



♀ ST. JOHN'S WOMEN'S CENTRE  
📍 MARGUERITE'S PLACE  
🚶 SAFE HARBOUR OUTREACH PROJECT

170 Cashin Ave. Ext., St. John's, NL Canada A1E 3B6 | T. 709.753.0220 | F. 709.753.3817 | [www.sjwomenscentre.ca](http://www.sjwomenscentre.ca) | [www.sjsowc.tumblr.com](http://www.sjsowc.tumblr.com)

October 17, 2019

Dear Hon. Carol Anne Haley,

We are writing with a request on behalf of SHOP (the Safe Harbour Outreach Project), a program of the St. John's Status of Women Council. As you are aware, our organization works from the pillars of feminism, anti-oppression, trauma-informed care and harm reduction. Our work is deeply rooted in the understanding that all women deserve equitable access to safety, services and supports that meet their individual needs.

Unfortunately, a recent piece of investigatory journalism has revealed back room comments which we believe fly in the face of these principles and the mandate of your Office for the Status of Women in the advancement of true social, legal, cultural and economic equality for all women in the province of Newfoundland & Labrador. The specific targeting of the SHOP program has led to feelings of vulnerability and caused deep harm within our community. In many ways, the statements made by government representatives devalue the exceptional work of SHOP, further stigmatize sex working women and survivors and run counter to the pillars of our shared goals as stated above.

Through our front-line work, we see firsthand how laws can oppress and cause harm to women who are Indigenous, women who are transgender and queer, women who are engaged in sex work, women experiencing homelessness, women engaged in drug use, women who have survived violence, and many of society's most marginalized, criminalized and vulnerable women. The St. John's Status of Women Council has and will continue to advocate for law reforms that protect those we serve and promote equity and equality for all.

Along with its advocacy work, SHOP is unique in our province in that it provides supports and services to women along a continuum of sex industry involvement, including those who have experienced sexual exploitation, those engaged in survival sex, and those who do sex work. The women SHOP supports are among the most under-served by the systems in our province, and every day we focus on participants and we provide them with services and supports on a limited budget, and despite being under-staffed and under-resourced.

**What SHOP and the women we serve need more than an apology for these comments is a firm commitment to the services we provide and secure operating funding.** We ask that you show support for the work of SHOP by



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committing to increased funding for SHOP and by bringing SHOP under the same multi-year funding agreement that has been established for many other community groups, including all Status of Women Councils, in our province. We ask that your government show your commitment to the advancement of true social, legal, cultural and economic equality for all women, including the most vulnerable in our society by providing financial and operational stability for SHOP. This would be a tangible way to begin to repair the harm caused by statements which we hope do not represent the views of the Office for the Status of Women.

The instalment of sustainable funding would send a message to current and former sex workers and survivors, many of whom are SHOP participants, that they are valued, deserving of equitable support and self-determination, and included in the fight for women's advancements by the Office for the Status of Women. It would communicate that you are committed to rebuilding relationships of trust with a community left feeling minimized, silenced and targeted, and would show support for what we know are our shared values around the inherent worth of all women in this province.

We thank you for your time and await your response.

Laura Winters

Executive Director, St. John's Status of Women Council/Women's Centre

Caitlin Urquhart

Board Chair, St. John's Status of Women Council/Women's Centre

Cc: Ball & Parsons