

SUBMISSION TO THE HOUSE OF COMMONS STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

Study on Women's Shelters and Transitional Housing

Protecting Biological Female-Only Spaces: Safety, Privacy, and Trauma-Informed Care for Women and Girls

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Current Canadian policies and practices in many jurisdictions permit biological males who identify as women (transgender women) to access women's shelters and transitional housing based on self-identified gender rather than biological sex. This submission argues that such policies compromise the safety, privacy, dignity, and effective trauma recovery of biological females—particularly the most vulnerable women fleeing male-perpetrated domestic violence, sexual assault, and intimate partner violence.

Key Evidence: (1) Biological males retain male-pattern criminality and violent offending risk even after transition (Dhejne et al., 2011); (2) Documented Canadian cases, including serial sex offender Christopher Hambrook ("Jessica"), who exploited gender-identity policies to rape women in Toronto and Vancouver women's shelters; (3) Physiological data showing retained male strength and skeletal advantages post-hormone therapy; (4) The foundational purpose of women's shelters—to provide single-sex refuge from male violence—is undermined by opposite-sex inclusion.

Primary Recommendation: Eligibility for women's shelters and transitional housing should be based on biological sex (female). Dedicated, safe alternative accommodations and funding should be provided for transgender-identifying males without compromising female-only spaces. This approach protects the human rights and safety of women and girls while addressing the needs of all vulnerable populations through evidence-based, sex-aware policy.

I. STATEMENT OF INTEREST AND QUALIFICATIONS

I am Sharon Fair, Psy.D., Ph.D., a licensed physical therapist in Florida with advanced degrees in psychology and related fields. As President of Wellness Society USA, a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to health, wellness education, and community support, I have long advocated for policies grounded in biological reality and the protection of sex-based rights. My clinical experience informs a deep understanding of trauma recovery, physical vulnerability, and the importance of safe, predictable environments for healing.

I have previously contributed expert materials in U.S. legal proceedings concerning the preservation of single-sex spaces, including support for petitions emphasizing biological sex in women's facilities. While based in the United States, the erosion of female-only spaces is a transnational concern affecting women in Canada, the UK, and beyond. I submit this brief in the interest of protecting the safety and dignity of biological females in Canada's shelter system.

II. THE PURPOSE OF WOMEN'S SHELTERS AND THE REALITY OF MALE VIOLENCE

Women's shelters and transitional housing exist primarily because of the documented, sex-disaggregated pattern of intimate partner violence (IPV) and domestic abuse. According to Women and Gender Equality Canada and Statistics Canada data:

- In 2022–2024 reporting periods, approximately 78% of police-reported IPV victims were women and girls.
- Rates of IPV are 3 to 3.5 times higher among women and girls than men and boys.
- The vast majority of perpetrators of severe physical and sexual IPV are male. Intimate partner homicide data similarly shows males comprising over 80% of accused persons in many Canadian analyses.
- On any given night, thousands of women and children occupy shelters primarily due to abuse by male partners or family members.

These statistics are not contested. They reflect a biological and social reality: males commit the overwhelming majority of serious sexual and physical violence against females. Women's shelters were designed as *single-sex* refuges precisely to remove victims from proximity to male perpetrators and male-pattern threat. Trauma-informed care principles recognize that many residents suffer PTSD, hypervigilance, and fear responses specifically triggered by male presence, voices, bodies, or authority in intimate settings (dormitories, bathrooms, showers, counseling spaces). Introducing biological males into these environments, regardless of self-identification, predictably re-traumatizes survivors and erodes the therapeutic value of the shelter.

III. BIOLOGICAL SEX IS BINARY, IMMUTABLE, AND MATERIAL TO SAFETY

Biological sex in humans is binary and determined by the type of gamete an individual's reproductive anatomy is organized to produce (sperm or ova), corresponding to XY or XX sex chromosomes in the vast majority of cases. It is observed at birth through visible anatomy and confirmed by genetics and reproductive biology. No medical intervention—hormones, surgery, or declaration—alters an individual's biological sex. "Gender identity," by contrast, is a subjective, internal sense of self that cannot be objectively verified and is prone to social influence, particularly among youth.

Policies that substitute self-identified gender for biological sex in sex-segregated spaces effectively allow any biological male to access female facilities by simple declaration. This removes all gatekeeping and creates a documented pathway for male predators. It also ignores the material differences in strength, size, skeletal structure, and criminal propensity that persist irrespective of identity or medical transition.

IV. CRIMINOLOGICAL EVIDENCE: RETAINED MALE PATTERN OFFENDING

The landmark Swedish cohort study by Dhejne et al. (2011) followed all individuals who underwent sex reassignment surgery in Sweden from 1973–2003 and compared long-term outcomes to matched controls. Key finding for male-to-female individuals (biological males):

"Regarding any crime, male-to-females had a significantly increased risk for crime compared to female controls (aHR 6.6; 95% CI 4.1–10.8) but not compared to males (aHR 0.8; 95% CI 0.5–1.2). This indicates that they retained a male pattern regarding criminality. The same was true regarding violent crime."

Dhejne, C., et al. (2011). Long-term follow-up of transsexual persons undergoing sex reassignment surgery: cohort study in Sweden. PLOS ONE, 6(2), e16885. Transition did not eliminate the elevated risk profile associated with male development. While the study authors have noted limitations and that later cohorts may differ, the core observation—that male-to-female individuals retain male-typical criminality—remains a critical data point for risk assessment in vulnerable female environments. Shelters housing traumatized women cannot ethically ignore this evidence.

V. DOCUMENTED CANADIAN FAILURES: THE HAMBROOK CASE AND OTHERS

Policy has consequences. In Canada, the case of Christopher Hambrook demonstrates the lethal risk of self-ID access policies:

Christopher Hambrook, a biological male with a documented history of sexual offenses against females (including the sexual abuse of a 5-year-old girl and the rape of a 27-year-old intellectually challenged woman while on bail), claimed a transgender identity (“Jessica”) and gained access to women’s shelters in both Toronto (Fred Victor Centre) and Vancouver. While residing in these female-only spaces, he raped at least two vulnerable women: one deaf and homeless, and another fleeing domestic violence. He pleaded guilty in 2013 to sexual assault and criminal harassment charges arising from the shelter incidents. He was later designated a dangerous offender and sentenced to an indefinite term of imprisonment.

This was not an isolated failure of vetting; it was the predictable result of a policy that prioritized self-declared identity over biological sex and criminal history. Similar concerns have arisen in other Canadian jurisdictions, including reports of women being pressured to share rooms with biological males or facing retaliation for voicing safety concerns (e.g., incidents documented in Kelowna, BC shelters). These cases are not theoretical. They represent real women re-victimized by the very system intended to protect them.

Source references: Toronto Sun reporting on R. v. Hambrook proceedings (2013–2014); legislative testimony citing the case in multiple jurisdictions; contemporary shelter incident reports.

VI. PHYSIOLOGICAL REALITIES: RETAINED MALE ADVANTAGES

Even setting aside criminal propensity, biological males who identify as women retain significant physical advantages relevant to safety in confined, vulnerable settings:

Multiple peer-reviewed studies on transgender athletes and physiology demonstrate that testosterone suppression and estrogen administration do not fully eliminate male performance and strength advantages, particularly in upper-body strength, muscle mass, bone density, grip strength, and skeletal frame (height, shoulder width, hand size). Reviews by Hilton & Lundberg (2021) and others conclude that advantages persist for years and may never fully converge with female norms. In a shelter environment—where residents may be physically weakened by abuse, sleep deprivation, or substance issues, and where staff oversight is limited—the presence of male-bodied individuals creates an inherent and asymmetric risk of intimidation, physical overpowering, or non-consensual sexual exposure.

Key studies: Hilton, E.N. & Lundberg, T.R. (2021). Transgender Women in the Female Category of Sport. *Sports Medicine*; Harper, J. et al. (2021) on strength retention; Roberts et al. (2021) U.S. military data showing retained push-up and speed advantages.

VII. PRIVACY, DIGNITY, AND THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF WOMEN

Biological females have a legitimate expectation of privacy and dignity in states of undress, sleep, and personal hygiene. This expectation is especially acute for women who have survived male sexual violence. Forcing them to share sleeping quarters, bathrooms, or showers with biological males—some of whom retain male genitalia and secondary sex characteristics—constitutes a violation of that privacy and can constitute a form of re-traumatization. Canadian and international human rights frameworks have historically recognized single-sex exemptions precisely for these reasons (prisons, shelters, changing rooms, sports).

The substitution of “gender identity” for sex in policy erodes the material basis for these exemptions. It also silences female voices: women who raise concerns about male-bodied residents are often labeled bigoted, pressured to accept the situation, or in some documented cases, asked to leave the shelter themselves. This inverts the protective purpose of the institution.

VIII. ADDRESSING COUNTERARGUMENTS

“Trans women are women and deserve inclusion.” While compassion for individuals experiencing gender dysphoria is warranted, compassion does not require redefining biological reality or sacrificing the safety of one vulnerable group to accommodate another. Trans-identifying males remain biologically male. Their needs are real but best met through dedicated services, specialized housing programs, or appropriately adapted male facilities—not by reclassifying female spaces.

“Trans individuals face high rates of victimization.” This is acknowledged. However, the solution is not to transfer risk onto female DV survivors. Funding dedicated trans-inclusive or third-option housing, improving male shelter

safety, and providing targeted support services addresses the problem without dismantling female-only protections that exist for empirically demonstrated reasons.

“Exclusion is discriminatory.” Single-sex services based on biological sex are not discrimination; they are recognition of differential patterns of vulnerability and privacy needs. Males (including trans-identified males) have access to male shelters and general homeless services. The existence of female-only shelters does not deny trans individuals housing; it preserves one evidence-based model for the population it was designed to serve.

IX. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. Reaffirm Biological Sex-Based Eligibility:** Federal policy, funding conditions, and guidance to provinces should require that women's shelters and transitional housing serving female victims of violence maintain eligibility criteria based on biological sex (female persons). Self-identification alone is insufficient and unsafe.
- 2. Dedicated Alternative Provision:** Allocate targeted federal and provincial funding for safe, specialized housing and support services for transgender-identifying individuals, including trans women. These should be developed in consultation with all stakeholders but must not be carved out of existing female-only capacity.
- 3. Strengthen Trauma-Informed, Sex-Aware Training:** Mandate training for shelter staff that accurately reflects sex-disaggregated violence data, the persistence of male-pattern risk, and the clinical importance of single-sex environments for many female trauma survivors.
- 4. Protect Female Residents' Voices:** Implement clear anti-retaliation policies so that biological female residents who express safety or privacy concerns about opposite-sex inclusion are heard and protected, not silenced or removed.
- 5. Independent Review and Data Collection:** Commission independent, transparent research on the outcomes of inclusive versus sex-segregated shelter policies, with particular attention to female survivor satisfaction, safety incidents, and retention in services. Data should be disaggregated by biological sex.
- 6. Legal Clarity on Exemptions:** Provide clear guidance affirming that single-sex exemptions under Canadian human rights law remain available and appropriate for women's shelters where justified by safety, privacy, and trauma-recovery needs.

X. CONCLUSION

The House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women has a solemn responsibility to protect Canada's most vulnerable women and girls. Women's shelters and transitional housing represent a hard-won, evidence-based response to the epidemic of male violence against females. Diluting these spaces with biological males—however they identify—undermines their purpose, exposes women to preventable risk, and contradicts both criminological data and the lived experience of countless survivors.

The tragic case of Christopher Hambrook in Canadian women's shelters is not an aberration to be minimized; it is a warning that must be heeded. Combined with robust international evidence on retained male risk patterns and physical advantages, the case for restoring and protecting biological sex-based boundaries is compelling and urgent.

I respectfully urge the Committee to recommend policies that prioritize the safety and dignity of biological females in women's shelters and transitional housing, while developing compassionate, separate solutions for other vulnerable populations. Women's rights to single-sex spaces are not bigotry; they are a necessary recognition of material reality and differential vulnerability. Canada's women and girls deserve nothing less.

Respectfully submitted,

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- Toronto Sun and court records regarding R. v. Christopher Hambrook (2013–2014 proceedings and dangerous offender designation).
- Various reports and testimony citing shelter incidents in Toronto, Vancouver, and Kelowna, BC (2012–2017).
- Clinical literature on trauma-informed care in domestic violence shelters emphasizing sex-segregated environments for female survivors of male violence.

This submission is provided in good faith to assist the Committee with evidence-based analysis. The author has no financial or personal interest in the outcome other than the protection of women's safety and rights.