



The Honourable / L'honorable Rob Nicholson, P.C., M.P./c.p., député
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Men's Leadership Forum

I would like to welcome you to the 2008 Men's Leadership Forum in Edmonton. Although I am, regrettably, unable to join you in person, let me assure you that I deeply respect and support the aims of the Forum.

Abuse of women and children is against the law in Canada, but if we truly want to put an end to the shameful heritage of domestic violence, here and elsewhere, we have to change hearts and minds as well.

I commend the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters for their vision in welcoming the Men's Leadership Forum as an ally and making it part of this important and timely event, the first World Conference of Women's Shelters. The sad reality is that far too many women and their children, all around the world, continue to suffer abuse at the hands of those who should help them most. It is a tragedy that affects us all and undermines human dignity everywhere.

Nonetheless, by sharing what they have seen and learned, their ideas and their insights, the delegates may find hope and solutions that will make real changes possible. Men can help, and the Men's Leadership Forum is an excellent step in the right direction. We have to take responsibility, work hard to change attitudes and behaviour, and set an example of respect and dignity.

Canada's young people, in particular, need – and deserve – to see men who are leaders in all areas of our society speaking out clearly and without compromise against the crime of domestic violence. By bringing together leading figures from business, sports, entertainment and many other areas, the Men's Leadership Forum provides role models whose achievements will be an inspiration to boys and young men.

This issue marks a more personal note for me as my mother, Betty Nicholson, helped to establish the first transition house for abused women in the Niagara region in the 1970's. She served on the original board of directors of Niagara Women in Crisis when it was founded in 1977. More than thirty years later, the dedicated staff and volunteers at the shelter they established, Nova House, continue to provide an invaluable service to women and children in need.

Today, the need is as great as ever – but through efforts such as the Men's Leadership Forum, I hope this too will change. I wish you all a very successful meeting.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rob Nicholson".