



Policy Shifts 2020

Law and Policy Changes Relevant to Violence Against Women in Canada
December 2019-December 2020

National

Legislative bills or acts coming into force that directly affect VAW shelters and transition houses

- [The COVID-19 pandemic has delayed the Divorce Act amendments from coming into force.](#) The changes, including new considerations for family violence in custody arrangements, was scheduled for July 1, 2020 but the coming into force date has been deferred until March 1, 2021 to allow provinces and territories more time to reform their laws.
- [Bill C-15: An Act respecting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#), was introduced December 3, 2020. The declaration includes articles affirming the [right of Indigenous people to create their own education systems, receive restitution for stolen lands, and participate in all decision-making that affects their interests.](#)
- [S-209: An Act to amend the Department for Women and Gender Equality Act](#), a Senate Bill to require a GBA analysis of legislative bills was introduced by Independent Senator Dr. Mary Jane McCallum but has not moved beyond second reading.
- Private Member's [Bill C-247: An Act to amend the Criminal Code \(controlling or coercive conduct\)](#) was introduced October 5, 2020. Private Member's bills do not often become law.

National publications related to VAW policy

- The [Federal Framework on Posttraumatic Stress Disorder](#) was published in January 2020 as a result of the Federal Framework on PTSD Act which received Royal Assent in June of 2018.
- [Addressing Gendered Violence against Inuit Women: A review of police policies and practices](#) in Inuit Nunangat by Pauktuutit Inuit Women, January 2020
- ["Domestic Violence and Access to Justice: A Mapping of Relevant Laws, Policies and Justice System Components Across Canada,"](#) an open-access e-book by Koshan, Mosher and Wieggers.

British Columbia

Legislative Bills or newly-signed laws that directly affect VAW shelters and transition houses

- [Bill 5, Employment Standards Amendment Act](#), passed in August 2020 and will provide [5 days of paid leave](#) for victims of [domestic and sexual violence](#).
- [Bill M206, the Residential Tenancy Amendment Act](#), came into effect May 29th. This creates a process to apply to [end tenancy early due to household violence](#).

Key policy changes that directly impact VAW shelters and transition houses

- National Occupancy Standards: BC Housing issued a statement to BC Housing Providers BCSTH has engaged in ongoing [advocacy](#) with other Provincial entities on the impact of the NOS as barrier to abused women accessing safe housing.

Policy consultations initiated by the government of BC that include VAW shelters and THs

- BCSTH sits on the Steering Committee and Working Group for the province-wide [Trauma-Informed Practice \(TIP\) Project](#) to develop awareness, education and training for the justice, public safety and anti-violence sectors.



- BCSTH sits on the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General [Policing and Security Branch Advisory Committee](#) reviewing the online police training DV modules (I and II) along with the BC [Summary of DV Risk Factors](#) (SDVR-19).
- BCSTH sits on the RCMP working group to develop an operational policy on interacting with Transition & Second Stage Houses & Safe Homes.
- BCSTH participates in the work of the [Special Committee to Review the BC Personal Information Protection Act \(PIPA\)](#).

British Columbian publications related to VAW policy in your region

- [Westcoast LEAF BC: Gender Equality Report Card](#)
- [Rise Women’s Legal Centre: Parenting during Covid-19](#)

Alberta



Legislative bills or acts coming into force that directly affect VAW shelters and transition houses

- [Bill 32, the Restoring Balance in Alberta’s Workplaces Act](#), received royal assent on July 29 and will make it [challenging for unions to contribute to charities](#).
- Bill 16, the [Victims of Crime \(Strengthening Public Safety\) Amendment Act](#) came into force June 26, 2020. It expands public safety initiatives to deter crime and reduce victimization, such as Alberta Law Enforcement Response Teams (ALERT), the Rural Alberta Provincial Integrated Defence (RAPID) Force, drug treatment courts and hire more Crown prosecutors, while also repurposing the [victim financial benefits fund](#) and replacing it with a to-be-determined victim assistance model. The Victims of Crime Review is underway.

Key policy changes that directly impact VAW shelters and transition houses

- Income Support must temporarily be accessed by phone or online due to COVID, resulting in delays.
- Alberta agreed to [streamline reporting and introduce multi-year funding agreements](#) for women’s shelters as part of Red Tape Reduction; however, this process has stalled during the pandemic

Policy consultations initiated by the government of Alberta that include VAW shelters and THs

- Alberta Council of Women’s Shelters (ACWS) participated in the [Review of the Police Act](#).
- ACWS contributed to the [Alberta Firearms Advisory Committee Survey](#) in Fall 2020 and the [Human Trafficking Services in Alberta](#) questionnaire.
- The government of Alberta conducted [consultations on the implementation of Clare’s Law](#), passed last year and to be implemented in 2021. ACWS sits on a committee to advise on the community supports to be put in place with the roll out of Clare’s Law.

Saskatchewan



Legislative bills or acts coming into force that directly affect VAW shelters and transition houses

- [Clare’s Law](#) went into effect in SK on June 29, 2020. This advance was tarnished by a [refusal to participate from the RCMP](#), which provides law enforcement for many rural communities in the province.

Key campaigns intended to inform legislation or policy

- [PATHS](#) used the provincial election as an opportunity to advocate for a provincial plan to address IPV/FV, operational funding for 2nd stage shelters and increased operating funds for shelters.

Manitoba



Legislative bills or acts coming into force that directly affect VAW shelters and transition houses

- [Bill 7, the Employment Standards Code Amendment Act \(Leave for Victims of Interpersonal Violence\)](#), was introduced November 2019 and received assent [December 5, 2019](#). This Bill expands leave eligibility to an employee who is a victim of sexual violence or stalking, as well as the previously legislated category of domestic violence, and adds leave to assist a dependant who experiences or is exposed to one of these forms of interpersonal violence.
- Private Member's [Bill 215, The Provincial Court Amendment Act \(Gender-Based Violence Education Requirements\)](#), introduced Nov. 18, 2020, would amend The Provincial Court Act to require judges to complete education in sexual assault and domestic violence law.

Ontario



Legislative bills or acts coming into force that directly affect VAW shelters and transition houses

- [Bill 207, Moving Ontario Family Law Forward Act](#), received assent November 2020. It was intended to ensure that Ontario's provincial family laws align with the new federal Divorce Act legislation. A broad [definition of family violence](#), coupled with the inclusion of family violence as a mandatory consideration in the best interests of the child test, should ensure that family violence is given serious consideration in family law cases.
- [Bill 154, the Stop Cyberbullying in Ontario Day Act](#) received assent in September 2020. It addresses the [non-consensual creation, distribution and consumption of intimate images](#) as a form of violence against women.

Quebec



Legislative bills or acts coming into force that directly affect VAW shelters and transition houses

- [Bill 55, the Act to Modify the Civil Code](#), removed statutes of limitations for sexual abuse, child abuse and domestic abuse and came [into force](#) June 12 2020.
- [Bill 70: An Act to protect persons from conversion therapy provided to change their sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression](#) was introduced October 22, 2020. It was adopted in principle and was undergoing further study in December 2020.
- [Bill 693 - An Act to amend the Election Act to prevent and fight sexual violence in the context of political activities](#) was introduced on October 22, 2020.
- Bill 59: [An Act to modernize the occupational health and safety regime](#), was introduced by the Government on October 27, 2020. When passed, the employer must take the necessary measures to ensure the protection of workers exposed to physical or psychological violence, [including domestic or family violence](#).
- Upcoming bills: reform of Family Law (spring 2021) and reform of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Act (winter 2021)

Key policy changes that directly impact VAW shelters and transition houses

- On [December 3, 2020](#), the Minister responsible for the Status of Women, Isabelle Charest, and the Minister of Public Security, Geneviève Guilbault, detailed their new [five-year action plan to address domestic violence](#). The [RMFVVCQ](#), the A2É and the FMHF have all acknowledged this announcement.

Policy consultations initiated by the government of Quebec that include VAW shelters and THs

- [Reflections on the realities of policing: Public Forums, public hearings and a survey on the realities of policing](#) took place in fall 2020. The report will be released in May 2021.
- [Consultation on the judicial system by the Expert committee on support for victims of sexual assault and domestic violence](#) was held from March 5 to April 10 2020.
- [Quebec's Special Commission on the Rights of the Child and Youth Protection](#), also known as the Laurent Commission, released preliminary findings on November 30, 2020 with a key recommendation to [create the role of provincial director of youth protection](#). The final report will be released in April 2021.
- A [coroner's public inquiry into the murder of a young child](#) by her mother who was fleeing abuse will be conducted from December 7 to 11 2020. Several women's shelters will be involved.
- The [Report of the Domestic Violence Death Review Committee](#) of the Coroner's Office was published on December 7, 2020. It recommends continuous and regular training in domestic violence for all stakeholders in connection with victims of domestic violence or abusers.

New Brunswick

Legislative bills or acts coming into force that directly affect VAW shelters and transition houses

- [Bill 6: Concerning the Family Law Act](#) was introduced November 18th 2020. This update will harmonize custody considerations in the NB Family Law Act with the upcoming Federal Divorce Act changes, including specific considerations around [family violence](#).

Nova Scotia

Legislative bills or acts coming into force that directly affect VAW shelters and transition houses

- Private Member's [Bill 254, Shelter Standards Advisory Committee Act](#), was introduced on March 10, 2020. Private Member's bills rarely become law. (Note that the [NS legislature has only met for one day since early March](#) due to the pandemic.)

Prince Edward Island

Legislative bills or acts coming into force that directly affect VAW shelters and transition houses

- FVPS has been asked to provide feedback on regulations around [circulating intimate images without consent](#) after the new [Intimate Images Protection Act](#) passed on July 14, 2020.
- [Bill 57, the Children's Law Act](#), is at second reading as of December 2020. It would codify the best interests of the child in the case of custody disputes, including the important factor of family violence. FVPS has asked to participate in drafting future regulations.



Newfoundland and Labrador

Legislative bills or acts coming into force that directly affect VAW shelters and transition houses

- [Bill 6: An Act Respecting Disclosure Of Information Under An Interpersonal Violence Disclosure Protocol \(Clare's Law\)](#) was tabled Nov. 4, 2019 and received assent December 6 2019.



Yukon Territory

Legislative bills or acts coming into force that directly affect VAW shelters and transition houses

- [Bill 10 to amend the Employment Standards Act](#) to support leave for victims of domestic violence was tabled on October 3 2020.
- Following a [public consultation](#), the Government of Yukon passed a new [Workplace Violence and Sexual Harassment Regulation](#) in September 2020.
- Following advocacy by high school students, [Bill 9, the Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Protection Act](#) received assent on November 9th, 2020, making Yukon the first territory to ban conversion therapy.
- The [Missing Person Act enacted in 2017](#) will come into force in 2020. Yukon Women's Transition Home Society (YWTHS) will be involved in the drafting of the regulations.

Policy consultations initiated by the government of Yukon that include VAW shelters and THs

- The Yukon government invited YWTHS to provide information for the possible opening of the first much-needed halfway house for women.
- The Minister responsible for the Women's Directorate has mandated work to modify the Yukon Advisory Council of Women's Issue, including mandate and composition. YWTHS is involved.
- [Health and Social Services \(HSS\) conducted a review of their services](#), including consultation with YWTHS, and released the report [Putting People's First](#). As a result, women's shelters are moving to a different part of HSS for their funding agreements.



Northwest Territories

Legislative bills or acts coming into force that directly affect VAW shelters and transition houses

- [An Act to Amend The Employment Standards Act](#) came into force on February 10 2020, introducing the option for [five days of paid leave in the case of domestic violence](#).



Nunavut

Legislative bills or acts coming into force that directly affect VAW shelters and transition houses

- [Bill 49: An Act to Amend the Labour Standards Act](#). This government Bill was introduced September 21, 2020 and if passed would amend the Labour Standards Act to provide for public emergency leave and family abuse leave.
- [Nunavut Legislative Assembly moves unanimously to affirm its support for ongoing actions and measures to promote a violence free Nunavut](#), on March 6 2020.