

#### **Land Acknowledgment**

CAWI's work in Ottawa-Gatineau takes place on the traditional unceded and unsurrendered territory of the Algonquin Anishinaabe nation. As uninvited guests on this land, we acknowledge the leadership of Indigenous women from time immemorial and seek to learn and unlearn our own colonial practices as we support just city-building.

## Letter from the Board Co-Chairs

#### **Dear CAWI Members and Supporters:**

Another year of CAWI's great work within the City of Ottawa, with day-to-day operations to the transition of staff and board what a year it has been! The Board of Directors continues to stay committed to the important work that CAWI does.

In November 2024, CAWI celebrated its 20th Anniversary, which brought many women who were part of this "small kitchen table" Steering Committee to the now full complement Board of Directors and five staff members. A great evening to honour, celebrate, and recognize women for their achievements and growing leadership of amazing work, to what it has become today.

With changes in life come changes with staff and board. This year, we said goodbye to Valerie Stam, who had been the Executive Director for 4 years before transitioning to a co-director model. Her work from the turnover of the Steering Committee to the

Board of Directors comes with learning curves of challenges to successes. We wish Valerie all the best as she moves on to a new journey in her life.

With the departure of Valerie early this year, the board recruited two new co-executive directors. We welcome Alana Nugent, Business Development & Education Director, and Meg Herod, Policy Director.

With an election year, the work of CAWI couldn't be more critical than ever. The lives of the communities that are at most vulnerable are at their weakest should the government implement high costs due to the economy and the relationship with our neighbouring country. The time is now to act and make that change, not only for our economy but also for political and social justice.

Now, as we approach another year to have our Annual General Meeting, we thank and acknowledge two of our Board Members, Dolores PeltierCorkey and Sado Ibrahim, as they both complete their full term with the Board of Directors. Their dedication and hard work do not go unnoticed, as they both have been working with CAWI since the beginning.

We thank all our members, partners and friends for the heartfelt support. We look forward to walking side-byside as we continue our journey towards a more equitable, caring city.

Sincerely,



**Dolores Peltier-Corkey** and **Khrystal Sturridge** 

CO-CHAIRS, CAWI BOARD OF DIRECTORS

## Letter from the Co-Directors

#### Dear CAWI members and friends,

This is our first letter as a triad of co-directors! A shared leadership model that strives to flatten hierarchies by redistributing power and decision-making across the organization, use consensusbased decision-making, recognize and disrupt power imbalances. Our leadership now includes three directors: Operations (Hana), Business **Development and Education** (Alana), and Policy (Meg). These roles share the responsibilities of an executive director.

What a year of transformation and transition it's been for us! Some of our highlights include our special members meeting to review and update our Bylaws to align with the Ontario Non-for-Profit Corporations Act (ONCA), celebrating our 20th Anniversary (hooray!), receiving the Jack Layton Award for advocacy and

activism, and walking alongside residents of Ottawa through our Caring Cities community walks. We have shared an abundance of beautiful moments, conversations, and connections with partner organizations, our members, and supporters.

Over the past few months, we have been busy onboarding our new directors, getting to know each other as a brand new team, navigating backto-back provincial and federal elections and striving to stay grounded in our local advocacy amidst the change and unease around us. With all this past year has brought, our Caring Cities project is even more relevant and necessary. We continue to work for a City that cares for one another, and neighbourhoods that cultivate care through inclusive and equitable urban planning.

We have much to look forward to in the year ahead. We are focusing on growing WeaveChange, sharing our voices at City Hall, building our Caring Cities framework into the everyday actions of urban planners and decision makers, continuing coalition building, and advocating for a city that centers women and gender expansive individuals at its heart.

We write this letter with gratitude for our unbelievable staff team, Kassidy and Cata, whose passion, heart and dedication infuse a culture of care into all our programming. We want to give a special thanks to: the incredible community members, Facilitators' Network, program participants for sharing their knowledge with us; our board for their commitment to our mission and values; and all of

you for showing up for CAWI in all the big and small ways that you do - you embody this year's AGM theme: Everyday Acts of Care - and work so hard to cocreate spaces and experiences in Ottawa that contribute to a caring city.

In solidarity and with care,



Hana, Alana and Meg
CAWI CO-EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS





of **women leading**the way

avec des **femmes qui ouvrent** la voie

## CAWI 20th Anniversary

This year, CAWI marked a powerful milestone—20 years of amplifying voices, advancing equity, and building a more inclusive city. As one member beautifully expressed:

66

Twenty years of carving a space for women to not just speak, but to be heard, to make their need undeniable, and to transform whispers into a chorus too loud to ignore."

To honour this legacy, we gathered with the heart of CAWI—members, partners, supporters, and friends—for an evening of art, dialogue, and connection. The celebration featured poetry by CAWI members, a moving art exhibit tracing our journey, and the panel Leading Change: Women and Gender-Diverse Voices in Community Activism.





Andrea Balfour and Sado Ibrahim.

Valerie Stam, Sawsan Al-Refaei, and Dolores Peltier-Corkey.

We were honoured to open and close the evening with powerful cultural performances from hoop dancer **Mariah Smith Chabot** and the **Eagle River Drum Groups**, graciously invited by CAWI board members **Dolores Peltier-Corkey** and **Darlene Kaboni**.

One of the most meaningful moments was the unveiling of a mural created in collaboration with visual artist **Stephanie Babij**, shaped by input from CAWI members and supporters. As Stephanie shared: This mural now stands as a living tribute to CAWI's people, values, and vision—a shared story told through colour, movement, and meaning.



Indigenous Hoop Dancer Mariah Smith Chabot from Kitigan Zibi dances in the foreground with Eagle River Drum Groups in the background singing and drumming around one large drum on the floor.



Completed mural by visual artist Stephanie Babij.



This mural serves as a representation of CAWI's dedication to serving the community and fostering connections that last... The silhouettes are designed to reflect the diversity of cis and trans women and non-binary folks, capturing the essence of CAWI beautifully."

We also premiered a commemorative video featuring reflections from past and present board members, staff, and allies—including co-founder **Fran Klodawsky** and former Executive Director **Suzanne Doerge**. With heartfelt thanks to **Adrienne Rowe Smith** for her vision and guidance, the video offered both a celebration of our legacy and a collective imagining of what's still possible.

And perhaps most powerful of all was the feeling in the room — the **warmth, laughter, and connection** as stories were shared, old friends reunited, and new relationships took root. Elders, youth, long-time collaborators, and new faces stood together in celebration and recommitment.

To everyone who helped make the CAWI2O celebration what it was—and to everyone who has shaped this journey — **thank you**. We are still here, still rising, and still shaping this city together.



CAWI staff and board members stand together, holding a plaque presented by the Mayor of Ottawa congratulating CAWI on 20 years of service.



It's Thursday at 11:30
AM. CAWI staff arrive at
Clementine Towers, where
Cathy and her team of
volunteers have the food
bank set up—tables lined
with fresh vegetables,
halal chicken, bread, milk,
and more. But the pantry
is just one part of what
Cathy does.

It all began during the pandemic, with one woman lying on the lobby floor.

She said, 'I'm so weak, I'm hungry.' So I got her some bread, cheese, and water. I missed my appointment, but I stayed with her."

That act of care became the foundation for a growing network of support.

"The pantry is just a fraction of what I do. I do wellness checks, I make sure people aren't alone."

Cathy's work includes a balcony gardening project to grow fresh herbs and vegetables, dances to help tenants socialize, and regular check-ins that



CAWI member, Cathy Hamilton, stands behind 6 women that volunteer with the Food Pantry Cathy started in her building.

can mean the difference between life and death.

"We missed people for days, and then we realized they were dead. No one knew."

She's built a team of volunteers—many of them seniors—who find purpose in this work.

"It helps them be active. One of the volunteers is 94. She told me if she wasn't volunteering, she'd be sad."

Cathy also makes time for joy—cooking, music, dancing, and cuddling with her dogs.

"Sometimes I just pause and smile I know I have friends, and I have people who appreciate what I do."

To Cathy, CAWI is both a support system and a family.

"I know I have you folks. CAWI has helped me grow and evolve a lot."

What she's built goes far beyond food. It's about care—in every knock on a door, shared meal, and moment of connection. A culture of care, grown from the ground up, has the power to transform lives.

#### The squeaky wheel gets the grease!

For two years, Peggy
Nesbitt heard "No, that's
not possible." But she
didn't stop advocating for
a Para Transpo parking
sign in front of her seniors'
residence.

"I kept at it because it was needed. I believe this is the first time a Para Transpo sign has been installed in front of an apartment building."

Without it, delivery vehicles often blocked access, forcing Para drivers and riders like Peggy to wait. She reached out repeatedly to the city, and to Councillor **Stéphanie Plante**, until her persistence paid off.

"We need to speak up and make things right, even if it has never been done before." Now the sign is in place—improving safety, accessibility, and timely service for all riders.
Peggy often hears:

#### "Oh, you're the one with the sign!"

Her advocacy didn't stop there. She's now pushing for curb cuts to make boarding even easier and continues breaking ground for accessibility.

"I moved in here, and there were no accessibility buttons. I said, 'No, I'm not living like this. Duty to accommodate.' And they did it."

Peggy's story reminds us that care isn't just about kindness—it's about persistence.

"Don't let no be the answer that you take. It's just an answer. Keep on going."



Peggy Nesbitt is sitting beside a sign that indicates that the area she is in front of is for ParaTranspo drop off & pick up.

## CAWI'S Caring Cities Initiative

#### CAWI's Caring Cities

initiative reimagines city planning to center care—supporting both caregivers (paid and unpaid) and care receivers. Instead of looking outside our neighbourhoods for what we need to thrive, a caring city looks inward, asking: What helps us feel connected, supported, and like we belong?

Rooted in feminist and antiracist values, this initiative centers the instruction and feedback of CAWI members to shape policies, spaces, and services that prioritize dignity, wellbeing, and community. Through storytelling, art installations, advocacy, and collaboration, Caring Cities makes visible the everyday acts of care that hold our communities together—and calls for systems and policies that support and sustain them.

#### Participatory Community Walks

As part of our Caring Cities initiative, CAWI has launched Participatory Community Walks to identify where



care already exists in our neighbourhoods—and where it's missing. These walks are the first step in our Community-Based Participatory Research, rooted in the lived experiences of residents.

Together, we ask: Can you move safely through your neighbourhood? Are there accessible sidewalks, nearby

grocery stores, affordable and culturally relevant food, health services, green spaces, and places to connect?

Walks in Centretown, Vanier, and Overbrook—co-created with local partners—are helping us reimagine urban planning through a lens of care, belonging, and community-led change.

#### Caring Circles: Co-creating a Caring City, One Conversation at a Time

Did you hear about a **Caring Circle** happening in your
neighborhood? This year
CAWI launched a new pilot
program under our Caring
Cities initiative, Caring
Circles!









Caring Circles are 2-hour conversations among neighbours, friends, and community members, led by CAWI members and supported by our team. In April and May, nine CAWI members hosted circles across Ottawa sparking meaningful, grassroots conversations about what it means to live in a city that truly values care.

A Caring Circle is more than just a gathering. It's a space to reflect, listen, connect, and imagine together. Participants gathered in small, informal settings to explore big questions: What does care look like in our daily lives? Where does it happen, and where is it missing? What makes care easier-or harder-in your neighborhoods? These conversations brought forward stories, insights, and visions for a city that supports all forms of care, both paid and unpaid.

Care starts with a conversation and grows into many. Alongside care walks, these conversations are helping us co-create a vision for a more inclusive, equitable, and caring Ottawa. Together, we are building a culture of care, one that starts at the kitchen table and reaches into city planning, policy, and beyond.



Five participants of a Caring Circle stand together with Iman, a CAWI member, and Alana, a CAWI staff member.



A group of participants from a Caring Circle, hosted by CAWI member Cathy Hamilton.



Nene, a CAWI board member, stands facilitating their Caring Circle.

#### Grief Tending, An Act of Personal and Collective Care

There is much to grieve in these dark times, whether environmental catastrophes, televised genocides, loss of dignity and life; the overall trauma of colonialism, domination and disconnection. As part of our cultural conditioning, many of us avoid, hide, repress and/ or carry our grief stoically and alone. If our ancestors were alive with us today, we believe, they would remind us that we were never meant to carry our grief alone.

We believe tending grief is a deep act of care: care for self, community, and all sentient beings. We believe by naming, reclaiming and grieving collectively we create more and more spaciousness within our nervous systems and thus build more and more capacity for joy, compassion and empathy; well needed ingredients in our work towards social equity, inclusion, justice and liberation for all.

From January to June 2025 CAWI hosted monthly Grief Tending Circles with Maureen St. Clair and Lori-Ann McDonald, co-holders/facilitators of the space. Collectively, we created safe and brave enough space for people to show up as themselves within the body of community while welcoming, normalizing and witnessing personal and collective grief.

We danced, moved, sang, shared stories and poetry, lit candles, free wrote, created visuals to music; we stirred the pot of grief through prompting questions, quotes, meditations, stories, and short video clips. We cried, laughed, raged, and honoured silence.

We cared for one another through these rituals while honoring each other's dignity through seeing, feeling, hearing and holding the exquisite wildness of grief in however grief presented. Francis Weller, author of the Wild Edge of Sorrow, states that there is an alchemy that happens when the wounded in one, touches the wounded in another. The alchemy of deep care and support was palpable in our monthly circles, which we believe and hope will manifest as more and more aliveness and joy within our advocacy and action work.

We believe the Grief Tending Circle was a profound collective healing experience for many, especially in a time of wide immense pain and loss. We are confident this group provided a safe enough haven for folks to feel and share without judgment thus deepening into each other's shared humanity while widening circles of care, love and belonging.



Our hope is folks found solace, strength, and tools to navigate their ongoing journey of

grief knowing we were never meant to grieve alone. We hope we will continue to care, hold, encourage, support and inspire one another through dark days ahead as we carry on organizing, advocating and mobilizing in the struggle together.



Written by: Maureen St. Clair and Lori-Ann McDonald

## Civic Engagement

#### Making Voices Count

Over the past year, Making Voices Count (MVC) has continued to strengthen civic engagement by focusing on the everyday needs of CAWI's members and the communities that they are connected to—like the housing crisis, transit, food insecurity, income support, childcare and accessibility needs...

In summer 2024, MVC convened a key transit meeting with community partners to align priorities ahead of the City budget. We also joined city officials and Ottawa Community Housing for important conversations on snow clearing—advocating for safer, more accessible winter conditions.

With renewed three-year funding from United Way Eastern Ontario, MVC remains committed to amplifying the voices of those most impacted by systemic inequities through everyday acts of care and collective action.

#### Women's Action Circle

From January to May,
CAWI's **Women's Action Circle (WAC)** brought
together women and
gender-expansive people
to build community,
strengthen leadership, and
explore what it means to
create a more caring city.

This cohort focused on the **Caring Cities** theme, shaping messages to support CAWI's broader initiative and raise awareness about embedding care into municipal policy. Alongside skill-building, the Circle offered space for reflection, connection, and collective response to ongoing political and social issues including the rise in femicides.

WAC continues to show that advocacy is rooted not just in policy, but in care, through presence, listening, and acts of solidarity.





Cata & Kassidy stand on either side of Women's Action Circle Spring Cohort 2025 graduate, Mik.

And graduate, Hodan.

#### Maamawe: Reducing Poverty Together

Since spring 2024,

Maamawe has continued to grow as a vibrant space for connection, support, and collective action toward a more caring and equitable city. Members see Maamawe as a place where care and intention make meaningful change possible, especially for those often left out of

decision-making.

Rooted in CAWI's Caring
Cities principles, Maamawe played a key role in planning our Participatory
Community Walks, shaping every step through collaboration and lived experience. Members identified concerns like isolation, safety, accessibility, and the need for community spaces, helping co-create a tool to assess access to care

Beyond the walks, Maamawe members deepened their learning through a seminar at Carleton University, exploring how cities are embracing care-centered planning. As Maamawe enters a new chapter, the focus is on deeper engagement, community

in Centretown and Vanier.

storytelling, and advocacy grounded in connection and care - all in service of reducing poverty together.

#### Mobilizing for Democracy: CAWI's Work During the Provincial and Federal Elections

This year brought not one but two snap elections which highlighted deep inequities in the democratic process and its systems.

CAWI quickly mobilized with partners to ensure communities had accessible tools and support to participate meaningfully.

For the provincial election, we partnered with the

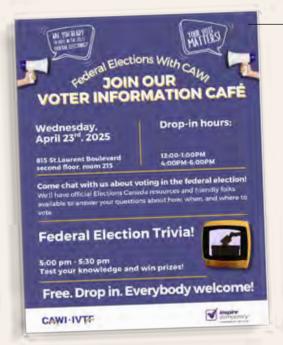
#### Coalition of Health and Resource Centres (CHRC)

to create two educational videos on voting and government roles, and published an op-ed challenging the harm of rushed elections on equitydenied and equity-seeking communities.

When the federal election was called, we built on earlier training with **WeaveChange** by hosting another session to address myths, fears and misinformation around the voting process.

#### Maamawe members

also created a moving video series reflecting on voting through the lens of caregiving, community, and lived experience. Did you see it? You can check it out on our Instagram or YouTube channel!



A flyer for the "Join Our Voter Information Café" hosted by CAWI where people can ask questions about federal voting, supported by Elections Canada resources. A "Federal Election Trivia" with prizes was part of the event and was free and open to everyone.

To wrap this work, CAWI hosted a **Voter Information Café**, offering Elections Canada materials, trivia, and a warm and welcoming space to learn, connect, and engage.

Thanks to **Elections Canada** for supporting this vital civic engagement work.



"Federal Elections With CAWI: What Kind of ID Do I Need to Vote?"

#### **Budget** workshop

In the fall of 2024, as Ottawa braced for a municipal budget shaped by austerity, CAWI joined a coalition of community and non-profit organizations to co-host a powerful "Building a Better Budget" workshop. The evening featured a keynote by Neil Saravanamuttoo of CitySHAPES, a panel of housing, climate, and transit advocates, and breakout groups led by CAWI's WeaveChange facilitators. This event reminded us that community input is essential and that budgets are an important site where we advocate for care.







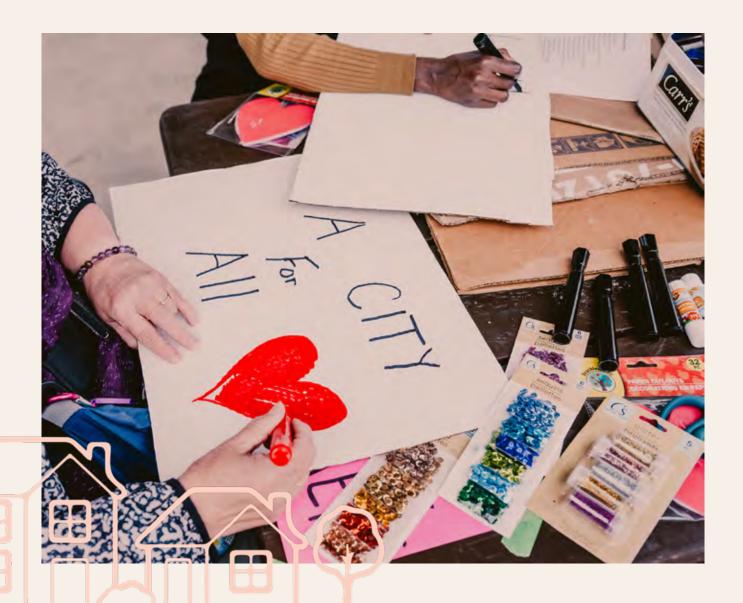
Building a Better Budget workshop.

#### Zoning for Equity: Embedding Care in City Planning

This year, the City of
Ottawa undertook the
major task of updating its
zoning bylaw, a tool that
shapes how neighborhoods
grow, how land is used,
has broad implications
for access to housing,
services, and opportunities.

In collaboration with the Peoples Official Plan coalition, CAWI contributed to this process by offering feedback to city officials on the draft bylaw, advocating for a planning framework rooted in care, equity, and inclusion.

As part of this work, CAWI also delegated at a City Council meeting in support of an amendment to allow shelters in all zones across the city. While shelters are not the long-term solution to the housing crisis, they remain a vital part of the housing continuum. Zoning should never be a barrier to people accessing shelter, and this step represents meaningful progress toward a more inclusive city. CAWI will continue to advocate for zoning that reflects the values of a caring city.



#### Finding a Unicorn: A submission to the Gender Housing Justice Review Panel

CAWI contributed to the Gender Housing Justice Review Panel, a human rights initiative that is examining Canada's failure to uphold the right to housing for women and gender expansive people. The review will culminate in a report with recommendations presented to the Minister of Housing.

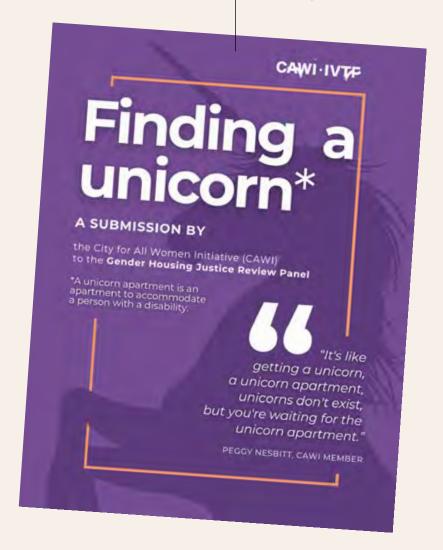
CAWI's submission highlighted how the feminization of poverty, systemic barriers, and housing precarity continue to disproportionately impact women and genderexpansive people. Our submission was grounded in local data and the lived experiences of our members, whose stories were instrumental in shaping our response to the review panel's open call for testimonials.

CAWI views housing in the context of a caring city, where affordable housing options (that are also desirable) are part of all

neighbourhoods and includes community support, core services, income-generating opportunities, schools and childcare, health care, culturally relevant and faithbased spaces, and places for recreation and connection. As said by our Policy Director "we do not believe a place to sleep is a house and that a house is a home until it is lived in by residents, residents who have the right to access what they need to be well and to thrive".

A digital graphic titled "Finding a Unicorn" created by the City for All Women Initiative (CAWI), the graphic explains that a "unicorn apartment" refers to housing that accommodates people with disabilities. A quote from CAWI member Peggy Nesbitt reads:

"It's like getting a unicorn, a unicorn apartment — unicorns don't exist, but you're waiting for the unicorn apartment."



## Caroline Andrew Civic Engagement Award

Last year, Peggy Nesbitt was honoured with the Caroline Andrew Award in recognition of her outstanding contributions to civic engagement and community advocacy. A dedicated advocate for accessibility and inclusion, Peggy embodies the spirit of this award through her leadership, persistence, and unwavering commitment to creating change. Her efforts have removed barriers not only for herself but for many others in her community. Known for her gift of finding the right words to make an impact, Peggy is actively involved in all of CAWI's programming and continues to inspire those around her to speak up, advocate for change, and never take "no" as the final answer.

If you're ever looking for Peggy at an event, she'll be there networking and advocating. And if you see Peggy in the community and need support, encouragement, or just a few words to get you started on your own journey of advocacy, she will be there to offer exactly that.



Andrea Balfour (left) stands next to Peggy Nesbitt (right).

# VEAVE DIVERSITY INCLUSION CHAILGE with CAWI

Andrea Balfour and Euphrasie Emedi (CAWI members & WeaveChange Facilitators) facilitating a workshop, Building Youth Engagement and Trauma-Aware Facilitation.



In 2025, WeaveChange -CAWI's social enterprise - continues to focus on equity, community, and transformation. We worked with organizations across Ottawa-including EcoEquitable, Rideauwood Addictions and Family Services, Caldwell Family Centre, and the City of Ottawa-supporting them through facilitation, training, and strategic guidance grounded in anti-oppression and community care.

In January, Alana Nugent joined CAWI as the Business Development & Education Director (co-executive director), bringing renewed focus to how WeaveChange can grow sustainably while staying true to our roots.

We've restarted our
Facilitators Network
gatherings to rebuild trust
and connection. We come
together to align on how we
work together, what we offer,
and how we build a strong,
future-ready social enterprise.

Looking ahead, we're refining our brand and developing new offerings that reflect what we do best - using facilitation as a tool for accountability and meaningful change. We're also applying for grants that will create pathways to investing in community learning and internal systems, with the goal of growing partnerships with clients who are ready to do deep, honest work.

We're proud of what we've built so far, and excited about what's ahead.



## **Financial Statements**

2024-2025

Revenue	2025
Women and Gender Equality Canada	\$231,777
City of Ottawa	\$96,008
United Way	\$38,000
Canadian Union of Public Employees	\$20,000
Ottawa Community Foundation	\$17,584
Catherine Donnolley Foundation	\$14,061
Public Service Alliance of Canada	\$10,000
Elections Canada	\$2,250
Fees for Service	\$36,412
Other	\$2,957
TOTAL	\$469,049

#### **Expenditures**

Salaries and Benefits		\$297,778
Program and Administration		\$173,990
	TOTAL	\$471,768
Reserve Fund		\$72,549

## Partners and Funders

Alliance to End Homelessness

Catherine Donnelly Foundation

Caldwell Family Centre

City of Ottawa

Coalition of Community Health and Resource Centres

Community Development Framework

Cornerstone Housing for Women

CUPE

EcoEquitable

**Ecology Ottawa** 

**Elections Canada** 

Gignul Non-Profit Housing

Horizon Ottawa

Immigrant Women's Services of Ottawa

Lowertown Community Resource Centre Nepean, Rideau Osgoode Community Resource Centre

Ottawa ACORN

Ottawa Climate Action Fund

Ottawa Coalition to End Violence Against Women (OCTEVAW)

Ottawa Community Foundation

Ottawa Community Housing

Ottawa Local Immigration Partnership

Ontario Nonprofit Network

Parkdale Food Centre

People's Official Plan (POP Coalition)

Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC)

Women and Gender Equality Canada

United Way East Ontario

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### Thank you very much to our partners and our donors that make all this possible.



Women and Gender Equality Canada Femmes et Égalité des genres Canada

























































