



Canadian Network of Women's
Shelters & Transition Houses

Réseau canadien des maisons
d'hébergement pour femmes

Expanding Our Reach:

CNWSTH Fall 2016 Newsletter



CNWSTH Executive Director Lise Martin with Status of Women Minister Patty Hajdu at the Advisory Council for a Federal Strategy on Gender-Based Violence.

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Expanding Our Reach

I see it as a bonus that each year has multiple “beginning of year” moments. There is of course the calendar New Year on the first of January, the start of many of our fiscal years on the first of April and of course the beginning of the school year in September. Here we are in September and my sense is very much that we are beginning a New Year and a new chapter in the life of the Network.

As reported on in our most recent [Annual Report](#) we are truly in the process of expanding our reach and in doing so amplifying the voices of shelters. The Network has recently received a grant from Status of Women Canada which will allow us to carry out several initiatives which will be of benefit to the shelter movement in Canada. This opportunity comes at a perfect time in the Network’s development. In our first three years we have gradually developed our identity and funding base. As a young organization, it was important that “what we do” was not solely defined by government-funded projects. For example, Sheltersafe.ca is a standalone initiative which is solely supported by nongovernmental sources, namely the RBC Foundation and the Royal LePage Shelter Foundation.

Our staff of two - Heather Stewart, responsible for knowledge exchange and myself - will be joined by two new colleagues, one working in the area of research and policy and the other in communications and development. As of September 1, 2016 individual shelters can join the Network as associate members. We are thrilled to welcome the [member shelters](#) who have been among the first to join.

We look forward to continuing to work with you in the coming year and hopefully to meet a number of you in person!

In solidarity,

Lise Martin

Executive Director

Comprehensive National Profile of Shelters

An exciting part of our new project will be to develop a comprehensive profile of shelters across the country. Even though our sector has been providing an immeasurable number of services for decades, we still do not have a clear picture, especially at the pan-Canadian level. We are aware that Statistics Canada does have a shelter survey and will ensure that the Network’s survey will enhance the government’s survey. The information derived from our survey will reflect what WE deem will be most useful in our collective work and the data will belong to us. Having this information will go a long way in enabling us to better plan and advocate.

The information for the profile will be gathered through an on-line questionnaire.

Prior to receiving the questionnaire, we will have the opportunity to present and discuss it with a number of you at one of your provincial/territorial meetings in 2017. The results will be presented in a number of formats and will be made available to shelters for them to use in their own work be it fundraising, public awareness or lobbying. The profile will serve as our starting point for initiating a conversation on the shelters of the future. More on this to come at a later date!

Shelter Exchange Program

As part of the benefits of being an associate member of the Network we look forward to launching our shelter exchange program in the coming year. Our objective is to bring the sharing of promising practices out from theory and into practice by facilitating staff exchanges between shelters for mutual idea-sharing, shadowing and mentoring. Although we have had this idea for a few years now, two shelters in Ontario have already done a successful exchange from their own initiative. Women's Habitat in Etobicoke, Ontario and Saakaate House in Kenora, Ontario, had a staff exchange focused on integrating trauma informed care. In the coming months we will be reaching out to the Directors of our associate members with more detailed information on the program and our pilot.

Open Doors Project Partnership

Open Doors is a YWCA Canada project creating systemic change for women coping with trauma, mental health and substance use within first-stage VAW shelters and transition houses. The project provides training and resources to develop inclusive service models and enhance coordination at the community level.

Shelter staff who are selected as Community Service Leaders will attend an Open Doors train-the-trainer workshop delivered by the British Columbia Society of Transition Houses (BCSTH). During the 3-day training, Community Service Leaders will learn about inclusive service models for women with trauma, substance use and mental health concerns as well as facilitation skills for sharing and implementing these approaches.

Between 2016 and 2019, the Open Doors project will provide inclusive service model training to 50 selected Community Service Leaders from 50 communities across 5 regions of Canada: Ontario, Prairies, North, Atlantic, and Québec. After each regional workshop, the Canadian Network of Women's Shelters and Transition Houses (CNWSTH) will provide ongoing support via conference calls, follow-up webinars and the www.opendoorsproject.ca website which offers tools for applying inclusive service model approaches in shelters and communities.

Federal Strategy on Gender-Based Violence

The Minister along with a number of staff from Status of Women Canada have spent much of the summer meeting with experts/advocates and survivors from across the country to discuss priorities and actions that will address and prevent gender-based violence. It is anticipated that summaries of these meeting will be made available online this fall. An online survey was made available between August 16th and September 1st. Further information on the strategy is available [here](#).

The Minister has appointed a 17-member Advisory Council of which the ED of the Network is a member. The Council met once last June and will meet once again in the fall. The consultations have occurred at a rapid pace to say the least. The rationale for this is that the Minister wants to ensure that they are in a position to have the strategy reflected in the next Federal budget. To do so the department must submit its numbers to the Department of Finance by November.

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