



**WOMEN'S
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CANADA** | **HÉBERGEMENT
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National Housing Strategy Recognizes Needs of Most Vulnerable Women

Ottawa, 23 November 2017 – Women's Shelters Canada (WSC) welcomes the government's announcement of the National Housing Strategy that commits to at least 25% of investments to support projects that specifically target the needs of women and girls.

"Lack of availability of safe and affordable housing is a major barrier for women fleeing violence," said Lise Martin, Executive Director of Women's Shelters Canada. "The programs included in the strategy have the potential to make a significant difference in the lives of these women. Success will largely depend on ensuring that an intersectional feminist approach trickles down to the local levels where much of the delivery will occur."

Federal leadership in the area of housing has seriously lagged behind for the last 25 years. The inclusion of legislation and accountability mechanisms are key to ensuring that the Strategy has a long-lasting impact on the thousands of women who are homeless or living in sub-standard conditions.

Members of Women's Shelters Canada have recommended a dedicated federally operated program for shelter enhancement with the capacity to respond to the state of disrepair of many of Canada's shelters and to increase the number of shelters that are accessible to women and children with disabilities. These needs are particularly acute in rural and remote areas, in the North, and in Indigenous women's shelters. "The amount of new money earmarked for shelter spaces, approximately \$120 million over ten years, will need to be distributed within an equity model. We look forward to working in partnership with CMHC on developing this model," said Manon Monastesse, co-chair of WSC.

The portable housing benefit announced will, in theory, allow recipients to choose where they live. "Our data shows that a significant percentage of women fleeing violence move to another province. To respond to the needs of these women, the portability of the benefit must include the capacity to take it across provinces as well as provide options to women who are unable to access social housing within their province," said Jan Reimer, co-chair of WSC. "Given the urgent needs of abused women leaving violence, we urge the government to begin the implementation of the portable benefit in the next fiscal year."

Currently, second stage shelters in Canada cannot respond adequately to women's needs. Expanding the number of second stage shelters through the Co-Investment Fund will have an impact on the over capacity issue in emergency shelters. Following a period of residency in an emergency shelter, a stay that can vary from three weeks to three months, many women are in need of the security and psychosocial services available in second stage shelters.

We look forward to ongoing dialogue with the government to ensure that Canada's most vulnerable women can truly benefit from this strategy.

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Women's Shelters Canada brings together 14 provincial and territorial shelter organizations. We work as a unified voice to collaborate, educate, and innovate for systemic change that ends violence against women, making Canada a model for safety in the world.