

Deputation
Women Reducing Poverty Together
City for All Women Initiative (CAWI)
Initiative: une ville pour toutes les femmes (IVTF)

Presented by: Andrea Balfour, Suzanne Doerge
City for All Women Initiative (CAWI)
To: Community and Protective Services Committee
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Membres du conseil municipal, merci d'avoir reçu cette députation aujourd'hui. Je m'appelle Andrea Balfour, I am on the Board of City for All Women Initiative (CAWI), and I am joined by Suzanne Doerge, Executive Director of CAWI.

We are here speaking on behalf of *Women Reducing Poverty Together - Maamawe*. Maamawe means “together” in Anishinabe, as we are organizations working together on the unceded land of the Algonquin people to reduce women’s poverty in our city. Toward that end, fifteen organizations in our network (listed below) joined with over 70 organizations to sign the collective statement calling for an investment in capital funding for affordable housing. We are here today to share what we have heard from our partner organizations and the women they serve.

At a time when City Council has made a commitment to integrating an intersectional gender lens into city planning and decision making, we want to help you understand why the \$15 million investment in capital funding for affordable housing is so important for gender equity.

Women’s precarious housing and homelessness occurs in a context of continuing economic inequality and gender –based violence.

- Canadian women, on average, who work full-time earn 75 cents for every dollar earned by a white male.
- women make up 70 per cent of minimum wage workers,
- and 76 per cent of part-time workers.

Women, who are Indigenous, racialized, immigrant, trans, living with disabilities or single parents, experience these trends most deeply.

In Ottawa today, the Violence Against Women shelters are having to turn women away as their shelters are full, increasing the chances that women return to situations of violence. There are 5 shelters in Ottawa with a mandate to provide emergency shelter for women and their children fleeing violence (VAW Shelters): Nelson House, Chrysalis House, Interval House, Oshki Kizis Lodge and Maison D’Amitie (2 shelters). There are 121 beds available in total. These beds are almost always full.

The City of Ottawa has always been responsible for providing emergency spaces to women when the VAW shelters are full. It is their policy to place women and children in motels when emergency shelters are full. We are concerned that women are falling through the cracks and we know that motels are not adequate spaces for women. Not only do they lack the supports and adequate living conditions, but women are at risk of being trafficked there.

The VAW shelters being full is directly related to women living there being unable to find affordable housing, so beds are not freed up for other women seeking shelter.

Women's homelessness is more invisible than men's homelessness. Women are more likely to couch surf or stay in unsafe situations in order to avoid going out onto the street or into a mixed-gender shelter. There are no available statistics that combine shelter usage at Violence Against Women (VAW) shelters and that of city-funded shelters in Ottawa.

In the city-funded shelters (not VAW shelters), we do know that the length of stay of single women increased by 6% last year. We have heard stories of recently-arrived single, immigrant women staying in the shelters, even though they feel unsafe there, as they have no other place to go, and we know this is true of many Indigenous women new to our city. Family usage of city-funded shelters increased by 33%, and the length of stay increased by 23%. What we don't know is how many of the families are single mothers, struggling to make ends meet. As a single mom, who juggles many tasks in caring for my daughter, I understand how stressful this can be.

We need to have more clear gender disaggregated statistics on the homelessness of a diversity of women in order to have a more complete picture. We hope that in the future, with the women and gender equity strategy, such statistics will be available.

We do know that for housing to work for women that housing needs to be safe, with supports and located where there is access to transit, grocery stores and social services. This connectivity is key for women, especially when assuming the role of primary caregiver. For these reasons, we urge you to support steps being taken by the City to identify land near rapid transit where affordable housing will be built. We cannot allow for those who need transit the most to be pushed away from our new transit system, as condos for the wealthy take up those spaces. Let's learn from Vancouver, and not let that mistake happen in our city.

Finally, given the depth of this housing crisis, we ask that you do all possible to ensure that the building of this new affordable housing moves quickly, and that you work with the community to determine how to best invest in housing.

We know that \$15 million is only a small portion of the funds needed. The organizations participating in Women Reducing Poverty Together – Maamawe, are ready to call on our elected officials at the provincial and federal level to contribute their part to address Ottawa's housing crisis. You can count on us.

Merci d'avoir reçu notre députation ici aujourd'hui.

Community-wide Affordable Housing Ask

1. Invest at least \$12 million, over and above federal and provincial grants, in the 2019 City Budget. This could double the number of new affordable homes supported by the City and leverage at least \$12 million more from other sources.
2. Pass a strong citywide inclusionary zoning by-law that ensures 25% of new development is dedicated to affordable housing and places a special emphasis on deeply affordable housing within 1 km of rapid transit stations
3. Ensure that all available government-owned land within 1 km of current & future rapid transit stations is used for non-profit and co-op housing
4. Create a 2019-2022 Term of Council Priority that integrates transit and planning, with clear, affordable housing targets.

Organizations serving women who signed on to this Ask with 70 organizations:

1. Amethyst Women's Addiction Centre
2. City for All Women Initiative (CAWI)
3. Cornerstone Housing for Women
4. Gignul Non-Profit Housing Corporation
5. Harmony House
6. Immigrant Women's Services Ottawa (IWSO)
7. Interval House of Ottawa
8. KIGONI
9. Maison d'amitié
10. Ottawa Coalition to End Violence Against Women
11. Planned Parenthood Ottawa
12. Sexual Assault Support Centre of Ottawa
13. Somali Women's Circle Network
14. St. Joe's Women's Centre
15. The Well
16. Women's Initiatives for Safer Environments (WISE)