

ALBERTA COUNCIL of WOMEN'S SHELTERS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PRESS RELEASE

Re: MORE WOMEN SEEK SHELTER IN 2000

The Alberta Council of Women's Shelters has compiled the accommodation statistics for individual shelters recently released by the Office for the Prevention of Family Violence. Almost 400 more women sought shelter in 2000 and 19,191 women and children were turned away because the shelters were full, an increase of 9.5% from 1999. Total admissions also rose to 11,230 women and children served, an increase of 9.7% from 1999.

Alberta shelters are stretched to the limit in meeting this staggering need: basic operating costs for women's shelters have not increased since 1986 nor have salaries kept pace. Shelters are grateful for the support received from their communities and staff in providing this essential service. Women's shelters continue to provide both referral services and a safe haven. Women fleeing violence are encouraged to contact their local shelter for assistance.

Shelters continue to operate on a "Survival Mode," and this is simply not acceptable. ACWS continues to stress the need for adequate ongoing funding and a long-term plan that addresses strategies to reduce domestic violence.

In 2000, 5,834 children were admitted into shelters and 10,103 children were turned away. Research tells us that the effects on children witnessing violence between parents is serious and long-lasting. These children are at an increased risk of becoming victims or perpetrators of violence themselves and are at greater risk of numerous behavioural, emotional and developmental problems (*Statistics Canada – Juristat – Canada Shelters for Abused Women, 1999-2000*). This makes support for women trying to escape the violence in their homes all the more critical. ACWS has challenged the Minister of Human Resources and members of the Low Income Review Committee to address the paltry level of funding available through Supports for Independence (SFI) for women leaving abusive relationships. We have also recommended to the Minister of Justice that the safety of women and children must be paramount in the new Divorce Act.

ACWS wants to see these numbers go down significantly. This will take the concerted co-operation of the community, politicians and legal system. These are more than statistics. Every number has a face of a woman or a child fleeing from violence in their homes, a place where they have every right to expect to be safe.

"We believe in a world free from violence and abuse."