



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **FEDERAL GOVERNMENT APPROVES FUNDS FOR ATIRA TO CONTINUE IMPORTANT WORK FOLLOWING SUCCESSFUL WOMEN'S HOUSING SYMPOSIUM IN OTTAWA**

*The Government of Canada announced funding for Atira to convene the Pan-Canadian Voice for Women's Housing symposium for another year.*

### **Vancouver, B.C. | Unceded traditional territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations |**

After Atira Women's Resource Society convened the seventh annual Pan-Canadian Voice for Women's Housing (PCVWH) symposium in Ottawa on October 19 and 20, 2023, the Government of Canada announced that it would fund the symposium for another year. The government's continued confidence in Atira will help the organization be at the forefront and lead these conversations around safe housing for vulnerable and marginalized women and gender-diverse individuals.

"The conversations we are having at each PCVWH symposium help motivate government to make policy changes that will support the important, necessary work that Atira and other organizations do," said Sarah McIntosh, Senior Executive Director, Operations. "We are honoured that the Government of Canada has decided to fund this symposium for another year with Atira leading this important conversation. The work we do is vital and we can't do it alone."

The symposium gives female leaders and housing advocates a space to discuss changes they'd like to see in housing policies at the local, regional and national levels. Discussions at the symposium have focused on housing policy with an intersectional lens and a goal to make women- and gender-diverse-focused housing a priority.

In her keynote address at the symposium on October 19th, 2023, independent Senator Marilou McPhedran noted that in her 50 years since law school, she had never seen a government extend rights and benefits until civil society convinced lawmakers that action was necessary. She advised, "tenacity is a virtue — if Ottawa is ignoring you, come together to bring your issue home to MPs and to the Minister responsible."

This year, the symposium welcomed representatives from all regions of Canada and included government representatives, social housing and nonprofit leadership, and housing advocates, including:

- Senator Marilou McPhadren
- Marie-Josée Houle, federal housing advocate
- Romy Bower, President and CEO, Canadian Mortgage & Housing Corporation
- Meseret Haileyesus, Founder and Executive Director, Canadian Centre for Women's Empowerment

- Julieta Perucca, Deputy Director of the Shift
- Ange Valentini, She\*They\*Us Campaign Consultant
- Anne Landry, housing advocate
- Kaitlin Schwan, Executive Director, Women's Housing and Homelessness Network
- Pamela Spurvey, peer support transition worker
- Chevi Rabbit, human rights advocate and knowledge keeper
- Lavenia Schug, knowledge keeper
- Tracey MacKinnon, Elder

In her opening remarks, federal housing advocate Marie-Josée Houle shared her request that the National Housing Council launch a review panel on the failure to prevent and eliminate homelessness amongst women, gender-diverse and Two-Spirit people. This request was based on submissions that demonstrated across Canada, many women, girls and gender-diverse people live in insecure or unsafe housing — or are made homeless — due to deliberate policy choices.

"Gendered homelessness is one of the most pressing human rights issues in Canada," said Kaitlin Schwan, Executive Director, Women's Housing and Homelessness Network. "WNHHN is honoured to be joining forces with PCVWH to drive a bold collective vision for gender equity in housing."

The next step arising out of PCVWH will be creating a national advocacy campaign in response to the National Housing Accord. Atira will be joining forces with the Women's Housing and Homelessness Network on this project.

While Atira remains committed to delivering Housing to Hope to the most marginalized citizens in BC, the organization recognizes that the community deserves a longer-term appropriate housing solution investment by government. There needs to be long term planning and the creation of purpose-built housing for people who have challenges and are hard to house.

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Atira operates 3,150 housing units for women, children, and all gender individuals in the Lower Mainland. More information is available on our website here: [atira.bc.ca](http://atira.bc.ca).

The PCVWH is a national project focused on ensuring housing policies across Canada include and prioritize women and children. The annual symposium, which has been held since 2017, brings together women from across the country to discuss policy solutions with an intersectional and inclusive lens to make women and gender-diverse focused housing a priority. Learn more here: [pcvwh.ca](http://pcvwh.ca).

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