Neha Review Panel

June 20, 2025

Morning Session

>> EMILY PARADIS: Hello everyone out there in webinar land. Welcome to the second Neha Dialogue. This session will focus on safe, permanent housing for survivors of gender-based violence.

I would like to welcome you all here today for what I know is going to be a very rich and powerful conversation.

My name is Emily Paradis. I am the manager for review panels with the National Housing Council. I'm very honored to be joining today from Toronto, the traditional territory of Huron-Wendat, Anishinaabeg, and Haudenosaunee peoples subject to the Dish with One Spoon Covenant and Treaty Territory of the Mississaugas.

Before I hand it over to the chair of Neha, Sylvia Maracle, to open the session and introduce the Elder, I would like to just let you know about the access to interpretation. We have French and English interpretation today, as well as ASL and captioning services. And you can access all of those by clicking the button at the bottom of your Zoom screen on the right hand side that says "More." You will find an interpretation icon, a globe icon. And in order to access captions, you can click a link that will be placed in the chat.

And I will just mention on the technical side that I'm not seeing the messages that are placed in the chat. So I'm just hoping that somebody is taking care of that on the viewer side and that those of you who are viewing the webinar are able to see that.

Thank you so much for being here. Now I will hand it over to the chair of Neha, Sylvia Maracle. Please go ahead, Sylvia.

Sylvia, I think you're on mute.

>> SYLVIA MARACLE: Well, I was brilliant while I was on mute.

It is our way to offer a request to our knowledge keepers, our traditional knowledge keepers, our Elders and our title holders. And so we -- if you notice that Zibi is our host, that's because we are often based in Ottawa and the host nation, the unceded Algonquin territories is Kitigan Zibi. They have several people who are well schooled long term in our culture and our history. And so they're very busy, and they share work, this kind of work.

So we have asked one of the often -- one of the Elders from the community to come and to do the opening for us. Verna is here with us and has been patient. I'm going to invite her to introduce herself a bit more just so that we all get in the mood and comfortable to be able to listen and to offer our own thoughts of thanksgiving. We will take it from there.

Verna, welcome. Thank you very much for taking time, yet again, to help us, and agreeing to use this process which is so inconsistent with our ability to create positive relationships with each other.

>> VERNA McGREGOR: Hello, everybody. I'm coming to you live, and

I like this technology here. I couldn't make it to my office in time, so I'm coming to you from my car and from my phone. I said we live in different times where you would meet in the lodge, your little lodge is my four wheels.

Welcome, everybody.

[Speaking Indigenous language]

I'm honored to be here today.

Really quickly too, this issue is very important to me as well. I have worked at Minwaashin Lodge, and they also have a shelter, one of the only shelters in Ottawa Gatineau. Prior to that, I did work with the National Aboriginal Circle Against Family Violence, and they represented the First Nations, Inuit, and Métis shelters across Canada, but specifically also on reserve.

And again to this issue of permanent housing for women leaving violence, women and children mostly, but also other sectors too, like the 2SLGBQT and there's a separate. And this is important too because I was recently at another gathering and they were looking at the financial skills for women coming from the shelters, and that's tied to housing and how do you build wealth.

The other part when I worked with the National Aboriginal Circle on Family Violence, we created a little resource book specifically on policies and procedures for the shelters. And it wasn't in depth, it was just a little booklet as a guide book.

The other part that was needed was the physical requirements that I didn't end up doing was the physical aspects of a shelter. But also how does that extend to housing to, for example, the shelters? Visiting some of the shelters today, they needed other things, security things like security or maybe an alarm system, but also too as well with the shelter, they needed bullet proof windows. That's the times we're in too as well.

But also, though, in addition to the social fabric of also creating safe communities. So I look forward to the discussion today. Also too, different to the cultural aspect too of Indigenous women and we're coming from communities and how do you extend it and how do you heal the communities? Because understanding that too from this colonial violence, especially the residential school, again to that's that whole understanding, and we had a different understanding of housing too. So I hope we have a good discussion.

[Speaking Indigenous language]

What I do is really just go around, it's just an acknowledgment of all the things we're gifted with today, including the earth, the waters, the fire, the air, because everything, it connects all of us. I thank all our ancestors, our ability here to come together to talk about this issue. But also too as well to offer our prayers for the ones that are sick, the ones that are poor, that need to eat. The ones that are in conflict, that they find peace. And also too as well peaceful

coexistence. And that's one of the subjects we're talking about today.

So I wish you well. I need to -- I can't stay throughout. I am here at the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario. I may have to leave in about half an hour. But I look forward to listening to partly to the discussions. And I will see you probably also next week. Good discussions. Back to you, Sylvia.

>> SYLVIA MARACLE: Thank you very much, Verna. It's always good to see you and hear you.

One of the things that we were able to convince the National Housing Council was that we had to stop doing things the same way and expecting different outcomes. And in this instance, we perhaps really stretched our notion. And we talked about that the processes of sort of interviewing and reviewing and fanning the fire of trauma had to stop. That we wanted something that was part of -- the great peace with you. That's what I said. And how might we do that?

So I was given the task to look for something that was different. And whenever I'm looking for something different, I look to my own nation and the true matriarch that we are. The true matriarch. Our clans, our titles, our life, issues go through our female line, who we are, who we will become.

And there was -- there is a belt that the settlers in Canada -- let's see here if I can show the belt, it's called the Guswenta. The Guswenta was created in 1613. And one of the interesting notions about it was that when people arrived here, they didn't bring their women. And a matriarch wonders why would you leave your women out of the equation?

We hold up half of the sky. And special people historically in terms of what is referred to now as Two Spirit and LGBTQIA+.

So we went back -- so I suggested that we go back to the belt, to the three row Wampum that said that the only things -- that we'll each have a path, we'll all have a path. We'll go through life. And the only things that should separate us are trust, friendship, and respect. That means that we don't have to have a public process that is quasi judicial. It means that we can go to the people who have the lived experience and say what can we change, how do we make it different?

And so we have made it different so far. We have had gatherings where people have sat in circle with each other. We have invited people like yourselves, not who just have lived experience, but also have community experience and professional experience in how and why we could do things better.

We have had a lot of support from the National Housing Advocate and have agreed. She has articulated that in order to address the sort of situations where people find themselves in amongst violence or homeless or just not part of the system that's safe, about 20% of their income should be spent on housing, and that we should have safe and affordable housing.

So you're part of both of those sides of the discussion. And you are people who have -- who have walked already in the moccasins, as we say, and who will be able to break the system down. Because we can't fix it by tinkering. We have to make some very significant notions, approaches, legislation, unfortunately, and opportunities for people

to do things in a different way. We're even looking at -- we have come up with a variety of obstacles in the system. Like you can't get into public housing if you're not related. So two people who could live together and it would make it easier won't get supports to do that.

We know that one of the things that we will talk about shortly, not necessarily today, is we keep building a shelter system. But shelter and prison beds and other kinds of things are not really long-term safe, affordable housing, which is what we're looking for. And how do we do that and how do we change the policies and approaches?

And you have all had opportunities for that. And hopefully -- and we're grateful that you're here sharing with us.

So we want to do it differently. And I use the expression we don't want to do it in a box. A box has sharp corners. They can really hurt you. And teachings like we have, I don't know if you can see this belt very well, but it can go into a circle. There's always more room in the circle. And in the circle, when we look around it, we use the expression in English too, we're all the same height. Nobody is more important or less important than anyone else. No one should have more power or authority than anyone else. So we have tried to go out in ways like this where people can say what they want us to say, hear, and what they want us to say.

That's what we're going to try to do today. We're going to put trust and friendship and respect in our relationships. We're going to listen to you hard. We will try to have processes that are respectful. We have already had some gatherings already that were fairly large

and there were great conversations of people who have lived experience who were and are service providers and who have been incredibly enthusiastic about the sort of approach.

So I will leave it at that. I don't think you will find it too different. We expect to spend most of our time listening to you and your experiences. And we'll take it from there.

There is a series of questions which my friends will pose. But they are just to try to get the conversation started. And hopefully, I have said -- I don't really speak much from notes, so they never know what I am going to say at each session. So today, that's what I'm going to say. And I welcome you. I hope that you find that this is a safe space. And if you have recommendations or things you really want us to hear, this is the time for you to say it. And you may have said it many, many times before, but we're trying to do this differently. We're not worried about so much the transcripts and other things. But really what people have based on how they have walked through their life.

Okay.

>> EMILY PARADIS: Thank you, Sylvia.

>> SYLVIA MARACLE: Yeah. The group intro has been done. They're prepared to introduce question one, right?

>> EMILY PARADIS: Thanks, Sylvia. Before we get to the introductions, I will hand it over to Pam to introduce herself and explain a little more about the session.

>> PAMELA GLODE DESROCHERS: Hi, everybody. Hopefully you can hear

me good and it's clear. I am Pamela Glode Desrochers. I'm L'Nu. I belong to Millbrook First Nation. However, I live, work, and play in Halifax, Kjipuktu. And I'm thrilled that you guys have taken the time today to be here.

We are definitely trying to do things very differently, and I would say that we certainly keep the staff on their toes. They have been wonderful to get us to this point.

And we really want to do things differently. I always say we have way more in common than what actually separates us. And I just want to say again how important that it is for people with lived experience to have a space, a safe space to actually tell us -- not to relive how we get here, but what do you need and how do we go forward? And I want to focus on that today.

I'm always concerned that people always want to hear about the trauma side of things. Well, I want to hear about what you need and how do we do that and if there are wonderful experiences or examples that you have. And I'm hoping throughout today that that happens.

I'm excited for today.

We have actually two groups. There's group one and group two. The first one is for research and policy. And the second one is the front line and lived experience group.

My understanding, because this is new for us, we have the two groups, group one will go. Group two will be asked to have their cameras off. And then we will reverse that as we move through the questions, which Marie I believe is going to walk us through the five questions.

At the end, we will all come back together again. And Sylvia will wrap it up in her wonderful style that she always has. And she certainly keeps the staff on their toes.

I'm going to leave it at that. Emily, I don't know if you're about to kick off with a little more around the review panels or if Marie would like to introduce herself first and then the questions. I will leave it up to you, Emily.

>> EMILY PARADIS: Thanks, Pam. I think that Sylvia provided all the introduction that's needed for Neha. For those who wish to know more, there will be some links posted in the chat where you can learn more about what are review panels, what is Neha, and where you can see the other dialogues that will be taking place this afternoon and Monday.

So, Marie, I'm inviting you to introduce yourself and then introduce the questions to be discussed today.

>> MARIE PASCALINE MENONO: I lost the sound. Is it up to me now to speak? I have lost the sound.

>> EMILY PARADIS: Yes, it's for you. It's your turn. Do you hear me?

>> MARIE PASCALINE MENONO: There's a sound problem. Just a moment. Emily, is it up to me to speak now?

>> EMILY PARADIS: Yes. It's your turn.

>> MARIE PASCALINE MENONO: Good. I didn't hear. I had to go back to the --

Hello, everyone. I'm sorry for the technical problem.

So my responsibility is to introduce the questions around which the discussions will be discussed.

I just want a quick reminder, in the commission, we work on human rights. And today around the table and in this call, it's because you're rights holders. It's because basically we consider that everything you will give us is important material to advance the right to access to housing.

So we have seven questions, seven main questions. Group one, so research and advocacy, the first question is what do you hope will come out of this dialogue? And what is motivating you to be here today?

The question is there has been a lot of research and policy advocacy on the connections between gender-based violence, homelessness, and discrimination based on gender, race, and disability. Have you seen meaningful improvements in response to this work? In what areas? What actions still need to be taken by Governments?

Group two, the question number three, because group two works on service provision and lived experience. So the question is what is the one important message you want to report to communicate to decision makers?

Number four, what would safe government housing need to look like in order to meet the specific needs of women, Two Spirit, Trans, gender-diverse people facing violence and discrimination based on gender, race, and disability? How is it different than what we have now, and what are some promising examples of what can be done?

And fifth for both groups, imagine that in the future we have

succeeded in our efforts to realize the right to housing. What would this look like? And what needs to be done to make this a reality?

So there you go. It's yours now, Emily.

>> EMILY PARADIS: Thank you, Marie.

So Sylvia, I will hand it over to you now to open it up for the folks in group one to introduce themselves. And I will remind those who are in group two, this is the time to now turn your cameras off and your mics off. Thank you.

>> SYLVIA MARACLE: We're going to talk for a while, as you have heard, on research and advocacy. There are some of you here who it's your specialty, and this is your opportunity to maybe have you introduce yourself and then you can start your dialogue with each other and with us.

So I don't have a list of you. Whoever is keen, tired of all these introductions, you can start now.

>> ALINA McKAY: Thanks, Sylvia. I really appreciate the opportunity to be here today. My name is Alina McKay, and I am a research manager for Housing Research Collaborative and Balanced Supply of Housing at UBC Allard School of Law. And I am coming to you this call from the unceded territories of the Squamish nation here in Squamish, British Columbia.

In terms of the first question, in terms of what important message -- oh, sorry. One second.

So the first question around what do you hope will come of this dialogue and what is motivating me to be here today? So I'm motivated

to be here today because our current housing system is failing survivors of gender-based violence and their families. Transition in second stage housing system is at capacity, and a lack of non profit and affordable rental housing means that many women and their families have no places to go when they experience violence. This is placing far too many families at risk of further violence.

I think that in this moment in Canadian history, we have an opportunity to invest in proven solutions that will ensure that survivors of gender-based violence have access to safe, permanent, and affordable housing. I hope that this dialogue will contribute to meaningful and long-term investments into the antiviolence sector and long-term financial commitments to nonprofit housing that incorporates women-centered design.

With that, I will pass it on to Amy or whoever would like to go next.

>> ANURADHA DUGAL: Thanks, Alina. I will jump in. I'm Anuradha Dugal with Women's Shelters Canada. In a similar vein, what's motivating me to be here today with Women's Shelters Canada is certainly understanding the support that shelters offer women, gender-diverse people, and their children and how they are feeling the negative impact of the housing crisis in Canada.

We advocate for supportive housing, so not just the emergency shelters, but what we would call second stage, third stage, and permanent solutions for survivors. And for us, it's incredibly important that those are supportive systems. So they support survivors who have left

violent situations to establish an independent and stable lifestyle from the early stages through all the way to the supports they need for life skills, employment, accessing resources, and then gradually into a more independent living environment.

I think that what we need is a comprehensive strategy that understands all of those stages. And also specific strategies, for example, for small, rural, and remote communities where shelters face compounded barriers to accessing the means to build those kinds of shelters and housing opportunities, including consultants and supporters who don't always understand the development experience from the perspective of gender-based violence.

And also the fact that they have fewer funding opportunities. And then all the way through to when they are making applications for funding, because their models might be smaller scale, they might be less attractive or harder to fund. So these kinds of challenges, just as a few examples, are limiting safety and stability for survivors, while also putting additional strain on those shelters.

>> SYLVIA MARACLE: Okay. Thank you.

>> CAROLYN WHITZMAN: I'm happy to go next, if that's okay, Sylvia.

>> SYLVIA MARACLE: Yes, that's fine, Carolyn.

>> CAROLYN WHITZMAN: My name is Carolyn Whitzman. I guess my interest in being here today is that I feel the needs have never been greater, but also the opportunities are tremendous in terms of a new Government, in terms of growing understanding of certainly the housing crisis. And in terms of increased willingness from both providers of housing

and services for women and investors to do more.

That's my hope, at least.

I wanted to say that I have been working on this issue now, I kind of sat back before Neha, and I have been working on this issue for 40 years. And things have gotten worse for the 40 years. It's very frustrating for me, particularly since I'm an optimist, to see things get worse for 40 years.

So in 1986, I wrote a master's thesis, which was a feminist critique of local crime prevention and talked about the importance of gender-based violence. And then I worked for the city of Toronto for ten years on coordinated gender-based violence. And then I did a Ph.D. on housing policy. And then I lived in Australia, admittedly, for 16 years after that.

And of course, the issues are very similar, particularly with Indigenous women, children, Two Spirited people. That term wouldn't be used in Australia. But gender nonconforming people. And then returned to Canada in 2019.

When I have an opportunity, I want to talk about three particular pieces of research I have undertaken, one back in 2002, so 23 years ago, on integrated services for women who are homeless. A second piece of research in 2019 soon after I returned to Canada on scaling up women's housing. And the third piece of research from 2023, but I have recently returned to it with the Housing Advocate on housing needs, who needs what housing where and at what cost, and some possible targets for the Federal Government to consider.

But I will wait for the other folks to introduce themselves before I move on to that.

>> SYLVIA MARACLE: Thank you.

>> AMANDA ARELLA: I can go next. My name is Amanda Arella. I am the National Director of Public Policy and Advocacy at YWCA Canada, which is the national convening body for YWCAs operating in nine provinces and two territories. Our national office is located in Treaty 13 territory in Tkaronto.

And I am here today to really talk about the recommendations and insights from local YWCAs and the clients that they serve. You will be hearing later from our member association [indiscernible] about some of the realities of that front line service experience.

But I want to perhaps in this moment echo some of the comments that were made about how challenging it is for providers, shelters, transitional housing, and permanent affordable housing serving women and gender-diverse people and their families, in particular, survivors of violence, to continue to do this work. And to access the kind of funding needed to build and operate what we know is such important life saving infrastructure.

So very motivated as part of this conversation perhaps to break down some of the silos that we see as we do this work that support for survivors is often not very well integrated with housing policy and seen as a separate stream of work. We also know that shelters and transitional housing within housing policy can be treated very differently from the permanent affordable housing that survivors need

to move into once they have gone through shelters and transition housing.

So more of collaboration and breaking down silos, I think, is something that we hope to gain from this conversation.

>> SYLVIA MARACLE: Okay. Thank you.

>> AMY FITZGERALD: I will jump in. Good morning. My name is Amy Fitzgerald. I have the great pleasure to work alongside the transition houses and the Women's Transition Housing and Supports Program in British Columbia as the executive director. And I work with many of you folks on the screen. So appreciate all your work. I'm grateful for the opportunity to contribute and learn together today and bring the voices of our 137 members and the women and families they support to lead violence-free lives. Our society was created by transition houses which came together and said we need a collective voice. I see this as a continuation of all those voices.

I appreciate the commitment in the national housing strategy to acknowledge housing as a human right and hope that through this panel and dialogue sessions that commitment will be become a reality. And my hope is that the reality of the lives at this table and those we all represent are useful to that final report and to the Federal Minister of Housing's actions so that we can shift hopelessness to hopefulness for women with experiences of violence who desperately need long-term, safe, and affordable housing because the system is broken and it's truly a matter of life and death for many. Because of violence in Canada and other places, home remains the deadliest place for women and girls and they need to become homeless, they have to choose between being

homeless and safety.

So our member programs back in 2018 brought this issue to us because they wanted to understand the relationship between the housing insecurity and the women's experience of violence. And they identified the bottleneck to long-term housing for the women who access their services.

And the safety really result from that lack of safe, affordable, appropriate housing for them who experienced violence because all the systems back up. If they have nowhere to transition to, they just stay longer and longer in temporary spaces.

In BC, our work has shown that gender-based violence is one of the main causes of homelessness for BC. Only 25% of women leaving transition houses find housing. And for most, it's precarious housing, with only 4% leaving for safe, affordable, permanent housing. So 75% remain temporarily sheltered or return to violence. And we all know that creation of safe and affordable housing and financial independence are key levers for addressing women's poverty and safety, yet those barriers exist for women to reach the goals that they want to survive and thrive.

So I really hope that this consultation is an opportunity to identify those barriers of affordability and discrimination and poverty. And particularly of the interest is the Federal National Occupancy Standards, which my colleague Alina McKay has done a significant amount of work on. And really it's such a significant barrier. It's a policy that is being applied across the country and really in a way that is

with marginalized populations, the most vulnerable populations, the most discriminatory way. And there's also a lack of supply of appropriate and accessible long-term safe and affordable housing.

So there's opportunities. Some of the work our members have done include how to design and develop housing that meeting needs of women and children who experienced violence through the women-centered housing design tool kit that they worked on.

So what motivates me about this consultation is an opportunity to be part of this collaboration that recognizes the sober reality of the world we live in and the systemic barriers, but dreams big to really build a future for long-term housing solutions and to recognize that housing is a fundamental human right and is essential to safety and healing and long-term stability for all, forever homes for all.

So thank you.

>> SYLVIA MARACLE: Thank you.

A couple more?

>> JENEANE FAST: I'm happy to speak. Good morning, everyone. My name is Jeneane Fast. I'm a research and policy associate with the Canadian Center to End Human Trafficking. We are probably best known for operating the Canadian Human Trafficking hot line, which is a confidential multilingual service that operates 24/7 to connect survivors with services and supports across the country. And we do this by also maintaining a referral directory of over 1,000 service providers nationally.

But we do also undertake advocacy through different policy and

research initiatives. So for the last few years, we have been really developing policy recommendations on issues really impacting survivors of human trafficking, recommendations that have been based on consultations with service providers, but also with survivors themselves. Housing has been one of our primary focuses for us. First of all, because housing of all types are the most requested referrals on the hot line, but are also unfortunately the most challenging for our staff to actually connect survivors with and callers with.

More broadly, of course, we know that access to safe and affordable housing is so crucial for disrupting human trafficking. It can be a protective measure that prevents people from being vulnerable in the first place. It can help people exit trafficking situations and then provides that stability during recovery from those experiences.

So a motivation for the Center to kind of be here and be part of these discussions really is to continue this work that we're already doing to help break down some of those barriers that prevent survivors of human trafficking from accessing safe and affordable housing.

Also to draw attention to some of the unique needs of human trafficking survivors. So when there aren't kind of human trafficking specific safe houses or beds available, we know survivors will be accessing domestic violence and intimate partner violence shelters, as well as homeless shelters. But they don't necessarily address the needs of survivors themselves and are not always the best option for the survivors or other residents who are staying in those places. So I really wanted to bring awareness to some of those differences too.

>> SYLVIA MARACLE: Thank you.

>> MISHA KHAN: I can go next. Thank you so much for inviting me here today. My name is Misha. I use she/her pronouns and I'm joining today from Montreal, which is on the traditional unceded lands of the Kanien'keha Nation. I am also the strategic development manager at the National Right to Housing Network. A lot of what brings me to this work comes from both personal experience, as well as what I have seen on the ground, especially when it comes to how often systems fail women, Trans folks, and gender-diverse people.

I'm joining today with my colleague Michele Biss. And we're here today because as everyone in this room has already commented on and knows, those failures are ongoing and they are systemic.

Pam, you had said earlier in Monday's session that the systems that we're navigating aren't broken, they're doing exactly what they were designed to do. So we know that people don't end up in emergency shelters, for example, by accident. Many have already faced gender-based violence, been evicted from their homes, or pushed out due to skyrocketing rents and inadequate income supports. And for Indigenous women and gender-diverse people, these experiences are then compounded by the ongoing impacts of colonialism and systemic discrimination. So these kinds of crises can happen to everyone. But when they do, it's woman and gender-diverse people who are turning to a shelter system that was never built to truly support them. So by the time someone walks through those doors, they have often exhausted every other option.

We had submitted the National Shelter Standards into this space, when were developed over the course of two years in collaboration with over 50 individuals and organizations, especially people with lived and living experience of navigating the shelter system, as well as people who work in them. And actually, some of those organizations and people are here with us today, including Women Shelters Canada. And Amanda, I believe YWCA was involved, but please correct me if I'm misremembering. Because both are navigating the consequences of systems that weren't designed with them in mind. So it's important to center both perspectives to better understand where things are breaking down and what actually needs to change.

There are seven standards that we co-developed in our submission. And we'll kind of going into more of the content. But just to name a few, standard four, for example, was ensuring culturally safe services and supports. Prohibiting forced evictions into unsheltered homelessness was standard five. As well as standard seven, which was ensuring access to justice to claim the right to housing. So it's really motivating us to be here today is just this shared urgency to go beyond just naming the issues and to really work collectively across communities and organizations and regions to build a clear and coordinated push for change.

So there's been decades of research and reports and advocacy on this issue. And this work has already been done, as all of us have noted. What we really need now is accountability and resources and political will. Thank you.

>> SYLVIA MARACLE: Thanks. Is that everyone on the list? The list disappeared on me here.

So Pamela, I will pass it back to you. There are a variety across the country, really, that are very unique in some places. So we're going to hold a session soon on the fact that as one of the nations who purport to have good human rights and other things, children are being lost and put in children's aid societies, all kinds of children, your children as well, because there's no safe home for them.

And the system will pay 10,000, 20,000, 60,000 depending on the needs of the child and the number of children. As opposed to saying here's safe, affordable housing. And destroying -- already destroying a relationship when they don't know how to relate to family and community and other things.

So we are -- but we can find all kinds of models that work. It's just they only seem to be hit and miss. They don't become the policy statements. Right? And the resource driven.

For instance, there are lots of models. And it's those models that we need to use to design the new system. Anyway.

Pamela?

>> PAMELA GLODE DESROCHERS: Thanks, Sylvia. I think Marie is going to introduce the next question. And I'm going to provide a little bit of an update or a summary, I will say. But please note that even when I do the summary that we have this recorded and we're going to go back through and staff are going to make sure we haven't missed anything.

Marie, did you want to start with the question?

>> MARIE PASCALINE MENONO: Hello. Certainly. The next question I have here is to the question one, it's question number two. And the question is many research and political actions were launched about the link between violence, homelessness, and discrimination based on gender-based discrimination. Have you noticed improvements, significant improvement as the response to these? And in which domain?

Secondly, what action must be taken by the Governments?

Did you hear me? Because -- am I still speaking?

>> SYLVIA MARACLE: They're being polite. So nobody wants to jump in.

>> CAROLYN WHITZMAN: I'm happy to be rude and start first.

>> SYLVIA MARACLE: Go for it.

>> CAROLYN WHITZMAN: That's one of my best skills.

So I'm going to focus in on some big picture issues around housing and homelessness with a focus on gender.

The current Prime Minister has said that we need 500,000 new homes a year. And that fits in well with some research I did a couple of years ago for the Federal Housing Advocate that took a rights-based approach to housing supply. Because a lot of the discussion about housing supply has been very generic, and it doesn't really focus on who needs what housing where and at what cost.

And I think we have already heard from some of the other folks who have spoken that we need permanent housing. Institutions, shelters, even transitional housing where there is no exit other than back into homelessness or violence is not acceptable from a rights-based

perspective. That doesn't mean that there don't need to be emergency shelters. It's just that the kind of homelessness that's represented by shelters needs to be very short term, very rare, and very nonrecurrent. In other words, you shouldn't have to keep on going back there.

In order to end homelessness in a generation, in 30 years, because there's been virtually nothing helpful done by the Federal Government over three decades, it's going to take 30 years. It's going to take at least 200,000 of the 500,000 homes being provided by non-market social mission providers. It's going to take at least, at least 100,000 of those 500,000 homes per year, and I'm talking about net new housing, to meet the needs of very low income and low income households. That household could be an individual woman on social assistance. It could be a single parent with a child or more children who is reliant on minimum wage. It definitely could be women, girls, gender-diverse people fleeing violent situations who usually don't have that much in the way of financial resources. It won't be met by the private sector.

Where we would need to start and what we don't have right now is any way of even accurately counting need. So I worked with Alina and several other folks at UBC for a number of years developing and implementing a project called Housing Assessment Resource Tools where we broke down core housing need as measured by the Census and by Statistics Canada, by income category, by size of household, and by priority populations. The priority populations are identified by the CMHC, and we tweaked one of them and looked at single mothers in particular who are the most at risk group to be in core housing need.

So much higher than -- much higher chance of being a core housing need. And that means living in an overcrowded -- and Alina will tell you about the problems with the way we define overcrowding, absolutely. We're talking about the measures that exist. Poorly repaired or unaffordable.

And in the south at least, 90% of the presenting problem is unaffordability, paying more than 30% of before tax household income, which is an international measure that's used. I'm not saying it's the greatest measure on earth, but at least it's based on income as opposed to market rate, which is meaningless in terms of ability to pay. Anyhow.

Great, we have got core housing need, 2021 census, 1.5-ish million households in core housing need. We don't have any kind of accurate number on homelessness. And if you look at countries that have actually reduced and come close to eliminating homelessness, like Finland, it's comprehensive. It happens every year. There's a clear definition that every single municipality and region in Finland provides data on. We have a little bit of data for Ontario suggesting 81,515 people were homeless last year. Sometimes that includes women in emergency and violence against women shelters. Sometimes it doesn't. That's more than the population of Peterborough or Fredericton. It's a big, big city in Ontario of homeless people, if you want to put it that way.

But we need to have a consistent way of measuring homelessness because we talk about cutting chronic homelessness in half, which is a very non rights-based goal. If we're talking about the rights-based

goal of ending homelessness, we actually need something that we can check in on.

We don't include anyone in any form of collective dwelling. And that would include people in rooming houses, people in seniors assisted living. People in supportive housing where there isn't sort of a private entrance to each dwelling.

We know that there is over 600,000 of such dwellings in Canada, we just don't count them. We have no idea of housing need inside there, inside rooming houses, et cetera.

We don't include the needs of migrant workers. We don't include students. And we know that there are a lot of -- there's 2.3 million post-secondary students. We don't include any kind of sense of what students are in housing need.

So we aren't even measuring where we're at, let alone any improvements. We don't measure housing completions. We measure housing starts. People can't live in a place that's been permitted or is under construction but isn't completed. People live in completed homes. We don't even measure that, let alone have a consistent way of measuring how we're moving toward completions.

And we need to include a basic income category definition of affordability, which we don't right now. We used to. From the '40s to the '80, we had income categories and we agreed we needed to focus on low and moderate income folks. We don't have that.

Now I will try to sound positive. We're starting to have that in needs assessments, consistent. It's not in the programs at all.

We have programs that are in no way set up under the National Housing Strategy to meet the needs of low income people. And that's -- that's where I will end.

>> SYLVIA MARACLE: All right. Thank you. I don't like doing it. They're making me do it. But --

>> CAROLYN WHITZMAN: So those are some basic needs. I can talk about grounds for optimism later on.

>> SYLVIA MARACLE: Okay. It will come up. We're at question two.

Anybody else want to weigh in on this? We have quite a list from Carolyn.

>> ALINA McKAY: I can jump in. Just jumping off of what Carolyn said. I will keep it as short as possible.

I'm glad that Carolyn brought up CMHC's report they released yesterday saying that doubling housing starts is needed. They are projecting we need 430,000 to 480,000 housing units each year by 2035 to meet projected demand. And that's to get us to affordability levels of 2019. So let's just put this in perspective.

In 2018, there's 168,000 housing starts approximately. 2022, we had 206,000 or so. Sorry, yeah, 206,000 housing starts. These were within historically low interest rates, very positive lending environments, national housing strategy investments. And we don't -- we are in a current policy environment where there's higher interest rates, where there is higher -- there's less favorable conditions to build housing. So focusing on the market to provide this housing I think is just a little bit crazy.

So I want to just point to what we can do, though, especially when it comes to meeting the needs of women fleeing violence and those that experienced gender-based violence. There is a real opportunity in terms of what Government can do with a program like Canada Builds. I want to just paint a picture in terms of what's possible. Imagine that we have Canada Builds that works with provincial and municipalities, because they are needed at the table too. They identify public land, agree to allow multifamily housing as a right, and work with nonprofit developers to build that housing that's truly affordable, so no more than 30% of the household's before tax income. Centrally located and close to amenities including day cares, parks, transportation, schools, and work. And managed by nonprofit organizations that have a goal of protecting affordability and building community.

So I know that Carolyn can point to examples of countries that are doing this, but I think that we have a real opportunity here. And I think we have talked about how this system isn't working. And this is an example of how the system might work better and also giving autonomy to women to make choices around their housing so that we avoid policy failures like national occupancy standards that too often place women in vulnerable positions because they're forced into impossible situations and just left in crisis. So I think there are opportunities here for Government to act in real and important ways.

>> SYLVIA MARACLE: Thank you. We have a few more minutes on these questions. Anybody else? I see three hands. I'm sorry, I was looking at my paper so I don't know which one of you is quickest. But go ahead.

>> ANURADHA DUGAL: Thanks, Sylvia. I'm happy to go next. Anuradha from Women's Shelters Canada.

Just building on some of the things that have been said earlier, I want to add some context to the number of women who find secure housing after they leave shelters. We had some data from a shelter in Ontario where only 21% of women found adequate housing, and that's simply adequate, that's not necessarily safe or long term.

And from an emergency rural shelter in Nova Scotia, last year, only 12% were able to secure housing. So we know that the situation puts women back in danger. So what works?

Well, they need rental accomodation is the first thing. And they need rental accomodation with income support that is sufficiently high, as people have said, to actually pay rent. But also the rent needs to be subsidized. So it has to accommodate children. It has to accommodate large families, which many private rental landlords don't want to do. And they also need to -- so the builds, the new builds need to be more than one bedroom and studio apartments. That's essential.

In some places, I will say of course all the builds that are happening that I mentioned on second stage, third stage, and permanent need to be accessible for women with disabilities, gender-diverse people, and their children and families with disabilities. They also need the protections as renters that we have talked about. And it needs to be very, very clear that the landlord has a responsibility, whether that's a private landlord or it could be municipal or otherwise a nonprofit, they need to be supportive landlords that understand the

need for long-term leases and being able to deal with abusive family members and partners who might still be around. And that's part -- I think that's a really important thing that we often skip over and why we say that we need shelters to be involved in that process because they really understand that.

As well as the deep investments, I just want to give an example. At Women's Shelters Canada, we have been supporting shelters who are trying to build their second stage offerings and then longer term. Thanks to that, there are actually close to 400 newly available spaces for families throughout Canada. But that's us supporting four shelters with project management offering and then another 38 with capacity building work.

We have an unmet need of 71 shelter organizations that are interested in beginning, and most importantly, finishing the steps to have supportive housing.

The funding landscape is incredibly challenging for those organizations. It's inconsistent. It's uneven. It's a mishmash of conflicting policies from municipal, provincial, territorial, and federal level. We either need this all of government approach, or they need to agree to get out of each other's way and allow the organization to manage that funding picture.

And we need a lot more contributions for whether it's the rapid housing subscreen, the affordable housing program, they have been good, but they haven't necessarily met the need for housing specifically for survivors, for women, gender-diverse people and their families

who are survivors. They haven't met the need for rural, remote, and northern communities. It hasn't met the need for Indigenous survivors. It hasn't met the need for survivors with disability. And those are the ones who are experiencing the highest levels of violence. So I would also recommend that we prioritize the accessibility of funds to those communities.

100% agree on everything that's been said about accountability and measurement frameworks and oversight. We would also recommend a GBV commissioner, as well as the housing commissioner. We think that they could work really well together. And much, much more data collection, as I think Carolyn laid out the importance of that really well.

>> SYLVIA MARACLE: Okay. Thank you.

Again, three hands up.

>> MICHELE BISS: I'm happy to go.

>> SYLVIA MARACLE: Go ahead.

>> MICHELE BISS: Thank you so much.

>> SYLVIA MARACLE: I just want the three of you who are lined up to remember that I have instructions that we're supposed to finish this in ten minutes. So that's three minutes each for you. Okay?

>> MICHELE BISS: Perfect. Got it. Thank you, Sylvia.

My name is Michele Biss. I'm with the National Right to Housing Network.

Before I begin, I wanted to highlight a story that we heard repeatedly as we developed the National Shelter Standards. That is the story of women, parents who are fleeing domestic violence who appear

at a shelter and who are either terribly fearful or have the experience of their children being apprehended.

And I very much agree with everything that has been voiced so far in this session. But I bring up this point because an intersection of the crisis is around legal services and what kind of legal services are available to folks who are experiencing homelessness. So one of the shelter standards that we came up with through this work was the piece around access to justice, the piece around making sure that persons who are accessing a shelter have access to legal aid services, for example, to be able to secure their children if they have been apprehended.

Importantly for this discussion, as we talk about what actions need to be taken by Government, I do want to always highlight the fact that Canada has been told repeatedly what we need to do in this area. We have concluding observations with recommendations from the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women that we got just last year, I believe. We have recommendations around homelessness and the right to life from the United Nations Human Rights Committee under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. We have recommendations from the United Nations Human Rights Council under the Universal Periodic Review.

So to say it is important to remember that this work is grounded, as we were opened with, with multiple, multiple recommendations. Canada knows what we need to do, but we have lacked the political will.

In terms of our shelter standards, I will highlight briefly the work that we did was directly with rights holders, with rights claimants,

as well as with shelter providers. Always with the view that the vision should be long-term, stable housing, but knowing that there's an emergency need within shelters. I will say through this discussion, we came up with really solid recommendations that folks will be able to see in the written submission. Things around accessibility of shelters, making sure that resources are available in braille, and that physical space is accessible as well. We talked about cultural appropriateness within shelters.

But importantly, we came to this discussion repeatedly while we talked about the requirements of shelters themselves, we talked about the barriers that shelters providers have in terms of being able to provide those services.

So a lot of our discussion through the shelter standards, as you will see, comes down to the need for Government --

>> SYLVIA MARACLE: I'm going to stop here. I know that many of you would like an hour lecture. But unfortunately, we can't stay up for 36 hours in a row.

So I'm going to go with Amanda and Amy, I'm still going to get you in. Again, please, you see -- don't take the minutes. Just three, make your big points. We're going to come back and you will have other questions you can introduce your information in.

>> AMANDA ARELLA: Thanks so much. I will make two quick points. Building on Michelle's point around really needing to integrate services within shelters and transition housing that survivors need, one major challenge we see is a siloing or differentiation in different

levels of government providing different kinds of funding. And so typically for YWCA, the Federal Government will come in and only provide capital construction costs and require provinces or territories and municipalities to bring in operational funds. And we really see a gap there in taking a rights-based approach where governments should rather be looking at what are the needs for survivors and those who are accessing shelters.

The other piece I want to highlight is I think one positive element is an understanding by the Federal Government and CMHC that there needs to be dedicated supports for women and their children accessing housing, that they have unique needs. And in particular, highlighting women fleeing violence as a priority population. However, even within that, the tracking and accountability of housing and units dedicated to women and families and in particular women fleeing violence is often not very well understood or tracked. And one thing that we have recently learned is that permanent affordable housing is not considered sort of a category when CMHC is managing their targets of meeting the needs of women fleeing violence under the National Housing Strategy. So an area we see as a gap as well.

>> SYLVIA MARACLE: Thank you.

Amy?

>> AMY FITZGERALD: I will be fast. Three things. I'm going to start with data collection. So I would really welcome and our folks would welcome a cross sector collaboration to ensure that accurate data collection related to women and gender-diverse people experiencing

homelessness, they are most likely to be part of the invisible population of those who experience homelessness and has resulted in inaccurate estimation in the point and time counties. I would say in BC for sure and I'm guessing across Canada.

Number two, financial independence is one of the largest barriers that we see in addition to housing for women and their children leaving violent and abusive relationships. And the provision of served during COVID broadened the possibilities of government economic support to targeted populations, so we really need to look at reducing the social inequities for them to reduce those barriers of homelessness. And government can step in and do that and provide those financial supports through rental assistance and child care and other benefits.

And thirdly, GBA Plus was something adopted by probably all of our provinces and territories and by Canada. It's the analytical tool that we can use to assess how diverse groups of people experience policies, programs, and initiatives and how they access services. Governments should be held accountable. They should apply that. If they apply that tool as to who's at the table and who's not at the table, some of these barriers could be addressed. Thank you.

>> SYLVIA MARACLE: Thank you.

Governments have an interesting process, and that is that when elections are called, everything is filed and maybe sent to the archives, maybe hidden under desks. And even though there's a civil service, there's no continuum by very constructing is a controlling mechanism. There are lots of great ideas out there. And we agree with great ideas.

But they get shelved every time. Doesn't matter who the government is. Doesn't matter if it's a local, a provincial, or territorial.

So Pam, thank you. I took the last minute myself. And so I think we go -- we're going into cameras off, I guess. Is that correct?

>> PAMELA GLODE DESROCHERS: Yeah. I just want to say thank you all. And we appreciate this. And this is recorded and we're going to make sure we highlight all of your information. And I know that you guys are huge on data collection. So am I. And measuring is a huge piece. And I know that making sure that we have the accurate and understanding of what affordability is, that those definitions are key in how we move forward.

So we're going to take all of this information. And I also want to acknowledge that the access around legal services is really key as well. Making sure that funding is long term, sustainable, and actually does what the community needs, that we get to lead that stuff and that we are supporting our own communities.

So we'll leave it at that. And Sylvia will jump in, and I believe we're headed into a break. Please make sure your cameras are off and your mics are off as well.

>> EMILY PARADIS: Thank you so much, everyone. To our viewers, yes, we're heading into a 15-minute break. We invite the participants to keep your cameras off during the break. And we'll see everyone back here at 11:35.

[Break]

>> EMILY PARADIS: Hello, folks. If we could remove the break slide, please, we will start our second half. Thanks, everyone.

And welcome back to the Neha Review Panel, which is examining the right to adequate, safe, and affordable housing for women, Two Spirit, Trans, and gender-diverse people and the Government's duty to uphold this right.

This morning's dialogue is focused on safe and permanent housing for survivors of gender-based violence.

For those who are just joining, we will post some instructions in the chat about how to access interpretation and transcription services.

Thanks very much for joining. And thank you to our participants in group one for the very rich discussion in the first half of this dialogue.

Now we will invite folks in group two to turn your cameras on. And folks in group one, turn your cameras off. And I will ask our AV folks to pin group two on the screen. Thank you very much.

I will hand it back over to you, Sylvia, to kick off the second half.

>> SYLVIA MARACLE: I will start the second half. We're opposed to violence, remember? So we have to change our own words.

So we're going to go into the group two. You're going to come up shortly. We'll first invite you to introduce yourself. And Pam will

then start the questions that we'll ask you to address. And we'll move on from there.

So is this -- am I using my own list? Or is one going to come up?

>> EMILY PARADIS: Sylvia, I have sent you the list. I can drop it to you in the chat as well.

>> SYLVIA MARACLE: That's okay. I have it in front of me.

So we are interested first in you introducing yourselves. We don't need your whole curriculum vitae, just who you are and who you're comfortable talking to us from a perspective today.

I am going to start with Debbie McGraw.

>> DEBBIE McGRAW: Good morning, everybody. I'm Debbie McGraw, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.

>> SYLVIA MARACLE: You don't want any opening remarks?

>> DEBBIE McGRAW: I'm excited to be here. And I'm looking forward to answering the questions and providing some input.

>> SYLVIA MARACLE: Okay. Thank you.

Jocelyn Shaffer?

>> JOCEYLN SHAFFER: Hi. My name is Jocelyn Shaffer. I'm located in New Brunswick, which is the traditional unceded territory of the Maliseet Mi'kmaq people. And I'm here with lived experience. I was a single mother, 8 months pregnant, and unfortunately went through the experience of being homeless, leaving a very abusive relationship. I'm excited to be here and be a part of the conversation and hope that we can hold the decision makers accountable in getting solutions for

adequate and safe housing.

>> SYLVIA MARACLE: Okay. Thank you.

Shaine?

>> SHAINE SAVOIE: Hi. I'm Shaine Savoie. I'm also from New Brunswick. So I work as the housing services manager at YWCA Moncton. We house and support women, gender-diverse folks and their families who are experiencing homelessness, fleeing domestic violence, or in some type of precarious housing situation.

So while I don't have lived experience myself, myself and my team are front line supporting folks.

>> SYLVIA MARACLE: Thank you.

Molly?

>> MOLLY NEEDHAM: Hi, everyone. Thank you so much. My name is Molly. I'm speaking to you today from the unceded territory of the Musqueam, Tsleil-Waut-uth, Squamish, Coast Salish people, colonially known as Vancouver. I'm the sexual assault response coordinator providing a front line response at the Downtown East Side Women's Center. I'm here today just to serve as an instrument hopefully to reflect the perspectives and wisdom of the people who access the Women's Center and to acknowledge those who are fighting to survive and those who have died waiting for safe, permanent housing. Thank you.

>> SYLVIA MARACLE: Okay. There's a series of questions, as you know, and I'm not sure, Pam, are you doing question three?

>> PAMELA GLODE DESROCHERS: I think there's one more person, Sylvia.

>> SYLVIA MARACLE: Did I miss someone?

>> PAMELA GLODE DESROCHERS: I think so. Go ahead.

>> SIMONE PAGE: My name is Simone. I'm part of the Native Women's Shelter of Montreal. And my project is specifically the Iskweu Project which is the project for missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, Trans, and Two Spirit people. I'm excited to be here today, and I wanted to draw attention to the way that housing effects this issue of MMIWG2S+.

>> SYLVIA MARACLE: Great. I'm happy you're here too. We will fix the list.

So Pam, are you now ready to go?

>> PAMELA GLODE DESROCHERS: I'm ready.

So we have technically three questions. They have it as one, but there's three parts to it. The first part is what would safe, permanent housing need to look like in order to meet the needs of women, Two Spirited, Trans, and gender-diverse people facing violence and discrimination based on gender, racism, and disability?

How is it different from what we have now?

And what are some promising examples of what can be done?

So if you know of an example of what is currently happening or you have been part of, we would love to know that.

And if you need me to repeat that, let me know. I think they're in the chat. But just in case.

>> SIMONE PAGE: You're on mute there, Pam.

>> PAMELA GLODE DESROCHERS: I was just going to say go ahead.

>> SYLVIA MARACLE: Yeah.

>> PAMELA GLODE DESROCHERS: You said I was on mute, so you get to

go first, Simone.

>> SIMONE PAGE: Okay. Yeah. Sorry. I had read the different question there. But just off the top of my head for what I do know that would be very helpful to the group and for the issue that I work on is that there needs to be a rapid expansion of emergency shelters just as a bare minimum to get women who are currently being targeted by traffickers and by pimps and who are being attacked on the streets. And also being controlled through course of control and abuse. That's who I am mainly working with who are at great risk.

So being able to actually offer these women and girls shelter spaces to get them out of the dangerous situations that they're facing in homelessness would be the very first step to rapidly expand that. In Montreal, we have an issue of not having shelter spaces, not having availability of shelter spaces.

And then I am very interested in expanding more programs like the one that we have under the Native Women's Shelter umbrella which is called Miyoskamin. It's a second stage housing that's three to five years. It enables women to go from shelters into stabilization kind of housing where there's counseling, life skills development, family lawyers, and family reunification services, as well as pediatric services. That's all within the Miyoskamin second stage housing.

And then the parts that I think is missing that I know my shelter really wants to expand upon and really wishes we had the funding to do is to provide housing that would be long term after the second stage housing.

And for there to be family reunification prioritized in those shelters as well. And definitely it's a matter of needing to access -- for the women that I work with who I know are in constant danger, it's that I need to be able to offer them stable housing that is -- that will -- that is accepting of people wherever they are at in their journey with harm reduction principles embedded in it so that there's not a requirement for sobriety, so there's not a requirement for a certain type of behavior. That it's accessible to everybody, but still has lots of supportive programming and services. So that would be the ideal housing that I would want to see implemented to help with this issue right away.

>> PAMELA GLODE DESROCHERS: I think we actually skipped a question there, and I think that was the question you probably had. Sylvia, I think part of the introduction was what do you hope will come of our report maybe? Was that the question you had originally? Do you see that, Sylvia? Or am I -- do I have the wrong agenda? You're on mute, Sylvia.

>> SYLVIA MARACLE: You have the correct agenda. You are the one posing the questions. I'm just here for fluff right now. You're on mute.

>> PAMELA GLODE DESROCHERS: Was that the original question you had, Simone?

>> SIMONE PAGE: I think it was question four and I was prepared for question three. But that's okay. I answered question four and I would love a chance to answer question three.

>> PAMELA GLODE DESROCHERS: Okay. Jocelyn, do you want to go next?

>> JOCELYN SHAFFER: Sure. When being proposed to be a part of this discussion, I thought long and hard about my own experience and what I see happening around me in my community. So I kind of wrote out my response. So I do apologize I'm reading right now.

But safe and permanent housing has to go beyond just having a roof over your head. It needs to be a place where people feel truly safe, respected, and supported in every part of their identity. For women, Two Spirit, Trans, and gender-diverse people facing violence and discrimination, this housing needs to be truly safe and stable, safe without surveillance. Long-term housing, not just temporary shelters. Shelters are needed everywhere, but there also needs to be preventive measure to break that cycle. So not just temporary shelter where people are protected and don't live in fear. It should have privacy, secure lots, and no risk of being judged or harmed or turned away because of who they are.

There needs to be very supportive housing on-site services like mental health care, harm reduction, addiction support, peer support should be available widespread. People need access to staff and programs who understand our lived experiences, especially around trauma, discrimination, and survival and coming from that.

Inclusive and culturally safe housing should welcome people of all racial, gender, and cultural backgrounds. Services need to be led or co-created by the communities that they serve, especially Indigenous, Black, racialized, disabled, and LGBTQS+ people. It needs to be

accessible physically for people with disabilities, emotionally for people healing from their trauma, and socially so no one is isolated or excluded. Coming from it, it is so isolating to be in that situation and not know where to go and where to turn. And community is something so integral to success and breaking that cycle.

And there need to be low barrier. People should not have to meet strict rules or be clean to qualify for housing. This is a very, very diverse situation, and all of the perspectives need to be taken into consideration. So everyone deserves a safe home, regardless of where they are in their healing journey.

Currently, most housing options are short term, severely underfunded, and people don't feel safe for many gender-diverse people and situations. Shelters are often full and come with strict rules and are run in ways that feel more like institutions rather than actual healing spaces.

Some promising examples include Indigenous and LGBTQS+ led housing initiatives rooted in culture and community care. Housing first programs that give people housing without requiring sobriety or program --

[Video froze]

>> PAMELA GLODE DESROCHERS: I have lost Jocelyn. She froze.

So what we will do while we wait for Jocelyn to come back, Debbie, do you want to jump in so that we're moving along. When Jocelyn gets

back, we will let her jump back in.

>> DEBBIE McGRAW: Yeah, I just have a quick comment. Simone and Jocelyn touched on some of the things that I was going to talk about.

Transitional housing, supported housing, and second stage housing, whatever you want to call it, it can be transitional, second stage. But supports in these homes need to look like -- there needs to be on-site counselors, on-site social worker. There needs to be on-site nurses, an on site doctor. On-site counselors and mental health workers and addiction workers. And that's the kind of supports that need to be in place in these homes.

And they need to not have a time frame. Some transitional houses and supported housing have a two-year time frame. They need to be three to five years.

They also need to have a case manager that once the client has gone through all the other processes, the counseling, the mental health and such, that there's a case manager that can work with them on long-term goals and a housing plan moving forward.

And how do you keep those supports in place once they are housed?

>> PAMELA GLODE DESROCHERS: Thank you, Debbie. Those are all wonderful wraparound supports that you are talking about. I appreciate that.

Molly, you can jump in.

>> MOLLY NEEDHAM: Thank you so much.

So some of the people that access our services may be active or former substance users experiencing mental health crisis, complex

trauma, facing extreme current or historical violence, living with brain injuries as the result of violence, cognitive impairments, being newcomers to Canada, refugees, older adults, seniors, gender nonconforming folks, folks who have been incarcerated, who are on low income, and who are single mothers. And who are living with disabilities, which can include developmental disabilities. So we need to see housing that is inclusive of that and as has been mentioned, actually meets people where they're at.

So discrimination and prejudice that exists particularly toward drug users and people who are in a mental health crisis, having really human reactions to the realities of experiences of gender-based violence, are trying to access safe and permanent housing. And the Canadian Human Rights Act defines dependency on drugs and alcohol as a disability. However, we see that the majority of shelter and housing policies actually prohibit substance use. Which in an increasingly toxic drug supply policies, these kinds of policies actually increase overdoses, especially when the abusive person is controlling what substances are provided and how they're administered.

So some of the other needs that we need to see addressed include, as we have already discussed a little bit, the transition or transitional housing models. Here, they are typically 30-day stays, and then the person is left homeless again and often has to return to the violent settings.

We also need to see inclusive and trauma-informed intake processes. So something like sitting through a 30-minute or hour intake process

is not really accessible for a lot of people in that state of crisis.

And the lack of affordable housing set up and supportive housing set up for people who are refugees and are immigrant women new to Canada. A couple of things that we really want to see moving forward are those wraparound supports, like we have discussed. Medical, psychosocial supports. Supportive housing that is adequately staffed as well. That's a big thing that we hear is that the staff are busy or overwhelmed, they don't really have time to listen to me or just aren't able to be available. And appropriate security measures. Access to self-contained washrooms is probably one of the number one things that I hear requested. And as we have already discussed as well, that funding and autonomy for communities, First Nations, and survivors.

>> PAMELA GLODE DESROCHERS: Thank you, Molly. We'll go to Shaine. And then Jocelyn, we will come back to you if you're looking to come back on because I know we lost you. So Shaine?

>> SHAINE SAVOIE: Thank you. Yeah. It was already touched on quite a bit. I am assuming that we see a lot of the same situations touching services across Canada.

What we are seeing is a lack of appropriately sized units. It's not rare for us to do an intake with a mom who is trying to leave domestic violence with kids. There is supportive housing that's being built in our area, but it's mostly single occupancy, one bedroom or studio apartments. Which is needed, of course. But we do a lot of intakes with folks who find themselves in unstable situations due to gender-based violence and want to be able to bring their kids with

them. But the lack of appropriately sized units prevents them from doing so. If we are able to find them a unit, it's often unaffordable. Processes are pretty sticky. They can take a long time because we have a whole rush of people trying to access these services at the same time. And rightfully so.

Yeah. I think I can just echo everything that was already said. But I will just touch on that one point.

>> PAMELA GLODE DESROCHERS: Thank you, Shaine.

Go ahead, Jocelyn.

>> JOCELYN SHAFFER: I'm not exactly sure where I left off or where I cut off. Does anybody recall?

>> SHAINE SAVOIE: I just know the next word you were going to say is participation. I'm not sure where you were other than that.

>> JOCELYN SHAFFER: Okay.

I guess I will start off with the on-site services. So truly safe and stable housing, mental health care, harm reduction, addiction support, peer support needs to be available and needs to be inclusive and culturally safe. Housing should be welcoming to all races, genders, cultural backgrounds. Need to accessible physically, emotionally, and socially and low barrier. People should not have to meet strict rules or to be clean to qualify for housing.

Currently most of the housing options are short term, underfunded, and don't feel safe for many gender-diverse people. Shelters are often full, come with strict rules, or are run in ways that feel more like institutions than healing spaces.

These approaches are working with some of the things we have available. But we need more of them and led by people with lived experience, backed by long-term Government funding and accountability. Safe, permanent housing is not a need, as we all recognize, it is a human right. And funding is a big thing. We have the data. We have the initiative. But we need to have accountability for our governments to make sure that this is happening. And it's time.

>> PAMELA GLODE DESROCHERS: Thank you, Jocelyn.

I see Debbie, you have your hand back up.

>> DEBBIE McGRAW: Yeah. Just a quick comment. One, I'm not sure if I have mentioned I'm a person with lived experience also. When I started with the Salvation Army in 2013, I worked in their women's shelter for five and a half years. It did close down because of lack of funding.

But one of the things that's really important and this is something I noticed amongst staff, when you're staffing these transition houses, supportive housing, you need to be clear with staff that there needs to be an open door policy. Clients need to feel like you're approachable. Some of our staff had the office doors closed all the time. Clients didn't feel comfortable approaching them or talking to them. So staff need to make sure that they have an open door policy so that clients can come and see them at any time. The only time the office door should be closed is if you're with a client or doing an intake. I just wanted to throw that in there because that's a really important piece of the well-being of the people we're serving.

>> PAMELA GLODE DESROCHERS: Does anybody else want to add anything? Sylvia, you're on mute.

>> SYLVIA MARACLE: Can I ask a question?

>> PAMELA GLODE DESROCHERS: You sure can.

>> SYLVIA MARACLE: Everybody is pretty consistently using the word "accessible." My experience, to be honest, over 53 years, is that we use words and we're not clear about how they apply.

So accessible, which is perhaps, Debbie, this is something you will relate to, we can't be building shelters where everybody is there. We have to make sure the supports you need, the doctors, the lawyers, and other things are accessible. So you make those kinds of relationships in the community so you build a community structure. Is that how we're using it? Or are you saying we need to build these huge high-rises or multiple units in rural places and that sort of secures some increased safety?

So we -- and I was on the group who were charged with creating a new 100 shelters for First Nations. And they announced it. They didn't do anything with it for a year or two. And then all of the expenses went up and we could only fund 70 shelters. Do you see what I mean? So there's a public announcement, it's a great thing. But not all of them have support that they can. Because some of them are very remote in different communities.

So I'm just a little bit worried. I understand how I use accessibility. It doesn't mean that everything has to be in one building. It means that the community as a collective will provide the supports

and backup as it is. Is that how you're using it? Because each one of you used the word "accessible."

>> DEBBIE McGRAW: Part of it is building a community within your shelter. But also building partnerships in the outside community. And for me, we have those supports on site. But we also utilize a lot of other supports in our community, like for employment programs, for mental health and addictions.

We have an organization here called Classic which provides law services to low income people who don't qualify for legal aid or can't pay a lawyer. We use their services quite often.

So it's building the partnerships in the community too. And it's got to be a combination of both. And connecting with universities too, bringing in programming, things like that.

>> PAMELA GLODE DESROCHERS: You're on mute again, Sylvia.

>> SYLVIA MARACLE: I'm at least getting good at muting.

Jocelyn and then Simone.

>> JOCELYN SHAFFER: Sylvia, I would like to thank you for clarifying. I do agree with you when it comes to accessible housing, it's -- it isn't about building the massive building that just so happen to have every single feature. A whole part of the healing process is the community, and I think it is something that does need to be identified in this conversation. Accessible is not just what we provide in the building or what the shelter is providing, it's also utilizing all of the services that are around us to help build our community. And knowing how to have those discussions and bridging those gap ways of communication

and support. So yeah, that's what I -- for sure.

>> SIMONE PAGE: I just wanted to say I definitely think accessibility in terms of physical accessibility is the very baseline. But I just wanted to highlight the accessibility of services in Indigenous communities. I work in an urban center, but a lot of Indigenous women that come here are coming here because they cannot access services in their home communities, especially domestic violence shelters. So of the 55 Indigenous communities in Quebec, there's only 11 shelters. And some of those shelters have as little as two beds.

So accessibility in terms of when you come to the city, yes, that there should be something that's accessible to you there. But there should be something that's accessible to you if you do want to stay in your home community. So I think when it comes to accessing services from a rural place, that's a huge thing. Because even if you're physically able, if you just can't get there, or if getting to the services means leaving behind all of your community and your family, that's a situation that a lot of the women that I work with have already faced.

And then when it comes to working in urban centers doing frontline work with unhoused populations like I do, the biggest thing for accessibility that is the biggest barrier in terms of accessibility, because I think we think of accessibility as in wheelchair ramps. But substance use is also a medical diagnosis, substance use disorder. And so when we have the vast majority of shelters and longer-term housing that requires sobriety and requires a certain level of behavior or a certain expectation of rigidity in behavior, especially for women

who have experienced traumatic brain injury from intimate partner violence, which is I think 80% or 90% of women who experienced intimate partner violence have traumatic brain injury according to the SOARS program, that's a great program in BC on traumatic brain injury and intimate partner violence. And when the women that I am working with are seeking a leg up out of their situation or are seeking shelter, the biggest barrier and the lack of accessibility is that mental health issues and substance use issues are not considered when we think about accessibility.

>> SYLVIA MARACLE: Molly?

>> MOLLY NEEDHAM: Thank you, Sylvia. And thank you for clarifying with your question as well.

When I talk about accessibility, I'm referencing a couple of things. So firstly, it's just being able to get a foot in the door. The wait lists and the wait times are just skyrocketing. But also really actually being able to meet the person where they're at when they present to us and being willing and continuously open to adapting how we work to accommodate really where they're at and what they need in any given moment. But also adapting our resources and how we work to meet the needs of sex workers, people as well with intellectual and developmental disabilities. And so it's more of that approach when I use that term, as well as that service provision.

>> SYLVIA MARACLE: Shaine, did you want to comment on this?

>> SHAINE SAVOIE: I will. I don't know whether or not I did use it. But I use it often. It's one of those we say transitional housing,

but transitional housing can be incarceration or a housing opportunity that transitions. It's one of those words.

Whenever I'm saying it, obviously there's the baseline, like Simone was saying, of accessible units for folks who need it medically.

I think more when I'm using it, I'm thinking how many doors do people need to open to get from needing the service to having the service. So door one, an intake. Door two, you have to get rid of your cat and you need to do all these things to get to. So how can we take away a few doors for people to make things more accessible so that the services that we create are useful and people can access them.

>> SYLVIA MARACLE: Okay. I'm trying to get you to give me some ammunition. So I will be honest about it. Shelters are underfunded. And shelters are overprescribed. There's no ifs, ands, or buts about that. We should not have to prove that. We are aware of shelters where the most you can stay is five days because there's such a demand, they're in such a remote location. And what can we do? Except listen. And lots of you do not have case managers. You don't have people who work together and you have to do that all yourself. Right? Figure out how to bring all these services together.

So the funding model for shelters to begin with, if we're going to resolve this in a long term and try to change society, is we have to look at the funding models. And you need to know the kind of demands, and I agree, I think that Montreal's demand is very different than Chibougamau's. I happen to know what the shelters are.

So some of it in my case, so Pamela, hopefully, you will forgive

me, but we're going to have to be strategic and thematic as we present this. Because quite frankly, some of us on this call have been through this process more than once through Supreme Court, through the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People, through the Indian Act for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, for Indigenous Residential Schools, and Missing, Murdered, Indigenous girls, and child welfare. And we would like to have a different outcome.

And if it's any comfort to you, we are having specific conversations with respect to disabilities, with respect to other kinds of things that maybe haven't been addressed in the way that we should. But it really is going to require I think as we heard one of the early speakers about the whole system has to be examined. And we're going to have to find a way to prioritize some things. And not -- because if we do another report where we ask for everything at once, we will get nothing. We will get a shelved report and looking at resourcing. And Government always wants to do new things. And sometimes old things work.

Anyway, sorry, Pam.

>> PAMELA GLODE DESROCHERS: No, no. I think that's legitimate. We're used to this. We have been playing this game a long time. And it's how do we actually move something? And when you're on the front lines or you have the lived experiences some of you have, quite often you feel like you're not heard, you're ignored, and you don't matter. So that's why this call today is really, really important to us.

We're going to jump in to let Marie do a quick summary of what

we have heard.

But then I would like to go back. I know we have a few extra minutes here. I would like to go back to a couple of questions that I skipped over because I do think these are really important. They will be very short after Marie provides the quick summary.

>> MARIE PASCALINE MENONO: So hello again. Let's have the principles that came out of the discussion and testimonies.

First, almost all participants said that the right to housing and everything related to it should be available to all with no conditions.

Secondly, these rights to housing should guarantee -- some people have several problems, mental health and addiction, alcoholism, violence. There are many problems that revolve around the problem of housing and that resolve around the right to access to housing. We should have absolute rights, like intersectional approach to take care of all these realities.

So actions for interdependent actions, because it's impossible to take into account only housing and not think of mental health and alcoholism. You have to think of the interdependence.

Homelessness. To realize the right to housing, we have to think of everyone. The fact of living, being in Canada, of being Canadian, should give you immediate access to housing. And the question of safety also comes back up. The right to housing is related to safety. And sometimes -- somebody said that sometimes when people don't have the option for affordable housing, it's because they have to choose between safety and housing.

So generally speaking, something struck me here and it's important to me is to take into account the difference between shelter and housing. Shelter solutions are emergency, but they don't always end up with a right to housing. And it's important for us to pay attention to this aspect.

Yes, I think I have said everything. If I have forgotten something, you can remind me. Thank you very much.

>> PAMELA GLODE DESROCHERS: Thank you, Marie.

And just as a reminder, this is recorded, so we're going to go through and make sure we haven't missed anything as well.

Sylvia, we will jump back to those -- there's two questions. And we have a short amount of time, and I do think these are really important. And we'll have about a minute each. And what we'll do is I'm going to read the questions and if we can keep them as short as possible.

The first one is what do you hope will be the outcome of the report? And what is one important message you want to report -- this report for us to take to the Ministers?

So one is what's the outcome of this report? And one important message you want us to carry forward?

And we're going to start with Debbie. She's first on my list.

>> DEBBIE McGRAW: The important message I would like to be taken to the Minister would be that Carolyn and group one had mentioned 30 years of research. If you look back at research projects that have been done since 1983 to date, the recommendations are the same. I would like them to take a really long, hard look at these recommendations,

pick some priorities, and move forward with them. Show us some positive results. Because from my perspective, instead of things getting better, things are continually getting worse. So we need to -- they need to really take a good, hard look at these recommendations. Because since 1983 to now and nothing's changed, that's pretty sad.

>> PAMELA GLODE DESROCHERS: Thank you, Debbie. I appreciate that. I'm with you. We have seen it and heard it over and over again.

Jocelyn?

>> JOCELYN SHAFFER: It's the same stance as Debbie. The information is there. It's the same thing that's continuously happening over and over. We need to take that information and actually put into action some change. The funding is lacking, so let's take the information, let's get some money to where it needs to be.

>> PAMELA GLODE DESROCHERS: Shaine, you're next.

>> SHAINE SAVOIE: Yeah. I think research and the fact that we ask folks who have been through these experiences to share their stories over and over again, and what are the results? And it's a privilege to hear their stories. So then to not do anything with it is a slap in the face.

So message for those who are hopefully going to be making some changes is let this be the last collection of stories that you need to hear before we start moving forward.

>> PAMELA GLODE DESROCHERS: And you are singing my song. I love that.

Simone?

>> SIMONE PAGE: Yeah. I absolutely want to echo that. I would say to any Government officials that would be listening to this, we don't need more inquiries. We have so many publications about missing and murdered. We have 231 calls to justice of the National Inquiry that was made six years ago. And 2 out of those 231 calls to action have been completed.

So if the response to this kind of dialogue is to do another inquiry, to ask another 3,000 people who testified in the inquiry to come up and tell their stories only to let them sit in a publication and never become reality, I would ask that that not be the result.

If you need -- if they need some ideas about where to start, they can go and look at the calls to justice and begin to implement them.

And I would like to point out that -- and I know I have a minute here, but I would like to be quick about this. But the missing and murdered, the National Inquiry released an executive summary. They highlighted in there that the applicable law for genocide, one of the laws for genocide which has been recognized by many groups, including Amnesty International and many Indigenous groups, that the MMIWG2S+ issue isn't genocide. And the applicable law for genocide, one of the subsections is by conflicting conditions of life meant to bring about physical distraction. And one of those things is failing to provide adequate medical care, systematically expelling members of the group from their homes, and generally creating circumstances that would lead to a slow death, such as the lack of proper food, water, shelter, clothing,

sanitation, or subjecting members of the group to excessive work or physical exertion.

So the shelter part of that is extremely relevant to this. And I just think that the Canadian Government needs to consider the intricate ways in which housing and the issue of MMIW are completely dependent on each other. And housing must be addressed as well as those 231 calls to justice.

>> PAMELA GLODE DESROCHERS: Thank you. So appreciate you raising that. Thank you.

And Molly, can you wrap us up with this?

>> MOLLY NEEDHAM: I would love to. Thank you so much.

So survivors of gender-based violence who access our services are rarely, if ever, provided with access to safe, permanent, and affordable housing. I want to say on average, for every ten women that I first meet as a front line provider who are experiencing intimate partner violence, they have presented to me after being assaulted again on average approximately 43 times.

So we know there are numerous barriers embedded in the framework of housing that we have spoken about today. But there are also some important intersections between that safety, permanency to integrate into any housing decisions that are made.

However, I just want to emphasize that in any kind of decisions in funding, these concepts are really to be led by the survivors, by the communities, by the nations. And when these perspectives are left out, however well-intentioned a policy may be, there is going to be

an inherent gap and the result may be simply inept. So the funding needs to be in the hands of the people, the community, and the nations.

So in a nutshell, I would say my message today is not all survivors of gender-based violence can be provided simply with that four-wall structure as a homogenous solution to a lethal and systemic problem. And there are realities of survivors that have not been and are not being appropriately or sufficiently considered and centered in the approach to housing.

So I hope to see the full implementation of also the Red Rising Report, which I'm happy to post in the chat as well, which provide recommendations for housing specifically for our community.

And as has already been said, I don't know how many more research reports we need to understand, for our Government to understand that women and nonbinary folks deserve better and deserve to be given that basic human right and not abandoned to be beaten to death.

So I really hope to see some tangible change come from this. Thank you.

>> PAMELA GLODE DESROCHERS: Thank you, Molly. Again, I appreciate everybody coming today to be part of this particular conversation near and dear to myself and I know Sylvia as well, who has worked her entire life to help raise the profile and to help address this stuff. So I thank you all.

And Sylvia, back to you. And I believe we're about to have everybody come back on and we'll head into the next piece, I believe. You're muted, Sylvia.

>> SYLVIA MARACLE: I was clearing my throat. We spend days on this. And I have a deep voice as it is. So it's not always easy.

We have -- but if we look back at history, we can find places where there have been some really tremendous examples too. And maybe they're not as well known. We have children who are brought out of our communities because moms can't be with them. And so one of the models that we had was we had a number of elderly women who needed to be in town, the town is Timmins, for care that they needed. They might have needed dialysis or something that wasn't available in their community. And they were all grandmothers, and they missed their kids.

So the Friendship Centre and the town opened I want to say 16 houses that were two and three bedrooms, and they're physically on the Friendship Centre property. And those older women are the grandmas for these kids so these kids don't go into care and they are at school, they can walk to the school, and they're surrounded, we have a word which is surround you with love.

And it's been going on for a while. And it is proving that the children are doing better in their lives and schools. And that these grandmas who aren't -- who are just older women, who aren't necessarily biological relatives, are also helped. There's someone who knows how to go to the store and be safe and bring the milk home. Simple things.

And those are win/wins because that's what we're looking at, at trying to stop the generational trauma that gets passed on. And that's just a very simple one, but one I'm particularly proud of.

And we have other things. Because the whole point is I want to

think outside the box. I don't want to try things the way we have always tried them. And I think the young person who spoke about -- I said look, I lived through all these reports and the system hasn't changed yet. So we need and we will, and Pam reminds us of this, we are going to take your words. I look at the project as a series of groovy quotes on a T-shirt and that we'll use some of these things that you have said to quote throughout the report so that we can be clear about where it's at. And hopefully talk about systems change as opposed to here is the laundry list.

So that's maybe what I might add, Pam.

And we have a little bit more time. So if there's -- I'm not sure if our Elder is coming back. Because they were going to the Children's Hospital, right? That means there are some families there that need some support.

>> EMILY PARADIS: And Sylvia, I think we do still have time for the closing thoughts from all the participants.

>> SYLVIA MARACLE: From all the participants. Okay.

>> EMILY PARADIS: In response to that final question while we wait for Elder Verna's return.

>> SYLVIA MARACLE: Okay. So your last thoughts and words. The one thing that might get on the T-shirt.

Okay. Carolyn, you were up first.

>> CAROLYN WHITZMAN: I think there is an opportunity right now with the Federal Government talking about more than doubling housing capacity, putting Government land toward nonmarket housing, talking

about new investment streams, talking about new construction streams to mainstream some of these issues within a program that's going to be happening.

I am concerned that if we continue to have a separate concept of women's housing, housing for gender-based violence that's separate from the literally billions or trillions of dollars that's going to be going into it, we're going to lose out.

>> SYLVIA MARACLE: Thanks.

Jeneane?

>> JENEANE FAST: That's me. I think too I just wanted to -- I really enjoyed this, especially group two, I just enjoyed listening to your comments so much. So thank you for that.

I think beyond governments wading into the funding of housing, whether that's funding for shelters or building more, I think there's also a really strong responsibility for governments to look at their own programs that they're running and how those are creating barriers for everyone, but here we're talking about survivors of gender-based violence.

An obvious example of that would be social assistance or income support and how woefully inadequate it is. But I also think when we're looking at housing specifically that governments need to really be assessing the regulations and the requirements and their intake procedures for things like rent geared to income social housing wait lists and how those things are really creating bottlenecks, first of all, for people wanting to move out of shelters and into transitional

housing, into permanent housing. And also just preventing people from being able to access it in general because of rent arrears or income limits. And coerced debt is a huge issue for survivors of human trafficking, probably also other survivors of gender-based violence. So the Government has a responsibility to look in on its own standards and procedures as well.

>> SYLVIA MARACLE: Thanks.

I'm going to go with Ms. Dugal.

>> ANURADHA DUGAL: Thank you, Sylvia. Anuradha from Women Shelters Canada.

So I think there's an interesting opportunity around declaring gender-based violence an epidemic that comes from the recommendations of the Mass Casualty Commission Turning the Tide Together. And it's an important step not to take away the feminist intersectional and community approach and somehow medicalize it, because epidemic can sound like we're going to take a health first approach or something like that. But to declare it the emergency that it is, and therefor look at the root causes. So whether it's sometimes we talk about social determinants of health too. And of course shelter comes into that question.

So I think declaring it an epidemic can seem wholly performative. But if it is an opportunity to make the change in the systems that we want to see, then I support that and I support the advocacy to make governments accountable beyond the declarations that they have -- some of them have made, the Ontario hasn't, for example, yet.

>> SYLVIA MARACLE: Yet, the Ontario Government has the longest-running and best-funded Aboriginal healing and wellness strategy. Do you see what I mean about governments come and go? And yeah.

Amy?

>> AMY FITZGERALD: Thank you. Thanks for the lovely conversation. I really enjoyed the panel that we just listened to.

So very quickly, in terms of my hope for the future is to live in a world where home and community is a sanctuary and a place to survive and thrive and not the deadliest place for a woman to be, which is the reality.

And also, I think if the Canadian Federal Government just announced this housing plan which is, quote, solving the housing crisis, Canada's housing plan, that all of the folks at this table that we are trying to bring their voices, they're all identified as priority populations under the National Housing Strategy. So that plan should be for them. So that plan and those units, the 4 million new homes, the 250,000 new homes on surplused and underused public lands should be for those people.

And also in terms of holding government accountable, the National Occupancy Standards, and Alina knows I have been ranting about this for a while, needs to be replaced with a new and more flexible benchmark that guides occupancy rates in social housing and private rentals to ensure that housing is adequate and safe and it's being used against -- proportionally against immigrant and Indigenous communities.

And that's their law. They say that there are guidelines, but it's their law, and they have the ability to change it and to start the conversation.

In terms of a T-shirt, very quickly, just saying that some of the women that we spoke to back in 2018, one of the things they wanted us to know when they were searching for housing is that small changes matter and can inform change on a larger scale.

And the second one was that they're the ones that said let's work together to shift hopelessness to hopefulness. So those are my T-shirt recommendations, Sylvia. Thank you for all of the discussion today.

>> SYLVIA MARACLE: Misha?

>> MISHA KHAN: Thank you. Yeah. I will be fairly quick. But just like Canada has committed to our carbon reduction goals, we really want to see a national commitment to ending homelessness with goals and targets and timelines that are grounded in human rights. So more concretely, this could look like the Minister reviewing the National Housing Strategy in alignment with the obligations of Section Five of the National Housing Strategy Act and make the necessary amendments so that the programs of the National Housing Strategy genuinely meet the needs of people in poor housing need and homelessness.

And also mentioned by Jeneane, we need income supports that are aligned with the real cost of living and importantly, as we have mentioned, people in a reality where we have succeeded in our efforts to realize the right to housing, people have access to justice. So there's legal

support for tenants to challenge the decisions that violate their rights. When we're talking about realizing the right to housing, we're talking about building systems that people can trust and that they have confidence in. So if someone loses their home or has to leave to protect themselves and their children, they will be met with support rather than barriers. And they will know that they can turn to a system to help them get back on their feet and into safe, adequate, and affordable housing in a reasonable amount of time. So it's that kind of confidence in our systems and in our rights that we're really working toward. Thank you.

>> SYLVIA MARACLE: Molly?

>> MOLLY NEEDHAM: Thank you. Just one point that I omitted from my earlier comment that I wanted to include is that particularly in Downtown East Side community, we see a lot of people considered as housed, living in SROs, the single room occupancy units, that are very sub standard living conditions.

>> SYLVIA MARACLE: Okay. Simone?

>> SIMONE PAGE: Yes. So yeah. I wanted to address that the interlocking issues, intertwined issues that affect the issue of MMIW, it starts with a lack of the Government not honoring their obligations to provide housing in Indigenous communities, the lack of shelters in Indigenous communities, the lack of shelters in urban centers, and the lack of second stage and longer term housing.

And that I would like for people to recognize, for officials to recognize that these knock on effects of not having any of these

supports in place lead to women, Indigenous women, and all women being susceptible to coercive control which requires power over another. And there's almost nothing more powerful than financial finances and housing. And housing is a major version of coercive control that I see that affects a lot of the women that I know of who are living in situations where their lives are in danger from the men that they're spending -- that they're depending on for housing.

So because they can't access safer housing and because I'm not able to access -- to offer them better housing options than what the men that they're depending on or the people that they're depending on for housing are able to offer them, that that leads to trafficking, that leads to homelessness. And the result of that is the loss of lives of Indigenous women and the increase in cases of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and Trans and Two Spirit people across the country and certainly in Montreal.

And so the way that I see that being addressed, because we have all these knock on issues over here, and what I would like to actually see to address those at all stages is to have stabilization housing for youth-leading care. The vast majority of MMIW cases are between the ages of 15 and 34. So we have a huge problem with group homes and the way that child services treats you, including putting children who are running away from abusive group home situations in lockups in Montreal.

So we have a lot of situations, a lot of people that I work with who are youth or running away. Legitimately so given their situations.

So they're being targeted probably more than anybody, especially for sex trafficking.

So I definitely think we need a huge expansion of stabilization housing for youth who are leaving care or youth who are not comfortable remaining in their group home situations.

And then we really, really need obviously an expansion of shelter spaces. That was how the cases of the Brady landfill missing and murdered -- the four murdered women that were found in the Brady landfill, they were targeted outside of shelters. So those lives were lost because those shelters were overfilled. And unfortunately that serial killer knew to target the shelters and find vulnerable women outside of those shelters. So definitely we need emergency shelters to be opened up all over the country in the short term.

But in the long term, I would definitely like to see second stage housing with cultural appropriate wraparound services. And long-term housing after that.

And another big thing --

>> SYLVIA MARACLE: Maybe we have got the list.

>> SIMONE PAGE: Okay.

>> SYLVIA MARACLE: Okay? I think Shaine needs to speak and there might be others. All right?

>> SIMONE PAGE: For sure.

>> SYLVIA MARACLE: I appreciate your enthusiasm.

Shaine?

>> SHAINE SAVOIE: I can go. I don't know that I put my hand up.

That's okay.

>> SYLVIA MARACLE: It appeared to be up. And Molly and Alina have it up.

>> SHAINE SAVOIE: It's all good. I think if I'm answering the question imagine a future where we have succeeded, I think we will always have folks who have instances of homelessness. I don't think gender-based violence is going to disappear any time soon. But if we can see housing as a continuum, and so from the first instance that somebody needs emergency shelter, for that to be along the continuum of housing, there are folks that they don't necessarily need transitional housing with supports, they just need an affordable place to live. And right now, it does not exist at the volume we need.

So I think for it to be viewed as a continuum where folks are sometimes when people are going to need an emergency shelter. And not to chunk out, I guess, funding for each thing, but how can we address it as a continuum so that people can enter where they need to go and move along the continuum until they're in permanent, affordable housing.

>> SYLVIA MARACLE: Thank you.

Alina?

>> ALINA McKAY: Yeah. I think actually, Shaine, your points are really good jumping off point for the need for affordable housing, which is really what we're here to talk about. Survivors of gender-based violence, this is at the core of being able to create that safe home that Amy has mentioned a couple of times. Home is not a safe place for many of these people. So if we want to have a safe place for people

to call home, there's a couple of things that we can do to get there. And that includes priority placement programs and ensure that women fleeing violence have access to the limited supply of social affordable housing. We have 30 years of disinvestment, so this is a limited supply and we need priority placement programs.

We need long-term investments in non profit housing to increase the supply of safe and affordable housing for households in need.

Commitments to family friendly housing design that meets the diverse needs of the women and their family, including the needs of women-led single parent households, women with disabilities, and racialized women.

Stronger protections against discrimination, especially for Indigenous women, single parent households, and women with disabilities.

And programs that ensure that housing that is affordable stays affordable, and that often will involve nonprofit housing groups.

Thank you.

>> SYLVIA MARACLE: Okay. And apparently, Molly is going to shortly finish where she was at when her mic left.

>> MOLLY NEEDHAM: Thank you. Yes. It's just to speak on that continuum piece really. Just that the SROs that are often provided and on paper make it seem as though people may be housed do not actually have access in reality to safe, permanent housing. And that the transition housing that does exist or transitional housing is having to plug in some of those gaps when women do not have actual safe permanent housing to

transition to.

So that was really just all of the emphasis on the importance of those continuum models. So thank you for having this discussion.

>> SYLVIA MARACLE: All right. I want to give Pam and Marie an opportunity themselves to share a couple of reflections. And they do have strong opinions themselves about housing priorities.

>> PAMELA GLODE DESROCHERS: I will jump in. Thank you, Sylvia. Some of us have strong opinions for sure.

And I'm pleased to hear that you guys have raised a lot of I know some of my own personal concerns. I have worked within the community, my own community for a long time, and kids exiting care is a big one for me. Watching our young moms lose children due to poverty. And when I see investments going outside to support our kids that are taken and huge amount of money going to that to actually keep them in care versus actually keeping them with family. So all of you guys hit probably every beef that I personally have. And probably then some.

So I just really truly, truly thank each and every one of you, again, for taking the time. And Sylvia's mentioned we have been doing a lot of work. I'm surprised her voice has lasted as long as it has. So again, I thank each and every one of you.

And I noticed Emily or somebody put in there, if there's something that we missed in the conversation, please send it through. There's Neha, the email is in the chat there. If there's something we have missed, and I hear you loud and clear on a lot of good work has been done by a lot of good people and organizations, and we're going to

make sure that we take a look at all of that and that we raise the profile the best we can, recognizing, and I'm with Sylvia, if we go in with a laundry list of things, it's easy for Government to go oh, we can't do any of that.

So there's probably some low-hanging pieces there that we can push forward and hopefully get the Ministers and all levels of Government involved in making a shift and looking at what is truly nonmarket housing and what's truly affordable. You guys have talked about income support actually matching the cost of living, all of those pieces. It has not been lost on us. And you guys are not the only ones to talk about this. This is recurring. So we're going to do our best to wrap it up and hopefully corner a bunch of people in Ottawa. And Sylvia hasn't gone away. I'm going to be right beside her cornering them some more.

Thank you. And I truly, trial appreciate each and every one of you for taking the time today. Thank you. Marie?

>> SYLVIA MARACLE: Marie?

>> MARIE PASCALINE MENONO: I am going to emphasize what Sylvia and Pam said. Thank you very much for coming to speak to us. And I'm very happy to realize that you all exactly have the same concerns as we do when we talk about the availability of services, intersectionality, universality. And I am convinced that once we were to produce that report, so what keeps me at peace after listening to all of you is that you will be able to recognize yourselves in the way that we will say things and in the recommendations we will make.

So we are really sorry already for all the short comments and

the mistakes that the report may have. But we hope that we will be able to convince of the importance of our recommendations to make access housing for all Canadians, men and women. Thank you very much.

>> SYLVIA MARACLE: Thank you.

As I said, this isn't -- I'm not new to the process. And I recognize that going through all of the previous decisions of Government that they're going to spend special attention to an issue is older than many of you are on this call.

So I do appreciate it. I hope the little bit of change we were able to make in how to do this, you are just one series of a variety of people who we're talking to who, as Marie explained to you, we believe are the rights holders. That the right to safe, affordable housing for disabled is the disable's right. To the 2SLGBTQ, is their rights. To women, period, because of the economic imbalance between male and female and then you begin to add all of the other ways that people identify themselves and we'll see what we can do. We give you -- we will make the best use of our skills, knowledge, values, and attitudes as we can in that process.

I have been informed that Elder Verna will be unable to be here. So I will be doing the closing. And I think it's now.

It is the responsibility of the speaker to gather together the hearts and the minds of the people. And normally, I would be looking around a circle, and I would turn and look at each one of you and say thank you for your contributions, for your attendance. I would ask that you have good health and good mind as you go about your work.

I would ask that you offer the way that you have been taught in your culture, in your practice, in your beliefs, in your however to send out positive thoughts about what is happening. We have spent the morning talking about the negatives. But under the negatives is a good life, the good works that people do. Those of you who work in from the front line and in the trenches. Those of you who try to use your influence and your organizations and construct different ways to approach problem solving.

So I wish you the great peace. I wish that you find time to take care of yourself. And I would ask the grandmothers and the grandfathers and the Two Spirit people in your lives and in the world and in creation, the natural world, the spirit world, the animal world, we all have guides that help us. Call upon them. Lay your bundles down. Give yourself the break so you can renew yourself for the fight later in the day and onwards.

So be it in your minds and your hearts.

We are ended, this gathering.

Thank you all very much.

You can all go now.