

# ANNUAL REPORT

APRIL 2016 - MARCH 2017

**Women's Shelters Canada**

Shelters and Transition Houses United to End Violence Against Women

**THE WORLD CAN  
CHANGE** WHEN  
**WOMEN COME  
TOGETHER** AROUND A  
**COMMON VISION**

# 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. 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.

# WORKING TO CONNECT

2016-17 was a turning point year for our organization. This fourth year was one of growth and change. Wanting to make ourselves more accessible and relatable, we changed our name to Women's Shelters Canada (WSC). Our staff doubled from two to four, allowing us to expand our reach and our capacity to serve as a connector on multiple levels.

We began to concretely connect shelters to one another and to WSC through our associate membership program and our shelter exchange program. We are excited to be hosting our first national shelter conference in Ottawa in June 2018. By engaging in active peer-to-peer learning, this will be an opportunity for shelters across the country to share their challenges and successes. We have also begun to share the story of the amazing work that shelters carry out on a daily basis for some of the most vulnerable women and children. We share their first account stories on our new YouTube channel that can be accessed from our website.

Part of our work is also to ensure that the perspectives of shelters are represented at the federal level. In June 2016, the Minister for the Status of Women created an Advisory Council to guide the development and implementation of the federal government's Gender-Based Violence Strategy and appointed WSC's Executive Director as a member. A number of our provincial and territorial members had the opportunity to participate in consultations throughout the summer

of 2016. WSC also presented a brief in anticipation of the National Housing Strategy underlining the importance of connecting the gender-based violence strategy, the national housing strategy, and the poverty reduction strategy.

In July 2016, we received a three-year grant from Status of Women Canada that will allow us to develop a national profile of shelters. The profile will be a State of Shelters in Canada, covering a range of issues from bricks and mortar to human resources to the extent of services provided to name a few. Surprisingly, this does not exist and will be instrumental in moving shelters forward. The profile will also be our starting point for a national conversation on shelters of the future.

We continue to diversify our base of supporters that includes unions, the public and private sectors, and individuals. We launched our Leading Men Campaign, which is a specific invitation to one hundred men to pledge \$1,000 a year for three years. We are grateful to Simons for having selected WSC as one of the three organizations they supported during their March 8th event and to the Royal LePage Shelter Foundation for its support of [sheltersafe.ca](http://sheltersafe.ca).

We thank the provincial and territorial shelters associations, individual shelters, our partners, and stakeholders who have shared their knowledge and expertise and allowed us to continue to create and develop connections to one another in our efforts to address violence against women.

*Lise Martin*  
*Executive Director*

*Manon Monastesse*  
*Co-Chair*

*Jan Reimer*  
*Co-Chair*

2016-17

# REVIEW OF THE YEAR

- We changed our name to Women's Shelters Canada: Shelters and Transition Houses United to End Violence Against Women
- We received a three-year grant from Status of Women Canada for our Shelters of the Future project
- We hired two new staff – a Communications and Development Coordinator and a Research and Policy Coordinator
- We gained another provincial member from Quebec – L'Alliance des maisons d'hébergement de 2e étape pour femmes et enfants victimes de violence conjugale
- We published our fourth annual issue of Shelter Voices
- We launched the Associate Membership program, enabling individual shelters to become members of Women's Shelters Canada
- We met with over 200 shelter directors in Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia
- We launched the Leading Men campaign
- We facilitated the first shelter exchange

- We co-facilitated Open Doors training sessions in Ontario and the Prairies and facilitated our first webinar on prescription medicine and medical marijuana in shelters
- Our Executive Director was appointed to the Advisory Council on the Strategy to Prevent and Address Gender-Based Violence
- We continued to build a diverse base of supporters

## LEADING MEN

Through their donation, Leading Men have made a pledge toward a safer world.

Leading Men is a national opportunity for men to stand alongside women's shelters, to help women and children get out of immediate danger while working toward a vision of Canada where emergency shelters are no longer required. Leading Men is a specific invitation to one hundred men to pledge \$1,000 a year for three years. Beyond the direct work it supports, Leading Men will be a watershed legacy of men's support to end domestic violence in Canada.

*Supporting the safety of women in honour of our daughters and the women we love.*

Together, Leading Men support:

- Sheltersafe.ca, connecting abused women to help 24/7
- Emergency shelters across Canada
- A future where shelters are no longer needed

# 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 was made possible in large part due to the generosity of our two founding partners: the RBC Foundation and the Royal LePage Shelter Foundation.

*“ Before I called, I had no idea what I was going to do.  
Now I have a plan and I know where to start.*

*“ For the first  
time, I feel  
like somebody  
actually  
believes me.*

*“ I never knew that I  
could feel safe again.*

*- Shelter users and abuse survivors*



sheltersafe.ca  
hebergementfemmes.ca

# SHELTERS OF THE FUTURE

In July 2017, Women's Shelters Canada received a three-year grant from Status of Women Canada for our Shelters of the Future project.

A lot has changed since most shelters opened in the 1970s and 1980s. Since then, the needs of the women served have become more complex, the number of institutions and services involved has

increased, and the work shelters do has evolved and multiplied.

The Shelters of the Future project aims to strengthen the voices of shelters and shelter networks in order to produce systemic change by informing policy and

practice, leading to better services and outcomes for women and their children fleeing violence. The project will also raise awareness about the multiple barriers marginalized women face in accessing shelters and the breadth of services that shelters provide.



The development of a comprehensive national profile of shelters will illustrate the scope of the shelter sector and provide reliable, up-to-date information on shelter capacity, infrastructure, services, funding, and staffing structures across the country. The results of the survey will lay the groundwork for:

- Defining a vision for the shelters of the future, including a national consultation process
- Addressing the links between violence against women, shelters, and housing
- Knowledge exchange through three Communities of Practice (COP)

Having an accurate and up-to-date understanding of the pan-Canadian shelter environment and engaging in a national conversation on the shelters of the future will help address the social, institutional, and economic barriers that women fleeing violence face on a daily basis.

*A lot has changed since most shelters opened in the 1970s and 1980s.*

# OPEN DOORS PROJECT



The Open Doors Project responds to the training needs identified by shelters and transition houses 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.

In 2016-2017, we co-facilitated training sessions in Ontario (June 2016) and the Prairies (November 2016). We offered our first webinar in February 2017 on Prescription Medicine and Medicinal Marijuana Management in VAW.

# SHELTER EXCHANGE PILOT PROJECT

The Shelter Exchange Program, open to our Associate Members, allows two shelters at a time to experience each other's work cultures in a hands-on way. They learn from each other's practices, provide key learnings that can be summarized and shared with all shelters, and provide feedback toward the development of an ongoing Shelter Staff Exchange Program.

In March/April 2017, a pilot exchange was conducted between Mountain Rose Women's Shelter Association in Rocky Mountain House, Alberta, and Women's Community House (Anova) shelter in London, Ontario. Themes explored included:

- Understanding the different challenges and barriers to women and children living in rural areas and urban centres
- Learning how services are provided to both the Indigenous population and new immigrant communities at each shelter
- Learning more about the harm reduction strategy that is used at Anova

# WHO WE ARE

## Board of Directors

Joanne Baker\*

Deena Brock

Jo-Anne Dusel

Lyda Fuller\*

Marlene Ham\*

Becky Kent

Nadia Losier

Barbara McInerney

Dan Meades

Manon Monastesse\*

Jan Reimer\*

Ellen Ridgeway\*

Louise Riendeau

\* In December 2016, the composition of the Board became the Advisory Council. The Board was reduced to 6 members, indicated by an \*

## Staff

Lise Martin

Heather Stewart

Kaitlin Bardswich

*(as of Dec 2016)*

Krystle Maki

*(as of March 2017)*

Francesca Sapozhnikov

*(Sept-Dec 2016)*

Patricia Hendrick

## Consultants

Kathryn Babcock

Marika Morris

## Volunteers

Chloe Batista

Jenna Smith

Maya Naureese Fillion

# DONORS

Status of Women Canada

Justice Canada

Royal LePage Shelter Foundation

Alex and Ani

Benevity Community Impact Fund

CaesarStone Canada

Celgene

Canadian Federation  
of Nurses Union

National Union of Public and  
General Employees

Ontario English Catholic  
Teachers Association

Shoppers Drug Mart  
Life Foundation

Simons (March 8 campaign)

Telus

UFCW Canada

United Steelworkers

# LEADING MEN

Anonymous

John Barrack

Simon Dean

John Drake

Dave Friesema

Christopher Holz

Talib Hussain

Ira Levy

Leo Liao

Alex Mazer

Doug Mizzi

Stewart Schaefer

Phil Soper

Kip Southam

Ray Stasiulis

Matt Varey

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

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[www.facebook.com/endvawnetwork](http://www.facebook.com/endvawnetwork)

[www.twitter.com/endvawnetwork](http://www.twitter.com/endvawnetwork)

YouTube: <http://bit.ly/2udQYqb>

Women's Shelters Canada is a registered charity: #840989933RR0001