[Date]  
  
[Address]  
[Postal Code]  
  
Dear MLA [LastName],

Domestic violence shelters across Alberta are struggling. Shelters provide essential services to thousands of vulnerable Albertans every year and the demand for shelter services is only growing. In the face of that need, shelters are being told again to find a path forward alone.

The Alberta Council of Women’s Shelters has released a new report that paints a grim picture of the state of domestic violence shelters in the province of Alberta: “Survivors Deserve Better. Shelters Deserve Better. Alberta Deserves Better. The 2021-22 ACWS Domestic Violence Shelter Workforce Survey.”

Domestic violence shelters haven’t received a funding increase from the Government of Alberta in 8 years. As inflation rises and a recession looms, shelters are being asked to operate on budgets written for 2015 dollars. It’s unfair to demand shelters operate under these impossible conditions. And the last thing anyone of us wants is to hamper efforts of survivors and their children to live violence free lives.

Despite promises that shelters would receive multi-year contracts and greater flexibility in how dollars are allocated, shelters continue to be asked to make more and more happen with less. After the Government of Alberta announced a $13 billion surplus in 2022, it is unacceptable that shelters remain in this crisis.

Stagnant funding hurts survivors of violence, shelters and their staff, and all Albertans, who bear the social and economic costs of gender-based violence. In 2021-22 alone, shelters were unable to grant over 19,000 requests from survivors for admission, and 10,000 requests to shelter children who would have accompanied them, due to lack of capacity to house them or safely meet their needs. The average wage of domestic violence shelter staff is 15% lower than the wage of the average Albertan, 21% lower than comparable business sector wages, and 33% lower than comparable government wages. Shelters can’t recruit and retain competent staff when they’re being asked to work additional jobs just to make ends meet.

Domestic violence and elder abuse shelters are facing an urgent problem. We need to invest in their work to enable the supports that survivors truly need. Please enact immediate inflationary funding increases that begin in the 2023-24 fiscal year, and to work with shelters to create adequately funded models and contracts in the 2024-25 fiscal year and beyond.

Thank you for your support. I’m counting on your action.

[Your name]