Alternatives for Women

PRINCE EDWARD COUNTY, ON

ANNUAL REPORT 2025-2026



2025-2026

COMMUNITY IMPACT

142
Clients Served

23
Transitional Clients

40
VAW Clients

18
RWSN Clients

34
Women & Children Housed

7
Counselling Groups

192
Crisis Calls

41
Caring Dads Referrals



CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

As Chair of the Board, it is my privilege to reflect on the past year and recognize the incredible work of the staff, volunteers, board members, donors, and community partners who make Alternatives for Women possible.

The need for AFW's services remains significant. Every day, women and children in our community turn to AFW for safety, support, counselling, advocacy, and hope. While we continue to work toward a future free from violence, the reality is that our services remain as essential today as they have ever been.

As we often remind ourselves, behind every statistic is a person, a family, and a story of resilience. The work AFW does changes lives.

This year has also been one of transformation and achievement.

I am incredibly proud to share that this year we welcomed four women and their children into our new transitional housing units. These homes represent far more than bricks and mortar. They represent safety, stability, dignity, and the opportunity to begin again.

This project would not have been possible without extraordinary dedication. Our staff approached this undertaking with determination, creativity, and persistence while continuing to deliver the high-quality counselling services our clients rely on. I also want to recognize board member Erin Jones, whose leadership and commitment were instrumental in bringing this vision to life. The success of this project is a testament to what can be accomplished when passionate people work together toward a common goal.

Of course, achieving this milestone is not the end of the journey.

Building these new units required AFW to take on significant debt, and over the coming year we will be embarking on an ambitious fundraising campaign with a goal of raising $1 million. This campaign is about more than paying off a building. It is about ensuring that future generations of women and children have access to safe, supportive housing when they need it most.

I am confident that our community will rise to this challenge. Prince Edward County has always demonstrated remarkable generosity and compassion, and I believe people understand the importance of investing in safety, dignity, and hope for members of their community.

The work of Staff, behind the scenes, did not go unnoticed. They worked diligently to ensure the new units would be suitable for our clients, they prepared and supported the women and their families during a disruptive period of transition and help move them into the new units. Shelter Movers Canada also deserve many thanks for putting in a very long day, along with staff, to ensure the women, their children and possessions were all moved in.

I would also like to acknowledge the work of our former Executive Director, Julie Watson, who led Alternatives for the past 4 years. Julie was a passionate advocate and strong leader, we thank her for her service. I'm happy to welcome Val Blower, our Interim Executive Director, who stepped in during the busiest and most intense time, likely in the history of the agency. Thank you, Val, for sticking with us through this period, now hopefully you can settle in and enjoy more of the everyday experiences of running the agency!

On behalf of the Board, thank you to staff for their unwavering commitment, our volunteers for their generosity, our donors and supporters for their belief in our mission, and my fellow board members for their leadership and dedication.

Together, we are building a community where women and children can find safety, healing, and opportunity.

EMILY COWAN

Alternatives for Women Chair



"safety, stability, dignity,
and the opportunity to begin again."



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Hi everybody. First, I want to thank you for taking the time to be here tonight. This is my first AGM as the interim ED, but I've had the pleasure of being part of the Alternatives for Women team for some time now and I'm excited to share some of the work we've been doing and the accomplishments we've made towards our mission of ending violence towards women in Prince Edward County.

Each year, it seems like we start by talking about how busy the last year has been, and somehow each year keeps getting busier; this year was definitely no exception.

Our biggest and most exciting news is the successful construction of our new building. After months of tireless efforts from our team, our Board of Directors, our community partners, our volunteers, and generous members of Prince Edward County, we were able to achieve what in years past would have been beyond our wildest dreams. We were thrilled to end the summer on a high note and move our residents into a new build, giving them safe, accessible, and dignified housing designed with them in mind. Thank you to Julie Watson for working very hard before her departure,

making sure the new building was up and running, thank you to the board of directors, with all the late/after hours emails, texts and phone calls to make sure all of our tenants are still safe in a good and safe building. Alternatives for Women was honoured to partner with The County Foundation on a capital fund to help us reach this goal. Through both generous community donations and The County Foundation's matching commitment, we raised over $100,000. We would also like to thank the generous partnership of Jamie Yeo at Foodland Picton for their summer fundraising campaign, and the many kind supporters who donated to 100 People who Care this year, raising almost ($10,000). We would also like to thank all those who joined us on June 8th at The Regent for our fundraiser showing of the documentary We Lend a Hand: The Forgotten Story of the Ontario Farmerettes, and the ongoing support of all those who donate to our mission of ending violence against women in Prince Edward County through our Canada Helps page.

While I'm happy to celebrate the momentous wins we had this year, it is with a heavy heart that I also must recognize the ongoing need for our services and supports that continues to grow in our community. This year, Alternatives for Women helped women and children in need of counselling and specialized supports, and we were able to provide safe transitional housing to many of them. Despite our best efforts, the demand for safe and stable shelter for women fleeing intimate partner violence continues to exceed our capacity, and our waitlist remains ongoing.

VALERIE BLOWER

Alternatives for Women
Interim Executive Director

TREASURER'S REPORT

Treasurer's Report Annual General Meeting Good afternoon everyone,

I am pleased to present the Treasurer's Report for Alternatives for Women in Prince Edward County based on the audited financial statements for the fiscal year ended March 31, 2026.



Overall, the organization remained in a sound financial position during the year. Total revenue was $669,206, compared with $673,738 in the previous year. Our largest source of revenue continued to be funding from the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, along with rental income, grants, donations, and investment income.

Total expenses for the year were $635,341, compared with $653,220 in the previous year. This resulted in an excess of revenue over expenditures of $33,865, an improvement over the previous year's surplus of $20,518.

At year-end, the organization had total assets of $1,747,746, including $197,067 in cash, $192,109 in short-term investments, and $1,320,664 in tangible capital assets. Total net assets increased to $775,171, compared with $741,306 at the end of the previous fiscal year.

In early 2026, AFW entered into an agreement to acquire a new build property meeting the evolving transitional needs of our organization for $2.5 million plus HST, with a remaining commitment of $2.075 million plus applicable HST at March 31, 2026. In addition, subsequent to year-end, the organization entered into an agreement to sell an existing property for $1,033,000, with an estimated gain of approximately $1,006,004 before transaction costs, to be recognized in the following fiscal year.

As we move forward with this important capital project, continued community support and donations will be essential to helping us meet the significant financial commitments associated with the new building. We are deeply grateful to everyone who has contributed so far, and we encourage continued support as we are now at the finish line.

The financial statements also reflect increased borrowing associated with the organization's property and capital activities. At March 31, 2026, total long-term debt was $371,188. The financial statements note that a $308,000 loan was repaid in full subsequent to year-end.

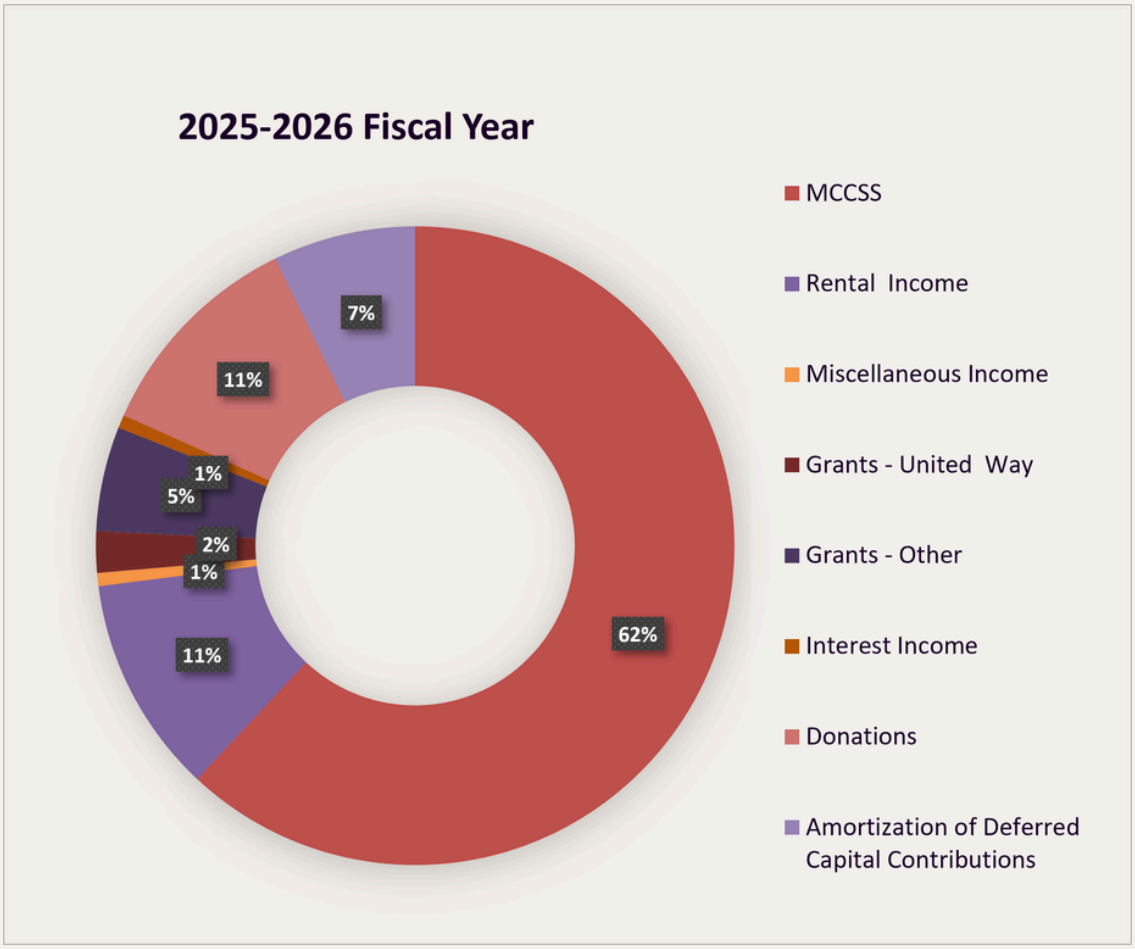
The auditor's report expresses a qualified opinion because, as is common with charitable organizations, the completeness of donation revenue cannot be independenrly verified through normal audit procedures. Aside from this limitation, the auditor concluded that the financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position and results of the organization in accordance with Canadian accounting standards for not-for-profit organizations.

In summary Alternatives for Women in Prince Edward County ended the fiscal year with a positive operating result, an increase in net assets, and significant progress toward its capital and property plans. However, the next phase of the new building project will require substantial ongoing financial support, and donations from our community will play an important role in helping us achieve this goal. would like to thank our staff, management, Board of Directors, funders, donors, and community supporters for their continued commitment to the financial sustainability and important work of the organization.

GILLIAN WHITE

ALTERNATIVES FOR WOMEN TREASURER

REVENUE



Bottom line: Revenue remains stable, but the organization continues to rely heavily on MCCSS funding. Building more dependable, unrestricted sources of income would help reduce this reliance.

For the fiscal year ended March 31, 2026, the organization received $669,206 in revenue. MCCSS provided most of this funding. Community donations made up 11% of revenue and were our second-largest source, showing the strength of local support for our work. These donations are especially important because our Second Stage Housing program depends mainly on community support. Rental income, grants, and other revenue also help us provide essential services and create a more balanced funding base.

We sincerely thank all of our funders, community donors, and supporters. Your generosity and continued commitment make our programs possible, including Second Stage Housing, and help us provide essential services to those who need them most.

AFW Supporters

2025-2026 Fiscal Year

- Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS)
- The County Foundation
- United Way
- The Houssian Foundation
- 100 People Who Care Prince Edward County
- The Corporation of the County of Prince Edward
- Community Foundation for Kingston & Area
- Remembering Otto and Marie Pick Charitable Foundation
- Picton Chapter #273 of the Order of the Eastern Star (OES)
- Canadian Online Giving Foundation
- St. Andrew's Anglican Church of Wellington
- Gordon R. Holton Medicine Professional Corporation
- Picton Tattoo Club
- HSSD Corporation
- Heidelberg Materials
- Willowlee Sod Farms Limited
- BPW Hastings & Prince Edward
- Cressy Glenora United Church
- Lily's Cafe
- Prince Edward County Quilters' Guild
- Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario
- Kingfisher Financial Ltd.
- Wellington Community Dinner
- St. Mary Magdalene Anglican Church, Picton
- PEC Social Fund
- Hastings-Prince Edward Elementary Teachers Local
- Golf Green Gals
- St Philip's Anglican Church Women, Milford
- Victim Services of Hastings, Prince Edward, Lennox & Addington
- Sandbanks Community Church
- Picton United Church
- Royal Canadian Legion Branch 509
- St. Andrews Anglican Church Women, Wellington
- Mountain View Women's Institute
- Pampered Chef
- Charities Aid Foundation Canada
- The Studio PEC
- Over 160 personal donations from community members.





Client Success Stories

Transitional/VAW Client

My name is Amy; I'm 44 years old. I have endured sexual assault and abuse from people in my life since I was a child. In 2022, I was living in my car, moving from town to town every night to flee my abusive partner and keep my whereabouts unknown. I was broken, lost, beaten and abused in all senses of the word. I didn't trust anyone and no longer cared if I lived or died. I had completely lost all hope that there was a way out for me. After many attempts to rebuild my life on my own and always ending up in the same places with the same type of people. Believing there were no good people left in the world and that a better future was unattainable.

After struggling to survive life like that for so long, finally a stranger suggested to me a shelter. I was embarrassed, ashamed and felt like a failure to have to go to a shelter, but I really was out of options, I needed help. So I went, after a few short weeks of instability and the unknown, a place was offered to me at Alternatives For Women. I had no idea what it was going to be like, but I was assured it would be safe and supportive.

I arrived at AFW in May 2022. I was given a beautiful living space just for me, a safe place to rest and begin to heal. This was the first time I felt safe in years. They offered me weekly counseling, and round the clock support if I needed it. This opened the gates for me to learn to trust and start to grow hope for the future. There were also weekly group get togethers, that covered topics like safe\unsafe relationships, cycles of abuse and types, core values, boundaries and so much more. I learned a lot about myself, the person I was, and the one I wanted to become. Groups were filled with other women going through the same things I was. I was grateful to know I was no longer alone. AFW had great resources in the community as well to help with other issues I had.

During the year I was residing there and still to this day I'm working on me. I've changed a lot; I've healed parts of me that I thought couldn't be fixed. I now love and trust me, I've learned a lot about relationships and people and navigating them in healthy ways. I gained a community of supportive women who care about me and others. But above all I have a safe place that has helped me rebuild my life and who I can count on with ongoing support. Today I have a good life, I have hope for the future and I want to be alive to live it. That's something.

I don't know what would have happened to me if I hadn't had the opportunity to stay at Alternatives For Women. But I can tell you for sure I'm positively changed; I'll forever be grateful to these women and the agency. I couldn't have done it without them. They saved my life and gave me a life worth living. I will spend the rest of my life highly recommending them to women in need and supporting them every way that I can. All my love and gratitude will never be able to compensate for the gift they have given to me. Huge thanks to all the women over the years that have played a part in my life's Journey, through AFW. Words will never be enough to express how blessed I am because of all of you.

Yours Truly,
With all my Love, Amy

VAW Client

I moved to the County in the summer of 2013 with my then-husband, to be closer to family. We had just found out I was pregnant with our second child, and we wanted to be less isolated so we packed up our London home and moved to a town 1/100th the size. I instantly fell in love with the place, and it became home for me. I got involved in the community, becoming Parent Council Chair at the kids' school for a couple of years. I had a wide social network. I got a really great job (that I still have and love today).

We separated in 2018. But my story isn't about my ex-husband.

My story is about the man that came after.

I met him in 2020. On paper, he was perfect. Exactly what I had been looking for. Good father to his kids, hard-working, funny, empathetic, compassionate, kind, and looked at me like I hung the moon. He would constantly tell me how lucky he was to have me. He picked me bouquets of wildflowers, just because. He would cook me dinners, and he treated my kids like gold. I was so cautious about getting into a relationship with him, but he was so patient. Shortly after we started dating, he got injured at work - a brain injury. It happened the day after we had a date night. I felt responsible because he was tired. That guilt played a huge part in how the rest of this unfolded.

It was hard to see the red flags at first. It started so slowly, so incrementally, I tell people that it was a lot like being a frog in a boiling pot. You don't notice all of the ways you're losing yourself until you barely recognize what's left.

He started getting angry at me over the strangest things. And when I would try to talk to him about it, it seemed to make it worse. Then came the patterns of conflict with no repair. He'd lose his temper and storm out, only to return hours later like nothing was wrong. I started avoiding trying to discuss it because I would be met with "We're finally having a good night, do you really want to get into this now?" No. No, I wanted to enjoy the good night too.

We moved in together after 2 years. That's when things got really bad. Our fights got worse, he moved on to name-calling. I told him repeatedly I would not be spoken to like that. It didn't help. But also, I didn't leave. He started staying out all night. I asked his teenage son if he had been like this before I moved in. "No." was his response, "I don't know what he's thinking."

He started stealing my car, saying his truck was out of gas and “it was just easier.” In hindsight, I see this for what it was - taking away my ability to leave. But at the time, all of his excuses, all of his reasons, well they were JUST this side of probable so maybe I am making it all up in my head?

I caught him cheating. I still stayed. I was keeping his family and my own afloat. And I loved him. Or at least, I loved a version of him that I now recognize was a very carefully crafted mask, made all the more believable because HE wanted to believe it. I think that’s still the most heartbreaking part of this story.

It all came to a head one Saturday night in February, 2024. I ended up in the truck with him at 2 am. He was getting progressively more agitated and angry and I recognized very early that I wasn’t going to be able to reason with him, so I stayed silent. Apparently, that was a mistake. We ended up in the middle of the woods, where he stopped the truck, pulled me out of the passenger door, and bodily threw me in the ditch. 3 times.

I don’t think I can accurately convey what it feels like to make the realization that you are going to die. Not in some far off distant future, but imminently. I was in the woods, soaking wet, in the middle of February at 2 am, with no idea where I was or how to get back to the road, with no phone, and with a man who wasn’t going to let me back in his truck. A calmness and a certainty settled over me as I started walking back the way we had come.

He did end up picking me up and putting me in his truck and driving me back home. I didn’t say anything to anybody until 4 days later. I was on the phone with a friend and everything just hit me, all at once. I still remember her response after I finished. “This is enough now. This has to be enough.”

After a year of descending into my own private hell, that was the catalyst for me to get out.

I didn’t do it on my own. I was LUCKY. I was lucky to have an amazing support network. I was lucky to have access to resources like Alternatives that helped me navigate this. I was lucky to have an income so I could finance my exit. A lot of women don’t get that.

Friends took me to the police station the next day and I reported it. I had already had an introduction to Alternatives For Women from a previous experience with him, but I started regularly seeing someone there and her guidance and support was nothing short of extraordinary.

It didn't end when I left. The next year was the hardest period of time that I've ever had to live through. The trial was a year to the day of that horrific night. I had asked to give my testimony in a separate room. My therapist provided a letter to the court indicating that it would be detrimental to my mental health and wellbeing to be in a room with my ex. The judge denied my request. And so I had to sit in a room full of strangers (one of whom had been tasked with the sole job of discrediting me), and my abuser and recount the events of the worst and most terrifying night of my life. All while I could feel his eyes boring into me. My counsellor from Alternatives was there in the courtroom, and I don't know that I could have done it without her.

He was found guilty.

It's been a year and a half since the trial. It's been 2.5 years since I left. I am finally coming back to myself and a large part of that has been the help and support I have received from Alternatives For Women. When they asked me to write out my story for their AGM, I readily agreed. This is an organization that is, unfortunately, so necessary for our community and if I can use my voice, my circumstances, and my story to drive that importance home, I will happily do so. Through them, I got to participate in a Survivor's Forum Project, bringing victims' voices to the OPP to help police better understand and thus respond to IPV. Through them, I was able to attend group sessions with other women who had similar stories, allowing me to realize that I was not alone.

Looking back, I was arrogant. I was a university educated woman. I founded a Feminist Meet-Up group in the County when I moved here. I thought it couldn't happen to me.

Turns out, it's a lot closer than you think.

AFW SERVICES AND PROGRAMS

Free and Confidential Counselling

Safety Planning

Public Education

Transitional Housing

Group Counselling

Transportation to Emergency Shelter

Referrals & Resources

Adocacy & Accompaniment

Caring Dads

24 Hour Crisis Support

FAQ.

Do I have to leave my abuser in order to use your services?

No you do not have to leave your abuser. We respect your decisions and your journey. Counsellors will talk with you and give you resources that you may find helpful. We respect the rights and decisions of all women; only you know what is right for you.

Can you help me with legal information or help me find a lawyer?

We have experience with the legal issues that confront a woman dealing with abuse, however we are not lawyers and cannot give you legal advice. We can support you in your legal journey by:

- Directing you to the proper legal resources, including lawyers who are familiar with domestic abuse issues.
- Providing transportation (if required) to legal appointments.
- Court accompaniment as emotional support.

Offering a safe confidential place to discuss what you are going through.

Is there a cost for counselling? How many sessions can I have?

There is no charge for counselling. We provide Violence Against Women Counselling. If you need support beyond what we offer, we will refer you to other counselling services as appropriate (Mental Health, Addictions etc.) There is no limit on the number of sessions you can access; Alternatives for Women will support you for as long as you need.

Do you service the rural areas? Can you meet me where I live as I don't have transportation into Picton?

We have a Rural Outreach Violence Against Women Counsellor who can meet with you anywhere in Prince Edward County. If it is not safe to meet in your home, then she will meet you in an alternative space. You can discuss any concerns with her.

Can you help me with safety planning?

We have extensive Safety Planning knowledge and tools to use to help keep you safe, including Safety Planning before you leave, while you are still living with an abuser and/or after you leave an abuser.

What does Second Stage housing mean?

When someone has left an abusive situation and goes into a women's abuse Shelter, that is considered First Stage. Women can stay a limited time in these shelters—usually 6 weeks.

Second Stage Housing was developed to provide women with the next step forward—a physically safe place to get many parts of her life organized such as finances, children, work, schooling, emotional healing and legal issues dealt with, as often it is hard for women to find housing after all of the upheaval in their lives. Second Stage is also called Transitional Housing where women and their children can stay for up to one year. At Alternatives for Women, we call our Transitional Housing Program the "Kiosan" Program—which means "to choose."

Can I bring my kids and pets?

Your children are able to live with you in our Second Stage Housing Units, full time or part time, depending on your custody agreement. Pets are welcomed in our 1 and 2 bedroom units on a case by case basis. Unfortunately we are not able to accommodate pets in our studio units.

How can I help my mom, sister, or friend?

One of the most important things you can do for your loved one who is experiencing domestic violence is to listen. Don't try and be a therapist. Don't ask questions or pry for details, just be a friend and listen. The most powerful statement you can make is: I believe you.

Alternatives for Women

PRINCE EDWARD COUNTY, ON

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