urban settings or in other communities can offer more anonymity to Indigenous women than those located in their communities.¹³⁵ Witnesses suggested that efforts to ensure security in shelters located in smaller communities be developed with a multi-stakeholder group,¹³⁶ and that building shelters near police or medical services and the use of security cameras may increase security.¹³⁷

131 Inuit Nunangat means "the place where Inuit live" in Inuktitut. It is comprised of four regions: Inuvialuit (the Northwest Territories), Nunavut, Nunavik (Northern Quebec) and Nunatsiavut (Labrador).

132 Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, "[Briefing Note Submitted to House of Commons 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](#)," *Submitted Brief*, November 2018.

133 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 19 November 2018, 1600 (Anita Olsen Harper); and FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 3 December 2018, 1545 (Viviane Michel).

134 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 3 December 2018, 1545 (Viviane Michel) and 1625 (Sharmila Chowdhury, Transitional Support Worker, Minwaashin Lodge); also FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 24 October 2018, 1605 (Jennifer Lepko).

135 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 3 December 2018, 1625 (Sharmila Chowdhury) and 1545 (Viviane Michel); also FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 24 October 2018, 1605 (Jennifer Lepko).

136 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 3 December 2018, 1545 (Viviane Michel).

137 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 19 November 2018, 1600 (Anita Olsen Harper).

In leaving their communities, Indigenous women can become disconnected from their social support, communities and land, making them more vulnerable to abuse.¹³⁸ As well, Indigenous women may be uncomfortable seeking services from non-Indigenous shelters because of fear of being subject to discrimination and racism; a lack of culturally appropriate services; and fear of being separated from their children:¹³⁹

Indigenous women experience multiple intersecting forms of family, state, and structural violence. Many shelter services are failing Indigenous women by ignoring the ways in which colonization has normalized violence in Indigenous communities, but also the ways in which culture can support pathways to healing.¹⁴⁰

To heal from trauma, the Committee heard that Indigenous women need a continuum of long-term, gender-specific, trauma-informed and culturally appropriate support and services, including mental health services and counselling, that incorporate Indigenous expertise.¹⁴¹ In a written brief, Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada recommended that the federal government ensure that a full suite of integrated services be available for Inuit women, such as telehealth support, after-hours services for women and children experiencing violence, multi-purpose healing facilities, and that the federal government, in collaboration with Inuit women, develop a plan to reduce current service gaps.¹⁴² In a written brief, the Native Women's Association of Canada stressed the importance of supporting Indigenous women fleeing violence: “When we support women escaping family violence in meeting their physical, emotional, mental, and cultural needs, we

138 Native Women's Association of Canada, [“Violence Against Women Shelters and the Experiences of Indigenous Women: Policy Brief for the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women,” Submitted Brief](#), November 2018; also FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 3 December 2018, 1550 (Josie Nepinak, Executive Director, Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society), 1640 (Samantha Michaels) and 1655 (Rebecca Kudloo).

139 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 3 December 2018, 1600 (Josie Nepinak); and FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 22 October 2018, 1545 (Arlene Hache).

140 Native Women's Association of Canada, [“Violence Against Women Shelters and the Experiences of Indigenous Women: Policy Brief for the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women,” Submitted Brief](#), November 2018.

141 See, for example: Ibid.; Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, [“Briefing Note Submitted to House of Commons 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,” Submitted Brief](#), November 2018; and FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 3 December 2018, 1605 (Josie Nepinak).

142 Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, [“Briefing Note Submitted to House of Commons 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,” Submitted Brief](#), November 2018.



interrupt the cycles of violence in their communities.”¹⁴³ As well, witnesses recommended that the federal government provide funding for trauma-informed training and cultural competency training for service providers, especially for non-Indigenous service providers.¹⁴⁴

Recommendation 8

That the Government of Canada increase funding for on-reserve shelters serving women and children affected by violence to ensure that First Nations women and girls living on-reserve who are experiencing violence have access to comparable shelter services and support as women and children living off-reserve.

Recommendation 9

That the Government of Canada work with Inuit governments and communities to explore options, such as expanding the eligibility criteria for funding under the Family Violence and Prevention Program, with a view to providing adequate and long-term funding for shelters and transition houses serving women and children affected by violence in Inuit communities.

Recommendation 10

That the Government of Canada continue to work with Indigenous governments and communities to ensure that safe housing options and culturally appropriate support and services are available for Indigenous women and children victims of violence who live in communities where no shelters are available.

Recommendation 11

That the Government of Canada facilitate the collaboration among women’s organizations and Indigenous organizations to develop and implement, in partnership with Indigenous women who have lived experience of homelessness or violence, a culturally appropriate and competency-based staff training curriculum specific to the needs of First Nations, Inuit and Métis women.

143 Native Women's Association of Canada, [“Violence Against Women Shelters and the Experiences of Indigenous Women: Policy Brief for the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women,” Submitted Brief](#), November 2018.

144 Ibid.; Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, [“Briefing Note Submitted to House of Commons 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,” Submitted Brief](#), November 2018; and FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 22 October 2018, 1535 (Arlene Hache).

Women Living with Disabilities

Women living with disabilities experience higher rates of violence, and face higher risks of being victims of intimate partner violence, than women living without disabilities.¹⁴⁵ These risks increase for women living with disabilities who also belong to other marginalized groups, such as racialized women, Indigenous women and immigrant women.¹⁴⁶ Women can also become disabled because of violence; for example, violence can cause traumatic brain injuries.¹⁴⁷ Witnesses stated that as women enter shelters, there should be a screening process for brain injuries, as these conditions may affect women's needs and behaviour. The Committee heard that while some shelters can screen for these injuries, others do not have the resources to do so.¹⁴⁸

The Committee heard that barriers specific to women living with disabilities can inhibit them from leaving abusive relationships and from accessing shelters and transition houses. For instance, shelters are typically older buildings that may not be accessible to individuals living with disabilities.¹⁴⁹ Accessibility extends beyond physical accommodation and shelters and transition houses' employees may not be equipped to address the complexities and diversity of disabilities.¹⁵⁰ In shelters and transition houses with accessible spaces, women living with disabilities can become socially isolated, for instance if the accessible spaces are physically separated from the rest of the residents.¹⁵¹

Witnesses called for an increase in funding for shelters and transition houses to allow them to become fully accessible for women living with diverse types of disabilities.¹⁵² In addition, witnesses stated that providing training and education in shelters and transition houses regarding the complexities of living with disabilities would be

145 DisAbleD Women's Network Canada, "[Women with Disabilities and Access to Shelters and Transition Houses](#)," *Submitted Brief*, November 2018.

146 Ibid.

147 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 22 October 2018, 1530 (Bonnie Brayton).

148 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 24 October 2018, 1550 (Kristal LeBlanc) and 1550 (Jennifer Lepko); also FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 22 October 2018, 1620 (Bonnie Brayton).

149 See, for example: FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 31 October 2018, 1735 (Violet Hayes); also FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 5 November 2018, 1615 (Samantha Lacourse) and 1610 (Donna Smith).

150 DisAbleD Women's Network Canada, "[Women with Disabilities and Access to Shelters and Transition Houses](#)," *Submitted Brief*, November 2018.

151 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 22 October 2018, 1550 (Bonnie Brayton).

152 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 5 November 2018, 1610 (Donna Smith); and DisAbleD Women's Network Canada, "[Women with Disabilities and Access to Shelters and Transition Houses](#)," *Submitted Brief*, November 2018.



beneficial for women seeking support from shelters and transition houses.¹⁵³ Finally, in a written brief, the DisAbled Women's Network Canada recommended that the Government of Canada review its housing policies and programs to ensure that there is no gap in services for women living with disabilities.¹⁵⁴

Recommendation 12

That the Government of Canada facilitate research to identify best practices regarding protocols or screening questions to recognize possible traumatic brain injuries, acquired brain injuries, post-traumatic stress disorder or other mental illnesses or disabilities resulting from violence among women entering shelters and transition houses and provide funding for this research where necessary.

Immigrant and Refugee Women and Women from Diverse Cultural Backgrounds

Shelters and transition houses serve women coming from different ethnic, cultural and linguistic backgrounds.¹⁵⁵ Because of a lack of resources, shelters and transition houses may struggle to provide these women with services that meet their cultural and linguistic needs.¹⁵⁶ Women who speak languages other than French or English may encounter significant barriers in learning about and accessing shelters and transition houses or other social services, as well as when reporting violence to police.¹⁵⁷ As such, witnesses underlined the need for collaboration among service providers and increased access to information in women's first language.¹⁵⁸

153 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 22 October 2018, 1625 (Bonnie Brayton).

154 DisAbled Women's Network Canada, "[Women with Disabilities and Access to Shelters and Transition Houses](#)," *Submitted Brief*, November 2018.

155 See, for example: FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 31 October 2018, 1600 (Fabienne Héreau, External Services Social Worker, Lina's Home, Table de concertation de Laval en condition féminine); and Safe Housing and Directed Empowerment Inc., "[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](#)," *Submitted Brief*, November 2018.

156 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 31 October 2018, 1600 (Fabienne Héreau); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 24 October 2018, 1530 (Kristal LeBlanc); and FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 5 November 2018, 1715 (Fiona Cunningham).

157 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 31 October 2018, 1545-1550 (Melpa Kamateros); and FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 5 November 2018, 1715 (Geneviève Latour).

158 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 31 October 2018, 1615 (Melpa Kamateros).

Witnesses explained that women without legal status in Canada encounter difficulties in accessing social services. Long wait times associated with obtaining permanent residence or refugee status can further delay access to health care and income assistance, which can in turn force women and children to stay in shelters and transition houses for longer.¹⁵⁹ Women who are seeking legal status in Canada may be vulnerable to abuse, and a woman's legal status may be used as a means of control by an intimate partner, particularly if that partner is sponsoring her migration.¹⁶⁰ Sometimes, women in these situations are unaware of their rights, and do not seek help for fear of being deported.¹⁶¹

Witnesses stated that funding should be provided to increase shelters and transition houses' capacities to properly support immigrant and refugee women who are experiencing violence.¹⁶² In addition, YWCA Metro Vancouver recommended, in a written brief, to expedite the process for applications for permanent residency status on humanitarian and compassionate grounds for women victims of violence to "reduce the exposure to harm by making it easier for women without status, or with precarious stays to leave their abusive partner."¹⁶³

Women in Specific Age Groups

The Committee was told that most youth seeking services at youth homeless shelters have been exposed to violence in their own homes, and/or on the streets.¹⁶⁴ For female youth, accessing shelters and transition houses for women experiencing violence may be difficult because of their age or the lack of parent or guardian being with them. Gaps in services may force female youth experiencing violence to remain in abusive relationships

159 YWCA Metro Vancouver, "[Brief to the Standing Committee on the Status of Women](#)," *Submitted Brief*, November 2018; and FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 5 November 2018, 1715 (Geneviève Latour).

160 YWCA Metro Vancouver, "[Brief to the Standing Committee on the Status of Women](#)," *Submitted Brief*, November 2018; and FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 17 October 2018, 1625 (Tim Richter).

161 YWCA Metro Vancouver, "[Brief to the Standing Committee on the Status of Women](#)," *Submitted Brief*, November 2018.

162 See, for example: FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 5 November 2018, 1715 (Geneviève Latour); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 24 October 2018, 1605 (Jennifer Lepko); and City of Montreal, "[City of Montreal Submission on the System of Shelters and Transition Houses Serving Women and Children Affected by Violence Against Women and Intimate Partner Violence](#)," *Submitted Brief*, December 2018.

163 YWCA Metro Vancouver, "[Brief to the Standing Committee on the Status of Women](#)," *Submitted Brief*, November 2018.

164 Eva's Initiatives for Homeless Youth, "[Standing Committee on the Status of Women](#)," *Submitted Brief*, October 2018.



to avoid the dangers of homelessness.¹⁶⁵ Youth shelters are often under-resourced and unequipped to properly manage the needs of young women fleeing violence.¹⁶⁶ In a written brief, Eva's Satellite (a shelter for youth struggling with substance use and mental health troubles in Toronto) underlined the need for funding to create shelter spaces and have employees in youth shelters who can deliver services and meaningful programs for young women experiencing violence.¹⁶⁷

Older women can also face unique challenges when fleeing abusive relationships. The Committee heard that shelters and transition houses have seen an increase in older women accessing their services.¹⁶⁸ According to witnesses, most shelters and transition houses were built to accommodate a younger demographic; but as Canada's population ages, these services need to be tailored and accessible to older women.¹⁶⁹ Older women may face significant financial barriers when trying to access housing; because of a small pension for instance.¹⁷⁰

Women Living in Rural and Remote Communities

Women affected by violence who live in rural and remote communities face significant barriers when trying to access shelters and support.¹⁷¹ Factors such as geographic isolation,¹⁷² absence of confidentiality in small communities,¹⁷³ limited access to telephone or Internet services,¹⁷⁴ and lack of emergency services¹⁷⁵ represent some of the challenges

165 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 29 October 2018, 1655 (Grace Costa, General Manager, Eva's Satellite, Eva's Initiatives for Homeless Youth).

166 Ibid.

167 Eva's Initiatives for Homeless Youth, "[Standing Committee on the Status of Women](#)," *Submitted Brief*, October 2018.

168 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 24 October 2018, 1545 (Kristal LeBlanc); and FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 13 June 2017, 0955 (Violet Hayes).

169 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 24 October 2018, 1545 (Kristal LeBlanc); and FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 7 November 2018, 1740 (Linda Lafantaisie Renaud).

170 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 31 October 2018, 1735 (Violet Hayes).

171 See, for example: FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 24 October 2018, 1630 (Lyda Fuller); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 7 November 2018, 1715 (Joanne Baker); and FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 5 November 2018, 1550 (Samantha Lacourse).

172 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 24 October 2018, 1630 (Lyda Fuller).

173 See, for example: FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 5 November 2018, 1555 (Samantha Lacourse); and FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 24 October 2018, 1615 (Kristal LeBlanc).

174 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 24 October 2018, 1615 (Kristal LeBlanc).

175 Ibid., 1630 (Lyda Fuller, Executive Director, YWCA NWT).

facing women living in a rural or remote community wanting to flee abusive relationships. As well, the Committee was told that there is a limited number of shelters, transition houses and related services in rural and remote communities in Canada.

Witnesses stated that the lack of public or affordable transportation is of particular concern for women living in rural or remote communities who are affected by violence;¹⁷⁶ the inability to safely travel to other communities can lead to life-threatening situations for women.¹⁷⁷

Linda Lafantaisie Renaud, Director of the Horizon Women's Centre, highlighted that the recruitment and retention of qualified, bilingual frontline workers remains a challenge in rural and remote communities.¹⁷⁸

Witnesses suggested that operational funding be provided to shelters and transition houses in rural and remote communities, and that funding for transportation and legal services for women experiencing violence in remote and rural communities be increased.¹⁷⁹

Recommendation 13

That the Government of Canada in collaboration with the provinces, territories and Indigenous governments, fund transportation for women living in urban, rural, remote, and northern communities, including in Indigenous communities, who are fleeing violence and do not have access to safe shelter services in their home community.

Female Victims of Human Trafficking

The Committee was told that there is a significant gap in services in shelters and transition houses for victims of human trafficking. Female victims of human trafficking might not meet criteria to access shelters and transition houses serving women and children affected by violence. Shelters and transition houses serving women and children affected by violence may have strict rules against sex work; these rules can be a

176 See, for example: FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 7 November 2018, 1630 (Linda Lafantaisie Renaud); and FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 7 November 2018, 1715 (Joanne Baker).

177 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 7 November 2018, 1640 (Joanne Baker).

178 *Ibid.*, 1630 (Linda Lafantaisie Renaud).

179 See, for example: FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 5 November 2018, 1555 (Samantha Lacourse); and Salvation Army, "[The Salvation Army Submission to the House of Commons Status of Women Committee Study: System of Shelters and Transition Houses Serving Women and Children Affected by Violence Against Women and Intimate Partner Violence](#)," *Submitted Brief*, November 2018.



barrier to accessing services for victims of human trafficking who are engaged in sex work.¹⁸⁰ As well, female victims of human trafficking might have difficulty following specific rules and schedules that residents of shelter and transition house must follow, “as they have just exited a similar situation where their daily routines and mobility were completely controlled by their trafficker.”¹⁸¹

Witnesses underlined that trauma-informed, intersectional and harm-reduction-based housing models are required to properly support and address the needs of victims of human trafficking.¹⁸² In addition, witnesses stated that services in the shelter and transitional housing system must distinguish between, and meet the distinct needs of, victims of trafficking and those who participate in consensual sex work.¹⁸³

Recommendation 14

That the Government of Canada provide funding, through the National Housing Strategy, for the creation of housing support specifically designed for survivors of human trafficking.

Individuals Identifying with Certain Gender Identities and Sexual Orientations

The Committee heard that individuals who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and Two-Spirit (LGBTQ2S) face high rates of violence.¹⁸⁴ However, when services identify violence as “male violence against women,” many members of these communities are excluded.¹⁸⁵ Women who are transgender may be turned away from women’s shelters and transition houses as they are sometimes “being told that [their] presence in women’s services is triggering for cisgender women who have faced violence at the hands of men.”¹⁸⁶ Furthermore, individuals who identify outside the

180 SAVIS of Halton, “[Barriers of Access in Shelters and Transitional Housing for Survivors of Human Trafficking](#),” *Submitted Brief*, October 2018.

181 Ibid.

182 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 29 October 2018, 1705 (Tara Setaram, Crisis Counsellor, Human Trafficking, SAVIS of Halton).

183 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 5 November 2018, 1655 (Fiona Cunningham).

184 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 29 October 2018, 1655 (Grace Costa).

185 Native Women's Association of Canada, “[Violence Against Women Shelters and the Experiences of Indigenous Women: Policy Brief for the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women](#),” *Submitted Brief*, November 2018.

186 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 29 October 2018, 1635 (Jayce Beaudin-Carver).

gender binary are often forced to choose between shelter and transition houses for women and men; as such, gender-diverse individuals and individuals who are transgender may not be able to access the services they need. Individuals who are transgender may remain in violent or dangerous situations to avoid seeking shelter services that do not meet their needs or that are unwelcoming to them.¹⁸⁷

The Committee was told that reliable data are not available regarding the experiences of women who are transgender with respect to homelessness, intimate partner violence or access to shelters and transition houses' services. Individuals who are transgender are often placed in a broad category with individuals identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual or queer. Without data and research specific to people who are transgender, their experiences and needs cannot be addressed accurately.¹⁸⁸ Witnesses stressed that individuals who identify as LGBTQ2S should be consulted and their experiences should be taken into account when developing solutions to address intimate partner violence.¹⁸⁹ Witnesses also suggested that greater support be extended to transitional services for vulnerable groups, including LGBTQ2S communities.¹⁹⁰

Women who Have Complex Mental Health or Substance Abuse Issues

Witnesses explained that shelter and transition house policies often inhibit access for women who struggle with complex mental health and substance use challenges,¹⁹¹ and that women may hesitate to disclose these challenges when seeking shelter services.¹⁹² Shelters and transition houses are generally under-equipped to properly support women with complex mental health or substance use issues.¹⁹³ These women often require significant support, and may have trouble integrating into communal living

187 Ibid., 1635-1640.

188 Ibid., 1635.

189 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 17 October 2018, 1615 (Tim Richter).

190 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 29 October 2018, 1705 (Alma Arguello, Executive Director, SAVIS of Halton).

191 Victoria Cool Aid Society, "[Better support for transition houses and shelters serving women and children affected by violence against women](#)," *Submitted Brief*, November 2018.

192 Ibid.; and FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 19 November 2018, 1545 (Dawn Clark).

193 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 24 October 2018, 1530 (Kristal LeBlanc); FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 7 November 2018, 1630 (Linda Lafantaisie Renaud) 1640 (Joanne Baker).



environments, such as in shelters or transition houses.¹⁹⁴ As well, shelter rules around alcohol and substance use might be difficult for some women to follow and might prevent them from accessing or staying in a shelter.¹⁹⁵ Witnesses suggested that funding should be provided to establish harm-reduction and “low-barrier” shelters¹⁹⁶ and to train employees of shelters and transition houses to properly support women with mental health and substance use addictions.¹⁹⁷

194 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 19 November 2018, 1545 (Dawn Clark); and FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 5 November 2018, 1650 (Fiona Cunningham).

195 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 22 October 2018, 1545 (Arlene Hache); and YWCA Hamilton, “[Barriers of Access to Shelters and Transition Houses for Marginalized and Homeless Survivors of Violence](#),” *Submitted Brief*, November 2018.

196 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 7 November 2018, 1630 (Linda Lafantaisie Renaud); and FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 5 November 2018, 1555 (Samantha Lacourse).

197 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 7 November 2018, 1720 (Linda Lafantaisie Renaud).

HELPING WOMEN AS THEY LEAVE SHELTERS

Gender-based violence is a key contributing factor to women's housing insecurity in Canada:

Gender-based family violence is a key factor contributing to women's housing instability and homelessness in Canada. Women in the [gender-based violence] sector have not been counted in the homeless numbers locally or nationally, and we want to ensure that their homelessness and housing instability are accurately captured in the local and national analysis.¹⁹⁸

Women and children who leave shelters can go to various types of housing: transitional, market, or social housing, and, eventually, to homes that they own. These housing options, along with barriers preventing women from accessing them, are described in the sections that follow.

ACCESS TO TRANSITIONAL HOUSING

The Committee heard that transition houses – longer-term accommodations, usually between a few months and up to two years offering ongoing support¹⁹⁹ – are a crucial interim step between shelters and more permanent housing for women leaving violent situations.²⁰⁰ Transition houses can help women navigate various social services and administrative processes, such as securing financial support and housing, accessing lawyer services, navigating child custody issues and child care, and providing police statements.²⁰¹ The Committee was told that a significant gap exists in the capacity of transition houses to meet the needs of women and children affected by violence – typically because of a lack of funding and resources – which can result in women being

198 Anova, [“Written Submission for the Members of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women “Better support for transition houses and shelters serving women and children affected by violence against women” study,” Submitted Brief, November 2018.](#)

199 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 7 November 2018, 1635 (Joanne Baker); and FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 17 October 2018, 1535 (Lise Martin).

200 See, for example: FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 5 November 2018, 1640 (Geneviève Latour) and 1655 (Jean Fong); also SAVIS of Halton, [“Barriers of Access in Shelters and Transitional Housing for Survivors of Human Trafficking,” Submitted Brief, October 2018.](#)

201 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 5 November 2018, 1655 (Jean Fong).



sent outside their communities to try to access these services or returning to violent environments.²⁰²

When leaving shelters, women may encounter barriers in accessing housing, such as high housing prices and a lack of transitional housing in their communities.²⁰³ In particular, it was noted that when Indigenous women leave shelters, they may return to their

“Gender-based family violence is a key factor contributing to women’s housing instability and homelessness in Canada.”

Anova

communities, which may be too far for shelters to provide ongoing outreach and follow-up services.²⁰⁴ For example, Josie Nepinak, Executive Director of the Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society, explained that increased resources are needed to ensure that women have adequate transitional support and safety plans as they reintegrate into their communities.²⁰⁵

Many witnesses emphasized the need to expand access to transitional housing to all communities in Canada, including on reserves, and stated that adequate funding should be provided to build, operate, and provide ongoing services in transitional housing for women fleeing violence.²⁰⁶ Witnesses highlighted other considerations to improve women’s access to transitional housing, including:

- increasing “community-based follow-up for individual and innovative support services, such as opportunities for women to provide feedback and input regarding program designs and influence service delivery;”²⁰⁷

202 See, for example: FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 7 November 2018, 1635 (Joanne Baker) and 1650 (Ann Decter).

203 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 3 December 2018, 1555 (Josie Nepinak), 1640 (Sharmila Chowdhury and Samantha Michaels).

204 Ibid., 1555 (Josie Nepinak).

205 Ibid., 1615.

206 See, for example: FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 17 October 2018, 1625 (Lise Martin); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 7 November 2018, 1625 (Diane Beaulieu); and FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 31 October 2018, 1545 (Marie-Ève Surprenant).

207 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 19 November 2018, 1550 (Dawn Clark).

- ensuring that proper safety measures are in place in transition houses²⁰⁸ and that these houses meet the needs of diverse groups of women;²⁰⁹
- establishing agreements with municipalities to guarantee that a number of units in newly built residences are allotted to transitional spaces;²¹⁰ and
- creating safe community spaces open to women seven days a week, 24 hours a day, when they need to seek safety.²¹¹

ACCESS TO SAFE AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING

The Committee heard that while shelters and transition houses are important, they should be seen as temporary solutions for women, between leaving a violent environment and acquiring safe, permanent and affordable housing.²¹² This is crucial for women and children to heal from their trauma.²¹³ Women leaving shelters and transition houses can face barriers when trying to access affordable housing and often have very few viable housing options.²¹⁴ The high cost of rental housing in many Canadian cities leaves little money for necessities, even with rent supplements or other income support.²¹⁵ The lack of affordable housing has led to overcrowded shelters and long

208 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 24 October 2018, 1555 (Jennifer Lepko).

209 Carrefour pour Elle, "[Brief on the system of shelters and transition houses serving women and children affected by violence against women and intimate partner violence](#)," *Submitted Brief*, November 2018.

210 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 29 October 2018, 1735 (Tara Setaram) and 1745 (Megan Walker); also FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 17 October 2018, 1545 (Paul Taylor, President and Chief Executive Officer, Mortgage Professionals Canada).

211 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 5 November 2018, 1535 (Cynthia Drebot).

212 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 22 October 2018, 1640 (Jeff Morrison) and 1720 (Martina Jileckova).

213 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 17 October 2018, 1535 (Tim Richter); Native Women's Association of Canada, "[Violence Against Women Shelters and the Experiences of Indigenous Women: Policy Brief for the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women](#)," *Submitted Brief*, November 2018; and FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 22 October 2018, 1545 (Arlene Hache).

214 See, for example: FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 31 October 2018, 1750 (Violet Hayes); FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 29 October 2018, 1710 (Tara Setaram); and FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 22 October 2018, 1635 (Martina Jileckova).

215 See, for example: FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 5 November 2018, 1610 (Samantha Lacourse); and YWCA Metro Vancouver, "[Brief to the Standing Committee on the Status of Women](#)," *Submitted Brief*, November 2018.



waiting times for shelter spaces because women are not able to move on to market housing. This situation reduces the capacity of shelters to support more women.²¹⁶

In addition to financial barriers, women must often navigate complex administrative processes to receive rent supplements or other financial support to secure housing,²¹⁷ and they may not meet the eligibility requirements for affordable housing priority lists.²¹⁸ Witnesses also explained that racism and discrimination exist in the housing market, as landlords may hesitate or refuse to rent to some women, such as single mothers, women receiving social assistance, or Indigenous women.²¹⁹

Some witnesses stated that the housing-first model, and immediate access to housing, can contribute to women's self-determination and empowerment.²²⁰ In contrast, some witnesses stated that accommodating the housing-first model may contribute to a reduction in the number of shelter beds available to women, and suggested instead employing a "women-first" principle.²²¹ Witnesses added that solutions to the housing needs of each community should be established in collaboration with the community.²²²

Witnesses emphasized the need to improve and expand the availability of, and access to, affordable housing for women.²²³ To do so, witnesses suggested converting some existing buildings to affordable housing units,²²⁴ and adopting co-operative housing

216 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 3 December 2018, 1630 (Sharmila Chowdhury); and Comox Valley Transition Society, "[Submission to the Standing Committee on the Status of Women: November 2018](#)," *Submitted Brief*, November 2018.

217 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 29 October 2018, 1710 (Tara Setaram).

218 YWCA Hamilton, "[Barriers of Access to Shelters and Transition Houses for Marginalized and Homeless Survivors of Violence](#)," *Submitted Brief*, November 2018.

219 See, for example: FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 19 November 2018, 1605 (Dawn Clark); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 29 October 2018, 1710 (Tara Setaram); and Prince Edward Island Family Violence Prevention Services, *Submitted Brief*, November 2018.

220 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 17 October 2018, 1530 (Tim Richter); and FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 22 October 2018, 1605 (Arlene Hache).

221 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 29 October 2018, 1630 (Megan Walker).

222 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 31 October 2018, 1640 (Travis DeCoste).

223 See, for example: FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 29 October 2018, 1745 (Megan Walker); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 24 October 2018, 1635 (Lyda Fuller); and FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 22 October 2018, 1635 (Lisa Litz).

224 Vancouver and Lower Mainland Multicultural Family Support Services Society, "[Brief to Standing Committee on Housing and Women/Children Affected by Violence Against Women and Intimate Partner Violence](#)," *Submitted Brief*, November 2018.

models.²²⁵ To help tenants, witnesses recommended providing tax breaks to landlords, implementing rent control measures,²²⁶ creating a federal housing benefit to ensure women are “able to make choices about where to secure housing,”²²⁷ and establishing long-term rent-to-own arrangements.²²⁸ In addition, Martina Jileckova, Chief Executive Officer of the Horizon Housing Society, suggested supporting community housing models that pair affordable housing with social support.²²⁹

Recommendation 15

That the Government of Canada, in collaboration with the provinces and territories, examine measures that could increase access to affordable housing and transitional support, such as flexible rental supplements or benefits.

Recommendation 16

That the Government of Canada provide support to organizations working in the affordable housing field to operate as social enterprises to sustain their operational needs.

Recommendation 17

That the Government of Canada, with the goal to continue to address the housing affordability crisis, work with provinces and territories to ensure the efficient release of funds allocated to affordable housing under the National Housing Strategy.

225 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 22 October 2018, 1555 (Arlene Hache).

226 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 31 October 2018, 1750 (Violet Hayes); and Ishtar Women's Resource Society, “[House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women](#),” *Submitted Brief*, November 2018.

227 Ishtar Women's Resource Society, “[House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women](#),” *Submitted Brief*, November 2018.

228 Ibid.; and Vancouver and Lower Mainland Multicultural Family Support Services Society, “[Brief to Standing Committee on Housing and Women/Children Affected by Violence Against Women and Intimate Partner Violence](#),” *Submitted Brief*, November 2018.

229 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 22 October 2018, 1635 (Martina Jileckova).



ACCESS TO HOME OWNERSHIP

The Committee heard that efforts to make home ownership available to women who have experienced violence are necessary, as home ownership can empower women.²³⁰ As well, some women may benefit from financial literacy training in order to manage their finances after leaving an abusive relationship or fleeing violence.²³¹ Women who have experienced violence may be in precarious financial situations,²³² which may make seeking financial advice and services difficult, as financial institutions may seem unwelcoming to them.²³³ For this reason, Donna Mullen and Marilyn Ruttan, who both have experience as realtors and mortgage brokers, suggested that mortgage brokers and real estate agents receive sensitivity training to properly support and mentor women who have experienced violence.²³⁴ As well, Marilyn Ruttan told the Committee that women leaving shelters should know more about affordable housing programs available to them, such as provincial down payment assistance programs.²³⁵

Witnesses also told the Committee that new mortgage rules like the “stress test,” can impede some single women’s access to mortgages and home ownership.²³⁶ A representative from CMHC explained that the stress test is meant to protect Canadians from unforeseen financial or economic stress.²³⁷ The Committee heard that the stress test should be eliminated for mortgage applicants who can show six months of continuous full-time work and who are purchasing homes priced at less than \$500,000.²³⁸ In addition, witnesses indicated that the following initiatives could help women who have experienced violence have access to home ownership:

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- 230 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 29 October 2018, 1740 (Donna Mullen, as an individual).
- 231 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 22 October 2018, 1725 (Martina Jileckova); and FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 24 October 2018, 1620 (Kristal LeBlanc).
- 232 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 17 October 2018, 1620 (Tim Richter) and 1620 (Jacquie Bushell, Residential Mortgage Specialist, as an individual).
- 233 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 29 October 2018, 1645 (Marilyn Ruttan, as an individual).
- 234 *Ibid.* and 1715 and 1740 (Donna Mullen).
- 235 *Ibid.*, 1740 (Marilyn Ruttan).
- 236 *Ibid.*, 1645 (Marilyn Ruttan) and 1740 (Donna Mullen).
- 237 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 15 October 2018, 1615 (Charles MacArthur).
- 238 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 29 October 2018, 1715 (Donna Mullen).

- ensuring that all mortgage lenders across the country consider certain social support and benefits, such as child benefits, as income;²³⁹ and
- ensuring that debt for spousal home buyouts outlined in separation agreements is understood as buyout and not mortgage refinancing.²⁴⁰

Several innovative solutions to make home ownership available to vulnerable groups of people were presented to the Committee. For example, Antigonish Community Transit in Nova Scotia is exploring the possibility of using shipping containers to create affordable housing,²⁴¹ and the Atira Women's Resource Society has developed multi-unit dwellings from shipping containers, where the residents are part of an intergenerational mentorship program.²⁴² In addition, the Committee was told that the Aboriginal Housing Society provides affordable housing and the option of home ownership through a "social enterprise model" in collaboration with the private sector. Capital grant funding when available is used to purchase property, and "recycle" the money to increase the number of affordable housing units in the community.²⁴³

Recognizing that shelters are a temporary short-term option, witnesses presented various housing options for women and children affected by violence. For instance, three witnesses presented owning a home as an achievable goal for some women who have experienced violence. Other witnesses indicated that is typically not a realistic option for most women who are living in shelters and transition houses.²⁴⁴ Many women who have experienced violence may struggle to afford rent.²⁴⁵ Diane Beaulieu, Executive Director of Halton Women's Place, told the Committee that:

239 Donna Mullen, "[Follow-Up Report: Mortgage Qualification Recommendations Changes to the Stress Test and the Income Qualifying Rules that would have Immediate Results](#)," *Submitted Brief*, November 2018; and FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 17 October 2018, 1620 (Jacquie Bushell).

240 Donna Mullen, "[Follow-Up Report: Mortgage Qualification Recommendations Changes to the Stress Test and the Income Qualifying Rules that would have Immediate Results](#)," *Submitted Brief*, November 2018.

241 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 31 October 2018, 1750 (Travis DeCoste).

242 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 5 November 2018, 1710 (Caithlin Scarpelli).

243 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 7 November 2018, 1645-1705 (Boyd Thomas, Executive Director, Aboriginal Housing Society).

244 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 29 October 2018, 1720 (Megan Walker); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 7 November 2018, 1700 (Diane Beaulieu); and FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, Parliament, 22 October 2018, 1705 (Jeff Morrison).

245 See, for example: FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 29 October 2018, 1720 (Megan Walker) and 1725 (Jayce Beaudin-Carver).



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Many, many women come to the shelter, and there are some women who perhaps could afford to buy, but they would be women who had resources before they came. I've had the wife of a judge in our shelter. I've had a few nurses in our shelter. When I say that abuse can happen to anyone, it can. Those women might, perhaps, be able to afford to buy, but 99% of the women who come to our shelter would not be able to afford to buy. They cannot afford to rent in Halton. Many of them, if they can't get subsidized housing through Halton Region, have to go to Hamilton to find housing, and even then it's difficult.²⁴⁶

246 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 7 November 2018, 1700 (Diane Beaulieu).

PREVENTING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

Prevention programs are key to ending violence against women and to reducing the need for women to access shelter services.²⁴⁷ In a written brief, the Native Women's Association of Canada stated that investments in safe and affordable housing in Indigenous communities are also investments in violence prevention.²⁴⁸ The Committee was told that approaches to prevent and address violence against women should be collaborative and community-based.²⁴⁹ Witnesses also stressed the importance of including the perspectives of survivors of violence in the development of initiatives to address violence against women and of engaging both perpetrators of violence and Canadian society in these initiatives.²⁵⁰ In a written brief, Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada stressed the need for Inuit women and girls to have access to violence prevention services.²⁵¹ As well, various witnesses called for more investments from the federal government to address and prevent violence against women.²⁵²

The Committee heard about *It's Time: Canada's Strategy to Prevent and Address Gender-Based Violence* (the Strategy). Since the federal Strategy was launched in 2017, Status of Women Canada, along with other federal departments and agencies, has implemented and invested in various initiatives to support survivors of violence and to prevent violence against women. The Strategy has population-specific programs, including for Indigenous and underserved populations.²⁵³ Some witnesses indicated that the Strategy

247 See, for example: FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 15 October 2018, 1615 (Justine Akman); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 17 October 2018, 1530 (Tim Richter); and FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 5 November 2018, 1535 (Jennifer Gagnon).

248 Native Women's Association of Canada, "[Violence Against Women Shelters and the Experiences of Indigenous Women: Policy Brief for the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women](#)," *Submitted Brief*, November 2018.

249 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 5 November 2018, 1550 (Donna Smith); and FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 24 October 2018, 1655 (Lyda Fuller).

250 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 19 November 2018, 1550 (Dawn Clark); and FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 5 November 2018, 1655 (Fiona Cunningham).

251 Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, "[Briefing Note Submitted to House of Commons 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](#)," *Submitted Brief*, November 2018.

252 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 29 October 2018, 1635 (Megan Walker); and FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 31 October 2018, 1605 (Melpa Kamateros).

253 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 15 October 2018, 1545 (Justine Akman).



is insufficient and recommended that a national action plan on gender-based violence be developed in collaboration with provinces and territories to ensure that all women in Canada have equal access to services and protection.²⁵⁴

Witnesses explained that any federal strategy or policy on violence against women should be coordinated with other national strategies,²⁵⁵ focus on social inequalities that affect women from diverse backgrounds,²⁵⁶ and support survivors in retaining employment.²⁵⁷

Many witnesses indicated that preventing violence and encouraging healthy relationships should be approached by the federal government through education programs at all levels of the school system and in communities, and through public awareness campaigns.²⁵⁸ Witnesses recommended that these awareness campaigns make use of social media,²⁵⁹ be culturally relevant,²⁶⁰ and be multilingual.²⁶¹ As well, the Committee was told that men and boys need to be involved in ending violence against women.²⁶² Witnesses explained that men and boys across Canada need to be taught from a young age about gender-based violence and that they are responsible for their

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- 254 See, for example: FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 7 November 2018, 1655 (Ann Decter); Le Parados inc., “[Re: The dire needs of women’s shelters](#),” *Submitted Brief*, November 2018; Agape House - Eastman Crisis Centre Inc., *Submitted Brief*, November 2018; and Pavillon Marguerite de Champlain, *Submitted Brief*, November 2018.
- 255 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 22 October 2018, 1725 (Dominika Krzeminska, Director, Programs and Strategic Initiatives, Canadian Housing and Renewal Association); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 31 October 2018, 1550 (Melpa Kamateros); and FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 5 November 2018, 1645 (Geneviève Latour).
- 256 Native Women's Association of Canada, “[Violence Against Women Shelters and the Experiences of Indigenous Women: Policy Brief for the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women](#),” *Submitted Brief*, November 2018; and FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 22 October 2018, 1600 (Bonnie Brayton).
- 257 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 5 November 2018, 1655 (Fiona Cunningham).
- 258 See, for example: FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 29 October 2018, 1730 (Grace Costa); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 7 November 2018, 1605 (Linda Lafantaisie Renaud); and Women's Place of South Niagara Inc., *Submitted Brief*, November 2018.
- 259 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 7 November 2018, 1630 (Diane Beaulieu).
- 260 Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, “[Briefing Note Submitted to House of Commons 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](#),” *Submitted Brief*, November 2018.
- 261 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 31 October 2018, 1615 (Melpa Kamateros).
- 262 See, for example: FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 29 October 2018, 1715 (Alma Arguello); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 19 November 2018, 1605 (Dawn Clark); and FEWO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 7 November 2018, 1705 (Joanne Baker).

own behaviour.²⁶³ A representative from the Department of Indians Affairs and Northern Development indicated that the FVPP has seen an increase in proposals focussed on engaging Indigenous men in ending violence against women and girls.²⁶⁴

Recommendation 18

That the Government of Canada, in collaboration with provinces and territories, continue its efforts to create a national action plan on gender-based violence and consider including access to shelters and transitional houses and to safe and affordable housing in this action plan.

Recommendation 19

That the Government of Canada encourage the provinces and territories to consider incorporating gender-based violence prevention into school curricula at all levels of schooling to teach children about gender-based violence, human rights and healthy relationships, with an emphasis on engaging boys in the issue.

Recommendation 20

That the Government of Canada work with community organizations to take substantive action on the recommendations made in the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women's report entitled *Taking Action to End Violence Against Young Women and Girls in Canada* regarding the implementation of culturally sensitive, locally informed and community-oriented awareness campaigns and education programs for various groups, including young people, men and boys, and those living in Indigenous and northern communities.

263 See , for example: FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 29 October 2018, 1715 (Alma Arguello); FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 19 November 2018, 1605 (Dawn Clark); and FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 24 October 2018, 1645 (Lyda Fuller).

264 FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 15 October 2018, 1650 (Margaret Buist).

APPENDIX A LIST OF WITNESSES

The following table lists the witnesses who appeared before the Committee at its meetings related to this report. Transcripts of all public meetings related to this report are available on the Committee’s [webpage for this study](#).

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation Charles MacArthur, Senior Vice-President Assisted Housing	2018/10/15	114
Department of Employment and Social Development Janet Gwilliam, Manager Community Development and Homelessness Partnering Directorate Catherine Scott, Director General Community Development and Homelessness Partnerships Directorate	2018/10/15	114
Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development Margaret Buist, Acting Assistant Deputy Minister Education and Social Development Programs and Partnerships Branch	2018/10/15	114
Office of the Co-ordinator, Status of Women Justine Akman, Director General Policy and External Relations Tammy Tremblay, Director Gender Based Violence Knowledge Center	2018/10/15	114
As an individual Jacquie Bushell, Residential Mortgage Specialist	2018/10/17	115
Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness Tim Richter, President and Chief Executive Officer	2018/10/17	115
Mortgage Professionals Canada Paul Taylor, President and Chief Executive Officer	2018/10/17	115

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
Women's Shelters Canada Lise Martin, Executive Director	2018/10/17	115
As individuals Bonnie Brayton, National Executive Director DisAbled Women's Network Canada Arlene Hache, Community Advocate	2018/10/22	116
Canadian Housing and Renewal Association Dominika Krzeminska, Director Programs and Strategic Initiatives Jeff Morrison, Executive Director	2018/10/22	116
Horizon Housing Society Martina Jileckova, Chief Executive Officer Lisa Litz, Director of Stakeholder Relations	2018/10/22	116
Beauséjour Family Crisis Resource Centre Kristal LeBlanc, Executive Director	2018/10/24	117
YWCA Lethbridge and District Jennifer Lepko, Chief Executive Officer	2018/10/24	117
YWCA NWT Lyda Fuller, Executive Director	2018/10/24	117
As individuals Donna Mullen Marilyn Ruttan	2018/10/29	118
Eva's Initiatives for Homeless Youth Grace Costa, General Manager Eva's Satellite	2018/10/29	118
London Abused Women's Centre Megan Walker, Executive Director	2018/10/29	118
SAVIS of Halton Alma Arguello, Executive Director Tara Setaram, Crisis Counsellor Human Trafficking	2018/10/29	118
Windsor-Essex Transgender and Allied Support Jayce Beaudin-Carver, Executive Director	2018/10/29	118

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
Antigonish Community Transit Society Travis DeCoste, Housing Support Worker A Roof Over Your Head	2018/10/31	119
Habitat for Humanity Halton-Mississauga John Gerrard, Chief Executive Officer	2018/10/31	119
Horizon Women's Centre Linda Lafantaisie Renaud, Director	2018/10/31	119
Island Crisis Care Society Violet Hayes, Executive Director	2018/10/31	119
Regroupement des maisons pour femmes victimes de violence conjugale Chantal Arseneault, President Louise Riendeau, Co-responsible, Political Issues	2018/10/31	119
Table de concertation de Laval en condition féminine Fabienne Héraux, External Services Social Worker Lina's Home Marie-Ève Surprenant, Coordinator	2018/10/31	119
The Shield of Athena - Family Services Melpa Kamateros, Executive Director	2018/10/31	119
Atira Women's Resource Society Caithlin Scarpelli, Director Communications and Fund Development	2018/11/05	120
Crossroads for Women Inc. Geneviève L. Latour, Associate Director	2018/11/05	120
Iris Kirby House Fiona Cunningham, Mental Health Counsellor	2018/11/05	120
North End Women's Centre Cynthia Drebot, Executive Director	2018/11/05	120
South Shore Transition House Association (Harbour House) Jennifer Gagnon, Executive Director	2018/11/05	120

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
Tearmann Society for Abused Women Donna Smith, Executive Director	2018/11/05	120
Vancouver Rape Relief and Women's Shelter Jean Fong, Transition House Worker Daisy Kler, Transition House Worker	2018/11/05	120
Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre Samantha Lacourse, Coordinator A Safe Place	2018/11/05	120
Aboriginal Housing Society Boyd Thomas, Executive Director	2018/11/07	121
BC Society of Transition Houses Joanne Baker, Executive Director	2018/11/07	121
Canadian Women's Foundation Ann Decter, Director Community Initiatives	2018/11/07	121
Halton Women's Place Diane Beaulieu, Executive Director	2018/11/07	121
Horizon Women's Centre Linda Lafantaisie Renaud, Director	2018/11/07	121
As individuals Eva Kratochvil, Survivor and Frontline Worker Hiatus House Anita Olsen Harper, Research Consultant National Aboriginal Circle Against Family Violence	2018/11/19	122
Haven Society Dawn Clark, Acting Executive Director	2018/11/19	122
Statistics Canada Kathy AuCoin, Assistant Director Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics Yvan Clermont, Director Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics	2018/11/19	122
Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society Josie Nepinak, Executive Director	2018/12/03	125

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
Minwaashin Lodge Sharmila Chowdhury, Transitional Support Worker	2018/12/03	125
Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada Rebecca Kudloo, President Samantha Michaels, Senior Policy Advisor	2018/12/03	125
Quebec Native Women Inc. Viviane Michel, President	2018/12/03	125

APPENDIX B LIST OF BRIEFS

The following is an alphabetical list of organizations and individuals who submitted briefs to the Committee related to this report. For more information, please consult the Committee's [webpage for this study](#).

Advancement of Women Halton

Agape House - Eastman Crisis Centre Inc.

Anova

Atlohsa Native Family Healing Services Inc.

Carrefour pour Elle

Centre féminin du Saguenay

City of Montreal

Comox Valley Transition Society

Cowichan Women Against Violence

Dawson Women's Shelter

DisAbled Women's Network of Canada

Elizabeth Fry Society of Greater Vancouver

Eva's Initiatives for Homeless Youth

Fédération des maisons d'hébergement pour femmes

Halton Women's Place

Havre l'Éclaircie

Ishtar Women's Resource Society

Island Crisis Care Society

Kratochvil, Eva

La Gigogne

Le Parados inc.

Maison d'hébergement le Rivage

Maison d'hébergement pour Elles des Deux Vallées

Maison La Traverse
Maison pour femmes immigrantes
Maison Simonne Monet-Chartrand
Mullen, Donna
Native Women's Association of Canada
New Brunswick South Central Transition House and Second Stage Coalition, Inc.
Office of the Federal Ombudsman for Victims of Crime
Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses
Paquette, Courteney
Passe-R-Elle des Hautes-Laurentides
Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada
Pavillon Marguerite de Champlain
Prince Edward Island Family Violence Prevention Services
Regroupement des maisons pour femmes victimes de violence conjugale
Ruttan, Marilyn
Safe Housing and Directed Empowerment Inc.
Salvation Army
SAVIS of Halton
South Central Committee on Family Violence Inc.
Table de concertation de Laval en condition féminine
Three Oaks Foundation
Vancouver and Lower Mainland Multicultural Family Support Services Society
Victoria Cool Aid Society
Victoria Women's Transition House Society
Westcoast Community Resources Society
Willow Place Inc.
Women's Place of South Niagara Inc.
Yellow Brick House
YWCA Hamilton
YWCA Metro Vancouver

REQUEST FOR GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the Committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to this Report.

A copy of the relevant *Minutes of Proceedings* ([Meetings Nos. 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 125, 129, 130 and 134](#)) is tabled.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Vecchio
Chair

Conservative Supplementary Report: A Bridge to Stability - How Thoughtful Housing Policy Can Help Women and Children Fleeing Abuse

Introduction

Violence against women remains a public health crisis in Canada. Women and children fleeing domestic violence are extremely vulnerable and require individualized support from organizations in their communities. Unfortunately, the shelters and transition houses that provide critical services to help these individuals are facing significant challenges that must be addressed.

Many communities are dealing with serious disparities in funding or have to tackle unique difficulties that are not accounted for under the current system. The current state of the Canadian housing market, with high prices and low supply, puts these organizations at an even greater disadvantage as they try to help women and children move out of emergency care into stable, permanent housing. These issues need to be addressed in order to equip shelters with the capacity to empower those facing the horror of abuse.

Shelters in Rural and Remote Communities and in Indigenous Communities

At committee, Statistics Canada mentioned that approximately 300 women and 200 children were turned away from shelters in a single day. Many of these cases were due to the reality that shelters are often already operating at capacity.¹ Shelters in rural and remote communities, including those in the North and on First Nations reserves, face additional challenges in delivering their services. Lack of access to these shelters adds further difficulty for women and children trying to heal from their trauma.

We recognize that women in Indigenous communities frequently face high rates of violence, and that this need should be reflected in the levels of funding and services that are provided to their communities. These facilities face specific challenges including security and anonymity concerns. It is clear that the government must consult directly with bands and elders in order to create new ways of connecting the communities in the greatest need with the resources that they require.

We re-affirm the Committee Report's Recommendation calling on the government to ensure that First Nations women and girls living on-reserve who are experiencing violence have access to comparable shelter services as women and children living off-reserve.

We also support federal assistance to Indigenous communities and other communities in rural and remote areas for job retraining programs, education and outreach.

Improving Gaps in the Housing Continuum

Conservatives understand that the housing market operates on a continuum with multiple stages. The continuum starts at emergency shelter housing for individuals (including women and children affected by violence) and extends through to market-rate rental housing and

¹ FEWO, Evidence, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 19 November 2018, 1640 (Yvan Clermont, Director, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Statistics Canada).

homeownership. Emergency shelters often serve as the first point of contact for people entering into this housing continuum and must be given the tools to enable women to move into more stable environments. We strongly believe that emergency shelters deliver essential services, but must be viewed as temporary means that help women move to reliable, sustainable, permanent housing.

As wait times for housing grow, and as emergency shelters face further constraints, the need for safe, affordable housing becomes increasingly urgent. Unfortunately, the low supply and high prices of homes of the Canadian housing market has limited individuals' ability to transition naturally through each stage of the housing continuum, especially in major urban centres such as Toronto and Vancouver.

While there are concerns at each stage of the continuum, one government policy that has created some concern is the application of a stress test to Canadians applying for mortgages. The Canadian Real Estate Association reported that the stress test would reduce buying power by roughly 18% for prime borrowers (i.e. homebuyers who have a 20% or more down payment).² A Fall 2017 report from the Mortgage Professionals of Canada estimated that between 2017 and 2019, about 200,000 families will have "significantly reduced their housing expectations in order to obtain financing, or [will be] entirely prevented from buying a home."³

These measures have compressed regular market activity and constrained the upward mobility that Canadians could usually find in the housing continuum. It has reduced buying power and restricted the supply of housing and rental property that would otherwise be affordable for individuals with lower income - including women seeking to leave a shelter or a transition house. The failure to highlight this information in the Committee Report, despite testimony from several witnesses, will inevitably lead to blind spots in policy development, and will leave promising solutions to aid vulnerable women and children unexplored.

We understand that homeownership may seem like a distant reality for individuals who are living in the shelter system. However, by pushing homeownership further away through a combination of tax hikes and regulation, the Liberal Government has actually created a bottleneck in the natural housing continuum. Unfortunately, this means that those facing the challenge of finding housing after a traumatic experience have even fewer options as they seek to rebuild their lives.

Housing First

The previous Conservative government understood that permanent housing offers a powerful level of stability for vulnerable individuals. That is why, in the design of the Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS), we earmarked 65% of funding for projects using a Housing First approach. As outlined in the Committee's Report, in addition to providing a permanent place to call home, Housing First also includes essential wraparound supports for vulnerable individuals.

² https://www.crea.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/20171006_PACDays_MPBriefingBooklet_EN_Web.pdf

³ <https://mortgageproscan.ca/docs/default-source/membership/annual-state-of-res-mtge-mkt-2018.pdf>

Housing First is a proven, cost-effective way of permanently ending homelessness. The Final Report of the Advisory Committee on Homelessness commissioned by the current Liberal government *specifically* outlined the usefulness of a Housing First approach and stated that this model could make a dramatic difference in the lives of women and children fleeing violence.⁴ This government-commissioned Committee, composed of “housing and homelessness experts, local and regional service providers, as well as individuals with a lived experience of homelessness” concluded their official report by recommending that the government, “maintain the funding allocation and the current Housing First targets to enable communities to move to ending homelessness.”

Unfortunately, despite its own committee’s recommendation, the Liberal Government rejected those findings, and instead removed the Housing First funding targets, when it redesigned the HPS, which is now known as *Reaching Home: Canada’s Homelessness Strategy*.⁵ This decision ignores the way that the housing continuum works, and fails to recognize how strategic, well-timed assistance, can provide women and children fleeing violence with immediate access to a stable home, as well as appropriate supports and services that will help them rebuild their lives.

Conclusion and Recommendations

While the Conservative Members of the Committee appreciate the content of the committee’s report, and concur with the majority of its findings, we believe that several components of witness testimony have been omitted. Our supplementary recommendations build on the principles outlined in this supplementary report and are focused on balancing a compassionate and determined effort to address the tragedy of gender-based violence and to empower women without creating government policies that introduce new barriers for women seeking shelter following a traumatic experience.

⁴ <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/communities/homelessness/publications-bulletins/advisory-committee-report.html>

⁵ <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/news/2018/06/reaching-home-canadas-homelessness-strategy.html>

Appendix I: Recommendations

1. That the Government of Canada work with community organizations to take substantive action on the recommendations made in the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women's report entitled *Taking Action to End Violence Against Young Women and Girls in Canada* regarding the implementation of culturally sensitive, locally informed and community-oriented awareness campaigns and education programs for various groups, including young people, men and boys, and those living in Indigenous and northern communities.
2. That the Government of Canada address the lack of supply of affordable housing, transition houses, and community housing by eliminating government policies that restrict the supply of housing, and that produce barriers that prevent women from accessing those supports. This could be facilitated by introducing an annual report from the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation on the total cost of taxes, fees, permits, delays and red tape per unit of housing in each major market across Canada, and an evaluation of the impact that mortgage stress-tests have on women who are seeking to enter the market after a traumatic event.
3. That the Government of Canada conduct a Gender-Based Analysis Plus on the Housing First approach and on their decision to remove all funding targets for Housing First Programs under Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy.
4. That the Government of Canada provide funding to organizations to create and implement a business model by which revenue is generated in a sustainable manner to help cover the cost of affordable housing or shelter space.

Appendix II: Expert Testimony in Support of Recommendations

Martina Jileckova (CEO, Horizon Housing Society): “The lack of access to supported affordable housing is, for women fleeing violence, double-barrelled. Women leaving a violent partner often face a reduction in income, and we see that when they come to stay with us. Then, the lack of access to affordable housing can force them into homelessness. Once they are there, the lack of housing options keeps them in homelessness. Our partners, Discovery House and others, tell us that the average second-stage shelter stay for a woman and her children is nine months in Calgary. It's not necessarily because they need to be in the shelter for nine months but because there is a lack of affordable housing for these women to move into.” (FEWO, Evidence, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 22 October 2018, 1635)

Martina Jileckova (CEO, Horizon Housing Society): “It's interesting, because I agree that we need emergency shelters and second-stage shelters for a very limited short period of time. What our partner agencies are telling us is that, once that immediate need is addressed, a woman with children is very successfully housed in community housing with supports. We no longer view the transitional second-stage housing as a progression, that thou shalt spend six months there because you are going through a program. What we are finding really works in Calgary is that, once the immediate shelter need is addressed, moving women as soon as possible into community-based housing that's affordable with the supports still available is the most successful model.” (FEWO, Evidence, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 22 October 2018, 1725 (Martina Jileckova, Chief Executive Officer, Horizon Housing Society)).

Martina Jileckova (CEO, Horizon Housing Society): “We spoke about indigenous women, and they need cultural reconnections. We will move women into our housing, but they need that cultural reconnection that comes from social supports. Those are the types of supports that need to be funded” (FEWO, Evidence, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 22 October 2018, 1725).

Jeff Morrison (Executive Director, Canadian Housing and Renewal Association): “Shelters and transitional housing are important, but they are and should be temporary. They are interim solutions for survivors of domestic violence. The next step for women is to find, secure and maintain safe and affordable housing. However, this gap between need and supply is exacerbated by long wait-lists for social and non-profit housing, particularly for families with children, which far outpaces the availability of units. As an example, in Montreal, there are currently over 25,000 individuals on the wait-list. In Toronto, the wait-list is well over 82,000. We anticipate that these numbers are very conservative. The real demand we believe is much, much higher.” (FEWO, Evidence, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 22 October 2018, 1640)

Jeff Morrison (Executive Director, Canadian Housing and Renewal Association): As we discussed, shelters are important and they play a role, but they are a band-aid. Shelters, especially for women fleeing violence, should not be seen as a solution. They should be seen as a step along the way. In terms of providing shelter for women fleeing violence, I would hope this committee would really focus on how we provide that ongoing access to safe affordable housing in the long term. (FEWO, Evidence, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 22 October 2018, 1655).

Arlene Hache (Community Advocate, Appeared as an individual) - For me, the housing first model has all of the elements it needs. I think it's the application of cultural differences or cultural tools, trauma-informed practice, and it's just to round out the practice better... A lot of women who face violent situations have lived on their own, can live on their own. Just because they end up in a shelter doesn't mean that they can't be supported in their own home or different homes." (FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 22 October 2018, 1605)

Tim Richter (President and CEO of the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness) – Long-term solutions, in my view, will be found by involving women with lived experience of domestic violence at every stage of the policy process. In the homelessness world, we've applied rights-based approaches like "housing first" with significant success. Housing first empowers people experiencing homelessness with agency, voice and choice. By doing that, we achieve far better long-term outcomes than ever before. By listening carefully to them and reflecting their input and needs in our systems and programs, we design more effective systems and programs to serve them. (FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 17 October 2018, 1530)

Tim Richter (President and CEO of the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness) - Providing permanent, safe, decent and affordable housing is a critical step in achieving better outcomes for women and children fleeing domestic violence. Positive outcomes are a result of wraparound support that helps women build self-reliance and heal from their trauma. We're seeing that interventions borrowed from the homeless system, like housing first, achieve significant success for women and children fleeing violence when the model is adapted to their unique and specific needs. (FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 17 October 2018, 1535)

Tim Richter (President and CEO of the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness) - There's a lot to unpack here, but we have to look at the flow of people into the domestic violence system, what happens to them while they're there, and the movement of people out. I think you cannot separate housing stability and the support services that they need to address their trauma, make sure their kids are well, deal with their safety, help them address their mental illness, and help them address addiction concerns. I think that wraparound support in housing is very critical, ultimately, to their success. (FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 17 October 2018, 1600)

Catherine Scot (Director General, Community Development and Homelessness Partnerships Directorate, Department of Employment and Social Development): While the Housing First approach was initially tested among homeless individuals who are single and living with mental health and/or addiction issues, the approach has been used successfully with a variety of demographic groups, including women and families. (FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 15 October 2018, 1535)

Violet Hayes, Executive Director, Island Crisis Care Society - Yes, the mention of the tax break for landlords might help. I know, as the value of the houses are going up, to find a house now for \$500,000, that's a fairly basic house now in Nanaimo. If landlords are having to pay a mortgage on the place and their taxes keep going up, they put the rent up as much as they can. We just had the latest announcement for how much the rent could go up next year, and it was

4.5%. That's a big jump[...]. (FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 31 October 2018, 1750)

Marilyn Ruttan (Appeared as an Individual): I quickly messaged back to state that single women are not coming through our doors anymore to buy homes especially since last January, when the new mortgage stress test was introduced. It is difficult enough for a two-income family to qualify, let alone a single woman or a single woman trying to get back on her feet after having been in a stage one shelter or a stage two shelter situation. Women can't buy a home without first qualifying for a mortgage, and the big banks are not at all accommodating or welcoming. (FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 29 October 2018, 1640)

Donna Mullen (Appeared as an Individual): Right now, when you apply for a mortgage to buy a home, the rules have never been so stringent and inconsistent from lender to lender. I started working in the banks in 1982, when rates were 20%, so I've been through every crash. (FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 29 October 2018, 1650)

Donna Mullen (Appeared as an Individual): What's happening is that we have so many on short-term disability that these casual workers who are hired are working 40 hours a week all year long because you have people on eight-week vacations or on short-term disability. Guess what? Those women can't buy a house. They have to be there for two years to show an average income before they can qualify for a mortgage.

My first recommendation, knowing those industries, is that for six months of continuous work at 40 hours a week you can get a mortgage and buy under the \$500,000 mark with no stress test. (FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 29 October 2018, 1715)

Donna Mullen (Appeared as an Individual): - If we want them to be successful, we have to empower them so they can pay their own bills. That is the biggest empowerment for any woman today. She wants to pay her way, buy her own food, be able to provide for her children. That will give the woman the biggest sense of security that she can have in this world today.

If the rents are similar to what the mortgage payment would be, what better way to empower a woman if she doesn't have to fear moving every other year because a landlord wants to sell? She could do well with the profit, given the way that real estate has appreciated. We're looking to give that security. Policies in place right now are so interconflicted that women are shaking their heads, asking what to do.

As for building more units, yes, we definitely need more first-stage transitional spaces. We could never build enough for the need out there today. We have to start building programs that interconnect and move women out of the transition two status, programs that give them security in their own homes. (FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 29 October 2018, 1740)

Jacquie Bushell (Residential Mortgage Specialist, Appeared as an individual) referring to a conversation with a colleague: She said that since the B20 rules, the qualifying standards in lending policies for most of the major financial institutes, or A-type lenders, have been removed, along with the ability to use the child tax credit and non-taxable spousal or child

support. Therefore, very few lenders, and only a couple, ICICI and Manulife, will allow a variation of this type of income to qualify. The choice of lenders has dramatically been reduced since the introduction of B20, removing options and competition. Lenders are required to prove affordability with provable income or income that is allowable under their guidelines. Most of the major lenders removed the child tax credit as they felt it was not sustainable over the long term and, therefore, could not be used to mitigate affordability. When the child tax credit or the spousal support is used, it is often cut back to 20% to 40%, depending on the lender policy and the age of the children. As you can guess, this hampers the applicants in their ability to qualify when a large portion of their income includes spousal support, child support and child tax benefit.

She said that the bottom line is that the options for the lenders that allow these types of incomes to be used is greatly reduced since the change. This, in turn, gives the consumer fewer lending options and terms, and they typically receive higher interest rates for use of these programs. Not only can they not use income that helps them move on in their new life, but they are also penalized for this by getting a higher interest rate. The new rules do not allow for character-based lending, common-sense lending, or cash flow based on real income figures.

While her association would like to give more insight into the desperate shelter issue, they have to consider the government's stress test. It indeed stresses this particular group of applicants far more than others. It stresses quite a few of those you are studying: the women who want to move on from awful conditions, but are limited by regulations. Their members and their clients clearly tell them these rules have made it harder for the Canadians for whom this committee is seeking to find the freedom and independence that they need and deserve. (FEWO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 17 October 2018, 1545)

TIME TO END THE UNDERFUNDING OF WOMEN'S SERVICES AND ENSURE EQUALITY OF ACCESS TO SERVICES AND PROTECTION FOR ALL WOMEN

*A Minority Report submitted by the New Democratic Party of Canada
To the Government of Canada*

“Shelters contribute much more than a safe place to stay. They provide vital services and resources that enable women and their children who have experienced abuse to recover from the violence, rebuild self-esteem and take steps to regain a self-determined and independent life. Shelters also contribute to awareness raising and social change as part of broad efforts to prevent and eliminate violence against women and girls.”¹

In Canada and around the world, violence against women is shockingly prevalent. Domestic violence or Intimate Partner Violence is still one of the most common forms of violence against women in Canada.

- Every six days, a woman in Canada is killed by her intimate partner.
- Over half of Canadian women will experience violence at some point in their lives.
- Indigenous women are seven times more likely to be murdered than non-Indigenous women. Thousands of Indigenous women in Canada have been murdered or gone missing over the past 30 years. Sexual assault experienced by Indigenous women are more than three times that of non-Indigenous women.
- “Women with disabilities and Deaf women experience rates of violence nearly three times higher than comparable non-disabled women. They are the largest, poorest minority group in Canada with the highest rates of physical, systemic, financial, psychological and interpersonal/family violence.”²
- Domestic and sexual violence costs our economy over \$12 billion a year.

New Democrats call upon the Liberal government to fulfill its promise of a national action plan to end gender-based violence and demand justice for Indigenous women who have gone missing from our communities. We also call upon the government to fund operations at Canada’s shelters and transition housing for women fleeing violence.

National leadership is long overdue to coordinate responses to violence against women and girls, yet successive Liberal and Conservative governments have failed to act. To date, the Trudeau government has failed to translate its feminist rhetoric into real change. Multiple witnesses, including Rebecca Kudloo, President of Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, called out the government for its failure to address this national crisis:

In 2015, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau committed to gender equality for our women in Canada. The federal government also committed to reconciliation with indigenous peoples. Minister of Status of Women, Maryam Monsef, was mandated to ensure that no one fleeing domestic violence is left without a place to turn, by growing and maintaining Canada's network of shelters and transition

¹ Evidence, Lise Martin, Executive Director, Women's Shelters Canada, October 17, 2018.

² DisAbleD Women's Network of Canada, “Legislation Policy and Service Responses to Violence Against Women with Disabilities & Deaf Women”, December 2018, URL: <https://dawnacanada.net/projects/lps/>.

houses. Despite this, violence against Inuit women and girls remains a systemic national crisis that requires urgent, informed and collaborative action.³

Each day Violence against Women (VAW) shelters across the country are forced to turn away women and children due to capacity issues.

- “In 2014, on a snapshot day, more than 300 women and 200 of their children were turned away from a shelter—more than half, 56%, because shelters were full.”⁴

The federal government has demonstrated an abysmal failure to act. In addition, it has broken its promise to Canadians and the United Nations with its failure to develop and implement a National Action Plan.

Due to the lack of federal leadership, women continue to have varying levels of services and protection depending on where they are living and the place to which they are fleeing. In a 2018 report from Women’s Shelter Canada⁵, revealed that:

- In order get protection against violence and rebuild their lives, survivors of violence against women must navigate UN VAW responses that are “largely fragmented,” and are “often inaccessible”.
- Many current policies, legislation, and strategies across Canada “lack effective coordination of efforts, conflict with one another, and/or have unintended (negative) consequences.”

There has been, at best, a piecemeal approach to the creation of a National Action Plan on gender-based violence from the current government.

In April 2018⁶, the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women, in her first official visit to Canada, called out the government for its failure to prevent violence against women and girls and the lack of action to address their safety and well-being:

- “Violence against women in Canada is still a serious, pervasive and systematic problem: an unfinished business that requires urgent actions.”
- The rapporteur commented on the lack of harmonization with CEDAW across federal, provincial and territorial levels, resulting in an incomplete patchwork and varying levels of protection for the right of Canadian women to live free from violence.⁷

Witnesses continue to call on the government to immediately create a National Action Plan⁸ aided by the *Blueprint for Canada’s National Action Plan on Violence Against Women and Girls*⁹,

³ Evidence, Rebecca Kudloo, President, Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, December 3, 2018.

⁴ Evidence, Justine Akman, Director General, Policy and External Relations, Status of Women Canada, October 15, 2018.

⁵ Women’s Shelters Canada, “Building a National Narrative; a select review of domestic violence policies, legislation, and services across Canada”, September 2018, URL: <https://endvaw.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Building-a-National-Narrative-Sept-2018.pdf>

⁶ Dubravka Šimonović, United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence against women, its causes and consequences, “End of mission statement - Official visit to Canada”, 23 April 2018, URL: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=22981&LangID=E>

⁷ Dubravka Šimonović, United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence against women, its causes and consequences, “End of mission statement - Official visit to Canada”, 23 April 2018, URL: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=22981&LangID=E>

⁸ Evidence, Ann Decter, Director, Community Initiatives, Canadian Women’s Foundation, November 7, 2018; Evidence, Joanne Baker, Executive Director, BC Society of Transition Houses, November 7, 2018; Evidence, Lise Martin, Executive Director, Women’s Shelters Canada, October 17, 2018; Evidence, Donna Smith, Executive Director, Tearmann Society for Abused Women, November 5, 2018; Evidence, Eva Kratochvil, Survivor and Frontline Worker, Hiatus House, November 19, 2018; Evidence, Louise Riendeau, Co-responsible, Political Issues, Regroupement des

developed by a network of 23 Canadian experts, trade unions and non-governmental organizations and endorsed by over 180 organizations. Some even argued that the federal government “could have done the work that we were told they needed to do federally to get their own house in order. That could have been part of the [national] action plan.”¹⁰

The UN Special Rapporteur also insisted that “federalism should not be a barrier to human rights implementation”.¹¹ She was very critical of the lack of federal leadership:

“Canada currently has a federal strategy on Gender Based Violence. Its reach is limited to the areas of responsibility of the federal government and thus does not seek to ensure that women in all areas of the country have access to comparable levels of services and protection.”¹²”

It is now clear that the Trudeau government has failed its international commitments to the UN, and its human rights and constitutional equality obligations, leaving Canadian women and girls without a National Action Plan to protect them.

Since the NDP tabled its report *Comprehensive National Action Plan needed immediately to end violence against young women and girls* (March 2017), the government has failed to act on the urgency to end violence against women and girls in Canada. Because national leadership is imperative to save lives and help women leave domestic violence, we are repeating this call.

Therefore, the NDP recommends:

That the Government of Canada immediately demonstrate leadership and coordinate federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal government responses to protect women and girls against violence, via a National Action Plan – to ensure equality of access to services across and within jurisdictions in policies, laws, and education, and to prevent and address violence against women and girls – and that the National Action Plan be developed working in partnership with Indigenous peoples and communities.

That the Government of Canada, in collaboration with provinces and territories and in partnership with Indigenous peoples and communities, immediately lead national coordination of policing and the justice system to ensure equal access to protection and justice across the country for victims and survivors of violence against women and girls, including access to consistent services, policies and laws across and within jurisdictions.

maisons pour femmes victimes de violence conjugale, October 31, 2018; *Evidence*, Lyda Fuller, Executive Director, YWCA NWT, October 24, 2018; *Evidence*, Genevière Latour, Associate Director, Crossroads for Women inc., NB, November 5, 2018.

⁹ Canadian Network of Women’s Shelters and Transition Houses, “A Blueprint for Canada’s National Action Plan on Violence Against Women and Girls”, April 20, 2016, URL: <http://endvaw.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Blueprint-for-Canadas-NAP-on-VAW.pdf>.

¹⁰ *Evidence*, Joanne Baker, Executive Director, BC Society of Transition Houses, November 7, 2018.

¹¹ Dubravka Šimonović, United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence against women, its causes and consequences, “End of mission statement – Official visit to Canada”, 23 April 2018, URL: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=22981&LangID=E>

¹² Women’s Shelters Canada, “Women’s Shelters Canada Releases Report Documenting Gaps in Domestic Violence Policies, Legislation, and Services Across Canada”, September 2018, URL: <https://endvaw.ca/archives/news/womens-shelters-canada-releases-report-documenting-gaps-domestic-violence-policies-legislation-services-across-canada/>

That the Government of Canada, in partnership with Indigenous peoples and communities, work with provinces and territories to:

- ***Develop strategies to deal with gender-based violence and to ensure police and prosecutors use a common set of practices in dealing with female survivors of gender-based violence, and:***
- ***Coordinate a national review of the justice system to ensure equal access to protection and justice across the country for survivors of violence against women and girls.***

Women's services in Canada are woefully underfunded

In memory of Kate McInturff, Senior Researcher at the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, we need to remember her advice to Parliament: "If I can convince you to take one action to make one change that has the power to change lives and indeed to save lives [...] it is this: invest in women's organizations."¹³ She also decried the fact that:

- women's organizations are the most underfunded in Canada's non-profit sector, yet they are the single most effective means to building better lives for women;
- direct federal funding to women's organizations represents less than 0.01% of total federal program spending, only about \$1 for every woman in Canada.

Feminist women's organizations have been struggling for decades to keep the lights on and doors open due to a lack of federal core operations funding. The #MeToo movement is lifting the taboo on reporting violence, but federal funding to women's services is not keeping up with the demand for much-needed help. The Government of Canada's program funding is insecure, competitive, and takes workers' time away from helping more women.

Women's groups, shelters, transition houses, and front-line workers from across the country have all called for the federal government to provide secure, multi-year, core operational funding to women's organizations, and to ensure equality of access to services and protection for all women in Canada. Responding to cries for help from women's organizations struggling for decades due to the lack of federal core operations funding, the previous NDP Women's Equality Critic, Sheila Malcolmson, launched the "Time to end the underfunding of women's services" campaign. It calls on the Liberal government to heed this call for core funding.

Despite the all-party Status of Women committee's recommendation for immediate federal funding to meet the growing demand for services, the Liberal government continues to underfund the work of women's organizations throughout the country.

Women and children are bearing the cost of Justin Trudeau's inaction. Failing to act on core operations funding now is placing women's lives at risk. After years of neglect, Justin Trudeau's

¹³ *Evidence*, Kate McInturff, Senior Researcher at the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, September 28, 2017.

government needs to immediately fund equal levels of services and protection for women across Canada. Women are done waiting: it's time to act!

Therefore, the NDP recommends:

That the Government of Canada immediately provide secure, multi-year, core operational funding to the system of shelters and transition houses serving women and children affected by violence against women and intimate partner violence.

That the Government of Canada immediately increase funding to shelters and transitional houses to provide support staff with fair compensation and adequate staffing levels.

That the Government of Canada set a national standard with regards to shelters and transitional housing services in order to ensure that all woman victims of violence across Canada have access to equal services and protection.

In addition, the current report's recommendation to "examine the possibility of introducing" a national universal basic income is too weak and non-committal to address the affordability crisis facing Canadian women fleeing violence.

Therefore, the NDP also recommends:

That the Government of Canada, in collaboration with the provinces and territories, implement a "living wage", or a universally accessible guaranteed liveable income that reflects the cost of living in each province or territory.

It is crucial to end the underfunding of women's shelters on-reserve and in the North.

- "Currently, Canada does not provide Indigenous women access to equal, equitable and culturally appropriate protection from domestic violence. Indigenous women fleeing or at risk of experiencing domestic violence do not have access to the same quality of shelters as other women in Canada. Some cannot access these services at all."¹⁴
- "Indigenous Services Canada provides funding for 41 shelters to serve the 634 recognized First Nations communities in Canada."¹⁵
- "For the 53 Inuit communities across the north, there are only 15 VAW shelters."¹⁶
 - "There is no second-stage housing in Inuit Nunangat, which can be crucial to women's efforts to re-establish a life without violence"¹⁷
 - "Even with the highest rates of violence in the country, more than 70% of our communities across Inuit Nunangat do not have safe shelters for women.[...]"¹⁸

¹⁴ Evidence, Anita Olsen Harper, Research Consultant, National Aboriginal Circle Against Family Violence, November 19, 2018.

¹⁵ Evidence, Lise Martin, Executive Director, Women's Shelters Canada, October 17, 2018.

¹⁶ Evidence, Lise Martin, Executive Director, Women's Shelters Canada, October 17, 2018.

¹⁷ Evidence, Samantha Michaels, Senior Policy Advisor, Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, December 3, 2018.

¹⁸ Evidence, Rebecca Kudloo, President, Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, December 3, 2018.

- “The most pressing issue that on-reserve women's shelters face is insufficient financial funding from Indigenous Services Canada.”¹⁹
 - “The funding that on-reserve shelters receive ranges anywhere from about half to three-quarters of what provincially funded or mainstream women's shelters receive from the province in which they are located.”²⁰
 - “Frequently, there is a lack of dedicated long-term funding, since funding is generally project-based and time-limited, making sustainability a continual challenge.”²¹
- “When women who have Indian status and normally live on reserve, access women's shelters off reserve, Indigenous Services Canada reimburses that provincially funded shelter at the provincial rate, a rate that is higher than what it pays the First Nation to provide these services on the reserve, when these services are available. This is actually discriminatory.”²²
- “Indigenous Services Canada fails to take into account the historical circumstances and the increased needs of a population that has lived through Indian residential schools, ongoing colonialism, and intergenerational trauma. It also fails to consider the heightened cost to deliver services in rural and remote communities, including on reserve.”²³
- “Shelters serving Inuit women in the Arctic are disallowed from accessing this funding because they are not on a reserve. This specifically excludes the development and access to shelters in the north.”
 - “Just as the government funds shelters on reserves, so must they fund shelters in Inuit communities. In 2018, this is no longer acceptable.”²⁴

The NDP joins with Ann Decter of the Canadian Women's Foundation to “support the call of the Alberta Council of Women’s Shelters and the Aboriginal Circle Against Family Violence to fund Aboriginal shelters at the same level as all other shelters in Canada. This apparent discrimination is not acceptable.”²⁵

While we appreciate that recommendation 17 acknowledges a housing affordability crisis that affects the ability of women escaping violence to access safe accommodations, the NDP must point out that this recommendation would not be necessary if the Trudeau Government had not withheld spending on its National Housing Strategy for 10 years. Canadians should not have to wait until after the next general election to access affordable housing when the crisis is immediate and growing.

¹⁹ Evidence, Anita Olsen Harper, Research Consultant, National Aboriginal Circle Against Family Violence, November 19, 2018.

²⁰ Evidence, Anita Olsen Harper, Research Consultant, National Aboriginal Circle Against Family Violence, November 19, 2018.

²¹ Evidence, Samantha Michaels, Senior Policy Advisor, Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, December 3, 2018.

²² Evidence, Anita Olsen Harper, Research Consultant, National Aboriginal Circle Against Family Violence, November 19, 2018.

²³ Evidence, Anita Olsen Harper, Research Consultant, National Aboriginal Circle Against Family Violence, November 19, 2018.

²⁴ Evidence, Anita Olsen Harper, Research Consultant, National Aboriginal Circle Against Family Violence, November 19, 2018.

²⁵ Evidence, Ann Decter, Director, Community Initiatives, Canadian Women's Foundation, November 7, 2018.

Therefore, the NDP recommends:

That the Government of Canada immediately fix the unconscionable unequal funding on-reserve shelters serving Indigenous women, children, and families by funding and providing equal, equitable and culturally appropriate shelter services and programming.

That the Government of Canada immediately fix the unconscionable unequal funding for Inuit communities shelters serving Inuit women, children, and families by funding and providing equal, equitable and culturally appropriate shelter services and programming.

That the Government of Canada immediately invest in universal broadband and telephone infrastructure to provide access to services for women in remote and rural areas.

Canada's housing crisis undermines women's ability to escape violence.

Canada needs more safe, affordable housing for women and their children after they leave shelters. A shortage of affordable housing leads to a shortage of shelter spaces because women can't afford to leave the shelter. And some women become homeless when they leave domestic violence. Without affordable housing, women leaving violence are forced to choose between staying with their abuser or moving themselves and their children into poverty. On its own, building shelters without providing for staffing is not helpful, nor is building more houses without supports for women and children escaping violence. We need both.

- “We need to build capacity in northern Canada, not only with bricks and mortar but with people who are there to run the shelters, and we need to invest in them and in their training.”²⁶
- “If you simply build more places to live and do not adequately support the individuals, there will not be success[...] We need to provide safety and ongoing support. “These women and children are being hunted, in many cases [...] so not only do we need to put the supports in place, but we need to make sure that there is adequate safety as they move forward. Fleeing violence is the most dangerous time for women and children.”²⁷
- “We do not have second- or third-stage housing, although the demand is most certainly there. If we had second- or third-stage housing, every unit would be filled today. Instead, women are staying in shelters longer, as safe and affordable housing is just not readily available in our jurisdiction. Women have left our shelter to go to substandard housing, such as apartments with no flooring other than plywood or rooming houses that are co-located with men, which is a significant safety issue for women experiencing gender-based violence. These rooms often do not have inside or outside locks, which leaves women unsafe when they are home or when they are in the community.”²⁸
- “The larger context is that in the 1990s, the federal government began downloading federal responsibilities for social programs such as subsidized housing, social assistance,

²⁶ Evidence, Lyda Fuller, Executive Director, YWCA NWT, October 24, 2018.

²⁷ Evidence, Jennifer Lepko, Chief Executive Officer, YWCA Lethbridge and District, October 24, 2018.

²⁸ Evidence, Jennifer Gagnon, Executive Director, South Shore Transition House Association, Harbour House, November 5, 2018.

child care and health care to the provinces. This dismantling of the social safety net undermines women's equality. No access to adequate housing, universal child care, health care, and abysmally low welfare rates increase women's vulnerability to men's violence."²⁹

- “The lack of access to support affordable housing is, for women fleeing violence, double-barrelled. Women leaving a violent partner often face a reduction in income, and we see that when they come to stay with us. Then, the lack of access to affordable housing can force them into homelessness. Once they are there, the lack of housing options keeps them in homelessness.”³⁰
- “The other reality is that VAW shelters providing limited stays push women out of the VAW system and into the homelessness stream if they cannot achieve their goal of securing safe, affordable housing in the allotted time.”³¹

Since the NDP tabled its report *Actions to improve women’s economic security and remove barriers to economic justice for women in Canada* (June 2018), the government has failed to act on the urgency to address Canada’s housing crisis. Because housing is imperative to save lives and helped women leave domestic violence, we are repeating our call.

Therefore, the NDP recommends:

That the Government of Canada immediately introduces legislation that recognizes housing as a basic human right.

That the Government of Canada’s National Housing Strategy invests, without delay, in affordable housing to address the housing affordability crisis.

That the Government of Canada’s National Housing Strategy invests in the expansion of the number of first and second stage shelters across the country.

That the Government of Canada’s National Housing Strategy, in partnership with provinces and territories, include a specific stream within the strategy program for survivors of domestic abuse and that the federal government ensure that this is enforced across all jurisdictions in Canada.

Conclusion

Powerful testimony, such as that from Jennifer Gagnon of the South Shore Transition House Association, should be incentive enough for the federal government to get back into the business of supporting women’s organizations that are working to save lives:

“Shelters are not band-aid solutions to issues of violence against women. Rather, they are part of a larger, system-level component that's essential for supporting women and children in crisis. We provide 24-hour-a-day, 365-days-a-year access

²⁹ Evidence, Daisy Kler, Transition House Worker, Vancouver Rape Relief and Women's Shelter, November 5, 2018.

³⁰ Evidence, Martina Jileckova, Chief Executive Officer, Horizon Housing Society, October 22, 2018.

³¹ Evidence, Eva Kratochvil, Survivor and Frontline Worker, Hiatus House, November 19, 2018.

to a place that is safe and that helps each woman with her immediate needs. These include health care, safety planning, criminal justice system navigation, trauma-informed supportive counselling for the woman and her children, and linking with a broader system for next steps. Without a safe place to go to escape violence, the level of risk in her situation will certainly increase.”³²

It’s a national shame for the federal government not to deliver on its promise to make the country safer for women and girls.

New Democrats urge the Canadian government to demonstrate leadership by walking the talk, and by dedicating the political and financial support, resources and funding to meet Canada’s long-standing international and constitutional commitments to make a safer country, where women and girls live free of violence. It’s beyond time to put words into action.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the New Democratic Party.

³² *Evidence*, Jennifer Gagnon, Executive Director, South Shore Transition House Association, Harbour House, November 5, 2018.

