

Building a National Narrative

A SELECT REVIEW OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE POLICIES, LEGISLATION, AND SERVICES ACROSS CANADA



**WOMEN'S
SHELTERS
CANADA**

Shelters and
Transition Houses
United to End Violence
Against Women



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Women's Shelters Canada (WSC) is based in Ottawa. Bringing together 14 provincial and territorial shelter organizations, we represent a strong, unified voice on the issue of violence against women on the national stage. Through collaboration, knowledge exchange, and adoption of innovative practices, we advance the coordination and implementation of high quality services for women and children accessing shelters.

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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Background and Objective of Review

The impetus for this review was the desire of Women's Shelters Canada (WSC) to begin mapping out the terrain in which survivors of violence against women (VAW) must navigate to rebuild their lives. Our intent was to provide a desk review, looking at what was available online. This exercise was much more challenging than initially anticipated. The lack of accessible information and data on government websites makes it extremely difficult to find current and reliable information.

The objective of this document is to provide a cross-jurisdictional comparison of key pieces of legislation and service provision in order to highlight the variations and gaps across the country.ⁱ It is in part because of these varying levels of services and protection that WSC strongly believes that Canada needs a National Action Plan (NAP) on Violence Against Women.ⁱⁱ

NAPs are critical frameworks for coordinating efforts and maximizing resources to address VAW.¹ The United Nations has called on all countries to have an NAP by 2015. NAPs establish national standards and call for collaboration between all levels of government, civil society, survivors, and service responders.

Presently, provincial and territorial governments develop and implement VAW response systems independently, based on differing definitions of and approaches to violence and without reliable, generalizable data or ties to federal measures.

The implications of this fragmented and discretionary approach include:

- a missed opportunity to capture and disseminate knowledge and best practices;
- a poor understanding of shelter work that often results in guidelines and levels of support not corresponding to the actual needs or range of services offered;
- significant variances in funding; and
- a climate that is not conducive to working toward, monitoring, and achieving lasting change.

Context of VAW in Canada

In Canada, on average, a current or former intimate partner kills a woman every six days.² Between 2009 and 2014, 342,000 women in Canada were victims of intimate partner violence (IPV).³ However, according to the 2014 General Social Survey (GSS) on Victimization, 70% of spousal violence is not reported to the police.⁴

ⁱ This is a living document. Tables will be updated regularly as changes occur across provinces and territories.

ⁱⁱ What we currently have is a federal strategy on Gender Based Violence. 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.

On a single day in 2018, there were 6,702 women and children staying in sheltersⁱⁱⁱ across the country primarily because of abuse. On that same day, 742 women and children were turned away from shelters because they were already operating at maximum capacity.⁵ These figures tell us that too many women and children in Canada continue to experience alarming rates of violence and that current demands exceed existing resources; but the issue goes beyond the number of beds available.

Shelters have long been reporting chronic systemic barriers that hinder women from living violence-free lives and prevent shelters from delivering much-needed services. These include poor legislative protections, insufficient social and housing supports, inadequate funding and increases, deficient data collection and monitoring, and convoluted and overlapping information. As a result, there have been repeated calls for greater cohesion within and across jurisdictions and sectors to better align the many moving and interconnected parts involved in preventing and responding to violence against women.

What This Review Includes

We begin this review by looking at the various Action Plans that are in place in Canada’s provinces and territories. We then provide information on key aspects of the shelter architecture across the country – the number of VAW shelters receiving government funding, the departments or ministries that provide operational funding to VAW shelters, the maximum length of stay, and the presence of shelter standards.

The presence of Domestic Homicide Review Committees is also included in this review. Finally, we have reviewed provisions for domestic violence in tenancy acts as well as provisions for leave from work in cases of domestic violence.

Action Plans on VAW

The Government of Canada does not currently have a National Action Plan on VAW. However, in June 2017, a federal [Gender-Based Violence Strategy](#) was announced. 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. A number of provinces and territories have independently implemented some form of action plan or initiative related to VAW and/or family violence.

According to the United Nations, a National Action Plan is a key mechanism for countries to coordinate the effective prevention of, and appropriate responses to, all forms of VAW. NAPs on VAW “establish a coherent framework and strategic long-term program of activity that address root causes of VAW, strengthen systems that respond to it (including legal systems), and assign accountability and appropriate resources.”⁶

ⁱⁱⁱ Across Canada, the terms “shelter,” “transition house,” and “transition home” are used in different provinces and territories to refer to VAW residential facilities. When we use the word “shelter” in this report, we are referring to all VAW residential facilities.

Among the 14 recommendations outlined in the UN Handbook, the UN stipulates that, in order to be effective, APs should:

- recognize women as the primary victims of domestic violence, and gender inequality as its root cause;
- involve meaningful participation by community agencies;
- identify adequate budgetary resources;
- ensure consistency among relevant legislation and policies;
- specify data collection and research; and
- include monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.⁷

In 2013, WSC (then called the Canadian Network of Women’s Shelters and Transition Houses) released [*The Case for a National Action Plan on Violence Against Women*](#). The report’s overall finding was that VAW responses have been “largely fragmented,” are “often inaccessible,” and that many current policies, legislation, and strategies across Canada “lack effective coordination of efforts, conflict with one another, and/or have unintended (negative) consequences.”⁸ It also noted that a number of provinces had action plans that provide promising ground on which to build a National Action Plan on all forms of VAW.

The table below provides links to the provinces’ and territories’ main VAW and/or domestic violence (DV) Action Plans (APs) as well as plans that address specific communities or forms of VAW. Please note that some of these APs have expired but are still the most recent available.

Table I. Federal, Provincial, and Territorial Action Plans, Initiatives, and Strategies on VAW

	Name of VAW or DV AP / Framework / Initiative	APs for Specific Communities / Forms of VAW
Canada	It’s Time: Canada’s Strategy to Prevent and Address Gender-Based Violence (2017)	Gender Equality: A Foundation for Peace - Canadas National Action Plan for the Implementation of the UN Security Council Resolutions on Women, Peace, and Security 2017-2022 Action Plan to Address Family Violence and Violent Crimes Against Aboriginal Women and Girls (2015) National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking (2012)
Alberta	Family Violence Hurts Everyone: A Framework to End Family Violence in Alberta (2013)	Preventing Violence Against Women and Girls Commitment to End Sexual Violence

	Name of VAW or DV AP / Framework / Initiative	APs for Specific Communities / Forms of VAW
		Alberta's Plan for Promoting Healthy Relationships and Preventing Bullying (2014) Addressing Elder Abuse in Alberta – A Strategy for Collective Action (2010)
British Columbia	Coroners Recommendations Working Group (CRWG) - A Review of Intimate Partner Violence Deaths 2010-2015 Action Plan (2017) A Vision for a Violence Free BC: Addressing Violence Against Women in British Columbia (2015) British Columbia's Provincial Domestic Violence Plan: First Annual Report (2015) Provincial Domestic Violence Plan (2014)	Accessibility 2024 (2014) Together to Reduce Elder Abuse – B.C.'s Strategy (2013) ERASE (Expect Respect and A Safe Education) Bullying strategy (2012)
Manitoba	Manitoba's Multi-year Domestic Violence Prevention Strategy (2012)	
New Brunswick	A Better World for Women: Moving Forward 2005-2010	Preventing and Responding to Sexual Violence in New Brunswick (2018) New Brunswick plan to prevent and respond to violence against Aboriginal women and girls (2017 – 2021) New Brunswick Family Plan: Advancing Women's Equality (2017) A Strategic Framework to End Violence against Wabanaki Women in New Brunswick (2008)
Newfoundland and Labrador	Working Together for Violence-Free Communities: 2015-2019 Prevention of Violence Action Plan	Minister's Committee on Violence Against Women and Girls. Progress Report (2018)

	Name of VAW or DV AP / Framework / Initiative	APs for Specific Communities / Forms of VAW
Northwest Territories	<p>Coalition Against Family Violence: Strategic Directions in Ending Family Violence in the NWT (2018)</p> <p>NWT Family Violence Action Plan: Phase II (2007-2012)</p> <p>Government of the NWT Response to the NWT Action Plan on Family Violence: A Framework for Action (2003-2008)</p>	<p>Creating Safe Communities for Older Adults: A Five Year Strategy for the Northwest Territories (2015 – 2020)</p>
Nova Scotia	<p>Standing Together to Prevent Domestic Violence: Building a provincial action plan (2019)</p> <p>Domestic Violence Action Plan Update (2012)</p> <p>Domestic Violence Action Plan (2010)</p>	<p>Breaking the Silence: A coordinated response to sexual violence in Nova Scotia: Progress Report Year 3 (June 2016 – May 2017)</p> <p>Breaking the Silence: A coordinated response to sexual violence in Nova Scotia (2015)</p>
Nunavut	<p>Government of Nunavut Family Violence Prevention Framework for Action</p>	<p>Strategic Plan for Inuit Violence Prevention and Healing (2016)</p> <p>Nunavut Sexual Health Framework for Action 2012-2017 (2012)</p>
Ontario	<p>It's Never Okay: Ontario's Gender-Based Violence Strategy (2018)</p> <p>Domestic Violence Action Plan Progress Report Update (2012)</p> <p>Domestic Violence Action Plan Update (2007)</p> <p>Domestic Violence Action Plan (2004)</p>	<p>It's Never Okay: Action Plan to Stop Sexual Violence and Harassment: Progress Update 2016 – 2017</p> <p>It's Never Okay: Action Plan to Stop Sexual Violence and Harassment (2015)</p> <p>Walking Together: Ontario's Long-Term Strategy to End Violence Against Indigenous Women – Year Two Update (2018)</p> <p>Walking Together: Ontario's Long-Term Strategy to End Violence Against Indigenous Women (2016)</p>

	Name of VAW or DV AP / Framework / Initiative	APs for Specific Communities / Forms of VAW
PEI	Strategies for Addressing Family Violence in Prince Edward Island (2015)	
Quebec	Plan d'action gouvernemental en matière de violence conjugale (2018-2023)	Ensemble pour l'égalité. Stratégie gouvernementale pour l'égalité entre les femmes et les hommes vers 2021(2017-21) Stratégie gouvernementale pour prévenir et contrer les violences sexuelles (2016-2021)
Saskatchewan	No formal plan currently exists	Saskatchewan Sexual Violence Action Plan (2019)
Yukon	No formal plan currently exists	Safe at Home: A Community-Based Action Plan to End and Prevent Homelessness (2017) Outcomes and Priorities for Action to Prevent and Address Violence Against Indigenous Women and Girls (2016) Health and Social Services Strategic Plan 2014-2019 Victims of Crime Strategy (2009-2014)

Funding

Funding is a central issue in shelter system architecture and administration. It is one of the areas where opacity, lack of coordination, and the absence of data-informed decision-making often result in confusion, inconsistencies, and inadequate responses. Funding for women's shelters is typically funneled through two distinct streams: capital and operations. However, a comprehensive picture of funding schemes in each province and territory is beyond the scope of this review.

Operational funding is administered through one or more provincial/territorial department. Monies are for "core services," as defined by government agencies, and/or for distinct projects or programs.

The services and programs that ministries fund differ from one province/territory to the next, as do the amounts of funding provided, the types and lengths of agreements, the naming of services, accessibility, and guidelines and standards related to admission criteria, length of stay, staff training and remuneration, reporting, legislative compliance, and so on. This variability and lack of clarity,

transparency, and informed decision-making, particularly at the ministerial level, leads to confusion and frustration for those in the shelter sector and interferes with their capacity to carry out their work.

These system gaps translate to out-of-touch, inappropriate, and inadequate service agreements and contracts, impacting shelter workers as well as women and children on the ground. For example, eligibility restrictions or funding holes sometimes reflect a lack of understanding about the actual services shelters offer and the communities they serve. This disconnect means that women fleeing violence are not guaranteed the same services and supports from one shelter and jurisdiction to the next.

Table II. Department/Ministry Responsible for Operational Funding, Provincial Length of Stay Standard, and Shelter Service Standards

	Department/ Ministry Responsible for Administering Funding to Shelters	Number of VAW Facilities to which Operational Funding is Provided ^{iv}	Provincial Length of Stay Standard ^v	Shelter Service Standards ^{vi}
ISC-funded shelters	Indigenous Services Canada (ISC)	41 shelters, mostly on reserve ⁹	N/A	National Aboriginal Circle Against Family Violence (NACAFV): Guidelines for Shelters^{vii}
Alberta	Community and Social Services	30 emergency shelters, 12 second stage shelters, and 2 seniors' shelters. ¹⁰	21 days	Women's Shelter Program Manual (Government of Alberta, 2002) and Alberta Council of Women's Shelters Aspirational Service Standards (2005)
British Columbia	BC Housing	68 transition houses, 27 safe	30 days	Women's Transition

^{iv} There may be slight variations in numbers depending on the source and how a shelter differentiates its facilities (1st stage, 2nd stage, or mixed facility of both 1st and 2nd stage). ISC-funded shelters are not reflected in the provincial/territorial numbers. These numbers are not readily available on most government websites.

^v These figures were provided by the provincial and territorial shelter associations. Due to lack of safe and affordable housing, extensions and increases in length of stay are regularly given to women across the country.

^{vi} Unlinked titles are documents not available online.

^{vii} ISC-funded shelters are members of NACAFV. Some of these shelters are also members of provincial associations and thus covered by those standards as well.

	Department/ Ministry Responsible for Administering Funding to Shelters	Number of VAW Facilities to which Operational Funding is Provided ^{iv}	Provincial Length of Stay Standard ^v	Shelter Service Standards ^{vi}
		homes, and 30 second stage houses ¹¹		Housing and Supports Program Framework (2015)
Manitoba	Department of Families	10 women's shelters and 4 second stage shelters ¹²	30 days	Manitoba Standards Manual for Women's Shelters (2014)
New Brunswick	Department of Social Development	13 transition houses ¹³ and 5 second stage shelters ¹⁴	30 days	Standards & Procedures for Adult Residential Facilities (2013)
Newfoundland and Labrador	Department of Health and Community Services	12 transition houses ¹⁵	6 weeks	Provincial Transition Houses Operational Standards (2010)
Northwest Territories	Department of Health and Social Services	5 family violence shelters ¹⁶	6 weeks	NWT Shelter Minimum Standards (2011) ^{viii}
Nova Scotia	Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women	12 transition houses and 4 second stage shelters ¹⁷	6 weeks	Nova Scotia Standards for Member Organizations of the Transition House Association of Nova Scotia (2012)
Nunavut	Department of Family Services	5 family violence shelters ¹⁸	6 weeks	Saillivik Policy (2009) ^{ix}
Ontario	Ministry of Community and Social Services	96 emergency women's shelters ¹⁹	No stipulated length of stay	Violence Against Women (VAW) - Emergency Shelter Standards and Standards for Ontario Indigenous Shelters (2017)

^{viii} These government standards have not been formally implemented.

^{ix} According to this policy, all family violence shelters must enter into a Contribution Agreement, which outlines the minimum standards that family violence shelters must comply with.

	Department/ Ministry Responsible for Administering Funding to Shelters	Number of VAW Facilities to which Operational Funding is Provided ^{iv}	Provincial Length of Stay Standard ^v	Shelter Service Standards ^{vi}
PEI	Department of Family and Human Services	2 emergency women’s shelters ²⁰	21 days	No shelter standards
Quebec	Ministry of Health and Social Services	109 women’s shelters ²¹	No stipulated length of stay	No shelter standards
Saskatchewan	Ministry of Justice	12 transition houses ²²	6 weeks	Saskatchewan Residential Services Act (2002) and Provincial Association of Transition Houses and Services of Saskatchewan Shelter Standards (2010) and Saskatchewan First Nations Women’s Shelter Standards (2018)
Yukon	Department of Health and Social Services	3 women’s shelters ²³	30 days	No shelter standards

Death Review Committees

Domestic Violence Death Review Committees (DVDRCs) are multi-disciplinary advisory committees composed of experts who review domestic violence-related deaths and provide non-binding recommendations for change to provincial governments in order to prevent future deaths.²⁴ They focus on addressing systemic issues that increase domestic homicides but do not investigate the criminal culpability of individual perpetrators. Their reports are often structured along the themes of awareness/education, assessment/intervention, and providing resources.

DVDRCs currently exist in Australia, New Zealand, Great Britain, and the United States. In 2002, Canada’s first DVDRC was established in Ontario, based on recommendations from two major inquests into the killings of Arlene May and Gillian Hadley.²⁵ Several other provinces have since formed their own committees or one-time death review panels.

Table III. Domestic Violence Death Review Committees and Panels

	Name of the Committee / Panel	Year Committee / Panel Was Established	Most Recent Report
Alberta	Family Violence Death Review Committee	May 2013 ²⁶	Family Violence Death Review Committee: Case Review Public Report #6 (May 2018) and 2016 Annual Report
British Columbia	Domestic Violence Death Review Panel (Not an established committee; convened on ad hoc basis)	In March 2010, the panel reviewed and composed a report on 11 domestic homicides selected from coroner files between 1995 and 2010 ²⁷ On June 8 & 9, 2016, the British Columbia Coroners Service (BCCS) held an additional death review panel on the 100 deaths that resulted from intimate partner violence between 2010 and 2015 ²⁸	A Report to the Chief Coroner of BC: Findings and Recommendations of the Domestic Violence Death Review Panel (May 2010) and A Review of Intimate Partner Violence Deaths 2010-2015 (November 2016)
Manitoba	Domestic Violence Death Review Committee	June 2010 ²⁹	Manitoba Domestic Violence Death Review Committee Annual Report 2016/2017: Executive Summary
New Brunswick	Domestic Violence Death Review Committee	February 2010 ³⁰	Recommendations from the Domestic Violence Death Review Committee 2017
Newfoundland and Labrador	N/A	N/A	N/A

	Name of the Committee / Panel	Year Committee / Panel Was Established	Most Recent Report
Northwest Territories	N/A ^x	N/A	N/A
Nova Scotia	N/A	N/A	N/A
Nunavut	N/A	N/A	Media Release- Recommendations by the Chief Coroner to Prevent the Domestic Violence Related Deaths 2018
Ontario	Domestic Violence Death Review Committee	2003 ³¹	2016 Annual Report
PEI	N/A	N/A	N/A
Quebec	Domestic Violence Death Review Committee	The Quebec government announced in November 2017 that it would create a committee chaired by the province's chief coroner Work is scheduled to begin in 2018 as per the current five-year action plan. ³²	N/A
Saskatchewan	Saskatchewan's Domestic Violence Death Review Panel	Summer 2016 ³³	Interpersonal Violence and Abuse: Response to the Domestic Violence Death Review 2019 May 2018 Domestic Violence Death Review Report

^x The Coalition Against Family Violence advocacy group has called for an NWT Domestic Violence Death Review Committee: CBC News. (2016, February 3). "Coalition Against Family Violence calls for death review panel." Retrieved from <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/nwt-family-violence-coalition-death-review-panel-1.3432886>

	Name of the Committee / Panel	Year Committee / Panel Was Established	Most Recent Report
Yukon	N/A	N/A	N/A

Provincial and Territorial Tenancy Acts

Leaving an abusive and violent relationship can be a difficult and often dangerous decision for survivors to make. The Ontario Domestic Violence Death Review Committee found that in 81% of the domestic homicide cases they reviewed, the couple was separated or in the process of separating.³⁴ Furthermore, there is often a threat of financial insecurity; having to pay monetary penalties for ending their leases early may prevent people from leaving their unsafe environment. Provincial legislation revising Residential Tenancy Acts allows tenants experiencing domestic violence to end their tenancies early with a notice period of approximately one month if they provide their landlord with proper documentation. Provincial governments created these laws to make it easier for victims to leave violent situations without bearing the burden of additional financial penalties.

Table IV. Domestic Violence Provisions in Provincial and Territorial Tenancy Acts

	Tenancy Act Provisions
Alberta	In August 2016, Bill 204, the Residential Tenancies (Safer Spaces for Victims of Domestic Violence) Amendment Act , Termination of Tenancy (Domestic Violence) Regulation, and amendments to the RTA Ministerial Regulation were proclaimed. ³⁵ These changes allow tenants experiencing domestic violence to end their residential tenancies early without the usual financial penalties. In order to do so, they must get a Certificate Confirming Grounds to Terminate Tenancy from the government by submitting either a court order or a Certified Professional Statement. Tenants need to use this certificate to give at least 28 days' notice to their landlord, but they must still pay rent during the notice period. ³⁶
British Columbia	According to revisions of the Residential Tenancy Act that came into force in December 2016, ³⁷ a tenant may end a fixed-term tenancy before the term is finished if they need to leave the rental unit to protect themselves or their children from family violence. They must have their eligibility confirmed by an authorized third-party verifier using an Ending Fixed-Term Tenancy Confirmation Statement form. The tenant needs to give this completed and signed form to the landlord, along with a one month written notice. Tenants are responsible for paying rent until the end of that notice period, but not for any additional months' rent or for any of the landlord's costs to re-rent. ³⁸ In June 2019, Bill M206, Residential Tenancy Amendment Act , received Royal Assent. It provides tenants with the ability to end their fixed-term lease if staying in the rental unit is a threat to their safety or security. It broadens the

	Tenancy Act Provisions
	existing family violence provisions and gives a tenant exposed to sexualized violence by a roommate or a neighbour the right to break their lease so they can move to a safer home. ³⁹
Manitoba	2011 amendments to the Residential Tenancies Act stipulate that a tenant may end a tenancy if, because of domestic violence or stalking, they fear for their safety or the safety of their dependent child if the tenancy continues. ⁴⁰ The tenant must give the landlord both a notice of termination that is not less than one rental payment period and a certificate signed by the Victim Services Branch of Manitoba Justice (the designated authority), confirming there are grounds to terminate the tenancy. ⁴¹ In June 2019, Bill 19, The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act , received Royal Assent. ⁴² It expands the act to include sexual violence, and simplifies the procedure for establishing that violence or stalking has occurred, such that certain individuals acting in their professional or employment capacity may provide a statement confirming violence or stalking has occurred. ⁴³
New Brunswick	New Brunswick's Residential Tenancies Act does not yet include special provisions for early termination of lease due to family and domestic violence. A private member's bill from the Green Party, Bill 10, An Act To Amend The Residential Tenancies Act (RTA), had its first reading in the New Brunswick Legislature in December of 2018. ⁴⁴ It defines domestic violence, and states that tenants that are victims of domestic violence may terminate a year-to-year or fixed term tenancy by giving the landlord a one-month's notice to quit. ⁴⁵ In November 2019, the Government of New Brunswick proposed a similar Bill 20 to Amend the Residential Tenancies Act , ⁴⁶ . A Service New Brunswick News Release explains the mechanisms for qualifying for early lease termination: an emergency intervention order, a court order or a verification statement. ⁴⁷
Newfoundland and Labrador	Bill 15, An Act to Amend the Residential Tenancies Act , received Royal Assent in late May 2018. ⁴⁸ It will allow tenants experiencing family violence to terminate fixed-term rental agreements early without penalty by providing the Director of Residential Tenancies with a court order such as a peace bond or a statement from a designated authority indicating they believe the tenant or the child with them to be subject to family violence. ⁴⁹ Designated authorities include physicians, nurses, social workers, psychologists, police officers, and individuals employed by an agency or organization recognized by the Director of Residential Tenancies. ⁵⁰
Northwest Territories	On August 31, 2015, Bill 42: An Act to Amend the Residential Tenancies Act introduced changes allowing victims of domestic violence with Emergency Protection Orders, or other court orders that demonstrate domestic violence has occurred, to terminate their tenancy agreement. The protection order must be in effect when the tenant applies to terminate the tenancy. The Rental Officer will issue a termination order if the application meets the necessary criteria, which must be given to the

	Tenancy Act Provisions
	landlord no later than 30 days after it is issued. Once the landlord reviews the order, the tenant has 30 days to leave the rental unit. ⁵¹
Nova Scotia	Changes implemented as of September 16, 2013, to the Residential Tenancy Act in Nova Scotia allow victims of domestic violence to work with the Department of Justice’s Victim Services to end a year-to-year or fixed-term lease with one month’s notice and without paying a penalty. ⁵² The tenant must also provide the landlord with a Certificate Confirming Grounds to Terminate Tenancy Due to Domestic Violence within 60 days after the Director of Victim Services has issued the certificate to them. ⁵³
Nunavut	Nunavut’s Residential Tenancies Act does not include special provisions for early termination of lease due to violence.
Ontario	The Sexual Violence and Harassment Action Plan Act , which came into effect on September 8, 2016, amended the 2006 Residential Tenancies Act to shorten the notice period to end a tenancy for tenants who are survivors of sexual and domestic violence. ⁵⁴ They can now end their tenancy in 28 days if they believe they or a child living with them may be harmed or injured if they do not leave the unit. Tenants must give their landlord a Tenant’s Notice to End My Tenancy Because of Fear of Sexual or Domestic Violence and Abuse (N15) and either a signed Tenant’s Statement About Sexual or Domestic Violence and Abuse or a copy of a court order. ⁵⁵
PEI	Prince Edward Island’s Rental of Residential Property Act does not include special provisions for early termination of lease due to violence.
Quebec	The Civil Code allows a tenant to terminate their residential lease early if their safety or that of a child living with them is threatened because of domestic violence on the part of a spouse or a former spouse, or because of sexual aggression. ⁵⁶ The tenant must give the landlord a termination notice of lease and an attestation from a public officer indicating that it is necessary to terminate the lease to ensure their safety or that of a child living with them. The lease will be terminated two months after a termination notice has been sent, or one month after the notice has been sent in the case of a lease for an undetermined period or lasting less than 12 months. ⁵⁷
Saskatchewan	Bill 67: An Act to Amend The Victims of Interpersonal Violence Act and Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 was passed in April 2017, allowing a tenant to end a fixed-term agreement within 28 days if they or their family members are experiencing abuse by another resident or former resident of the home. They must obtain a Certificate Confirming Safety Risk from the Victims Services Branch by providing a copy of a court order/bond or a Professional Person Statement (from a social worker, psychologist, registered nurse, police officer, etc). The tenant should then provide this certificate along with a Notice to Landlord to Terminate a Fixed Term Tenancy for Interpersonal Violence. ⁵⁸
Yukon	Yukon’s Residential Landlord and Tenant Act does not include special provisions for early termination of lease due to violence. In April 2016, the Official Opposition NDP caucus tabled a successful motion asking the House to “urge the Government of Yukon to introduce amendments to the Residential Landlord and Tenant Act to allow

	Tenancy Act Provisions
	domestic violence victims to: (1) terminate a lease early and without penalty, and (2) remove an abuser’s name from a lease.” ⁵⁹ such amendments were made to date. ⁶⁰ In 2018, the Yukon government released a document titled “What if Domestic Violence Affects my Tenancy?” It provides survivors with instructions on how to end a tenancy, negotiate new terms, and other housing resources and information. ⁶¹

Paid and Unpaid Leave

The momentum to recognize the need for paid leave from work in circumstances of domestic violence is very much linked to the work of the Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse, which collaborated with organized labour in 2011 to conduct a ground breaking survey on the prevalence and impact of domestic violence on the workplace. Australia’s advancements inspired the Canadian Labour Congress and University of Western Ontario to conduct a similar national survey in 2014. Canadian data revealed that domestic violence makes it difficult for one third of survivors to go to work, continues for more than half of them during work, and negatively affects the majority’s work performance. Survivors often require unforeseen time to seek medical attention, file protective orders, receive legal assistance, and find safe homes for themselves and their children. The threat of unemployment or financial insecurity can hinder many women from leaving abusive relationships.⁶² In 2016, Manitoba became the first province to ensure job protected leave for domestic violence survivors, providing them with greater social support and increased job security.⁶³

Table V. Provincially and Territorially Legislated Paid/Unpaid Leave for Domestic Violence Survivors

	Provision of Law Guaranteeing Domestic Violence Leave	Paid or Unpaid	Total Length of Protected Leave
Canada	Yes ⁶⁴	5 days paid, remaining unpaid ⁶⁵	10 days every calendar year ⁶⁶
Alberta	Yes ⁶⁷	Unpaid ⁶⁸	10 days every calendar year ⁶⁹
British Columbia	Yes ⁷⁰	Unpaid ⁷¹	10 non-consecutive days, and a second option of up to 15 consecutive weeks ⁷²
Manitoba	Yes ⁷³	5 days paid, remaining unpaid ⁷⁴	10 consecutive or intermittent days and an additional 17 continuous weeks in a 52 week period ⁷⁵
New Brunswick	Yes ⁷⁶	5 days paid, remaining unpaid ⁷⁷	10 days to be used intermittently or continuously, and up to 16 weeks in one continuous

	Provision of Law Guaranteeing Domestic Violence Leave	Paid or Unpaid	Total Length of Protected Leave
			period, with the first five days paid ⁷⁸
Newfoundland and Labrador	Yes ⁷⁹	3 days paid, remaining unpaid ⁸⁰	3 days paid leave and 7 days unpaid leave ⁸¹
Northwest Territories	Yes (as of 1 January 2020) ⁸²	5 days paid, remaining unpaid	10 days and up to 15 weeks in a calendar year
Nova Scotia	Yes ⁸³	3 days paid, remaining unpaid ⁸⁴	10 continuous or intermittent days and up to 16 continuous weeks ⁸⁵
Nunavut	No	N/A (Proposed: 10 days paid, remaining unpaid ^{xi})	N/A (Proposed: 10 days) ^{xii}
Ontario	Yes ⁸⁶	5 days paid, remaining unpaid ⁸⁷	10 days and an additional 15 weeks every calendar year ⁸⁸
PEI	Yes ⁸⁹	3 days paid, remainder unpaid ⁹⁰	10 days ⁹¹
Quebec	Yes ⁹²	2 days paid, remaining unpaid ⁹³	26 weeks over 12 months ⁹⁴
Saskatchewan	Yes ⁹⁵	5 days paid, remaining unpaid ⁹⁶	10 days continuous or intermittent in a 52 week period ⁹⁷
Yukon	No	N/A	N/A

Concluding Remarks

Although by no means exhaustive, it is clear from the tables presented in this review that women fleeing violence in Canada do not have access to the same levels of services or protection across the country.

For example, when looking at the current provision of domestic violence leave, residents of Ontario, New Brunswick, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba have five days of paid leave from work, while residents of PEI, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland and Labrador have three days, and those in Quebec have two days.

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Alberta and British Columbia, as well as federally regulated employees, only have access to unpaid leave. Residents of the territories do not have access to leave in cases of domestic violence. It is interesting to note that New Zealand recently passed legislation (July 2018) that stipulates that any person experiencing domestic violence will be entitled to 10 days paid leave from work.⁹⁸ As of August 1, 2018, Australians have access to five days of unpaid leave.⁹⁹ In both New Zealand and Australia, the provisions apply on a countrywide basis.

Many other policies and programs differ widely from province to province. Reviewing them was, however, beyond the scope of this current project. This exercise has highlighted how difficult it is to access information that is both up to date and accurate. The lack of transparency makes it extremely difficult to have a clear picture of what is in place and where to access information.

Given the expansiveness of our country and the importance of ensuring that policies and practices (1) respond to the intersections in women's lives and (2) recognize the needs of those marginalized by systems and society, Women's Shelters Canada continues to advocate strongly for a National Action Plan.

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