



Alberta Council of Women's Shelters

Please accept this response on behalf of David Khan and the Alberta Liberal Party team.

1. How do you understand the purpose and the role of women's shelters and, in general, what would you do to ensure they receive support during the lifetime of the next government?

The Alberta Liberals believe the purpose and role of women's shelters is to provide immediate shelter, food and security for women and their children fleeing domestic violence. Shelters also provide counselling and emotional support, and can assist with connecting survivors of domestic violence with other needed resources. Beyond the critical crisis intervention role of emergency shelters, second-stage shelters and other housing supports help survivors to empower themselves and rebuild their lives.

The Alberta Liberals fully acknowledge that the economic downturn has contributed to a dramatic increase in domestic violence and women's shelters being overburdened to the point where a sizeable number of people seeking help are having to be turned away. Shocking numbers from ACWS's latest annual report bear this out, and this is wholly unacceptable. After forming government, we would promptly consult with ACWS and other stakeholders to develop a comprehensive response aimed at boosting shelter beds and resources. We are also committed to exploring the idea of a portable housing benefit to give survivors of domestic violence more housing options and support.

And, in the lifetime of the next government will you commit to:

2. The creation of 998 new second-stage shelter beds and providing related operating funds?

The Alberta Liberals fully recognize that more second-stage shelter beds are urgently needed, and that allowing survivors of domestic violence and their children time to reestablish themselves is of critical importance. As indicated in our response to Question #1, we think it would be prudent to consult stakeholders first and also to examine what's feasible at this time

in light of the province's challenging financial position. However, we can say with certainty that we would absolutely make this a priority.

3. The introduction of a Portable Housing Benefit for abused women?

Yes, absolutely. The Alberta Liberals believe that women should not have to be solely reliant on our already overburdened social housing system after escaping domestic violence. A monthly portable housing benefit would provide survivors of domestic violence and their children greater flexibility and more options by facilitating prompt subsidized access to market rate housing in their community. We think that Ontario's program has more than demonstrated the value of a portable housing benefit, and we are keen to emulate that in Alberta.

4. Extending and expanding the pilot program providing free legal supports to sexual assault survivors to include domestic violence survivors?

Yes. The Alberta Liberals believe that domestic violence is equally traumatic and impactful, and that survivors deserve prompt access to free legal advice in their hour of greatest need. Trying to figure out how they are going to cover the cost of a lawyer should be the furthest thing from their minds.

5. Tying shelter funding formulas to cost of living increases?

The latest ACWS annual report paints a shocking picture of just how far Alberta is falling short in providing an adequate number of shelter spaces. The Alberta Liberals believe there is merit to linking shelter funding formulas to inflation, and that this is an idea that should be explored. As a party, we pressed for decades for AISH and other income support programs to be indexed to inflation, and there are clearly other areas where it makes eminent sense for government to be factoring in cost of living increases.