



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MEDIA STATEMENT

October 26, 2023 – Cornerstone Housing for Women commends the City of Ottawa for launching its Emergency Shelter Task Force to address the ongoing housing and homelessness crisis.

It is important that the city and our partners take a gendered lens when creating this task force and implementing sustainable solutions for people experiencing homelessness.

Women and gender-diverse people who are homeless, sleeping rough, staying in shelters, or couch surfing require unique supports to help them find safe, long-term housing solutions.

One in five women fleeing violence return to their abuser. Women in the shelter system often have caregiver responsibilities. Trans women and gender non-confirming residents need safe spaces such as gender-neutral bathrooms and specialized healthcare supports. When we're searching for shelter solutions we have to keep these gender-based challenges in mind.

The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic are still widely felt across our sector. Cornerstone is struggling to keep up with the rising demand for our services.

In October alone, Cornerstone has had to turn away 269 women and gender-diverse people because our 60-bed shelter was at capacity every night.

"It breaks my heart having to turn women in need when we simply don't have the space," says Martine Dore, director of programs and services.

Over the past year, the number of refugees seeking shelter at Cornerstone has doubled. The number of incidents requiring emergency services has dramatically increased. The opioid epidemic continues to take lives. People seeking shelter require more complex healthcare services.

We hope this emergency shelter task force is going to create short-term and long-term solutions that take a gendered approach to our housing and homelessness crisis. Cornerstone believes everyone deserves a place to call home in a community that supports them to live with dignity and hope.

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