

action by women's groups, transition houses are often the only option for women who have no money or support systems. Transition houses offer a short-term, safe living environment for battered women and their children. They are the first step towards breaking the cycle of violence and control. The period of stay in a transition house can be for a few days, a few weeks or a few months. Simone Harris, a representative from the New Brunswick Coalition of Transition Houses Against Abused Women, described for the Committee the typical characteristics of women who come to a shelter in that province: they are in their late twenties or early thirties; on income assistance; and do not have a lot of family support. The witness pointed out that these are not, of course, true statistics for battered women in general because women who are financially well-off do not seek refuge in shelters, which are places of last resort for women who have nowhere else to turn for safety and support (5:126).

Transition house workers offer assistance to residents in their dealings with social, financial, legal, health, and housing services. They provide protection and arrange referrals to other services and crisis counselling. As well, in some transition houses, staff offer counselling for sexual assault, incest and family problems. Workers also accompany women to court and to their homes to collect their belongings. Job stress due to confronting daily evidence of brutality is endemic to the work of shelter workers.

Most transition houses do not have, and have never had, ongoing core funding. Limited government grants and low level *per diem* funding for each inhabitant is provided through the Canada Assistance Plan (CAP) and is relied on to operate a house and hire staff. CAP is a 50-50 cost-sharing program between the federal and provincial governments. Through its support of provincial welfare programs, it subsidizes the cost of social services for people living below the poverty line. The 1990 federal budget limited increases in federal spending under the Canada Assistance Program to 5%, for the fiscal years 1990-91 and 1991-92, in the provinces of Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia. In the 1991 federal budget, the limit on the federal contribution under CAP to these provinces was extended for three additional years. Eleanor Summer, Vice-President of the British Columbia/Yukon Society of Transition Houses, told the Committee, "if the CAP program goes, I have no trouble believing that transition houses will go" (5:30).

Witnesses from provincial associations of transition houses told the Committee that the funding arrangements for shelters are inadequate for keeping a shelter open 24 hours, operating a crisis line, and ensuring there is sufficient staffing. The absence of stable, predictable operational funding inhibits long-term planning and program development, and means there are no counsellors for the children who with their mothers flee violence in the family home. In Saskatchewan, there are 2.5 child counsellor positions funded by the government for all transition houses in the province (5:40).