

FAMILY SHELTER FOR MEN & CHILDREN

Executive Summary



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INTRODUCTION

Imagine that you and your child live each day in fear of family violence, but no one believes you because you're a man. That is the situation for thousands of Canadian fathers every year, and for over 450 men who reached out to our agency in 2018. Statistics Canada data and sociological research indicate that men suffer domestic abuse at unexpectedly high rates, yet their access to vital support services, including crisis centres and emergency counselling, is almost non-existent.

The critical missing piece are domestic abuse shelters for fathers and children. Single father families are the fastest growing family form in Canada. While the caregiving role of dads quickly expands, fathers who are suffering violence in the home still have no safe place where they can escape with their children.

The long-held belief that men did not suffer family violence at rates sufficient to establish shelters is a view that is quickly changing. In August 2018, several Alberta women's shelters released a ground-breaking report, *Shelter 2.0*, acknowledging the victimization of men and recommending that shelters "need to expand our focus to include, for example, men and members of the LGBTQ2S+ community who are victims."¹ Meanwhile, a number of women's shelters have begun opening their doors to abused men.²

In March 2019, the government of the UK released its first-ever "Position statement on male victims of crimes" and earmarked one million pounds to charities that support men and boys who have experienced domestic violence.³ These funds will expand emergency services for male victims. In announcing these historic measures, Victoria Atkins, the UK Minister for Crime, Safeguarding and Vulnerability, stated "Men can, and do, suffer from crimes such as domestic and sexual abuse."³

These remarkable developments signal a breakthrough in community awareness that domestic abuse is a serious public concern that requires both a gender-inclusive and a gender-sensitive approach. Our proposal builds on these trends and reflects feedback and resources which were generously supplied by women's shelter Executive Directors and staff in the Violence Against Women department within the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services. Our collaborative approach will be maintained through our Advisory Board, composed of leading members of the victim service, shelter, police and academic communities.

"Domestic violence against men is frequent and significant and a rarely acknowledged fact."

Rita Demontis, *Men also suffer from domestic abuse*, Sun newspapers, June 24 2016.

PROPOSAL OVERVIEW

The Canadian Centre for Men and Families will open Ontario's first dedicated shelter facility for abused men and children.

OBJECTIVES

- 24/7 community-based emergency shelter and crisis support services
- Provision of residential supports (food, blankets, hygiene products)
- Canada's first 24 hour/day helpline for male victims of domestic abuse
- Emergency case management, including safety planning, referrals and system navigation
- Emergency and ongoing trauma counselling
- Housing application support
- Legal clinic and assistance with the justice system
- Support Group for Male Survivors of Domestic Abuse
- Fathering After Separation or Divorce

COLLABORATIVE SHELTER MODEL

We aim to establish the Shelter in collaboration with the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services, the Ontario Ministry of the Attorney General, and the City of Toronto, all of whom fund and/or regulate shelters and services for abuse victims. We intend to operate as similarly as possible to existing Violence Against Women (VAW) shelters, according to the same Shelter Standards established by the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services. Through our partnership with the VAW community, we hope to draw on the experience and knowledge of those who have come before us and to demonstrate our firm commitment to a collaborative model which improves services for the benefit of all.

FACILITY DETAILS

The proposed space is a house or a mixed-use commercial/residential property. The facility, estimated value \$1.5 million, will accommodate up to six families with thirteen beds. Families will range in size from single men to families of four. The facility will operate as an emergency or short-term shelter, with stays not to exceed 90 days, barring exceptional circumstances.

BACKGROUNDER

A Growing Acknowledgment of Male Victimization

We have long known that domestic violence spans all ethnicities, ages and socioeconomic status. Now we are increasingly aware that domestic violence also spans all genders, gender identities and sexual orientations. Our proposal is based on an emerging core consensus that the rate of male victimization is much higher than is publicly recognized and that the consequences of this violence on men and their children are severe.

Facts and Figures

The portrait painted of family violence will differ considerably depending on the technique used for collecting data. Police data show a significant majority of female victims, while large scale population surveys report gender symmetry. A major reason for the difference is that police data capture instances of abuse which are consistent with institutional policies, often based on historic views of domestic violence. Police data record only those incidents which police choose to treat as domestic violence. Most police agencies in Canada are directed to employ a gender lens when dealing with domestic violence and will often decline to take action against an abusive woman.⁴ This may relate to why male victims are significantly more likely to report dissatisfaction with police, according to the 2014 Canadian General Social Survey (GSS).⁵

The largest study on domestic violence ever completed, known as *The Partner Abuse State of Knowledge Project*, summarized 1,700 peer-reviewed studies. It concludes that *“women perpetrate physical and emotional abuse, and engage in control behaviors, at comparable rates to men.”*⁶ According to the 2014 GSS, a nearly equal proportion of men and women reported having experienced spousal violence within the preceding five years, specifically 342,000 women and 418,000 men.⁷ The emergence of *Partner Assault Response* intervention programs designed for female perpetrators of domestic violence is another indicator that female perpetration – and by extension male victimization – is real.

Male Victims of Severe Violence

A large body of evidence asserts that male and female victims sustain similar levels of severe violence. Canadian data indicate that 22% of male victims and 19% of female victims of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) were found to have experienced severe physical violence along with controlling behaviours.⁸ Women were twice as likely as men to experience being sexually assaulted, beaten, choked or threatened with a gun or a knife, while men were more than three and one-half times more likely than women to be the victim of kicking, biting, hitting or being hit with weapons or items.

Gender Differences in the Effects of Domestic Violence

A meta-analytic review concluded that of those injured by a partner, 38% were men and 62% were women.⁹ A similar finding was reported in the 2014 GSS, where 40% of female victims and 24% of male victims reported physical injuries.¹⁰ Though men and women commit severe violence at similar rates, women more often suffer severe injuries. According to research by Straus & Gelles, this phenomenon *“can in large part be explained by the greater average size, height, weight and strength of men, thereby increasing the risk of injury among women.”*¹¹ Three quarters of victims of domestic homicide are women and one quarter are men.¹²

Without in any way underplaying the severity of female victimization, violence against men also results in serious physical consequences. Denise Hines and Emily Douglas studied male victims who contacted the US National Domestic Abuse Helpline. Within this sample, 58% had PTSD, 20% had experienced extreme violence (choking, using a knife, burning with scalding water, targeting of their genitals) and 78% were injured, sustaining on average eleven injuries.¹³ The psychological consequences are similar among men and women. The 2014 GSS found that most of the long-term effects of traumatic domestic violence, such as PTSD symptoms, did not differ significantly between the genders.

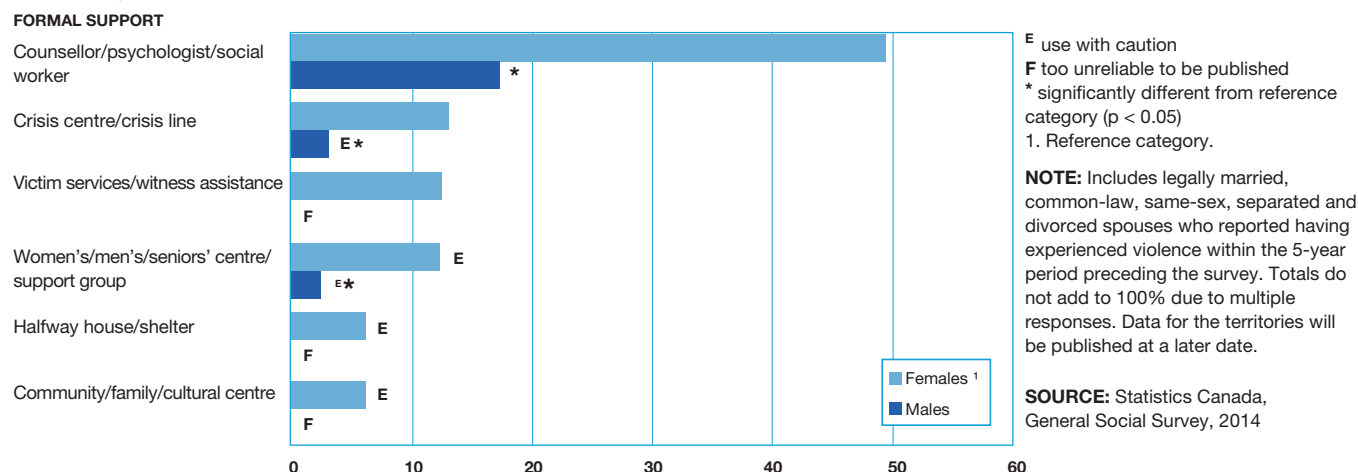
Conclusion

Domestic abuse is a serious issue for women and comprehensive intervention programs must continue to expand to guarantee women live lives free of violence. At the same time, men also suffer severe abuse with serious consequences for them and their children. It is appropriate that resources be mobilized on addressing the gap in services for men.

Access to Critical Services and Support

The 2014 GSS concluded that despite high levels of victimization, male victims are significantly less likely to have access to essential support services like counselling, crisis centres, victim services or domestic abuse shelters. The table below is reproduced from Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile (2014).¹⁴

Chart 1.4 | Formal supports used by victims of self-reported spousal violence, by sex, 2014.



Research by Dr. Emily Douglas and Dr. Denise Hines into the help-seeking behaviours of men supports the case for a shelter for male victims. They found, somewhat counterintuitively, that men do engage in help-seeking behaviours. In fact, 43.7% of male victims contacted a domestic violence agency, 23.4% contacted a hotline and 66.2% reached out to a mental health professional. Unfortunately a majority of those men were told “We only help women” and 40% were accused of being the real perpetrator, which is an outrageous form of revictimization.¹⁵ The conclusion of this research is remarkable: “The resources providing the least support to men seeking help for IPV victimization are those that are the core of the DV service system: DV agencies, DV hotlines and the police.”

We share these findings not to lay blame, but rather for us to better understand the problem which our proposal is seeking to address. The conclusion, that men will seek help but that help is often not available or not receptive to men as victims, makes a strong case for a domestic violence shelter dedicated to the needs of men and their families. The result would be an improvement in family health. Douglas and Hines discovered that positive help-seeking experiences are associated with better mental health outcomes: “for each additional positive helpseeking experience, men were about 40% less likely to abuse alcohol in the previous year. For each additional negative helpseeking experience men were 1.37 times more likely to meet clinical cutoff of PTSD.”¹⁶

The Government of Canada document “Shelters for abused women in Canada, 2014” found that in 2014 there were 627 shelters that offered services to abused women and only 6% of these venues allowed the admission of adult men.¹⁷ This number is on the rise as, happily, more women’s shelters have begun admitting men as a result of the growing awareness of male victimization.

Will Men and their Families Use a Shelter?

Elements of this proposal have precedent in Canada and the US. The Manitoba Men’s Resource Centre in Winnipeg provides residential space for men and children fleeing domestic abuse. In the last 12 months, they were regularly at capacity, registering 830 bednights of use. In Montreal, the Maison Oxygène offers shelter and support services for fathers and children in crisis. The Taylor House in Batesville, Arkansas, operates an abused men’s shelter with nine beds. They have been at capacity for the last six months. Although we do not yet operate a shelter, we receive about a dozen calls a week from Toronto men looking for shelter as a result of domestic abuse, and another fifteen calls a week from men outside the GTA. While the trend of women’s shelters accommodating men is a positive development, a shelter specifically dedicated to male victims is vital, according to research commissioned by the Canadian Centre for Men and Families and funded by Homelessness Partnering Strategy, an agency of the Government of Canada. Men were found to be twice as likely to report a willingness to access a domestic abuse shelter when it is explicitly dedicated to men. Researchers also found that abused men rarely receive the services they need from a homeless shelter that serves the general homeless population.

HOW OUR SHELTER WILL BENEFIT WOMEN AND THE COMMUNITY

Domestic violence was once ignored as a private matter to be left behind closed doors. Now we treat it as a serious problem of great public concern. Violence Against Women (VAW) advocates, academics and professionals are responsible for achieving this profoundly positive transformation in attitudes and public policy. We applaud these efforts and we are inspired by this history. We are partnering with the VAW community to expand the services available to all families fleeing abuse. Our work is part of an ongoing evolution aimed at making services ever more inclusive. It is not only men who are underserved. Research shows police and victim services are not adequately supporting lesbian and gay victims of violence in same sex relationships.¹⁸ Senior age victims, both men and women, are also falling through the cracks.

Bilateral Partner Violence: The most common form of domestic violence is bilateral violence perpetrated by mutually violent couples, and this is precisely the scenario in which women are most likely to be injured.¹⁹ Mutual violence can escalate over time and results in a higher likelihood of greater injury compared to situations of unilateral violence.²⁰ When we are sensitive to the victimization of both men and women, we may find more opportunities to block the escalation of mutual violence and we may therefore reduce the chance that a woman will be injured.²¹ Pamela C. Alexander of the Wellesley Centers for Women, argues in her 2015 book *Intergenerational Cycles of Trauma and Violence*:

*"Inattention to women's violence either in mutually violent relationships or unidirectionally violent relationships keeps women vulnerable in the current relationship (as they fail to seek help and minimize their partner's behavior in part because of their own violence) and keeps them at risk for finding themselves again and again in new abusive relationships."*²²

Intergenerational Family Violence: Family violence can be cruelly transmitted between generations. Regardless of gender, individuals who suffer family violence as children are more likely to perpetrate domestic violence as adults.^{23 24} They are also more likely to suffer revictimization by becoming a victim of domestic violence in adult relationships.^{25 26} The severe longterm effects on children of growing up witnessing family violence include *"behavioural effects such as aggression and delinquency, and psychological effects such as anxiety, depression and low self-esteem."*²⁷ According to research by the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics,²⁸ *"a history of family violence in the childhood home was notable among those who reported being the victim of spousal violence as adults."* The 2014 Canadian General Social Survey found that 51% of both male and female victims of spousal abuse reported that children had heard or seen the abuse they received.²⁹ With some domestic violence being intergenerational, family violence may involve a male victim in one generation and a female victim in the next.³⁰ Intervention programs that support victims regardless of gender will improve the health of children, families and communities by breaking the cycle of violence, either within a relationship or between the generations.

ABOUT THE CANADIAN CENTRE FOR MEN AND FAMILIES

Community Leadership: Our agency runs the first support program for male survivors of family violence at offices across Ontario. The federal government's Homelessness Partnering Strategy is funding a research project we developed entitled "Studying Male Homelessness as a Consequence of Domestic Violence." This is the first Canadian study to explore this question. Our agency supports clients who are referred to us from police, shelters, CAMH, CMHA and family health agencies. In recognition of our experience in this area, other agencies looking to improve their services for abused men regularly invite us to present workshops or training sessions to improve their services. These agencies include the following:

- Toronto Police Domestic Violence Committee
- Legal Aid Ontario Long Term Strategy for Domestic Violence
- Ontario Network of Domestic Violence Treatment Centres
- Canadian Mental Health Association
- Family Dispute Resolution Institute of Ontario
- Ontario 211

Access to Legal Support: Our agency is the first one to be accredited by Legal Aid Ontario to provide legal aid certificates specifically to male domestic violence victims.

Affordable Housing: The City of Toronto affordable housing agency has registered us as a "Verifier of Abuse," the first men's facility to participate in their Special Priority Housing Category for victims of spousal abuse.

Psychiatric Services: We have partnered with the Fathers Mental Health Network to provide fathers with access to free psychiatric services at Mount Sinai Hospital and St. Joseph Hospital.

Products for Men and Families: Canadian Centre for Abuse Awareness, the nation's largest victim support agency, has partnered with us to supply clothing, children's products and other vital goods to men and families in crisis.

Healing Journeys Conference: We host the first annual conference to focus on the intersection of men, trauma and mental health, bringing together mental health professionals, advocates and survivors.

FAMILY SHELTER PROPOSED BUDGET

PROPERTY VALUE: \$1,500,000

INITIAL CASH OUTLAY

Mortgage Down Payment	\$525,000.00
Land Transfer Tax	\$45,000.00
Additional Home Purchase Costs	\$3,500.00
Building Improvement	\$125,000.00
Building Furnishings	\$50,000.00
Total Initial Cash Outlay	\$748,500.00

OPERATING COSTS (ANNUAL)

Building	
Mortgage Payments (\$975,000)	\$59,280.00
Property Taxes	\$11,500.00
Insurance	\$20,000.00
Maintenance	\$10,000.00
Programs and Services	
Emergency services staff	\$80,000.00
Program materials	\$7,500.00
Meals and supplies for residents	\$21,000.00
Administrative	
2 on-site administrators	\$75,000.00
Office supplies	\$4,500.00
Utilities	\$6,000.00
Security	\$20,000.00
Total Annual Operating Expenses	\$314,780.00

Total 3 Year Project Cost	\$1,692,840
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3 YEAR FUNDING PLAN

Funds Currently Available	\$300,000.00
Grants from Corporations and Foundations	\$200,000.00
Annual Fundraising Campaigns	\$400,000.00
Ontario Government Funding	\$800,000.00
Total Revenue	\$1,700,000

FAMILY SHELTER FOR MEN & CHILDREN | ADVISORY BOARD

Full biographical information available at menandfamilies.org/familyshelter



Carrie McManus

Director of Programs, Sagesse Domestic Violence Prevention Society. Sagesse provides services to victims of abuse in 50 Alberta communities.



Steve Doherty

Executive Director, Youth Without Shelter, a Toronto shelter for homeless young people.



Geoff Thompson

Director of the Manitoba Men's Resource Centre, the only Canadian shelter for men fleeing intimate partner violence.



Margaret Newall

Pioneer in the women's shelter movement, Co-Founder and 10 years Chair, Prairieaction Foundation, and Co-Founder, RESOLVE (Research and Education for Solutions to Violence and Abuse).



Don Wright

Founder and 28 years Executive Director of the British Columbia Society for Male Survivors of Sexual Abuse, supporting male victims of sexual and domestic violence.



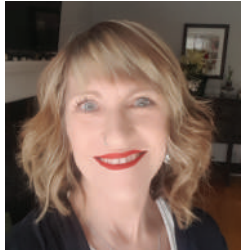
Alexandra Lysova

Assistant Professor of Criminology, Simon Fraser University. Her groundbreaking research on male victims of domestic violence is funded by the SSHRC and the the Carnegie and Fulbright Foundations.



Gary Sangha

Detective, Special Victims Unit, York Regional Police.



Sandy Prentice

Counsellor at a GTA Violence Against Women Shelter and Caseworker in a shelter and homelessness agency.



Lauren Vanspall

Community Relations Officer, Toronto Police Services



Maria Barcelos

Executive Director, The Gatehouse, an agency for men and women who have experienced abuse.



Don Neufeld

Program lead and social worker, Caring Dads parenting group and the Partner Assault Response Program.



Marcus Jackson

Manager, Taylor House, a domestic violence shelter for men and children, in Batesville, Arkansas.



Lori Cohen

Counsellor, Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association

Margaret Amason

Assaulted Women's Helpline and the City of Toronto Trainer and Counsellor for violence against women/ gender based violence.

Carolyn Luscombe

Victim Services Coordinator, Métis Nation of Ontario.

Adrianna Vanderneut

Nonprofit executive developing housing and homelessness prevention programs across the social services sector.

Steve Richardson

COO for Housing, Alexandra Community Health Centre (The Alex), Calgary

Kaitlyn Anastasiou

Chair, Education Committee, Ontario Network of Sexual Assault/ Domestic Violence Treatment Centres.

Sheri MacDonald

President of the Ontario Network of Victim Service Providers.

ENDNOTES

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