

16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence

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(SAFE, AFFORDABLE) HOUSING

November is Woman Abuse Prevention Month, which includes the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, a global campaign spanning November 25th to December 10th that calls for an end to gender-based violence.

Thunder Bay City Council formally declared GBV and IPV an epidemic on September 25th immediately following our deputation. In addition, City officials have invited us to present to the local social services administration board and the Intergovernmental Affairs committee, and also supply a list of actionable goals for City Council to better support survivors of GBV in our community.

Our 2023 16 Days campaign will focus on these actionable goals - efforts at the municipal and personal levels to address gender-based violence.

Why it matters

- For people experiencing intimate partner violence, the risk of homelessness and financial instability are of great concern when deciding to leave an abusive situation. In fact, intimate partner violence is a leading cause of homelessness among women (Maki 2021; Meyer 2016; Sullivan et al. 2019; Yakubovich and Maki 2021). (Statistics Canada, 2022)
- The previous City run women's homeless shelter was closed in the 1990's. Thunder Bay has one mixed gender emergency shelter, but women are less likely to stay there due to fears of violence. (Women tell us they would rather sleep rough than risk using the main shelter.)
- In Thunder Bay, there are two shelters for women and children fleeing violence: Faye Peterson House and Beendigen. They are often at capacity. According to Beendigen staff, 596 women had to be turned away in 2022-2023, more than double the number from the previous year. It's difficult to free up beds when there is a lack of affordable, safe and permanent housing available. There is also not enough transitional housing available for the number of women who need it.

ACTION

- Strengthen existing special priority status in social housing for women fleeing or fearing ongoing violence, including expediting transfer to a new unit if a woman is at risk or has been traumatized in her current social housing unit/building. Consider establishing transitional units for high-risk cases.
- Designate women experiencing GBV as precariously housed or at risk of homelessness Include precariously housed women in the official homelessness count (i.e.: women in crisis homes/shelters, staying with family/friends, couch-surfing, and women living with violence in their own homes).
- Support the creation of transitional housing for women leaving shelters.
- Address the legal systems' inadequate or unhelpful use of emergency exclusion or sole possession orders - make it a reliable possibility that women and children will be able to stay in their homes and abusers will be required by the courts to live somewhere else.
- We are awaiting a formal invitation from TBDSSAB to present our concerns and recommendations to their Board of Directors.

MANY CURRENTLY HOMELESS WOMEN WERE ORIGINALLY SURVIVORS OF INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

Resources

- National Housing Day 2023 Press Conference (Kristyn Wong-Tam, Toronto): <https://fb.watch/oAHRlHhlhe/>
- Canadian residential facilities for victims of abuse, 2020/2021 (Statistics Canada): <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2022001/article/00006-eng.htm>
- A Place of My Own: https://womanact.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/WomanACT_A-Place-of-My-Own-Report.pdf
- From the National Action Plan: <https://nationalactionplan.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Enabling-Infrastructure.pdf>
- Issue brief: Right to housing and violence against women: <https://womanact.ca/publications/issue-brief-right-to-housing-and-violence-against-women/>
- The State of Women's Housing Need & Homelessness in Canada: <https://womenshomelessness.ca/wp-content/uploads/Executive-Summary-State-of-Womens-Homelessness.pdf>
- Women's National Housing & Homelessness Network: <https://womenshomelessness.ca/>
- A Rights-Based, GBA+ Analysis of the National Housing Strategy (Prepared for the Canadian Human Rights Commission): <https://womenshomelessness.ca/wp-content/uploads/EN-Rights-Based-GBA-Analysis-of-NHS-28-Sept-2021.pdf>
- Safe-at-Home Housing for Victims of Domestic Violence (CMHC): <https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/nhs/nhs-project-profiles/2021-nhs-projects/safe-home-housing-victims-domestic-violence>

