

"WE DESERVE A CHANCE" SEX WORKERS ARE SLIPPING THROUGH THE CRACKS



Photos: Wendy D.

"We deserve a chance, we shouldn't feel so unsafe and unprotected."

– WISH PARTICIPANT

We need to do better. We need to speak up, inform and advocate. Street-based sex work sees the most amount of vulnerability and risk, yet support systems for them are almost non-existent. Sex workers have always fallen through the cracks, but COVID has deeply exacerbated the gaps in access.

"I was so overwhelmed, I didn't know where to go. I was turned away so many times that I got rid of all of my possessions," shared a WISH participant when describing the sudden closures of services in the community due to the pandemic.

Sex work is work and it requires the same support other employment provides. This is why we need

your help. Even though COVID resulted in additional funding from foundations, and municipal and provincial governments, we now fear a claw back of resources.

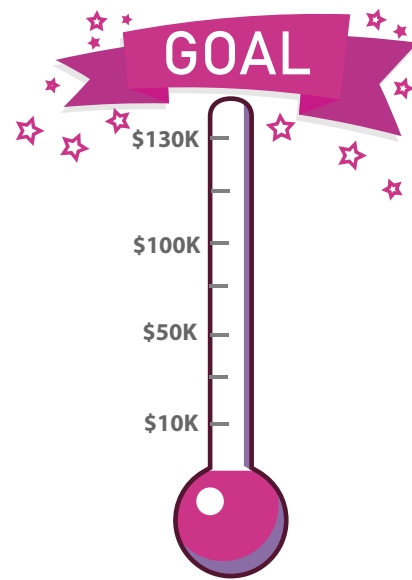
"We deserve a chance, we shouldn't feel so unsafe and unprotected," shared another WISH participant.

We need to maintain the additional services that have only been made possible due to one-time emergency pandemic funds. Please help ensure sex workers have the supports they need. Please help raise the funds necessary to move forward, not backwards.

[FIND OUT HOW YOU CAN HELP](#) →

WE CAN'T GO BACK TO "NORMAL" WE NEED YOUR HELP RAISING \$130,000

Women who rely on our services cannot afford to go "back to normal."



COVID-19, although catastrophic on so many levels, showed us that government, partners, and allies were ready and able to respond. Thanks to this, WISH was able to meet gaps in service. This included the addition of a day shift to our MAP Van, the installation of a washroom trailer and safe respite area in WISH's backlot, the introduction of Peer Witnessing, and the opening of Canada's first-ever shelter for street-based sex workers.

But without renewed financial support, these essential services are at risk. None of these life-essential services should be reliant on one-time funding. Your support will

ensure services are not clawed back, especially as the Downtown Eastside continues to battle three persistent and pre-existing deadly crises: a poverty crisis, a housing crisis, and a catastrophic overdose crisis.

We cannot go back to "normal."

Last year, you helped us raise \$118,000. Our goal this holiday season is to raise \$130,000 through our Winter Campaign! Please help ensure the "new normal" is one with more support and choices for street-based sex workers, not less.

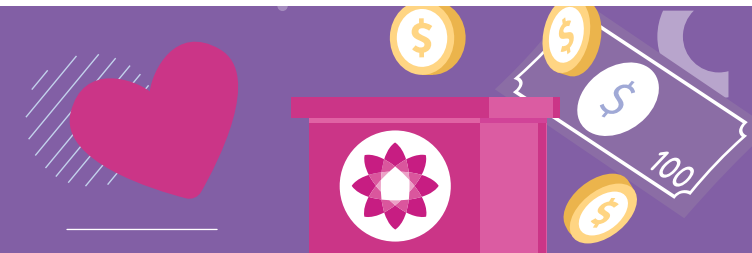
"People were scrambling, and no one had answers."

- WISH PARTICIPANT



DOUBLE YOUR GIVING POWER

From December 1st to January 31st, all donations of \$250 and up will be matched!*



WISH is very fortunate again this year to have received an offer from a generous donor to double your donations this Winter Campaign.

Thanks to this matching donation, you can DOUBLE the number of women you help with your gift. *Up to \$30,000



\$250

Equivalent of 12.5 hours of Peer work in the Supportive Employment Program.



\$500

Ten women can reconnect with their Indigenous culture through two months of programs.



\$750

Helps 50 women upgrade their financial or computer skills, get help with their resumes, or write stories, poems and songs during one month of customized literacy programming in the Learning Centre.



\$1,000

Ten women can sing their hearts out at Music Therapy sessions in the Drop-In Centre.

WISH is so very grateful for your continuous support and encouragement. Will you please join us again in creating greater change?

Please consider giving the gift of positive options and opportunities to women who don't often have them.

WISH PEERS ACHIEVE WAGE PARITY

Our Supportive Employment Program has achieved major milestones in 2020. The program doubled its capacity, creating 41 new peer-based positions. This includes the new SEP-Lead positions that work with the shelter, and with WISH's first-ever Peer Witnessing Program, designed to protect against, and reverse, accidental overdoses.

Just as monumental has been the achievement of wage parity for peers. A long-standing goal of WISH's was to bring the peer wages up to a fair and equitable level. By achieving true wage parity and equity, we are honouring WISH's vision that every woman should have equal opportunities to make free, healthy, and positive choices.

WISH OPENS CANADA'S FIRST-EVER 24/7 SHELTER FOR SEX WORKERS

WISH is exceptionally proud and excited to have opened the doors to Canada's first-ever 24/7 temporary emergency shelter for street-based sex workers. Precariously housed and unhoused women and gender diverse folks in the sex trade will now have a place to temporarily call home while continuing to access all the programs, services, and wraparound supports that WISH has to offer.

The shelter has been full since opening its doors on October 26th. Street-based sex workers now have a place to sleep solidly, uninterrupted, and wake up calmly and slowly. They can enjoy a meal and relax in peace without worrying about their belongings, or where they're going to sleep or eat next. This was possible thanks to critical support from BC Housing and the City of Vancouver.



"I'm not in a place of desperation anymore and can up my prices. I don't have to exchange low-cost sex work for a place to stay."

- WISH SHELTER PARTICIPANT



WISH EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR WINS YWCA WOMEN OF DISTINCTION AWARD

Photo: Wendy D.



Congratulations to Mebrat Beyene for winning this year's YWCA Metro Vancouver Women of Distinction Award in the Non-Profit Category. The awards honour individuals and organizations whose outstanding activities and achievements contribute to the well-being and future of the community.

This extraordinary recognition is a reflection of Mebrat's work ethic and dedication. Mebrat continually advocates for sex worker's rights and works tirelessly to ensure participants are always at the heart of WISH and everything we do.

