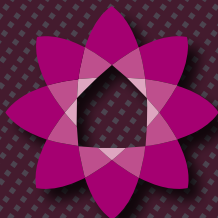




A Year Of Navigating Multiple Crises



WISH Drop-In
Centre Society

Annual Report
FY 2020-2021

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND BOARD CHAIR



Photos: Wendy D. Photography

A LOOK BACK AT THIS UNIQUE AND CHALLENGING YEAR

Without a doubt, the 2020-2021 fiscal year was one of the most challenging years in WISH's history.

COVID-19 meant street-based sex workers faced a catastrophic global pandemic while continuing to navigate an unprecedented toxic drug supply, a homelessness and poverty crisis, lost income, disproportionate rates of violence, and fewer safe spaces.

Because of COVID-19, we immediately saw a severe exacerbation of those pre-existing crises. As the world rushed to go back to "normal," we worried about returning to a status quo that had been broken for years. Despite years of repeated and increasingly desperate calls for urgently needed resources from organizations like WISH, resources only became available because of COVID-19.

One-time emergency funding allowed us to focus on increasing programming and services that had been urgently needed for a long time. It is WISH's commitment to maintain each of these much-needed programs and services, a commitment that is made possible thanks to the support of our donors.

We are extremely proud that we never closed our doors nor scaled back services. What you'll read in this annual report are all the measures WISH took to advocate for street-based sex workers, as well as how we were able to quickly adapt to expand and create new services in the midst of multiple crises.

At the time of writing this, we celebrate the one-year anniversary of the opening of Canada's first-ever 24/7 emergency shelter for sex workers. It's remarkable to look back and see all that was accomplished. We are forever grateful for your support, and to all our staff and volunteers for continuing to support those who depend on WISH.

Please join us in looking back over this unique and extremely challenging year.

Mebrat Beyene
Executive Director

Zoe Grams
Chair

A YEAR OF NAVIGATING MULTIPLE CRISES

DROP-IN

- Showers and bathrooms at the Drop-In open **24/7** for the first time in WISH's history
- More than **100,000 meals** served during the year
- Approximately **300 participants** welcomed on average every day
- Participants accessed clothing and make-up donation rooms about **1,800 times** each month



MAP VAN

- MAP Van began operating **12 hours a day** instead of six
- MAP Van day shift served **as many sex workers as the night shift**
- **More than 1200** Narcan (overdose reversal) kits distributed
- Staff connected with street-based sex workers **more than 19,000 times**
- **More than 90,000** sterile needles handed out
- **62,632** condoms distributed
- **32** Bad Date Reports taken



MUSIC THERAPY, AHSP, LEARNING CENTRE

- **All were affected** by COVID-19 pandemic due to the close-proximity of group work
- All programs **constantly changed and revised** due to COVID-19 restrictions
- As many activities as possible were **moved outdoors to WISH's safe respite area**
- WISH Learning Centre celebrates **20 years**

SAFE RESPIRE

- WISH opened a **24/7 safe respite area** in response to spaces closing or scaling back, and dramatically fewer safe sanitation options for women and gender-diverse people
- Area houses 5-toilet washroom trailer to **meet demand**
- Participants described the safe respite area and services as a **"vital necessity"**
- **63%** of WISH participants using the washroom trailer identified as having disabilities
- **33%** are experiencing homelessness
- **More than a quarter** of the folks coming to the respite area used the space more than once a day

Photos: Wendy D. Photography

"I feel like I now have the confidence to achieve."

– SUPPORTIVE EMPLOYMENT PARTICIPANT

"It's awesome you guys are open 24/7 now. I have nowhere else to use a washroom except here. It's great knowing that people care. I feel like you guys care."

– WISH PARTICIPANT

PEER WITNESSING

- Operates within the WISH 24/7 safe respite area
- **More than 35 peers** from the Supportive Employment Program offer support and provide overdose prevention
- **More than 1,000 crack kits** distributed to participants per month
- Peers gave out **almost 20 Narcan kits** every month
- Peers helped facilitate **more than 50 health referrals** every month
- **More than 450 participants** served each month by the Peer Witnessing and Peer Safety staff

Photo: Estefania Duran



SUPPORTIVE EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM

- Number of peers working in the Supportive Employment Program (SEP) **almost tripled**
- Peers achieve wage parity; wages increased to a **fair and equitable level**
- **New SEP Lead positions introduced**, working closely with participants in the Drop-In Centre and new WISH shelter
- WISH's **first-ever Peer Witnessing positions** introduced to protect against, and reverse accidental overdoses

Photo:
Wendy D. Photography



SHELTER

- Most residents report **fewer instances of violence** thanks to the shelter
- Many residents also report the **ability to turn down** potentially dangerous work
- Crash beds used **more than 500 times** during the first 6 months
- Participants **turned away more than 400 times** since opening day due to limited capacity
- **More than 700 loads of laundry** done during first 6 months
- Five women have been in the shelter for **more than 4 months**

INREACH

- Inreach programming became **more important than ever** as many other DTES services and supports closed or became unavailable to participants
- Program became **a crucial bridge** between participants and all of WISH's programs and services
- Amidst the pandemic, participants' needs became **more urgent and more complex**, requiring far more one-on-one supports than ever before
- Inreach staff quickly became participants' **primary help navigating increasingly complex needs**
- Staff helped participants with **mental health supports, medical appointments, legal matters, housing, social assistance, and more**

YEAR AT A GLANCE

2020

"We just want to live our lives. We just want to raise our children, we just want to be happy, healthy, productive people but how do you do that?"

- WISH PARTICIPANT

APRIL

WISH Emergency Response Team formed to rapidly respond to COVID-19

Courage Campaign launched: WISH mobilizes to highlight devastating effects of the pandemic on street-based sex workers. Campaign includes calls to action and requests to all levels of government to address ongoing need for safe spaces, food, information, sanitation and essential services

MAY

Peer Witnessing introduced as part of the Supportive Employment Program to respond to dramatic increase of accidental overdoses occurring in the DTES

WISH opens 24/7 for the first time in history

WISH's backlot converted into 24/7 safe respite area featuring a 5-toilet washroom trailer in response to the urgent need for safe spaces and access to basic sanitation

Scotiabank Charity Challenge in-person event cancelled

JUNE

Donation clothing room re-opens to participants

Mobile Access Project (MAP) Van day shift begins

JULY

WISH joins more than 90 organizations calling for an immediate ban on the arbitrary, racist, and illegal practice of **police street checks** in B.C. For disproportionately Indigenous, Black, trans, and low-income sex workers trading sex on the street, repeated wellness checks on various strolls pushes the trade further underground

AUGUST

WISH opens satellite office a few blocks away at 312 Main to accommodate some of WISH's program managers, supervisors and admin staff as programs and services continue to expand at 334 Alexander Street

"[Street-based sex work] is more dangerous and women who work on the streets aren't given much of a choice."

- WISH PARTICIPANT

2020

OCTOBER

Canada's first emergency shelter for street-based sex workers opens at WISH. While women make up about 47% of the DTES community, this percentage is not reflected in the amount of available safe spaces, housing, shelter beds, and drop-ins

DECEMBER

WISH Learning Centre celebrates 20 years

WISH, DTES Women's Centre and Atira express outrage and call for an immediate action plan to end pandemic of gender-based violence in the DTES. Organizations called on all levels of government for a coordinated action plan due to the rampant culture of sexualized violence in the DTES

"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."

-SHELTER RESIDENT

FEBRUARY

In collaboration with WISH, CBC Radio series airs, centering the voices and sharing the experiences of current and former street-based sex workers

B.C.-wide Bad Date Reporting system for sex workers announced. The provincial BDAR system will be the first of its kind in Canada, and one of a select few "geographically linked" reporting systems that exist internationally

SEPTEMBER

Drop-In renovations begin for clothing and make up donation rooms

NOVEMBER

WISH hosts virtual panel discussion about the profound impacts of COVID-19 on street-based and im/migrant sex workers

"Call it home, call it family, call it whatever you want, but we all come here to take care of ourselves."

- WISH PARTICIPANT

2021

JANUARY

WISH joins coalition of organizations calling for an end to VPD's Trespass Prevention Program. The program further criminalizes and stigmatizes poverty, and gives more power to the police to harass and criminalize street-based sex workers at any time, even if there is no actual public safety issue

MARCH

WISH launches WISH Talks: Creating Impact Through Conversation in honour of International Women's Day. Through the series, we will strive to center the voices, experiences and realities of street-based sex workers. We want to have the challenging, and sometimes difficult, conversations needed to create impactful and meaningful change

2020-2021 Financial Statements

Government Grant Revenue

Federal	\$	48,241
* Provincial	\$	2,238,600
Municipal	\$	423,924

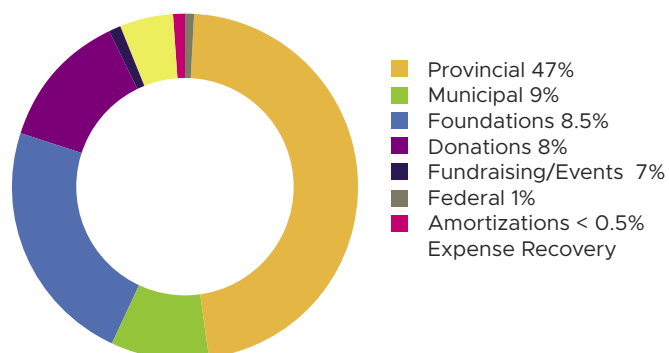
Total Grants Government \$ 2,710,765

Other Revenue

Foundations	\$	1,090,593
Donations	\$	631,651
Fundraising & Events	\$	69,223
Interest & Other	\$	2,370
Expense Recovery	\$	233,558
Amortization of Deferred Capital Contributions	\$	50,733

Total Other Revenue \$ 2,078,128

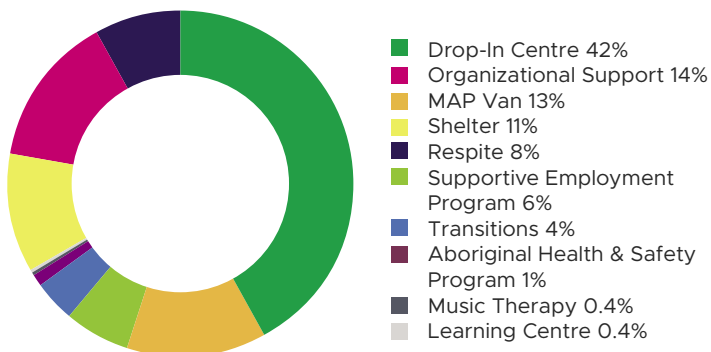
Total Revenue \$ 4,788,893



Program Expenses

Drop-In Centre	\$	1,799,608
MAP Van	\$	567,465
Supportive Employment Program	\$	268,958
Transitions	\$	164,763
Aboriginal Health & Safety Program	\$	30,719
Music Therapy	\$	17,142
Learning Centre	\$	17,708
Shelter	\$	463,151
Organizational Support	\$	597,347
Respite	\$	324,399

Total Expenses \$ 4,251,260



Excess (Deficit) of Revenues over Expenses before Transfers \$ 1,519,122

Transfer of Surplus to Externally Restricted Funds \$ 1,215,074

**** Excess of Revenue over Expenses \$ 304,048**
(Including emergency/contingency reserves)

* A word about government funding: The province of B.C. through BC Housing provides WISH with an annual funding commitment to operate the Shelter and 80% of the Drop-In costs, while the BC Ministry of Public Safety partially funds the operations of the MAP Van.

** The excess revenue in our 20/21 audited statements include one-time COVID-19 funding, emergency and contingency reserves, as well as internally restricted revenues earmarked for increased programming and staffing expenses incurred in this current 21/22 fiscal year.

“Whether you’re a drug addict, or a former sex worker or somebody who’s in between, [you] can be here and be comfortable, not be judged.”

– WISH participant

2020/2021 Volunteer Board Members

Zoe Grams
Chair

Jenn McGinn
Chair (Outgoing)

Nicolle Wayara
Vice Chair

Karina Munroe
Treasurer

Alessandra Smith
Interim Treasurer

Rysa Kronebusch
Secretary

Carly Teillet
Member at large

Tiffany Misri
Member at large

Robyn Baron
Member at large

Lisa Gibson
Member at large

Nycki Basra
Member at large



Photo: Emily Kydd



Photos: Wendy D. Photography



Acknowledgement of Funding

We acknowledge – and are thankful for – the financial support from the City of Vancouver, the Province of B.C. and the Government of Canada. We also want to thank all the public and private foundations, and the individual and corporate donors who make our work possible.

Mission

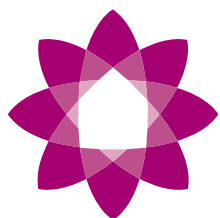
WISH's mission is to improve the health, safety and well-being of women who are involved in Vancouver's street-based sex trade.

Vision

Our vision is that every woman should have access to opportunities to make free, healthy and positive choices.

Values

Acceptance, caring, dignity and respect.



WISH Drop-In
Centre Society

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