



# 2017 BC Provincial Election Toolkit



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## INTRODUCTION TO THE TOOLKIT

The BC Society of Transition Houses (BCSTH) has developed this toolkit to encourage candidates running in the May 2017 provincial election to inform the people of British Columbia about how they will work to eliminate violence against women and children if elected. In order to raise awareness about violence against women in BC, we ask that our members, women serving organizations, individuals and other community groups draft letters to their local candidates to advocate for legislation, policy and practice commitments that benefit women and children experiencing gender-based violence.

In this toolkit you will find background information and key points that will help inform candidates about the nature and scope of violence against women in BC. This is not an exhaustive list by any means and we hope that you will add to and adapt this material to make it as useful as possible for your own organizations and communities. We have also provided questions you may wish to ask candidates as well as a letter template to candidates, statistics sheets and a reference list. Please feel free to adapt the resources in this toolkit to strengthen your local concerns and most pressing issues.

## VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN, YOUTH AND CHILDREN IN BC

Violence against women, youth and children in BC is an ongoing public health and safety crisis that remains a devastating daily reality for many. This violence affects people of all social, economic and cultural backgrounds, can result in lifelong impacts and creates an overwhelming health, social and economic burden mostly borne by women and their children.

Transition Houses, Second Stage Houses and Third Stage Housing programs, Safe House programs, and Children Who Witness Abuse programs across BC have a frontline view of the issues experienced by women and their children escaping violence. We strongly encourage all candidates to familiarise themselves with and listen to the experience and insight of this sector. Investment by our Provincial Government in violence against women support services, affordable housing, stronger criminal justice responses, income assistance and child care would offset what this pervasive social problem already costs BC.

- Every year in BC, more than 13,000 people seek police assistance to stop violence at the hands of current or former spouse or dating partner (Egilson, 2016).
- Every year more than 30,000 women and children are referred to counselling and outreach programs as a result of their experience of violence (Egilson, 2016).

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- Every year, more than 18,000 women and children access transition and safe houses to escape violence (Egilson, 2016).
- In just one day in 2012, 71 women in BC were turned away from Transition Houses (BCSTH, 2012). 73% of potential new residents in Transition Houses across Canada could not be accommodated during the 24-hour survey period in 2014 (Canadian Network of Women Shelters & Transition Houses, 2016).
- In addition to the human rights imperatives of doing all that we can to prevent violence against women, there are also strong economic arguments. The cost of violence against women is estimated to be \$7.4 billion per year in Canada (Zhang et al. 2012).



## HOUSING & HOMELESSNESS

### WHAT WE KNOW:

- Housing is a vital issue for women and their children experiencing violence. Timely access to safe, secure, affordable housing (to rent or own) is a crucial component enabling a woman to leave a violent partner and to prevent homelessness (United Nations, 2009, 2012).
- Our society expects women to leave violence but they are in danger if they are not able to access safe, affordable housing in a timely manner. In many cases, they face the very real risks of homelessness or further violence if they return home to the abusive partner.
- Transition Houses and Safe Homes provide much-needed emergency responses to women fleeing violence. However, they are not able to provide shelter to all those who need it and they are not designed for long-term stays. Similarly, there is not sufficient Second Stage Housing to meet demand. For example, in 2012, in just one day 237 women and children were turned away from Transition Houses, Second Stage Houses and Safe Home Programs (BC Society of Transition Houses, 2012).
- The limited capacity of Transition Houses and the lack of options following a stay means women and children who have left violence are at risk of homelessness, couch-surfing, living in vehicles or other unsafe and substandard accommodation or returning to the abuser.
- Research consistently demonstrates that Transition Houses and women's shelters across Canada are not able to meet the needs for shelter of every woman who contacts them
- Domestic violence is a leading cause of homelessness. Thus, the shortage of affordable housing in BC cannot be separated from the issue of domestic violence.
- The lack of access to a safe and secure place to live also increases the vulnerability of women and their children to child protection intervention and apprehension when they have to flee to unsafe, substandard living accommodation or remain with a violent partner.

### WHAT IS NEEDED:

- Increased operational funding allocated to Transition Houses, Safe Homes and Second Stage Housing Programs.
- Increased investment in a range of affordable housing options to rent or to own with units set aside with priority access for domestic violence survivors. This should include rent-geared-to-



income social housing, rent-controlled housing units in new and existing developments. Housing options that meet the needs of women with disabilities and older women should also be prioritised.

- Portable housing benefit that gives a household the freedom to choose where to live because it is not tied to a specific unit. The current Homeless Prevention Program (HPP) should be expanded and for best effect, accompanied by rent control.
- Stronger responses to discriminatory landlords who deny housing for and evict domestic violence survivors.
- An improved criminal justice response to violence against women – including breaches of protection orders – so that more women and children can remain safely in their own homes.

## QUESTION TO CANDIDATE

- *What will your party do to make housing affordable and available specifically for women and their children who are experiencing violence?*

## POVERTY

### WHAT WE KNOW:

- Poverty is a persistent barrier to women's ability to leave a violent partner and is often a reason for them having to return. Leaving violence often means leaving behind stable housing, financial security and possessions. It can result in relocation and the loss of employment.
- Any investment in raising income assistance rates and the minimum wage would reduce poverty and violence against women in BC. Increasing women's economic well-being increases their capacity to leave violence and is a powerful violence prevention strategy.
- Access to universal, affordable, high quality child care is a vital component to addressing gender inequality. It increases women's economic capacity and reduces the need for single parents to receive social assistance (Tiessen, 2015).



## WHAT IS NEEDED:

- Increase Income Assistance rates in line with the Market Basket Measure. Income assistance rates should then be indexed to inflation (See for example: Raise the rates: <https://raisetherates.org>).
- Raise the minimum wage. For example, raising it from \$10.85 to \$15 per hour would lift a worker above Statistics Canada's low-income threshold – a necessity given that BC is one of the most prosperous and expensive provinces to live in. Currently 1 in 4 employees in BC earn \$15 or less (Green, 2015).
- Invest in public childcare. See for example the \$10 a day campaign: <http://www.10aday.ca/>.
- Our priority is ending violence against women as a matter of social justice. There are also strong economic arguments supporting what we advocate for. Investment in these areas is associated with higher employee satisfaction, increased productivity and a more stable workforce. Higher incomes also mean that people have more money to spend, which creates more economic opportunities.

## HEALTH

### THE ISSUE:

Violence against women (VAW) has a wide range of negative effects on women's health, including their physical, psychological/mental and sexual/reproductive health. 1 in 3 women will experience physical or sexual abuse in their lifetime (WHO, 2012). Vulnerable and marginalized women, including Indigenous women, older women, women with disability and women with HIV are at a higher risk of experiencing violence. In fact, VAW is the most frequent cause of injury to women in Canada (Campbell, 2004). It is estimated that the Canadian health care system spends between \$408 million to \$1.5 billion each year on medical treatment because of VAW (Cohen & Maclean, 2004).

While physical injuries and death are the most obvious health impacts of violence, the more prevalent consequences are longer-term mental health problems (Wathen, 2012). There is strong evidence that supports the understanding that women's experiences of violence precede their substance use and/or mental health issues (Gatz et al., 2005; Humphreys et al., 2005; Purdon, 2008). In addition, women struggling with mental health issues and substance use issues are more vulnerable to violence, and are less likely to be able to access support services (Gatz et al., 2005; Testa et al., 2003). Women who have experienced violence in relationships are more likely to develop depression, anxiety and post-traumatic



stress disorder (PTSD) (Dutton, 2005; Logan et al., 2002). The World Health Organization has declared violence against women to be the leading cause of depression for women (Thara & Patel, 2001).

In terms of women's reproductive health, violence from an intimate partner is associated with gynecological disorders, infertility, pelvic inflammatory disease, pregnancy complications/miscarriage, sexual dysfunction, sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS, unsafe abortion, and unwanted pregnancy (Wathen, 2012). Fifty nine percent (59%) of spousal sexual assault victims reported being manipulated, drugged, or otherwise coerced, sometimes in combination with sexual assault through physical force (Statistics Canada, 2016).

## WHAT WE KNOW:

- An average of 232 women were admitted to a BC hospital for severe injuries sustained during intimate partner violence each year (Egilson, 2016).
- There were 3,238 police-reported sexual assaults in 2013. The actual number is significantly higher because an estimated 90% of sexual assault cases go unreported each year (Statistics Canada, 2016).
- Women who have a physical disability, health problem or mental health issue that limits their daily activity are more likely to experience spousal violence or sexual violence than people without these types of health issues (Breiding & Armour, 2015; Statistics Canada, 2016).
- Nearly two-thirds (64%) of senior victims of family-related homicides between 2004 and 2014 were women. Among female victims, a spouse was most often the perpetrator (47%) compared to male victims (5%) (Statistics Canada, 2016).

## WHAT IS NEEDED:

- Investment of money in prevention programs including school-based and community-based program.
- Mandatory training for health care professionals on the issues of violence against women. Health care professionals are often the first point of contact and it is vital that they have the knowledge and capability to talk to women about these issues.
- Increased mental health and substance use treatment services for women. This would not only support women already struggling with those issues, but it could effectively prevent further marginalization of a vulnerable group.



- A provincial policy on sexual assault.

## PREVENTION

### THE ISSUE:

- Currently, there is no provincial violence prevention program in BC.
- Attitudes towards violence and violent behaviours are formed in early years (Centre for Social Research and Evaluation, 2010; Roguski, 2015).
- Violence and its effects – against women, in schools, in dating relationships is a public health and safety issue that impacts British Columbians (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2016)

### WHAT WE KNOW:

- In order to decrease the rates of violence against women, children and youth, multiple prevention strategies must be used. These should be co-ordinated and be funded for the long term. Changing social attitudes and perspectives toward violence is possible through public education campaigns (Centre for Social Research and Evaluation, 2010; Roguski, 2015).
- School and dating violence can be prevented by implementing coordinated, well-funded programs (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2016; David-Ferdon, 2012). Examples from other jurisdictions include the It's Not OK campaign to end Family Violence (New Zealand) <http://areyouok.org.nz/> and The Fourth R (Ontario): <https://youthrelationships.org/>
- Widespread public education campaigns are effective in changing perceptions toward violence and violent behaviours (Centre for Social Research and Evaluation, 2010; Roguski, 2015).
- Schools are ideal locations to challenge attitudes, beliefs and behaviours that perpetuate violence.

### WHAT IS NEEDED:

The provincial [\*Violence Free BC\*](#) strategy lacks sufficient investment in programs and initiatives to significantly decrease violence in BC and requires an injection of funding in prevention programs. School-based prevention programs that are flexible, inclusive, experiential, have long term investment, youth involved, and are built on strong relationships between the school and the service provider (Status of Women Canada, 2016). School-based prevention programs should address dating violence, violence against women, misogyny, and influencing or changing social norms early on. MCFD and the



Ministry of Education support two school-based prevention programs. However neither the Seeds of Empathy program nor the Roots of Empathy program are focused on violence prevention. Rather, they are broader programs which increase social and emotional skills of children and youth, and address bullying.

- An example of one program in BC that is currently operating but without regular funding since 2007 is the **Violence is Preventable (VIP) program**. The VIP program increases awareness and knowledge of the effects that violence has on children and youth, challenges and changes attitudes about the silence and misperceptions about violence against women, supports educators, counselors and administrators increasing effective, sustainable support services for children and youth in schools.
- The VIP program, which clearly supports the Province’s Violence Free BC strategy’s goal of “engaging British Columbians to challenge and change attitudes that perpetuate violence” (British Columbia, n. d., pg 10), should be provided with ongoing, sustainable funding by the BC Government.

## QUESTION TO CANDIDATE

- *There is no provincial program that addresses the prevention of violence against women and their children in BC schools. How will your party take initiative to prevent violence against women and children?*

## MURDERED AND MISSING CANADIAN WOMEN

### THE ISSUE:

In BC and across Canada, women and girls are being murdered and are going missing - a critical public health and safety issue that has existed for decades. Every four days a woman is killed by a family member in Canada (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2016). More than 1,100 Indigenous women and girls have disappeared or been murdered in Canada since 1980, which is double an earlier estimate (Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 2014). In BC and Canada, women and girls make up over 50 % of the population and their health and safety is endangered on a daily basis.



## WHAT WE KNOW:

### In Canada

- Indigenous women make up 4.3 % of the Canadian population and represent 16% of the murder victims and 11.3% of the missing women. 49% of the women murdered in Canada are Aboriginal (Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 2014).
- In 2014, Indigenous people were murdered at a rate 6 times higher than non-Indigenous Canadians, with Indigenous women being 3 times more likely to report spousal abuse than nonindigenous women (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2016).
- Between 1980 and 2012, there were 1181 murdered and missing Indigenous women in Canada of which 1017 are homicide victims, 164 are missing and 225 cases are unsolved (Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 2014).
- In Canada, between 2003 and 2013, there were a total of 960 intimate partner homicides, an average of 87 deaths per year (Statistics Canada, 2015). Female intimate partners are murdered at a rate four times greater than for male intimate partner victims (Statistics Canada, 2014).
- Women and girls represent more than 75% of the attempted murders and 83% of murders that occur as a result of violence from an intimate partner (Statistics Canada, 2015)
- Women are more likely than men to be killed by a spouse, common-law partner or dating partner. Men were more likely to be a victim of a violent crime by someone outside their family than by a family member (Statistics Canada, 2016).
- Most victims killed by an intimate partner and murder-suicide were killed in a private residence, with 73% killed in the home they shared with the accused (Statistics Canada, 2011).

### In British Columbia

- From January of 2010 through December of 2015, 100 persons died as a result of intimate partner violence, of which 73 were deaths of an intimate partner. In BC, on average, 12 people are killed a year due to intimate partner violence (IPV) murder. (Egilson, 2016)
- 78% of the victims were women and 80 % were killed in their own homes. Less than one third of the victims had reported the violence to the police and 14% of the victims had a protection order. (Egilson, 2016)
- Men committed 85 % of the intimate partner violence homicides and female intimate partners were 5 times more likely to be murdered than male partners. (Egilson, 2016)
- 15 % of the murder victims were Aboriginal, which is a disproportionate representation as Aboriginal persons only make up 5% of BC's population. (Egilson, 2016)



- 27 children were living in the homes with an IPV victim, 2 children died during the murder and 3 children were injured or threatened but survived. 44% of these families had MCFD contact in the previous 12 months (Egilson, 2016)

## QUESTION TO CANDIDATE

- *How will your party take initiative to prevent violence against women and children? What role will your party play in the ongoing 2016 Federal Inquiry on Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women?*
- *How will your party meet the need of BC's families, youth and children who have been victimized by murder and missing sisters, mothers, grandmothers and aunts?*
- *How will your party reduce the disproportionate number of indigenous women and girls being murdered and going missing?*
- *The establishment of public transit along Highway 16 would result in increased community safety, economic well-being and community cohesiveness in a remote area that suffers from a tragic history of murdered and missing residents. How will your party meet this dire need?*

## TRANSITION HOUSE, SECOND STAGE HOUSE AND SAFE HOMES PROGRAM FUNDING

### THE ISSUE:

Most Transition Houses in British Columbia frequently operate with a single worker who, alone, provides support and information to resident women, youth and children while also responding to crisis calls,



managing in-take and referring women and children fleeing violence who have contacted the transition housing program for support and/or to seek residence.

The province must provide essential staffing to support the Transition House sector to provide vital services to resident women, children and youth fleeing violence as well as to reduce barriers to access for women who are impacted by substance use and mental health issues as a result of violence and for their children who are most at risk. It should be noted that, currently, there is provincial funding for operating Homeless Shelters across BC with two staff persons on every shift (BC Housing, 2012a, 19).

## WHAT WE KNOW:

### Transition Houses

Transition Houses provide short- to long-term shelter and related support services to women, children, and youth who have experienced or are at risk of violence. Transition House workers increase women's awareness of violence against women and Transition Houses are staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

- Most Transition Houses in BC operate with a single worker most of the time. Having double staffing at transition houses 24hours a day, 7 days a week is necessary for the safety of women, children and workers at the house.
- There are not enough Transition Houses in the province to meet the needs of women, children and youth fleeing violence and those that currently exist are operating over capacity.
- Food prices in BC have been increasing consistently (Statistics Canada, 2016). There has been no increase in funding to transition houses to offset this.
- Most Transition Houses provide some degree of child support but many are not funded to do so (BC Housing & BC Society of Transition Houses, 2009)
- Although transportation costs are high in rural and remote areas, ongoing, additional operational funding is not currently provided for it.
- Most Transition Houses do not have funding for child care and rely on volunteers to provide this essential service.

### Second Stage Houses

Second Stage Houses provide service-enhanced affordable temporary housing for women, children and youth who have recently experienced violence. They offer women, children and youth secure, affordable housing for 3 to 12 months, as well as support and programming that enable women and families to make decisions about their future.



- Most Second Stage Programs report inadequate operating funds. None of the second stage programs in BC have staff on-site 24 hours a day, 7 days a week (BC Housing, 2012b, 3).
- The lack of sufficient operational funds impacts their capacity to provide the level of support needed for the necessary child and youth support. More staff hours are needed to provide support and services to women and their children fleeing violence. These support and services include: providing referrals to appropriate services, early intervention with safety issues, activities for children, transporting women to appointments, families with more complex needs or families with specific cultural needs, finding appropriate long-term housing for women and children (BC Housing, 2015).
- Most programs rely on agency fundraising to supplement their revenues (BC Housing, 2012b). This fundraising work takes them away from their core business of supporting women and their children who have experienced violence.

## Safe Homes

Safe Homes are community-based networks of private homes that shelter women and their children. Typically offer short stay placements, but can be longer if required. Safe Home workers or coordinators also provide outreach services in small rural communities that are often geographically far apart.

- While the use of private homes to shelter women and children fleeing violence in BC's Safe Home Programs speaks to the dedication of those committed to ending violence in rural and remote locations, it is nevertheless, problematic that women, children and youth fleeing violence in many rural and remote parts of BC must depend on the generosity of private citizens for their safety, particularly knowing that doing so brings considerable risk to the families that shelter them.
- Most safe homes are under funded programs and rely on volunteers who receive small stipends per person for stays in their private homes. Funding for safe homes is very much needed in BC.
- Most Safe Homes are located in remote and rural areas and communities have none/or limited public transportation. This increases transportation costs associated with the daily operation and services provided by the Safe Homes (BC Housing, 2011).
- Most Safe Home coordinators work part-time or on a casual basis and some homes employ only one staff person. More funding for staff time and coverage is required.



## WHAT IS NEEDED:

- Ensure double staffing, 24 hours per day, seven days per week for all BC Transition Houses with contracts for eight or more beds. It should be noted that, currently, there is provincial funding for operating Homeless Shelters across BC with two staff persons on every shift.
- Provide funding that uniformly covers staffing and operations expenses for Second Stage Housing Programs so that these programs are more accessible for women whose experiences of violence have negatively impacted their mental wellness and their substance use practices, as well as for immigrant and refugee women and children fleeing violence, whose situations are made more complex by sponsorship agreements.
- Ensure Safe Homes have adequate levels of funding for staffing, coordination, and travel costs for transfers of families to services and/or transition houses. Funding should also be made available to build appropriate facilities outside of the homes of volunteers and to provide training for staff and volunteers – all in a concerted effort to reduce the risk of harm for women, youth and children fleeing violence as well as for rural and remote community members who are willing and able to support them.
- Increase funding for transportation to reflect and respond to travel costs in rural and remote areas for all transition housing programs.
- Ensure that all Transition Housing Programs (Transition Houses, Safe Homes, and Second Stage Housing Programs) meet basic accommodation and adaptation requirements for resident women, children and youth living with disabilities.
- Ensure that Transition House, Second Stage and Safe Home programs are funded for translation and interpretation costs to provide support to resident women, children and youth.

## QUESTION TO CANDIDATE

- *How will you ensure that the vital crisis services provided by Transition, Second Stage and Safe Home Programs receive increased and adequate funding?*

## CHILDREN WHO WITNESS ABUSE PROGRAM FUNDING

### THE ISSUE:

Children Who Witness Abuse (CWWA) is a free, confidential program provided across BC for children and youth aged 3 to 18 who have been exposed to violence. There are 86 CWWA programs and British Columbia is the only province and territory in Canada that has a provincial program supporting children and youth exposed to violence against their mothers. However, Children Who Witness Abuse Programs



have not received a funding increase since 2009, while the cost of living, supplies, materials, gas, food have all increased.

## WHAT WE KNOW:

- The majority of CWWA programs fund a part time CWWA Counsellor. However, in a 2012 BCSTH 24 Hour census report, in just one day, 426 children and youth in British Columbia were on waitlists for Children Who Witness Abuse Counselling which was greater than the 346 children, youth and mothers who received support by Children Who Witness Abuse Counsellors (BC Society of Transition Houses, 2012).
- The expectation of CWWA Counsellors to provide counselling to children and youth in large service areas (sometimes a 2-3 hour drive each way) while only funded part time means that many children and youth living outside of larger communities do not receive service. The continuous increase in gas prices with no increase to travel costs in operational budgets also play a factor.
- There is no sustainable funding for specialized Children Who Witness Abuse Counsellor training for new CWWA Counsellors.

## WHAT IS NEEDED:

- Increased funding to extend the service capacity of CWWA programs unable to meet demand and providing service across large geographic areas.
- Sustainable funding for specialized Children Who Witness Abuse Counsellor training for new CWWA Counsellors.

### QUESTION TO CANDIDATE

- *The majority of programs are contracted to provide part time hours. The majority of these same programs have long waitlists and large service delivery areas. With an increase demand for service and the rising cost of supplies, how will your party meet the need of BC's children exposed to violence?*
- *How will your party ensure that Children Who Witness Abuse Counsellors receive the specialized training needed to provide CWWA Counselling to children and youth exposed to violence against their mothers?*



## QUESTIONS TO CANDIDATES

In this section, we have compiled the list of questions to candidates pertaining to each topic, which can be found across the document. You can pull the questions from this section as necessary and can use them to plug into the letter templates that is also provided as a resource in this toolkit.

### AFFORDABLE HOUSING

- *What will your party do to make housing affordable and available specifically for women and their children experiencing violence?*

### PREVENTION

- *There is no provincial program that addresses the prevention of violence against women in BC schools. How will your party take initiative to prevent violence against women and children?*

### MURDERED AND MISSING CANADIAN WOMEN

- *What role will your party play in the ongoing 2016 Federal Inquiry on Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women?*
- *How will your party meet the need of BC's families, youth and children who have been victimized by murder and missing sisters, mothers, grandmothers and aunties?*
- *How will your party reduce the disproportionate number of indigenous women and girls being murdered and going missing?*
- *The establishment of public transit along Highway 16 would result in increased community safety, economic wellbeing and community cohesiveness in a remote area that suffers from a tragic history of murdered and missing residents. How will your party meet this dire need?*

### TRANSITION HOUSE, SECOND STAGE HOUSE AND SAFE HOMES PROGRAM FUNDING

- *How will you ensure that the vital crisis services provided by Transition, Second Stage and Safe Home Programs receive increased and adequate funding?*



## CHILDREN WHO WITNESS ABUSE PROGRAM FUNDING

- *The majority of programs are contracted to provide part time hours. The majority of these same programs have long waitlist and large service delivery areas. With an increase demand for service and the rising cost of supplies, how will your party meet the need of BC's children exposed to violence?*
- *How will your party ensure that Children Who Witness Abuse Counsellors receive the specialized training needed to provide CWWA Counselling to children and youth exposed to violence against their mothers?*



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## RESOURCES

### LETTER TEMPLATE

Date:

For the attention of:

Candidate's Name

Office Address

Dear Candidate's Name,

As we approach the May provincial election, I, on behalf of the Agency Name, would like to know the positions of our local candidates on important questions relating to ending violence against women in BC.

Insert short agency description here if you want

As someone who supports women and children experiencing and fleeing gender based violence, I am well aware of the importance of politicians in achieving adequate outcomes that will support women and children experiencing violence. These outcomes impact the safety and lives of women and children. Some questions for you based on our immediate concerns follow.

Choose backgrounders and points from this toolkit and select which topics are most relevant to your community. The following are **only examples**:

1. Housing is a vital issue for women and their children experiencing violence. Timely access to safe, secure, affordable housing (to rent or own) is a crucial component enabling a woman to leave a violent partner and to preventing homelessness (United Nations 2009, 2012). Thus, the shortage of affordable housing in BC cannot be separated from the issue of domestic violence. We encourage you and your party to increase investment in a range of affordable housing options to rent or to own with units set aside with priority access for domestic violence survivors. This should include rent-g geared-to-income social housing, rent-controlled housing units in new and existing developments. Housing options that meet the needs of women with disabilities and older women should also be prioritised. Also an improved criminal justice response to violence against women – including breaches of protection orders – so that more women and children can remain safely in their own homes.



***What will your party do to make housing affordable and available specifically for women and their children who are experiencing violence?***

2. In BC and across Canada, women and girls are being murdered and are going missing and this critical public health and safety issue has existed for decades. Every four days a woman is killed by a family member in Canada. (Chief Public Health Officer's Report on the State of Public Health in Canada: A Focus on Family Violence in Canada, 2016) More than 1,100 indigenous women and girls have disappeared or been murdered in Canada since 1980, double an earlier estimate. (Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women RCMP National Operational Overview 2014) In BC and Canada, women and girls make up over 50 % of the population and their health and safety is endangered on a daily basis.

***How will your party reduce the disproportionate number of indigenous women and girls being murdered and going missing?***

***What role will your party play in the ongoing 2016 Federal Inquiry on Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women?***

3. Currently, there is no Transition House in our community of **INSERT COMMUNITY** which is placing pressure on services in surrounding areas as well as limiting the options of women requiring safety in. In a neighbouring community, **Agency Name** supported **# of** women and **#of** children in 2016 however **#of** women and **#of** children were turned away due to lack of capacity. In a 2012 report, in just one day, 71 women in British Columbia were turned away from Transition Houses<sup>1</sup>. According to a 2014 national survey, 73% of potential new residents in Transition Houses across Canada could not be accommodated during the 24-hour survey period<sup>2</sup>.

***With an increase demand for shelter when fleeing violence, how will your party meet the need of BC's women and children needing shelter?***

4. Children Who Witness Abuse (CWWA) is a free, confidential program across BC for children and youth aged 3 to 18 who have been exposed to violence in their relationships. There are 86 CWWA programs and British Columbia is the only province and territory in Canada that has a provincial program supporting children and youth exposed to violence against their mothers.

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<sup>1</sup> 2012 24 Hour Census Report. BC Society of Transition Houses. <http://bcsth.ca/publications/2012-24-hour-census-report/>

<sup>2</sup> Shelter Voices 2015. Canadian Network of Women Shelters and Transition Houses. <http://endvaw.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/ShelterVoices-2016-WEB.pdf>



However, Children Who Witness Abuse Programs have not received a funding increase since 2009, while the cost of living, supplies, materials, gas, food have all increased. The majority of CWWA programs fund a part time CWWA Counsellor. However, in a 2012 BCSTH 24 Hour census report, in just one day, **426** children and youth in British Columbia were on waitlists for Children Who Witness Abuse Counselling which was greater than the **346** children, youth and mothers who received support by Children Who Witness Abuse Counsellors<sup>3</sup>.

***With an increase demand for service and the rising cost of supplies, how will your party meet the need of BC's children exposed to violence?***

The reality of women and children not having adequate support whether it be access to affordable housing, healthcare, safe transportation, low income assistance and rental supplement rates, being turned away from transition houses due to lack of space, be on waitlists for underfunded children's programs is dangerous, is putting lives at risk, and is a matter of shame for a province which has a vision for a 'Violence Free BC'.

I would be very grateful to hear your responses on these **four** questions, and also on any other points you feel are important for eliminating gender based violence in BC.

Sincerely,

**Name**

**Title**

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<sup>3</sup> 2012 24 Hour Census Report. BC Society of Transition Houses. <http://bcsth.ca/publications/2012-24-hour-census-report/>



## HOW TO VOTE

*We want to acknowledge First Call BC for the following information.*

During the election, each political party can put forward a candidate in every voting region (called Ridings). You vote for the candidate you want. The candidate that gets the most votes becomes a Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA). That MLA represents the people in your Riding. The party that gets the most MLA's elected forms the Government. The party with the next most MLA's elected forms the Opposition. Voting allows you to choose who you think will best represent you and your community. Your choice helps decide who will form the government in BC.

### WHO CAN VOTE?

Everyone who is a Canadian Citizen, has lived in BC for the last six months and who is 18 years of age or older on voting day can vote in this election if they are on the voters' list. You also have to live in the riding where you are voting.

### HOW DO I GET ON THE VOTERS LIST?

If you are already on the voters' list you will receive a voting card in the mail. If you do not receive a voting card, call Elections BC or go to this website:

<https://eregister.electionsbc.gov.bc.ca/OVR/RegistrationActivity.aspx>

If you aren't on the voters' list on Election Day you can still register at the polling station when you vote. However, there may likely be line-ups and you will need two pieces of I.D. with your name, address, and signature. Check this link to see the list of documents that are acceptable:

<http://www.elections.bc.ca/index.php/voting/voter-identification/>

### WHERE DO I VOTE?

On Election Day you vote at a "polling station". The address of the polling station will be sent to you in the mail along with your voters' card. If you don't get this information, call your Elections BC office and ask them where you should vote.

### CAN I VOTE ON OTHER DAYS?

Yes. "Advance voting" is available from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. on the Saturday and Sunday two weeks before election day. It is also available from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. on the Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday of the week before election day.

## **16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence**

This is a one-pager of talking points that may assist when you are advocating on the issue of men's violence against women and the importance of maintaining a gendered analysis of this issue.

### **Statistics that point to the prevalence of violence perpetrated by men against women in intimate relationships:**

- One out of every 3 women will experience physical or sexual abuse in their lifetime (Taylor, 2016).
- Women experience intimate partner victimization at a rate more than 3 times higher than men (World Health Organization, 2012).
- In Canada in 2014, 57,835 girls and women were victims of family violence, accounting for 7 out of every 10 reported cases (Taylor, 2016).
- Every 4 days a woman is killed by a family member in Canada (Taylor, 2016).
- Women are more likely to be a victim of a violent crime committed by a family member than by someone outside their family. Men are more likely to be a victim of a violent crime by someone outside their family than by a family member (Statistics Canada, 2014).
- 80% of women are the victims of police-reported intimate partner violence compared to 20% of men (Statistics Canada, 2013).

### **What about research that suggests that women are 'just as violent' as men in intimate relationships?**

- There are problems with the methodology that these kinds of studies have used. They use a survey tool called a Conflict Tactics Scale.
- As the name suggests, it is designed to focus on 'conflict' (disagreement) rather than 'control' which underpins the power dynamic of much violence against women.
- Therefore, the Conflict Tactics Scale does not take account of initiation, intention, prior history, or patterns of violence. It does not include the significant harm from psychological, emotional and economic abuse, social isolation, intimidation, stalking and manipulation involving children (Kimmel 2002).
- When women do use violence in intimate relationships, it is more likely to be in self-defence or through 'fighting back'. Furthermore, they sustain more injuries and those injuries are more severe than those sustained by men (Johnson 2006).

### **The need for more funding and services to respond to this chronic social and public health issue:**

- In just one day in 2012, 71 women in British Columbia were turned away from Transition Houses (BCSTH, 2012). 73% of potential new residents in Transition Houses across Canada could not be accommodated during the 24-hour survey period in 2014 (Shelter Voices, 2015).
- These numbers represent only a fraction of those experiencing violence in intimate relationships. Statistics Canada (2014) found that only 36% of victims of 'spousal violence' contacted or used formal victim services, crisis lines, shelters and transition houses, counsellors or social workers.

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# Violence Against Women in Canada Facts & Stats

6289

Women and children accessed services from a Transition House on a given day in 2014 in Canada.

523

Women and children were turned away due to resource issues on that same day.



Women are most likely to be abused by someone they know (i.e. current/former partner).



Violence Against Women costs Canada more than \$7.5 billion per year.



3-5 children/youth in every school classroom are exposed to domestic violence.



Almost all (96%) Canadians believe sexual activities should be consensual, yet only 1 in 3 know what it means to give consent.



Less than 1 in 5 women report violence or abuse.



Women are twice as likely to experience severe intimate partner violence (sexually assaulted, beaten, choked, threatened with a gun or knife) compared to men.



On average, a woman is killed by her intimate partner every 6 days in Canada.



67% of Canadians know a woman who have experienced physical or sexual abuse.



A quarter of female victims of spousal violence report 3+ of the long-term effects consistent with PTSD.



82% of employed women who have experienced domestic violence report it negatively affecting work performance.



Each year in Canada, up to 362,000 children and youth are exposed to violence in the home.



60% of women with a disability experience abuse of some form.

This infographic was created by BCSTH in honour of Prevention of Violence Against Women Week 2016

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