



Ministry of Finance Provincial Budget 2026

Submitted By:

Marlene Ham, Executive Director
Ontario Association of Interval & Transition Houses
marlene@oaith.ca

January 29th, 2026

The Honourable Peter Bethlenfalvy
Minister of Finance
c/oa Communications Services Branch
Frost Building North, 3rd Floor
95 Grosvenor Street
Toronto, Ontario
M7A 1Z1

Dear Minister Bethlenfalvy,

On behalf of the Ontario Association of Interval & Transition Houses, thank you for the opportunity to present to you and your colleagues at the Ministry of Finance Consultation on Friday January 16th, 2026. OAITH respectfully submits this written submission for your consideration for Budget 2026.

Background:

Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses was established in 1977 as a provincial association committed to ending gender-based violence. In 2026 we now represent 90 organizations including shelters, transitional housing and community based organizations focused on ending all forms of gender-based violence. With OAITH members and our allies, we envision an Ontario that is safe and just and one that doesn't require gender-based violence services at all because we call for its eradication in all its forms. Our mission empowers us to:

- Create training, learning and capacity-building opportunities with those engaged in gender-based violence work
- Conduct research to share knowledge, shape public policy that inspires change, innovate and build promising practices, advocate for funding and;
- Build public awareness about existing services, prevention initiatives and advocate for the prevention of all forms of gender-based violence by improving social conditions and eliminating systemic barriers that perpetuate violence.

Looking Towards the 2026 Provincial Budget

Over the last ten years, OAITH has submitted proposals to the Ministry of Finance and the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs advocating for strategic investment into the sector. We are pleased to note recent investments, including the Transitional Housing Support Program (\$18.5 million), Stabilization to Gender-Based Violence Organizations (\$18 million), and, in 2025, \$26.7 million allocated to support

300 unfunded beds and the funding enhancement to the Family Court Support Worker Program. Much of this was made possible through provincial and federal funding agreements.

Although it has taken 23 years to secure a dedicated funding investment of beds for survivors of intimate partner violence and their children, we recognize that this essential catch-up payment necessitates a plan to ensure the long-term sustainability of these investments and we're ready and willing to work in partnership with MCCSS on this.

OAITH is presenting to the Ministry of Finance four key strategies as we look towards the 2026 provincial budget:

Aligning Government Strategies with Ontario STANDS - Ontario's Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence

We acknowledge the government's important strides in giving voice to gender-based violence by naming it as an endemic problem in the Ontario Legislature in November 2025. The significance of this would be enhanced if all relevant government strategies included:

1. Ministerial commitments to address gender-based violence.
2. Strategic funding investments.
3. Policy priorities that align with "Ontario Stands - Ontario's Action Plan to End Gender Based Violence," which is part of the National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence in Canada.
4. Invest 10 million into gender-based violence organizations to deliver locally informed and provincially supported prevention programs. This will create staffing infrastructure across more than 100 organizations to deliver evidence-informed prevention by local experts.

There are many ministries across the whole of government with policy and program priorities that are addressing gender-based violence, however when this is in alignment and guided by Ontario STANDS and further resources are contributed to ending gender-based violence, we will then reach more achievable results of reducing the prevalence of men's violence ([OAITH Submission, Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy](#); [OAITH Submission to IPV Justice Committee](#)).

Annual indexing of 3% to base funding for shelters to offset inflation and the rising costs of delivering 24 hour essential emergency services:

A long-awaited investment of \$26.7 million is being directed towards over 60 Violence Against Women (VAW) Emergency Shelters, which will fund approximately 300 beds. This investment is accompanied by additional funding for the Family Court Support

Worker Program. The operational challenges of delivering services to survivors and their children are compounded by rising costs of living, utilities, wages and benefits, maintenance, and basic infrastructure, alongside the demands of a growing population and inflationary pressures. Furthermore, while a number of shelters currently operate with unfunded beds, the remaining shelters contend with unfunded services, necessitating significant fundraising efforts to offset the actual costs of core programs primarily funded by the Government of Ontario.

This could be mitigated by the annual indexing of base funding for all gender-based violence programs funded by the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS). Instead of requiring a lump sum to address funding deficits that have accumulated over periods of 5, 10, or 20 more years, an ongoing plan to sustain this investment is a more efficient approach. Annual indexing has been legislated within other government ministries for rights based payment programs (WSIB, CPP) and options should be explored for gender-based violence services under the purview of MCCSS.

Experiencing violence is not the fault of survivors and these programs exist *because they should have a right* to safety and freedom from harm. If the government rejects this notion or framing of annual indexation of programs over rights based payment programs, OAITH is willing to be a partner in discussing how we can solve the issue so that investments made to date can be sustainable. Our members deserve funding certainty and survivors deserve service quality and both are interconnected.

“We are bearing witness to the social and economic consequences of gender-based violence and hatred — Last year 44 femicides occurred in Ontario or nearly a woman killed every week —an agonizing reminder that a shelter bed can be the only thing standing between safety and tragedy. *But a shelter system is meaningless without a housing system.*”

-Marlene Ham, Executive Director, Deputation to Minister of Finance, January 16th 2026

Investing in the stability of gender-based violence organizations is an investment in the safety of every community in Ontario.

Address Housing Pressures to Reduce Women and Kids Turned Away from Shelter

From 19/20 to 22/23 MCCSS data to the Financial Accountability Office reports that 147,623 kids and women were turned away from shelter ([FAO, Spending Plan Review 2024](#)). While data is not always unique, there is an upwards trajectory each year as we move away from the pandemic of turning more kids and their Mothers away. OAITH urges the Ministry of Finance to prioritize investments that will ensure the long-term viability and expansion of GBV-focused transitional housing and housing-related supports to ensure we can sustain the shelter system.

- **Operational Funding for Sustainability:** While capital investment to build supportive and transitional housing is welcome, **operational funding is critically required to make these units sustainable**. This funding must be planned, ongoing, and measured to ensure shelters and transitional housing can meet true and changing costs. This is a necessary step to help survivors move out of emergency shelter and into safe, affordable, supported housing.
- **System-Wide Investment:** OAITH continues to advocate for a significant investment, approximately **\$60 million**, for shelter and related programs. This investment is needed for more beds, more staff, more programs, and, now we need more transitional housing operations.
- **Relieve Shelter Backlogs:** We call on the government to build more affordable housing options (Rent Geared to Income, Affordable, Deeply Affordable, Transitional Housing and access to home ownership) to alleviate the immense pressure and "bottle neck" currently faced by VAW shelters.

Provincial Budget Survey Snapshot

OAITH members were surveyed in 2025 (n=39) to gain insight into the financial pressures they face with operating programs, staffing and about system barriers survivors are facing. This sample of member shelters is representative regionally across Ontario (Toronto at 10.5%; West at 21%; Central at 24%, East at 24% and North at 24%)

- **On average**, organizations reported they had to turn away 190 women and 68 children between April 2023 and March 2024.
- **The average length** of stay in shelter has jumped from 80 days in 2021-2022 to 104 days in 2023-2024 demonstrating a year over year increase.
- Members reported a 32% turnover rate of employees in 2023-2024
- 76% indicating **compensation** as the primary reason employees are leaving their jobs
- 71% reporting they are not double-staffed which could possibly create serious safety and wellbeing barriers for clients and staff.

- 90% of members surveyed indicated they are fundraising to offset expenses for core programs, while only 10% indicated they didn't need to fundraise at all.
- Nearly 40% of members surveyed indicate they own and operate some form of transitional housing, but many don't receive any operational funding
- Nearly 16% surveyed indicated they are currently in the process of applying to build transitional or supportive housing.

These results demonstrate the importance of targeted investments into:

1. Workforce, labor, training and capacity-building initiatives to ensure the continuance and further development and growth of our workforce.
2. Housing, transitional housing and housing-related supports are critical to the success of delivering shelter programs.
3. Funding and creating sustainability plans for existing investments for the operations of shelter and transitional housing.
4. Approximately 56% of members surveyed either have or are in the process of building transitional housing creating a unique opportunity for MCCSS to expand the services that are required for survivors of gender-based violence.

On behalf of our Board of Directors, Members and Staff, thank you for your consideration and for your support to strengthening the sustainability of our services and ensuring the safety of survivors and their children are prioritized in Ontario.

Sincerely,



Marlene Ham, Executive Director
Ontario Association of Interval & Transition Houses
marlene@oaith.ca | www.oaith.ca | www.mulberryfinder.ca
416-977-6619 ext 103