



WOMEN'S HABITAT





MISSION & VISION

Our mission is to provide safe refuge, counselling, support and advocacy for women and their children who are fleeing violence; while also working towards a more equal society where the inherent value of all women is acknowledged and celebrated.

We envision a world where all women have choice and opportunity to live their lives in dignity, with equal access to economic and social opportunities, and freedom from violence.



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APRIL, 1 2018 - MARCH 31, 2019

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A special thanks:

- GIA DEJULIO
- BARBARA HUME-WRIGHT

Gia DeJulio has been Board President since 2017 and a director since 2010. Her term as President ends September 2019, but she will remain on the board for another year, keen to continue supporting the agency's ambitious long-term goals. Gia has governed our board with grace and strong leadership, leaving big shoes to fill.

This year director Barbara Hume-Wright will retire from our board. Barbara was first elected in 2012, and has served as our trusted Board Secretary since 2014. Her knowledge, wisdom and sage advice have been invaluable. Luckily, we are hard to part with and Barbara will continue to pass on her governance knowledge in an advisory capacity. We are so grateful for their commitment and support!

Dear Friends,

Through the unwavering support of our donors, partners, volunteers and staff, Women's Habitat continues to be at the forefront of progressive, social change.

This year we launched our latest strategic plan which is primarily focused on our role in addressing the affordable housing crisis. Thankfully, with crisis comes action, and coalitions and networks are forming to address the issue.

We are actively involved in these networks, bringing a much-needed intersectional and gendered perspective. Our participation in these conversations is critical, as lack of affordable housing continues to be the greatest barrier faced by our sector.

At our shelter our residents are now staying with us for an average of 14 months which is a 50% increase over the last decade. From 2017 to 2018 our housing program service numbers increased by 20% and continue to rise through 2019.

Through our strategic plan we will examine solutions to bridge the growing gap between emergency shelter services and safe, affordable, permanent housing. We will work in partnership with a variety of stakeholders to understand the best options available for us to provide housing to the women and children whom we serve so that they can build new and violence-free lives.

This report shares with you one survivor's personal journey to find a home she could call her own. Inside you will find Maya's story, a story of survival and courage. With the support of Women's Habitat, Maya was able to save not only her own life, but the lives of her children as well. Her story is not unique; it is an accurate portrayal of the challenges most of the women with whom we work face. They meet heartbreaking roadblocks at every turn, which they must overcome while coping with the physical and mental impacts of the violence they have experienced.

We celebrate their every success, both big and small. Every time a woman opens her own bank account, applies for a new job, or pays down a loan; every time she wakes up and faces the day, we celebrate her... because we know that every step is a step closer to the freedom she deserves.

Maya's story is a testament to the impact of our work. We do not do this work alone; we do it with you, our valued supporters. We recognize that you invest your time, and your money, and we know you do it because you believe in women like Maya. You believe that with support, every survivor has the strength inside her to start over.

Alone we make ripples. Together, we make waves.

We continue to face challenging times, yet, just like the survivors we serve, we have made incredible progress. With the ongoing support of our donors, partners, staff, board and volunteers, Women's Habitat is ready for the uncharted road ahead.

Thank you for believing in us. Thank you for believing in the women who need you. Your contributions are helping. Please do not stop now. We are just getting started.

In solidarity,



Gia DeJulio,
President



Silvia Samsa,
Executive Director



Finding Home TORONTO'S HOUSING CRISIS

The affordable housing crisis affects one in five Canadians¹. Often survivors of violence suffer financial abuse, are unable to work, cannot access money and have poor credit. It is unsurprising that the number one reason women can't leave their abusers is because they are not able to afford alternate housing.

Toronto's housing crisis has had two visible impacts on our organization: 1) our residents are staying longer than ever before; and 2) requests for our Housing Support Services have increased dramatically. The women we work with at our Outreach Centre often have to make the impossible decision of whether to buy food or whether to pay rent. Many are in particularly vulnerable and dangerous housing situations, reporting sexual harassment and violence by their landlords. Although critical conversations on how best to provide affordable housing is taking place, no practical relief currently exists.

So what IS being done?

Federally, the housing crisis led to the enactment of the National Housing Strategy Act as part of Bill C-97 (the Budget Implementation Act, 2019) which, for the first time, recognizes housing as a human right. It acknowledges the role housing plays in preserving one's dignity, with a focus on building sustainable and inclusive communities. The Federal Government's strategy sees housing as a critical factor in the achievement of social, economic, health and environmental goals².

At the provincial level, the Ontario government conducted public consultations focused on how to increase housing supply and how to decrease barriers to developing new housing.

At the municipal level, the City of Toronto is developing a new Housing Action Plan. In studying the housing spectrum, they have identified the major challenges as: the inability of housing services to meet the needs of Torontonians; the shortage of purpose-built rental housing; affordability issues with ownership and rental; and the shrinking population in some single-family neighbourhoods. The city is exploring housing solutions and consulting with residents about mixed-income communities and inclusionary zoning (a policy that would require affordable housing units in new developments).

¹ Housing crisis affects one in five renters. www.haventoronto.ca

² www.Right2HousingTO.ca

Although there is conversational momentum, there has been little visible movement. Accessible, livable, and reliable infrastructures are not in place to immediately address the housing needs of women and children impacted by gender based violence.

At Women's Habitat, we recognize the connection between violence against women in the broader socio-economic context. We see how it perpetuates a cycle of dependence³, informing survivors' experiences of homelessness, poverty and economic inequality⁴. We are challenged by the lack of legitimately affordable and available, rent-g geared-to-income housing, and feel strongly that legislative change around housing, as well as increased government funding is absolutely necessary to adequately and immediately address women's housing needs.

So what can WE do?

We are currently researching "best practice" programs, consulting with non-profit housing experts, and developing a feasibility study to explore the options available to Women's Habitat to become a housing provider. Our community needs housing now and so as we walk an unfamiliar and unclear path, we feel empowered by the strength of our allies. We are confident that no matter the programs and practices we ultimately select and implement, the result will be the same. We will have developed increased housing supports for the families with whom we are privileged to work. We look forward to sharing our progress with our stakeholders as we embark on this next chapter.

³ Grenaway, C. (2018). Women's Habitat: Women and Micro-Enterprise Program Review

⁴ Gurr et al (2008). Breaking the Links Between Poverty and Violence Against Women. Ottawa:Public Health Agency of Canada, page 8.

Maya has been in a relationship with the father of her children for the past decade.



She has two children, Kaela is 4 and Nia is 2. Maya's partner is physically and emotionally abusive, which has worsened since the birth of their second child.

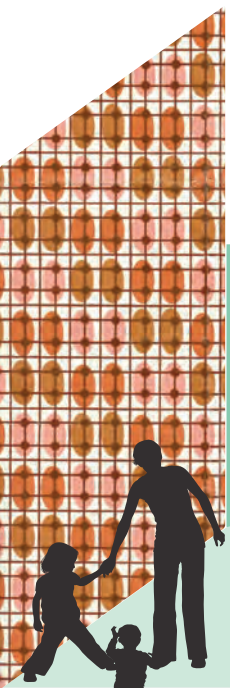
Maya is ready to leave the relationship. She has nowhere to go and he has threatened to kill her and the girls if she leaves.

She calls the Women's Habitat crisis line. Fortunately, there is a room available.

Maya is told to bring anything with her that can prove she lives with her abuser. He is the sole person listed on their apartment lease and has never allowed her to work. He gives her a cash allowance from time to time if she is lucky.

In 2018 our crisis line received over 800 calls from women experiencing violence.

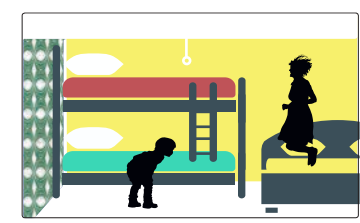
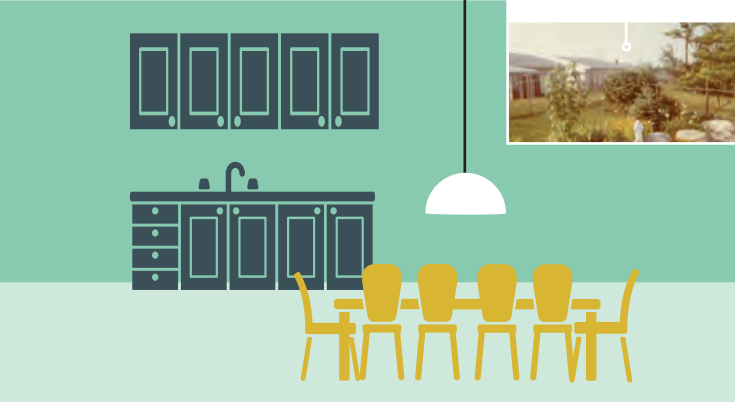
Maya and her children leave that night with nothing but some personal items.



At the shelter Maya and the girls get settled in.

She quickly gets to work with a counsellor, determined to get her girls a safe home of their own. The counsellor advises her that without some proof of cohabitation with the abuser she cannot qualify for Special Priority Housing. This list is reserved for survivors of violence as well other vulnerable groups and the length of its wait list averages over a year as opposed to the Toronto Social Housing waitlist which has reached

103,049 households.



Maya needs to find stable employment if she is ever going to be able to afford market rent in Toronto.

Because she is living in the shelter she does not qualify for Ontario Works. Besides a meager allowance provided to all shelter residents of \$4.85 per person per day Maya has no income. Her counsellor advises her to save as much as she can while she is in the shelter.

Maya doesn't know how she will ever afford an apartment. She is afraid to fight for child support; she just wants to keep her kids safe from their father's abuse.

Maya needs a job.

Maya hasn't worked in years. Women's Habitat refers Maya to employment counsellors who help her get her resume together.

She manages to secure a job as receptionist at a real estate firm. Unfortunately, she hasn't been able to find child care.

The firm is on the other side of the city; she has to take two buses to get there. It takes her an hour and half each way.

Maya is devastated. She can't accept the job.

Weeks go by as she searches for a job closer to the shelter. The Child and Family Advocates at the shelter manage to get her subsidized child care spots.

She takes a minimum wage job as a dishwasher at a local restaurant and saves every penny.



It's been almost a year in shelter, Maya's kids have settled in well at the daycare, and they have made friends. She doesn't want to uproot them again, but she knows they can't live there forever. She knows there is another woman just like her that is desperate to leave abuse. She has to move on. It's taken months, but Maya has saved enough and is ready to start apartment hunting.

She can't believe it. Average rent in Toronto for a two bedroom is \$2,600.



The apartment is small, it needs a thorough cleaning, and the sink in the bathroom is leaking, but she will make do. She has to. That weekend they move in. Women's Habitat secures Shelter Movers and some donated furniture. The shelter also gives her a move out basket with some kitchen items and other essentials to get started.

She doesn't have a bed yet, so she gathers all the blankets she has and they sleep all together in the living room.

That night Maya feels safe.

The road ahead is uncertain and Maya is scared and all on her own. But she knows she can contact Women's Habitat at their Outreach Centre anytime. It's taken more than a year to get here, and she knows she still has a long way to go.

But she's here now. And it's hers.

Maya decides to look outside the city for a one bedroom. The kids can share the room and she will sleep in the living room.

She works with Women's Habitat's Housing Worker who finds her market rentals in her price range. She applies, but every landlord wants a credit check and an employment letter, most want her to have held the same job for over a year, others don't get back to her when she tells them she has children.

Her Housing Worker has educated her on tenant rights; she knows it's wrong, but how will she fight? One landlord made a comment about her not having a husband, another referenced the colour of her skin.

Maya is angry.

She has worked so hard.

Finally her Housing Worker finds a landlord that will accept her application.

The apartment is in Scarborough, she will need to get a new job and will have to get one ASAP or she will lose her daycare subsidy.

Every day she travels from Etobicoke to Scarborough job searching. She finds a server job and takes it. She secures a daycare spot; she strongly preferred the other daycare, but what choice does she have?



ROAD TO RIO

We are grateful for the unwavering support of our committee members, volunteers, staff and guests who joined us on March 28, 2019 for Road to Rio, a colourful celebration of strength and resilience. Together we raised \$41,565 for our vital programs and services!

Next year's event planning is already underway. Be sure to save the date: March 26, 2020!



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MARCH 31, 2018 - APRIL 1, 2019

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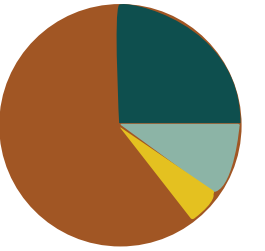
FINANCIALS

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION as at March 31, 2019

Assets	2019	2018
Cash and other current assets	\$ 1,246,201	\$ 1,144,249
Capital assets	2,821,853	2,934,267
Total Assets	4,068,054	4,078,516
Liabilities		
Accounts payable & accrued liabilities	238,738	128,036
Deferred contributions	17,979	19,342
Mortgages payable	258,923	266,158
Total Liabilities	515,640	413,536
Fund Balances		
Invested in Capital assets	2,562,930	2,668,109
Internally restricted net assets	926,339	945,118
Unrestricted net assets	63,145	51,753
Total Fund Balances	3,552,414	3,664,980
	\$ 4,068,054	\$ 4,078,516

STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS year ended March 31, 2019

Revenue	2019	2018
Government grants	\$ 1,613,607	\$ 1,438,964
United Way Greater Toronto	360,896	367,583
Fundraising, foundations & other revenue	375,869	355,485
Total Revenue	2,350,372	2,162,032
Expenses		
Staffing costs	1,812,406	1,778,665
Purchased services	47,737	35,261
Program costs	91,629	81,658
Building & occupancy costs	189,669	92,454
Office & administration	172,931	168,756
Amortization	113,947	134,501
Fundraising expenses	34,619	32,499
Total Expenses	\$ 2,462,938	\$ 2,323,794
Deficiency of revenue over expenses	(\$112,566)	(\$161,762)



Copies of the audited financial statements may be obtained on request from Women's Habitat of Etobicoke.



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