STATE RECOGNITION OF FAMILY VIOLENCE SERVICES DELIVERED BY WOMEN'S SHELTERS IN SASKATCHEWAN

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May 2001

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State Recognition of Family Violence Services
Delivered by Women's Shelters in Saskatchewan
Occasional Paper 14
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Preface

Carmen Gill, the principal investigator on this project, and collaborator Luc Thériault present the results of an exploratory study conducted in Saskatchewan during the year 2000 and made possible through a Human Resources Development Canada grant within the “Social Economy, Health and Welfare” program. The authors wish to acknowledge the women’s shelter directors who agreed to be interviewed and all those who contributed to this project. Sandra Jackle made an important contribution as the research assistant on this project. The authors also want to thank George Maslany for his valuable advice and Fiona Douglas, Research Coordinator in the Social Policy Research Unit, for her help in editing the report.
**Introduction**

This exploratory study on the State recognition of family violence services delivered by women’s shelters in Saskatchewan is part of a broader group of social economy studies conducted in the province. We were most intrigued by shelters since they have sought State recognition for their services and an appropriate place in the services network since the 1970s. When we began the study in October 1999, it was our firm belief that the experiences gained by those involved in the shelter network would underscore the importance of this social economy sector in the delivery of services for women. We also felt it would be worthwhile to draw the State’s attention to the underlying changes within this network.

**State recognition of shelter services**

Women’s shelters have existed in Saskatchewan for thirty years. We consider them social economy initiatives because they are non-governmental and non-market oriented, they deliver services without profit objectives and they feature a democratic structure (i.e., responsibilities are shared among organizational members and the community).

In responding to the needs of women, shelters offer services in various parts of the province. As non-profit organizations (NPOs), they are able to deliver these services through Saskatchewan Social Services grants.\(^1\) Since they derive most of their financing from this Department, it would seem evident that the provincial government recognises the services they deliver. But does this fact indicate genuine State recognition?

We believe that public funding is a necessary but insufficient condition to assert that the Government of Saskatchewan fully recognises and adequately supports the services delivered by women’s shelters. State-shelter dynamics and the respect accorded to shelter missions and mandates are among the factors underscoring this issue. Through interviews conducted province-wide with women’s shelter directors regarding their interactions with Social Services, our study focused on both the positive aspects of these relationships and the problematic factors impacting the delivery of shelter services. Our

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\(^1\) Saskatchewan Social Services provides $120,000 to $600,000 in shelter grants, including grants to some shelters for supporting child victims. These amounts correspond to about 60 percent of total shelter budgets, with the remaining 40 percent stemming from private donations and fundraising campaigns. It should be noted that shelters located on the reserves are funded by the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. Some safe homes and crisis centres receive grants of $100,000 or less.
intention was to demonstrate that unless funds are injected into the shelter network, the situation will remain precarious in Saskatchewan and some needs will remain unmet.

**Partnership Relation with the State**

Our analysis was inspired by Jane Ursel’s 1991 report on how the women’s movement’s efforts to eradicate violence against women had impacted the Government of Manitoba. We found Ursel’s work relevant in the way that it distinguished between divergent State-women’s movement interpretations.

Such interpretations regarding services offered to victims, aggressors and child witnesses seemed to fall into two categories: 1) a negative analysis describing an “invasive government” that imposed regulations and standards to service dispensers, and 2) a more positive analysis describing a governmental commitment leading to the establishment and State recognition of the services delivered by shelters. We found the second interpretation particularly interesting in that it also allowed for questioning how shelter management styles influenced and transformed violence intervention approaches.

Although one could foresee the growing institutionalisation of shelters (Barnsley, 1988) compromising the original mission and philosophy of women’s groups (a perspective promoting a resistance strategy), it would be more opportune to envision interpreting this State-shelter rapport within a partnership perspective in which State-shelter dynamics lead to changing practices on each side. This approach promotes broader questions and considers major organizational and structural transformations in the delivery of public services.

The decline of the welfare state since the 1980s has led to redefining State-non-profit organization (NPO) dynamics and envisioning new strategies and collaborations among those involved in delivering human services. Indeed, the establishment of two innovative partnerships, the Interdepartmental Committee on Family Violence in 1983 and S.T.O.P.S. To Violence in the 1990s, reflects promising changes in State-NPO dynamics. The enactment of *The Victims of Domestic Violence Act* in 1995 and the implementation of the Family Violence Policy Framework in 1997 further reflect the State’s willingness to recognize family violence issues.

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2 S.T.O.P.S. To Violence is a provincial organization that brings together people involved in intervention issues relating to family violence and violence against women.
Like the proponents\(^3\) of the perspective primarily aimed at redefining State-NPO dynamics, we believe there is a need to develop a more flexible decentralized model that further considers community needs. In the past thirty years, women’s shelters have been a prime example of models established in the 1970s that became indispensable to women and children as a result of the way in which they met local community needs.

**Women’s Shelters and Services Delivered**

Saskatchewan has a solid network of women’s shelters.\(^4\) When we began this study, the province’s Women’s Secretariat listed 13 shelters under its directory for the year 2000.\(^5\) There are also other NPOs in the province that deliver services to women victims of violence and their children. Although these do not provide official shelter to victims, they represent significant community public service initiatives. Four safe homes and crisis centres provide safe housing and transportation to shelters; four second-stage housing initiatives offer women 29 low-cost apartments after a shelter stay; and the Violence Intervention Program (V.I.P.), the only program of its kind in Saskatchewan, delivers services to victims of family violence, domestic violence and sexual assault.

The mission of these shelters is to provide support and a safe place for women, and to guide them through their time of crisis, respect their decisions, provide referrals if needed, take necessary steps to eradicate violence against women in the community, provide information and raise community awareness. These shelters offer a 24-hour hotline service, seven days a week. Services vary from one shelter to another depending on available financial resources, the region and the characteristics of the population served.\(^6\) Some shelters have broadened their mandates over the past few years, offering services to a more diverse clientele. Others also provide services to women who are addicted to alcohol or drugs or to women in crisis. Several reasons may explain this phenomenon: the absence of services available to this clientele in some areas, the need to make shelter

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\(^3\) Opponents mostly favour a resistance strategy because they consider the decline of the welfare state and the privatization of services (Shapiro, 1997) detrimental to social equilibrium.

\(^4\) The term “women’s shelters” is used here to designate second-stage housing, safe homes, crisis centres and the Violence Intervention Program.

\(^5\) Some might disagree with our numbers because all sources are not listing the same agencies. For other information see the PATHS web site. Our sample was drawn from the Women's Secretariat’s 2000 Directory.

\(^6\) Shelters employ an average of 8 to 12 full-time workers. Safe homes, crisis centres and the Violence Intervention Program are usually run with less staff (in some cases, two to four full-time employees).
operations profitable, and divergent interpretations of the role of women’s shelters. This constitutes an important element in our study since it greatly contributes to understanding the often diverging views held by shelter directors. It also allows us to explain the importance of meeting service needs in remote regions. Finally, some shelters have established support programs for violent partners.

Like women’s shelters, safe homes and crisis centres provide support services to victims of family violence. Safe homes are private homes whose owners offer temporary emergency shelter to women and their children. While these centres exist in four of the province’s rural areas, few provide shelter services because of the difficulty in finding sponsors well known to the centres. As such, these centres mostly transport women to women’s shelters in neighbouring locations. The four second-stage housing projects in Saskatchewan currently provide 29 low-cost apartments to women and their children following a shelter stay.

The V.I.P. also delivers services similar to those of women’s shelters; however, like safe homes and crisis centres, space is limited, and so the program usually provides transportation to the nearest shelter. Workshops are offered year-round.

Thus, there are a variety of services offered to victims of family violence in Saskatchewan.

Better Understanding of the Perceptions of Shelter Directors

When we began this study on the State recognition of services delivered by women’s shelters in Saskatchewan, we envisioned a more in-depth analysis of the State’s perspective and its recent funding of such services in order to document the extent of its involvement in services aimed at resolving family violence and violence against women issues. But we ultimately decided that it would be more beneficial to first gauge the issue from the inside (i.e., from the perspective of those who deliver these services).

Shelter directors are primarily responsible for budget and staff management, operations, service delivery and violence intervention program development. They are accountable to a board of directors and act as a bridge between the organization and Saskatchewan Social Services. As such, we believe they represent ideal key informants.

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7 When we completed our study, a fifth second-stage housing was being planned for northwest Saskatchewan.
for better understanding the factors facilitating State recognition of women’s shelters and those inhibiting the delivery of services as they see them.

**Methodology and Sample**

For interview purposes, we contacted all 18 directors\(^8\) in the province who manage women’s shelters, safe homes, crisis centres and the V.I.P. Most interviews were conducted in June and August 2000. It should be noted that we covered most of the provincial network, having obtained a response rate of almost 77 percent (14 out of 18 directors).

By covering most regions, we obtained relevant information on service diversity, on variations in State-shelter dynamics and on how directors perceived the State recognition of services from one region to another. The low population densities in some regions, strong rural component and presence of native populations in others were among the factors that led us to interview directors across the province.

**State Recognition of Services**

When we began this study, we wanted to examine how the provincial government recognized the work performed by shelters. How much leeway did shelters have in running their operations, activities and interventions? Did their Social Services funding impact their operations, management style, service options, and so forth?

The mere existence of women’s shelters is not the only indicator of State recognition. Indeed, State recognition is also perceived in terms of financial support, the dynamics of those involved in the network, collaboration in the delivery of services, the respect of the mandates and roles on each side, etc. We therefore chose to underscore how women’s shelter directors perceived State recognition in terms of each of those factors.

Over the course of our interviews, we focused on shelter funding issues. We wanted to find out which funding sources shelters could access and the nature of that support, how directors went about obtaining funding, the dynamics between them and public officials in this regard, and more generally, the relationships they had developed in recent years.

From the start, we observed that not all directors shared the same perceptions of

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\(^8\) The eighteen (18) directors we considered were those that ran shelters (13), safe homes and crisis...
their governmental interactions, although most maintained good personal relationships with their local Social Services representatives. This report considers two interpretations of directors' perceptions with regard to State recognition of their services. When directors discussed their governmental interactions at the provincial (and therefore more general) level, they were more inclined to question the role of Social Services regarding the shelters and were more critical of the Department.

Lisa\(^9\) raised one of the problems existing between some shelters and Social Services:

*One of the concerns I have with the Department of Social Services is the high expectation they have of our services while they give us less money to pay our staff than they pay their staff. They give us tiny money for operating and I need United Way money to keep the house running. We use donations to help pay our people's salaries and stuff like that, and, at the same time, I find there is more and more government offloading happening.* (Lisa)

Difficulties with governmental relationships seemed exacerbated by the lack of understanding of shelter mandates and realistic departmental expectations. When directors approached department officials at the regional or local level, they often had to rely on the quality of their working relationships to get their views across.

Krista’s comments provide a good example of more personal working relationships with departmental officials at the local level:

*We have a very good working relationship with the people that we deal with at Social Services and it is a relationship that has been developed on both sides. The organization that I am with has been involved with the Department for many years and it is a Native-run organization and it has a very good reputation. . . . I know that is not the same for all the shelters, it depends on personalities and who is in there, and it depends on how you present your case.* (Krista)

Shelter directors indicated that they had positive, cordial relationships with Social Services officials, especially with local representatives. At the local or regional level, interactions were said to be pleasant and funding requests, understood. However, problems arose more frequently when requests were made at the provincial level, as indicated by Erin’s comments:

*I find that quite frustrating because we put a lot of work into the proposal.*

\(^9\) We changed the names of the directors to protect their anonymity.
For example, this last year we asked for our budget to be revised and we worked on that with our representative from the local Department of Social Services. When it went to the central office, it was completely ignored and the budget was sent back exactly as it was before which doesn't suit our needs. So, things like that get to be quite frustrating. (Erin)

Relationships were deemed more difficult for financial matters, issues such as service needs and respecting shelter mandates, etc. Directors questioned the relevance of the procedures they were required to follow to obtain funding and expressed their difficulty in obtaining support for specific intervention programs, particularly with regard to children.

To obtain a grant from Social Services, women’s shelters must submit a duly completed application every year. The application must include information such as worker job descriptions, shelter intervention programs and mandates. The shelters must also provide quarterly reports and supporting material justifying additional expenses not included in original applications. Although women’s shelters are funded to deliver services to province-wide victims of family violence, their financial support remains precarious since they must submit annual grant applications.

Nevertheless, some directors felt it was preferable for most of the funding to stem from a single source, namely, Social Services, since it avoided having to meet multiple funding requirements. “It is not that difficult because we are essentially funded by one organization. If you are not that makes it more difficult because you are trying to please many masters rather than one” (Krista). Directors also found it beneficial to obtain organizational funding for delivering services to victims of family violence versus per-project funding, a process that is more costly and time-consuming on a yearly basis.

However, directors openly criticised the need to submit an annual grant application. Since funding amounts and services offered remain essentially unchanged from year to year, many questioned the relevance of this time-consuming annual exercise: “My attitude about that is that it is an absolute waste of time to do a funding proposal when they know they are going to give a 2 percent across the board increase and they do not pay attention to any of our numbers . . .” (Jane).

In addition, when directors submit a new application emphasising the need to develop a specific intervention program or their intention to invest money for the support of workers, Social Services seemed inattentive to their requests:
They still do not give it the respect it deserves. I think they do not understand the kind of stress shelter workers live with. They never give any money to deal with this. Provincially, there is no recognition of the need for ongoing training or support of shelters staff as a whole. (Jennifer)

With regard to the financial support obtained from Social Services, the directors stated that they were privileged to benefit from it, but would make better use of their time if applications could be submitted every three years. “Maybe if there was a commitment of 5 or 3 years of funding but there is not even a commitment for next year” (Laura).

Directors also expressed criticism over service responsibilities of the Department versus those services which the directors felt should be left to shelters. Being a government-funded organization was said to impact on the roles of shelters in delivering services: how could shelter mandates be changed given their relationship to the Department? Some directors questioned if shelters were sometimes acting on behalf of Social Services or if they were an extension of government services. They stated that they were many overlapping Social Services-shelter responsibilities, citing the billing of services and child protection as examples of such ambiguity.

In some cases, shelter directors in Saskatchewan must recover the lodging costs of the women in their care from relevant institutions, which means they must perform billing duties to recover costs for client services delivered in another government jurisdiction.

In Saskatchewan, shelters must bill services rendered in two specific instances: 1) bills to the Band Councils and 2) bills to Saskatchewan Social Services.

When a First Nations woman leaves her reserve to enter a shelter, her Band Council must assume all lodging costs – a phenomenon stemming from two-tiered government financing: reserves receive money from the federal government to deliver social services to band members, while shelters are funded by the provincial government. Directors must therefore contact Band Council representatives to indicate that a member from their community is at their shelter and that they will be billed as soon as she leaves.

This procedure raised two major problems for some directors. First, who should be assigned as a recovery agent and, more important, to what extent should shelters reveal the identity of the women they are sheltering for reimbursement purposes? Remarks made by Amy provide a good illustration of this concern:

…All we are doing is serving as a collection agency for the government. Further up than us they need to straighten that out because the reserves are
going to refuse to pay if we do not phone first. But some of these communities are too small and the women won’t come if we can’t protect their identity. (Amy)

Directors taking in women from the reserves remarked on Department-shelter responsibility issues directly impacting their objectives and violence intervention mandates. Since some 12 percent of Saskatchewan’s population is Aboriginal and most shelters are located outside the reserves, this problem affects many shelters. It is but one example reflecting the extent to which the blending of various jurisdictions in human service delivery matters weighs on shelters. This issue is also felt by directors who run shelters funded by the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development or the Department of Social Services in a bordering province, such as Kate’s shelter:

Well the border runs right down the center of the city so it really complicates everything. We receive core funding from the Province, but if we serve anyone from Saskatchewan we have to bill one of two places: either Saskatchewan Social Services or Saskatchewan bands. Then we are deducted from our next quarterly payment whether or not we receive that payment. We are funded for 60 percent of our total budget from the Province. Forty percent we raise ourselves. Of the 60 percent what happens is when we bill either Saskatchewan Social Services or the band, the Province deducts whatever we bill from the next quarterly payment. So of this 60 percent, Saskatchewan Social Services will pay us a certain amount and so will the bands. So this 60 percent is really made up of the interaction of those three. (Kate)

The above noted comments reflect the headaches caused by having to deal with three jurisdictions to recover shelter lodging costs, a lack of harmony among various government tiers that has also led to confidentiality problems for shelters wishing to shield the identity of the women they are mandated to protect as well as overlapping State-shelter responsibility issues. The directors expressed the view that they were performing government tasks and had to pay for the lack of harmonization among the various jurisdictions.

When the issue of child protection was raised, directors indicated their strong objection to taking on a responsibility that was not theirs to assume. Indeed, child protection was an especially thorny issue for some: Should they broaden their mandates to

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10 Three women’s shelters are funded by the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and one women’s shelter is funded by the Department of Social Services of a bordering province.
deliver services to clients whose situation did not fall within the scope of their responsibilities? Over the course of our interviews, we were often told that women were referred to shelters because the safety of their children was being compromised:

*We have had incidents with Social Services. I am speaking here mainly of child protection workers. They will give the woman a choice of either going into a shelter or having her children apprehended. We do not like that... It’s very difficult if not impossible to work with a client like that because they are going to resist you every step of the way. They see you as being in cahoots with Social Services, even though we are there for her and our hands are tied... We will not police clients for Social Services and we make that very clear.* (Lucie)

Some directors also noted they felt pressure from Social Services to take in women who had not willingly chosen to enter a shelter:

*Are we just a little longer arm of the government? I think we are even though we are not government. So we do their work for them. So there is a lot of offloading and child protection is one area where we see that a lot. You get reluctant clients who do not really want to be here and that need a lot of things. It affects how they relate with the staff and other women. If they get angry at us, or they might just be angry anyway, they say: "Oh, you do not want me to be here."... Now if Social services did give women that choice and they do come here then government needs to put resources in place. And they are asking for documentation of the stay and it is never detailed enough for them. How long does the baby cry and at what time? We can not monitor that. If you are expecting that you better put the resources in place.* (Lisa)

Not all directors agreed on the role of shelters in child protection matters. Some believed shelters should provide such services, while others felt that the responsibility fell directly to Social Services. Indeed, the controversy raises a serious funding debate on the mandates and roles of the various players involved in delivering human services. Will women’s shelters be asked to act as temporary shelters in the future? Although the various parties will ultimately have to reach consensus on their respective mandates, they certainly have their work cut out for them given that even shelter workers disagree on the issue. Amy was among the rare directors we interviewed who felt that shelters should play a direct role in child protection matters:

*We are just signing a service agreement with Social Services. Say I am a mom of three little kids and I do not have parenting skills and I have been reported for not parenting them properly. Rather than always apprehending the children, Social Services are using the shelter more to say*
Amy didn’t see a contradiction between shelter mandates and providing services to women with special needs. On the contrary, she stated that when shelters broaden their mandates, occupation rates went up, and shelters could therefore continue to shelter clients; otherwise, justifying the need for their existence was far more difficult.

While Social Services requires shelters to take in women whose children become part of abuse investigations, the directors explained that it was difficult for them to obtain funding for violence intervention programs aimed at the child witnesses or victims of violence. This creates a paradox. It was said that few women’s shelters could offer support to the children of the women they sheltered and that workers were thus reduced to “babysitters.” Further, the directors could not see why their shelters should have to deliver a service that was not officially theirs to provide. This reality reveals the extent to which shelter mandates are not always clearly understood by Social Services. Directors indicated that if shelters were called upon to play a larger role in delivering services to a more diverse female clientele, an agreement would need to be reached between Social Services and the shelters; otherwise, the shelters would be forced to adopt a resistance strategy to Social Services requests.

Band billing and child protection were thus two areas where the complexity of State-shelter dynamics was apparent to those directors who spoke of the lack of collaboration in service delivery. They indicated that shelters played a major role in delivering services to women and their children and that without them, victims would have little choice but to rely on family and friends. For all practical purposes, they stated, it would be unthinkable to envision a modern social service system for victims of domestic violence without taking into account the importance of the shelter network. However, before considering the expansion or change in shelter mandates with regard to service delivery, the survival of these organisations and the support of women after a shelter stay would have to be ensured. In addition, adequately meeting intervention needs would inevitably require improving the working conditions of shelter workers:

*The main challenge now in the shelter program is the lack of funding for*

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11 When we began our study, four shelters were receiving grants from Saskatchewan Social Services to cover the costs of child counsellors.
proper salaries for counselors. Most of them have a degree or years of experience and they're sorely under-funded. Number two is when we need to build a new facility we need to fundraise and save money for it and I think that shouldn't be. The challenges within those confines are just the sheer paper work of everything; the bureaucracy is a challenge. (Nicole)

Another issue identified by our study was the lack of worker support. For example, shelters are rarely given psychological assistance services or training days. Budgets for the support and training of workers are thin and are usually allocated to client services.

However, directors also unanimously agreed that in the past three years, Social Services had made major strides towards improving the plight of women in Saskatchewan. Indeed, some directors hoped their comments would not be viewed as a denouncement of the Department. “I do not want it to be a bad slam on the Department because this government in the past 3 years has made a big effort.” (Nicole)

The main criticisms leveled at the State were the control of shelter grants through mandatory annual applications and the perceptions of shelter roles and services. Daily problems encountered by directors were said to stem from a lack of harmony between the various governmental tiers and a lack of understanding of shelter mandates.

From the perspective of a neo-democratic government, the directors did not wish to see shelter funding support reduced since the services they provide are not available elsewhere. Shelters were established at a time when neither the State nor the private sector could meet the needs of battered women. Indeed, it could be said that the women’s groups who progressively set up shelters made these services indispensable. To wit, various Saskatchewan departments are involved with the Interdepartmental Committee on Family Violence and are working with women’s groups to establish the Family Violence Policy Framework (2001-2004). The directors recognized the provincial government’s willingness to eradicate family violence and violence against women, but underscored that as it stood, shelter services did not respond to the needs of all women across the province. The point that they most wanted understood was that current services were inadequate and that many improvements were needed.

**Deficiencies in Domestic Violence Issues in Saskatchewan**

Over the course of our interviews, directors emphasised the difficulty they encountered in meeting client needs in their respective regions. They stated that requests for assistance
could not be fully met through the current presence of shelters, 24-hour phone hot-line services, individual and group interventions, or workshops and seminars in local communities. The directors identified three essential improvements they would require for providing a more adequate service than currently available:

- Offer affordable, adequate, and safe family housing to women who have been staying in a shelter;
- Ensure that outside resources conduct a follow-up once the women leave the shelter; and
- Recognize the importance of supporting child witnesses or victims of violence during their shelter stays through the funding of child counselor positions.

Although other needs were raised (e.g., opening new shelters across Saskatchewan, particularly in rural areas, having translator services for shelters that take in women from various cultural backgrounds, favoring specific clients and developing intervention programs for violent partners), we chose to focus on the needs identified by the majority of the directors interviewed.

**Affordable, adequate and safe housing**

As previously mentioned, Saskatchewan can currently only provide 29 low-cost apartments for battered women. The lack of affordable, adequate and safe housing is a limiting factor in the fight against violence against women.

> For the women it's housing, I think that the government welfare rates are too low to establish good housing. Minimum wage is too low to establish affordable housing. There are too many women that are in these situations that move in to poverty with their families. Most of them typically are poorly educated and have not worked because they're in households without control. (Jane)

Directors further remarked that battered women often returned to their abusive situations after shelter stays because they couldn’t find the kind of safe and affordable housing that would facilitate their decision to escape the cycle of violence. It was said that shelters were only a temporary remedy to these women’s problems, and that while a few of the women would be given the opportunity to stay in a second-stage housing after their shelter stays, the others would have a far more difficult time securing decent housing:

> They have to find other accommodations which is very difficult to find right now,

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12 One out of three directors interviewed referred to these needs.

13 In the above regions, the closest shelter is about two hours away by car. As such, access is more limited (if not virtually impossible in winter) for women residing in these regions.
because you can find something that’s affordable but it’s not appropriate, it’s run down, it’s not a good place to live. It’s not hygienic, just a slum place. (Nicole)

Many directors cited Saskatchewan’s housing crisis since the 1990s. Indeed, two recent studies (MacNeil and Warnock, 2000; Geller and Kowalchuk, 2000) revealed that the province has faced a residential housing shortage (especially affordable housing) in urban centers in recent years.

**Follow-up and outreach services**

What happens to women after they leave the shelter? When this question was raised, directors expressed concern over the safety of women after their shelter stays. Shelters are a temporary refuge for battered women who have chosen to escape their violent situations. They provide a timely intervention in that shelter workers are able to work with women in crisis at a critical juncture in their lives. But the directors stated that since maximum stay periods do not generally exceed 30 days and that average stays are approximately 10 days, most women found themselves without support once they left the shelters. They were not always able to count on the support of workers to either discuss changes that might affect them, become accustomed to a new environment or understand the ramifications of returning to their abusive situations:

*From the shelter’s perspective, and I will start with that, I think the biggest gap in what we offer to clients is that there is no follow-up. Women are horribly in crisis when they come in and you hope they are marginally in crisis when they leave and that sounds terrible when you say that out-loud. You start to bolster up a little bit and there is some basic things the staff try to get across, it's not your fault, what can you do differently, how can you avoid this happening again, safety plans . . . . So you do all that, you bolster them up, maybe they feel a little bit better about themselves and you throw them out the front door and hope they don't fall down flat on their face. And they go back, we know that a lot of them go back. And if we know they are going back we do a lot of emphasis on the safety plan: So you are going to do this – what's going to happen when that situation arises again? What can you do to keep yourself, and especially your children, safe? We try to get some of those basic ideas down.* (Lisa)

Directors not only raised the issue of work needing to be done during the shelter

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14 A report published in 1995 by the Research and Evaluation Branch of Saskatchewan Social Services revealed that 83 percent of women who entered a shelter for the first time remained 12 days.

15 It should be noted that workers counsel residents inside the shelters. Some shelters conduct some follow-up with former residents via individual or group meetings; however, they do not offer any official
stay, but the importance of offering post-stay support, and above all, forestalling new crises, repercussions from ex-partners and other problems faced by the women in their care.

*There is no formal follow-up. But there is follow-up in terms of women coming back to us, in terms of us calling them when we have things that they might need like furniture, clothing, food. If we get food donated we call up women who’ve left that we know are having a tough time. That’s informal services.* (Jennifer)

In addition to the need for post-stay follow-up, the directors also indicated the high demand for outreach services:

*I think there needs to be more services available in the counseling field for these women, more groups that they can access. One of the main things that makes it difficult to access is the childcare and the transportation needed to get to those groups. Most are not in a financial situation where they can hire a babysitter. So they feel they have to stay in that situation or stay brow-beaten all the time because they have no choice, but there needs to be more services available for them. They are not used 100 percent of the time but they need to be there when they are needed.* (Krista)

For her part, Kate indicated that the implementation of an outreach program run from her shelter allowed departing women and women who had never stayed in her shelter to benefit from a discrete service in their own community:

*We have just implemented an outreach program, for a number of years we didn't have the manpower to do any follow-up or provide any ongoing support and in the last year-and-a-half we've developed that program and that's been wonderful. The women and children have a three-to-six month window where we provide support and assistance with referrals. So now we are able to do follow-up and it's been effective.* (Kate)

Lisa also indicated that women would benefit from the support of shelter case workers:

*In the ideal world if a woman left the shelter it would be nice if someone within a week gave her a phone call. I'm not talking about doing outreach for a year for some people it's that one phone call, that's it. Some people don't want to hear from you so you don't phone them. Some people just need a little bit, and they need it for a few weeks.* (Lisa)

Marilyn McCrea (1995: 139, 140) raised a key point with regard to outreach programs: the need to offer support services to women from rural areas that would not compromise their safety. She noted that outreach programs should not be limited to telephone follow-up to see, for example, how former residents are doing.
information sessions or shelter transportation. These should also ensure the safety of the women who wish to remain in their community.

Since follow-up and outreach services can be very time-consuming, the directors indicated that implementing these would require more case workers and especially, more efficient service coordination (i.e., collaboration among the various services offered in the community). While there are currently a few Domestic Violence Outreach Program initiatives offering such services, the core issue is: up to what point can such a program be used in conjunction with shelter services? Since shelter workers have privileged contacts with the women\textsuperscript{16} in their care and have already established a relationship of trust, it would seem a natural extension to offer formal outreach services in the shelters themselves.

\textit{Support to child witnesses and victims of violence}

As previously mentioned, it is difficult for shelters to obtain grants that would allow the hiring of child counselors to address the needs of children sheltered with their mothers. Although shelter workers are confronted with the needs of child witnesses and victims of violence on a daily basis, they are not able to address the specific needs of this clientele:

\textit{One of the needs that, I think, is really unmet are children that witness violence. Each time that a child saw the mom being beat or abused or whatever, they are emotionally abused too. We all need to start recognizing that, because if we need to end violence we have to start working with the children right from birth or just about. That is one of the things I really see as lacking, and right through Saskatchewan that's a big issue.} (Kelly)

The directors felt that it would also be beneficial to work with the children to help them cope with this period of transition in their lives, to allow them to express their feelings, to discuss their parental relationships, and so on. All of the directors who raised the issue of child witnesses were unanimous in stating that they did not expect an individualised therapy or intervention program since such specialised interventions were currently handled by health and social services professionals. They merely felt that shelters would benefit from having empathetic child counselors to speak to the children about their problems. When we completed our study, only four shelters had child counselors – although some shelters employed babysitters, depending on available funds.

\textsuperscript{16} Individual interventions in crisis situations, legal procedure support, etc.
Conclusion
The services examined in this study represent well-established social economy initiatives in Saskatchewan. Within the framework of creating positive changes in the dynamics between the State and other sectors delivering such services, we can certainly draw several conclusions from the women’s shelter experience. As indicated in our study, the Department of Social Services funds shelters, a reality that inevitably creates resistance and underscores how and at what price the State can establish and impose the scope of responsibilities attributed to these organizations. The directors felt that they often had to make do with very little, a reality creating daily frustration in their work.

Our examination of the State-shelter funding dynamics revealed that practices developed by women within a social economy perspective were not fully recognized despite cordial relationships among shelter workers and local government representatives. The main frustrations identified were the necessity to produce new funding applications despite the relatively stable amounts granted; the low amounts granted to improve working conditions or to hire child counselors; and the requirement to bill Band Councils and Social Services, thereby rendering shelters responsible for recovering money.

It is obvious that solutions are needed to improve the services already delivered by shelters. There is a need for more secure funding; shelters would benefit from a 3- or 5-year funding plan so that they can concentrate energy on programming and services to their clientele. There is no reason to leave the cost recovery responsibilities to the shelters.

In addition, some mechanisms should be put to place to ensure the confidentiality of the clients. Department of Social services officials must realize the delicate situation in which they put the shelters and their clients.

It is important to remember that shelters are delivering diversified services at a very low cost, in terms of salaries, etc. It is thus difficult to recruit and retain staff, especially in towns away from the main centers. It would be really interesting to further research the working conditions in shelters and the shelter funding issue. This kind of research could help to better clarify the shelters' experiences and the difficulties keeping qualified workers in third sector agencies. A comparison with workers from the public sector doing similar jobs could also be relevant.

However, State-shelter interactions were not all negative or one-sided and often led to positive changes on both sides. Our study revealed that both parties are involved in a
dialectic process that, in the long-term, has had a positive impact, for example, on their mutual understanding of family violence and violence against women issues, intervention approaches and partnerships to be developed. Further investigation should be pursued on civil servants' perceptions of the recognition of shelter services, with particular attention paid to the perceptions of regional government representatives versus provincial representatives. This research could produce an excellent understanding of the dynamics at the government level and the relationships with the shelters.

It must be noted that State-shelter interactions have led to changes in family violence services delivered by women’s shelters and that changes have also taken place within the Government of Saskatchewan. While we believe these phenomena are likely to continue, the main issue for future consideration will be ensuring that the influence of the social economy sector continues to be felt in the public sector.
References


