



YWCA
C A N A D A

A TURNING POINT
FOR WOMEN

UN POINT TOURNANT
POUR LES FEMMES

LIFE BEYOND SHELTER

TOWARD COORDINATED PUBLIC POLICIES FOR WOMEN'S SAFETY AND VIOLENCE PREVENTION



**BEYOND SHELTER WALLS PHASE III
POLICY PAPER**



LIFE BEYOND SHELTER

Toward Coordinated Public Policies for Women's Safety and Violence Prevention

BEYOND SHELTER WALLS PHASE III

YWCA Canada

OCTOBER 2009

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research was funded by the Department of Justice, the Homelessness Secretariat and Public Health Agency of Canada. We are very grateful for their support, without which conducting this research would not have been possible.

We want to warmly thank Pamela Cross, principal researcher, for her incredible commitment and remarkable work and Tracy Read, principal writer of the report.

To the participants of the Yellowknife, Calgary, Toronto and Halifax regional consultations who shared their time, experience, knowledge and expertise, YWCA Canada remains grateful for your contribution and dedication to advocating for change.

Lillia Dahmani and Ann Decter were invaluable as the YWCA representatives who facilitated the regional consultations and led the project from within. Thanks also to Ambar Aleman of the National YWCA office for her outstanding assistance.

A number of Executive Directors and CEOs were central in conducting the regional consultations. They include: Jill Wyatt, YWCA Calgary, Tanis Crosby, YWCA Halifax, and Lyda Fuller, YWCA Yellowknife. The Internal Advisory and External Reference Committees have also been gracious with their time and commitment to the project.

YWCA Canada
75 Sherbourne St., Suite 422
Toronto, Ontario
Canada M5A 2P9

Telephone: 416-962-8881
Fax: 416-962-8084
Web Site: www.ywacacanada.ca

Printing: RedGap Communications

ISBN 978-1-896235-58-5

French Translation Available: 978-1-896235-59-2

Copyright © YWCA Canada 2009

This project was made possible with the financial assistance of the Government of Canada.



Department of Justice
Canada

Ministère de la Justice
Canada

Canada

“It’s the world’s most pervasive human rights violation. It’s the violation most often ignored. Every minute of every day, women and girls around the world are assaulted, threatened, raped, mutilated, killed.”

Amnesty International Canada,
Stop Violence Against Women Campaign

“If there’s no peace in the home, there’s no peace on the streets. If there’s no peace in the home, there’s no peace in our communities. If there’s no peace in the home, there’s no peace in the world.”

Jackson Katz, Men’s violence prevention educator

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	6
TOWARD COORDINATED PUBLIC POLICIES	10
SETTING the POLICY FRAMEWORK	13
FRAMING a NATIONAL PERSPECTIVE: The Regional Consultations	14
COORDINATING POLICIES: A Woman-Centred View	17
Issues Impacting Women Beyond Shelter	18
Women's Poverty	18
Housing and Homelessness	20
The Legal Environment	24
Life in the North	29
Multiple Barriers: Inclusion for Marginalized Women	36
SUPPORTING WOMEN BEYOND SHELTER	42
System-Wide Initiatives	42
Women's Advocates	42
Violence Awareness and Prevention Programs and Initiatives	44
Education and Training	45
Promising Practices	52
Custody and Access: Ontario's <i>Children's Law Reform Act</i> (s.24)	52
Life in the North: Healthy Families Healthy Nations	52
Supporting Women with Mental Health Issues: An Abuse Screening Protocol	52
Removing Barriers of Language and Culture: Family Law Education for Women	53
Adult Education and Outreach Programs	53
Education Programs for Young People	54
Education and Training Programs for Professionals	55
Education and Training Programs for Women at Risk	55
Recommendations	57
Implement Women's Advocates in Every Province	57
Increase Women's Economic Security	57
Increase Access to Housing and Prevent Homelessness	59
Improve the Legal System	64
Support Women in the North	70
Support First Nations, Métis and Inuit Women	74
Support Women with Mental Health Issues	75
Remove Barriers to Accessing Shelter	75
Improve Access to Information for Newcomer Women	76
Support Rural Women	76
Increase Violence Awareness and Expand Violence Prevention Programs	76
Expand Education and Training Programs	77

CONTENTS

CONCLUSION: Policy Coordination with Women at the Centre	80
APPENDICES	
Sources	82
Policy Recommendations by Level of Government	89
Research Instruments	104

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the 12 months between April 1, 2007 and March 31, 2008, 101,000 women and children – almost the equivalent of the entire population of Thunder Bay – entered shelters in Canada. Three-quarters were fleeing abuse. Despite more than three decades of building Canada’s violence against women movement, violence continues. Across Canada, homeless women who have experienced the trauma of violence shelter in frigid alleys, cocooned in cardboard, with a one in five chance of being sexually

“We can’t just keep on looking at housing as a separate and discrete issue for women. We have to look at things like income support for women. We have to look at issues for women who are living in marginalized communities. We have to look at policing issues. We have to look at employment, at job re-training, at child care – the whole picture. We can’t continue approaching post-abuse issues for women in a piecemeal fashion.”

Consultation Participant

assaulted. In the northern territories, a single house might provide a haven for as many as 20 relatives unable to find or afford their own places, many of them daughters, sisters, aunts or mothers seeking refuge from abuse in their own homes.

As Canada’s only established national network and largest single provider of shelter services for women and children leaving domestic abuse, YWCA Canada has deep roots in the country’s violence against women movement, offering services to approximately 20,000 women every year. To rightly position violence against women as a wide social issue demanding action, in 2001, YWCA Canada launched a multi-phase system-change initiative: *Beyond Shelter Walls*.

REGIONAL CONSULTATIONS

In Phase III of *Beyond Shelter Walls*, researchers facilitated a dialogue among key stakeholders at the national, provincial/territorial and community levels to identify concrete workable avenues to effecting real and lasting change.

Consultation discussions revealed a consensus:

The multiple factors informing and affecting violence against women in Canada are intersectional. The chance of finding a remedy for one factor in isolation is remote.

Interconnected themes emerged in the cross-country discussions that identify areas where policy change is needed:

- the triggering conditions of women’s poverty and homelessness
- the legal climate, in both family and criminal law, and how it contributes to and mitigates the circumstances of at-risk women

“These women are exceptional, and they keep going and keep going and keep going. And I think that’s admirable, but it shouldn’t be the way people should have to function. It shouldn’t be that hard.”

RCMP Officer & Participant

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- the circumstances faced by abused women living in the North, where a daunting spectrum of conditions foster a cycle of poverty and violence
- the marginalization of women who face multiple social barriers.

HIGHLIGHTS of the RECOMMENDATIONS

Implement Coordinated Policies

A coordinated set of policies that work to ensure women can live safely in community post-shelter must be implemented at all three levels of government and across parallel jurisdictions. A coordinated response provides the *only* possibility of reducing and eventually eliminating violence against women and is the *only* approach that can lead to an effective systemic response to keep women and their children safe once they have left an abusive situation. The point of intersection for these policies is, not surprisingly, in the lives of women leaving shelter. Understanding the issues and coordinating the policy recommendations requires a holistic approach grounded in women's lived realities.

"We should develop a policy framework that by its nature creates the need for agencies – federal, provincial, regional and municipal – to work together with enabling individuals to become self-sustaining in a safe environment as their collective focus."

Consultation Participant

Life Beyond Shelter identifies five broad issue areas impacting women as they seek to move beyond shelter to safe lives in the community:

- Poverty
- Housing and Homelessness
- The Legal Environment
- Life in the North
- Lack of Inclusion for Marginalized Women

It is imperative that the coordinated response recognize the unique realities, opportunities and vulnerabilities in Canada's north and address the lives of Aboriginal women there and across the country, whether on First Nation territories or in the rapidly expanding urban Aboriginal communities of Canada's western and northern cities.

Life Beyond Shelter identifies broad positive initiatives that should be expanded and specific promising practices currently in place that can be replicated elsewhere in the country to improve the lives and life chances of women leaving shelter and of their children. Broad, system-wide initiatives include:

- **Women's Advocates** - Implement women's advocates in every province to guide at-risk women through all services and systems they encounter as they move toward violence-free lives.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- **Violence Awareness and Prevention Programs and Initiatives** - Expand to include embedding women's equality, healthy relationships and positive conflict resolution in school educational curricula across the provinces and territories and a broad national campaign to shift attitudes.
- **Professional Education on Violence Against Women** – Ensure education on violence against women is mandatory in professional training for any and all professionals women encounter as they move through shelters, courts, hospitals, income security programs, housing and beyond into community.

Among the extensive specific promising practices already in place and which should be replicated is Ontario's *Children's Law Reform Act* (s.24), which ensures violence is taken into account when the best interests of the child test is applied to parents in custody and access cases. This is just one example of many promising practices for change identified in the report.

The recommendations in *Life Beyond Shelter* are comprehensive and extensive and call for coordinated changes at all levels of government. The federal government needs to lead this coordination by:

- Adopting a national poverty reduction strategy
- Creating a national housing strategy for emergency, second-stage and permanent housing that is inclusive of women and incorporates safe design
- Supporting sectoral housing strategies for Inuit, First Nations, Métis and urban Aboriginal women, with development led by their organizations
- Increasing the proportion of federal transfer payments for legal aid dedicated to family law
- Convening a national consultation to discuss the effectiveness, limitations and challenges of mandatory charging by police in domestic violence situations
- Funding emergency shelters in the territories for homeless women in crisis that accommodate children
- Providing equitable funding mechanisms to support the development of low-income housing in Nunavut
- Providing information on violence against women – including legal information and sources of support – in materials for newcomers entering Canada to live
- Championing national anti-violence awareness aimed at boys and men and funding a major social marketing campaign featuring positive male role models.

“As women and as women’s organizations, we can’t do this alone. We have to partner with people of like mind, both men and women, to move this issue forward. We need to have key women and key men involved in the work. We need politicians to see the political capital of working with us. We need neighbourhood champions, we need champions at every level of government.”

Consultation Participant

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Solving violence against women will require developing a meaningful role for men as full partners in the work. Men must be involved in addressing male violence in their peers, in providing non-violent role models to boys, in policy development and implementation.

Provincial governments need to take note that abused women deserve a legal system – family and criminal – that understands their realities and works for, rather than against, them. The same can be said for social assistance. With social assistance levels well below the poverty line, women and children leaving violence who depend on social assistance live deeply in poverty. In addition, in many provinces, when fathers do pay child support for children on social assistance, their children see no benefit, as social assistance is commensurately reduced. The entire benefit accrues to the government.

POLICY COORDINATION with WOMEN at the CENTRE

For more than 30 years, advocates and activists in the field of violence against women have worked side by side with all levels of government to develop strategies to deliver appropriate services to women in need. Shelters are the first and most immediate defence against the harm and potential lethality of woman abuse. But shelter is not a permanent solution. Women and children need to live safely beyond shelter, with dignity, without fear of stalking, abuse and homelessness. Throughout our regional consultations, a single strategy was raised again and again: the absolute necessity of collaborative partnering with like-minded people at every level of government, from fostering a community voice in public housing and forging relationships with key business leaders and lead funders to developing champions for housing and poverty policies in the public and private sectors. Women's lives must be at the centre of this collaboration.

It costs us much more to do nothing than to act. The price of operating shelters for abused women in Canada is more than \$135 million a year. Factoring in social services, education, criminal justice, lost employment days and health care interventions, physical and sexual abuse has been estimated to cost Canadians over \$4 billion annually. And that is only the cost in dollars. The human toll, on women and men, girls and boys is incalculable.

All Canadians have a right to be safely housed. Twenty years after the murders of young women at *L'École Polytechnique*, women who have left violent situations should be able to live safely and securely in their community. It is time to bring these issues together into a national discussion that can lead to a national, coordinated strategy.

TOWARD COORDINATED PUBLIC POLICIES

“...we have to look at the whole picture. We can’t continue approaching post-abuse issues for women in a piecemeal fashion.”

Consultation Participant

“We should develop a policy framework that by its nature creates the need for agencies – federal, provincial, regional and municipal – to work together with enabling individuals to become self-sustaining in a safe environment as their collective focus.”

Consultation Participant

A roof over their heads. A safe place to live without fear, free from anxiety about what the next day might bring. It doesn’t seem like much to ask. Yet in Canada, for many women, this is a fantasy of huge proportions. In the 12 months between April 1, 2007 and March 31, 2008, 101,000 women and children – almost the equivalent of the entire population of Thunder Bay – entered shelters in Canada. Three-quarters were fleeing abuse. Despite more than three decades of building by Canada’s violence against women movement, violence continues. Across the country, homeless women shelter in frigid alleys, cocooned in cardboard, with a one in five chance of being sexually assaulted (Sistering, 2008). In communities in the northern territories, a single house might provide a haven for as many as 20 relatives unable to find or afford their own places, many of them daughters, sisters, aunts or mothers seeking refuge from abuse in their own homes. In cities and towns, women beg temporary asylum on the couches of friends, relatives, even passing acquaintances – at great personal risk – moving from place to place to ensure one door is always open to them. According to one research participant, women fleeing violence are placed in housing infested with cockroaches and rats in the nation’s capital. In Toronto, at-risk women add their names to the long waiting lists for affordable housing. In the rural Maritimes, women wait until their abusive spouses leave home on hunting trips to escape to a distant emergency shelter, usually by asking a neighbour or friend for transportation.

It shouldn’t be this hard to live.

As Canada’s only established national network and largest single provider of shelter services for women and children leaving domestic abuse, YWCA Canada has deep roots in the country’s violence against women movement. Every year, YWCAs across the country offer services to the approximately 20,000 women who come to them wanting to leave violence behind and live safely.

In 2001, YWCA Canada identified a common need to shift the way violence against women was regarded, from a “tolerated” local, provincial and territorial concern to a wider social issue demanding immediate action. A multi-phase project was launched. Phases I and II analyzed the shelter work of the YWCA and effective practices for providing shelter to women. Phase III has investigated how to

TOWARD COORDINATED PUBLIC POLICIES

ensure women can choose to leave violence behind and live safely, not just in the short term in shelters, but in the long term in the community. Through a literature review, focus groups with women in shelter and service providers, and a series of regional consultations with partners and stakeholders, Phase III has facilitated a nation-wide discussion on the development of social policies and practices that could result in real change for women fleeing violence and abuse-related homelessness.

For more than 30 years, advocates and activists in the field of violence against women have worked side by side with all levels of government to develop strategies to deliver appropriate services to women in need. Many millions of dollars have been spent. Despite encouraging progress in some areas, the statistics tell us a grim story: every year, as many as 70 Canadian women are murdered by their current or former partners and thousands more are abused sexually, physically or psychologically in their homes. Chilling for hopes for a different future, hundreds of thousands of children witness abuse and the patterns of behaviour in abusive relationships on a daily basis.

It shouldn't be this hard to change.

Shelters are the first and most immediate defence against the harm and potential lethality of woman abuse. But shelter is not a permanent solution. Women, and children, need to live safely beyond shelter, with dignity, without fear of stalking, abuse, homelessness, discrimination, social stigmatization or intimidation by processes and agencies developed to aid them.

Groundbreaking housing researcher David Hulchanski has written that: "Having no place to live means being excluded from all that is associated with having a home, a neighbourhood and a set of established community networks...It means being exiled from the mainstream patterns of day-to-day life. Without a physical place to call 'home' in the social, psychological and emotional sense, the hour-to-hour struggle for physical survival replaces all other possible activities." (Hulchanski, 2003.)

Housing at-risk women securely, ensuring they can develop the social, psychological and emotional sense of home that Hulchanski describes and build sustainable, self-supporting lives, requires a coordinated national approach to life beyond shelter. As one research participant said, "We can't just keep on looking at housing as a separate and discrete issue for women. We have to look at things like income support for women. We have to look at issues for women who are living in marginalized communities. We have to look at policing issues. We have to look at employment, at job re-training, at child care — really, we have to look at the whole picture. We can't continue approaching post-abuse issues for women in a piecemeal fashion."

Other participants agreed. "We should develop a policy framework that by its nature creates the need for agencies — federal, provincial, regional and municipal — to work together with enabling individuals to become self-sustaining in a safe environment as their collective focus."

TOWARD COORDINATED PUBLIC POLICIES

Throughout our regional consultations, a single strategy was raised again and again: the absolute necessity of collaborative partnering with like-minded people at every level of government, from fostering a community voice in public housing and forging relationships with key business leaders and lead funders to developing champions for housing and poverty policies in the public and private sectors. “The idea of mobilizing people from many different sectors to make change is an important one,” said a participant, “For instance, people often don’t understand the broader implications of interpersonal violence, of violence in society, in the community and in organizations.”

“As women and as women’s organizations,” a participant explained, “we can’t do this alone. We have to partner with people of like mind, both men and women, to move this issue forward. We need to have key women and key men involved in the work. We need politicians to see the political capital of working with us. We need neighbourhood champions, we need champions at every level of government.”

As a society, it costs us much more to do nothing than to act. There is a horrendous personal price, and an enormous financial toll in direct economic costs, lost productivity and lost potential. No single study has been able to report accurately the full financial cost to society, but it is clearly billions of dollars annually. The cost of operating shelters for abused women in Canada, for instance, totals more than \$135 million each year. When we factor in social services, criminal justice, lost employment days and health care interventions, physical and sexual abuse costs Canadians more than \$4 billion each year (Canadian Women’s Foundation, 2007).

A participant in Calgary observed that, “As non-profit agencies, we’ve been working upstream and not getting the leverage that this issue really demands or deserves.” We need to look at solutions that we haven’t considered before. Violence against women can’t be addressed effectively by one particular ministry or department. It cuts across the spectrum from justice and corrections to health, housing, social services and education. It has implications for finance and for business development. And it cannot be solved if it is seen only as a women’s issue. It is a community issue, involving and impacting women and men, girls and boys, young women and young men.

It doesn’t have to be this hard for women to live safely. With coordination, political will and public awareness, the policy options under discussion here can bring about positive change. To echo a consultation participant, “We need to blend our strengths.” Twenty years after the murders of young women at L’École Polytechnique, it should not be so hard for women who have left violent situations to live safely and securely in their community.

SETTING THE POLICY FRAMEWORK

The policies in this paper are grounded in these principles that provide a foundation and framework to address the issues faced by women fleeing abuse and seeking appropriate, long-term housing and safe lives in safe communities:

- All Canadians have a right to be safely housed.
- Policies and strategies developed to implement this right, including funding for programs, must be based on a gendered, anti-racist and anti-oppression analysis that:
 - acknowledges women's ongoing inequality in Canadian society
 - recognizes that communities in the North face unique challenges.
- Violence against women is a gendered reality resulting from socialized behaviour by men.
- Housing women who leave abusive relationships requires a collaborative, cross-sectoral approach that should be led by a national housing strategy and federally committed funds.
- The input and lived experiences of women must be reflected in every aspect of policy creation, including development, funding, implementation, evaluation and accountability.
- Women's poverty is the root cause of homelessness and of living in inadequate housing and must be addressed if housing-related policies are to have real effect. A national poverty reduction strategy must be implemented.
- Preventing violence is the ultimate goal of any and all policy and strategy development. The federal, provincial and territorial governments must develop and implement a comprehensive nationwide violence prevention strategy.
- Canada must implement the international treaties and conventions it has signed, including the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

FRAMING A NATIONAL PERSPECTIVE: THE REGIONAL CONSULTATIONS

“The stories that I’ve heard around this table are amazing. These women are exceptional, and they keep going and keep going and keep going. And I think that’s admirable, but it shouldn’t be the way people should have to function. It shouldn’t be that hard.”

RCMP Officer & Participant

The multi-phase project, *Beyond Shelter Walls*, a coordinated consultation and system-change initiative to keep women out of the cycle of violence, homelessness and marginalization, originates from core principles that animate the work of YWCA Canada. These principles provide the policy framework that anchors this discussion, including the belief that all Canadians have a right to be safely housed, that national housing and poverty strategies are key to preventing violence against women and that the federal government must employ a gendered, anti-racist and anti-oppression analysis in policy development to fulfill its national and international commitments to human rights and advancing equity among women.

In Phase III of *Beyond Shelter Walls*, researchers were tasked with facilitating a dialogue among key stakeholders at the national, provincial/territorial and community levels, including policymakers, decision-makers, legislators and activists, and through that dynamic exchange to identify concrete workable avenues to effecting real and lasting change.

To prepare for this dialogue, invited stakeholders were provided with a discussion paper that grew out of focus groups held with VAW service providers, women in shelters and at-risk women caught in a life-long cycle of violence, poverty and homelessness. That discussion paper posits a spectrum of policy solutions beyond shelters, and the author stipulates that efforts to move to the next level of VAW policy reform will demand substantial and sustained coordination at all levels of government.

A national dialogue was set in motion at four one-day regional consultations in Toronto (South), Calgary (West), Halifax (East) and Yellowknife (North) in fall 2008. After introductions at each consultation, stakeholders discussed a series of questions designed to encourage participants to share perspectives, develop practical strategies and generate policy recommendations that would advance VAW issues at all levels of government (*see Appendix*).

A comprehensive review of the four consultation discussions revealed a consensus among participants about the intersectional nature of the multiple factors informing and affecting violence against women in Canada. Because these factors are inextricably linked, finding a remedy for one without considering its relationship with the others, and with VAW as a whole, was seen as both remote and unproductive.

FRAMING A NATIONAL PERSPECTIVE: THE REGIONAL CONSULTATIONS

Life Beyond Shelter explores interconnected themes that emerged in the cross-country discussions:

- the triggering conditions of poverty and homelessness
- the legal climate, in both family and criminal law, and how it contributes to and mitigates the circumstances of at-risk women
- the circumstances faced by abused women living in the North, where a daunting spectrum of conditions foster a cycle of poverty and violence;
- the predicament of marginalized women who face multiple social barriers;
- proactive initiatives such as:
 - a women's advocate position
 - violence awareness and prevention programs to combat the harmful socialized behaviour of men
 - education and training programs for professionals dealing with at-risk women.

The comments, observations and policy suggestions that sprang from the regional consultations were considered against the backdrop of earlier research efforts, including the papers from *Beyond Shelter Walls*, Phases I, II and III, as well as the substantive reports on homelessness in Yukon, the Northwest Territories and Nunavut: *A Little Kindness Would Go a Long Way*; *Being Homeless Is Getting to Be Normal*; *The Little Voices of Nunavut*, and; *You Just Blink and It Can Happen*. Other information for this paper was gleaned from source material from the United Nations, the Canadian Council on Social Development, the Centre for Equality Rights in Accommodation, the governments of Ontario, Quebec and Nunavut, the Ontario Native Women's Association, the White Ribbon Campaign and the Mentors in Violence Prevention Program at Northeastern University in Boston, Massachusetts. Online resources proved enlightening as well, and these included information from the Family Violence Prevention Fund, the Ontario Women's Directorate and the range of public education programs that are described in this paper under Promising Practices.

Of particular note was Calgary's 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness, mentioned at the Calgary consultation. On closer analysis, it appears that the plan has great potential to serve as a remarkable roadmap to the VAW sector in its search for effective ways to build bridges among social agencies, government and the private sector, engage community members from the grassroots up, inspire champions and address a constellation of social ills through one multi-faceted, comprehensive plan.

The policy recommendations that appear with each consultation are intended to chart a positive, coherent and pragmatic course toward meaningful change in the VAW sector. Cooperation, collaboration and coordination among like-minded stakeholders are critical to achieving these goals.

COORDINATING POLICIES: A WOMAN-CENTRED VIEW

ISSUES IMPACTING WOMEN BEYOND SHELTER

1. WOMEN'S POVERTY

Poverty is one of the root causes of violence against women as well as the primary condition that can, and does, imprison women in a life of abuse. In the wide-ranging literature on violence against women, a brief list of recommended remedies — human rights and benefits that many Canadians take for granted — appears in virtually every article. Among them are housing, health care, financial support, education, job training and access to child care. This list efficiently signposts a strategy for ending woman abuse. It also provides a road map for ending poverty itself.

Women make up a disproportionate share of low-income Canadians and are at a heightened risk of poverty. Women leaving abusive homes and struggling to re-establish themselves and their children in a new setting without resources face dramatic financial barriers. More than 40 percent of children living in low-income families live with a single, female parent, and the median income for single moms is more than a third lower than for single dads (YWCA Canada, 2009). In the North, the high cost of living, limited employment and housing opportunities, significant rates of addiction, domestic violence and intergenerational dependency on income support form a vortex of challenges that entrap women in a cycle of poverty.

As a member of the United Nations, Canada has signed all seven UN human rights treaties, among them the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). These treaties articulate the country's commitment to protecting its citizens from the devastating consequences of poverty. Canada's federal government itself has promised to address this issue: in 1989, parliament voted to eliminate child poverty by 2000.

Sectors of Canadian society endure severe living conditions. In a statement to the UN committee reviewing CEDAW in 2008, Sharon McIvor reported that First Nations, Métis and Inuit women, "continue to live in impoverished conditions, with high rates of poverty, poor health, lack of access to clean water, low school completion rates, disproportionate incarceration and high rates of violence." She cited a crisis in social programs vital to women, including social assistance, civil legal aid, and child-care, with social assistance rates "at their lowest since the 1980s" (McIvor, 2008). As anti-poverty advocates across the country have documented, living on social assistance is a guarantee of living in poverty.

Participants at the YWCA's regional consultations likewise spoke in a unified voice about the pivotal role poverty plays in the cycle of violence against women. At the West (Calgary) consultation, a shelter administrator observed the need to undertake research that would explore the nature of violence, develop long-term strategies for dealing with its presence in our society and promote policies such as a guaranteed annual income, which would help "address the relationship between

ISSUES IMPACTING WOMEN BEYOND SHELTER

poverty and violence.” A participant engaged in international community development identified poverty as the point from which other social problems radiated, concluding that putting human rights and equal opportunity at the centre of all policies is even more critical than strengthening a social assistance safety net is.

In the North, a women’s advocate lamented the dearth of poverty strategies in the territories, and explained that women leaving violent relationships who co-own their homes face a double barrier. Until ownership of shared assets is determined in court, these women are unable to obtain legal aid, subsidized housing or income support, and live “in poverty, without access to any assistance.” In Nunavut, once an abused woman’s partner is removed from the home under the *Family Abuse Intervention Act*, a woman may be left without income for groceries and other needs. Another participant drew a chilling link between poverty and the high number of murdered and missing women in the North.

In the South (Toronto), a housing expert connected resources, access to accommodation, and the vicious cycle of poverty, explaining, “When women are poor...children are poor.” This concern was echoed in Calgary, where one observer said that “where there is no housing stock, it has a disastrous impact on women.”

In the East consultation (Halifax), a researcher reported on data collected in a recent survey of 391 abused women in New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island. “Seventy percent of [those surveyed] were unemployed,” she said. “Fifty-eight percent were receiving social assistance, and 27 percent had no income at all.” Noting that the illiteracy rate in New Brunswick is one of the worst in Canada, she commented that empowering these women to move forward in their lives “is not going to happen unless a poverty reduction strategy is addressed.”

A shelter administrator agreed:

To me, the biggest barrier for women securing and maintaining any type of housing is their income. In New Brunswick, where we have very high unemployment, if the women we work with finally decide to leave their abusers and get back into the work force, they’re offered 24 hours a week at \$7.85 an hour. They can’t afford to make that transition even if housing is available.

Minimum wage levels are not adequate to support families. No matter where she lives in Canada, a woman earning the minimum wage in full-time, year-round employment is living below the poverty line. If she is on her own with children, she is living well below the poverty line and in need of support to keep her children in daycare so she can be available to work.

ISSUES IMPACTING WOMEN BEYOND SHELTER

2. HOUSING and HOMELESSNESS

“We need more housing units, and that’s the beginning and the end of it. We need it in our rural communities, we need it in our mid-sized communities, and we need it in our cities.”

Consultation Participant

While access to housing and levels of government support for housing vary significantly from community to community across Canada, a resounding alarm was consistently sounded by participants at all four regional consultations: the shortage of housing options available to women escaping violence in their homes has reached crisis proportions.

This is not a new situation. After his 2007 fact-finding mission to Canada, the United Nations’ Special Rapporteur on adequate housing, Miloon Kothari, declared Canada to be in the midst of a housing crisis. The Special Rapporteur cited CMHC’s statistic that “one-in-four Canadian renter households are in ‘housing core need,’ which means that they are living in housing that is unaffordable, inadequate or unsuitable—or sometimes all three. Many thousands more are at risk of becoming homeless or being forced into inadequate housing conditions.” His conclusion echoed that of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which described the state of homelessness and inadequate housing in Canada as “a national emergency.” (Kothari, 2007)

Participants at the South consultation in Toronto confirmed the finding, reporting long waiting lists for subsidized units, many of which are less than desirable. Availability of units was not the only issue raised. Access to housing is often restricted by “racism and discrimination” on the part of landlords unwilling to rent to certain groups, even if the applicant is able to produce the rent money. As a housing advocate said, “We have to make sure that human rights legislation is involved [in housing policy].”

Another participant observed that even when women without financial resources obtain support from Toronto’s Housing Connections program in the form of a rent subsidy, they are frequently unable to find a housing unit for rent from the private sector. An expert in minority rights referred to women in Ottawa having to endure long waits before being assigned housing that leaves “... a lot to be desired. Women are placed in cockroach-, rat-infested housing.”

It was also pointed out that, “Housing is part of protecting the women from the cycle of violence. It is a safety need, but it’s not the only thing that is going to stop the cycle of violence. It has to be supported by a system of income support and employment training.” In the East region consultation in Halifax, the lack of housing took centre stage as a theme. “Housing is almost always a priority on all of our agendas,” said a shelter coordinator. “I would say that not a week goes by that we don’t hear something that has to do with housing.” The shortage exists on all fronts, from shelter space and

ISSUES IMPACTING WOMEN BEYOND SHELTER

second-stage housing to affordable and acceptable subsidized units in which abused women seeking to rebuild their lives might eventually expect to live.

“We need more housing units, and that’s the beginning and the end of it,” said an Atlantic shelter coordinator. “We need it in our rural communities, we need it in our mid-sized communities, and we need it in our cities.”

Like the North, Labrador faces particular barriers to the creation of housing stock. The cost of transporting building materials to isolated communities scattered across the region is high, as is the cost of labour. In parts of Labrador with resource development projects, small communities have seen huge influxes of workers and their families who occupy extant housing, causing a housing crisis and a population boom that drains budgets for local services. Stresses radiate throughout the community, from the impact on public budgets and families on fixed incomes to the social problems imported when women with children are parachuted into a new setting without supports. Participants cited rent controls and graduated municipal tax rate increases as possible remedies to these challenges.

One shelter executive director reported that after years of lobbying, funding had at last been approved for a legal aid lawyer in her small community. Unfortunately, she continued, “We can’t get a lawyer...because there’s no housing. And they can’t get an office. There’s nowhere to put an office. We would have to build a building...it’s great that in theory we have a legal aid lawyer, but we don’t actually have a legal aid lawyer.”

At the same time, when public money is tight, women’s shelters often suffer reduced funding. One women’s shelter has been trying to build 10 affordable housing units for two and a half years and had conditionally secured funding to do so. With escalating costs of labour and materials, however, and no ongoing funding in place, the units are no longer affordable. VAW workers also reported a critical service gap: abused women cannot qualify for income support without an address; landlords refuse to take them as tenants without up-front money for damage deposits—cash these women don’t yet have. This catch-22 scenario was reiterated in all four consultations.

Predictably, larger, richer cities such as Toronto and Calgary are able to support housing programs not enjoyed in Northern and rural communities. Among Toronto’s social justice-based housing projects is WoodGreen’s Homeward Bound, a program designed to help women and their children transition from shelter life to economic self-sufficiency. Housing Connections, a subsidiary of the Toronto Community Housing Corporation, provides “a one-stop shopping solution for people looking for affordable rental housing.” Maintaining a waiting list for access to housing co-ops, private non-profits and subsidized housing, Housing Connections also guides applicants through rent-supplement programs and housing allowance programs. Nevertheless, waiting lists for housing units are as long as 10 to 14 years: clearly not an option for a family in need, let alone for a woman fleeing violent abuse by her partner.

ISSUES IMPACTING WOMEN BEYOND SHELTER

In Calgary, the combination of a high-flying economy, a skyrocketing cost of living and a young, diverse and mobile population combined to produce two related crises: a homeless calamity and a surge in rates of stalking, domestic assaults and murder-suicides that have earned the city the title of Canada's domestic violence capital. Arlene Adamson, director of fund development for the Calgary YWCA has called it "an epidemic," reporting that as the city's only provider of post-shelter accommodation, the YWCA's 96 beds are full 365 days a year (*Calgary Herald*, September 8, 2008).

When it learned the municipal government was embarking upon an initiative to end homelessness, YWCA Calgary was proactive. "We got on the housing subcommittee, as opposed to the services subcommittee or the research subcommittee, and that's how we were able to raise the awareness of women's unique concerns and unique experiences," said a consultation participant.

After intensive research, a series of public consultations and a community summit, Calgary's 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness was launched in January 2007. Guided by a "housing first" philosophy and practical, results-oriented solutions that "cut through the underlying systemic barriers," it is meant to help people move to self-sufficiency and independence with appropriate care and support. The plan, which promises net cost savings to taxpayers, calls for major policy changes at all levels of government. (Calgary Committee to End Homelessness, 2008)

According to those present at the consultation, the Calgary plan to end homelessness "has been very successful in mobilizing not only interest and awareness but also commitment, even of money. It's been important in mobilizing provincial buy-in to the issue. There's a lot more cooperation ... between the Homeless Foundation [the plan's implementing agency], Calgary agencies working in housing and leverage to the provincial government. So it seems to me that mobilizing key community leaders around long-term planning has some benefit."

Unfortunately, the Calgary undertaking is one site rather than a movement that is sweeping the country. Elsewhere in the western provinces and in the North, the outlook is much bleaker. A representative from the VAW sector in Edmonton called for the protection and creation of affordable housing stock that meets the needs of immigrant women and of urban Aboriginal families with five or six children, observing that "these lovely affordable housing units where there's one bedroom, maybe two if you're lucky... are out in the middle of nowhere. They don't necessarily meet the needs of the type of population that we're working with." The three-week restriction on shelter stays in Alberta was also raised as an unrealistic and unjust policy.

A participant from British Columbia drew the group's attention to a provincial policy demanding that women seeking subsidized housing must find units with a bedroom for each child, a challenge in terms of availability and affordability and a stipulation that undermines cultures which regard sharing space as appropriate. Another policy quagmire arises from a bewildering set of bureaucratic hurdles that await an immigrant woman seeking to leave an abusive relationship and obtain government-subsidized housing.

ISSUES IMPACTING WOMEN BEYOND SHELTER

The overriding consensus of the regional consultations was that the federal government must:

- develop a national housing policy that includes a poverty-reduction strategy
- re-enter the public housing market
- create and preserve safe, affordable housing stock to which at-risk women are given priority access.

Participants were also clear that the profound challenges faced by women in First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities warrant the urgent development of a housing policy tailored to the needs of those communities across the country. Speaking of a model for an Aboriginal housing strategy, an Inuit researcher and advocate recommended a discussion with higher level groups, saying “that should be left to Aboriginal groups” but also clear that she “would want an Inuit-specific housing strategy.”

As has been described in a series of studies, Canada’s North comprises a constellation of characteristics that contribute to overall high rates of homelessness, and homelessness among women in particular. Issues in the North are addressed later in more detail, but the shape of the housing landscape emerged in the comments of participants at the North regional consultation in Yellowknife. The challenges of a small population spread over a vast land mass inhospitable to housing construction; a dire lack of housing options for all citizens, not only abused women, and the inhumanely crowded housing conditions that result; shortage of women’s shelters and the low level of pay for shelter staff; prohibitively high cost of living, labour and building materials; the inconsistencies in housing subsidy assignments; withholding of damage deposits by landlords; substance abuse and domestic violence; and the deadly day-to-day grind of living in poverty.

“There’s no alternative housing. There’s no private housing market. There’s no choice,” said one participant, who went on to describe her dream initiative: a multi-dimensional partnership that would see the community taking control of a piece of the housing budget and developing a multi-use building that would include housing for women escaping abuse.

The withdrawal of the federal government from the housing field in the 1990s had severe consequences for access to housing in the territories. “When the federal government got out of contributing to social housing, we stopped having more social housing built. So there is a huge backlog of need for housing,” said a Yellowknife participant. “It’s had a negative impact across Canada, but in northern Canada, it’s been horrible.”

As VAW researcher Leslie Tutty pointed out in *Effective Practices in Sheltering Women: Leaving Violence in Intimate Relationships*, housing is, in fact, a federal jurisdiction, though “much of the [housing] responsibility [has] devolved to the provinces.” Tutty recommends, “Putting funding and more power back into CMHC” to address some of the issues, noting with praise the historic work CMHC has done in terms of building women’s shelters in the past (Tutty, 2006).

ISSUES IMPACTING WOMEN BEYOND SHELTER

3. THE LEGAL ENVIRONMENT

The law is never an easy landscape to navigate and, in times of stress, that challenge becomes even more daunting, rarely more so than for a woman who has endured violent assaults and is struggling to find physical safety for herself and her children.

When abuse against a woman by her partner is reported to the police and a charge is laid, a new chapter begins in her life. Occasionally, this intersection can lead to a healthier, safer future for the abused woman. More often than not, she is drawn into a bewildering, complex legal world where decision-making is taken from her hands, her options are limited, her children become pawns in a custody battle, and she is exposed to ongoing trauma and increased danger.

Participants at the four regional consultations engaged in a wide-ranging conversation about changes to family law and criminal law statutes that would potentially increase the security of at-risk women and their children and improve outcomes as they move on from the support and protection of life in shelter living.

Family Law

Access to Legal Representation

Retaining the services of a lawyer is an expensive undertaking, prohibitively so for many. For those without savings, income or property, it is simply not an option. To level the playing field and increase accessibility to legal counsel, legal aid programs were developed and funded across the country. In Canada, legal aid is a responsibility shared between the federal government and the provinces and territories. Despite regular calls for the federal government to increase its contribution, especially to civil legal aid, where family law is housed, this has not happened. The end result for abused women and other disenfranchised people is that the legal aid program is not adequate.

In June 2007, on the occasion of a rally by provincial justice ministers on Parliament Hill to promote increased federal funding for legal aid, Murray Scott, then Nova Scotia Minister of Justice, said, “We’re asking the federal government to step up to the plate. The provinces strive to provide legal assistance for family law clients who are often women and children. But we can only do so much.”

“Legal aid is fundamental in terms of access to our justice system, and it greatly impacts the most vulnerable in our society,” the Newfoundland and Labrador Minister of Justice said. The Manitoba Attorney General commented that, “Family and civil legal aid services are being eroded because we have to address rising criminal legal aid demands on a flat-lined federal budget. We must ensure access to justice for low-income Canadians who need and deserve legal aid services.”

The result of inadequate federal support and the different political agendas of provincial and territorial governments is that funding for legal aid programs is inconsistent. At the Halifax

ISSUES IMPACTING WOMEN BEYOND SHELTER

consultation, a participant commented that, “Each province has a different roll-out of their legal aid program, but it all means the same thing: at the end of the day, there isn’t enough.”

Another described the reluctance of some lawyers to accept certificates for legal services because of the low level of pay. A researcher singled out New Brunswick for its system, “In this province, we’ve got the worst domestic legal aid system in the country, bar none. And I am the vice-chair of the legal aid board, but there’s no money. We have no money.”

In Yellowknife, a VAW worker reported a barrier in the Northwest Territories, where legal aid “doesn’t assist women to deal with separation or assets unless there are children involved.”

Absent reliable advice, said a Toronto participant, women may make decisions that are not in the best interests of themselves or their children. For example, without legal advice a woman might, out of frustration, plead guilty to a criminal charge that would not hold up in court (see Criminal Law, below) and gain a criminal record which impacts negatively on her chances in a custody dispute.

Custody and Access

A woman fleeing abuse is concerned for her own safety, but she is also frightened on behalf of her children, who may have witnessed the violence perpetrated by their father and who may themselves have been harmed. As a result, when a woman makes the decision to separate from her abuser, child custody is a central issue, especially when the mother believes that her children are potentially at risk.

In many regions, said one Halifax participant, the decision-making judge assumes that “because the relationship is over, the violence is over. There’s a clean slate.” This position doesn’t take into account the estranged partner’s continuing need to control his spouse, something he is able to achieve through access to their children. A woman’s struggle to protect her children during the custody and access process can become “re-victimization” by the abuser through the court system, that is, a re-experiencing of abuse for the woman.

Participants reported that, in the legal process, too often the abusive partner’s rights as a father appear to supersede the right of the woman to be safe. “We’re not saying that children do not have the right to have access to the parent,” said a family violence expert in Halifax. “What we are saying is that children have a right to have access to a *safe and healthy relationship* with their parent, which takes a lot of work. And right now, it’s on the backs of women. If it’s going to work, it’s because she bites her tongue. It’s because she organizes access and custody and doesn’t take offence when the maintenance support cheque doesn’t come. It’s on the backs of the women.” Another said, “Women want their kids to have a relationship with their father, they just want it to be safe.”

A lawyer at the Toronto consultation described the changes Ontario has recently made to family law as it pertains to custody. “It’s now mandatory for judges to consider family violence, while before that it was not,” she said. “So we do effect change, although we have failed to make that change within the federal *Divorce Act*.”

ISSUES IMPACTING WOMEN BEYOND SHELTER

In Nova Scotia, a collaborative effort among concerned individuals and agencies has resulted in the creation of a comprehensive resource manual for women leaving violence and navigating their way through child custody and access. Called *Safely on Your Way: A Family Law Information Pamphlet for Abused Women*, the manual may eventually be launched nationally. A number of publications exist across the country offering information for women leaving abusive relationships.

Financial

A woman who has left her abusive partner and is setting up a new household for herself and her children is likely dependent upon support payments from her partner. Ensuring that those payments are made is another area of struggle. It is a damned-if-you-do, damned-if-you-don't situation. She needs the money, but to pursue her estranged partner for it through support enforcement programs renews his access to her and makes her vulnerable once again to his abuse.

Women in common-law relationships do not have the same property rights as married women in the Atlantic or in many other parts of the country. A Halifax participant reported on a survey of shelters in the Atlantic region which showed that the majority of residents had been living in common-law relationships. Several people commented on the vulnerability of abused women fleeing these relationships who end up with nothing and no legal recourse to an equitable share of property or savings.

Child Protection

In the North especially, concern was expressed about women staying in abusive relationships because of fear their children will be apprehended by child protection authorities as a result of having witnessed violence in the home. The truth of these fears seems confirmed by the report that across the territories, "Ninety-five percent of the children in care are Aboriginal and Inuit."

"At the end of the day," said one Yellowknife participant, "evidence shows that they [child protection authorities] are apprehending those children. And women are not going to go to shelters or any sort of avenue where they're connected with child welfare."

Given that only 11 percent of abused women contact a shelter and only seven percent ever go to one, it is not a stretch to conclude that many at-risk Canadian women take into account the possibility of losing their children before they make a decision to draw the authorities into the equation.

Criminal Law

A number of concerns were raised about current criminal law issues affecting abused women. Central among these were mandatory charging directives and practices, put into place across the country in the 1980s to place the responsibility for charging with the police officer who responds to the call, as occurs in other areas of criminal law, rather than with the woman. Over time, though positive outcomes have been achieved through mandatory charging, drawbacks have also emerged. One

ISSUES IMPACTING WOMEN BEYOND SHELTER

drawback is the fact that, as previously mentioned, a woman may not realize that simply by placing a 911 call, she is setting in motion a process over which she will have no control, the result of which may be a criminal charge against her partner. Not being aware of the consequences of calling 911 cuts across women of all educational and social backgrounds and ages, but participants highlighted the “very differential impact on women of colour and men of colour.”

In Toronto, a participant said, “Immigrant and non-immigrant women alike don’t understand what is going to happen to them when they pick up that phone to call for help. There’s no informed consent. They don’t know that to pick up the phone is going to trigger this entire process over which they have no control and no say.” Another Toronto participant called for the Department of Justice “to fund a comprehensive discussion on mandatory charging in which all the centres and agencies, police, Crowns, corrections and community services are represented.”

A trend toward dual charging emerged in the late 1990s. In some jurisdictions, in an increasing number of cases, responding police — apparently unable or unwilling to determine who was responsible for the violence — began a practice of laying criminal charges against both people, using the language of mandatory charging as a rationalization. Some regard this decision as “lazy policing” and a reflection of an uninvolved uninformed attitude on the part of the police officer as well as a lack of training on domestic violence issues. According to one participant, once a dual-charging decision is made, “Then the real problems begin. If there are children, that triggers an automatic involvement by child protection services. If it’s the first charge for her, she’s unlikely to get legal aid, so she’ll be encouraged by duty counsel to put in a guilty plea so she can get out of jail. But has anyone taken the time to explain to her that she will have a record and that it will come up in child protection?”

A Toronto participant commented on the inconsistent approach to charging that exists throughout the system, saying:

The systemic response is hugely different depending on what your municipal police service is, who’s in the Crown’s office, who’s sitting on your bench. The public would be shocked to know the variability from one jurisdiction to another. Some police services actually do an excellent job and have virtually no dual charging. And there are other jurisdictions that have disproportionate dual charging, as much as 50, 60 percent. It’s horrible.

A Calgary participant suggested that the federal government move to make bail conditions more restrictive, saying, “They’re [the abusers] usually released the very next day, so there’s no safety for her.” Amendments to the *Alberta Protection Against Family Violence Act*, adding stalking to the definition of family violence, clarifying the use of Emergency Protection Orders, and introducing protections for vulnerable people - such as seniors or individuals with disabilities - who are being abused by a family member who does not live with them, were praised as a promising practice. Ontario’s *Domestic Violence Action Plan* was also cited as good practice.

ISSUES IMPACTING WOMEN BEYOND SHELTER

Nunavut's recent *Family Abuse Intervention Act*, which allows abusive spouses to be removed from the home was enthusiastically welcomed by Inuit women participating in the Toronto consultation. In Yellowknife, the *Act* was viewed with skepticism by a non-Inuit shelter administrator with a long history in the North, "Technically he's out, and she doesn't have to leave. But our Northern reality, at least in the eastern Arctic, is that there's no place for him to go." The *Act* allows for four orders: emergency protection orders; family intervention orders; compensation orders and assistance orders. A lawyer present in Toronto predicted court challenges to the *Act* which permits a potential abuser to be prevented from accessing his home for as long as a year without committing any criminal offence. Part of the implementation was to be the hiring of 25 community justice workers to be placed in communities across Nunavut.

At the Halifax consultation, cautious support was expressed for an integrated domestic violence court – such as those that exist in many jurisdictions across the country – amid some skepticism that appropriate support and funding would be provided.

Coordination

Lack of information-sharing among government agencies as well as between family and criminal courts across the country was also raised as a dangerous practice. "Sometimes, there's no coordination and, as a result, the judge who is making the custody and access order doesn't know that there is already an order from the criminal court limiting contact," said a Calgary participant. When a judge awards child custody and access to a spouse who has already proved intent to continue to stalk and/or threaten his ex-partner, the judge then unwittingly puts the woman in a position of risk that is potentially lethal.

In Calgary, participants also spoke out about the importance of establishing supportive, transparent relationships with the staff who assist at-risk women and their children and of developing positive, reciprocal connections with the local police forces. "Knowing how organizations run and understanding the point of intersection where prevention and education can occur is really vital," said one.

At the same consultation, an RCMP officer said, "The stories that I've heard around this table are amazing. These women are exceptional, and they keep going and keep going and keep going. And I think that's admirable, but it shouldn't be the way people should have to function. It shouldn't be that hard." She went on to recommend that provincial governments create an agency to oversee a coordinated anti-violence strategy, where women fleeing abusive relationships and who are homeless as a result actually have someone to assist and protect them as they're going through these processes. "They're in crisis," she concluded, "and there really needs to be crisis response built in from a provincial level."

She went on to describe a promising practice in Nova Scotia, where the provincial government had brought together all players involved in high-risk domestic violence cases in order to create a protocol and response strategy, the High-Risk Case Coordination Protocol Framework. Anyone within the

ISSUES IMPACTING WOMEN BEYOND SHELTER

protocol can activate the response rather than default to inaction due to lack of clarity about responsibility. “Otherwise,” said the officer, “people are just functioning within their own agencies, and it’s difficult to come together.”

In Halifax, as elsewhere in the country, the challenge of serving Emergency Protection Orders on First Nation’s territories or “reserves” was identified. These lands are subject to federal authority and, as a result, provincial and municipal local police forces do not have jurisdiction. Local or band police forces have no obligation to accept and serve these orders themselves because they are not subject to provincial legislation governing the police. Without local cooperation, the absence of a remedy for this bureaucratic conundrum leaves this cohort of women unprotected.

4. LIFE in the NORTH

“We had 14 shelters...and four closed. We do not have transitional housing, that’s non-existent, and we don’t have a human rights commissioner yet. We need help for basic necessities that the rest of Canada already has.”

Inuit Consultation Participant

The Indigenous population for each of the three northern territories – Nunavut, the Northwest Territories and Yukon – is well above that of the country as a whole (4%). Eighty-five percent of the population of Nunavut is Inuit, First Nation or Métis, as is 50% of the population of the Northwest Territories and 25% of that of Yukon (Statistics Canada, 2006). Indigenous women in Canada are five times more likely than other women of the same age to die as a result of violence (Amnesty International, 2004). Sexual assault rates are two to three times higher in Yukon than in any of the other provinces, three to six times higher in the Northwest Territories and between seven and 14 times higher in Nunavut (Statistics Canada, 2006). The Sisters in Spirit project of the Native Women’s Association of Canada has documented more than 500 Aboriginal women missing or murdered over the past 30 years (NWAC, 2007).

Living standards across Indigenous communities in Canada are a public global disgrace. In 2006, Statistics Canada researcher Holly Johnson reported that, “On the international stage, Canada has been taken to task for the persistent disadvantages faced by Aboriginal women in education, employment and physical safety (United Nations Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, 2003). The lack of detailed statistical data on violence against Aboriginal women has been identified as an impediment to addressing the causes of violence and ensuring access for Aboriginal women to the justice system” (International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 2005).

A territorial report prepared for the Qullit Nunavut Status of Women Council cited the multiple challenges faced by the people who live in the North’s vast region: a small population base; lack of transportation systems; underdeveloped infrastructure; a high cost of living; limited job opportunities;

ISSUES IMPACTING WOMEN BEYOND SHELTER

inadequate access to social services and the high cost of labour and materials needed to increase housing stock due to remote geography and a harsh climate. Also on the list is the high rate of family violence, which is coupled with addictions and an intergenerational dependency on income support (Bopp, 2007).

As discussed throughout this report, women seeking to escape violence in their own homes have little recourse but to leave them. Participants in Yellowknife noted that leaving home in the North can demand incredible resilience, given the remoteness of communities, interconnectedness of families and limited means of transportation. To escape violence in a small community often means flying out to a larger centre that has an emergency VAW shelter. Participants reported that shelters are scarce and underserved, and affordable housing, job training and education rare.

A series of reports by northern researchers on women's homelessness in the three territories outlines a best practices wish list:

- appropriate housing options, from emergency shelters to supported housing options and transitional housing
- poverty reduction
- support for homeless women and their children and access to services
- involvement of the homeless in the decisions that affect them
- an integrated services model, addressing immediate needs while also working toward systemic change
- a social program that engages the broader community in finding long-term solutions. (Bopp, 2007)

At the regional consultation in Yellowknife, and at the other consultations, women in the VAW sector gathered to discuss strategies for solving the problems they see every day in their work. Poverty and homelessness figured prominently in the spectrum of issues facing the North.

Leaving her abuser is a life-changing decision for a First Nations, Métis or Inuit woman. The Phase II report for the Beyond Shelter Walls project observed that the “overlapping dynamics of racism, cultural values and codes of silences are complex pressures that make it difficult to leave one’s family and community...[these] women often report tremendous pressure to either remain silent or endure violence within the community. They face strong sanctions for involving someone from outside to get help, and especially for involving the criminal justice system...The strength of extended family is a feature of some Native populations that can either protect victims of abuse, or conversely, perpetuate abuse by discouraging disclosing it outside the family.” (Tutty, 2006)

As discussed earlier, participants in the regional consultations expressed differing views on Nunavut’s *Family Abuse Intervention Act*, which stipulates the removal of the violent partner from the family home, allowing the woman and children to stay. A non-Inuit woman from the North raised concerns

ISSUES IMPACTING WOMEN BEYOND SHELTER

that in small communities women will not be able to withstand pressure from extended family to permit abusive men to return home:

...if he's smart he won't have to go and bang on the door and break the order — his family will do it for him. His brother will come over and say, what are you doing to my brother; his sister will come over and say, you were a bad sister-in-law, I never liked you; his parents will come over and say, what are you doing to my son, do you want him to commit suicide? Her parents then get in the act and say look, we go hunting, we're a small community, we've got to have some peace here, take him back, this too will pass.

In addition, this participant noted, a plurality of new bureaucratic interactions awaits an abused woman who applies to have her abusive partner removed. The *Act* came into effect April 1, 2009, and its impacts have yet to be assessed, though Inuit women at the consultations positively anticipated its implementation and the resulting 25 community justice or outreach workers placed across the territory.

Should a woman find a space in an emergency shelter, she faces a host of barriers to re-building her life, including a contradictory and bewildering set of policies that seem to conspire to punish rather than help her. The facilitator of the Toronto and Calgary regional consultations witnessed first-hand life at the Iqaluit shelter in a mid-March visit in 2009:

The shelter in Iqaluit, which is actually in a little town called Apex, has a capacity of 21. During my visit, there were 31 women and children staying there, and calls were continuing to come in from women needing shelter in Nunavut. As long as a woman is living in the shelter, she cannot receive income support [welfare], and there are no 'personal needs allowances' paid to women at the shelter. Since the shelter is funded only to shelter and feed the women and children, these women have no money for taxis (the shelter is out of town, there are no buses and the shelter van has been broken down since fall), cigarettes, clothes or anything that others would take for granted.

Once at the shelter, a woman will typically experience loneliness and alienation, perhaps unable to communicate with the other women by virtue of her dialect, and far away from the only people who know and understand her.

Participants complained about the shoestring budgets that Northern shelters survive on and the lack of training available to shelter workers as well as their poor rate of pay. This observation emerged from *No More Running in Circles*, the Phase III Discussion paper:

One Inuit woman charged with running the only shelter left in the Northern communities said, "We provide service for 13 communities in the area. Our operational budget is only \$14,000 a year." Another reported that, "It is the women from the same communities that are affected by violence who run the place. We are underfunded, untrained and unsupported. Then, when our shelters close, they say, 'See, they can't make a go of it.'" (Dale, 2008)

ISSUES IMPACTING WOMEN BEYOND SHELTER

With a small population and anonymity impossible to achieve, security can sometimes be impossible for a woman to achieve, even in an emergency shelter. In Yellowknife a shelter worker told a chilling story of the system's limitations:

In some ways, I think of our transitional housing as the safest, but when we were trying to find safe housing for a woman who was very high risk, we realized we couldn't take her because the partner knows so many of the other tenants, and he's so feared by all of them that they would let him in if he threatened them. We came to the conclusion we absolutely could not really keep that woman safe. There were so many people at the table — the shelter staff, the RCMP, Crown prosecutors, and it was a real sobering moment. All of these people around the table, and we had no real options for that woman. So now the six kids are in care, and she's back with him and will call the shelter every once in a while. And if she can get away, she'll come in and get a good night's sleep and disappear again. I look at this idea about long-term safe housing, and I think, what planet would that be?

Housing in the North

Movement to post-shelter housing presents another roadblock in NWT due to the priority system for assigning access. Those in transitional housing are not considered homeless. "If you're leaving transitional housing, you can't go right into public housing," said a Yellowknife participant. "You have to be unstable again. You have to lose your housing to get enough points. So we've stabilized families, and they're in transition, and then they have to be homeless again in order to get into public housing. There's no flow-through continuum."

Across the North, housing is in short supply. "The underlying issue in the North is that when the federal government got out of contributing to social housing, we stopped building social housing," said an Iqaluit service provider. "There is this huge backlog of need for housing. And it's had a negative impact across Canada, but in Northern Canada, it has been horrible".

"In the North, it's absolutely clear: there is no housing stock, and it has had a disastrous impact on women," said a researcher.

More than 50 percent of Nunavut homes currently have four or more people, and 32 percent have five or more (Nunavut Housing Corporation, 2004). The Nunavut Housing Corporation predicts the overcrowding rate among Inuit will increase to 70 percent by 2016 and estimates it requires 3,300 more homes to adequately house the current population and 270 more every year to keep up with growth (Bopp, 2007).

"In the past three years, there have been no new units built throughout the Northwest Territories," said a participant. "In Paulatuk, I went into a house where there were 12 people in a three-bedroom unit. At what point is the government really going to step up and say that this is an issue, and we need to build more units? We need to make something habitable."

ISSUES IMPACTING WOMEN BEYOND SHELTER

A shelter executive director asked why, “We couldn’t look at a policy that would require municipalities and cities to consider the social needs within their infrastructure, because they’re responsible for infrastructure. And they have money for that...” for housing, particularly shelters or second-stage housing. In Inuvik, the local government has made social housing available for its people and is considering re-purposing a fourplex building into a second funded shelter. Inuvik also offers a reduced rate to homeless people for a handful of units in the community.

“I’m always making a case for the fact that there is no alternative housing in the North,” said a representative from CMHC, “There’s no private market. There’s no choice. And something I’d love to see happen would be the community taking control of a chunk of the housing budget and developing it with community land. Perhaps it would be a community-owned multi-use building with a coffee shop and residential units on top. These could be for rent on the market or allocated to community groups. You could have two units that were available to women fleeing violence and two open for a centre or for the local doctor when he or she visits. It would be a community asset. I’d love to see someone pilot that and then replicate it in the community.”

She encouraged communities to get into housing:

But for the most part, communities don’t see the need to help themselves in terms of housing. They see that as a government-driven process. And even those groups that have settled their land claims and negotiated their claims without housing, they don’t want anything to do with it. And part of that is because they see it as a federal responsibility, so they don’t want to spend their resources and claimed money on it. But what they’re missing is what housing means to a community: it’s the economic driver, the social well-being of the community. It’s much more than just physical houses.

Even when housing is available, at-risk women cannot always secure it. “The Northwest Territories housing authority doesn’t have a priority on housing women who are fleeing violence,” said a VAW expert in Yellowknife. “They will only enter into three-month leases so they can make sure the family behaves themselves. If the housing authority wants to evict that family, they can evict them based on the fact that the lease is up. They don’t have to prove that they were poor tenants or didn’t pay their rent. They can choose not to renew the lease. If the tenant wants to dispute that, they have to go directly to the Supreme Court. And how many community people are going to go to the Supreme Court?”

She advocated for a change in policy for women experiencing violence. “If government housing or low-income housing had a policy where taking women directly from shelters or transition housing into long-term housing units were a priority, that would be helpful.”

The private market erects barriers to accessing the small number of units that might become available. “In the bigger centres like Yellowknife,” added a shelter worker, “the private market will not rent to people leaving a shelter or who are on income support.”

ISSUES IMPACTING WOMEN BEYOND SHELTER

Women fleeing violence are expected to take responsibility for debt incurred as a result of abandoning a rental home. “One of the policy changes I want to bring forward is a moratorium on the debt owed by women who are living in violence,” said a participant. “Currently, they can’t access housing if they owe any money to the housing authorities. And a lot of that debt was incurred by damages as a result of [their partner’s] violence.”

Also discussed were the barriers to women moving to another community to evade their abuser. “If someone’s willing and wants to move to a different community to avoid abuse, they can’t, because our territorial housing program doesn’t support migration within the territories,” said a Yellowknife shelter supervisor. “There’s a waiting list, and you can’t get on the list, so where are you going to go?”

The policies of the territorial housing authorities came under repeated criticism. “Our homeless populations are growing, and a lot of it has to do with the new policies,” said one participant. “In the 1950s, we didn’t know about homelessness, because everybody took care of everybody. Nobody was left out in the cold. Today, according to these new policies, if I’m in a housing unit, and my children are in housing units and they’re evicted, I’m not allowed to take them in. If I do, *I’ll* be evicted. Even their siblings can’t take them in. This, too, has been taken away from them — the caring and nurturing that they had for one another. It’s like our hands are tied. It makes it so difficult to take care of one another.”

One of the questions implicit in the discussion was about the allocation of resources in the now 10-year-old territory of Nunavut, which negotiated the largest land claims agreement in Canadian history. The Nunavut Land Claims Agreement “provides a schedule of payments worth \$1.173 billion over 14 years, making the Inuit of Nunavut collective owners of a billion-dollar enterprise.” (Canadian Geographic, 2009) Although the federal and Nunavut governments and the Inuit land-claims body “agreed on a protocol to address issues such as Inuit training programs, funding and the transfer of federal employees and assets for the purpose of negotiating a final transfer agreement [to complete the transfer of power to the territory], no deadline was proposed.” In 2006, the Kitikmeot Law Centre reported that, “The Government of Nunavut promised to develop and maintain wellness plans for each Nunavut community, identifying strengths, gaps and needs. Five years later, there is still no plan, and worse still, these goals have vanished from the government’s mandate.” (Bopp, 2007)

“You walk into the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation office in Inuvik, which cost millions and millions of dollars,” said a participant. “There’s one tiny room for social development on the first floor. And the next floor and the rest of the first floor and the top floor is all accountants and bankers. And nobody there has wondered, why are we just mindlessly in pursuit of every last dollar, while the social development office is one tiny closet on the first floor?”

Participants cited the work of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation (VGFN) as a government that has put a focus on housing and social services. The Vuntut Gwitchin housing policy declares that each of their citizens “has the right to housing suitable to his or her needs” and recognizes that “Good housing plays a vital role in the healthy functioning of a community. Not only does it fulfill a basic human

ISSUES IMPACTING WOMEN BEYOND SHELTER

right, good housing also meets a social commitment as VGFN assumes responsibility for the general welfare of citizens as stated in the Mission statement in the Strategic Plan (2005). In addition, the business of building, renovating and maintaining residences contributes to the economic growth of VGFN and the community of Old Crow.” (Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation, 2006)

A researcher with Sisters in Spirit, the project of the Native Women’s Association of Canada documenting missing and murdered women, identified the lack of social services in the North as putting women and especially young women, at risk.

I work with the last case, after there are no more shelters and no more services. Once these women leave the shelter, which is just a temporary solution, they end up going back to their communities or to the cities. They end up back on the street, and a lot of them end up missing or murdered. And that’s why I’m employed, because of the murder cases. Back in 2004, our estimated number was 500. As I sit here today, we’re at 514 confirmed. We need to come up with some solutions. One of the barriers I see is that transition from the North to the city. If one of our youth get in trouble out there, there just aren’t enough service providers. Where do they go?

When Sisters in Spirit released an interim report in March 2009, the number of documented missing and murdered women had risen to 520 (NWAC, 2009).

Involving Men

“In Nunavut, the best-kept secret for years has been that we’ve lost the men,” said a shelter worker. “I think we’re making a huge mistake in not going after the few healthy men that are around and putting significant pressure on them. ‘Get off your butts, and take [the abusers] on. You guys could stop it faster than we can.’ ”

Another shelter worker observed that some women leave shelters having learned something about the cycle of violence but return home to a partner “who still hasn’t received any help ... Opportunities for help are few and far between ... there’s nothing for the guys, nothing. When they’re reaching out or saying ‘I need help,’ someone needs to make that contact with them.”

A participant made reference to the Rankin Inlet Spousal Abuse Program, discussed later in more detail, a court-mandated program for men that began as a pilot and is now supported annually by the Government of Nunavut. Referring to Inuit men in the North she added, “What I wanted to do is have a large meeting with men on how we can work together...maybe it will be more effective if the programs are by men, for men.”

“I would like to see a curriculum in the schools that’s not about the violence but about gender and racial equality,” said a government family violence legislation coordinator. “And put it into the schools from kindergarten on, so we get young boys. It wouldn’t address what’s happening at home,

ISSUES IMPACTING WOMEN BEYOND SHELTER

but it would help children grow up understanding about equality, and I think that's a way to address the bigger issue."

5. MULTIPLE BARRIERS: INCLUSION for MARGINALIZED WOMEN

A constellation of social determinants predict marginalization among women, and all of them expose women to an increased risk of abuse. Among these determinants are poverty and homelessness, which are inherently linked. But to varying degrees, Canada's First Nations, Métis and Inuit women, immigrant women, women of colour, rural women, women living with mental illnesses, women living with addictions, women with disabilities and deaf women all face identifiable barriers in their daily lives that make accessing critical support systems daunting and even impossible. Statistically, these are the women who are more likely to have been killed or seriously injured in recent incidents of domestic or sexual violence.

An Inuit policy coordinator at the Toronto consultation lamented the meagre services for abused women in northern Quebec. "There are only three shelters in northern Québec. There is just one counsellor in town, who just started this year. We're trying to push hard for an Inuit agenda, but even though we're Canadians, we're so behind, it's as though we're a third world country."

Mental Health Issues

That condition prevails for marginalized women living in other jurisdictions as well. Women are homeless for many reasons, but poverty, mental illness, addiction and the decision to leave the family home to escape abuse are high among them. The harsh social stigmatization attached to mental illness still prevails and, as a result of decades-old government cutbacks to social services, women with mental health issues often lack access to medical care, social support and safe housing. The intersection of mental illness and addiction in concurrent disorders can result in a toxic and life-threatening brew of homelessness, street-involvement and continuing trauma. Studies tell us that the lifetime risk for violent victimization among homeless mentally ill women is so high that rape or physical battery is a normative experience. And according to a Yellowknife participant, abused women seeking space in a shelter who are also battling addictions "will be turned away."

Participants at the regional consultations reiterated the need for fresh funding for mental health and addictions and called for "a continuum of services." An RCMP officer at the Calgary consultation suggested that people who suffer from mental illness are ending up in prisons rather than in appropriate institutions because there is nowhere else to send them. The tragic suicide of Ashley Smith while incarcerated in a federal women's prison rather than receiving care for her mental health issues is a recent and dramatic, but not unique, illustration of this.

Community Pressure

First Nations and Métis women face high levels of violence as well as multiple barriers to accessing social services. Women in Canada's isolated northern communities, typically without recourse to

ISSUES IMPACTING WOMEN BEYOND SHELTER

affordable training, education, employment and housing, face the highest rate of domestic abuse in the country. Women's shelters and second-stage housing are underfunded, under-staffed or non-existent. There is powerful community pressure to be silent about physical and sexual abuse.

According to a 2004 report from the Canadian Council on Social Development, newcomers from other cultures and countries are more likely to suffer physical and psychological abuse by their partners and less likely to report it. The author cited "a combination of the abuse itself, isolation, their immigrant status, language proficiency and systematic discrimination" as contributing factors. (Smith, 2003)

Immigrant and Refugee Women

A recent Statistics Canada survey indicates that slightly more than 10 percent of immigrant women suffer emotional or financial abuse. Another four percent cited physical or sexual abuse. Yet only 10 percent of women who said they were abused sought help. (Smith, 2003)

A Toronto participant explained: "The issue for me is, how can the government create policy that will help immigrant women who have been abused become integrated into their new community, how can we provide her with child care, how can we help her learn the language, how can we provide her with the supports she needs?"

In Halifax, a participant spoke about the lack of information available to refugee and immigrant women as they enter the country: "Sometimes, it's easy to forget that there are no resources for immigrant women outside Halifax. If you're in Halifax, there's a chance, but that's only immigrant women, not refugee women, and refugee women are probably more vulnerable than immigrants. The government hires consultants to investigate the medical backgrounds of immigrants, their education, their country of origin, whether they're bringing diseases into Canada, but they can't give these people a handout [about their legal rights]?"

As Toronto participants discussed, sometimes women of colour from some racialized communities are reluctant to acknowledge violence experienced in the home. They may resist having their private lives subjected to scrutiny and interference from the state in what they perceive as a racist society. Consultation participants discussed fear that "going public" with their abuse by seeking support or calling the police would subject their partners of colour to racist treatment. This places these women in a dangerous lose-lose situation. Lack of cultural competency at women's services can create another barrier for women of colour, even if they have lived in Canada for many years.

Rural Women

Rural women often depend on sheer wit to escape their abusers. In isolated villages and farms, abused women face a unique set of challenges. Women who farm with their spouses are often without funds of their own and ineligible for employment insurance, CPP or welfare. Taking along their children

ISSUES IMPACTING WOMEN BEYOND SHELTER

makes plotting an escape that much more complex. Many are reluctant to leave farm animals for fear their husbands will neglect to care for them or worse, actually kill them as a means of continuing the abuse. Many resist the humiliation of having their personal lives shared in a close-knit community. Many have a natural love of the land and are fearful about relocating to a more densely populated community. Once they leave, they may have no claim on the farm assets, especially if they married into an incorporated family business or are living common-law.

Frequently, rural women don't even have access to transportation. One Halifax shelter worker said, "We've found that women come to the shelter when it is safe for them to come. They may not be facing a crisis — it might be hunting season. He's out in the woods, and she decides, now's the time to leave. But when she calls the police, they refuse to come and pick her up and take her to a shelter because an attack isn't in progress. Her husband isn't even in the house. 'We're not a taxi service,' they say. If you're two hours from a shelter, a taxi's expensive, and some of these areas don't even have taxi service. Unless you can get a friend, family member or neighbour to drive you, you're not going anywhere."

Participants noted that the presence of guns in the house and relationship to pets are influential issues for rural women making a decision to leave. Statistics show that rifles and shotguns are most often used in domestic homicides in rural areas. A Halifax participant noted a report that discussed how strong attachments to pets, often on farms, can create a reluctance to leave them behind, delaying a woman's decision to depart.

Barriers for Women with Disabilities and Deaf Women

Women with disabilities, by virtue of dependence on family, friends and caregivers and their place in what has been called "the hierarchy of disempowerment," are particularly vulnerable to neglect, physical, psychological and sexual abuse and financial exploitation. A disability may preclude a woman from making contact with the appropriate social service, rendering it extraordinarily hard to leave her situation. Accessibility of shelters can be another barrier, and should these women eventually reach one that is accessible to their needs and attempt to build new lives, they face the challenges of finding safe and affordable housing, securing a job, and supporting and caring for their children.

Women with disabilities and deaf women are disbelieved at a higher rate than other women when they talk about the violence they have experienced, especially when that violence is sexual. In some cases, this is because women with disabilities and deaf women are seen as unsexualized, in others because people assume that their partner/caregiver/abuser must be a wonderful person by virtue of being involved with a woman with a disability or a deaf woman.

When a woman's abuser is also her primary caregiver, the challenge in leaving is enormous because, in addition to everything else she must deal with, she needs to find someone new to provide her with daily, often very intimate, care.

ISSUES IMPACTING WOMEN BEYOND SHELTER

For one participant, the exercise of compartmentalizing abused women into separate categories struck a poignant note. “Marginalized is an interesting term,” she said. “Because from my perspective, anybody that has to go to a shelter is marginalized on some level. I mean, very few people go to a shelter because they want to. They go there because they don’t have any other source of support.”

SUPPORTING WOMEN BEYOND SHELTER



SYSTEM-WIDE INITIATIVES

1. WOMEN'S ADVOCATES

A woman making the decision to leave her abuser typically does so under a great deal of stress, often without aid from her friends, family or community. As she sacrifices the familiar in an effort to keep herself safe, she begins a journey through a complex, often contradictory world of policies and personnel, laws and legislation, for which none of us is intuitively equipped. Despite ongoing efforts to streamline the system of care and support available to at-risk women in Canada, there are gaps in the process that can cause delays, frustration, humiliation and ultimately despair about the opportunities for a secure future.

Shelter workers are often expected to possess a comprehensive knowledge of all available programs and aids and share that information with residents. Obviously, this is not a realistic expectation; but neither is the presumption that women in crisis will possess the skills and equanimity to search out the resources that best suit their situation.

Focus groups with women living in shelters from earlier in the research bear this out. “When you are in a shelter, you have no idea what your rights are,” said a participant in a project focus group. “Shelters are not knowledgeable about the court system, the law. You are just running in circles to get yourself standing.” (Dale, 2008) One recommendation from that study was the creation of a Women’s Advocate position. Drawing on the model of the Community Resources Connections of Toronto’s Hostel Outreach Program for homeless women, women’s advocates with specialized knowledge would work with and support women as they move from service to service, acting on their behalf and representing their interests as needed.

The research indicates that there is an even more pressing need for such representation in First Nations, Métis, Inuit and immigrant communities, where cultural differences, language, literacy and discrimination are all potential barriers to service accessibility. Similarly, at-risk women dealing with mental health issues need someone to guide them toward competent and caring mental health professionals. The benefit would be measurable, both in human terms and in terms of the cost to our health care system.

The value of women’s advocates was reinforced in the regional consultations. One participant referred to “a system navigation and advocacy model” that had been proposed in her community to bridge the many gaps in service that appear to be a fact of life in this sector.

In the Calgary consultation, a researcher described the advocacy system undertaken by Homefront, an organization that employs a collaborative justice community response to domestic violence: “Domestic caseworkers connect with the woman right away, within 24 hours after a charge has been laid. They take her through the court process, they let her know what the court date is, they let her know that [her abuser] is in jail. They might be the first people to let her know that he’s coming out of

SYSTEM-WIDE INITIATIVES

jail.” These domestic caseworkers also support complainants with safety planning, referrals to community and legal resources, counselling and treatment needs, advocacy and immigration status updates. They also provide risk assessment information to the court based on the complainant’s information and circumstances (Homefront, 2009, Domestic Court Caseworkers, para 1).

In Halifax, a shelter administrator commented on the critical limitations to the assistance workers are able to provide, observing that, “We have to know all the policies, we have to know all the acts, we have to know all the legislation, and yet we’re not given any of the funding or communication techniques to meet and discuss these things. So there are definitely total gaps in services between shelter workers and what we’re expected to do for women to help them and the services that [the government] say exist.”

The challenges faced by a woman who has left a shelter and is attempting to move on with her life were also raised. What is her recourse when she recognizes that she and, potentially, her children face an ongoing threat from her abuser? Unwilling to phone the Children’s Aid Society for fear that they will remove her children, faced with police who are unresponsive because no harm has yet occurred, she is powerless to act or protect herself. “Is there an advocacy role for the shelter that would work better there given what you know of the situation?” asked one participant.

The reply was quick and to the point. “If she’s moved on from the shelter, I don’t think we’d have the staff to do that,” another participant responded. “In an ideal world, oh sure. If we had an outreach worker, we could do that ...”

“In the city of Halifax, which is 400,000 people, we have one transition house and one outreach worker,” said another participant. “And we had to advocate strongly to get the outreach worker. That was about 12 or 13 years ago. We got the men’s intervention program and the outreach worker at the same time.”

In Prince Edward Island, there is more emphasis on addressing family violence than violence against women, and efforts are currently being made to integrate provincial outreach services and transition house services in a way that has caused VAW workers to fear that the message of women’s empowerment is getting lost.

At the regional consultation in the North, participants expressed deep frustration with the communication chasms separating service providers. New levels of bureaucracy have hindered access to supports rather than facilitated them. One shelter administrator said, “You get people cut up into small pieces with no one person in income support dealing with any of the other needs or dealing with the whole person.” Overall, the description of the dire circumstances facing at-risk women in these communities dramatically made the argument for a continuum-of-care model, a good fit with the position of women’s advocate.

SYSTEM-WIDE INITIATIVES

2. VIOLENCE AWARENESS and PREVENTION PROGRAMS and INITIATIVES

“There has to be prevention education policy around violence and abuse. Currently, we work in crisis rather than in prevention. If everyone started to make these connections, we could act as wellness workers rather than crisis workers.”

Consultation Participant

Women have been toiling in the violence against women movement — on the front lines as well as in research and advocacy — for roughly 40 years, yet gender-based violence continues to be “perhaps the most wide-spread and socially tolerated of human rights violations,” one that “both reflects and reinforces inequities between men and women and compromises the health, dignity, security and autonomy of its victims” (The United Nations Population Fund, 2005).

In Canada, as in many other countries, violence against women is an entrenched part of the social fabric. One-half of Canadian women experience violence at the hands of men they know over the course of their lives; one-quarter report experiencing violence at the hands of a stranger (Statistics Canada, June 1994). According to Statistics Canada’s 1993 National Survey on Violence Against Women, three in 10 women currently or previously married or living in common-law relationships in Canada have experienced at least one incident of physical or sexual abuse at the hands of their current partner or a former husband or common-law partner. Violence destroys domestic relationships and families, harms communities and exhausts economic and human resources. It prevents citizens from leading peaceful, productive lives. In short, it is in no one’s best interest. Yet it is a problem that, in the words of one expert, “stubbornly persists.”

At the four regional consultations, participants reiterated a point of view that has been articulated throughout VAW research: Abused women don’t want to leave their partners. They just want the violence to stop. The means to that end remain elusive. But as one participant at the Halifax consultation said, “If men are not part of the solution, there *is* no solution.” As the VAW movement has matured, some men have begun to educate themselves about their role in helping to end this inequity. Enthusiasm for partnering with like-minded men to confront and combat violence against women was expressed at all four consultations, although an alarm was also sounded about the potential for men’s prevention programs to compete for funding that would otherwise go to women’s VAW groups.

Participating women and men all agreed that a critical starting point for ending VAW rests with empowering girls and young women and educating boys and young men — working “upstream” to prevent behaviours from developing, rather than in crisis mode after the violence happens. Public education campaigns supported and sustainably funded by community agencies and all levels of governments were also identified as key to transforming established attitudes and behaviours. “We have to break the cycle,” said a YWCA administrator.

SYSTEM-WIDE INITIATIVES

At the Toronto consultation, a representative from the White Ribbon Campaign, a worldwide effort started in Canada and led by men to end violence against women, observed that, “We haven’t explored all of the ways that men can be enlisted as allies — as engaged bystanders, in positions of power in government, in the health system and in the police force — to do a better job understanding the role and responsibility they have in working on this issue.”

In outlining the goals of the campaign, the White Ribbon representative cited educating young people, especially young men and boys, raising public awareness of the issue and working in partnership with women’s organizations to create a future without violence against women.

White Ribbon co-founder Michael Kaufman has written that “leaving men and boys out of the gender equation and outside a gender and development approach is a recipe for failure.” Kaufman advocates a methodological approach he calls Addressing and Involving Men (AIM). Reaching out to men and including them in the process, he says, will create large-scale consensus on social issues that have been sidelined as “women’s issues” but which in fact affect both men and women. That in turn will help us raise the next generation of boys and girls within a framework of gender equity, improving the lives of women and girls by changing men’s and boy’s attitudes and behaviours (Kaufman, 2003).

We also heard suggestions for healthy relationships programming in every Canadian school, supported by funding from federal, provincial/territorial and municipal governments, wherein “young people [would be] able to express themselves without being controlled by the hierarchy of the school and the classroom.” Another proposal described a gender-transformative program in which older male students counsel younger male students in a mentoring capacity.

A U.S.-based program run by the Family Violence Prevention Fund was cited as a positive model. In Coaching Boys into Men, men are encouraged to engage with the boys in their lives (son, grandson, nephew, younger brother, and so forth), talking with them about violence, helping them understand what is and isn’t acceptable in their relationships with girls and women, and sharing the positive messages of respect, honour and responsibility (Family Violence Prevention Fund, 2009).

Another American model is Jackson Katz’s Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP), a gender violence, bullying, and school violence prevention approach that encourages young men and women from all socioeconomic, racial and ethnic backgrounds to take on leadership roles in their schools and communities. The training is focused on an innovative “bystander” model that empowers each student to take an active role in promoting a positive school climate (Katz, n.d., Mentors in Violence Prevention: Gender Violence Prevention Education and Training).

Participants in Toronto spoke positively about Neighbours, Friends and Families, an Ontario government funded campaign to raise awareness about woman abuse and facilitate constructive dialogue to prevent it. Informational brochures currently distributed in more than 150 towns and cities outline the warning signs of abuse, safety planning for abused women, how to overcome fears of

SYSTEM-WIDE INITIATIVES

becoming involved and guidelines for safely talking to men who are abusive. This project, funded by the provincial women's directorate, is very much a collaborative effort of community and government. Participating communities are funded to hire a coordinator, whose job it is to promote the campaign, bring new partners in to the work of ending violence against women and train community members in the use of materials.

For the campaign aimed at Ontario's French-speaking population — *Voisin-es, ami-es et famille* — materials were not just translated but culturally adapted. *Kanawayhitowin*, a parallel project also funded by the provincial government, has been developed by the Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres for use in First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities.

A public awareness campaign called the Circle of Safety and Support, which produces informational brochures and pamphlets to be circulated among friends, family, neighbours, employers and co-workers, was discussed at the Halifax consultation.

A cautionary note was sounded by a Halifax participant when she spoke about the risk of government created programs such as Neighbours, Families and Friends. She was concerned that government might eventually divest itself of its ongoing obligation to fund services and agencies that address the problem of violence against women. "We have to be careful that this is not a matter of unloading onto the community a responsibility that should be a universal responsibility — and therefore a government responsibility," she warned.

At the Calgary consultation, an RCMP officer and a VAW researcher shared thoughts on education prevention programs for students and discussed three in particular:

- Respectful Relationships (R+R) program from Salt Spring Women Opposed to Violence and Abuse (SWOVA), a national and provincial award-winning schools-based primary violence prevention program for youth
- New Brunswick's Making Waves/Vague par vague which engages youth in a peer process to explore and raise awareness of relationship violence issues and is guided by principles of equality, equity and diversity
- Ontario's Fourth R program, a skills-based curriculum that promotes healthy relationships and targets violence, high-risk sexual behaviour and substance use among adolescents.

The latter program is delivered as part of high school curriculum, while the first two programs maintain an arm's length relationship from the school system, which appears to achieve certain benefits in terms of the impact upon young people. Benefits discussed included the positives realized by students who are not lulled into regarding the course content as just another tedious part of their daily workload. Another is the natural passion, enthusiasm and specialized training external facilitators bring to these programs, although the high cost of delivery is a concern.

SYSTEM-WIDE INITIATIVES

Both boys and girls need violence-prevention education and programming opportunities. Some of it needs to be gender-specific and some mixed. One example of good programming for girls is YWCA Canada's girls program, GirlSpace, which offers girls an opportunity to increase awareness of violence and build self-esteem (discussed further in Promising Practices)

Programs for Abusive Fathers

How to provide targeted services for fathers who are abusers was also a pervasive thread in the consultations, and there was some discussion about Caring Dads, a university-community partnership that “focuses on helping men recognize attitudes, beliefs and behaviours that support healthy and unhealthy father-child relationships, develop skills for interacting with children in healthy ways and appreciate the impact on children of controlling, intimidating, abusive and neglectful actions, including witnessing domestic violence.” One Toronto participant said, “I am appreciating more and more as I get older how patriarchy has not only oppressed us as women but has failed men as well. It's not an easy thing to postulate, but I think programs like Caring Dads [have] much more potential to truly influence [an abuser's] behaviour for the better than a court-ordered program.”

“Research shows that men want to generally do well by their kids,” said the White Ribbon representative. “And as an access point into conversations about gender-equality anti-violence, talking about parenting and fatherhood is a way to integrate some of those issues. We are now being funded by the Ontario Women's Directorate to develop an awareness campaign for men about how to play a role in talking to 8-to-14-year-old boys about promoting healthy relationships around equality issues.”

With the highest rate of domestic violence in the country, in 2002, Nunavut launched a court-mandated “promise and practice” pilot project called the Spousal Abuse Counselling Program. Located in Rankin Inlet and originally run with funding from Justice Canada, it has enjoyed so much success in the community that the territorial government has now assumed some responsibility for its operating budget. Most importantly, community members are now able to request counselling rather than have it court-mandated.

Another shelter worker from the Northwest Territories observed that some women leave shelters having learned something about the cycle of violence but return home to a partner who hasn't received any help to change.

A participant from the Aboriginal development sector advocated for a greater emphasis on teaching children about the history of their culture and reassuring them that they don't bear responsibility for the violence they see in their homes. Another participant described the Kindergarten through Grade 8 program, Roots of Empathy, which teaches children how to understand their own feelings and those of others, thereby laying down the foundation for a safe and caring classroom — and a safe and caring community in the future.

SYSTEM-WIDE INITIATIVES

In Halifax, a family violence researcher said, “You can’t demonize [the abusers]. These are our fathers, husbands, brothers, sons. By making them monsters, you lose everybody, including them. But you have to provide them with a safe space to say, ‘Oh my god, I don’t know why I do this. I saw my dad do it, and I know it hurts my wife. I’d like to change. How do I change?’ ”

Another participant praised a men’s intervention program in Nova Scotia but lamented that it was a pilot project and would not receive ongoing funding from the federal government. Another reported on a recent conference on fatherhood in New Brunswick. “It was about parenting. It was about fatherhood,” she said, but it was attended by 40 women and three men. “There is a leadership vacuum within men. There has to be leadership. It can’t be women telling men all the time what they should be doing. I don’t like being told what I should be doing either.”

3. EDUCATION and TRAINING

“It’s not a senseless crime. He didn’t kill his employer, he didn’t kill his neighbour, he killed his wife, he killed his common-law partner, and he killed her because he had power over her, and he felt he had the right to do it. And you see that a lot. There just is no understanding of the inequality.”

Consultation Participant

In the past 30 years, Canadian discourse about violence against women has undergone major revolution. Once acceptable fodder for crude jokes by regressive parliamentarians, woman abuse today is the legitimate focus of task forces, agencies, legislation and support services. In the public arena, it has been widely recognized as a toxic phenomenon that must not be tolerated. Indeed, there is a growing consensus among both citizens and lawmakers that domestic violence is not a private matter.

Despite these measurable advances and the growing rejection of the attitudes that have allowed domestic violence to flourish, incidences of violence against women have not decreased. As the public sector has become more engaged, the number of professionals who deal with VAW incidents and their aftermath has expanded. Today, these professionals come from a wide range of sectors, including police, lawyers, paralegals, judges, shelter workers, health care workers, mental health therapists and counsellors, child protection workers, religious leaders and teachers.

Delivering these essential services effectively — detecting and assessing domestic violence, communicating with and offering assistance to victims, safely approaching perpetrators, dealing with children, guiding victims through social supports, including the legal system, medical care and transitional housing — requires sensitivity, information and training.

SYSTEM-WIDE INITIATIVES

There are still critical differences in levels of comprehension, acceptance and expertise among those delivering services. Curricula changes at educational institutions and professional training schools are not always timely. As a result, many professionals, however receptive, have not been exposed to specialized courses on VAW issues, let alone ongoing professional development. In addition, information coordination among the wide range of service providers is often cumbersome, illogical and inefficient.

Most educational and training opportunities for professionals or public education initiatives use a gender neutral framework. This results in the communication of information that is not accurate and, ultimately, not particularly useful in improving the quality of services that are available to women and their children as they flee abuse. While a shift is underway, participants at the four regional consultations agreed there is still much room for improvement.

Police and Judges

Police are typically first on the scene of reported VAW incidents and therefore key to making sure that the groundwork is laid for a positive outcome for the victim. A participant at the Calgary consultation said, “The police need to be responsive and timely; the police need to be connected in the community; they need to contribute at every level in getting at the root causes and problem solutions. But they also need to be informed and educated. In the Calgary police service, for instance, the demographic of the service is changing very rapidly. There are a lot of older officers gone, so the training of new officers needs to be more intensified around everything. That’s probably true to some degree across the country for police services.”

In Yellowknife, a participant commented that, “I think the biggest thing around the RCMP or police is just making sure everybody’s got that basic training about family violence. We come up against that all the time. People really don’t get it. They think it’s just a family fighting. They don’t understand the fear that women face.”

An RCMP officer with expertise in VAW issues spoke at the Calgary consultation about the extensive training officers receive on a wide range of fronts, including VAW, and pointed out that, “It’s not that they don’t have the training; it’s the experience. I mean these are not easy situations, as you can imagine...The public expectation is that police need to be everything to everybody.” He went on to outline the ways in which more complex times, strained budgets, increased workload and paperwork (for instance, it now can take up to seven hours to process a single impaired driver) mitigate against that outcome being realistic. “Responsiveness and timeliness of responses to calls is directly proportional to the capacity within the community. And the community gets what it pays for...You only have so many pairs of boots on the street, so you have to start prioritizing.”

A Calgary participant who works in violence prevention reiterated that experience in the field leads to an improved understanding about who needs to be involved once the process is underway. “When

SYSTEM-WIDE INITIATIVES

we're talking about safety and intensifying support to people who are assisting these women and children," she said, "having good relationships and knowing how the organizations run and knowing the point of intersection on where prevention education can occur is really vital."

Participants did not restrict the need for education and training to the police. A family violence researcher at the Halifax consultation suggested that, "We really need to educate judges too. I've done domestic homicide research from 1985 to the present in New Brunswick, and the judges in these trials are still saying, 'You can't make sense of this. This is a senseless crime. He lost his job and ...' No. It's not a senseless crime. He didn't kill his employer, he didn't kill his neighbour, he killed his wife, he killed his common-law partner, and he killed her because he had power over her, and he felt he had the right to do it. And you see that a lot. There just is no understanding of the inequality."

Shelter Staff and Professionals in the VAW Sector

In Halifax, a shelter director discussed the extensive background shelter workers are expected to have in order to negotiate the system of public services on behalf of their clients: "Shelters have to deal with all departments of government. We have to know all the policies, we have to know all the Acts, we have to know all the legislation, and yet we're not given any of the funding or communication techniques to meet and discuss these things."

The professionals working in the VAW sector "need consistent and ongoing training for family violence and abuse," said a shelter outreach coordinator from Prince Edward Island. "That's been recognized over and over."

A VAW researcher at the Halifax consultations commented on "...the lack of integration between the child protection side of things and woman abuse policies, protocols and so on. And it's a huge divide, it really creates so many problems for these women, whether it's about finding housing, trying to restart their lives, getting into certain programs...on it goes." A community care program manager noted that, "The most inexperienced of any of the program workers are in child welfare. That's where all the brand-new grads go. Most of them are very young, have very little life experience and they're overburdened — they're relying on a list of rules, policies and procedures. And our schools also fall by the wayside when it comes to incorporating education about domestic violence and discussing the role individuals play in that."

There were also calls for education among the private sector about VAW. "I'd like it to be mandatory that all business owners and other employers be certified in violence-awareness training to help women who are in the workforce," said a shelter director.

Training for Women

At all consultations, participants agreed that a central piece in helping abused women rebuild their lives is employment training and re-training, as well as access to educational programs. "In the study we did just a year ago using data from about 391 [abused] women in the two provinces," said an East

SYSTEM-WIDE INITIATIVES

Coast researcher, “70 percent of the women surveyed were unemployed, 58 percent were receiving social assistance, and 27 percent had no income at all. Clearly, to move out of poverty, one of the things that has to be in place for these women is employment training and the possibility of securing a job.” She also mentioned the high level of illiteracy in New Brunswick and emphasized the impediment to securing employment it represents.

A shelter coordinator in Halifax agreed. “To make women safer, to empower them to move forward in their lives — that’s not going to happen unless a poverty reduction strategy is addressed as well.”

PROMISING PRACTICES

1. CUSTODY and ACCESS: ONTARIO'S CHILDREN'S LAW REFORM ACT

Violence against women is a critical consideration in determining what is best for children, yet custody and access legislation across the country seldom requires judges to take it into account when making these decisions. All Canadian jurisdictions use the “best interests of the child” test in making custody and access determinations. This test generally includes consideration of such issues as which parent has been the primary caregiver historically, which parent has a better parenting plan for the future, what the status quo arrangements for the children are, which parent will maintain a stable connection between the children and their extended family, and the wishes of the children. Judges have a tendency to assume that violence ends at the time of separation. That perspective influences their “looking forward” approach to custody and results in an assumption that all children are always better off with maximum contact with both parents.

Notably absent in much of this legislation is any reference to family violence, despite the fact that research clearly establishes that men who abuse their partners are seldom appropriate primary parents. As well, a woman who must continue to engage with her abuser because of a joint custody order is condemned to years of ongoing harassment and intimidation, which creates an unhealthy climate for the children, as well as placing the woman at risk of future harm.

2. LIFE in the NORTH: HEALTHY FAMILIES, HEALTHY NATIONS

The Ontario Women's Directorate funded Healthy Families, Healthy Nations (Minoyawin Dibenjigewining Minoyawin Tashekewining), a program to provide training and resources in English and Ojibway on a sustainable, culturally sensitive, holistic family violence prevention model. As a result, service providers in First Nations communities are better equipped to identify situations of abuse earlier and provide families with appropriate supports, and those in 30 remote Northwestern Ontario First Nations communities in Equay-wuk's catchment area are trained.

3. SUPPORTING WOMEN with MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES: AN ABUSE SCREENING PROTOCOL

In London, Ontario, the Women's Mental Health and Addictions Action Research Coalition developed a woman abuse screening protocol through established collaboration and relationships between the agencies from mental health, addiction and woman abuse sectors and with the contribution of the workers and consumer-survivors. Their manual, “Facilitating Connections between Mental Health, Addictions and Woman Abuse” (2008) is intended to provide guidelines on how to assist abused women to create safety through screening for woman abuse and woman-abuse-related trauma and through responding appropriately to disclosures of abuse. It is specifically for frontline and management staff in the mental health and addictions sectors.

PROMISING PRACTICES

4. REMOVING BARRIERS OF LANGUAGE and CULTURE: FAMILY LAW EDUCATION for WOMEN (FLEW)

FLEW evolved from advocacy efforts of the No Religious Arbitration Coalition, a coalition of more than 100 women's and community agencies that came together to advocate against the use of religious arbitration in family law in Ontario. Its position was that the Canadian *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* guaranteed all women in Ontario the right to access public family law to resolve their family law disputes, and its work highlighted the need for widespread public family law education and outreach to women — in particular, isolated and vulnerable women — across the province.

The Ontario government subsequently amended the law to require that arbitration awards follow Canadian or Ontario family law. Several other new and important provisions related to family law arbitration were also introduced at this time. Shortly after announcing the new legislation, the government decided to fund a project targeted to reach these women. Eventually, seven agencies came together to form FLEW, which has developed and distributed plain language legal information on women's rights under Ontario family law that is currently available in 12 languages and in multiple formats.

5. ADULT EDUCATION and OUTREACH

The following annotated list features a selection of programs that need to be replicated, expanded and made secure with long-term funding across the country. Each of these can serve as a model that can be adopted at the regional and community level to reflect the needs of those discrete populations.

The White Ribbon Campaign

Founded in Canada in 1991 and dedicated to the women who were murdered in the Montreal massacre, the White Ribbon Campaign characterizes itself as the largest effort in the world of men working to end violence against women. Its central focus is on educating men and boys about VAW, challenging everyone to speak out and working in partnerships with women's organizations, the corporate sector, the media and other partners to create a future with no violence against women.

Caring Dads

Caring Dads is an intervention program designed for men who have abused or neglected their children or exposed them to abuse of their mothers. Designed to fill a significant gap in services to maximize the safety and well-being of children and their mothers, the 17-session group program draws from best practices in the fields of batterer intervention, parenting, behaviour change, child maltreatment and working with resistant clients.

Rankin Inlet Spousal Abuse Program

Nunavut's only community-level spousal abuse program is run from the Pulaarvik Kablu Friendship Centre and is credited with reducing the incidence of violence against women. The program has been

PROMISING PRACTICES

praised as a grassroots initiative built by community members and based on local needs that allows judges to mandate attendance in cases of domestic violence. It began as a pilot project in 2001 with core funding from Justice Canada, among other federal departments, and the Government of Nunavut.

Neighbours, Friends and Families

The Neighbours, Friends and Families (NFF) public education campaign is part of the Ontario government's Domestic Violence Action Plan, which places emphasis on prevention and better community supports for abused women and their children. The NFF campaign features a wide range of informational printed materials, helps to raise community awareness and increases the ability of neighbours, friends and families to identify abuse or women at risk of abuse and to help them understand appropriate actions.

6. EDUCATION PROGRAMS for YOUNG PEOPLE

YWCA Canada GirlSpace

The YWCA GirlSpace reaches out to girls with programming that addresses key social issues facing young women. GirlSpace aims to address the shortage of girls-only programming by offering girls the opportunity to increase their awareness about violence and its root causes while exploring self, personal achievements and building on positive self-esteem. One of the main objectives of the project is to develop a national signature program for girls and young women between the ages of 9 and 18 that will enable them to build skills such as leadership, teamwork, self reliance, increased independence, self-awareness and positive self-esteem.

Roots of Empathy

Roots of Empathy is an evidence-based classroom program that has shown dramatic effect in reducing levels of aggression among schoolchildren by raising social/emotional competence and increasing empathy. The program reaches elementary schoolchildren from Kindergarten to Grade 8. In Canada, the program is delivered in English and French and reaches rural, urban, and remote communities, including Aboriginal communities.

Respectful Relationships

Respectful Relationships (R+R) is a schools-based primary violence prevention program for youth, developed by Salt Spring Women Opposed to Violence and Abuse (SWOVA). SWOVA has spent almost a decade of research and development, refining ideas about how to stop bullying, interpersonal, partner and family abuse through "relationship education" with youth. The R+R model is one of partnerships between men and women, youth and adults, and schools and community members and uses trained adult and youth facilitators and interactive teaching and learning techniques to deliver a curriculum to students in grades 7, 8, 9 and 10 or 11.

PROMISING PRACTICES

The Fourth R

The Fourth R is a comprehensive school-based program designed to include students, teachers, parents, and the community in reducing violence and risk behaviours. Involving all adolescents in education builds resilience for future difficulties. Through this program, all students are better equipped with the skills they need to build healthy relationships and to help themselves and their peers reduce risky behaviours.

Making Waves/Vague par vague

Making Waves/Vague par vague is an innovative and successful relationship violence prevention program established in New Brunswick in 1995. Guided by principles of equality, equity and diversity, it engages youth in a peer process to explore and raise awareness of relationship violence issues. Teens are empowered to take leadership roles and become active partners in creating a world in which violence is not tolerated.

7. EDUCATION and TRAINING for PROFESSIONALS

Managing the Domestic Violence Trial

In the winter of 2008, the National Judicial Institute, with funding from the Ontario Women's Directorate, delivered a skills-development seminar to provincial/territorial and federal criminal court judges from across the country. With input from a panel of experts in the field, the seminar explored such issues as the difficult nature of domestic violence trials; the judge's role in an adversarial system; bail; dealing with a recanting spouse; pre-trial submissions; evidentiary issues; the trial itself; trial management; the decision; and sentencing issues. Extending this training to include family court judges and expanding it to provide cross training for both systems would help to address the potential gaps in understanding and knowledge that may arise following institution of information exchange measures between both courts.

Legal Aid Ontario Domestic Violence Training

Legal Aid Ontario has developed domestic violence training for the Family and Refugee Bars and for Legal Aid Ontario office staff that has helped to raise awareness and improve the quality of service offered in domestic violence cases. LAO should be encouraged to continue offering this training on an annual basis to ensure that new lawyers and staff have access and to serve as a refresher for others. LAO should require that all family law lawyers taking legal aid certificates undergo this training.

8. EDUCATION and TRAINING PROGRAMS for WOMEN at RISK

The Vermilion/YWCA Skills Training Centre (Calgary)

The Vermilion/YWCA Skills Training Centre in Calgary empowers women who are in search of a better future. Through a 16-week pre-employment and pre-apprenticeship training program, students

PROMISING PRACTICES

gain the skills and confidence they need for a career in Calgary's high-demand construction industry. Students may also qualify for a living wage, housing and childcare.

The Vermilion/YWCA Skills Training Centre is a partnership between the YWCA of Calgary and Vermilion Energy Trust, who generously invested \$2.5 million in this unique initiative designed to enable low-income women with an employable skill set, thereby breaking the cycle of poverty. Through hands-on shop training, career path mentorship, workplace culture adaptation and a two-week work term, the Vermilion/YWCA Skills Training Centre is intended to bridge the gap between current employer expectations and the essential employment skills of the program trainees.

WoodGreen's Homeward Bound (Toronto)

WoodGreen's Homeward Bound is an innovative program designed to help women and their children transition from shelter life to economic self-sufficiency. The women at Homeward Bound receive basic computer training so that they will become fully computer and Internet literate and qualified for employment in a variety of areas, including office administration and information technology. Upon completing this training, each woman will then be given the opportunity to attend one of Seneca College's computer studies diploma programs.

The Homeward Bound program also makes available life skills and career preparation training, transitional housing and on-site child care and support. A Job for the Future program matches women in the program with the right jobs to ensure long-term, stable employment. Homeward Bound has also developed an Industry Council of corporations and key financial institutions that have agreed to provide employment opportunities to the women in the program.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. IMPLEMENT WOMEN'S ADVOCATES in EVERY PROVINCE

Women leaving abusive relationships deal with a multiplicity of issues, from custody, access and financial support to personal safety and housing. While many systems and institutions are intended to support women at risk, there are often gaps between them and conflicts among them. Few women possess the necessary knowledge to navigate this path successfully. It's a journey that is challenging for any woman; additionally so for women facing multiple barriers.

As a result, women and their children are exposed to ongoing risk by an abuser, government-funded services are not working to their optimum efficiency, and costs rise. Some provinces have developed highly successful women's advocate programs within the VAW sector. Providing similar support across sectors for women fleeing violence would improve outcomes for women, increase the safety of women and children and produce increased efficiencies at the system level.

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSIBILITY
Establish Community Women's Advocate positions across the country. Advocates will guide at-risk women through the myriad of services and systems they encounter as they move toward violence-free lives, as well as assisting them in identifying and accessing appropriate resources, and providing whatever supports are needed to ensure positive outcomes. Determine the specific role of the advocate regionally to reflect the unique and diverse characteristics of communities across the country. Fund these positions provincially, through a collaborative inter-ministerial initiative and ensure women who have experienced violence can access training for these positions.	Provincial/territorial

2. INCREASE WOMEN'S ECONOMIC SECURITY

National Poverty Reduction Strategy

A National Poverty Reduction Strategy consistent with the UN millennium development goals for developed countries would set minimum targets of a 25% reduction in poverty rates over the next five years and a 50% reduction over 10 years. This would support provincial poverty reduction strategies already in place or in development and would steadily reduce poverty levels for women leaving shelter and their children. It would also strengthen Canada's compliance with international commitments including the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSIBILITY
Adopt a national poverty reduction strategy with measurable goals, a clear timetable, a transparent accountability structure that can demonstrate progress and a defined role for citizen participation, in particular people living on low incomes.	Federal

RECOMMENDATIONS

National Child Benefit

With the high cost of living and historically low social assistance rates, single-parent mothers with children who rely on social assistance are unable to make ends meet. The National Child Benefit provides a very small but important addition to their limited incomes, and can be an effective instrument for placing funding directly into these families when it is not deducted by other levels of government (clawed back).

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSIBILITY
Eliminate the clawback of the National Child Benefit and increase federal child benefit transfers for low income families to \$5,100 (in 2007 dollars) per child	Federal, provincial/territorial collaboration

Debt, Matrimonial Debt and Access to Service

Women leaving abusive relationships often carry with them matrimonial debt or financial obligations — for example, joint credit card debt, a share of the mortgage on the matrimonial house, joint line of credit, etc. Often, this is a debt that has been incurred by the abuser, sometimes without the woman's knowledge. In most parts of the country, access to social services, including housing and social assistance, is delayed or denied because of this debt. This problem is especially critical in Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut.

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSIBILITY
Social service providers review debt being carried by women and eliminate the barrier to accessing services where it can be established that it is a matrimonial debt that is being dealt with.	Provincial/territorial

Income, Assets and Access to Income Support

Social assistance responses to poverty don't provide an adequate living income. For those who have managed to retain small amounts of income or assets, regulations often make access to social assistance difficult or untenable. This does not encourage long-term financial independence or security, which surely should be a goal for all citizens.

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSIBILITY
Establish livable social assistance incomes at a level that takes into account regional living cost realities for all Canadians.	Provincial/territorial
Remove any regulations that bar people experiencing homelessness from accessing income support.	Provincial/territorial
Increase earnings exemptions for those receiving income supports under the "Not Expected to Work" and "Temporarily Unable to Work" categories. Fully exempt the first \$1,000 of total monthly net employment income and increase the earnings exemption for additional earnings from 25 percent to 50 percent.	Provincial/territorial
Increase the employment income exemption for those receiving disability support through social assistance to enable more women with disabilities to join the workforce.	Provincial/territorial

RECOMMENDATIONS

Increase core essential and core shelter income support benefits to match the actual cost of local rent and a nutritious food basket and index Income Support payments to the Consumer Price Index.	Federal, provincial/territorial
Allow people receiving income support to retain liquid assets <i>five times</i> the monthly core benefit so they can maintain household resources for emergencies, attend to day-to-day needs not provided for by income support (e.g., children's school field trips) and move out of poverty.	Federal, provincial/territorial

Child Support and Social Assistance

Social assistance regulations present a number of challenges to abused women with children. These include requiring women to seek child support from the father of their children and reducing the amount of assistance provided dollar for dollar against any child support the woman is receiving. This leaves abused women in a vulnerable position: for many, it is not a safe option to seek child support because there is a serious risk that such an application will increase the level of post-separation violence. In addition, reducing social assistance dollar for dollar ensures these women and their children will continue to live in poverty. The government, and not the children, then accrues the benefit of such child support payments. While most social assistance programs waive this requirement for a limited period of time - generally, a few months - this time period is not adequate.

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSIBILITY
Increase child support exemption periods for abused women to one year so they can put safety measures in place and begin to establish themselves before they are required to seek child support.	Provincial/territorial
Create an exemption for the first \$1,000/month received in child support before deducting it from the amount of social assistance. This will create an incentive for women to seek child support where it is safe for them to do so.	Provincial/territorial

3. INCREASE ACCESS to HOUSING and PREVENT HOMELESSNESS

A National Housing Strategy: Emergency, Second Stage and Permanent

The dramatic scarcity of affordable accommodation across the country means low-income, marginalized and at-risk women in Canada face a housing crisis. This scarcity manifests itself in emergency shelter spaces, second-stage housing and permanent housing. The crisis is especially dire in the North, where a roof over your head of some kind is an absolute necessity for survival. A national housing strategy is needed to address this crisis. The strategy must reflect the unique characteristics of the diverse regions of the country and ensure equity in accessing safe affordable housing for women, regardless of where they live.

RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSIBILITY
Institute a national housing strategy that is inclusive of women and lives up to governmental human rights obligations under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which guarantees the right to an adequate standard of living and adequate housing. Establish national standards for the design, implementation, monitoring and enforcement of laws, policies and strategies for housing support programs that meet the specific needs of women in the strategy. Through the strategy, ensure women's housing needs across their lifespan are met through an adequate supply of affordable housing available for women on principles of equality and non-discrimination.	Federal
Inuit, First Nations, Métis and urban Aboriginal women and women's organizations lead development of sectoral national housing strategies for the populations they represent.	Federal

Leaving the Abuser

While many women leaving abusive situations with their children turn to shelters for immediate housing support, many more do not. As few as 10 percent of Canadian women who are abused access shelter (Dale, 2008). These women often do not have access to resources and services to assist them in finding appropriate housing, and many return to their abuser after becoming frustrated and discouraged in their attempts to house themselves and their children.

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSIBILITY
Ensure information about safe and affordable permanent housing is available to at-risk women who do not enter the shelter system. This information should support these women in making the transition to a violence-free life and be available in a variety of languages and formats.	Provincial/territorial and municipal governments, community social service agencies, VAW sector

Subsidized Housing Priority Lists

The lack of affordable, safe housing is one of the chief reasons women return to abusive relationships, thus exposing themselves and their children to ongoing violence. Currently, women in some parts of the country are not placed on priority lists for affordable housing because they are considered "housed" by virtue of temporarily living in shelter. Women and their children who have left an abusive relationship should not have to experience ongoing instability in order to qualify for subsidized public housing.

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSIBILITY
Amend policies governing subsidized housing priority lists to ensure that women living in shelters qualify and that women leaving shelters and transitional housing are given priority access to long-term, low-income government housing.	Federal, provincial/territorial, municipal

RECOMMENDATIONS

Subsidized Housing Eligibility

Abused women face a number of procedural roadblocks in meeting eligibility requirements for subsidized housing. For example, in many parts of the country, co-ownership of a family home with an abusive partner excludes a woman from having her name put on a housing list, but the process of extrication from home ownership puts the woman at risk of future abuse from her partner. As a means of exercising ongoing control, a partner may prevent her from removing her name from the house title.

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSIBILITY
Amend eligibility requirements for subsidized housing to recognize the unique needs of women fleeing abuse. For example, policies prohibiting property ownership need to exempt abused women in appropriate situations.	Provincial/territorial and municipal
Permit supervisory staff discretionary authority to waive eligibility requirements to remove an unfair barrier to housing for abused women.	Provincial/territorial and municipal

Safe Housing Design and Safety Support

For many abused women, violence continues post-separation, often taking the form of stalking by the former partner. Housing for women needs to ensure both that they feel safe and are safe.

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSIBILITY
Incorporate safe building design measures, including security systems, lighting and safe parking into post-shelter housing for abused women.	Federal, provincial/territorial, municipal and private sector
Include safety focused supports in post-shelter housing for abused women; for example outreach workers who have ongoing contact with women, helping them with safety planning and providing check-in systems.	Provincial/territorial, municipal, community social services, VAW sector

Freedom of Contact

Many women will continue to have contact with abusive men and this should not jeopardize their housing. Policies and procedures of post-shelter housing must recognize this reality in a non-punitive way.

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSIBILITY
Require only the woman's name on the lease for post-shelter housing agreements. Policies and procedures dealing with the presence of men in these units should not result in de-housing women.	Provincial/territorial, municipal, housing provider

RECOMMENDATIONS

Second-stage Housing

For many women and their children, VAW continues post-separation and they require ongoing support and dedicated safety systems after leaving shelters. This support can be provided through second-stage housing, which is most effective when led by the VAW sector, but many of these programs across the country have experienced funding cuts in recent years.

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSIBILITY
Initiate a federal, provincial/territorial and municipal collaboration to fund VAW-implemented second-stage housing projects across the country.	Federal, provincial/territorial, municipal, VAW sector
Establish dedicated funding through the federal government's Canada Social Transfer for transitional housing as well as for a continuum of services for at-risk women as they progress through the stages of leaving an abusive spouse.	Federal

Long-term Housing

A coherent and comprehensive approach to housing abused women post-shelter requires the leadership and involvement of the federal government.

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSIBILITY
Return the federal government to the public housing business by re-establishing funding and power to the CMHC.	Federal
Renew and enhance the federal Affordable Housing Initiative over a 10-year period as part of a comprehensive national housing strategy.	Federal

Rent Control

Not all provinces and territories have rent controls, which are essential to ensuring access to appropriate housing for low-income families.

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSIBILITY
Establish rent control in provinces and territories that currently do not have controls in place: Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, Québec, Saskatchewan, Alberta, Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut.	Provincial/territorial governments

Enforcement of Landlord-Tenant Legislation

Women who have left abusers and are dependent upon subsidies to secure appropriate housing are often poorly informed about their rights. Too often, these women lack the agency to ensure these rights are respected under landlord/tenant legislation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSIBILITY
Enforce landlord/tenant legislation to ensure tenant rights are protected, appropriate repairs and maintenance are undertaken, and damage and rent deposits are returned to departing tenants in a just fashion.	Provincial/territorial

Shortage of Affordable Housing Stock

There is nowhere in Canada where there is enough affordable housing stock.

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSIBILITY
The federal government adopts measures to sponsor large-scale construction of housing to increase the stock of permanent, subsidized social housing units across the country.	Federal
Introduce legislation which obliges private-sector construction projects to include affordable housing units.	Federal, provincial/territorial, municipal
Introduce tax incentives to encourage public/private sector collaborations in the construction of affordable housing units.	Federal, provincial/territorial

Rent Supplements Across the Country

There is a patchwork approach to delivery of rent supplements across the country. Some supplements are attached to the tenant, others are attached to specific units. As a result of this inconsistency, women's access to financial support for housing depends upon where they live. When women are compelled to move to avoid ongoing abuse, they may encounter different subsidy programs that interfere with their ability to secure affordable housing.

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSIBILITY
Develop a coherent inter-jurisdictional system of portable rent supplements that travel with women regardless of their location and which are flexible enough to accommodate the diverse needs of abused women.	Provincial/territorial

National Housing Act - Section 95

The funding formula contained in Section 95 of the National Housing Act (NHA) is flawed, with the result that the subsidy for these programs decreases over time. As a result, federal non-profit housing providers under this program are in a serious financial situation.

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSIBILITY
Revise the funding formula to eliminate the decrease in subsidies to federal non-profit housing providers.	Federal

RECOMMENDATIONS

4. IMPROVE the LEGAL SYSTEM

Family Law**Access to Legal Representation**

Women have a fundamental right to legal representation in family court. Without proper legal advice and advocacy, women dealing with abusive partners through the family court process are often intimidated and manipulated into outcomes that are not in the best interests of their children. Nor can these outcomes protect against ongoing harassment and abuse. While improved services and supports to assist women who are unrepresented or underrepresented are critical, they cannot be implemented in place of policy to increase women's access to legal representation.

Many women do not qualify for legal aid because they do not meet the financial criteria. At the same time, they don't have enough money to pay for a lawyer themselves. Legal aid regulations require women to deplete savings and sell assets in order to qualify. Eligibility for legal aid should employ a poverty-avoidance strategy that looks at the long-term implications of loss of assets and the increased risk of violence if legal aid is denied.

Legal aid services are delivered very differently in different parts of the country, which means that effecting improvements will also look very different.

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSIBILITY
Increase the proportion of federal transfer payments for legal aid to the provinces and territories that is dedicated to family law.	Federal
Consider alternate delivery systems to increase women's access to legal representation. For example, provinces using a certificate system implement community-based clinics that deal with family law.	Provincial/territorial
Change the financial eligibility criteria for legal aid so people with moderate and middle incomes are eligible. Revise policies regarding ownership of property and money in savings accounts to allow greater discretion so women are able to obtain legal aid based on their income, rather than on assets that may not be entirely theirs or that may be unsafe for them to disclose or use.	Provincial/territorial

Restraining/Protection Orders

Across the country, a wide variety of legislation offers instruments intended to help keep abused women safe from ongoing, harassing and violent contact by their abusers. At the federal level, the *Criminal Code* provides for bail conditions to include no contact orders where the abuser has been charged with one or more criminal offences. Section 810 of the *Criminal Code* also provides for peace bonds, which a woman can initiate and prosecute privately.

Under family law, women can seek restraining orders, protection orders, emergency protection orders or peace bonds, depending on where they live. Some provinces and territories have stand-alone

RECOMMENDATIONS

protection order legislation. In others, restraining orders fit within more general family law legislation. Regardless of the legislation, the intention of these laws is to protect victims of domestic violence from ongoing abuse. Most jurisdictions report ongoing challenges with the enforcement of these orders, because police are often reluctant to interfere in what they see as private family disputes. Many abusers do not take the orders seriously because the police and courts do not seem to. While allowing room for legislation to reflect the unique nature of communities across the country, all legislation must be able to ensure women's and children's safety.

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSIBILITY
All restraining order/protection order legislation be available to both married and common-law (regardless of the length of time of cohabitation) couples as well as people in dating relationships.	Provincial/territorial
A breach of any family court restraining/protection order result in a charge under the <i>Criminal Code</i> rather than simply a provincial offences act charge.	Provincial/territorial
Family court restraining/protection orders be made on standard form orders that are consistent across the province/territory.	Provincial/territorial
All family court restraining/protection orders be immediately registered on CPIC.	Provincial/territorial
All family court restraining/protection orders clearly state that they are to be enforced across jurisdictions.	Provincial/territorial

Custody and Access

Violence against women is a critical consideration in determining what is best for children, yet custody and access legislation across the country seldom requires judges to take it into account when making these decisions. All Canadian jurisdictions use the “best interests of the child” test in making custody and access determinations. This test generally includes such issues as which parent has been the primary caregiver historically, which parent has a better parenting plan for the future, what the status quo arrangements for the children are, which parent will maintain a stable connection between the children and their extended family, and the wishes of the children. Judges have a tendency to assume that violence ends at the time of separation. That perspective influences their “looking forward” approach to custody and results in an assumption that all children are always better off with maximum contact with both parents.

Notably absent in much of this legislation is any reference to family violence, despite the fact that research clearly establishes that men who abuse their partners are seldom appropriate primary parents. As well, a woman who must continue to engage with her abuser because of a joint custody order is condemned to years of ongoing harassment and intimidation, which creates an unhealthy climate for the children, as well as placing the woman at risk of future harm.

RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSIBILITY
All provinces and territories adopt custody and access language similar to that in Ontario's <i>Children's Law Reform Act</i> , Section 24, describing <i>Best interests of the child</i> test and ensuring consideration of incidents of violence and distinguishing those from self-defence and defence of others.	Provincial/territorial
Amend the federal <i>Divorce Act</i> to include a requirement that family violence be considered in custody and access decisions and that Section 16 (the friendly parent rule) be removed so that women who wish to protect their children from contact with an abusive father are not penalized for doing so.	Federal

Supervised Access and Exchanges

Where there has been violence in the family before separation, custody and access arrangements must take into account the likelihood that the violence will continue. Both supervised access and supervised exchanges are important components of keeping women and children safe, but both are underfunded and inconsistent.

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSIBILITY
Increase funding and development of supervised access and exchange programs and locations.	Provincial/territorial
Where communities are too small or isolated to support formal supervised access and exchange programs and locations, develop collaborative initiatives to ensure that child access takes place in a way that is safe for children and mothers and respectful of fathers.	Community coordinating committees

Financial

Many abusive men use non-payment of child support as a means of retaining power over their former spouses, with the result that women and children live in poverty. Enforcement of court-ordered child support remains challenging. When child support goes unpaid, women and children often must rely on social assistance for their survival. Proper enforcement of child support orders would result in a dramatic decrease in reliance on social assistance.

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSIBILITY
Expand the authority of government child-support enforcement agencies and minimize the ability of support payers to evade their responsibilities.	Provincial/territorial
Properly resource child-support enforcement agencies, using reallocated monies from social assistance coffers.	Provincial/territorial
All child-support orders automatically require the payer to provide annual financial information to the recipient so women can seek child support increases where appropriate.	Provincial/territorial
Prohibit the operation of private child support collection agencies that take a percentage of the support in exchange for pursuing the payer.	Provincial/territorial

RECOMMENDATIONS

Common-Law Relationships and Family Property

Women in common-law relationships have no legal right to share in family property under existing provincial family law.

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSIBILITY
Amend legislation dealing with the division of family property to define spouse to include common-law partners.	Provincial/territorial

Property Rights of First Nations Women

First Nations, Métis and Inuit women with status under the *Indian Act* who live on reserve do not have the same rights with respect to the matrimonial home as do other women under provincial family law legislation because the *Indian Act* is silent on this topic. This leaves women and children living on reserve with less protection than families living off reserve. For example, women on reserve cannot apply for exclusive possession of the matrimonial home or for an order stopping their spouse from selling the land, including the matrimonial home.

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSIBILITY
Amend the <i>Indian Act</i> in a process with national organizations representing First Nations women and respectful of their input to enable First Nations, Métis and Inuit women on reserve to have the same rights to real property as women who do not live on reserve, while still respecting the right of Aboriginal people to self-government.	Federal, provincial/territorial and Aboriginal/First Nation organizations and governments

Child Protection

Current child protection and duty-to-report policies and practices in cases involving woman abuse focus largely on holding mothers accountable for protecting their children from witnessing their partner's abusive acts and behaviours. This is punitive, has a negative impact on women and children, and leaves the abuser free from any accountability for his actions. Mothers worried about losing their children do not reach out for the supports and assistance that they and their children need. Often, they remain with the abuser, unaware of any other option that would not place them at risk of a child protection intervention.

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSIBILITY
Implement child protection practices that apply a differential response, that work with the mother by supporting her custody case (for example, by providing an affidavit to corroborate her evidence about the abuser) and that hold the abuser accountable (for example, by imposing conditions on his behaviour rather than on hers).	Provincial/territorial

RECOMMENDATIONS

Housing and Child Protection

Women with children are often caught in a Catch-22 situation vis à vis housing and child protection. They can lose their children because they do not have adequate housing, but they may be unable to get that housing if their children are not living with them because they have been taken into care.

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSIBILITY
Child protection and housing services develop a collaborative approach to ensure women's eligibility for affordable and appropriate housing.	Provincial/territorial and municipal

Coordination of Family and Criminal Courts

While not all women are involved in both family and criminal courts, many are. A flow of information between the two courts, particularly with respect to orders relating to contact between the parties, could increase women's safety and feelings of security.

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSIBILITY
Establish a single case-management system approach in violence against women cases to ensure that orders, in particular no-contact and custody and access orders, are shared between family and criminal court.	Provincial/territorial Attorneys General

Enforcement of Family Court Orders

Provincial family court orders often cannot be enforced on First Nations, Territories ("reserves") Métis and Inuit land because that land falls under federal or sovereign jurisdiction. This means that women who obtain restraining orders or custody and access orders have little recourse if they live on reserve and the abuser violates the order.

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSIBILITY
Develop a cross-jurisdictional protocol between the RCMP, provincial police and First Nation police forces with respect to the enforcement of provincial family court orders that ensures the safety of women and children and respects First Nations, Métis and Inuit sovereignty.	Federal, provincial/territorial and Aboriginal governments

Criminal Law

In the 1980s, governments at both the federal and provincial levels began to recognize that violence against women was a serious social problem requiring a legislative response. Over this decade, various "mandatory charging" policies came into effect across Canada. These policies directed police officers to lay charges in "domestic violence" cases where the police officer believed there was evidence to support such a charge. This approach removed the responsibility for making this decision from the woman and placed it properly with the responding police officer, as is the case in other areas of criminal law. Since then, awareness and education about violence against women has increased, and unintended negative consequences growing from mandatory charging practices have been identified by violence against women advocates and others. Increasingly, a policy that was intended to assist

RECOMMENDATIONS

women experiencing abuse is being applied in a way that does not serve their best interests and, at times, increases exposure for violence for them and their children.

Perhaps most importantly, many women simply do not know that once they call the police (or the police are called by a third party, such as a child or a neighbour), they will lose control over what happens. Many women call the police because they need assistance in the moment but have no desire or intention to have their partner charged with a criminal offence.

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSIBILITY
Federal Department of Justice and federal Status of Women conduct a national consultation to discuss the effectiveness, limitations and challenges related to mandatory charging and the possibility of other approaches. This consultation would include preliminary research to gather data about the use of mandatory charging, women's lived experiences of violence and of the criminal response and participation by violence against women advocates as well as all players in the criminal system.	Federal Department of Justice, provincial/territorial Attorneys General and Solicitors General, federal/provincial/territorial Status of Women Committees and the violence against women sector

Domestic Violence Courts

A number of jurisdictions have established specialized domestic violence courts that provide women with enhanced support services and court personnel who have received domestic violence training.

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSIBILITY
Undertake a comprehensive evaluation of existing specialized courts to identify lessons learned and best practices to assist in the development of improved and expanded courts.	Provincial/territorial
Expand specialized domestic violence courts, custom designed to meet unique regional needs, to all court jurisdictions, with adequate funding to ensure proper training for all court personnel and a full array of support services for women.	Provincial/territorial

Bail Orders

One of the most dangerous times for a woman leaving an abusive partner is immediately after charges have been laid. Bail orders need to make women's safety a top priority.

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSIBILITY
Include formal risk assessments and information about family court proceedings and orders in mandatory bail submissions by Crown Attorneys.	Provincial/territorial Attorneys General

Legal Aid

Typically, when a woman is charged in a domestic dispute, she has no prior criminal involvement and the alleged offence is of a very minor nature, which means that she does not face the possibility of incarceration if she is found guilty. As a result, she does not meet legal aid eligibility criteria. Without

RECOMMENDATIONS

access to legal representation, many women enter guilty pleas in order to quickly resolve the situation and return home to their children. In short, they are unaware that they may, in fact, have had a defence against the charge.

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSIBILITY
Expand legal aid eligibility criteria in domestic violence cases to cover situations that do not involve the possibility of incarceration.	Provincial/territorial

Programs for Abusive Partners

Programs for abusive partners administered through the criminal court system have proven to be helpful in lowering the recidivism rate and in providing support to men who want to make a change in their lives. Present funding formulas limit participation in these programs to men who have been mandated as a result of a criminal charge. This excludes men who have identified their behaviour as problematic and who are seeking support to change but have not yet become involved with the criminal court.

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSIBILITY
Expand funding so programs can be provided for men who wish to self-refer, before there is criminal involvement.	Provincial/territorial
Provide funding for the development of culturally and linguistically appropriate programming for abusive men.	Provincial/territorial

5. SUPPORT WOMEN in the NORTH

Emergency Shelter

A housing crisis exists in all three territories, but women with children trying to escape violent situations and women facing other crises are even more profoundly affected. More emergency shelters for homeless women are needed in all three territories to alleviate current issues of overcrowding and inadequate resources. The quality of the existing shelters and the services they provide is also jeopardized by underfunding.

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSIBILITY
Establish direct federal funding for emergency shelters for women in crisis that also accommodate children.	Federal/territorial

Federal Social Housing Funds

Women living in the three territories have been seriously disadvantaged by the decision to reduce federal social housing dollars to all jurisdictions. In the territories, there is a cumulative impact, as per capita funding mechanisms further limit the territories' ability to address critical housing needs. Mixed with increasing demand for housing due to growing populations and booming economies, the people paying the price are those who are most disadvantaged, especially victims of family violence.

RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSIBILITY
Provide equitable funding mechanisms to encourage and support the development of low-income housing in Nunavut.	Federal
Require all three territories to implement priority housing policies for any federally funded housing which ensure that women living in violence or exhibiting other high needs are prioritized on access lists held by subsidized housing providers.	Federal/territorial

Low-Income Housing

Women, with or without dependent children or grandchildren in their care, need secure, safe and decent housing geared to those with modest or minimal incomes. This need for low-income housing specifically targeted for women and their children far outstrips the current supply of such housing in all three territories. Without increasing the supply of decent low-income housing, women cannot establish homes free from abuse, cannot adequately provide for their dependents, and cannot act to prevent their own homelessness.

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSIBILITY
Ensure an adequate supply of a variety of low-income housing stock is available for women and children in environments that can be kept safe and secure.	Federal/territorial
Ensure that women living in violent situations are in a position to retain access to their home and have their partner removed from the lease.	Territorial

Second-Stage Housing

In the North, second-stage housing is a rare occurrence. The number of women leaving shelters, only to find themselves back in the abusive household they fled in the first place, or homeless, or moving to the South in order to find housing, is high in all three territories due to the low number of transitional housing units, rooming houses and other low-income options for women. Second-stage housing that provides women and children in transition with low-income options and giving them enough time to explore future plans is urgently needed.

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSIBILITY
Fund the creation of low-income second-stage transitional housing options for women leaving shelters to ensure opportunities for healthy choices.	Federal/territorial

Debt as a Barrier

Women leaving abusive relationships often carry with them matrimonial debt or financial obligations — for example, joint credit card debt, a share of the mortgage on the matrimonial house, joint line of credit, etc. Often, this is a debt that has been incurred by the abuser, sometimes without the woman's knowledge. In most parts of the country, access to social services, including housing and social assistance, is delayed or denied because of this debt. This problem is especially critical in Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut.

RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSIBILITY
Debt being carried by women be reviewed by social service providers and, where it can be established that it is a matrimonial debt that is being dealt with, the barrier to accessing services eliminated.	Territorial

Evictions

In all three territories, the human right to affordable and decent housing is breached by landlords who evict women without cause, often in the dead of winter, and refuse to repair unsafe houses. Landlord and tenant legislation is outdated and offers few protections to the tenant. Governments must live up to the International Covenants to which they are parties and reform legislation to protect the human rights of tenants. Without these changes, legal redress is not possible. There is no recourse open or mechanisms available to tenants and agencies working to assist them.

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSIBILITY
Move swiftly to enact legislation protecting security of tenure, equitable rent and the quality of rental housing.	Territorial

Access to Service

Homeless women can experience barriers in accessing services that are important in empowering them to overcome their homelessness. Many current government policies contribute to barriers to these services by creating programs that are inflexible and have little tolerance, e.g. not providing child care and transportation allowances for up to six months after a client begins to receive social assistance, providing accommodation allowances that are lower than market rates, or having no systematic approach to allocating affordable housing to homeless women.

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSIBILITY
Address the complex interconnections of existing programs and benefits to ensure the availability for working women of a shelter allowance or housing subsidy adjusted to family size and housing costs.	Territorial

Integrated Service Model

Implementing an integrated service model that provides a continuum of care is essential to breaking the vicious cycle of homelessness trapping many women.

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSIBILITY
Enhanced capacity of service providers to work effectively with homeless women, providing information about where they can find help, such as how to access educational programs and affordable child care.	Territorial

RECOMMENDATIONS

Finances and Income Security

The depth of women's poverty is not decreasing despite the social safety nets created by government and civil society. Bold and creative approaches are needed to address this complex social issue. Poorly paid seasonal and part-time work does not provide an adequate income, nor does social assistance, and women are caught in a cycle of debt. Financial services for low-income people are needed across the North, where mainstream financial institutions do not work for people without addresses or for those with little income.

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSIBILITY
Ensure social assistance levels are livable.	Federal/territorial
Oversee development of financial services designed to meet the needs of the poor by offering a range of tailored options to women, including cheque cashing and micro-credit programs, and by eliminating bad debt to housing authorities.	Federal/territorial

Rent Supplements

With rental rates increasing in the North, low-income women are increasingly unable to afford private rental housing, even when they are able to find it. Rent supplements are a key component in successful housing strategies. Such a program would decrease the power landlords have over tenants and could prevent evictions due to tenant complaints.

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSIBILITY
Introduce portable rent supplements that are not tied to a particular location and do not require landlords to designate particular rent supplement units.	Territorial

Education and Training

Homeless women want to be self-determining and self-supporting. To do this, access to educational programs and support to follow through on employment is needed. Women need literacy programs, adult basic education, pre-employment skills and life skills training services. Workplace diversity programs need to be developed and, where they already exist, reinforced and publicized. Options for training such as job shadowing need to be made available. In the territories, where skilled trades people are in great demand, trades training and training in non-traditional occupations would provide women with a sustainable occupation and fill a need in Northern communities.

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSIBILITY
Enhance funding and access to education and training programs including literacy, adult basic education, pre-employment, life skills, and trades training for women.	Territorial

Child Care

Women with children are the fastest growing subpopulation in the homeless community in the North. These women need to take advantage of training opportunities in order to find employment

RECOMMENDATIONS

and end the cycle of poverty and homelessness. Critical to accessing any educational and training programs is the availability of affordable, subsidized daycare. Currently there are not enough daycare spaces in any of the three territories to meet the need.

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSIBILITY
Fund emergency shelters to provide free child care so women have the opportunity to apply for services and programs.	Federal/provincial/territorial/municipal
Fund adequate subsidized child care spaces in communities.	Federal/provincial/territorial/municipal

Public Education

Homeless women suffer from discrimination and racism due to misconceptions about causes and responsibility for homelessness. Public awareness can decrease the stigmatization that homeless women face (such as local opposition to shelters, public housing developments and other service centres) and increase access to much-needed supports and interventions. Public awareness will also help communities focus on longer-term solutions such as transitional and second-stage housing.

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSIBILITY
Fund activities directly focused on enhancing public awareness of homelessness and homelessness-related issues in women. These activities could include the production of tools and documents for public awareness and would use the available media, including newspapers, television and the Internet.	Federal/territorial/municipal

6. SUPPORT FIRST NATIONS, MÉTIS and INUIT WOMEN

Autonomous Policy Development

First Nations, Métis and Inuit cultures approach the issue of violence within the family from a perspective that seeks healing and will allow the family to remain intact. This process often takes into account addressing the damage resulting from colonialism and assimilation policies, including intergenerational trauma of the residential school system. In particular, Aboriginal approaches to family violence more often include the abuser as a wounded actor who also has the right to heal and move on to play a healthy role in his family.

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSIBILITY
Programs responding to violence against women in Aboriginal communities, particularly shelter and housing programs, be developed autonomously by those communities and funded in such a way that allows the very different cultural needs and realities that prevail from community to community to be reflected in the programming.	Federal, provincial/territorial, municipal, social service sector, VAW sector, Aboriginal sector

RECOMMENDATIONS

Ensure programs and services accessed by Aboriginal families are culturally competent and sufficiently flexible to accommodate the cultural realities, needs and approaches of those families, particularly in the areas of shelter and housing.	Federal, provincial/territorial, municipal, social service sector, VAW sector, Aboriginal sector
--	--

7. SUPPORT WOMEN with MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

Sheltering Women with Mental Health and Addiction Issues

Women with mental health and addiction issues have unique needs with respect to finding shelter and housing. Often, it is difficult if not impossible to meet their needs in traditional VAW shelters because staff are not trained, staffing levels are inadequate and the need for calm and safety of all residents may be jeopardized by the presence of women with anger issues and aggressive behaviour. Yet, isolating abused women who have mental health and addiction issues in separate facilities does not provide them with the support toward integration and healthy living that they need and deserve.

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSIBILITY
Increase provincial funding to VAW shelters to allow them to enhance staffing levels in order to integrate women with mental health and addiction issues into their programming.	Provincial ministries responsible for funding VAW shelters
Provide targeted funding to VAW shelters so staff can obtain specialized training to enable them to effectively support women with mental health and addiction issues.	Provincial ministries responsible for funding VAW services
Expand the mandate of extant inter-ministerial committees dealing with VAW to explicitly include an intersectional approach to addressing violence against women with mental health and/or addictions issues. Establish inter-ministerial committees where they do not currently exist.	Provincial/territorial ministries of social services, health, education, corrections, housing and Attorneys General

8. REMOVE BARRIERS to ACCESSING SHELTER

Women with disabilities and Deaf women are often unable to use shelter or housing programs because they are physically inaccessible and/or because there are communication barriers. Women from racialized communities need culturally competent shelter and housing programs and support services.

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSIBILITY
Increase funding to VAW shelters, second-stage housing and longer term housing designed for VAW survivors to ensure both physical and cultural accessibility and cultural competency throughout the sector.	Provincial/territorial housing, VAW and education ministries

RECOMMENDATIONS

Ensure adequate training for staff and adequate staffing complements in shelters and second-stage housing in order to support women with disabilities, Deaf women and women from racialized communities. In particular, support and encourage ASL training for shelter and second-stage-housing staff and cultural competency training throughout the sector.	Provincial/territorial housing, VAW and education ministries
---	--

9. IMPROVE ACCESS to INFORMATION for NEWCOMER WOMEN

One of the biggest challenges for women who are newcomers to Canada is their inability to access information about their legal rights, services and resources in languages that they understand.

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSIBILITY
Citizenship and Immigration Canada include material developed by VAW agencies in the standard “Welcome to Canada” package of materials provided to newcomers at their entry point to the country. This material should include, at a minimum, basic information about Canadian criminal laws related to woman abuse, basic family law information, especially about child custody and support, and information about helplines and other programs for abused women that offer services in multiple languages.	Federal ministry of citizenship and immigration

10. SUPPORT RURAL WOMEN

Access to Transportation for Rural Women

Rural women need transportation above almost anything else. Without it, they cannot get to appointments with their lawyers or attend court dates. In many parts of the country, there are no taxi services available outside urban centres. Where they do exist, they are prohibitively expensive. There is little to no public transportation for people living outside mid-sized cities or anywhere smaller.

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSIBILITY
VAW agencies work with regional boards of education to develop protocols to allow adults to ride on school buses on their regular routes.	Provincial/municipal

11. INCREASE VIOLENCE AWARENESS and EXPAND VIOLENCE PREVENTION PROGRAMS

Education of Children and Youth

Violence will only end with the true equality of women and the eradication of misogyny and patriarchy. Public education campaigns are important, but this goal will really only be achieved through the education of children and young people.

RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSIBILITY
Allocate appropriate and designated funding to support programs around women's equality, healthy relationships and positive conflict resolution that form part of the educational curriculum in all schools. This curriculum must reflect cultural realities and, in particular, speak to the needs of First Nations, Métis and Inuit families and communities, racialized communities and immigrant communities. Where appropriate, this curriculum should be delivered by non-school staff. These should be mandatory classes not requiring parental consent.	Federal/provincial/territorial
Fund gender-specific extracurricular programming to support the development of healthy relationships and positive conflict resolution strategies as well as self-esteem for both boys and girls.	Provincial/territorial and regional school boards

Programs for Boys and Men

Public education strategies must include programs directed specifically at and including boys and men and must be ongoing so they can develop credibility and familiarity in the community.

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSIBILITY
Provide sustainable funding for community-based as well as provincial and national men's violence prevention and awareness programs, through education, health and community services.	Federal and provincial/territorial health, education and community services departments and ministries, in collaboration with community-based organizations and services

Mentor and Model

Learning is best accomplished through modelling and doing. For this reason, mentorship opportunities that can match boys up with positive male role models can form an important component of campaigns to end violence.

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSIBILITY
Fund mentoring programs, men to boys, to help address leadership vacuum.	Provincial/territorial in collaboration with community-based groups and programs

12. EXPAND EDUCATION and TRAINING PROGRAMS

For Professionals

Women fleeing abuse encounter countless professionals as they make their way through the system. These may include police, emergency room physicians, family doctors, nurses, X-ray technicians, dentists, midwives, public health workers, social workers, religious leaders, teachers, child-care workers, lawyers, mental-health workers, child-protection workers and violence against women

RECOMMENDATIONS

workers. Unfortunately, few of these professionals receive training and education about violence against women while they are in school, and few have had access to those resources as continuing in-service opportunities. Without this training, professionals may remain unaware of the reality of abuse with which a woman is dealing, ignorant of appropriate responses when a woman discloses abuse, and uninformed about the community resources to which she can be directed.

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSIBILITY
Education on violence against women be a mandatory part every professional training and practice across the professions.	Provincial/territorial ministries of education and housing, professional schools & colleges, VAW sector
Mandated in-service violence against women training be part of every professional college's requirements for its members to maintain standing.	Provincial/territorial ministries of education and housing, professional schools & colleges, VAW sector
Fund training for all coordinated housing access centres and third-party-referring organizations to ensure that the criteria for abuse priority for subsidized housing is well understood.	Provincial/territorial ministries of education and housing, professional schools & colleges, VAW sector
Establish mechanisms to ensure that new public education and training materials are available to those developing and providing training for professionals and to enable professionals to come together to discuss challenges and issues related to providing services to abused women	Provincial/territorial ministries of education and housing, professional schools & colleges, VAW sector

Training for Police

For many women, the police represent the gateway to other services and, often, to the possibility of leaving an abusive situation. Police have received extensive training over the past 20 years, but that training is inconsistent across the country, with the result that women are better served in some regions than in others. It is of particular importance for women who have left their abuser, especially those with children, that police have a clear understanding of the importance of enforcing family court custody, access and restraining orders.

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSIBILITY
Expand police training to increase the focus on family law issues and the role of police in enforcing family court orders.	Provincial ministries responsible for policing, provincial Attorneys General, RCMP, Aboriginal police services
Consolidate approaches to violence against women training and make them consistent across the country, taking into account the need to address unique regional characteristics.	Provincial ministries responsible for policing, provincial Attorneys General, RCMP, Aboriginal police services

RECOMMENDATIONS

For Women at Risk

No matter what a woman's economic status was before separation, it invariably deteriorates when she leaves her husband. Women who have remained at home or been underemployed during the relationship will almost certainly have difficulty becoming re-employed at a level that allows them to be self-supporting. Women who have children face the additional challenge of needing to find appropriate child care while they are re-training. When women are unemployed or under-employed, they cannot access or maintain adequate, safe housing for themselves and their children. The only way to break the cycle of abuse, homelessness, poverty and social assistance is through education, skills training and re-training programs that qualify women for jobs that earn them a living wage.

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSIBILITY
Bring a collaborative approach between the private and education sectors to the establishment, maintenance and expansion of skills training and retraining programs.	Provincial/Territorial Ministries of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education, colleges & training • Citizenship • Community & social services
Expand funding for community-based apprenticeship training programs and institute a system of no-interest loans and grants earmarked for abused women.	Provincial/Territorial Ministries of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education, colleges & training • Citizenship • Community & social services
Include a literacy/ESL component designed to meet the needs of the women in the program in all training/retraining programs.	Provincial/Territorial Ministries of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education, colleges & training • Citizenship • Community & social services
Give abused women who enter such training and re-training programs full access to free child care for their children under the age of six.	Provincial/Territorial Ministries of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education, colleges & training • Citizenship • Community & social services

POLICY COORDINATION WITH WOMEN AT THE CENTRE

We began this paper with two quotes from consultation participants. It seems appropriate to revisit them in conclusion:

“...we have to look at the whole picture. We can’t continue approaching post-abuse issues for women in a piecemeal fashion.”

“We should develop a policy framework that by its nature creates the need for agencies – federal, provincial, regional and municipal – to work together with enabling individuals to become self-sustaining in a safe environment as their collective focus.”

The research conducted by YWCA Canada as part of this project identified a number of key themes related to the challenges women face when they leave abusive relationships:

- the triggering conditions of poverty and homelessness
- the legal climate, in both family and criminal law, and how it contributes to and mitigates the circumstances of at-risk women
- the circumstances faced by abused women living in the North, where a daunting spectrum of conditions foster a cycle of poverty and violence;
- the predicament of marginalized women who face multiple social barriers;
- proactive initiatives such as:
 - a women’s advocate position,
 - violence awareness and prevention programs to combat the harmful socialized behaviour of men
 - education and training programs for professionals dealing with at-risk women.

Our research led us to a number of conclusions.

First, a coordinated response provides the only possibility of reducing and eventually eliminating violence against women. It is also the only approach that can lead to an effective systemic response to providing services to women and keeping them and their children safe once they have left an abusive situation.

Second, it is imperative that this coordinated response recognize the unique vulnerabilities, realities and opportunities in Canada’s North; in particular, in Aboriginal communities.

Third, promising practices must be shared across the country, allowing for regions to adapt them to suit their unique regional needs.

POLICY COORDINATION WITH WOMEN AT THE CENTRE

Fourth, a gender-inclusive response to the issue of safely housing women post-violence and post-shelter is needed. What we mean by this is not the elimination of a gendered analysis of violence against women. Indeed, we must maintain an analysis that clearly articulates violence against women as rooted in women's social, political and economic inequality and as predominantly perpetrated by men.

However, to solve the problem we need to develop a meaningful role for men as full partners in the work. Men must be involved in addressing male violence in their peers, in providing non-violent role models to boys, in policy development and implementation.

Fifth, abused women in this country deserve a legal system – family and criminal – that understands their realities and that works for rather than against them. Every professional a woman encounters in the legal system needs to be properly informed about and sensitized to the reality of violence against women, its implications for her in the legal process and be able to understand the need for the legal response to address her unique individual circumstances.

This report provides a number of recommendations focused on many of the issues abused women face – poverty, homelessness, the law, marginalization and living in the north – as well as on initiatives already underway such as violence prevention and education and training programs.

It is time to bring these issues together into a national discussion that can lead to a national, coordinated strategy.

All Canadians have a right to be safely housed. That includes women and children.

SOURCES

Amnesty International Canada, “Stolen Sisters - Discrimination and violence against Indigenous women in Canada”, (2004), <http://www.amnesty.ca>, retrieved June 17, 2009.

Bopp, Judie, et al. *Being Homeless is Getting to be Normal: A Study of Women’s Homelessness North of 60*, territorial report, YWCA Yellowknife/The Yellowknife Women’s Society, 2006.

Bopp, Judie, et al. *The Little Voices of Nunavut: A Study of Women’s Homelessness North of 60*, territorial report, Qullit Nunavut Status of Women Council, 2007.

Bopp, Judie, et al. *A Little Kindness Would Go a Long Way: A Study of Women’s Homelessness in the Yukon*, territorial report, Yukon Status of Women Council, 2007.

Caring Dads, “About Caring Dads”, n.d., <http://www.caringdadsprogram.com>, retrieved June 22, 2009.

Calgary Committee to End Homelessness, “Calgary’s 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness”, Calgary, 2007.

Canadian Women’s Foundation, “Facts About Violence Against Women”, Violence Prevention Fund, 2007, <http://www.cdnwomen.org>, retrieved June 16, 2009.

Centre for Equality Rights in Accommodation, *Ontario’s Human Rights Code, Disability and the Duty to Accommodate: A Guide for Housing Workers and Tenants*, Toronto, 2003, <http://www.equalityrights.org/cera/index.cfm?nav=claim>.

Centre for Equality Rights in Accommodation and Advocacy Centre for Tenants in Ontario, Submission to 36th Session of United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR), Ontario, 2006.

Community Resource Connections of Toronto, “About CRCT”, n.d., <http://www.crct.org/about/>, retrieved June 22, 2009.

Curriculum Services Canada, “The Fourth R.”, n.d., <http://www.curriculum.org>, retrieved June 22, 2009.

Dale, Amanda. “No More Running in Circles”, *Beyond Shelter Walls: Phase III Draft Discussion Paper*, Toronto, YWCA Canada, 2008.

Dale, Amanda. *System Change, Best Practices and Policy Initiatives to Address Violence Against Women in Canada, Beyond Shelter Walls: Phase III Literature Review*, Toronto, YWCA Canada, 2007.

SOURCES

- Department of Justice Canada, *Criminal Code*, Government of Canada, Ottawa, 1985.
- Department of Justice Canada, *Indian Act*, Government of Canada, Ottawa, 1985.
- Department of Justice Canada, *National Housing Act*, Government of Canada, Ottawa, 1985.
- Equay-Wuk, “HFHN Project Summary”, 2009,
<http://www.equaywuk.ca/hfhnEngProjectSummary.pdf> , retrieved June 22, 2009.
- Family Justice Services, “Parenting After Separation”, n.d.,
<http://www.albertacourts.ab.ca/cs/familyjustice/ParentingAfterSeparation.pdf>.
- Family Justice Services, *Protection Against Family Violence Act*, Government of Alberta, 2006.
- Family Law Education for Women (FLEW), “FLEW Background”, 2008, <http://onefamilylaw.ca>,
 retrieved June 16, 2009.
- Family Violence Prevention Fund, “Campaigns”, “Coaching Boys into Men”, 2009,
<http://www.endabuse.org/content/campaigns/detail/688>, retrieved June 18 2009.
- Family Violence Prevention Fund, “Policy Talks: A Forum for Practitioners in the Fields of Domestic Violence, Child Welfare and Family Law”, vol. 1, issue 1, San Francisco, CA, 2002.
- Farris-Manning, Cheryl and Zandstra, Marietta, *Children in Care in Canada*, Welfare League of Canada, Ottawa, 2003.
- First World Conference of Women’s Shelters, “Discovering the Common Core: Practical Frameworks for Change”, Alberta Council of Women’s Shelters, 2007, http://www.womenshelter.ca/home_en.php,
 retrieved June 16, 2009.
- First World Conference of Women’s Shelters, speaker bio Jackson Katz, 2007,
http://www.womenshelter.ca/bios.php?bio_id=JK, retrieved June 16, 2009.
- Fortney, Valerie, “Boom creates ‘perfect storm’ of domestic abuse in Calgary”, *The Calgary Herald*,
 September 8, 2008.
- Gough, Pamela. *Northwest Territories’ Child Welfare System*, The Centres of Excellence for Children’s Well-Being, Toronto, 2007,
<http://www.cecwcpcb.ca/sites/default/files/publications/en/NWTchildwelfaresystem53E.pdf>.
-

SOURCES

Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, “Provinces Call For Increased Federal Funding For Legal Aid Justice Ministers Stand Together”, June 21 2007 Press release, <http://www.releases.gov.nl.ca/releases/2007/just/0621n09.htm>, retrieved on June 19, 2009.

Government of Prince Edward Island, “Advisory Council on the Status of Women”, n.d., <http://www.gov.pe.ca/acsw>, retrieved June 17, 2009.

Gregoire, Lisa. “Nunavut – Territory of unrequited dreams”, *Canadian Geographic*, 2009, January/February.

Healthy Balance Research Program, “A community alliance for Health Research on Women’s Unpaid Caregiving”, n.d., <http://www.healthyb.dal.ca>, retrieved June 17, 2009.

HomeFront, “Domestic Court Caseworkers”, n.d., <http://www.homefrontcalgary.com/domestic-court-caseworkers.html>, retrieved June 19, 2009.

Housing Connections, “Who are we, what do we do?”, n.d., <http://www.torontohousing.ca>, retrieved June 17, 2009.

Hulchanski, David and Shapcott, Michael (Eds.). *Finding Room: Options For A Canadian Rental Housing Strategy*, Centre for Urban and Community Studies, Toronto, 2003.

Johnson, Holly. *Measuring Violence Against Women: Statistical Trends 2006*, Statistics Canada, <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/85-570-x2006001-fra.htm>.

Justice Québec, “Québec Government Action Plan on Domestic Violence, 2004–2009”, Government of Quebec, 2004.

Kothari, Miloon. United Nations Special Rapporteur on adequate housing, Miloon Kothari Mission to Canada 9 – 22 October 2007, <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/>.

Kaufman, Michael. “The AIM Framework: Addressing and Involving Men and Boys To Promote Gender Equity and End Gender Discrimination and Violence”, 2003, <http://www.michaelkaufman.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/01/kaufman-the-aim-framework.pdf>, retrieved August 7, 2009

Katz, Jackson. “Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP): Gender Violence Prevention Education & Training”, n.d., <http://www.jacksonkatz.com/mvp.html>, retrieved June 17, 2009.

Legal Information Society of Nova Scotia, “Family Law Information Project for Abused Women: Safely on Your Way, Child Custody and Access Information for Women Leaving Abusive

SOURCES

Relationships and Their Service Providers” Family Law Information Project for Abused Women, Halifax, 2008.

Making Waves/Vague par vague , “Mission”, <http://www.mwaves.org>, retrieved June 22, 2009.

McIvor, Sharon. “NGO Statement (Canada)”, speech presented at the CEDAW review, Geneva, Switzerland, October 2008.

Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, “Domestic Violence Action Plan Update”, government of Ontario, Toronto, 2007.

Muriel McQueen Fergusson Centre for Family Violence Research, “Evaluation of the Provincial Court Specializing in Domestic Violence”, University of New Brunswick, Fredericton, 2005.

National Victims of Crime Awareness Week, “Domestic Violence Protocol”, 2007.

Native Women’s Association of Canada, “Sisters in Spirit Initiative: An Issue Paper”, Ohsweken, (Ontario), 2007.

Native Women’s Association of Canada (2009). *Voices of Our Sisters in Spirit: A Report to Families and Communities*, Ohsweken, ON.

Neighbours, Friends and Families, “Neighbours, Friends and Families”, <http://www.neighboursfriendsandfamilies.ca>, retrieved June 17, 2009.

Northwest Territories Department of Justice, *Child and Family Services Act NWT*, Government of Northwest Territories, 1998.

Nova Scotia Department of Justice, *Domestic Violence Intervention Act*, Government of Nova Scotia, Halifax, 2002.

Nova Scotia Department of Justice “Framework for Action Against Family Violence Review”, Government of Nova Scotia, Halifax, 2001.

Nunavut Department of Justice, *Family Abuse Intervention Act*, Iqaluit (Nunavut), Government of Nunavut, 2006.

Nunavut Housing Corporation and Nunavut Tunngavik Inc., “*Nunavut Ten-Year Inuit Housing Action Plan: A Proposal to the Government of Canada*”, Government of Nunavut, Iqaluit, 2004.

SOURCES

Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1997, http://www.unhchr.ch/french/html/menu3/b/k2crc_fr.htm, retrieved June 22, 2009.

Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, “A Domestic Violence Action Plan for Ontario”, Government of Ontario, 2005.

Ontario Women’s Directorate, “Healthy Families Healthy Nations”, Government of Ontario, 2005.

Patterson, Lisa. “Aboriginal Roundtable to Kelowna Accord: Aboriginal Policy Negotiations, 2004 - 2005”, government of Canada, 2006.

Pictou County Health Authority, “Mental Health Services: Community Resources Service Agencies: New Leaf: A Support Group for Men”, Pictou, (NS), 2005.

Prince Edward Island Transition House Association, “Safety Circles: A Collaborative Safety Planning Process for Women in Crisis”, 2008, <http://www.peitha.org/>, retrieved June 17, 2009.

Prince Edward Island Transition House Association, “Safety Circles: A Collaborative Safety Planning Process for Women in Crisis”, 2008, <http://www.peitha.org/>, retrieved June 17, 2009.

Provincial Advisory Council for the Status of Women, Newfoundland and Labrador, “*Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act (SCAN) Why SCAN is Not Safe for Women!*” St. John’s, NF, 2007.

Pulaarvik Kablu Friendship Centre, Spousal Abuse Counseling Program, n.d., <http://www.pulaarvik.ca>, retrieved June 122, 2009.

Roots of Empathy (2006), “About Our Program”, <http://www.rootsofempathy.org>, retrieved June 17, 2009.

Saltspring Women Opposed to Violence and Abuse, “Respectful Relationship Program”, 2007, <http://swova.org>, retrieved June 22, 2009.

Sauve, Julie and Burns, Mike (2008), “Residents of Canada’s shelters for abused women”, Statistics Canada, Juristat Article, vol. 29, no. 2, May 2009.

Sistering and Street Health, “Women & Homelessness Research Bulletin”, *Street Health Report Research Bulletin*, Issue 2, 2007.

SOURCES

- Smith, Ekuwa, “Nowhere to Turn? Responding to Partner Violence Against Immigrant and Visible Minority Women”, Canadian Council on Social Development, Ottawa, March 2005, <http://www.ccsd.ca/pubs/pubcat/nw.htm>.
- Sport in Society: A Northeastern University Centre, Mentors in Violence Prevention Program, n.d., <http://www.sportinsociety.org/vpd/mvp.php>, retrieved June 16, 2009.
- Statistics Canada, “Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile”, Ottawa, 1994.
- Statistics Canada, “Measuring Violence Against Women: Statistical Trends”, Ottawa, 2008.
- Statistics Canada, “Violence Against Women Survey – 1993”, Ottawa, 1994.
- The Ontario Native Women’s Association and the Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres, “A Strategic Framework to End Violence Against Aboriginal Women”, Thunder Bay, 2007.
- Tutty, Leslie M. “Effective Practices in Sheltering Women Leaving Violence in Intimate Relationships”, Beyond Shelter Walls: Phase II Report, YWCA Canada, Toronto, 2006.
- United Nations Population Fund, “State of world population 2005”, United Nations, New York, 2005, http://www.unfpa.org/swp/index_fre.htm.
- United Nations’ Millennium Development Goals, Goal 1: Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger (2008), <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals>, retrieved June 22, 2009.
- Vermilion YWCA Skills Training Centre, “Are you tired of ‘just getting by?’”, n.d., <http://www.ywcaofcalgary.com/training/>, retrieved June 22, 2009.
- Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation, “Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation Strategic Plan 2005”, Old Crow, (NWT), 2005.
- Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation, “Vuntut Gwitchin Housing Policy”, Old Crow, (NWT), 2005.
- White Ribbon Campaign in a Box, *Promoting Healthy Equal Relationships: A guide book for teachers and community leaders for Ontario youth ages 11 to 14*, Toronto, 2007.
- White Ribbon Campaign, “The Campaign”, 2009, <http://www.whiteribbon.ca>, retrieved June 22, 2009.

SOURCES

Women's Mental Health and Addictions Action Research Coalition (2007), "Implementing a Woman Abuse Screening Protocol: Facilitating Connections between Mental Health, Addictions and Woman Abuse", <http://wmhaarc.ca/Woman%20Abuse%20Screening%20Protocol%20Manual.pdf>, retrieved June 22, 2009.

WoodGreen Community Services, Homeward Bound, "Helping Women and their Children Achieve Economic Self-Sufficiency", 2005, <http://www.woodgreen.org/>, retrieved June 17, 2009.

YWCA Canada, "Broad Investments Counting Women in to the Federal Budget", Toronto, 2009.

YWCA Canada, "Submission to the United Nations Regional Consultation on Women and the Right to Housing in North America", Toronto, 2005.

YWCA GirlSpace , Girls' Clubs, 2004, <http://www.ywcacanada.ca>, retrieved June 22, 2009.

"100,000 women, children flee domestic violence", *Edmonton Journal*, May 14, 2009, page A7.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS by level of GOVERNMENT and SECTOR

FOR FEDERAL GOVERNMENT ACTION

RECOMMENDATIONS ON POVERTY	
National Poverty Reduction Strategy	Adopt a national poverty reduction strategy with measurable goals, a clear timetable, a transparent accountability structure that can demonstrate progress and a defined role for citizen participation, in particular low income people.
National Child Benefit	Increase federal child benefit transfers for low income families to \$5,100 (in 2007 dollars) per child and eliminate the drawback of the National Child Benefit in collaboration with provincial & territorial governments.
RECOMMENDATIONS ON HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS	
A National Housing Strategy: Emergency, Second Stage and Permanent	Institute a national housing strategy that is inclusive of women and lives up to its human rights obligations under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which guarantees the right to an adequate standard of living and adequate housing. Establish national standards for the design, implementation, monitoring and enforcement of laws, policies and strategies for housing support programs that meet the specific needs of women in the strategy. Through the strategy, ensure women's housing needs across their lifespan are met through an adequate supply of affordable housing available for women on principles of equality and non-discrimination.
	Inuit, First Nations, Métis and urban Aboriginal women and women's organizations lead development of sectoral national housing strategies for the populations they represent.
Safe Housing Design and Safety Support	Incorporate safe building design measures, including security systems, lighting and safe parking into all federally-sponsored post-shelter housing for abused women.
Second-stage Housing	Initiate a federal, provincial/territorial and municipal collaboration to fund VAW-implemented second-stage housing projects across the country.
	Establish dedicated funding through the federal government's Canada Social Transfer for transitional housing as well as for a continuum of services for at-risk women as they progress through the stages of leaving an abusive spouse.
Long-term Housing	Return the federal government to the public housing business by re-establishing funding and power to the CMHC.
	Renew and enhance the federal Affordable Housing Initiative over a 10-year period as part of a comprehensive national housing strategy.
Shortage of Affordable Housing Stock	The federal government adopts measures to sponsor large-scale construction of housing to increase the stock of permanent, subsidized social housing units across the country.
	Introduce legislation which obliges private-sector construction projects to include affordable housing units.
	Introduce tax incentives to encourage public/private sector collaborations in the construction of affordable housing units.
National Housing Act – Section 95	Revise the funding formula to eliminate the decrease in subsidies to federal non-profit housing providers.

FEDERAL

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LEGAL CHANGES	
FAMILY LAW	
Access to Legal Representation	Increase the proportion of federal transfer payments for legal aid to the provinces and territories that is dedicated to family law.
Custody and Access	Amend the federal <i>Divorce Act</i> to include a requirement that family violence be considered in custody and access decisions and that <i>Section 16</i> (the friendly parent rule) be removed so that women who wish to protect their children from contact with an abusive father are not penalized for doing so.
First Nations Women	Amend the <i>Indian Act</i> in a process with national organizations representing First Nations women and respectful of their input to enable First Nations, Métis and Inuit women on reserve to have the same rights to real property as women who do not live on reserve, while still respecting the right of Aboriginal people to self-government.
Enforcement of Family Court Orders	Develop a cross-jurisdictional protocol between the RCMP, provincial police and First Nation police forces with respect to the enforcement of provincial family court orders that ensures the safety of women and children and respects First Nations, Métis and Inuit sovereignty.
CRIMINAL LAW	
Criminal Law	Federal Department of Justice and federal Status of Women conduct a national consultation to discuss the effectiveness, limitations and challenges related to mandatory charging and the possibility of other approaches. This consultation would include preliminary research to gather data about the use of mandatory charging, women's lived experiences of violence and of the criminal response and participation by violence against women advocates as well as all players in the criminal system.
RECOMMENDATIONS TO SUPPORT WOMEN IN THE NORTH	
Emergency Shelter	Establish direct federal funding for emergency shelters for women in crisis that also accommodate children.
Federal Social Housing Funds	Provide equitable funding mechanisms to encourage and support the development of low-income housing in Nunavut.
	Require all three territories to implement priority housing policies for any federally funded housing which ensure that women living in violence or exhibiting other high needs are prioritized on access lists held by subsidized housing providers.
Low-Income Housing	Ensure an adequate supply of a variety of low-income housing stock is available for women and children in environments that can be kept safe and secure.
Second-Stage Housing	Fund the creation of low-income second-stage transitional housing options for women leaving shelters to ensure opportunities for healthy choices.
Finances and Income Security	Ensure social assistance levels provide livable incomes.
	Oversee development of financial services designed to meet the needs of the poor by offering a range of tailored options to women, including cheque cashing and micro-credit programs, and by eliminating bad debt to housing authorities.
Child Care	Fund emergency shelters to provide free child care so women have the opportunity to apply for services and programs.
	Fund adequate subsidized child care spaces in communities.

FEDERAL

Public Education	Fund activities directly focused on enhancing public awareness of homelessness and homelessness-related issues in women. These activities could include the production of tools and documents for public awareness and would use the available media, including newspapers, television and the Internet.
RECOMMENDATIONS TO SUPPORT FIRST NATIONS, MÉTIS AND INUIT WOMEN	
Autonomous Policy Development	Programs responding to violence against women in First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities, particularly shelter and housing programs, be developed autonomously by those communities and funded in such a way that allows the very different cultural needs and realities that prevail from community to community to be reflected in the programming.
Cultural Competence	Ensure programs and services accessed by Aboriginal families are culturally competent and sufficiently flexible to accommodate the cultural realities, needs and approaches of those families, particularly in the areas of shelter and housing.
RECOMMENDATION TO REMOVE BARRIERS FOR IMMIGRANT, REFUGEE AND NON-STATUS WOMEN	
Access to Information	Citizenship and Immigration Canada include material developed by VAW agencies in the standard “Welcome to Canada” package of materials provided to newcomers at their entry point to the country. This material should include, at a minimum, basic information about Canadian criminal laws related to woman abuse, basic family law information, especially about child custody and support, and information about helplines and other programs for abused women that offer services in multiple languages.
RECOMMENDATIONS ON VIOLENCE AWARENESS AND PREVENTION PROGRAMS AND INITIATIVES	
Education of Children and Youth	Designate appropriate federal funding for provinces and territories to develop educational curriculum on women’s equality, healthy relationships and positive conflict resolution for all schools. This curriculum must reflect cultural realities and, in particular, speak to the needs of First Nations, Métis and Inuit families and communities, racialized communities and immigrant communities.
Programs for Boys and Men	Provide sustainable funding for community-based as well as provincial and national men’s violence prevention and awareness programs, through education, health and community services.

RCMP

RECOMMENDATIONS ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING	
Training for Police	Expand police training to increase the focus on family law issues and the role of police in enforcing family court orders.
	Consolidate approaches to violence against women training and make them consistent across the country, taking into account the need to address unique regional characteristics.
Enforcement of Family Court Orders	Develop a cross-jurisdictional protocol between the RCMP, provincial police and First Nation police forces with respect to the enforcement of provincial family court orders that ensures the safety of women and children and respects First Nations, Métis and Inuit sovereignty.

FOR PROVINCIAL and TERRITORIAL GOVERNMENT ACTION

RECOMMENDATION FOR WOMEN'S ADVOCATES	
Women's advocates	Establish Community Women's Advocate positions across the country. Advocates will guide at-risk women through the myriad of services and systems they encounter as they move toward violence-free lives, as well as assisting them in identifying and accessing appropriate resources, and providing whatever supports are needed to ensure positive outcomes. Determine the specific role of the advocate regionally to reflect the unique and diverse characteristics of communities across the country. Fund these positions provincially, through a collaborative inter-ministerial initiative and ensure women who have experienced violence can access training for these positions.
RECOMMENDATIONS ON POVERTY	
Income, Assets and Access to Income Support	Establish livable social assistance incomes at a level which takes into account regional living cost realities for all Canadians.
	Remove any regulations that bar people experiencing homelessness from accessing income support.
	Increase earnings exemptions for those receiving income supports under the "Not Expected to Work" and "Temporarily Unable to Work" categories. Fully exempt the first \$1,000 of total monthly net employment income and increase the earnings exemption for additional earnings from 25 percent to 50 percent.
	Increase the employment income exemption for those receiving disability support through social assistance to enable more women with disabilities to join the workforce.
	Increase core essential and core shelter income support benefits to match the actual cost of local rent and a nutritious food basket and index Income Support payments to the Consumer Price Index.
	Allow people receiving income support to retain liquid assets <i>five times</i> the monthly core benefit so they can maintain household resources for emergencies, attend to day-to-day needs not provided for by income support (e.g., children's school field trips) and move out of poverty.
Child Support and Social Assistance	Increase child support exemption periods for abused women to one year so they can put safety measures in place and begin to establish themselves before they are required to seek child support.
	Create an exemption for the first \$1,000/month received in child support before deducting it from the amount of social assistance. This will create an incentive for women to seek child support where it is safe for them to do so.
Debt, Matrimonial Debt and Access to Service	Social service providers review debt being carried by women and eliminate the barrier to accessing services where it can be established that it is a matrimonial debt that is being dealt with.
National Child Benefit	Eliminate the clawback of the National Child Benefit.

PROVINCIAL/TERRITORIAL

RECOMMENDATIONS ON HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS	
Leaving the Abuser	Ensure information about safe and affordable permanent housing is available to at-risk women who do not enter the shelter system. This information should support these women in making the transition to a violence-free life and be available in a variety of languages and formats.
Subsidized Housing Priority Lists	Amend policies governing subsidized housing priority lists to ensure that women living in shelters qualify and that women leaving shelters and transitional housing are given priority access to long-term, low-income government housing.
Subsidized Housing Eligibility	Amend eligibility requirements for subsidized housing to recognize the unique needs of women fleeing abuse. For example, policies prohibiting property ownership need to exempt abused women in appropriate situations.
	Permit supervisory staff discretionary authority to waive eligibility requirements to remove an unfair barrier to housing for abused women.
Safe Housing Design and Safety Support	Incorporate safe building design measures, including security systems, lighting and safe parking into post-shelter housing for abused women.
	Include supports, specifically focused on safety, in post-shelter housing for abused women; for example outreach workers who have ongoing contact with women, helping them with safety planning and providing check-in systems.
Freedom of Contact	Require only the woman's name on the lease for post-shelter housing agreements. Policies and procedures dealing with the presence of men in these units should not result in de-housing women.
Second-stage Housing	Initiate a federal, provincial/territorial and municipal collaboration to fund VAW-implemented second-stage housing projects across the country.
Low-Income Housing	Ensure that women living in violent situations are in a position to retain access to their home and have their partner removed from the lease.
Rent Control	Establish rent control in provinces and territories that currently do not have controls in place: Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, Québec, Saskatchewan, Alberta, Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut.
Enforcement of Landlord-Tenant Legislation	Enforce landlord/tenant legislation to ensure tenant rights are protected, appropriate repairs and maintenance are undertaken, and damage and rent deposits are returned to departing tenants in a just fashion.
Shortage of Affordable Housing Stock	Introduce legislation which obliges private-sector construction projects to include affordable housing units.
	Introduce tax incentives to encourage public/private sector collaborations in the construction of affordable housing units.
Rent Supplements Across the Country	Develop a coherent inter-jurisdictional system of portable rent supplements that travel with women regardless of their location and which are flexible enough to accommodate the diverse needs of abused women.

PROVINCIAL/TERRITORIAL

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LEGAL CHANGES	
FAMILY LAW	
Access to Legal Representation	Consider alternate delivery systems to increase women's access to legal representation. For example, provinces using a certificate system implement community-based clinics that deal with family law.
	Change the financial eligibility criteria for legal aid so people with moderate and middle incomes are eligible. Revise policies regarding ownership of property and money in savings accounts to allow greater discretion so women are able to obtain legal aid based on their income, rather than on assets that may not be entirely theirs or that may be unsafe for them to disclose or use.
Restraining/Protection Orders	All restraining order/protection order legislation be available to both married and common-law (regardless of the length of time of cohabitation) couples as well as people in dating relationships.
	A breach of any family court restraining/protection order result in a charge under the <i>Criminal Code</i> rather than simply a provincial offences act charge.
	Family court restraining/protection orders be made on standard form orders that are consistent across the province/territory.
	All family court restraining/protection orders be immediately registered on CPIC.
Custody and Access - Best Interests of the Child and Violence	All family court restraining/protection orders clearly state that they are to be enforced across jurisdictions.
	All provinces and territories adopt custody and access language similar to that in Ontario's <i>Children's Law Reform Act</i> , Section 24, describing <i>Best interests of the child test</i> and ensuring consideration of incidents of violence and distinguishing those from self-defence and defence of others.
Supervised Access and Exchanges	Increase funding for and development of supervised access and exchange programs and locations.
Financial	Expand the authority of government child-support enforcement agencies and minimize the ability of support payers to evade their responsibilities.
	Properly resource child-support enforcement agencies, using reallocated monies from social assistance coffers.
	All child-support orders automatically require the payer to provide annual financial information to the recipient so women can seek child support increases where appropriate.
	Prohibit the operation of private child support collection agencies that take a percentage of the support in exchange for pursuing the payer.
Common-Law Relationships and Family Property	Amend legislation dealing with the division of family property to define spouse to include common-law partners.
Property Rights of First Nations Women	Amend the <i>Indian Act</i> in a process with national organizations representing First Nations women and respectful of their input to enable First Nations, Métis and Inuit women on reserve to have the same rights to real property as women who do not live on reserve, while still respecting the right of Aboriginal people to self-government.

PROVINCIAL/TERRITORIAL

Child Protection	Implement child protection practices that apply a differential response, that work with the mother by supporting her custody case (for example, by providing an affidavit to corroborate her evidence about the abuser) and that hold the abuser accountable (for example, by imposing conditions on his behaviour rather than on hers).
Housing and Child Protection	Child protection and housing services develop a collaborative approach to ensure women's eligibility for affordable and appropriate housing.
Enforcement of Family Court Orders	The RCMP, provincial police and band police develop a cross-jurisdictional protocol with respect to the enforcement of provincial family court orders that ensures the safety of women and children and respects First Nations, Métis and Inuit sovereignty.
CRIMINAL LAW	
Domestic Violence Courts	Undertake a comprehensive evaluation of existing specialized courts to identify lessons learned and best practices to assist in the development of improved and expanded courts.
	Expand specialized domestic violence courts, custom designed to meet unique regional needs, to all court jurisdictions, with adequate funding to ensure proper training for all court personnel and a full array of support services for women.
Legal Aid	Expand legal aid eligibility criteria in domestic violence cases to cover situations that do not involve the possibility of incarceration.
Programs for Abusive Partners	Expand funding so programs can be provided for men who wish to self-refer, before there is criminal involvement.
	Provide funding for the development of culturally and linguistically appropriate programming for abusive men.
Mandatory Charging	Provincial and territorial Status of Women Committees and departments hold a national consultation to discuss the effectiveness, limitations and challenges related to mandatory charging and the possibility of other approaches to increase the safety of women and children and hold perpetrators accountable. This consultation would include preliminary research to gather data about the use of mandatory charging, women's lived experiences of violence and of the criminal response and participation by violence against women advocates as well as all players in the criminal system.
RECOMMENDATIONS TO SUPPORT WOMEN IN THE NORTH	
Emergency Shelter	Establish direct federal funding for emergency shelters for women in crisis that also accommodate children.
Priority Housing	All three territories implement priority housing policies which ensure that women living in violence or exhibiting other high needs are prioritized on access lists held by subsidized housing providers.
Low-Income Housing	Ensure an adequate supply of a variety of low-income housing stock is available for women and children in environments that can be kept safe and secure.
	Ensure that women living in violent situations are in a position to retain access to their home and have their partner removed from the lease.
Second-Stage Housing	Fund the creation of low-income second-stage transitional housing options for women leaving shelters to ensure opportunities for healthy choices.

PROVINCIAL/TERRITORIAL

Debt as a Barrier	Debt being carried by women be reviewed by social service providers and, where it can be established that it is a matrimonial debt that is being dealt with, the barrier to accessing services eliminated.
Evictions	Move swiftly to enact legislation protecting security of tenure, equitable rent and the quality of rental housing.
Access to Service	Address the complex interconnections of existing programs and benefits to ensure the availability for working women of a shelter allowance or housing subsidy adjusted to family size and housing costs.
Integrated Service Model	Enhance capacity of service providers to work effectively with homeless women, providing information about where they can find help, such as how to access educational programs and affordable daycare.
Finances and Income Security	Ensure social assistance levels are livable. Oversee development of financial services designed to meet the needs of the poor by offering a range of tailored options to women, including cheque cashing and micro-credit programs, and by eliminating bad debt to housing authorities.
Rent Supplements	Introduce portable rent supplements that are not tied to a particular location and do not require landlords to designate particular rent supplement units.
Education and Training	Enhance funding and access to education and training programs including literacy, adult basic education, pre-employment, life skills, and trades training for women.
Child Care	Fund emergency shelters to provide free child care so women have the opportunity to apply for services and programs. Fund adequate subsidized child care spaces in communities.
Public Education	Fund activities directly focused on enhancing public awareness of homelessness and homelessness-related issues in women. These activities could include the production of tools and documents for public awareness and would use the available media, including newspapers, television and the Internet.
RECOMMENDATIONS TO SUPPORT FIRST NATIONS, MÉTIS AND INUIT WOMEN	
Autonomous Policy Development	Programs responding to violence against women in Aboriginal communities, particularly shelter and housing programs, be developed autonomously by those communities and funded in such a way that allows the very different cultural needs and realities that prevail from community to community to be reflected in the programming.
Cultural Competence	Ensure programs services accessed by Aboriginal families are culturally competent and sufficiently flexible to accommodate the cultural realities, needs and approaches of those families, particularly in the areas of shelter and housing.
RECOMMENDATIONS TO SUPPORT WOMEN WITH MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES	
Sheltering Women with Mental Health and Addiction Issues	Increase provincial funding to VAW shelters to allow them to enhance staffing levels in order to integrate women with mental health and addiction issues into their programming. Provide targeted funding to VAW shelters so staff can obtain specialized training to enable them to effectively support women with mental health and addiction issues. Expand the mandate of extant inter-ministerial committees dealing with VAW to explicitly include an intersectional approach to addressing violence against women with mental health and/or addictions issues. Establish inter-ministerial committees where they do not currently exist.

PROVINCIAL/TERRITORIAL

Removing Barriers to Accessing Shelter	Increase funding to VAW shelters, second-stage housing and longer term housing designed for VAW survivors to ensure both physical and cultural accessibility and cultural competency throughout the sector.
	Ensure adequate training for staff and adequate staffing complements in shelters and second-stage housing in order to support women with disabilities, Deaf women and women from racialized communities. In particular, support and encourage ASL training for shelter and second-stage-housing staff and cultural competency training throughout the sector.
RECOMMENDATION TO SUPPORT RURAL WOMEN	
Access to Transportation for Rural Women	VAW agencies work with regional boards of education to develop protocols to allow adults to ride on unoccupied school buses on their regular routes.
RECOMMENDATIONS ON VIOLENCE AWARENESS AND PREVENTION PROGRAMS AND INITIATIVES	
Education of Children and Youth	Allocate appropriate and designated funding to support programs around women's equality, healthy relationships and positive conflict resolution that form part of the educational curriculum in all schools. This curriculum must reflect cultural realities and, in particular, speak to the needs of First Nations, Métis and Inuit families and communities, racialized communities and immigrant communities. Where appropriate, this curriculum should be delivered by non-school staff. These should be mandatory classes not requiring parental consent.
	Fund gender-specific extracurricular programming to support the development of healthy relationships and positive conflict resolution strategies as well as self-esteem for both boys and girls in collaboration with regional school boards.
Programs for Boys and Men	Provide sustainable funding for community-based as well as provincial and national men's violence prevention and awareness programs, through education, health and community services.
Mentor and Model	Fund mentoring programs, men to boys, to help address leadership vacuum (in collaboration with community-based groups and programs).
RECOMMENDATIONS ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING	
For Professionals	Education on violence against women be a mandatory in professional training for all professionals women may encounter as they move through shelters, courts, hospitals, income security programs, housing and into community.
	Mandated in-service violence against women training be part of every professional college's requirements for its members to maintain standing.
	Fund training for all coordinated housing access centres and third-party-referring organizations to ensure that the criteria for abuse priority for subsidized housing is well understood.
	Establish mechanisms to ensure that new public education and training materials are available to those developing and providing training for professionals and to enable professionals to come together to discuss challenges and issues related to providing services to abused women.
Training for Police	Expand police training to increase the focus on family law issues and the role of police in enforcing family court orders.
	Consolidate approaches to violence against women training and make them consistent across the country, taking into account the need to address unique regional characteristics.

PROVINCIAL/TERRITORIAL

For Women at Risk	Bring a collaborative approach between the private and education sectors to the establishment, maintenance and expansion of skills training and retraining programs.
	Expand funding for community-based apprenticeship training programs and institute a system of no-interest loans and grants earmarked for abused women.
	Include a literacy/ESL component designed to meet the needs of the women in the program in all training/retraining programs and give abused women who enter such training and re-training programs full access to free child care for their children under the age of six.

FOR PROVINCIAL and TERRITORIAL ATTORNEYS GENERAL

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LEGAL CHANGES- FAMILY LAW	
Coordination of Family and Criminal Courts	Establish a single case-management system approach in violence against women cases to ensure that orders, in particular no-contact and custody and access orders, are shared between family and criminal court.
Bail Orders	Include formal risk assessments and information about family court proceedings and orders in mandatory bail submissions by Crown Attorneys.
Mandatory Charging	Hold a national consultation to discuss the effectiveness, limitations and challenges related to mandatory charging and the possibility of other approaches that would increase the safety of women and children while also holding perpetrators accountable for their behaviour. This consultation would include preliminary research to gather data about the use of mandatory charging, women's lived experiences of violence and of the criminal response and participation by violence against women advocates as well as all players in the criminal system.
RECOMMENDATIONS TO SUPPORT WOMEN WITH MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES	
Sheltering Women with Mental Health and Addiction Issues	Expand the mandate of extant inter-ministerial committees dealing with VAW to explicitly include an intersectional approach to addressing violence against women with mental health and/or addictions issues. Establish inter-ministerial committees where they do not currently exist.
RECOMMENDATIONS ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING	
Training for Police	Expand police training to increase the focus on family law issues and the role of police in enforcing family court orders.
	Consolidate approaches to violence against women training and make them consistent across the country, taking into account the need to address unique regional characteristics.

FOR ABORIGINAL and FIRST NATION GOVERNMENTS

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LEGAL CHANGES – FAMILY LAW	
First Nations Women	Amend the <i>Indian Act</i> in a process with national organizations representing First Nations women and respectful of their input to enable First Nations, Métis and Inuit women on reserve to have the same rights to real property as women who do not live on reserve, while still respecting the right of Aboriginal people to self-government (collaboration with Aboriginal/First Nation organizations).
Enforcement of Family Court Orders	Develop a cross-jurisdictional protocol between the RCMP, provincial police and First Nation police forces with respect to the enforcement of provincial family court orders that ensures the safety of women and children and respects First Nations, Métis and Inuit sovereignty.

FOR MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT ACTION

RECOMMENDATIONS ON HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS	
Subsidized Housing Priority Lists	Amend policies governing subsidized housing priority lists to ensure that women living in shelters qualify and that women leaving shelters and transitional housing are given priority access to long-term, low-income government housing.
Subsidized Housing Eligibility	Amend eligibility requirements for subsidized housing to recognize the unique needs of women fleeing abuse. For example, policies prohibiting property ownership need to exempt abused women in appropriate situations.
	Permit supervisory staff discretionary authority to waive eligibility requirements to remove unfair barriers to housing for abused women.
Safe Housing Design and Safety Support	Incorporate safe building design measures, including security systems, lighting and safe parking into post-shelter housing for abused women.
	Include supports, specifically focused on safety, in post-shelter housing for abused women; for example outreach workers who have ongoing contact with women, helping them with safety planning and providing check-in systems.
Shortage of Affordable Housing Stock	Introduce building regulations when require private sector construction projects to include affordable housing units.
Leaving the Abuser	Ensure information about safe and affordable permanent housing is available to at-risk women who do not enter the shelter system. This information should support these women in making the transition to a violence-free life and be available in a variety of languages and formats.
Freedom of Contact	Require only the woman's name on the lease for post-shelter housing agreements. Policies and procedures dealing with the presence of men in these units should not result in de-housing women.
Second-stage Housing	Collaborate with federal and provincial/territorial government to build VAW-implemented second-stage housing projects across the country.
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LEGAL CHANGES - FAMILY LAW	
Housing and Child Protection	Child protection and housing services develop a collaborative approach to ensure women's eligibility for affordable and appropriate housing.
RECOMMENDATIONS TO SUPPORT WOMEN IN THE NORTH	
Child Care	Fund emergency shelters to provide free child care so women have the opportunity to apply for services and programs.
	Fund adequate subsidized child care spaces in communities.
Public Education	Fund activities directly focused on enhancing public awareness of homelessness and homelessness-related issues in women. These activities could include the production of tools and documents for public awareness and would use the available media, including newspapers, television and the Internet.
RECOMMENDATIONS TO SUPPORT FIRST NATIONS, MÉTIS AND INUIT WOMEN	
Cultural Competence	Ensure programs services accessed by Aboriginal families are culturally competent and sufficiently flexible to accommodate the cultural realities, needs and approaches of those families, particularly in the areas of shelter and housing.
RECOMMENDATION TO SUPPORT RURAL WOMEN	
Access to Transportation for Rural Women	VAW agencies work with regional boards of education to develop protocols to allow adults to ride on unoccupied school buses on their regular routes.

FOR OTHER AGENCIES, INSTITUTIONS and SECTORS

VAW SECTOR

RECOMMENDATIONS ON HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS	
Leaving the Abuser	Ensure information about safe and affordable permanent housing is available to at-risk women who do not enter the shelter system. This information should support these women in making the transition to a violence-free life and be available in a variety of languages and formats.
Safe Housing Design and Safety Support	Include supports, specifically focused on safety, in post-shelter housing for abused women; for example outreach workers who have ongoing contact with women, helping them with safety planning and providing check-in systems.
Second-stage Housing	Initiate a federal, provincial/territorial and municipal collaboration to fund VAW-implemented second-stage housing projects across the country.
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LEGAL CHANGES	
Criminal Law	Federal Department of Justice and federal Status of Women conduct a national consultation to discuss the effectiveness, limitations and challenges related to mandatory charging and the possibility of other approaches. This consultation would include preliminary research to gather data about the use of mandatory charging, women's lived experiences of violence and of the criminal response and participation by violence against women advocates as well as all players in the criminal system.
RECOMMENDATIONS TO SUPPORT FIRST NATIONS, MÉTIS AND INUIT WOMEN	
Autonomous Policy Development	Programs responding to violence against women in Aboriginal communities, particularly shelter and housing programs, be developed autonomously by those communities and funded in such a way that allows the very different cultural needs and realities that prevail from community to community to be reflected in the programming.
	Ensure programs services accessed by Aboriginal families are culturally competent and sufficiently flexible to accommodate the cultural realities, needs and approaches of those families, particularly in the areas of shelter and housing.
RECOMMENDATIONS ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING	
For Professionals	Education on violence against women be a mandatory part every professional training and practice across the professions.
	Mandated in-service violence against women training be part of every professional college's requirements for its members to maintain standing.
	Fund training for all coordinated housing access centres and third-party-referring organizations to ensure that the criteria for abuse priority for subsidized housing is well understood.
	Establish mechanisms to ensure that new public education and training materials are available to those developing and providing training for professionals and to enable professionals to come together to discuss challenges and issues related to providing services to abused women.

OTHER AGENCIES, INSTITUTIONS, SECTORS

COMMUNITY SOCIAL SERVICE AGENCIES

RECOMMENDATIONS ON HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS	
Leaving the Abuser	Ensure information about safe and affordable permanent housing is available to at-risk women who do not enter the shelter system. This information should support these women in making the transition to a violence-free life and be available in a variety of languages and formats.
Safe Housing Design and Safety Support	Include supports, specifically focused on safety, in post-shelter housing for abused women; for example outreach workers who have ongoing contact with women, helping them with safety planning and providing check-in systems.
RECOMMENDATIONS TO SUPPORT FIRST NATIONS, MÉTIS AND INUIT WOMEN	
Autonomous Policy Development	Programs responding to violence against women in Aboriginal communities, particularly shelter and housing programs, be developed autonomously by those communities and funded in such a way that allows the very different cultural needs and realities that prevail from community to community to be reflected in the programming.
Cultural Competence	Ensure programs services accessed by Aboriginal families are culturally competent and sufficiently flexible to accommodate the cultural realities, needs and approaches of those families, particularly in the areas of shelter and housing.

PRIVATE SECTOR

RECOMMENDATIONS ON HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS	
Safe Housing Design and Safety Support	Incorporate safe building design measures, including security systems, lighting and safe parking into post-shelter housing for abused women.
Freedom of Contact	Housing Providers Require only a woman's name on the lease for post-shelter housing agreements. Policies and procedures dealing with the presence of men in these units should not result in de-housing women.

FAMILY LAW COMMUNITY COORDINATING COMMITTEES

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LEGAL CHANGES - FAMILY LAW	
Supervised Access and Exchanges	Where communities are too small or isolated to support formal supervised access and exchange programs and locations, develop collaborative initiatives to ensure that child access takes place in a way that is safe for children and mothers and respectful of fathers.

OTHER AGENCIES, INSTITUTIONS, SECTORS

PROFESSIONAL SCHOOLS and COLLEGES

RECOMMENDATIONS ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING	
For Professionals	Education on violence against women be a mandatory part every professional training and practice across the professions.
	Mandated in-service violence against women training be part of every professional college's requirements for its members to maintain standing.
	Fund training for all coordinated housing access centres and third-party-referring organizations to ensure that the criteria for abuse priority for subsidized housing is well understood.
	Establish mechanisms to ensure that new public education and training materials are available to those developing and providing training for professionals and to enable professionals to come together to discuss challenges and issues related to providing services to abused women.

RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

REGIONAL CONSULTATION PARTICIPANTS

West - Calgary: November 12, 2008

Shashi Assanand, Lower Mainland Multicultural Family Support Services
 Judie Bopp, Four Worlds Centre for Developing Learning
 Diane Delaney, The Provincial Association of Transition Houses and Services of Saskatchewan
 Jean Dunbar, YWCA Calgary
 Pat Hagemann, Family Violence and Bullying Division of the Alberta Government
 Heather Hildred, RCMP E Division
 Terry Kopan, RCMP E Division Crime Prevention & Program Support Services
 Janice Morin, Canadian Red Cross
 Yeta, YWCA Calgary
 Leslie Tutty, University of Calgary
 Caroyln Woodrell, Awo-Taan Healing Lodge
 Jill Wyatt, YWCA Calgary

South - Toronto: November 17, 2008

Alicia Blanco, Transitional Support Housing Counselor
 Rolande Clément, Regroupement provincial des maisons d'hébergement et de transition pour femmes victimes de violence conjugale
 Brian Davis, Toronto Housing
 Anuradha Dugal, Canadian Women Foundation
 Sipporah Enuaraq, Pauktuutit Inuit Women's Association
 Ruth Goba, CERA - Center for Equality Rights in Accommodation
 Todd Minerson, White Ribbon Campaign
 Leesie Naqitarvik, Pauktuutit Inuit Women's Association
 Samantha Poisson, Domestic Violence Justice Initiatives, Ontario Victim Services Secretariat
 Lucya Spencer, National Organization of Immigrant and Visible Minority Women Against Abuse
 Nadine Wathen, University of Western Ontario

North - Yellowknife: November 27, 2008

Caroline Anawak, Quimaavik Women's Shelter
 Larissa Doyle, Fort Smith Sutherland House Women's shelter
 Theresa Ducharme, Sisters in Spirit
 Lyda Fuller, YWCA Yellowknife
 Arlene Hache, Yellowknife Women's Society
 Diane Jamieson, Alison MacAteer House
 Ann Kasook, Inuvik Transition House
 Rebecca Latour, GNWT Justice

RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

Hayley Maddeaux-Young, Government of the Northwest Territories - Department of Health and Social Services

Gisele Maissonneuve, Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre

Jolene Russell, Health and Social Services

Michelle Schmidt, Family Support Center

East - Halifax: December 1, 2008

Joanne Bernard, Alice Housing

Deborah Doherty, Muriel McQueen Fergusson Centre for Family Violence Research

Pamela Harrison, Transition House Association of Nova Scotia

Maureen Kearley, Family Care and Access House

Jane Ledwell, Advisory Council on the Status of Women

Jackie Matthews, N.B Coalition of Transition Houses

Lisa Murphy, Transition House Association

Lesley Poirier, Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women

Marsha Power Slade, Hope Haven

Elaine Smith, Transition House Yarmouth Nova Scotia - Juniper House

Judy Whitman, Department of Justice

Elaine Wychreschuk, NL Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women

RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS



BEYOND SHELTER WALLS PROJECT
Regional Consultations
AGENDA

9:30 - 10:00 a.m.: Welcome and Introductions

- Overview of project (Pamela Cross)
- Goals/framework for day (Pamela Cross)
- Final project outcomes (Pamela Cross)
- Participant introductions (all)

10:00 - 11:15 a.m.: Discussion Round One: Broad Strokes

- If you could make just one policy recommendation at each of the federal, provincial/territorial and municipal levels to improve the situation of abused women after they leave transitional housing, what would it be?
- What policy initiative is needed most in this region to address impediments faced by women looking for long term/permanent housing on leaving shelter?
- How can public policy take into account the needs of women from marginalized communities in your region?

11:15 - 11:30 a.m.: BREAK

11:30 - 12:30 p.m.: Discussion Round Two: Overcoming Barriers

There are many barriers for women in securing and maintaining long term, safe housing. Please identify one policy initiative at any level of government in each of the following areas that could help break down these barriers:

- having a large enough stock of suitable housing for women and their children
- meeting high rents
- integrating women safely with previously homeless men in housing
- landlord and tenant legislation and regulation
- second stage housing

RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

- mental health issues
- ongoing stalking by abuser

12:30 - 1:00 p.m.: LUNCH (provided on site)

1:00 - 2:15 p.m.: Discussion Round Three: Challenging Issues

- What should a national Aboriginal housing strategy – on and off reserve – look like? Who should lead it?
- What is the role of men and programming for men in ensuring that women can move on to lives free from violence?
- What is the appropriate systemic advocacy role for shelter workers in supporting women moving on from their shelter experience?
- Could changes to family law assist women in being safely housed? What would those changes be?
- What is the role for police services in ensuring safe housing for women?

2:15 - 2:30 p.m.: BREAK

2:30 - 3:15 p.m.: Discussion Round Three: Everything Else

- Should Canada develop a national women's housing network? What would it look like?
- Is there a place for affordable home ownership or should initiatives be focused on rental housing only?
- What ongoing research initiatives should be developed?
- What else should be part of a comprehensive policy paper on housing abused women after they leave shelter?

3:15 - 4:00 p.m.: Wrap up and conclusion

RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

INTERNAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

NAME	YWCA MEMBER ASSOCIATION
Freda Badry	YWCA Edmonton
Donna Brooks	Prince Alberta YWCA
Krisitine Cassie	YWCA Lethbridge
Ginette Demers	YWCA Sudbury
Tanis Crosby	Halifax YWCA
Lyda Fuller	YWCA Yellowknife
Sheila Loranger	Kamloops YMCA-YWCA
Barb Macpherson	Saskatoon YWCA
Laurie Oshaughnessy	YWCA Edmonton
Sylvia Samsa	YWCA Toronto
Michele Walker	Kamloops YMCA-YWCA
Jill Wyatt	YWCA Calgary

EXTERNAL REFERENCE COMMITTEE

NAME	AGENCY
Diane Delaney	Provincial Association of Transition Houses and Services of Saskatchewan
Sipporah Enuaraq	Pauktuutit Inuit Women's Association
Caroline Goard	Alberta Council of Women's Shelters
Jennifer Hagedorn	Manitoba Association of Women's Shelters
Keely Halward	Sunshine Coast Community Services Society
Pamela Harrison	Transition House Association of Nova Scotia
Michele Johnson & Beverly Jacobs	Native Women's Association of Canada
Louise Kitkul	North East Crisis Intervention Centre
Jackie Matthews	N.B. Coalition of Transition Homes
Todd Minerson	White Ribbon Campaign
Louise Riendeau	Regroupement provincial des maisons d'hébergement et de transition pour femmes victimes de violence conjugale
Elaine Smith	Transition House Yarmouth