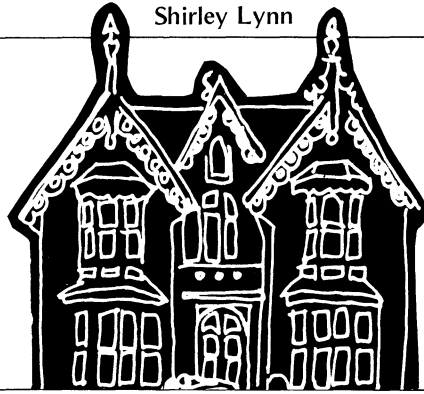


# Transition Houses: an Important Service for Women

Shirley Lynn



## Maisons de transition: un service nécessaire

Les maisons de transition (Interval Houses) reçoivent, avec leurs enfants, des femmes victimes d'actes violents et leur offrent un refuge et un temps d'arrêt pour réfléchir à leur avenir.

Cet article décrit la mise sur pied d'un tel centre à London en Ontario et le projet d'en créer un autre à Etobicoke en Ontario. Mais la préoccupation principale de cet article, c'est The Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses (L'Association ontarienne des maisons de transition), ses structures, ses buts. L'article se termine sur un appel à la solidarité dans cette entreprise.

'Of historical importance to women'. These words describe the conference on battered women and their children held in London, Ontario, on June 3, 1978.

The conference celebrated the opening of a new Women's Community House at 267 Piccadilly Street. Because so little money from the usual sources of funding was available for capital expenditures, four Board members bought this house in April. Operational costs will be covered for one year by a Canada Works Grant. As usual, volunteer help is urgently needed, as are additional funds. This house has been two years in the planning stage and even now has no guarantee of future funding. In major cities throughout the province, interval and transition houses operate in a chronic state of financial crisis.

On June 3, women involved in intervention work in such houses came to London from all parts of Ontario to participate in the opening of the new community house.

At this gathering, several events took place. There was a sharing of information in which Women's Habitat in Etobicoke (a borough of Metropolitan Toronto) announced its plans to open a new house in the fall. This comes after four years of determined effort. Funding up to eighty per cent is provided by Metro Social Services, and a mortgage by CMHC. Women's Habitat is a four-plex at 149 Stanley Avenue, Etobicoke. Extensive renovations are still required, and this is forcing mortgage payments far beyond original estimates. Corporations, government, foundations, and individuals are being asked to help in providing some thirty thousand dollars to meet the annual budget. Why is it that we have to beg for help when crisis housing is a basic and essential service in the borough of Etobicoke? This is a borough that has excellent rehabilitative services to help a woman take up a meaningful lifestyle after her stay at an Interval

House. It is deplorable that the Council should be blind to this vital primary need of transition houses for women. More houses are needed because the battered woman is everywhere. She lives next door to you and me.

In addition to the sharing of vital information and the discussion of common issues and problems, representatives from twenty houses serving battered women and their children joined together and formed *The Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses*. A co-ordinating committee was established to strengthen the relationship between established and proposed Houses and to develop an efficient network of communications among member organizations.

A Task Force is being developed by members to press for changes in the present legislation to assure the flow of funds from the Ministry of Community and Social Services to Interval and Transition Houses. Joint research among the member organizations is another project of major concern. This research is designed to show that the ugly fact of battered women, seemingly regarded as a social norm by non-victims, must be acknowledged and treated as a social disease and a criminal offence. To this end, a Task Force will initiate a dialogue with the provincial attorney-general and the federal minister of justice with the aim of defining family violence against women in the Criminal Code.

This newly formed association will also enable women to learn from other women who have pioneered this rescue operation. Board members, directors, and staff of established Houses are setting up training programs for other women to establish new Houses. Trudy Don, Director of Toronto Interval House, and Ann Cools, Director of Women in Transition, Toronto, are models of stamina and perseverance in this field. For years they have provided a haven for a steady stream of women who have found the courage to leave their homes. The systems set up by Trudy and Ann emphasize the importance of recording statistics that are crucial for research purposes.

While a workable framework and set of objectives are being initiated by the formation of *The Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses*, we must understand that our job is only beginning. We need Houses at many locations. The battered woman is everywhere, in all neighbourhoods; in every city and village. This is not a problem that will go away if we ignore it; neither is it a problem that will be solved for us. Women must teach women that they can break the cycle of violence that traps them. But they must have a safe place to go in order to learn. We need everyone's support and effort to eradicate violence against women in our society.



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