

Rachel Notley. Fighting for you

Alberta Council of Women's Shelters

Please accept this response on behalf of Rachel Notley and the Alberta NDP 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?**

No Albertan should live in fear for their life or safety, nor suffer alone. Our government stands with survivors of family violence. That is why, over the last four years, we increased funding for women's shelters by \$15 million which supported more than 17,000 women and 14,000 children in 2017 alone. Last year, the NDP government also provided nearly \$6 million in emergency financial supports for 5,489 Albertans who were fleeing abuse. Instead of making reckless cuts that would put survivors of domestic and sexual violence at risk, we are strengthening supports for survivors and investing in safer communities.

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?**

Rachel Notley and the NDP know how important second stage shelter beds are to help women fleeing violence get back on their feet. That is why we were happy to see part of the \$15 million increase the NDP government provide to ACWS go to women's shelters in order to provide second stage shelter beds. However, we know that this increase was not enough to meet the demand and that more needs to be done. If re-elected, we will continue to work with partners like the ACWS to try to find ways to address the needs for these beds.

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

Rachel Notley and the NDP believe that everyone deserves a safe, affordable place to rest their head at the end of the day. Over the last four years, the NDP government has invested \$1.2 billion to build and renovate over 4,000 affordable housing units to give more families a safe place to live. We were proud to support *Bill 204: The Residential Tenancies Act* that allows tenants affected by domestic violence to break leases without financial penalty. We are aware of the successes of the portable housing benefit pilot in Ontario and are interested in how it might work in an Alberta context. We are committed to supporting survivors of domestic violence and would be open to discussions about other ways to

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support abuse women as they are fleeing violence, including exploring a portable housing benefit.

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

Rachel Notley and the NDP have been fighting to support the survivors of sexual and domestic violence. We know that it can be frightening and overwhelming for survivors to figure out their legal options. We were so proud to provide \$700,000 to the Elizabeth Fry Society and participating lawyers for their partnership to providing new legal resources to people who need those services the most. We believe this pilot is critically important and we will assess the results once the pilot is complete to determine the way we can continue to provide these supports to survivors going forward. If it proves to be as valuable as initial indications suggest we will work with partners to find a way to extend the program.

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

We know how important the work that women's shelters do is. Rachel Notley and the NDP are committed to supporting shelters across the province. In the middle of the worst recession in two generations, we followed through on our commitment to increase funding for shelters because of the importance of their work.

Over the last four years, Rachel Notley and the NDP have invested in permanent supportive housing and increased funding for women's shelters by \$15 million, including providing \$1,7 million in badly needed maintenance and upgrades. Going forward, we will continue to work with our partners to determine how to best support this critical work. We are open to discussions about determining the appropriate level of financial support.