

ANNUAL REPORT

APRIL 2017 - MARCH 2018



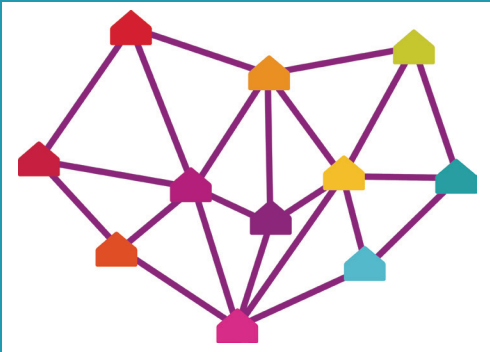
**WOMEN'S
SHELTERS
CANADA**

Shelters and
Transition Houses
United to End Violence
Against Women

OUR LOGO

On November 24, 2017, Women's Shelters Canada proudly launched its new logo. The logo communicates not only that we are a network of exchange, action, and care, but that we are also a unified voice in the work to end violence against women. In this iteration of the three-dimensional heart structure, the network is shown in multiple colours to reflect the idea that there are a variety of shelter/transition house services and organizations represented. A purple colour is used to highlight the connective paths generated by Women's Shelters Canada.

We give a special thanks to [The Public](#) for working with us to create this design!



ABOUT US

In 2009, drawn together by a shared vision to end violence against women and the need for a unified voice at the national level, the provincial and territorial shelter associations began giving shape to the Canadian Network of Women's Shelters & Transition Houses. On March 8, 2017 – International Women's Day – the Network officially changed its name to Women's Shelters Canada (WSC). Together, we have become a national, collaborative voice for change. The Network was incorporated and became a charitable organization in December 2012.

Our Beliefs

- We believe that governments and societies are responsible for ensuring women's human rights.
- We believe that violence violates women's human rights and equality.
- We believe that the women's shelter movement plays a critical leadership role in the provincial/territorial, national, and global effort to end violence against women and their children

LINKING POLICY & PRACTICE

2017-18 marked the second year of our three-year project with Status of Women Canada. Although there are several components to this project, the development of a comprehensive profile of shelters is front and centre. We are grateful to the provincial/territorial shelter associations for facilitating meetings with shelter directors across the country, allowing us to present the National Shelter Survey and gather input on specific questions.

Over 400 shelters completed the survey. For this, we are forever grateful. The focus of the survey is the shelters themselves: the services they offer, the human resources that keep them going, and the budgets that keep them afloat to name a few aspects. The survey will inform challenges for shelters as well as the range of services and disparities across the country.

Knowing that a lack of safe and affordable housing is a huge barrier for women fleeing violence and a major factor explaining the continuous issue of shelters being at capacity, the intersection of violence against women, housing, and homelessness was a priority issue. It was important to us that the specific needs of women fleeing violence be addressed in the discussions on the development of the National Housing Strategy.

We approached this issue on multiple fronts. In June 2017, a community of practice brought together 10 shelters that are exploring different models and avenues to address the post-shelter housing needs of women. A policy roundtable, with a number of our partners along with policy makers and elected officials, immediately followed. A Discussion Paper was published and 11 concrete recommendations were submitted prior to the announcement of the Strategy in November 2017. We are proud of our work and continue to be actively involved in discussions pertaining to further development of the Strategy, including ensuring that housing be

recognized as a human right per the 2018 report of the UN Special Rapporteur on Housing.

As a member of the Minister's Advisory Council for the Gender Based Violence Strategy, we were pleased to attend the official launch in Toronto in June 2017. We see the Strategy as a good starting point but continue to work with partners to move us to the development and implementation of a National Action Plan. The reach of the federal strategy is limited to the areas of responsibility of the federal government and thus does not ensure that women in all areas of the country have access to comparable levels of services and protection. Unlike the National Housing Strategy, there are no formal agreements between the provinces, territories, and the federal government in terms of how they collectively address the issue of gender based violence.

Setting the table for our first National Shelter Conference (June 2018) took up a considerable amount of our precious human resources. We received over 120 proposals to present at the conference, with the majority coming from the shelter sector. This met one of our main objectives: for the conference to reflect the work of shelters themselves.

We continued to diversify our base of supporters and re-branded our Leading Men Campaign to Strengthening Ties. We are also grateful to the Royal LePage Shelter Foundation for their ongoing support of sheltersafe.ca.

We could not have done our work without the support of the provincial and territorial shelter associations, individual shelters, and our partners. We are forever grateful for their time, knowledge, and expertise.

Lise Martin
Executive Director

Manon Monastesse
Co-Chair

Jan Reimer
Co-Chair

2017-2018

REVIEW OF THE YEAR

- Organized a cross-sectoral Roundtable and a [Community of Practice \(COP\)](#) on Violence Against Women, Housing, and Homelessness
- Developed [11 recommendations](#) for the National Housing Strategy and a [discussion paper](#) on the topic
- Launched the [first national survey](#) on VAW shelters/transition houses developed by VAW shelters/THs for VAW shelters/THs
- Received over 120 proposals to present at our first national conference, [Shelters of the Future: A National Conversation](#)
- Facilitated three shelter exchanges across the country
- Co-facilitated Open Doors training sessions in the Atlantic and Northwest regions of Canada
- Produced [three webinars](#) on Fundraising, Trauma-Informed Boards, and Pets and Mental Health
- Published our fourth annual issue of [Shelter Voices](#)
- Produced an [e-newsletter and 8 short videos](#) for Victims and Survivors of Crime Week
- Released the document [By the Numbers: Violence Against Women and Girls in Canada](#)
- Called on the Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos, Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, [to reinstate the Shelter Enhancement Program](#) as part of the National Housing Strategy
- Provided our expertise to government consultations on: sexual assault law training for judges, the National Housing Strategy, the measurement of gender-based violence, and a survey on sexual victimization among post-secondary students
- Minister Duclos and Minister Monsef met with the Advisory Council during their in person meeting in Ottawa in December

- Attended the meeting of the Global Network of Women's Shelters in New York
- Presented on the challenges for rural women's shelters at the Commission on the Status of Women in New York
- Member of Minister Monsef's [Advisory Council on Gender Based Violence](#)
- Member of Steering Committee of Pan-Canadian Voice for Women's Housing Symposium
- Met with over 200 shelter directors in Yukon, British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Quebec, New Brunswick, and Newfoundland and Labrador to consult on our national survey and engage in a conversation on shelters of the future
- Participated on the national planning committee of the 16 Days of Activision Against Gender-Based Violence Campaign and on the local planning committee of International Women's Day Ottawa
- 95 shelters were [associate members](#) of Women's Shelters Canada
- Continued to build a diverse base of supporters



Shelter representatives at the COP

HOUSING, HOMELESSNESS, & VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN



At Women's Shelters Canada, our long-term objective is to bring about systemic change that will allow for greater and better housing options and outcomes for women fleeing violence.

This year, we developed [11 recommendations](#) and wrote an [open letter](#) to inform the National Housing Strategy (NHS), which we hope will lead to comprehensive policies and funding opportunities to better support women fleeing domestic violence.

The recommendations are the result of a [Community of Practice](#) and a cross-sectoral roundtable on housing, homelessness, and violence against women organized by WSC in June 2017. The roundtable brought together a diverse group of leaders and experts including representatives from the VAW sector, the social and affordable housing sector, the homelessness sector, the anti-poverty sector, academics, and policy makers.

Women are often not represented in data collected on the homeless and as a result are left out of policy and programming to address homelessness. Additionally, women may not access the same services as homeless men because they fear for their safety in mixed gender shelters; some homeless shelters will not take in women fleeing violence; often homeless shelters do not have the staff or resources to support survivors of domestic violence; and single mothers fleeing violence may be reluctant to seek help from social services and shelters for fear that child welfare authorities may apprehend their children.

STRENGTHENING TIES

In the current #MeToo climate, many men are wondering how to contribute to much-needed change in our society. With Women's Shelters Canada's innovative new initiative, Strengthening Ties, men across the country have a concrete way to help end violence against women.

Until now, private donations to Canada's shelter system have largely come from women. Strengthening Ties gives men the opportunity to change that. It is a specific invitation to men to become part of this initiative through a financial pledge, providing both connection and critical funding to our work to end violence against women. An earlier iteration of this campaign was called "Leading Men"; we re-envisioned the campaign this year to better reflect the sense of men supporting the good work that women are already doing across the country.

The short-term vision for this circle of male allies is to address the gender balance of supporters for women's shelters and transition houses in this country. The long-term vision involves a much loftier goal: to end the need for shelters in Canada, period.

The names of the Founding Donors of the Strengthening Ties campaign can be found on our website: www.endvaw.ca/strengtheningties. We thank them for supporting our work to end violence against women in Canada.



WOMEN'S
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STRENGTHENING TIES

Men Supporting Women's Shelters

NATIONAL SURVEY

With the help of a grant from Status of Women Canada, Women's Shelters Canada conducted a national survey on women's shelters and transition houses (THs) from June 2017 – March 2018. We received an 80% response rate with over 400 shelters participating across the country. Results will begin to be shared in late 2018.

In our conversations with provincial shelter associations, individual shelters/THs, and through our annual Shelter Voices Survey, we often hear how much shelters are doing with so little. The lack of sustainable and adequate funding has many impacts on shelters, staff, and the women and children who use the services offered. However, before this survey, we did not have sufficient data or numbers to back up these claims – in our work with partners and stakeholders, we often get requests for “the numbers.”

This survey will be instrumental in allowing us to quantitatively as well as qualitatively demonstrate the extent of shelter work across the country. With the results, we will publish accessible and easy to share mini reports and infographics, in addition to academic and policy articles/reports. This work will help with public education and awareness, illuminating the extensive and life saving work that shelters do.

SHELTER EXCHANGE PROGRAM

The Shelter Exchange Program, open to our Associate Members, allows two shelters at a time located in different parts of Canada to experience each other's work cultures in a hands-on way. This "cross pollination" has been a source of new ideas, problem-solving and validation, as well as solidifying new connections across the country.

This year, six shelters were selected for three exchanges:

- Odyssey House in Grande Prairie, AB and Maison Flora Tristan in Montreal, QC are two combined first- and second-stage shelters that learned from each other in November and December 2017
- Camrose Women's Shelter Society in Camrose, AB and Marianne's Place in Guelph, ON are two rural shelters who shared learning about practical tools like intercoms and agency vans in February 2018
- Portage Family Abuse Prevention Centre in Portage La Prairie, MB and Rowan House in High River, AB completed an exchange in March 2018 and learned about the differences in funding models and protection orders in their provinces

OPEN DOORS PROJECT



The [Open Doors Project](#) responds to the needs identified by shelters and transition houses (THs) for training to help them feel better equipped and empowered to be more inclusive and trauma-informed when serving women escaping abuse who also use substances such as alcohol or drugs or have mental health concerns.

Open Doors is a three-year YWCA project, with Women's Shelters Canada playing the role of connecting with shelters, selecting participants, and providing follow-up. Training is delivered by the BC Society of Transition Houses, inspired by their Reducing Barriers project.

The Open Doors Project completed its third and fourth regional workshops this year in the Atlantic and North-Western regions. In April 2017, 8 Atlantic-region shelter/TH representatives and 4 YWCA women's program staff gathered together for training and reflection. In October 2017, a workshop was delivered to shelters from Yukon and Northwest Territories. With local partnership from the YWCA Yellowknife, this was a rich cross-territory experience with 10 participants. In both workshops, participants strategized on practical intersectional feminist approaches to decreasing barriers to shelter services for women, discussed the challenges in their regions such as understaffing and lack of resources, and left with ideas and resources for revising their practices.

SHELTERS SAFE.CA FINDING SAFETY 24/7

Launched in June 2015, Sheltersafe.ca is an online tool that provides reliable and accurate information on how you can access help, 24/7, wherever you are in the country. We let women know that it is not their fault, that they are not alone, and that they do not need to stay in a shelter to receive services.

“The most typical experience for victims of domestic violence is isolation. A map indicating hundreds of points of light, of hope, of safety and escape is more than a tool. It is a reminder that you are not alone. It is a reminder that whether you live in a large urban centre or in a remote community, there is domestic violence and that there are resources that can help.”

- Shelter Director

Providing safety through reliable and accurate information is made possible in large part due to the continued support of generosity of the Royal LePage Shelter Foundation.



WHO WE ARE

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Krystle Maki
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Melody Perkins



Heather, Lise, Kaitlin, and Krystle at our 2017 end of year lunch

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We would also like to thank the individual donors who have helped us achieve our goals this year.

Visit www.endvaw.ca to:

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

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