

# ANNUAL REPORT

APRIL 2022 - MARCH 2023



**WOMEN'S  
SHELTERS  
CANADA**

Shelters and  
Transition Houses  
United to End Violence  
Against Women

**SHELTERS  
SUPPORT WOMEN  
AND CHILDREN  
FLEEING VIOLENCE.**



**WE SUPPORT  
SHELTERS.**

# KEY POINTS



**\$65** million of federal funding distributed to **292** VAW organizations operating close to **450** shelters across the country

**\$1.3** million raised for the Shelter Ready Fund



**225** associate member shelters



Trained **1700+** anti-violence workers on tech-facilitated abuse

Supported **7** shelters in applying to CMHC's Rapid Housing Initiative



## ABOUT US

In 2009, drawn together by a shared vision to end violence against women, the provincial and territorial shelter associations began giving shape to Women's Shelters Canada (formerly the Canadian Network of Women's Shelters & Transition Houses). Together, we have become a national, collaborative voice for change. The Network was incorporated and became a charitable organization in November 2012.

### Our Vision

We are working towards a world where:

- Everybody matters – people of all genders, all cultures, all faiths, all abilities are valued and have equitable access to resources, power and justice, and all are safe from violence.
- Society uses an inclusive, intersectional, equity-based lens to make decisions.
- Organizations and systems are collaborative and accountable.
- The Earth, on which we all depend for survival, is protected.

*Women's Shelters Canada acknowledges that the location of our office and the work that we do in Ottawa is on the traditional, unceded territories of the Algonquin Anishnaabeg people.*

## CAUTIOUS OPTIMISM IN LIGHT OF CHALLENGES

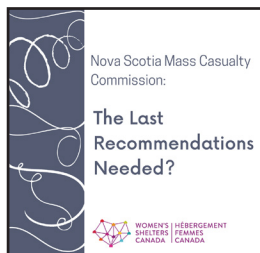
This year, the WSC team led outstanding work by coordinating the launch of several new initiatives, despite an often-challenging environment. We supported the shelters that support women and children fleeing violence with the creation of new knowledge exchange opportunities, providing valuable knowledge and skill training, and advocating on the issues that have the greatest impact on shelters and, of course, those affected by gender-based violence (GBV).



During the year, Women's Shelters Canada provided several in-person opportunities for shelters and transition houses (THs) to connect and learn from each other. The excitement of having in-person, peer-to-peer support was palpable and so rewarding for the 300 + shelter workers involved. The flag-

ship event was the Shockproofing Communities Summit, co-organized by WSC and the Canadian Women's Foundation. This was an opportunity to reflect on and learn from the work of the gender-based violence sector over the last three years. We also held a forum on Feminist Brain Drain in the sector, bringing together shelters/THs to strategize on solutions, big and small, on how to navigate the ongoing challenges with human resources. Finally, we launched a Community of Practice (COP) on Harm Reduction and Lowering Barriers to Service. This COP brings together 41 shelter workers from 25 shelters/THs who are working with and learning from other shelters on this journey.

Two new WSC projects have added new areas of expertise that we are able to offer shelters across the country. The Second Stage Transitional Housing (SSTH) New Build Project provides direct assistance and mentorship to organizations seeking to build new second stage shelters and THs. The project provides much-needed help in navigating the arduous application process from the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC). This year also saw the launch of the Tech Safety Canada Project, an initiative that offers survivors and shelter workers key resources to respond to tech-facilitated abuse.



On the policy side of things, recommendations were released from two major public inquiries, the Renfrew County Inquest and the Nova Scotia Mass Casualty Commission. Both recognized the impact and pervasiveness of violence against women in Canada. Both recommended better supports for service providers and greater accountability to the GBV sector. While this offers a glimmer of hope, there is, however,

much work ahead to ensure the implementation of these recommendations.

After more than a decade of advocating for a National Action Plan (NAP) on GBV, the federal government finally released its plan in November 2022. As announced, the document is not so much a *plan* as it is a *framework*. Given that WSC had coordinated a herculean effort to provide a ready-made roadmap for Canada's NAP, we were disappointed with the outcome. It is, however, a ten-year plan, thus one must remain optimistic.



This annual report provides an overview of WSC's work in 2022-23. We are extremely grateful to our many donors and supporters who have made this possible. Our work would not be possible without the collaboration of our members and partners.

We sincerely thank all of you.

*Lise Martin*  
*Executive Director*

*Marlene Ham*  
*Co-Chair*

*Amy FitzGerald*  
*Co-Chair*



2022-2023

# REVIEW OF THE YEAR



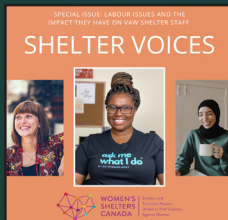
- **Continued supporting women's shelters across the country** during the COVID-19 pandemic by distributing \$65 million in COVID-19 Response and Recovery federal funding to 292 shelter organizations across the country
- Partnered with the Canadian Women's Foundation (CWF) to host the **Shockproofing Communities National Summit for Gender-Based Violence** in Ottawa
  - Selected 200+ shelter staff to participate in the event alongside other anti-violence workers from across the country
  - Hosted a special pre-summit dinner and panel event for 134 shelter workers
  - Organized the NAP on the Hill, which saw the summit's participants speak to parliamentarians about the importance of the National Action Plan on Gender-Based Violence
- Launched the **Feminist Brain Drain Study**, examining VAW shelter staff retention and wellness
  - Circulated a national survey about retention and wellness to VAW shelter staff across the country
  - Facilitated focus groups and interviews with shelter management and frontline staff
  - Organized the Beyond **Feminist Brain Drain**





## **Symposium** in Ottawa for shelter staff across Canada

- As an extension of the Feminist Brain Drain Study, published **Shelter Voices 2022** on labour issues and the impact they have on VAW shelter staff
  - During the 16 days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence, conducted a social media campaign in promotion of this year's issue
  - Launched the **Tech Safety Canada website** dedicated to providing knowledge and resources related to technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV)
    - As part of the launch, released two toolkits: the **Tech Safety and Privacy Toolkit** and the **Tech Safety Planning Toolkit**
    - Provided the Supporting Survivors Experiencing TFBGV training to 1,769 anti-violence workers across the country
    - Participated as part of the official Canadian Delegation to the United Nation's 67th Commission on the Status of Women
- Launched the Second Stage Transitional Housing (SSTH) New Build Project
  - Began working with 7 out of the 16 shelters that will be supported through this program in areas that include planning, construction, and advocacy
  - Produced a **blog post** featuring WSC Development Project Manager, Kyla Tanner, in support of the project
- Continued collaboration with the BC Society of Transition Houses on the **PEACE for Canadian Children and Youth project**



- Virtually trained 263 front-line staff from 130 VAW shelters and transition houses in rural, remote, and northern parts of the country in supporting children and youth who have experienced violence at home
- Hosted an in-person training session in Iqaluit for shelters in Nunavut, along with TFGBV training
- Produced a **blog post** featuring PEACE program participant, Amanda Dynes, in support of the project



■ Introduced a new Community of Practice (COP), the **COP on Harm Reduction & Lowering Barriers to Service** and continued to support the **COP on Supporting Immigrant and Refugee Survivors of VAW**

- Announced the development of our new **Shelter Ready funding program**, which will distribute grants to shelters and transitions houses across the country
  - Raised the first \$1.3 million in private financial support for the program
- Alongside CWF, organized, **GBV in Canada: Behind the Stats**, a virtual conversation with award-winning journalists Anna-Maria Tremonti and Eternity Martis
- Published a report on **Child Welfare Practices and Policies in Canada**
  - Coordinated a social media campaign related to report findings
- Rolled out the final phase of the **“More Than” National**



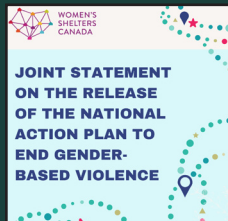
## Awareness Campaign in promotion of **ShelterSafe.ca**

- Released campaign graphics across our social media platforms
  - Collaborated with our Associate Members to produce customizable graphics that they could then share on their own social media platforms
- Promoted Member of Parliament Anju Dhillon's Private Member's Bill C-233, which includes Keira's Law



- In April, organized a Twitter Storm ahead of Bill-C233's second reading that involved our wide network of VAW shelters and supporters, with the goal of engaging MPs in the voting of Keira's Law, which passed unanimously
- Published a **blog post** on the importance of Keira's Law
- Participated in the **Nova Scotia Mass Casualty Commission** and public inquiry into the murders of 22 people in April 2020
- Provided expert advice on the role that gender-based violence played in the mass casualty
  - Produced two blog posts on the topic including **"When Will We Stop Blaming Survivors?"**
- Organized ten cross-platform social media campaigns, hosted three webinars for shelter workers, and published seven blog posts related to the above work
- Authored an article for *the Conversation* titled, **"Workers Supporting Survivors of Gender-based Violence are Demanding Change,"** which was re-published internationally

- Organized an in-person Circle's of Safety event for shelters in Edmonton
- Produced five e-newsletters for VAW shelters and transition houses and seven e-newsletters for WSC donors and supporters
- Released eight statements on Canadian VAW policy-related issues, including a **Joint Statement on the Release of the National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence** and a **Statement on Federal Budget 2023**
- Served as an advisory committee member for EVA Canada's **Building Supports for the Gender-Based Violence Workforce project** and CWF's **Service Continuity Guidelines for Gender-Based Violence Sector project**
- Attended the Samuel Centre for Social Connectedness (SCSC) **Global Symposium on Imagination and Action**



- Provided information on GBV and Sheltersafe.ca at Paramore's Toronto concert, where \$1 of every ticket sold was donated WSC
- Participated in several GBV panel events as guests, including a **Feminist Analysis of the 2022 Federal Budget**, organized by Oxfam Canada, and CWF's

### **Towards a Thriving Women and Gender Justice Sector**

- Submitted a **pre-budget brief to the Finance Committee** in October 2022
- Presented on **Bill C-21 to the Standing Committee on Public Safety** in November 2022
- WSC's Executive Director received the **Spirit of Barbra Schlifer Award**

# SHOCKPROOFING COMMUNITIES SUMMIT

In partnership with the Canadian Women's Foundation, Women's Shelters Canada co-hosted Shockproofing Communities (SPC): A National Summit for the Gender-Based Violence Sector in Ottawa from March 27-30, 2023. The summit was a collaborative and vibrant opportunity for over 500 delegates from GBV organizations across Canada to exchange lessons learned during the pandemic to help “shockproof” the sector against future crises.



Day 1 saw WSC welcome shelter delegates to the Shaw Centre with a community dinner that included two VAW-specific panels, one on worker burnout and retention and the other on fundraising. Day 2 and 3 of the summit were dedicated to practical learning through in-depth plenary sessions (both in-person and online), panel discussions, and focus groups that not only prompted valuable tool creation for participants, but also significant collaboration and knowledge exchange between them.



Finally, the last day of the summit was dedicated to the NAP on the Hill, where Summit participants engaged parliamentarians on the importance and urgency of implementing the National Action Plan to End GBV.

The summit was an unforgettable event that amplified our shared vision of working towards a world free from gender-based violence. Two video series were filmed at the Summit, *Thoughts on the COVID-19 Federal Funds* and *Shelter Spotlight*, available across our social media platforms.

A huge thank you to the Department of Women and Gender Equality (WAGE) for funding this project and making it possible. Til next time!



## NAP ON THE HILL

WSC organized a NAP on the Hill event on March 30, 2023. Ninety participants met with the sixty parliamentarians that had accepted our requests to meet. For the majority of the participants, this was their first time meeting with a parliamentarian at their Ottawa office.

Among the parliamentarians, 45 were MPs, 8 were Ministers, 8 were Parliamentary Secretaries, and 3 were Senators. Participants had the opportunity to meet with representatives of all five political parties represented in the House of Commons.

These meetings allowed us to:

- Increase awareness of the National Action Plan and why it's important, and urgent
- Share local examples of our sector's work, challenges, and accomplishments during this GBV crisis
- Speak to the role of our sector in making the NAP the best it can be, with the long-term goal of keeping the NAP alive beyond our tenure and beyond election cycles



# TECH SAFETY CANADA

Tech Safety Canada is a new and dynamic WSC project that equips shelter and transition house workers with the knowledge and resources they need to support women, children, and gender-diverse people with their experiences of Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TFGBV). The project scales up **BC Society of Transition Houses'** existing **Technology Safety Project** and draws on the work of partners from the **National Network to End Domestic Violence** in the United States, **WESNET Australia**, and **Refuge** in the United Kingdom.

This year, WSC launched our own **techsafety.ca** website along with two tech safety toolkits in both French and English!

- The **Tech Safety and Privacy Toolkit** provides women, youth, and gender-diverse people experiencing TFGBV with safety tips, general information, and strategies to use technology safely and increase privacy, as well as tips on securing specific devices and using specific platforms and technology.



- The **Tech Safety Planning Toolkit** offers women, youth, gender-diverse people, and frontline workers safety planning information to strategically use technology in ways that can enhance safety and take back some control if they are being harassed, threatened, stalked, or abused through a perpetrator's misuse of technology.



The TSC project provided training to 1769 anti-violence workers across the country. This training was free and held online. Additionally, the project spoke at the Learning Network's *Not Yours to Distribute! Intimate Images and Consent Forum*, *The Signal for Help: Innovation to Shift from Stigma to Support* event at the United Nations 67th Commission on the Status of Women (UNCSW 67), and CRIAW-ICREF's NGO CSW67 Forum parallel event *Whose technology: A tool for social justice or of control?*

The TSC project attended UNCSW 67 as part of the **official Canadian Delegation** and helped it secure its main priorities in the **Agreed Conclusions**, including: human rights and digital inclusion of all women and girls; promoting online safety and combatting gender-based violence; inclusive access to quality education; women and girls' leadership and participation.



*This was very informative, thank you. I will also be sharing some of these tools with my co-workers.*

*Thank you. Very informative and educational. Great support and empowerment for the victims of abuse.*

*This was excellent! I can't wait for your next training. There is a lot to learn regarding the use of tech in abusive relationships and how to navigate tech safely. I thoroughly enjoyed this training. Thank you for all the work you do.*

— FOLKS WE TRAINED



## SSTH NEW BUILD PROJECT

WSC launched a **four-year project** in September 2022 to help support the new build of second stage transitional housing (SSTH) across the country. WSC increased its in-house development capacity to offer development services to organizations that are interested in creating new SSTH. Through this project, WSC will assist up to 16 SSTH new build projects over four years with vital support in knowledge and coaching, feasibility studies, grant applications, and project management.

To build a brand-new building is an incredible task. An Executive Director (ED) taking on a new build project is akin to taking a second job they don't have experience in and doing it off the side of their desk. WSC's innovative SSTH New Build project offers services for free to assist shelter organizations navigate the complexities of securing funding for new builds. We offer additional assistance for some shelters, supporting the EDs through the process by acting as their representative in meetings with funders, architects, builders, and other parties.

In October, WSC surveyed shelters to gain a better understanding of the need in our sector. WSC received 100+ responses to the survey and 28 Expression of Interest responses from those that were interested in WSC support for their project.

Since its launch, WSC has supported seven shelters with grant applications, one shelter with project management, and provided knowledge and coaching to dozens of shelters on an as needs basis.



# FEMINIST BRAIN DRAIN & SHELTER VOICES

WSC's research team launched the **Feminist Brain Drain (FBD) Study** in March 2022. The study examined VAW shelter/TH labour challenges including retention, recruitment, and worker wellness. The research included a national survey of shelter workers in Spring 2022, a series of focus groups in Summer 2022, and a national symposium with shelter workers in November 2022. The study was guided by a diversified sector advisory committee, which included frontline experts from across the country.



To further understand the extent of labour issues in the sector, we also focused this year's *Shelter Voices* edition on the labour crisis. Together, these two research projects have provided a wealth of information about the sector's workers and the challenges that individuals, organizations, and the sector as a whole are facing.

#### SHELTER VOICES:



*"Our staff are well trained [and] therefore desirable to a lot of other sectors, so good staff have more choices than ever before."*

- Of the 243 shelters surveyed, 1300 frontline staff and 126 EDs/managers left their organizations over the last year. (*Shelter Voices* 2022)
- Among survey respondents, 28% indicated that they frequently think of quitting their jobs, and 40% often feel worn out due to their role as a helper. (FBD survey)

#### SHELTER VOICES:

73% saw an increase in demand for outreach services since March 2020.



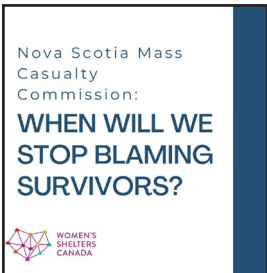
- Due to the pandemic, survey respondents indicated that they had seen their workload increase, their level of stress increase, and an overall decrease in their mental health. (FBD survey)
- While the sector is struggling, it is also incredibly resilient. Throughout the study many organizations shared promising practices that they were implementing to improve worker well-being.

Look out for the full report launch in Fall 2023!

# PARTICIPATION IN THE MASS CASUALTY COMMISSION

The Mass Casualty Commission (MCC), an independent public inquiry created to examine the April 18-19, 2020, mass casualty in Nova Scotia, began its public proceedings in February 2022. Women's Shelters Canada was a participant in the Commission, along with several other GBV organizations.

Kaitlin Geiger-Bardswich, Director of Communications, Development, and Grants, appeared on an expert panel with other GBV organizations in Halifax in August 2022. She spoke to the challenges in addressing intimate partner violence, key recommendations, and the resources and supports women and children need to be safe from violence.



On March 30, 2023, the Commission released its final report. Within its more than 3,000 pages and 130 recommendations were 17 recommendations specific to gender-based violence. We hope this is the last time these kinds of recommendations need to be made.

WSC produced four blog posts related to our participation in the MCC:

- **"WSC's Participation in the MCC"**
- **"Nova Scotia MCC: When Will We Stop Blaming Survivors?"**
- **"Nova Scotia MCC: WSC Attends the MCC"**
- **"Nova Scotia MCC: The Last Recommendations Needed?"**

## IN MEMORIAL: GAËLLE FEDIDA

As we were preparing this annual report, we received the news of the sudden death of Gaëlle Fedida, Coordinator of L'Alliance des maisons d'hébergement de 2e étape pour femmes et enfants victimes de violence conjugale. Gaëlle supported the work of Women's Shelters Canada for the past eight years as a member of our Advisory Council. She also served as the co-chair of our Board of Directors from 2019-22. Her passion was fighting for the rights and safety of women and children fleeing violence, and she is the reason that second stage shelters in Quebec have provincial funding. The anti-violence against women sector lost a formidable warrior in July 2023. We send our heartfelt condolences especially to her husband, children, and family, as well as her colleagues at l'Alliance and the shelters across Quebec she so ardently supported. We encourage you to **read this article** that recognizes the contributions of the tour-de-force that was Gaëlle Fedida.



# WHO WE ARE

## Board of Directors

Deena Brock (since September 2022)

Jo-Anne Dusel (until September 2022)

Gaëlle Fedida (since September 2022)

Amy S. FitzGerald  
Lyda Fuller

Marlene Ham

Nola Mahingen

Barb McInerney (until September 2022)

Dan Meades (since September 2022)

Saadia Muzaffar

Michelle Parsons (since September 2022)

Mathilde Trou (since September 2022)

Beverley Wybrow  
Julie Young

## Staff

Lise Martin

Kaitlin Geiger-Bardswich

Sarah McIntosh (since July 2022)

Leah Stuart-Sheppard

Robyn Hoogendam

Catherine Rideout (since January 2023)

Kyla Tanner (since September 2022)

Rhiannon Wong

Jed Nabwangu

Nikki Owens

Chandrabarna Saha

Patricia Hendrick

Stephanie McCullough  
(since October 2022)

Krys Maki  
(until December 2022)

Heather  
Stewart (until June 2022)



## THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS AND SUPPORTERS

Women's Shelters Canada extends our heartfelt gratitude to our donors and supporters, both longstanding and new, for standing beside us in our ongoing mission to combat gender-based violence. Your generosity inspires us and fuels our work that impacts countless lives.

Every donation, every amplified social media post, and every word of encouragement has enabled us to continue supporting shelters and the survivors they serve, educate communities, and create lasting change. You have played a pivotal role in ensuring that women across the country have access to valuable resources to help uplift and empower them.

With deepest gratitude,

Women's Shelters Canada





# Visit [www.endvaw.ca](http://www.endvaw.ca) to:

- access our programs and reports
- access videos about shelter work across the country
- see our financial statements
- read press releases and updates
- find out how to support our work
- sign up for our quarterly e-newsletter

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