

# ALBERTA COUNCIL of WOMEN'S SHELTERS

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **PRESS RELEASE**

**Re: NEED STILL TOO HIGH IN ALBERTA**

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. In 2001, Alberta women's shelters took in:

- **5,194** women and **5,546** children,
- Assisted **41,414** callers on crisis lines,
- Were unable to accommodate **8,443** abused women with their **9,017** children because their shelters were full.

In addition, the Solicitor General's department reported:

- **6,172** spousal abuse incidents were reported to police, with
- **4,144 charges laid** and
- **5 deaths** attributed to spousal abuse.

Knowing these statistics and the fact that most abuse goes unreported, ACWS is calling upon the Provincial Government to:

1. **Increase shelter funding:** As an immediate strategy to reduce the turn away rate the province should adequately resource outreach, follow-up and crisis intervention as essential shelter programs and provide funding for un-funded shelter beds.
2. **Increase the financial support** available to women who have been abused.
3. **Increase the supply and affordability** of second stage housing for women leaving abusive relationships.

*Further information and a backgrounder is attached.*

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

**ALBERTA COUNCIL of WOMEN'S SHELTERS**  
**NOVEMBER IS FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION MONTH**

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*Shelters unable to meet scope of need*

**Will the ones you know remain caught by abuse?**

More than 10,000 women and children found a safe haven from abusive relationships in shelters across Alberta during 2001. Yet many remain in the abusive cycle because their needs were not met. For shelter staff, the scenarios are all too familiar: The mother who finally finds strength to grab her children and run, only to be told the shelter has no room; the woman who returns to an abusive home when her allotted time in a shelter runs out, unable to afford the housing and long-term support she needs to cope alone.

Accommodation statistics compiled by the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters from tallies gathered by the Office for the Prevention of Family Violence are shown at right. In addition to turning many women and children away, shelters answered more than 40,000 crisis line calls. What's more, police responded to 6,172 spousal abuse incidents, laid charges in 4,144 cases and attributed five deaths to spousal abuse in the last year alone, according to Alberta's Solicitor General Department.

| <b>Number served, 2001-2002</b>  | <b>Alberta</b> |
|--|----------------|
| Women sheltered  | 5,194          |
| Children sheltered   | 5,546          |
| Women turned away  | 8,443          |
| Children turned away   | 9,017          |
| Crisis line callers assisted   | 41,414         |
| <i>Compiled by ACWS from individual shelter statistics released by the Office for the Prevention of Family</i> |                |

"As we enter Family Violence Month, it's startling enough to realize that Alberta shelters served one in every 300 women this past year," muses Jan Reimer, Provincial Co-ordinator of the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters. "Even more sobering is the fact that shelter workers report that women are forced to return to abusive relationships because of low SFI rates and high housing costs." The figures are all the more staggering as nearly one quarter of women who have experienced wife assault never told anyone about the abuse.<sup>1</sup>

These realities prompt ACWS to call on the provincial government in this Family Violence Month to take three specific steps:

1. Increase shelter funding;
2. Increase the supply and affordability of second and third stage housing;
3. Improve SFI (Supports for Independence) rates to meet the needs of women leaving abusive relationships.

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<sup>1</sup> National Clearinghouse on Family Violence