



## MELISSA ALEXANDER

### COMMUNITY SERVICE

Melissa Alexander has made an enormous impact in the lives of incarcerated women. After experiencing incarceration, she set out to ensure women in prison had every opportunity to advance and build a thriving life upon release.

Not only was she the first parolee to return to the program Building Up, which helps incarcerated women enter the trades, but she returned to Walls to Bridges, a program out of Wilfrid Laurier University that creates greater opportunities for incarcerated people, to receive a postsecondary education. Since her release, she has dedicated countless hours to the program as a faculty trainer – training instructors from numerous postsecondary institutions – and as a public workshop facilitator.

In addition to her work with incarcerated women, Melissa is deeply devoted to her community. She serves as both a Peer Support Worker on the Non-Crisis Peer Support Phone Line for adults dealing with mental health challenges and as a

Community Peer through the City of Toronto's Youth Equity Unit, developing meaningful relationships with the young women she serves. She brings new supports, resources, insights and respect to women across the Greater Toronto Area who have experienced personal and structural trauma and violence. She is also a Toronto Community Benefits Network Ambassador and speaks publicly about how getting a skilled trade through the Community Benefits Agreements has made a difference in her life.

Those who know Melissa describe her as an ambitious, principled and caring person who is committed to drawing on her lived experiences to inspire and empower others.

As a driven champion for women who have been incarcerated, Melissa will continue to advocate and create opportunities so women and girls can prosper and thrive.

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