



SHELTERS IN THE FUTURE: A NATIONAL CONVERSATION

Women's Shelters Canada (WSC) developed the *Shelters of the Future Project* to examine the multiple roles that violence against women (VAW) shelters and transition houses¹ play in supporting and protecting women who are victims of violence. This was a three-year project funded by the Department for Women and Gender Equality (WAGE, formerly Status of Women Canada) from June 2016 to June 2019. One of the project's main goals was to build a comprehensive national profile of VAW shelters through a national survey and a national consultation process.

To mark the end of the project, WSC planned a working meeting called *Shelters in the Future* – an opportunity for representatives from VAW shelters and partner organizations to come together to honour the past, examine the present, and look to the future. Fifty participants gathered in Ottawa on May 2-3, 2019 to take part. [An album of photos can be found here.](#)



¹Across the country, some provinces and territories use the term “shelter” while others use “transition house” to describe VAW residential and outreach facilities and services. For simplicity, the term “shelter” will be used in this report.

Honouring the Past

Participants attended a lunch and panel discussion honouring the founders of Canada's first women's shelters, with the Honourable Maryam Monsef, Minister of WAGE. Margo Goodhand, author of *Runaway Wives and Rogue Feminists*, introduced the founders or their representatives: Ardis Beaudry (Edmonton Women's Shelter, AB), Janet Currie (Ishtar Transition House, BC), Thérèse Dallaire-Laplane (Carrefour pour Elles, QC), Lorraine Kenaschuk (Saskatoon Interval House, SK), Natalie McBride (National Aboriginal Circle Against Family Violence), and Lynn Zimmer (Toronto Interval House, ON).



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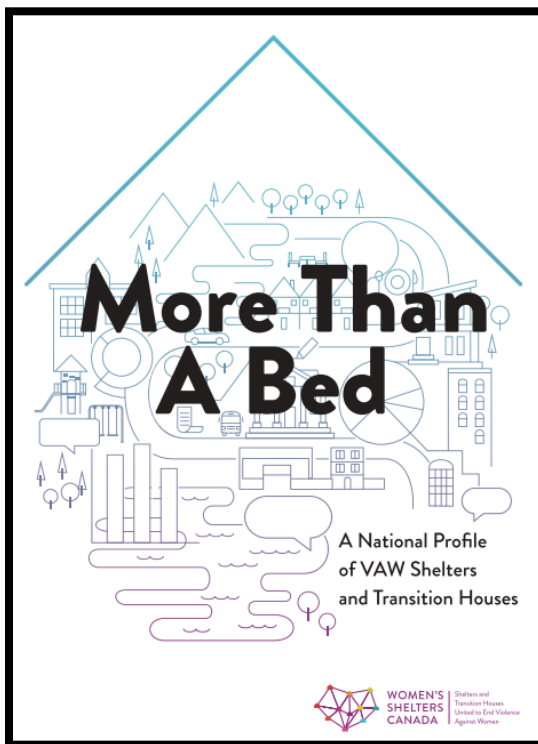
Maya Doyon-Hanson
Gaëlle Fedida

Amy Fitzgerald
Jeanine George
Michelle Greene
Francine Groulx
Irene Jansen

Moose Jaw Transition House
Eagle's Nest
Genesis House
The Canadian Centre for Gender and Sexual Diversity
The DisAbleD Women's Network of Canada
Manitoba Association of Women's Shelters
Violence Against Women Services, Elgin County
Medicine Hat Women's Shelter Society
Minwaashin Lodge
North York Women's Shelter
National Aboriginal Circle Against Family Violence
Pauktuutit
L'Alliance des maisons d'hébergement de 2e étape pour femmes et enfants victimes de violence conjugale
BC Society of Transition Houses
Aboriginal Shelters of Ontario
Iris Kirby House/O'Shaughnessy House
Maison d'amitié
Canadian Union of Public Employees

Examining the Present

WSC launched the results of its national survey through its report, [*More Than a Bed: A National Profile of VAW Shelters and Transition Houses*](#), on May 1. During the working meeting, WSC presented the report to participants and engaged in a discussion on how to use the report in their local communities.



Louise Lafortune

Hélène Langevin
Geneviève Latour
Angèle Losier
Ginger MacPhee
Connie Marchal
Tmira Marchment
Melanie Marsden
Viviane Michel
Fazia Mohammed
Shiva Nourpanah

Julie Poirier
Kari Prawdzik
Neena Randhawa
Maggy Razafimbahiny

Jan Reimer
Ebony Rempel
Rosemary Rowlands
Johanne Sanschagrín

Cristin Smook
Tanisha Sri Bhaggiyadatta
Sheila Swasson
Rayann Toner

Bev Walker
Mélanie Walsh
Desiree Wolfrey
Debbie Zweep

Regroupement des maisons pour femmes victimes de violence conjugale
Maison Simonne Monet-Chartrand
Carrefour pour femmes
Centre de prévention de Kent
Chrysalis House Association
Kelowna Women's Shelter
SOFIA House
Springtides
Femmes Autochtones du Québec
Interval House
Transition House Association of Nova Scotia

La Bouée
Parkland Crisis Centre
Chimo Community Services
Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes
Alberta Council of Women's Shelters
Odyssey House and Serenity Place
Help and Hope
Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation
Thompson Crisis Centre
The Redwood
Listuguj Shelter
Central Alberta Women's Emergency Shelter
Mi'kmaw Family Healing Centres
Maison Flora Tristan
Kirkina House
Faye Peterson House

On May 3, there were two sets of TED Talk-like presentations. [Videos are available on WSC's YouTube channel.](#) The first, on Innovative Practices for VAW Shelters in the Future, featured:

- Geneviève Latour (Carrefour pour femmes, NB): serving new immigrants and refugees
- Mohini Datta-Ray (North York Women's Shelter, ON): building a survivor-centric shelter with wrap-around services
- Melanie Marsden (Springtides Resources, ON): best practices for seniors with disabilities in VAW shelters
- Neena Randhawa (Chimo Community Services, BC): an innovative solution to the housing crisis

The second, on Examples of Success from Collective Action, featured:

- Jan Reimer (Alberta Association of Women's Shelters): the power of data
- Jeanine George (Aboriginal Shelters of Ontario): best practices for Aboriginal shelter standards
- Amy Fitzgerald (BC Society of Transition Houses): national occupancy standards and their effects on the affordable housing crisis
- Gaëlle Fedida (Alliance des maisons de 2e étape, QC): securing funding for second stage shelters



Looking to the Future

The meeting provided an opportunity to discuss how to move further as a sector. Facilitators lead small groups of participants through a series of activities aimed at envisioning a positive future for shelters. Each group focused on a specific issue emerging from the National Survey and Shelters of the Future consultations. For each topic, participants shared the challenges that currently exist, envisioned the best-case scenario for the future, and generated ideas on how to work together to move towards this future.

The issues that were discussed were:

Women with Complex Needs

Providing low-barrier services

Funding

What would a sustainable funding model look like?

Affordable Housing

Lack of housing and impact on shelters and women

Engaging Men and Boys

Outreach Services

Privilege

Addressing how shelters have perpetuated colonialism and racism

Public Awareness and Myth-Busting

Reality of gender-based violence and need for VAW shelters is being questioned

Rural and Remote Shelters

Dealing with unique barriers

Staffing

How to retain trained, skilled staff

Common Themes

Across the discussions for all topics, the key needs that consistently came up were related to adequate, accessible funding for shelters, training for staff and funding agencies, and the sharing of existing tools, resources, and best practices across the sector.



Moving Forward

Participants will use what they learned from these discussions to inform their work both locally and regionally. After reviewing participants' feedback, Women's Shelters Canada is committing to:

- Creating a knowledge portal for associate members that includes examples of best practices, policies, tools, and resources
- Hosting a communications webinar on speaking to the media and investigating other thematic webinars
- Continuing to advocate for a National Action Plan on Violence Against Women

