

Before I begin, I'd like to acknowledge that we are currently standing on treaty 1 territories, land of indigenous peoples.

Vancouver Rape Relief is the first rape crisis center in Canada originated in 1973, and we receive around 1200 new calls and house 120 women and their children per year. We speak from frontline collective knowledge of over 40 years. Our collective has been successful in effecting policy and legal matters, as well as influencing media and public education. We have agreed as a group that when we organize against sexism, we must address issues of race and class as well. Our collective has done anti-poverty work since the 70s and has been vocal about our campaign for a guaranteed livable income for over 12 years.

The women's liberation movement was historically one of the most effective social movements in addressing women's rights, reproductive freedom, and the problem of violence against women. We see violence against women as an oppressive tactic used by men to keep women in fear and silent. The invention of rape crisis centers and transition houses came from grassroots organizing that women in Canada in the 1970s created and kept throughout all provinces. A study quotes, "The autonomous mobilization of feminists in domestic and transnational contexts — not leftist parties, women in government, or national wealth — is the critical factor accounting for policy change." The authors of this study are Mala Htun and S. Laurel Weldon from the US conducting the largest global study on Violence Against Women of over 70 countries from 1975-2005 — published in American Political Science Review in 2012.

It is clear to us in our collective that our current economic system fails women. We know that women's poverty decreases women's safety.

These are examples of what women say to us when they call us.

-He is her supervisor. He makes sexual comments to her, touches her. He says "I control you. Whatever I want you to do, you will do."

-Her adult son tells her to kill herself "just get it over with" He threatens both her and her 18 yo daughter & they've had to flee out of fear for their safety. The landlord has kicked them out because of damage to the apartment.

-He has been violent and controlling – won't let her eat or leave the house without his permission. She was able to escape because he beat her in public and people stopped him – she fled and got into a shelter.

What we know from our front line work, our advocacy work, and our own lives, is that the state has eroded all income benefit programs, with a mission to get people off income assistance to relieve their responsibilities to people's well-being. We think that as long as we are governed by the state, that the state has responsibility to hold violent men accountable – and not to put women in the position to move, to quit her job, or to change all forms of communication. We think that the state should recognize batterers as unfit to parent, and provide battered women the resource to parent alone.

We know that violent men use their economic power and violence to control women. Guaranteed Livable Income can be an important tool in undermining and interfering with that control but we are not naïve to think that it will end all forms of male violence against women let alone women's oppression.

We want a Guaranteed Livable Income that reflects our principles.

Not the smallest forms of basic income, not welfare model, not a short term pilot project or short term income distribution. We demand an income that reflects the costs of living, that is more than the minimum for some, that is comfortable enough living for all people. We define livable to include safety and security. We want this income indexed to match inflation, to match geographic regions, to match the needs of people with disabilities. We want women who care for the elderly and children, to have a Guaranteed Livable Income, though we reject the burden of responsibility to continue to be put on women.

We want this income Guaranteed to us – without bureaucratic governments imposing means tests, proof of statuses, controlling our expenses, and claw backs to every market dollar earned. We want every woman to have their own account in their own names for this benefit to be directed to. We want any person upon landing to receive Guaranteed Livable Income, including refugees, trafficked and temporary foreign workers.

We know that a Guaranteed Livable Income would improve women's autonomy. From our frontline work, we know that women with economic security would be

better able to leave or avoid prostitution or battery. One woman who lived in our transition house fleeing an abusive husband told me that he often put her down as a poor mother in front of her daughter and told her she wouldn't ever be able to drive in Canada as the rules of the road are different then where she came from. I worked with her to secure additional grants for housing, getting child subsidy and a family lawyer, and taught her how to drive. She ended up getting fulltime stable work and was able to pick up her child in her car – and leave him speechless. In 40% of our calls women ask us for physical help (Shelter, money, transportation) to counter these attacks – often more than once.

We think more work needs to be done after achieving a Guaranteed Livable Income.

We reject capitalism – with systems that thrive off the destruction of nature, the exploitation of low wage labor, and the exploitation of women's unpaid labour. We see capitalism and patriarchy as forces combined that exploit women's labor and commodify women's bodies.

We reject the notion of false scarcity when our government implements austerity measures that restrict or cut any work done by women's organizing.

We think that organizations that advocate for systemic change to end all forms of oppression should not be sacrificed for basic income. We would argue that under a Guaranteed Livable Income, women's organizations should be adequately supported.

The work of the women's movement along with other liberation struggles should be prioritized and valued as work that not only benefits society, but also sustains life. In addition to care work, the work of the women's movement has social priorities – and we expect the value system to change in a capitalist system from consumption and production of material goods, to the care and needs of society.

A Guaranteed Livable Income can be a useful tool for us to challenge male violence against women but we would still intend to challenge systems of patriarchy, capitalism, and racism in our fight for freedom.

We quote from the Pictou statement of 2004, "everybody is entitled to economic and physical security and autonomy and a fair share of the common wealth" This is one premise we can unite on.