



ENDING I KNOW A PLACE VIOLENCE

National Emergency Survivor Support (NESS) Fund

2024 Impact Report Slaight Family Foundation



YWCA
CANADA



NATIONAL EMERGENCY SURVIVOR SUPPORT FUND
NESSFUND
FONDS NATIONAL D'URGENCE POUR SURVIVANTES

January 2025

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Mr. Slaight and The Slaight Family Foundation,

As the National CEO of YWCA Canada, I want to extend my deepest gratitude for your investment in our National Emergency Survivor Support Fund. YWCA Canada continues to ensure that nearly 90% of your funds go directly into the hands of women in need. Leaving an abusive relationship, reporting an assault, or seeking help after experiencing violence is profoundly difficult, and the barriers women face are complex. Your support has made it possible for nearly 1,000 women to access the resources they needed to make their escape less risky. This is truly a life-saving measure, and its impact cannot be overstated.

In 2024, as I entered my second year as leader of the YWCA federation, I had the privilege of visiting and getting to know each of our 29 local Member Associations across Canada. Together, we co-designed YWCA Canada's new Strategic Plan, and I would love to share our renewed direction and focus with you. I am proud to say that the federation has never been more aligned in using our collective strength to empower women and remove barriers faced by rights-holding and equity-deserving staff, service users, and volunteers, including those arising from indigeneity, gender, race, sexual orientation, language, age, disability, immigration status, geography, religion, and their intersections.

In 2024, we also took an important step forward by confronting our history and formally apologizing for our past involvement in the colonial oppression of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities. Central to our new Strategic Plan is our pan-Canadian commitment to antiracism and addressing the ongoing impacts of colonialism on Indigenous communities and ensuring concrete, accountable action on Truth and Reconciliation.

Partners like you are invaluable to our progress and our work. Your investment reflects your trust and support of YWCA Canada's long-standing mission to empower women and enable gender equity. While our partnership is currently set to conclude in 2026, we would be thrilled to continue this important work together, saving lives and breaking down the systems that oppress women and their families.

As I began, my gratitude to you and your family is beyond words. In times when hope feels fleeting, partners like you show us that there is light and a way forward towards a safe and just future for all women.

With sincere thanks and admiration,



Aline Nizigama (she/her)
CEO, YWCA Canada



What We Know

Violence against women and girls is the only violent crime in Canada that continues to rise (Anthistle & Arella, 2024). Between 2014 and 2022, family violence increased by 14%, while intimate partner violence rose by 19% (Anthistle & Arella, 2024). These rates are even higher for women with disabilities, 2SLGBTQIA+ people, Indigenous women, and women living in poverty (WAGE). Among women in intimate relationships, 44% have reported experiencing psychological, physical, or sexual abuse (2024), though the actual number is likely much higher due to underreporting (Tran).

One woman or girl is killed every 48 hours (CWF & Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability), with 93% of femicides committed by a male intimate partner or family member (WAGE). Preliminary 2024 data suggests this crisis is not improving. Ottawa recorded 6,636 reports of intimate partner violence, up from 6,547 in 2023. Nationally, 186 women and girls were victims of femicide, with Ontario seeing a rise from 38 femicides in late 2023 to 42 in the same period in 2024 (Weingarten, 2024). Sadly, it seems that violence against women and gender diverse people is on the rise, which means now more than ever, accessible and trauma-informed supports such as the National Emergency Survivor Support Fund (NESS Fund) are essential to help people escape from these violent situations.

The Critical Need for the NESS Fund

Financial insecurity is one of the biggest barriers preventing survivors from leaving abusive situations, a reality worsened by Canada's housing crisis. Many survivors remain trapped in unsafe homes, emergency shelters, or precarious housing because they lack the resources to start over. The YWCA Canada National Emergency Survivor Support Fund (NESS Fund) addresses this urgent need by providing one-time financial support to women, gender-diverse people, and their families. It helps them escape abuse, transition out of emergency shelters, and find stability, while also easing pressure on overburdened shelter systems.

The Slight Foundation's investment in the NESS Fund is lifesaving. Your support ensures survivors have the financial means to leave violence behind and rebuild their lives. At a time when gender-based violence is increasing, this partnership is filling a crucial gap in Canada's response—providing survivors with the tangible resources they need to achieve safety, healing, and long-term security.

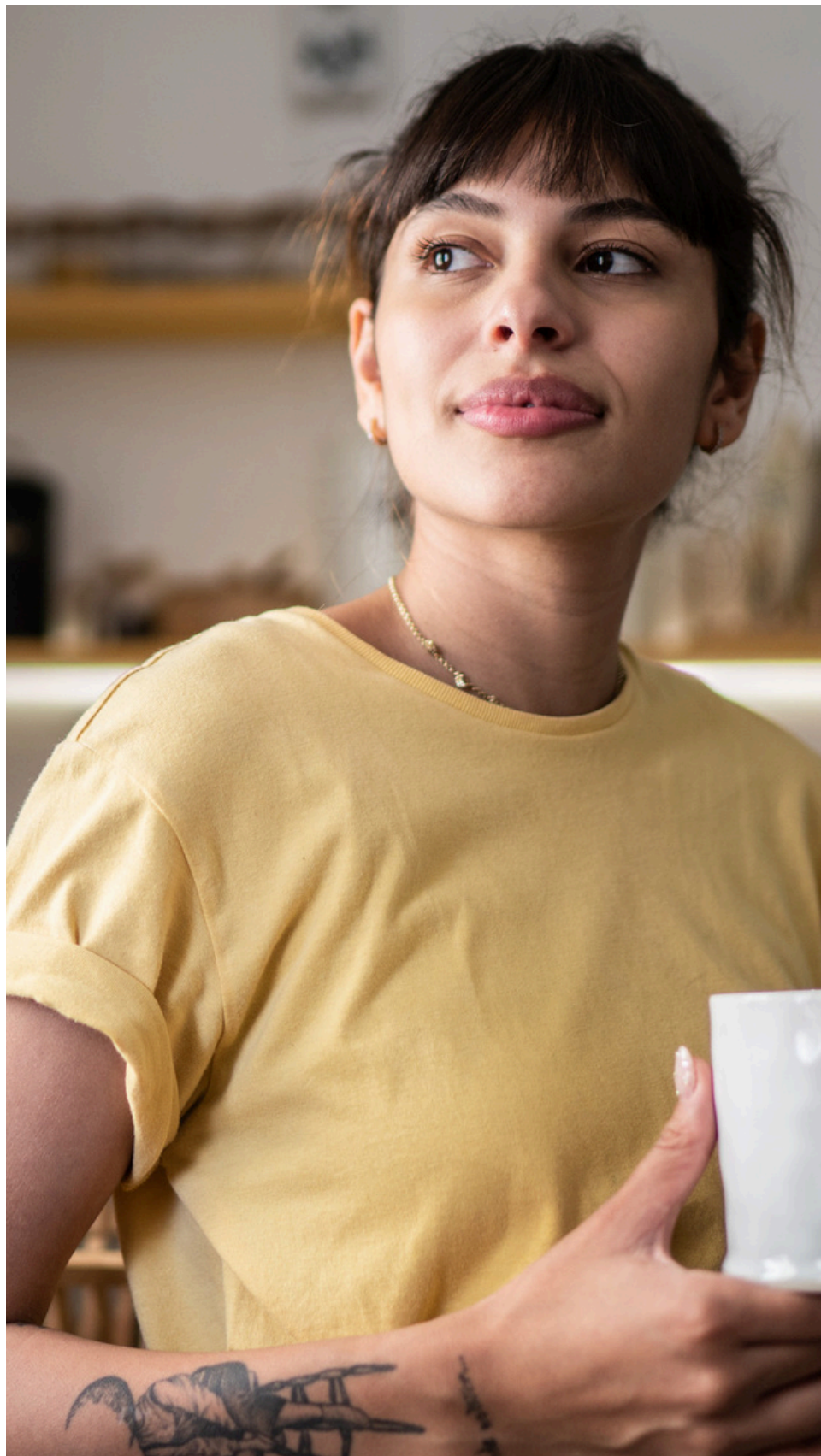
Impact on Community

"The National Emergency Survivor Support Fund has been indisputably a life changing and lifesaving initiative. The NESS fund launched at a time in which Nova Scotia, and many areas of Canada at large were grappling with a shadow pandemic of intimate partner violence, and an unprecedented housing crisis. What we were seeing resoundingly is that there was a massive shortage of available housing- especially spaces that were safe and affordable. We were also seeing high rates of intimate partner violence with many of the cases provincially being high risk or highest risk. Leaving us in a space where finding safe and viable housing options for people were a matter of life or death in many situations. The NESS fund has allowed us to support over 200 women and gender diverse folks in Nova Scotia with the necessary financial resources to enable a move or relocation into safe housing or regain housing stability after their experience of violence. We know the resources people have access to greatly informs their ability to live a life free of violence. The impact NESS has had has been profound, and we are forever grateful for the investment in our communities".

YWCA Halifax Staff

"For us here in Saskatchewan, the NESS Fund not only had a life-changing effect but also, in many ways, saved the women's lives that we helped. I have run into a couple of the women we helped, and they say that the NESS funds made a lasting impression on them and that they say it changed their lives and their children".

YWCA Regina Staff



What You Made Possible

Together, we are breaking down the financial barrier survivors face when fleeing domestic violence, easing the pressure on the temporary shelter system, and breaking cycles of abuse against women and gender diverse people. The NESS Fund's impact is multidimensional. We observed a critical impact on survivors and the systems they navigate to reach safety and healing.

1000+ Survivors of gender based violence helped since 2022.

95%

of participants credited the financial support provided as the primary reason they were able to leave a violent living situation.

98%

of recipients reported a good experience Communicating with YWCA being comfortable heard and respected.

93%

of recipients reporting that participating in the program improved their sense of safety, confidence and stability.

93%

of participants reporting that accessing program supports was easy, timely and had a positive impact on their lives.

\$1,131.00 was the average individual grant provided to survivors.

89% of your investment was given directly to survivors.

362 Survivors were supported by the NESS Fund in 2024.

Top 3 Needs:

1. Rent and security deposits
2. Essential furniture for new homes
3. Moving expenses

Other Needs:

- Utilities set up and utilities arears
- Storage expenses
- Rental arears
- Settlement Services



In the Words of Survivors



"This was a blessing that I never even expected to happen. It happened so fast and I am so very grateful! Having clean clothing and bedding and towels is actually so much more than just having clean items, it has a major impact on my mental health, confidence and well being! I am so grateful for this gift, I cannot even put it into words how thankful I truly am.

The NESS fund truly is amazing , for a women with small children that has left the DV relationship more times then one. With this being the time I finally got housing. The supports of the workers and the support of the fund has truly helped in times when it's hard to see the light.

It's been a huge relief to be able to provide a comfortable space for my family without stressing about the cost. Thanks to this support, we're all feeling more settled and at home.

I called every single helping agency in the city and social services, and no one knew how they could help us, did not have programs to help us, or we were not eligible for assistance. When I found the NESS fund online, I crossed my fingers and applied. It was such an easy application! All within 5 business days, we received funds to help us get into our own home today!

It was impressive to know how the YWCA staff could deal with my situation.. I am a newcomer in Canada and I don't have any family member here. Thank You!"

2024 Recipient of the NESS Fund

National Spotlight

In November 2024, the work of the NESS Fund and the impact of Slight Foundation's funding was highlight in the Globe and Mail.

TAKING ACTION TO END FEMICIDE

YWCA programs and services help survivors flee gender-based violence

As Canadians reflect on the 35th anniversary of the mass femicide at École Polytechnique where 14 women lost their lives in 1989, it's a sobering reality that gender-based violence is still rampant.

According to the 2022 Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability, a woman or girl is killed every 48 hours in this country.

Aline Nizigama, national CEO of YWCA Canada, believes everyone can take action to end the violence, whether it's by calling attention to the issue or by donating to organizations like YWCA Canada that have put initiatives in place to save lives.

"We know the crisis in housing affordability is intimately connected to the rise of gender-based violence," she says, noting a lack of financial resources is one of the most common reasons survivors stay in abusive situations.

In response to this need, YWCA Canada, in partnership with 12 of its local YWCAs across Canada, offers a route to safety through the National Emergency Survivor Support Fund (the NESS Fund).

With a transformational multi-year gift from the Slight Family Foundation, the NESS Fund provides immediate financial support to women and their families fleeing unsafe living situations and enables them to begin rebuilding their lives, explains Ms. Nizigama.

This investment by the Slight Family Foundation reflects trust in YWCA programs and services and ability to reach those in urgent need. As Canada's largest provider of women's shelters, YWCAs have the necessary infrastructure and community pathways to save lives.

Ms. Nizigama encourages more philanthropists to invest in established, community-based



Aline Nizigama, national CEO of YWCA Canada. RYAN CHRISTOPHER WALSH

organizations like YWCA, emphasizing the importance of trust-based philanthropy that enhances and expands upon the vital services already available. "Through the NESS Fund, we've been able to help over 700 survivors flee gender-based violence," she says, adding "90 per cent of survivors surveyed reported that the NESS Fund was a primary reason they were able to escape."

YWCA Canada's annual Rose Campaign – a national advocacy initiative to end violence against women and girls, commemorating Canada's National Day of Remembrance and Action to End Violence Against Women (December 6) – is an opportunity for all Canadians to take action and end the violence.

Learn more: ywcacanada.ca

2024 Learnings

Your trust in the YWCA federation has significantly fortified our infrastructure and expanded our reach, enabling us to deliver life-saving support more effectively across Canada. By driving collaboration and innovation throughout our network, your investment allows us to respond with unmatched flexibility and efficiency to the complex, evolving needs of survivors.

With your ongoing support, we are strengthening a more resilient, responsive system that ensures survivors receive the comprehensive, timely care they need to survive violence and rebuild their lives.



Collaboration

Collaboration Across Local YWCAs: The National Community of Practice (CoP) continued to facilitate collaboration across different local YWCAs, fostering a sense of community and mutual support. This collaboration was key in addressing challenges and sharing effective solutions.

Flexibility and Responsiveness: The model's flexibility in adapting the feedback and application process ensured that the program remains responsive to the needs of survivors, increasing accessibility and efficiency.

Real-Time Feedback for Improvement: The development of a real-time feedback system within the CoP allowed for immediate insights into program delivery, ensuring quick adjustments and ongoing improvements.

Supportive Network: The CoP acted as a safety net, offering ongoing support to frontline staff, which ultimately helped improve the NESS Fund's impact and effectiveness in assisting survivors.

2024 Improvements

- Decreased application decision wait time: Reduced from an average of 3 business days to 2, allowing faster assistance for survivors.
- Improved communication: Strengthened communication between community partners and potential applicants for a smoother process.
- Streamlined intake forms: Revised forms to gather only essential information, simplifying the application process.
- Enhanced financial process: Improved processes to expedite fund release, reducing the average time to just 4 days.

Pan-Canadian Reach

The following YWCA locations are delivering the NESS Fund:

YWCA Halifax, Nova Scotia
YWCA St. John's, Newfoundland
YWCA Québec, Quebec
YWCA Sudbury, Ontario
YWCA Toronto, Ontario
YWCA Hamilton, Ontario
YWCA St. Thomas Elgin, Ontario
YWCA Muskoka, Ontario
YWCA Regina, Saskatchewan
YWCA Saskatoon, Saskatchewan
YWCA Brandon, Manitoba
YWCA Metro Vancouver, British Columbia



Moving Forward



As we move forward into the final year of funding from the Slight Foundation, we remain committed to ensuring the continued success and sustainability of the NESS Fund. Through ongoing national fundraising initiatives, nurturing relationships with dedicated donors like you, and engaging corporate partners and family foundations, we aim to continue to offer this lifeline to survivors across Canada.

Together, we are building a stronger, more resilient communities that ensure every survivors can receive the immediate assistance and long-term empowerment that they deserve.

We sincerely thank the Slight Family Foundation for their invaluable support of the NESS Fund. Your generosity has been crucial in providing essential resources and assistance to survivors of gender-based violence, empowering them to rebuild their lives and find safety and stability.



If you have any additional questions that were not addressed in this report, please don't hesitate to reach out. We are happy to provide further information or discuss any aspects of the NESS Fund with you.

On Behalf of YWCA Canada, Thank You.

Megan Vella, Director of Philanthropy mvella@ywcacanada.ca



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