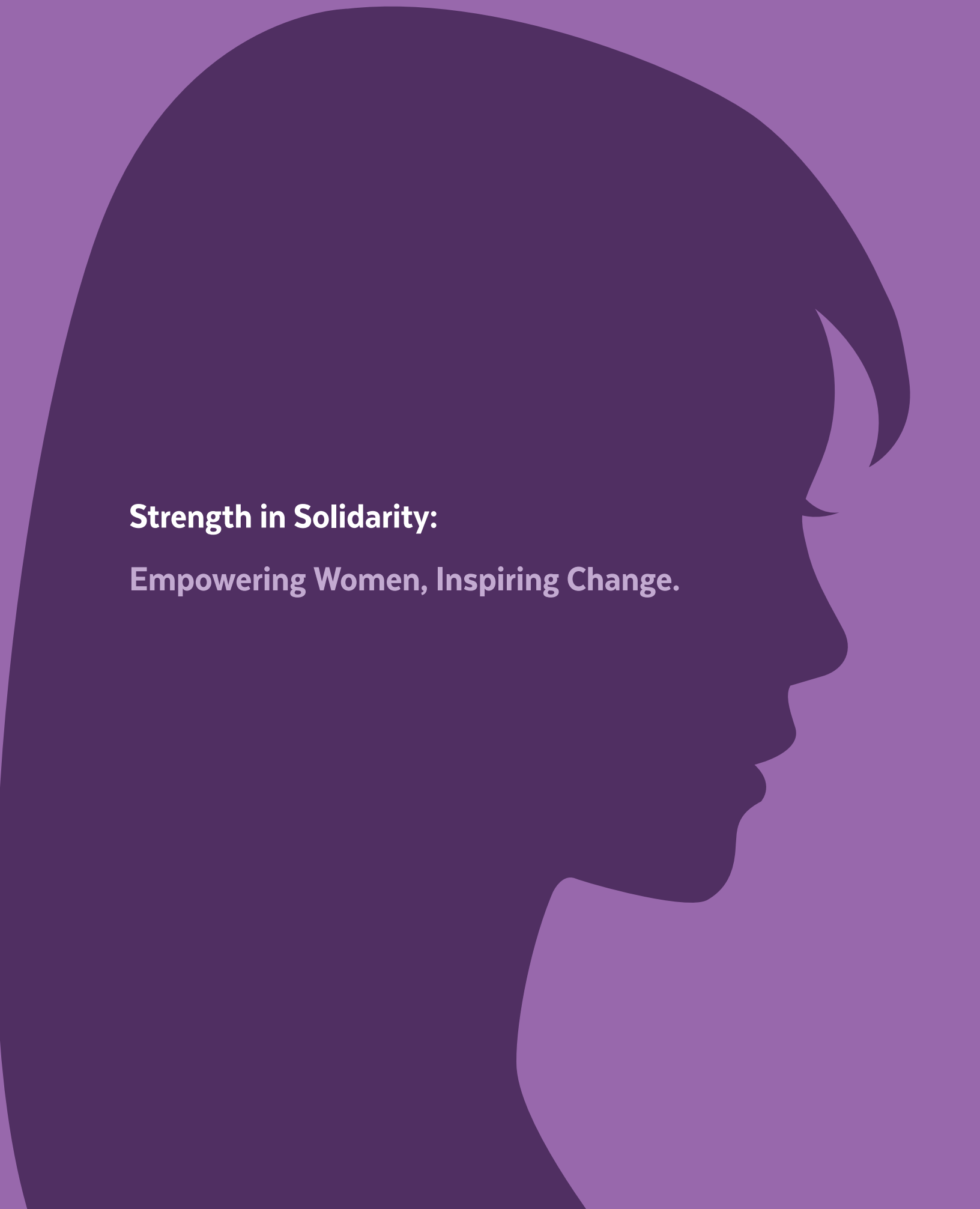
2023-2024

Halton Women's Place Annual Report

Strength in Solidarity: Empowering Women, Inspiring Change.




Strength in Solidarity:
Empowering Women, Inspiring Change.

A message from our Executive Director and Board Chair

As we step into the 2024-2025 fiscal year, we take a pause to reflect on the ongoing prevalence of domestic violence in our communities. With police responding to an average of 10 calls a day, the need for our services is critical. At Halton Women's Place (HWP), we continue to serve hundreds of women and children through our safe shelters and community outreach programs. This year, we made significant progress in Halton, with the united declaration with Halton Regional Council and every municipal mayor, recognizing Intimate Partner Violence as an epidemic, highlighting the urgent need for resources and support.

Guided by our four key pillars—client service delivery, education and advocacy, partnerships and collaborations, and organizational wellness—we have witnessed the profound impact of our work. With the support of the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), our Safe Shelter in Milton now features renovations and upgrades that provide a safer, more inclusive, and comfortable environment. Our efforts are bolstered by invaluable partnerships and collaborations. A testament to this is our collaboration with all municipal leaders and Halton Regional Police to launch Purple Benches across Halton, symbolizing support for women experiencing domestic violence and reminding them that they are not alone.

A continued challenge, more than ever, is the lack of safe, affordable housing. Domestic violence is a leading cause of homelessness, making this crisis critical to address. The diverse needs of the women and children who have experienced trauma demand a compassionate and comprehensive response. We will continue to work towards finding solutions for women and housing, working with our municipalities and searching for more transitional housing options for women to restart their lives.

We draw inspiration from the courage and resilience of the women we serve. Their strength, combined with the solidarity of our community and partners, fuels our mission. To our dedicated HWP staff, thank you for your unwavering commitment and compassion. To our leadership team, thank you for guiding us forward with dedication and vision. And to our steadfast Board of Directors, thank you for your strategic guidance, time, and expertise.

None of our achievements would be possible without the unwavering support of our donors, corporate partners, funders, and volunteers. Special thanks to the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, our main funder, along with the Community Foundations for their support. We remain deeply committed to our mission, but we cannot do our work alone; we need all of you. Thank you all for your ongoing support as we build a safer community for all.



Laurie Hepburn
Executive Director



Leslie Starr-Hemburrow
Chair, Board of Directors

Our Vision & Mission Statement

Halton Women's Place is dedicated to being a gateway to safety, support, and a future free from abuse for women and their children. Through offering a safe haven, vital information, and empowering education, the organization strives to help them build a life beyond abuse.

Board of Directors

Leslie Starr-Hemburrow
Chair

Irene Santos
Vice Chair

Derek Payne
Treasurer

Ayesha Shah
Corporate Secretary

Julie Cowan
Director

Barbara Love
Director

David Vandenberg
Director

Michelle Small
Director

Rufaida Mohammed
Director

Paul MacDiarmid
Director

Leadership Team

Laurie Hepburn
Executive Director

Janice Hamilton
Sr. Director, Finance & Operations

Carm Bozzo
Director, Philanthropy & Community Engagement

Jerusha Mack
Manager, Community Engagement and Events

Yvette Drake
Manager, HR Strategy & Culture

Andrea Cormier
Manager, Community Outreach Services

Michaela Ralston
Manager, Safe Shelter Services

Thea Goodings
Supervisor, Logistics, Programs & Services

Andrea Beebe
Supervisor, Community Engagement and Education



Programs & Services

Safe Shelter Services

Our commitment to providing Safe Shelter Services lies at the heart of Halton Women's Place. With a dedicated team of passionate staff and volunteers, we have continued to offer a haven of safety, security, and comfort for countless women and children experiencing domestic violence and abuse.

Throughout the year, our shelters operated at maximum capacity, highlighting the pressing need for our services.

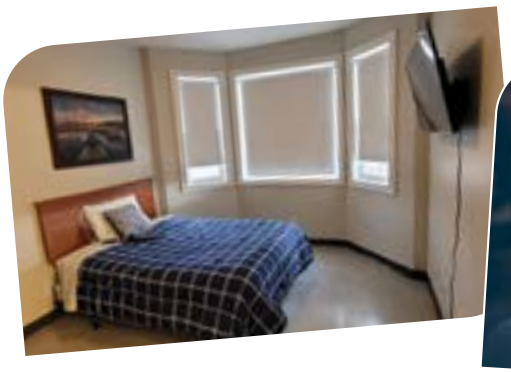
In the 2023-2024 period, we elevated our client service delivery in several ways, most notably through significant structural enhancements in both of our shelters.

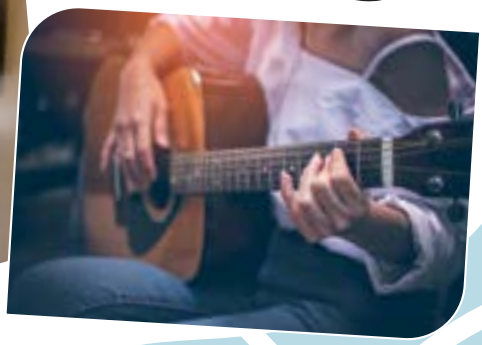
Our Safe Shelter in North Halton has undergone a transformation! At HWP, we're dedicated to crafting spaces that are safe, inclusive, and tailored to meet the diverse needs of all our clients. While ensuring effective infection prevention and control measures, we implemented accessibility upgrades, security enhancements, and constructed private washroom access for each room. Our goal? To provide a safer, more comfortable environment that fosters healing and recovery for all women and children on their journey to a life free from violence.

A heartfelt thank you to the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's Women and Children Shelter and Transitional Housing Initiative Grant for helping to make some of this transformation possible!

Moreover, as we transitioned from pandemic response protocols to a full return to open group programming and shared activity spaces within the shelter, we ushered in a new era of therapeutic initiatives. Excitingly, we introduced two novel therapeutic programs—music and pet therapy—complementing our existing offerings of yoga and art therapy. These endeavors underscore our unwavering commitment to holistic healing and support for all those who seek solace within our shelters.

LEARN MORE ABOUT THIS SERVICE CLICK HERE!







Key Statistics

182

Total individuals served in shelter
(95 women, 87 children)

1,924

Total calls to our crisis, information and support lines

180

Online chats

Forms of Abuse

Domestic violence is more than a bruise. It is also the most under-reported crime. Women frequently report experiencing various types of abuse, including physical harm, controlling behaviors, emotional manipulation, financial exploitation, and verbal or psychological abuse.

Physical abuse inflicts pain and injury, leaving tangible evidence of harm. Controlling behavior restricts freedom and autonomy, imposing dominance and fear.

Emotional abuse undermines self-worth and confidence, using manipulation and gaslighting to exert control.

Financial abuse traps victims in dependency, withholding resources and financial independence.

Verbal and psychological abuse inflict unseen wounds, eroding mental well-being with insults, threats, and degradation.

Understanding these different forms of abuse is crucial in providing comprehensive support and empowering survivors to break free from cycles of violence.

LEARN MORE ABOUT THE SIGNS OF ABUSE

CLICK HERE!



For the Love of Paws, Safe Shelter Program

Nearly half of domestic abuse survivors, a staggering 47%, face a difficult decision: delay leaving or forgo leaving altogether if they cannot bring their beloved pets with them. Recognizing this barrier to safety, Halton Women's Place (HWP) introduced the Safe Pet Program, inspired by Safe Pet Ontario, in 2016. It is now affectionately known as For the Love of Paws. This initiative provides a lifeline for women by offering temporary re-homing services for their pets, ensuring their furry companions are cared for while they seek safety and heal from trauma.

In the past year alone, our program has facilitated the housing of 13 beloved pet companions for our clients, offering peace of mind and a sense of security during challenging times.

One client, reflecting on her experience, shared,

"I was living in a very toxic environment and thought I would be stuck there for a long time. I have pets (a cat and a dog) but no family/friends in the area for us to go to. I couldn't trust leaving my furry, four-legged boys (who are my best friends and emotional therapy pets) behind but knew I needed to leave. I talked to my therapist about what was happening, and she told me about the Safe Pets program through Halton Women's Place. I was so relieved to know that my boys would have somewhere safe to go while I stay at the women's shelter and that I get to visit with them."

LEARN MORE ABOUT THIS PROGRAM

CLICK HERE!

More than Shelter

Community Services

At HWP, we extend beyond the boundaries of a mere shelter, offering comprehensive community outreach services to further support women throughout Halton.

In the past year, we have successfully broadened our service spectrum through strategic partnerships and program development, particularly with The Women's Centre of Halton in Oakville. Our dedicated Transitional Housing and Support worker now operates regularly from the Women's Centre, enhancing accessibility for clients who frequent the Centre but require specialized services for domestic violence situations. Additionally, our frontline staff engaged in proactive community outreach efforts in underserved areas, conducting weekly drop-in sessions at the Acton and Georgetown libraries in collaboration with the Halton Community Legal Services' Mobile Outreach Clinics. This initiative aims to raise awareness of our programs and services in North Halton, as we strive to establish a stronger presence in these communities.

Our Family Court Support Program plays a vital role in aiding women navigating the complexities of the family court system amidst domestic violence situations. Given the protracted nature of these legal proceedings and the ongoing support provided by our workers, the average duration of an open file, as of this fiscal year, stands at 447 days.

Key Statistics

69
Women Who Accessed Family Court Support Program

230
Women Served in Transitional Support Program

118
Women Served in Bridging Families Program

VIEW OUR SERVICES CLICK HERE!



LEARN MORE ABOUT THIS SERVICE CLICK HERE!

Transitional Housing

One of the main challenges we face, like many other shelters, is the longer stays our clients are experiencing. Last year, the average stay was 94 days. This is a continuing issue due to the severe shortage of safe, affordable and transitional housing options for women leaving shelters. The ongoing housing crisis makes it difficult for our clients to move forward with their lives independently. Additionally, the strained capacity makes it challenging for us and other shelters to accommodate more women in need, often resulting in women being turned away or referred to other regions or services. However, we, in partnership with Halton Region and Habitat for Humanity Halton-Mississauga, continue to operate three housing units across Halton with the hope of adding more units to support more women.

Last year, the average stay was 94 days.

Prevention & Education

The *Learn to Love* public education team delivered a record 875 workshops this past year, reaching over 21,000 students and individuals across the Halton Region.

Through our education and awareness efforts, we remain committed to empowering the next generation to build futures free from violence.

In February, for Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month, our educators engaged over 700 teens on a 'Learn to Love Tour' designed to specifically target and educate secondary students about the signs of unhealthy relationships. These initiatives are lifesaving as identifying red flags before they turn into abuse is critical to changing the statistics on relationship abuse.



LEARN TO LOVE
PRESENTED BY Halton Women's Place

CLICK HERE!



CLICK TO WATCH!

Our Executive Director, Laurie Hepburn visited CHCH Morning Live to talk about Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month.

CHCH

Halton Regional Police Services Statistics

Intimate partner violence remains a significant concern in Halton. Our partnership with the Halton Regional Police Service (HRPS) is crucial, as we collaborate to prevent and address violence against women throughout the region.

Key Statistics

April 1, 2023, to March 31, 2024

3,616
Intimate Partner Violence Calls

882
Intimate Partner Violence Arrests

1,963
Intimate Partner Violence Charges

> "Being fortunate enough to have space to work alongside the IPV detectives and to build those relationships with them and Victim Services staff have really allowed us to come together to collaborate on some of the more challenging cases this year. It also allows for the relationships to creatively problem solve using all resources available to us as a whole."
>
> **Violence Against Women Police Liaison Worker, HWP**

Advocacy & Community Engagement

Advocacy Efforts

This past year marked significant moments, not only for our organization but also for the issue of intimate partner violence. This allowed HWP to actively participate in advocacy efforts, supporting legislative processes and community awareness campaigns.

One notable achievement was our support for Keira's Law, spearheaded by Jennifer Kagan, Keira's mother, alongside various politicians such as federal minister Pam Damoff and provincial MPP Effie Triantafilopoulos. Abuse transcends partisan lines, and our role in this initiative underscores our commitment to supporting survivors and advocating for change.

In April, our team also organized Hope on the Hill, where we engaged with federal ministers and key members of Parliament to advocate for the National Action Plan on Gender-Based Violence.



Purple Bench Initiative

Halton Women's Place partnered with municipal mayors and Halton Regional Police Services to install 10 purple benches across the Region. These benches, now in every community in Halton, serve as symbols of remembrance for victims and survivors of domestic violence, accompanied by plaques displaying emergency contact information, reminding survivors that they are not alone.







READ ABOUT IT!
CLICK HERE!
inHALTON

READ ABOUT IT!
NEWS
CLICK HERE!
InsideHalton.com

Declaring Intimate Partner Violence as an Epidemic

In the past year, HWP participated in delegations spearheaded by Burlington Mayor Marianne Meed Ward, advocating for the recognition of intimate partner violence as an epidemic. On June 14th, these collective efforts resulted in success as Halton Region and all its municipalities officially declared intimate partner violence as an epidemic, highlighting the pressing need and urgency to address this issue. We extend our gratitude to our community leaders whose dedicated efforts made this achievement possible!





Non-Profit of the Year



HWP was honored to receive the nomination and designation of "Non-Profit of the Year" at the Milton Chamber of Commerce Community Awards last October. We express heartfelt gratitude to the Milton business community for their unwavering support, which has amplified awareness of our programs and services. Moreover, we deeply appreciate the recognition of the tireless efforts and commitment of our staff, who dedicate themselves each day to assisting women and children in transitioning to a life free from violence.

This recognition also reflects a key objective of our strategic plan—to increase awareness in North Halton. We are thrilled that our efforts in this regard have been acknowledged, affirming our commitment to expanding our reach and impact within the community.



Wellness and Training Initiatives

Continuing our commitment to fostering a supportive workplace culture, we've continued ongoing efforts to prioritize staff wellness. Additionally, we've expanded our range of initiatives, including team-building activities and educational speakers at our all-staff meetings. Collaborations with organizations like Nisa Homes on Cultural Responsiveness and discussions on trauma and burnout have enriched our staff's understanding and skills.

Moreover, we've organized off-site staff wellness events, offered professional development opportunities, and put into action a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) action plan to ensure a supportive and inclusive workplace environment.





Our Enchanted Gala

Our Enchanted Gala surpassed all our expectations with an incredible evening of generosity and support! More than $380,000 was raised – with $150,000 dedicated towards our Learn to Love Program. We extend special thanks to Dave and Elena Forgan for their incredible donation announced that evening of $60,000 towards public education and prevention!







Hope in Every Step

In September, our walk event returned to Milton and Burlington – rebranded! What was formerly known as Hope in High Heels was transformed into Hope in Every Step, with participants walking in support of ending violence against women. Approximately 400 walkers joined the events, with attendance by several local sports teams to promote male-led awareness and prevention of violence against women and girls. This event continues to promote the importance of male allyship and community engagement in supporting survivors and demonstrating solidarity against domestic violence.



IMAGINE CANADA

We were re-accredited with Imagine Canada!

Holiday Giving Program

This past December, your support reached **201 women** and **317 children** through our Holiday Giving Program.

Community Champions!

We are so grateful to our community supporters who choose Halton Women's Place as a charity of choice. Here are just a few of the many incredible individuals that organized events and campaigns to support our mission.



Thank you, Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church (Oakville) for this extraordinary gift that will profoundly impact the future of our organization!

In November 2023, a group of Royal LePage professionals from Halton travelled with their counterparts from across the country to Ecuador where they trekked five days towards one of the highest active volcanoes in the world to raise funds for shelters. Close to $70,000 was raised by the awesome Realtors who trekked for Halton Women's Place. Thanks to Bill Schiavone, Blair Mackey, Fionna Gossling, Giselle Isaacs Nguyen, Hunter Obee, Lisa McLaughlin and Marion Benson.

The Oakville, Milton and District Real Estate Board chose HWP as their charity of choice and we were thrilled to be the recipient! This year their combined efforts helped raise $45,000.

Since we are on a roll with Realtors, we were thrilled to be a part of the first annual Night Walk hosted by longtime supporters Royal LePage Burloak. A new initiative from the Shelter Foundation and a pilot year, staff joined the crowd on October 19th and walked down the beautiful streets of downtown Burlington in a joint effort to raise awareness and funds for our programs and services. This first-time event helped raise $45,000.

And another huge success with our largest third-party event, From Wallet to Wealth, organized by long time donor, Whitney Hammond. Back in person for the first time since 2020, Whitney gathered 200 women on November 10th and hit her goal of $70,000! Thank you so much Whitney for your continued support and advocacy!









#InspireInclusion

Survivor and warrior, Colette Martin was this year's guest speaker at our #InspireInclusion International Women's Day Luncheon. This sold-out event received an incredible amount of media attention and all who attended were inspired by her story of resilience and courage. We are so grateful to have had Colette share her story and her message that we must stand in solidarity and use our voices to advocate and support women experiencing domestic violence.



A Legacy of *Love* - Honouring Aileen Love

From a young age, Aileen Love was surrounded by loving parents and their many pets. She met and married her husband, Dr. William Robert Love and raised their family in Burlington where their home was rarely without a dog, cat or rabbit, often at the same time. When her husband died in 2014, Aileen wanted to honour his life by setting up a foundation but was torn between benefiting animals or abused women. Her family understood her desire to help animals but until that time were unaware of her interest in helping abused women. She then relayed stories about patients, abused women, her husband had treated - including a close personal friend. When Aileen found out that HWP could ensure both animals and abused women would benefit from her foundation, with a Safe Pet Program at the shelter, she felt it was a perfect fit her foundation. In 2016, Aileen developed the Dr. William Love Sr & Aileen Love Family Foundation in the amount of $1 million with proceeds directed to HWP!

In December of 2023, Aileen passed away peacefully at the age of 101 and we at HWP are so grateful for her generosity that continues to support our Safe Pet and Public Education Programs.



Thank you to all of our special donors

Safe Shelter Donors

Thank you to all who sponsored a room in one of our shelters this past year.

They include:

Zonta Club of Oakville

Woodbine Cares Foundation

Moen Canada

Ling Family Foundation

Enbridge Gas

Hoffmann-La Roche

Hayward Securities

Royal LePage Shelter Foundation

Arbor Memorial & Burlington Baptist Church

The Hayward Gordon Group

Quadra Chemicals

Tony & Betty Infilise Family Foundation

With Thanks to Our Funders

Ontario Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services

Halton Region

Burlington Community Foundation

Oakville Community Foundation

(The Fund for Gender Equality is supported by a collaboration between Community Foundations of Canada and the Equality Fund, with support from the Government of Canada)

Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation

Royal LePage Shelter Foundation



Treasurer's Report

Halton Women's Place ended their 2023-2024 fiscal year in a strong financial position. We are grateful to our community, and to the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services for their ongoing support.

The community has continued to be very generous with donations and support for our fundraising events. We are grateful to CMHC for the funding they provided to renovate our Milton shelter. We were able to ensure each bedroom in the shelter would have its own private washroom. The Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services provided extra funding this year with which we were able to enhance our child and youth programming, provide additional court support,and augment outreach services for clients.

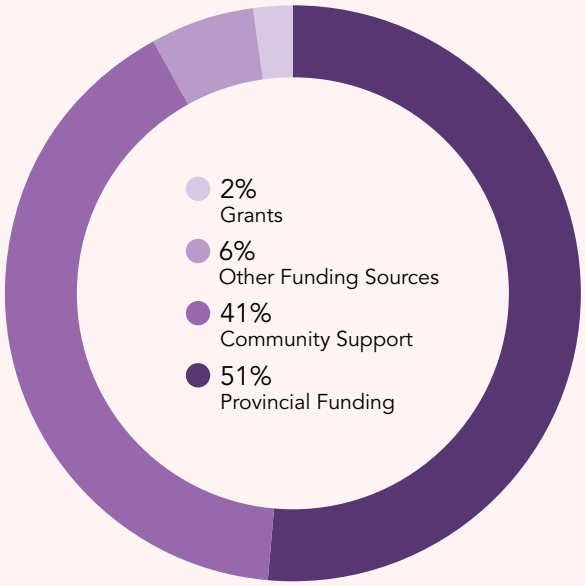
It is through the continued support and commitment of our government and community that Halton Women's Place has been able to allocate financial resources needed to provide shelter and services for women and children in need. Thank you for your commitment and ongoing support.



Janice Hamilton,
Sr Director, Finance & Operations

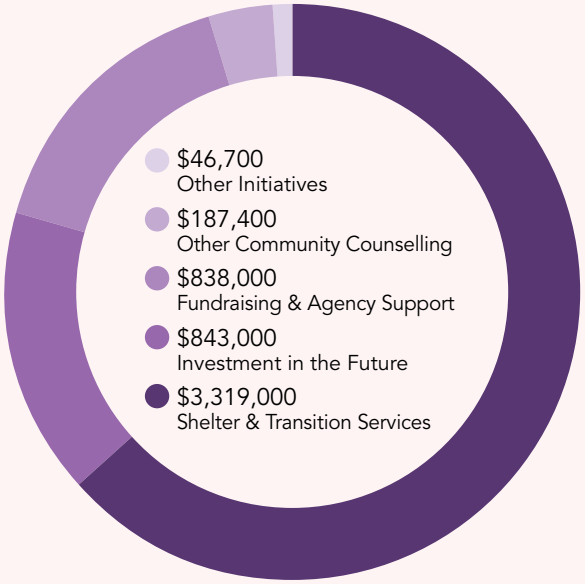


Derek Payne,
Treasurer



Sources of Operational Funding

$ 5,234,100



Operational Expenses

$ 5,234,100

Our complete financial statements are available upon request.
Email us at: info@haltonwomensplace.com

Reach Out Today

www.haltonwomensplace.com

Mailing Address:
Halton Women's Place
2211 Brant Street, #20060
Burlington, ON L7P 0A4

Administration:
905-332-1200

Fax:
905-332-1155

Email:
info@haltonwomensplace.com

24-Hour Crisis, Information and Support Line:
HWP South: 905-332-7892
HWP North: 905-878-8555

Online Chat:
www.haltonwomensplace.com/chat

