

Inadequate funding has meant that staff levels and salary levels are low. Witnesses noted that the pay levels are evidence that staff work for personal, not financial, rewards. The average wage in transition houses in B.C. is \$10 per hour whether a worker has a psychiatric nursing degree or a Bachelor's or Master's degree in Social Work (5:32). In Saskatchewan, counselling staff who have worked in a house for over six years make just over \$20,000 (5:39). As further evidence of their commitment, shelter staff contribute their labour on a volunteer basis to conduct fundraising, public education and awareness initiatives (5:39).

A problem identified by all the witnesses who addressed the topic of shelters for battered women is the chronic shortage of space in many shelters. Demand outstrips supply across the country.

Last year in Quebec, 4,264 women were admitted to 44 shelters. In that province, one woman out of two is turned away from the shelters because of lack of space (2:30).

In Alberta, approximately 1.5 or 2 women are turned away for every one who is accepted (2:30).

In Saskatchewan, a 16-bed shelter in North Battleford turned away 40 families in 1989-90. In the province, some women come 500 miles to access services (5:38, 44).

In Manitoba last year, the emergency shelter in Winnipeg run by the YWCA provided short-term emergency shelter to over 2,000 women and children (4:65).

In British Columbia, for every family taken in, two are turned away (5:25). The witnesses told the Committee that when a woman is turned away she may be put up in a hotel, where her safety cannot be guaranteed, or sent to a house elsewhere in the province that has room. In British Columbia, some women are sent to houses a two-hour car drive away from their homes. They may be safe there, but they have no support, no family, and the children are far from their friends and school (5:31).

For disabled women, Native women and immigrant and visible minority women who are abused, the dearth of accessible, culturally relevant and sensitive services and supports is even more acute.

Taking all these factors into consideration, the Committee is not surprised that there is a high turnover of staff in transition houses. It is in agreement with those who assist and support physically and sexually assaulted women that the chronic underfunding of emergency shelters and services reflects both the low priority our society accords to overcoming violence against women and the under-valuing of women's work in Canadian society.