

# ANNUAL REPORT

**2024-2025**





SHELTERS SUPPORT  
WOMEN AND CHILDREN  
FLEEING VIOLENCE.

**WE SUPPORT SHELTERS.**

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# OUR IMPACT AT A GLANCE



**Engaged over 500 shelter workers** from across the country through eight webinars & trainings



**Distributed \$700,000 to shelters** across the country through the Shelter Ready Fund



**Supported five shelters in successfully applying for \$713,930** for their new build projects



**Published two critical reports** on the state of the sector



**Brought together over 100 shelter staff** in-person to share knowledge and promising practices through our three communities of practice



# ABOUT US

Women's Shelters Canada (WSC) is a national organization working to end violence against women and gender-diverse people. We bring together more than 600 shelters and transition houses across the country that support women, children, and gender-diverse people leaving violent environments.

Rooted in a feminist, intersectional, and rights-based approach, we work to end gender-based violence (GBV) by acting as a unified, pan-Canadian voice on the issue of GBV, ensuring that policies and legislation reflect the realities of shelters and the people they serve. We provide direct support to the work of women's shelters and transition houses, equipping them with the training, resources, and community connections needed to strengthen their services and adapt to emerging challenges. We create opportunities to exchange ideas, learn from one another and share resources from coast to coast to coast. All this helps ensure that the women and children who turn to shelters receive the most effective and compassionate support possible.

*Shelters are places of safety, but also places where people rebuild their lives. We believe everyone deserves to live free from violence, and we work every day to help make that a reality.*



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# 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.

# OUR MISSION

We bring together the country's shelter networks to amplify the voices of survivors, shape policies, and share expertise. Together, we strengthen those who support women and children leaving a violent environment, ensuring they receive the safest, most compassionate care possible.

# LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

*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.*

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# MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

## STRENGTH AND SOLIDARITY

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Dear friends, supporters, members, partners, and the wider community interested in WSC's work,

As a newcomer to this role, I've had the privilege of seeing Women's Shelters Canada with fresh eyes – and what I see is a community that is both powerful and urgently needed. I have been welcomed by so many of you and learned so much through you generously sharing your time and stories. Thanks to the dedication of Lise, my predecessor, and current and past members of the Board, Advisory Council, and staff team, this organization is a strong, credible voice unifying shelters in a truly pan-Canadian network from coast to coast to coast.

Although I have travelled across half of Canada to visit shelters and attend shelter conferences this year, I still can't say that I've properly experienced the full extent of this resilient network. Visiting shelters has given me a new understanding of the deep courage survivors show when they take their first steps to live a life free from violence. Shelters support them every step along their journey, whether they live within the shelter or use their outreach services. Shelters are community hubs where safety and healing create transformation, restoring lives and helping make communities whole again.



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Shelters sit at the centre of the social issues we face in Canada; as we reported in the fall, during my first CBC syndication with WSC, virtually every single shelter feels their community is facing a housing crisis and 97% said it was harder to support survivors in this crisis. This is shaping our future direction. In the coming year, you will see a deeper commitment to tackling the housing crisis through a gendered lens.

In addition, investing in governance and membership capacity building is essential to ensure the successful rollout of our new strategic plan, set to launch in Fall 2025. As our network evolves and the landscape in which we operate becomes more complex, strengthening structures and building shared action and projects across the shelter sector is critical.

The highlights in the report you are about to read show you a small fraction of what I have seen this year from this incredible team, this network, and all our partners and collaborators. We are at our best when we support each other and remain unwavering in the face of every setback. And we forge ahead because we know what it takes.

Thank you for making sure WSC has what it takes.



Anuradha Dugal  
Executive Director



# MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CHAIRS

A pivotal and decidedly positive year has just come to a close for Women's Shelters Canada.

It was pivotal, first and foremost, because last August, the organization welcomed its new Executive Director, Anuradha Dugal. With over 25 years of experience advancing and defending the rights of women, children, and gender-diverse people, Anuradha quickly established herself as the ideal person to take the reins. At the end of this first year – and what a year it has been! – we can say without hesitation that she has earned the trust and respect of our network's members, partners, and allies through her expertise and humanity.

We are ending this year with a sense of confidence and determination. And we will need it to meet the challenges ahead. In a global context marked by worrying setbacks for the rights of women and vulnerable people, particularly in our southern neighbour, Canada's role as a leader in the fight against gender-based violence has never been more vital. For 13 years now, Women's Shelters Canada has been responding with consistency and commitment, and this past year was no exception: from the launch of the report on technology-facilitated gender-based violence, to trainings for practitioners, the continued distribution of funds to shelters and support services, the opening of a second stage house at Sussex Vale Transition House – these achievements, among many others, reflect the impact of our ongoing work.



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This is also a pivotal year because the organization has embarked on a major strategic planning process. This project, which will continue next year, aims to strengthen our capacity to act, while better aligning ourselves with our priority objectives and the geopolitical context. It will enable us to expand our reach and offer even stronger support to our members and, ultimately, to the women and children they serve.

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to Anuradha and the entire Women's Shelters Canada team. Their commitment, rigor, and agility are a true driving force. Anuradha, an inspired leader, can count on a committed, solid, and experienced team.

A huge thank you also to our funders and donors. Your support – in all its forms – is essential. Every contribution enables us to advance our advocacy, influence public policy, build lasting partnerships, and, above all, dream collectively of a world without violence.

Finally, we would like to salute the shelters and support groups, as well as the workers who devote themselves to this vital work. Day after day, they welcome, listen, support, and protect. Their humanity and professionalism save lives and rebuild futures. These essential actors deserve unwavering support from the federal government – a commitment that Women's Shelters Canada will continue to monitor and advocate for.

In solidarity,

**Mathilde Trou**  
Co-Chair

**Dr. Julie Young**  
Co-Chair



# 2024-2025 REVIEW OF THE YEAR

This year was marked with wins and successes across the scope of our work, from the launch of new critical resources and groundbreaking reports to successful advocacy outcomes and vital new knowledge-sharing and training opportunities that support and strengthen our sector. We also experienced major growth as an organization, including welcoming new team members and expanding programs and activities that allow us to make an even greater impact. Key highlights include:

Current ED and former ED both received the King Charles III coronation medal (Anuradha Dugal on February 7, 2025, and Lise Martin on June 20, 2025)

Launched a Community of Practice on the unique operations of second stage shelters (March 2024)

Launched the third round of the Shelter Ready Fund (Fall 2024)

Partnered with YSL Beauty for the Canadian launch of the Abuse is Not Love campaign (March 2024)

Supported the grand opening of Sussex Vale Transition House's new second stage building (November 2024)

Partnered with Nestlé Purina PetCare Canada for the Canadian launch of the Purple Leash project (November 2024)

Launched *Shelter Voices 2024*, the tenth national survey of VAW shelters and transition houses across the country (November 2024)

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# DRIVING CHANGE THROUGH SHARED LEARNING

Shelters and transition houses across the country continue to face complex and evolving challenges, whether it's adopting harm reduction approaches to better support survivors dealing with substance use, navigating the needs of second stage shelters, or helping women and gender-diverse people achieve long-term economic stability. Through our knowledge exchange work, we're helping to address gaps by creating space for frontline workers to come together to share strategies and expertise and co-develop practical tools.

We hosted eight webinars and training sessions this year, reaching over 550 people across the country. These sessions covered a range of topics, including navigating the development process for shelters considering a new build, adopting harm reduction strategies, supporting children and parents who have experienced violence, and understanding brain injuries caused by intimate partner violence. We also hosted three communities of practice (CoP) to deepen collective learning and collaboration on harm reduction practices, second stage shelter operations, and economic empowerment programs.

By creating space for shelters to learn from each other, we're helping build stronger, more inclusive supports for survivors across the country.

## PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

### CoP on Harm Reduction

In June 2024, we wrapped up our two-year CoP on harm reduction and lowering barriers to service. This initiative, generously funded by the Shoppers Foundation for Women's Health, brought together 41 shelter workers from 21 violence against women (VAW) shelters across eleven different provinces and territories that are working to adopt a harm reduction model and reduce barriers to service at their shelters.

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Over the course of two years, this group met regularly online and once in-person to exchange ideas and share promising practices, learn from experts, and work towards actions they had identified. Drawing from these rich discussions, we developed a series of sector-informed resources to support others on a similar journey: **a three-part webinar series, a summary report of key learnings, and two resource sheets.**

“It was validating to hear that other shelters are experiencing the same struggles, and learning how to navigate different issues was GOLD for my organization.”

– *CoP on Harm Reduction member*

## MOVING TOWARDS A HARM REDUCTION APPROACH

Sharing Lessons from Women’s Shelters  
Canada’s Community of Practice on Harm  
Reduction and Lowering Barriers to Service at  
Domestic Violence Shelters/Transition Houses

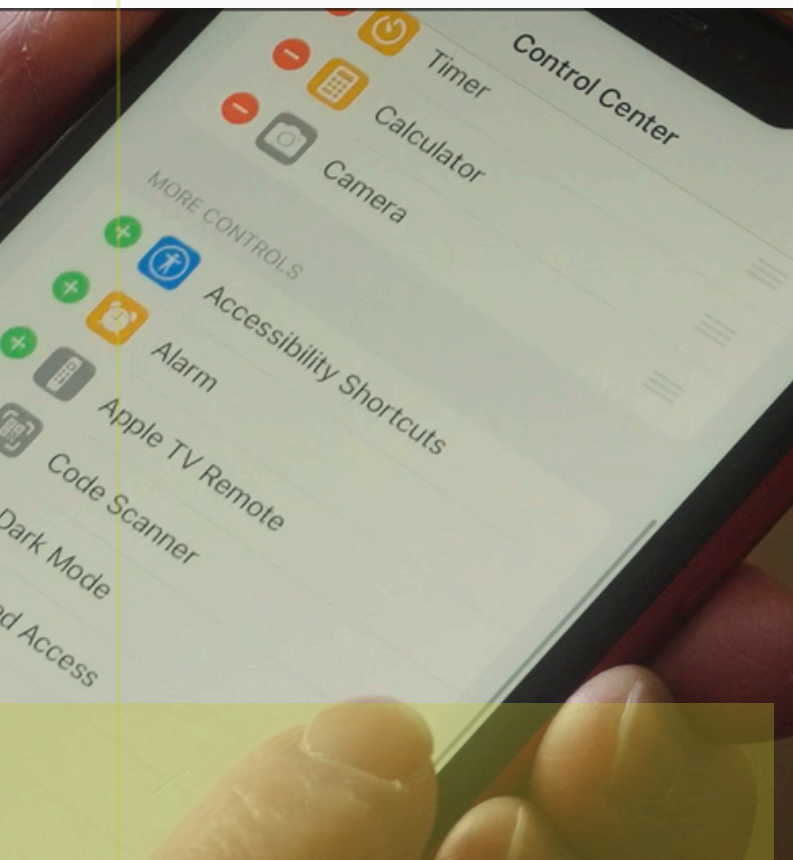
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# CONFRONTING TECH ABUSE AND EQUIPPING SHELTERS

Tech Safety Canada is a project of Women's Shelters Canada that aims to equip shelter and transition house workers across the country with the tools and training they need to support women, children, and gender-diverse people in their experiences of technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV). The project builds on and scales up the BC Society of Transition Houses' existing Technology Safety Project.

This year, we continued to provide a feminist response to the increase of TFGBV and launched several new resources and toolkits to raise awareness about its widespread nature, highlight the structural and systemic factors that enable it, and equip frontline workers with the tools to help survivors navigate tech abuse and stay safe online.

We successfully delivered several training sessions to over 300 frontline anti-violence workers across the country, providing hands-on guidance in supporting survivors navigating tech abuse – such as monitoring, harassment, or stalking through phones, social media, and other digital platforms – and in developing personalized tech safety plans, like securing devices and creating safe communication strategies. Beyond training, we contributed to national tech policy conversations by issuing a crucial report on how corporate platforms can create barriers for survivors, calling on them to take action. We also launched awareness campaigns to ensure that a GBV lens is brought to tech and digital safety discussions.



# PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

## Open Letter to Canadian Telecom Companies and Banks

This year, Tech Safety Canada released a crucial report, ***Insights into TFGBV A Survey of Women's Shelters and Transition House Workers Across Canada***, offering one of the first national snapshots of how abusers are misusing technology to target survivors. Drawing on frontline information and survivor experiences, the report sheds light on how corporate platforms can often unintentionally create barriers for survivors of gender-based violence, directly impacting their privacy and safety.

Based on this report, we issued an open letter calling for **Canadian telecom companies** and **banks** to recognize and respond to the increase in abusers misusing their services to perpetrate illegal acts of TFGBV. Following the launch of our letter, Interac announced that they would introduce a new opt-out feature that allows users to hide or disable the message field in Interac e-Transfer notifications from specific senders,

reducing the risk of receiving abusive or unwanted messages while preserving the ability to send or receive funds. This is a major win in our fight against economic abuse and a key step towards empowering survivors.


We also received formal responses from several other key providers, suggesting a willingness to engage in these critical issues.





# RESOURCE SPOTLIGHT

During the Victims and Survivors of Crime week, we launched a series of videos on tech safety, which received over 1 million views on YouTube and across our platforms. We received an outpouring of positive feedback in our comments. Here's what people had to say:



**Are you experiencing technology-facilitated gender-based violence?**

WOMEN'S SHELTERS CANADA | HÉBERGEMENT FEMMES CANADA

“Check it out and please share widely — you never know who might need access to this information.”

“Check out this great resource!”

“An amazing and comprehensive tech safety support tool from Women’s Shelters Canada.”

“This may be important to someone you love.”

“Tech safety is crucial when ending an abusive relationship. Learn how to protect yourself to stay safe.”

“Useful information.”

SEE OUR FULL LIST OF RESOURCES AT [WWW.TECHSAFETY.CA](http://WWW.TECHSAFETY.CA).



# DRIVING CHANGE THROUGH RESEARCH AND ADVOCACY

2024 was a big year for our team, marked by strategic growth and the launch of crucial projects to help shape national discussions on GBV.

The successful launch of our tenth edition of *Shelter Voices*, our yearly national survey, garnered widespread media coverage and increased public awareness of how the housing crisis is impacting shelters and the women and gender-diverse people they support. We also issued four new issues of *Shelter Trends*, our one-page report to monitor key trends across the VAW and transition house sector.

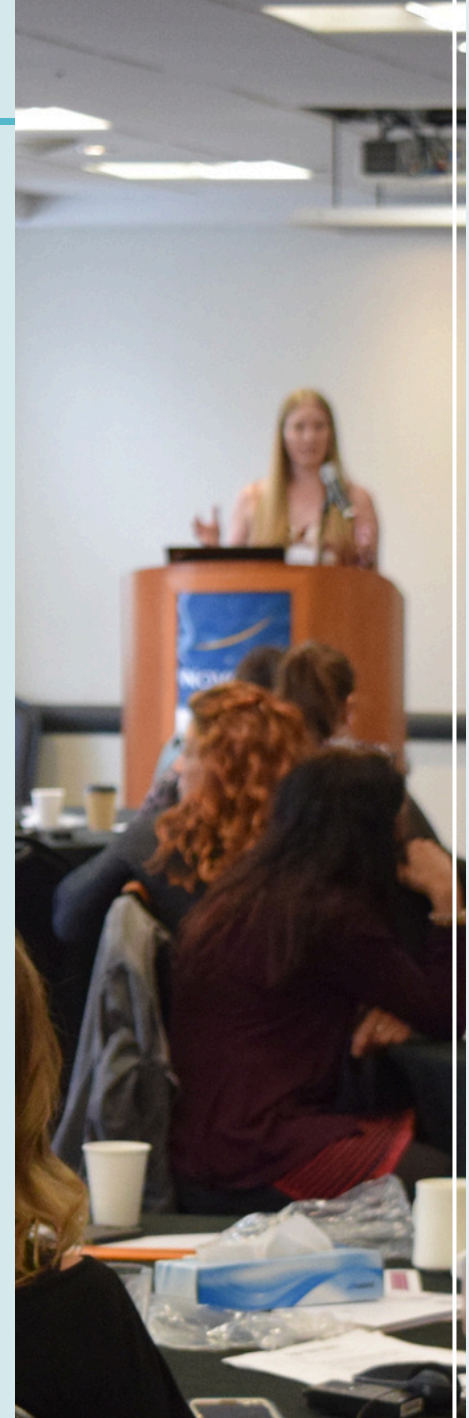
On the advocacy front, we continued to push for stronger federal leadership to drive national coordination, ensure accountability, and support provinces and territories with the resources they need to address GBV, including joining the collective efforts to re-establish a dedicated Minister for Women and Gender Equality. On the international stage, we took part in the UN Commission on the Status of Women and wrote the section on violence for Canada's upcoming Beijing+30 report. We also wrapped up the *National Narrative Project*, mapping out the differences in resources, legislation, and services across Canada when it comes to domestic violence.

# PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

## *Shelter Voices 2024*

This year, we launched *Shelter Voices 2024: Crisis within a Crisis*, the tenth national survey of shelters and transition houses serving women and children affected by violence. The findings underscored how the affordable housing crisis is not only trapping survivors in dangerous situations but also straining the capacity of the shelters supporting them.

This issue of *Shelter Voices* was designed to contribute to a better understanding of the housing crisis and its impact on shelters and transition houses, including the individuals working in these spaces and the survivors accessing supports. Through stories, data, and lived expertise, the report painted a vivid picture of how the lack of affordable housing ripples through every layer of support. It resonated across the country and garnered widespread attention, resulting in 14 syndicated radio spots and several guest lectures, presentations, and invitations to write report chapters and blogs.



"WSC provides up-to-date statistics and information that is helpful in the work we do. Your surveys are appreciated and provide real-time information, so I appreciate the surveys you conduct. We are so appreciative of the assistance you provide and the work you do and do not have any suggestions on how you can improve your process at this time."

- Kerry Ploughman, Samaritan House Community Ministries

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# SUPPORTING NEW BUILDS

With the support of The Slight Family Foundation, we launched the Second Stage Transitional Housing (SSTH) New Build project in September 2022. This four-year project aims to support several second stage transitional housing new build projects across Canada.

The SSTH New Build project team had a transformative year, marked by successful funding acquisitions and substantial contributions to the sector. Through our project management services, we successfully secured \$713,930 on behalf of five shelters. We also successfully secured an additional \$14.9 million in funding on behalf of two shelters.

This year, Sussex Vale Transition House celebrated the successful completion and opening of its new build, a milestone in which we are honoured to have played a part. We also began working closely with WIN House in Edmonton to pursue land and funding from the municipal and provincial governments for a new second and third stage housing development. In addition, four shelters we've supported over the years successfully secured funding from the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) and are set to begin construction in the year ahead.





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# PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

## Sussex Vale Transition House's New Build

In November 2024, Sussex Vale Transition House (SVTH) celebrated the successful completion and opening of a brand-new five-unit second stage transitional housing project. For the women and children who will live there, it means a safe, stable place to begin

rebuilding their lives after experiencing violence. This project came to life with the support of our Second Stage Transitional Housing New Build initiative. We walked alongside SVTH every step of the way, offering guidance, troubleshooting any issues, and helping carry the load when things got tough.



"I cannot overstate the value that Women's Shelters Canada's Second Stage Transitional Housing New Build project has brought to our SSH project...The knowledge and professionalism of my WSC Project Managers, coupled with their support and encouragement through many difficult decisions, has made the project a true success. I have no doubt that, without WSC's support of this project, we would still be many years away from completion. Thank you WSC for going the extra mile to uplift services to women facing DIPV and GBV!"

*- Julie Matthews, Executive Director, Sussex Vale Transition House*





Our support continues to fill a critical gap in the development of second stage transitional housing. Shelters often don't have the internal capacity to navigate complex development processes. We provide hands-on, sector-informed project management support that walks alongside leadership at every step.

This includes taking time to explain each phase of the process, responding to questions, and offering key advice backed by our deep knowledge of both housing development and the unique realities of the shelter sector.





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# PROVIDING DIRECT FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO SHELTERS

When emergency COVID-19 funding came to an end, the urgent needs of shelters, their staff, and those they serve did not fade. They have, in fact, increased in severity. Across the country, shelters have been facing rising costs, increased demand, and deeper complexity in the situations of the people they serve. In response, we took action.

WSC launched the Shelter Ready and Pet Ready funds to continue to financially support VAW shelters and transition houses through funds from the private sector. This year with Shelter Ready's third round of funding, we distributed \$700,000 to 14 shelters across the country to help cover their most pressing needs, from salaries to program costs, vehicles, and capital expenses that keep doors open and services running.



## PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

### Pet Ready Fund

For many women, children, and gender-diverse people leaving violent environments, the lack of pet-friendly shelter options can be a heartbreaking barrier to leaving. In December 2023, we partnered with Nestlé Purina PetCare Canada to work towards the November 2024 launch of the **Purple Leash Project** in Canada – a new initiative that directly enables more domestic violence shelters across Canada to welcome pets. Thanks to annual funding from Nestlé Purina PetCare Canada, WSC introduced the Pet Ready Grant, a dedicated funding stream to help VAW shelters across the country build the infrastructure needed to keep survivors and their pets together.

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Through this support, ten grants will be distributed to shelters across the country. Backing projects such as safe outdoor pet relief areas, renovations for on-site kennels and supplies and equipment for daily animal care.

Becoming pet-friendly means rethinking shelter design and operations to remove barriers that prevent survivors from keeping their pets by their side during such a critical transition. The Pet Ready Grant will help ensure that survivors can seek safety without losing the vital companionship that so often carries them through crisis.



“Survivors were able to access shelter without the fear of losing their beloved animals, which are often their only source of comfort, emotional grounding, and security. Several clients said that they would not have come to the shelter at all without this support. The presence of their pets, or even the assurance that their pets were safe and cared for, made it easier for them to engage in programming, attend legal appointments, and work with case managers.”

- *Partner shelter, Pet Ready funding recipient*

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# PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

## Abuse is Not Love

This year, WSC was honoured to be selected by YSL Beauty for a three-year partnership marking the Canadian launch of the **Abuse is Not Love** campaign. Created in 2020, this global initiative works to fight against intimate partner violence and shed light on its pervasive impacts on women across the globe, supporting nonprofits around the world and educating young people.

YSL's critical investment in our work is helping us strengthen our ability to support shelters and transition houses across the country and raise awareness about the realities of IPV. This partnership has allowed us to expand our reach, deepen our impact, contribute to education and prevention efforts, and continue advancing a future where every woman, child, and gender-diverse person can live free from violence.



**ABUSE  
IS NOT  
LOVE**



# BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Mathilde Trou / *Co-Chair*

Beverley Wybrow (until September 2024) / *Director*

Julie Young / *Co-Chair & Public Director*





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# STAFF

Lise Martin (until April 2024) / *Executive Director*

Anuradha Dugal (from August 2024) / *Executive Director*

Sarah McIntosh / *Director of Operations and Finance*

Patricia Hendrick (until June 2024) / *Bookkeeper*

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# THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS AND SUPPORTERS

We are deeply grateful to every individual, organization, and foundation that supported our work this past year. Your generosity fuels our efforts to strengthen the shelter sector and ensure safety, dignity, and support for women and children across the country. While this year's list highlights corporations and foundations only, we extend our heartfelt thanks to the many individuals whose generosity also makes this work possible.

The donor list below recognizes corporate and foundation contributions received between April 1, 2024, and March 31, 2025. It reflects gifts made during this fiscal year only and is not cumulative. We also acknowledge with gratitude the many donors whose ongoing support sustains us beyond this timeframe. Every effort has been made to ensure accuracy, and all donors who gave \$1,000 or more during this period are included.

Thank you for standing with us – your commitment makes this work possible.

## DONORS

Atimi Software

Nestlé Purina PetCare Canada

Royal LePage Shelter Foundation

Shoppers Foundation for Women's Health

TD Bank Group

The Hilary and Galen Weston Foundation

The Slaight Family Foundation

Women and Gender Equality Canada (WAGE)

\$100,000+

# \$25,000 – \$99,999

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Canadian Internet Registration Authority (CIRA)

Leacross Foundation

LiveNation on behalf of Olivia Rodrigo

The Allstate Foundation of Canada

YSL Beauty

# \$10,000 – \$24,999

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Canadian Telecommunications Association

Interac Corp.

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- Learn about our most recent work
- Find out how to support our work
- Sign up for our quarterly newsletter

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

- Find a shelter near you for support, counselling, and safety planning
- Find your local shelter and their donation information

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

- Access resources on tech-facilitated gender-based violence

# F O L L O W   U S

