



ACWS



A RIDE CAN SAVE A LIFE

Transporting
Survivors in Rural
Alberta to Safety
and Healing

Overlooking the Livingston Range
Between Nanton and Highway 22

MARCH 2026

Alberta Council of Women's Shelters | acws.ca



Authors: Dr. Miranda Pilipchuk, Wei Ling Goh, and Chantelle Chornohus.

Published by: Alberta Council of Women's Shelters (ACWS)

Suggested Citation: Alberta Council of Women's Shelters (ACWS), *A Ride Can Save a Life: Transporting Survivors in Rural Alberta to Safety and Healing* (2026).

ISBN: 978-1-927125-23-6



Table of Contents

We Are All Treaty People	2
Acknowledgements	3
About ACWS	4
Honouring Survivors	4
Why Is Transportation Important for Survivors	5
Project Impact	7
....Transporting Survivors to Safety	9
....Supporting Survivors' Access to Essential Services	11
....Supporting Survivors Who Need It the Most	15
....Providing Safe, Accessible and Reliable Transportation	17
Recommendations	20
Participating Shelters	22
Endnotes	23



We Are All Treaty People

ACWS acknowledges the traditional lands upon which we live, work, and play. We recognize that all Albertans are Treaty people and have a responsibility to understand our history so that we can learn from the past, be aware of the present, and create a just and caring future. ACWS celebrates and values the resiliency, successes, and teachings that Indigenous Peoples have shown us, as well as the unique contributions of every Albertan.

The ACWS office is located on Treaty 6 land in Amiskwacîwâskahikan, which is the traditional territory of the Plains Cree and an ancient gathering place of many Indigenous Peoples for thousands of years. These lands have also been home to, and a central trading place of the Blackfoot, Nakota, Assiniboine, Dene, the Métis people of western Canada, and the home of one of the largest communities of Inuit south of the 60th parallel.

We honour the courage and strength of Indigenous women. We honour them as life givers and caregivers as we honour and learn from their continuing achievements, their consistent strength, and their remarkable endurance.



Acknowledgments



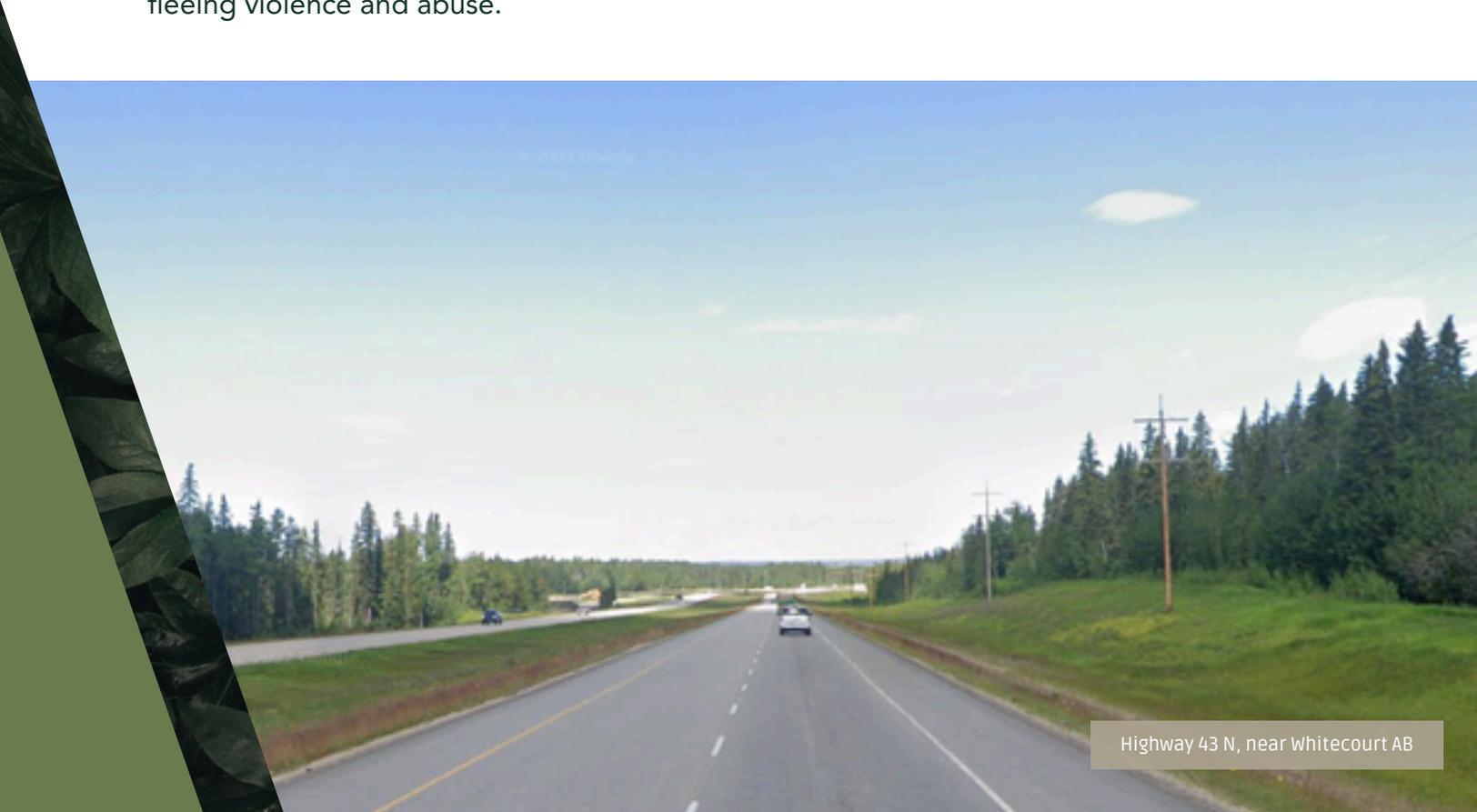
This project was made possible thanks to the generous support of the Government of Alberta Ministry of Children and Family Services.

ACWS offers our deepest thanks to the staff at the domestic violence shelters who collected and shared the information and experiences included in this report.

A special thank you to Matt Bourdot and his team at Driverseat for partnering with ACWS for this project and providing discounted transportation to our members, Rowan House Society and True North, in Southern Alberta.

This report was independently researched and written by ACWS. The report was written by Dr. Miranda Pilipchuk, Wei Ling Goh, and Chantelle Chornohus. Catherine (Cat) Champagne, Hannah Friesen, Alice Leef, Feni Worku, Jennifer Ness and Husna Khaidir made valuable contributions to this project.

Thank you to everyone who contributed to this project, and thank you to the shelters across the province who are providing essential support and advocacy for Albertans fleeing violence and abuse.





About ACWS

A registered charity, the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters (ACWS) is the provincial network organization of domestic violence and elder abuse shelters in Alberta. ACWS supports 43 members operating over 60 shelters across the province for women, their children, and seniors facing domestic violence and abuse. We support our members and work with them to end domestic violence through advocacy, collective data and research, and front-line training. With support from ACWS, Alberta shelters are helping to provide safety, support families, and improve communities.

Honouring Survivors

In consultation with our Survivor Advisory Committee, composed of people with lived experience of domestic violence and abuse, ACWS has chosen to use "survivor" as a term of respect for people currently experiencing or who have experienced violence and abuse. We use it to emphasize their personal power, courage, and resiliency. We recognize that not all people who have experienced domestic violence or abuse identify with the term "survivor," and some people may prefer to describe themselves and their experiences using different terms. No term can adequately describe what it means to have experienced and survived violence and abuse.

Not everyone who experiences domestic violence or abuse survives it. Each year many Albertans tragically lose their lives to domestic violence.

ACWS acknowledges the strength and resiliency of all people who have experienced domestic violence and abuse. It is essential that responses and solutions to domestic violence and abuse are informed by survivors' and their families' expert knowledge and advocacy. We pay the utmost respect to those who have not survived and acknowledge the lasting impacts of this preventable violence on families and communities.

A Note on Scenarios Presented in This Report

Throughout this report, you will find fictional scenarios based on the real experiences that survivors living in rural, remote and northern communities face when trying to access transportation. These scenarios discuss topics including domestic violence that may be triggering for some individuals. If you are in need of support, go to acws.ca/shelters to find a shelter near you.





Why is Transportation Important for Survivors?

A lack of safe, affordable, and reliable transportation is a barrier for all survivors of domestic abuse. However, it is especially difficult for survivors in rural, remote, and northern communities. For survivors in these communities, lack of transportation can prevent them from going to work, looking for a new job, getting their children to school, moving closer to family or support networks or going to medical appointments for themselves and their children. Without transportation, some survivors are forced to quit their jobs. **Other survivors have no choice but to stay in abusive relationships.** In the 2025 Government of Alberta's 10-year Strategy to End Gender-Based Violenceⁱ, people living in northern, rural and remote communities are identified as one of the groups most impacted by gender-based violence, with a lack of access to public transportation cited as one of the factors that can make it difficult for people in these communities to escape abuse. Ensuring that survivors have access to safe transportation is an important part of supporting their safety and empowerment. **Safe, accessible and reliable transportation is essential to ensure all Albertans live free from violence and abuse.**

SCENARIO

You live on a farm with your partner, a 4-hour drive from the nearest city. You have been isolated from your friends and family, and do not have a car, but you know that you need to get away from your partner, who has become extremely abusive and owns a gun. You call the shelter at the nearest city while your partner is gone, and they have a space for you, but you need to get there – and the cab ride is going to cost \$1,600.

Domestic violence and elder abuse shelters in rural, remote and northern communities play an essential role in helping survivors get to safety and supports. However, domestic violence and elder abuse shelters lack funding to provide all the transportation services survivors need. Travel within the province from one community to another can be very costly. If a survivor needs to travel to another province, especially at short notice, to escape their abuser shelters cannot afford the costs. Travel within the community can also be challenging due to a lack of safe, reliable, and affordable public and private transit.





SCENARIO

You moved with your partner to Alberta when you first got married. You didn't know anyone there and quickly became isolated – your partner controlled everything, you didn't have access to a vehicle or money, and you couldn't leave the house without his permission. After years of isolation and abuse, you were able to leave the relationship and access the support services at a domestic violence shelter. Now, you want to return to your home province and community, where you have begun to reconnect with your natural supports, family and friends, but it's going to cost \$600 for you to fly there.

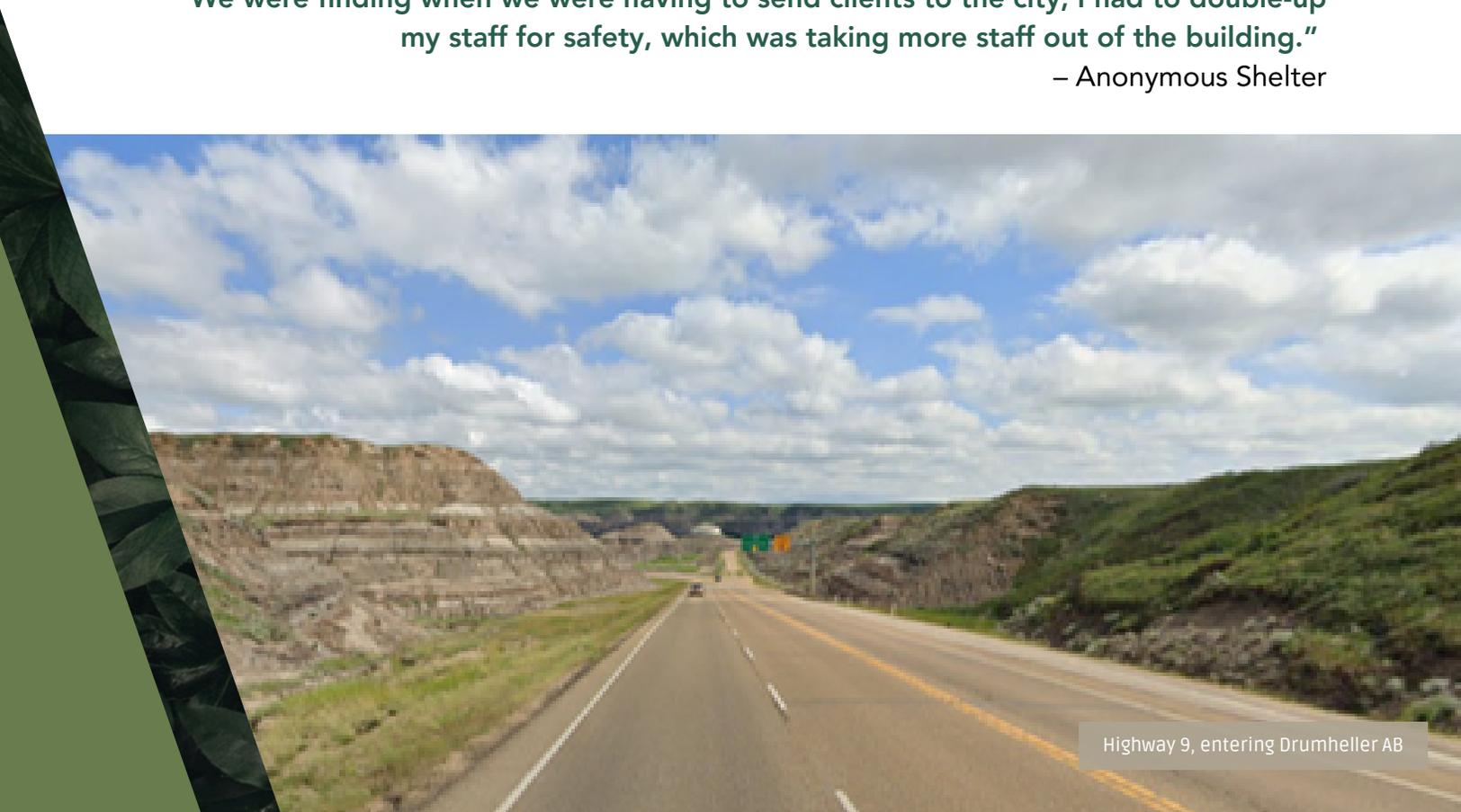
For shelters who own a shelter vehicle and use it to transport their clients, the costs of gas, vehicle maintenance and insurance add up. For survivors' and their staff's safety, it is also often necessary for shelters to have two staff members accompany survivors on longer trips to cities. These additional staffing costs are often invisible, and sometimes impossible for shelters to accommodate.

"If we didn't have access to other means of transportation, we would have to take our shelter vehicle. If you're looking at costs of fuel, costs of wear and tear on the vehicle, the tires, [and] then having two of our staff possibly waiting for an appointment to finish and it could take an hour or two, it's really hard on our budget to sustain that."

– Anonymous Shelter

"We were finding when we were having to send clients to the city, I had to double-up my staff for safety, which was taking more staff out of the building."

– Anonymous Shelter





Project Impact

In response to this urgent need, the Alberta Council of Women’s Shelters piloted the **ACWS Transportation Project, which supported 22 members’ shelters operating in rural, remote, and northern communities to provide safe and accessible transportation to survivors across Alberta.**

Through the Transportation Project, ACWS distributed **over \$113,900 to shelters in rural Alberta that was used to provide safe and accessible transportation to 3,430 survivors (2,087 adults and 1,343 children) over 14 months.**

“Prior to this [Transportation Project], we would have to say no to some of our clients, [they] had to find ways to get to [their] appointments without our help because our vehicle could be picking a client up or taking a client to court [for example], so it’s been a tremendous help.”

– Anonymous Shelter

**This project supported
2,087 adults
1,343 children
over 14 months**

“We used [funds from the Transportation Project] to buy gas cards and it really gave us more flexibility with the support we were giving families ... Sometimes people come with their own vehicle and they don’t have money for gas ... sometimes our staff would transport [clients] and they would take a gas card ... It really saved us on mileage costs.”

– Anonymous Shelter



Trans Canada Highway, between Hinton and Jasper AB



Service Spotlight: Driverseat

As part of the Driverseat community-specific pilot project, **two ACWS member shelters partnered with Driverseat to provide chartered taxi services to survivors**. Through their discounted services, **Driverseat donated a total of \$10,850 to shelters**.

“[Partnering with Driverseat has] been a huge game changer, it’s provided a lot of accessibility for our clients. We would have never been able to support the amount of immigration and medical [appointments], and housing, and so on ... it’s been quite a huge, beautiful process for us to experience and see the clients be grateful for that ... and they just love the support they are getting ... It’s nerve wracking to think in the future once this is over to have to go back to the status quo as it was before.”

– Anonymous Shelter

“Although my official tie-in was through ACWS, it was truly the on-the-ground connections with True North and Rowan House that made this experience so meaningful for me. The people there are absolute rock stars, and being able to support them—even in a small way—felt like the kind of work that actually matters.”

– Matt Bourdot, owner of Driverseat



With funds from the ACWS Transportation Project, shelters were able to support survivors **finding safety** and **accessing essential services** without the added burden of securing and covering the cost of transportation.



Transporting Survivors to Safety

Survivors are more likely to experience increased violence or to be killed by their abusive partners when they leave the relationshipⁱⁱ, making it crucial that survivors have access to safe and reliable transportation services to reach shelters and ensure safety. **Ensuring survivors arrive safely to shelters in their community (~7%) or to another shelter (~3%) were the third and fourth most common reason that shelters cited for using this project's funds.**

"For shelter staff, it's important to be able to supply travel costs as opposed to referring the client to [other social programs and funding sources]. When clients are referred somewhere else, the staff aren't made aware if the client is supported and often worries if the client makes it there safely."

– Anonymous Shelter

SCENARIO

You live in a small town and have found safety at the local shelter, but your abuser found out that you were at the shelter and is threatening the safety of you and your children. You have to get out of this town and away from your abuser. Your shelter support workers help find a space for you and your children at a shelter that is a 3-hour drive away in the city nearest to you. However, there isn't a bus that runs through your town to the city and to take a cab there will cost \$950.

Shelters also use transportation services to help survivors move to places where they are safe from their abusers, or where they are closer to their support system. **This is especially important in crisis situations, when survivors might need immediate help to escape danger. Being able to access funds through the Transportation Project allowed shelters to offer prompt, life-saving transportation for survivors.**

"[The abuser] started showing up [to our shelter] and then he showed up threatening to murder staff [and] to drag her out of the house. It got really bad. So once he came and made the threat we were able to get [the client and their family] out of here within 45 minutes and on the way to [another community] ... [Access to transportation services through the Transportation Project] kept that family safe. It kept our staff safe because once she was removed from the community, we've never heard from him again."

– Anonymous Shelter





“We felt it was safest for everyone if the family went to a different shelter as [her] abuser was actively looking [for her and her family], had access to guns and access to transportation. Client had left on previous occasions, but this was the first time she had taken the children.”

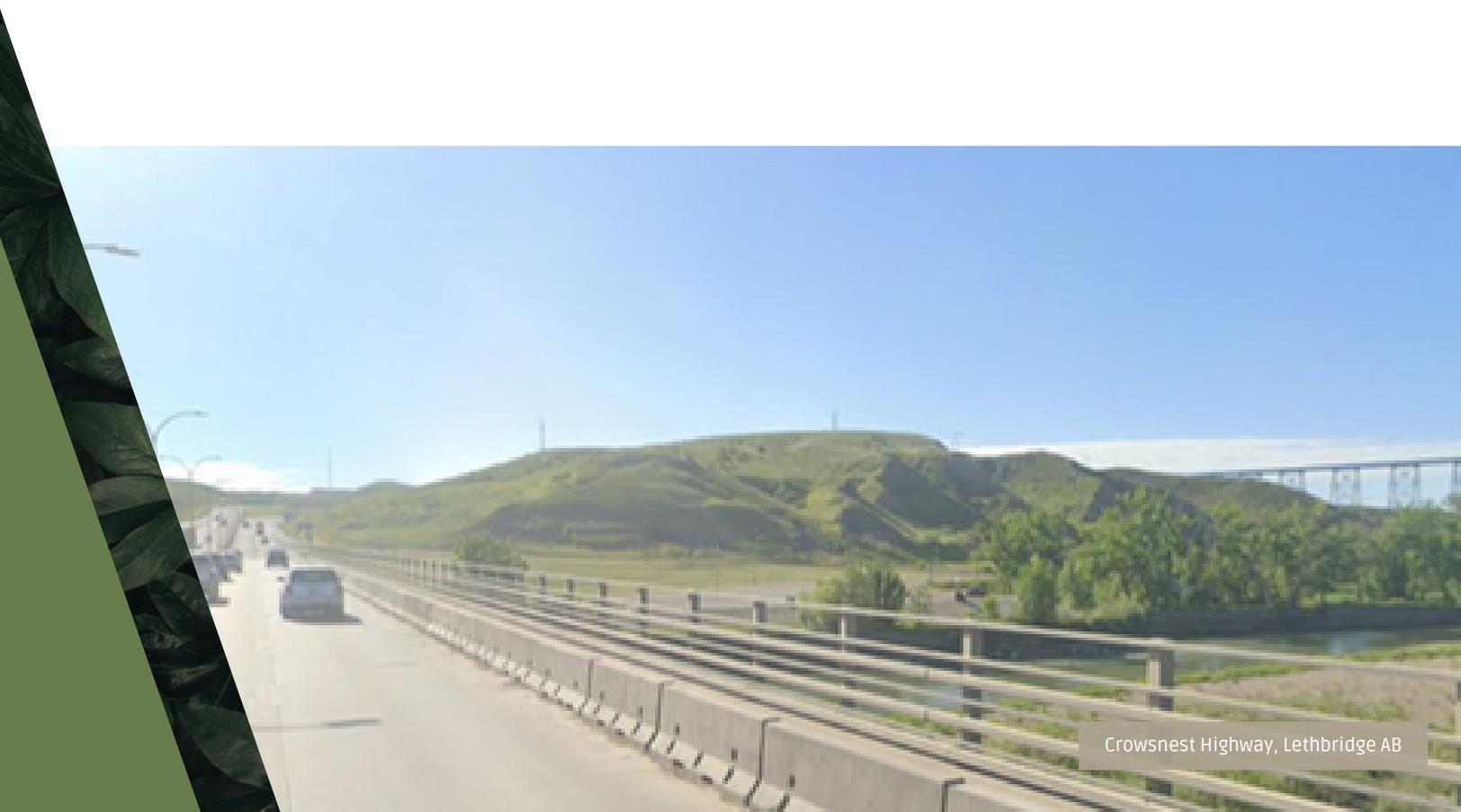
– Anonymous Shelter

“We got her out of a situation where she could have been killed... We couldn't have done it without the Transportation Project.”

-Anonymous Shelter

“Without [the funds from the Transportation Project] it is not likely we would have had the financial means to send her [to her destination] as the flights (being last minute) were quite pricey. We knew that if we did not send her quickly her abuser would convince her to return.”

– Anonymous Shelter





Supporting Survivors' Access to Essential Services

SCENARIO

You have been living in an emergency shelter in your small town for the past week and you are experiencing health issues that will require you to travel to the nearest urban center, a 1.5 hour drive away, for multiple appointments each week. There used to be a bus that ran through your town to the city, but it now only operates twice a week, so your only option is to take a cab – costing \$200 each way, \$400 a day. The shelter has a vehicle, but the shelter is short-staffed and over-capacity and cannot spare the required two staff members to drive you to every appointment.

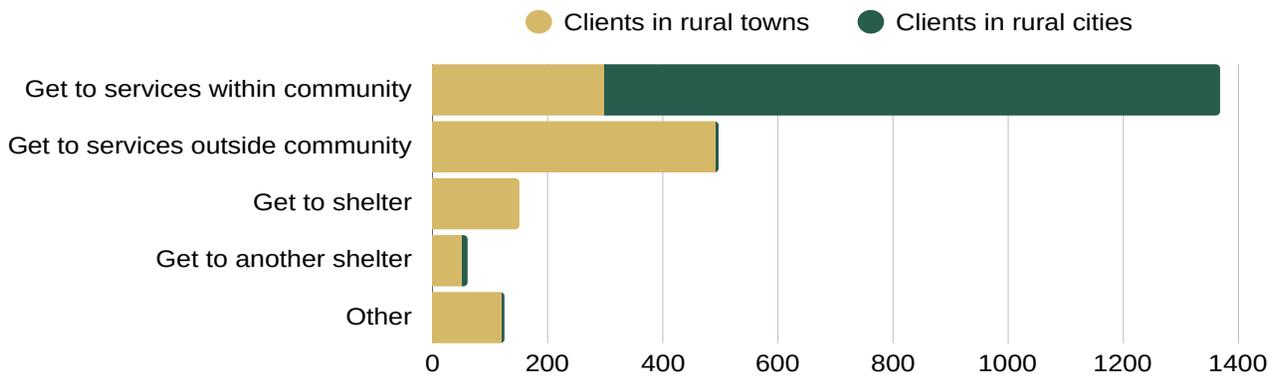
Domestic violence harms survivors' physical well-being, mental well-being, safety, finances, housing and employment.ⁱⁱⁱ Many of these harms are long-term but can be mitigated with prompt access to essential services and supportive social programs. Early access to comprehensive, wraparound services has been shown to improve the outcomes of survivors in shelters.^{iv}

Shelters were most likely to use funds from the Transportation Project to connect survivors to essential services within their community (62%) and outside their community (23%). The top three essential services that survivors accessed using the project funds were basic needs (groceries, pharmacy, etc.) (34%), medical care (15%) and mental wellness supports (14%).



98% of survivors located in rural, remote or northern Alberta cities used funds from the Transportation Project to connect to essential services within their community. Survivors located in rural, remote or northern Alberta towns used the funds for a greater variety of reasons, including to get to essential services outside the community, to travel to the shelter or to transfer to another shelter.

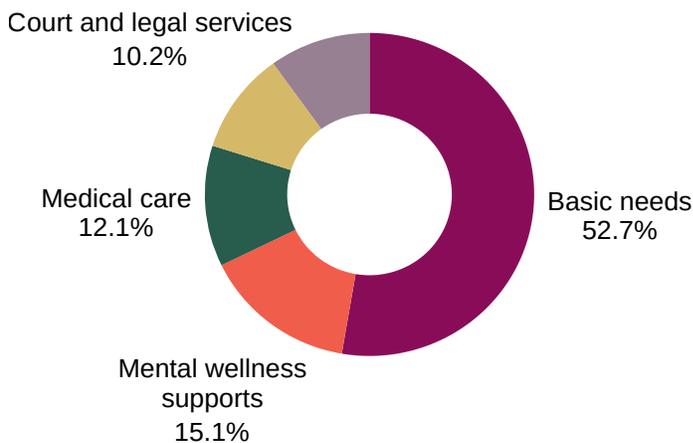
98% of survivors located in rural, remote or northern Alberta cities used funds from the project to connect to services within their community. Survivors located in rural, remote or northern Alberta towns used the funds for a greater variety of reasons.



Essential Services Within Communities

Within communities, shelters most often used transportation to support survivors to get to basic needs (e.g. grocery, pharmacy, etc.) (53%). Shelters also used funds from the project to transport survivors to mental wellness supports (15%) and medical care (12%), all of which are essential to ensure the overall wellbeing of survivors.

Within communities, transportation was most commonly used by shelters to support survivors to get to basic needs (e.g. grocery, pharmacy, etc.).



“The requests for travel included many within our community to access [the] food bank [and] medical [care]. This was impactful for those clients that had a long distance to walk with food bank items and they needed support.”
– Anonymous Shelter



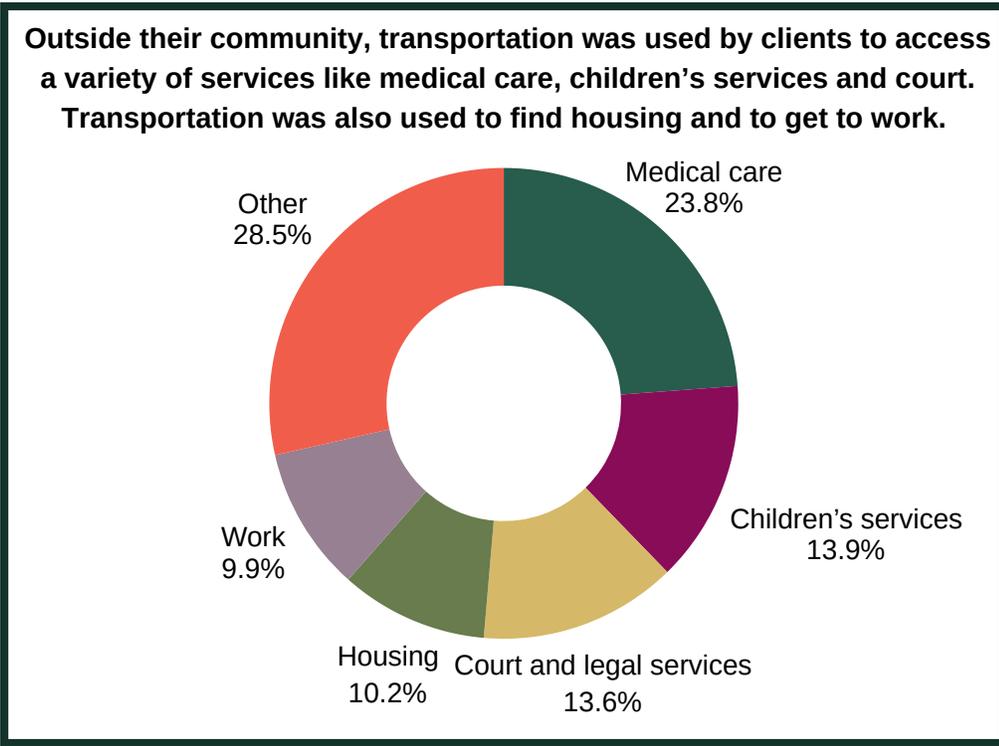
Essential Services Outside Communities

Survivors may access shelters in rural, remote, or northern Alberta communities because it is the only safe place they can go. However, some rural, remote or northern Alberta communities do not have all the services needed by survivors within their community. After their arrival, survivors in these communities often must travel to larger towns or cities nearby to access essential services. It can get costly for shelters to transport survivors to these services that are crucial for their wellbeing.

“Court cases and so on would be in the nearby city, so [clients] do need transportation to get there ... We do provide transportation, and it can be very expensive.”
– Anonymous Shelter

Outside their communities, survivors used funds from the Transportation Project to access a wide variety of services like medical care (24%), children’s services (14%) and court (14%). They also used it to find housing (10%) and to get to work (10%).

Survivors were able to receive urgent or ongoing medical care when there were no doctors available in their community. Survivors were also able to get their children to daycare or to school, as well as attend court appointments to get an Emergency Protection Order (EPO), attend custody hearings, and access legal services. The project also supported survivors to view housing units or rentals in nearby towns or cities, or to transport them to their new homes.





"[The Transportation Project is] keeping people alive, keeping people out of homelessness, keeping people off the streets and especially in northern Alberta, when ... our staff actually have to transport [clients] or we have to hire a taxi to get them to [the nearest larger town or city]... [Each ride costs] \$250 so [this project] is huge. It really added to our budget and allowed us to make those decisions that were crucial in supporting those clients to move on and transition to much more successful situations."

– Anonymous Shelter

SCENARIO

You left your abusive relationship two months ago and have been living in a women's shelter since then. With the help of the shelter workers, you've found a full-time job, a huge step. But, there is no public transit in the town, you do not have a car, and you would have to walk across a busy highway and up a steep hill to get to your workplace from the shelter. You have no choice but to take a cab to and from work each day, which costs \$25 each way – that's \$250 a week, a significant portion of your paycheque.

Survivors also need transportation to go to job interviews, and to transit to and from their job each day. Multiple shelters shared success stories that they were able to use this funding to support survivors relocating to other communities where they had found a job, to support their transportation to job interviews and/or their daily commute to and from work. This project allowed survivors to rebuild their lives through regular employment and to work towards economic and financial independence. Empowering women to be economically independent is a key strategic priority identified in the Government of Alberta's 10-year Strategy to End Gender-Based Violence.^v Investing in accessible and affordable transportation in northern, rural and remote communities is essential to remove barriers that can make it more difficult for women and survivors in these communities to achieve economic independence.

"The taxi was used numerous times this month to transport a client from shelter to her place of work which was quite a distance from [the] shelter ... the transport paid by [the] shelter allowed her to keep her job, save money for her transition into her own place and to stay in [our community] which is a safer location for her."

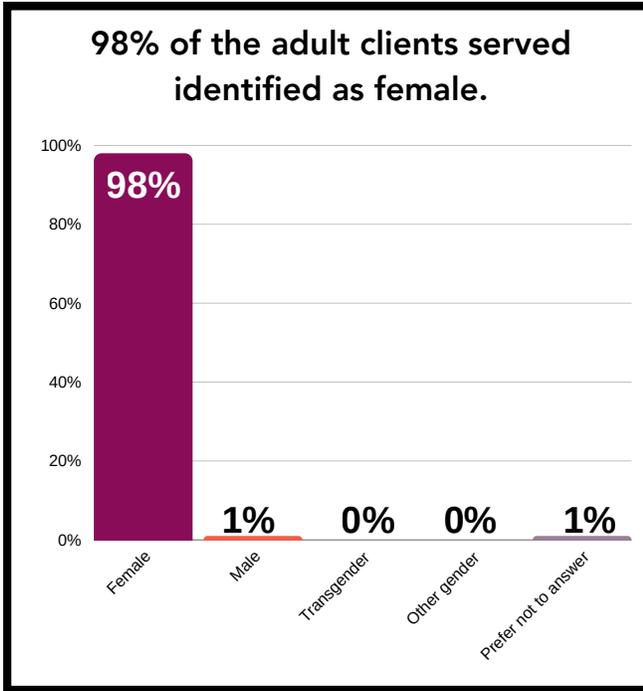
– Anonymous Shelter



Supporting Survivors Who Need It The Most

By Gender

The majority of adult survivors who this project supported identified as female (98%). 1% identified as male and the remaining 1% preferred not to answer.^{vi}



Compared to men, women in Canada have more complex transportation needs.^{vii} They continue to be disproportionately responsible for caregiving duties while also participating in the workforce.^{viii} This results in women being more likely to link multiple types of trips together to complete tasks with limited amounts of time.^{ix}

Accessible public transit and flexible private-hire drivers are key to supporting survivors who identify as women.

“Just being able to have Driverseat be part of that [housing search] process [with our clients] ... and spend that journey with them as they were looking for places and planning for their next steps of their journey was key.”

– Anonymous Shelter



Trans-Canada Hwy between Canmore and Banff AB



By Demographic

Survivors from equity deserving groups experience additional barriers to accessing safe transportation.

Six in ten (61%) Indigenous women experience some form of intimate partner violence in their lifetime, which is considerably higher than the proportion of non-Indigenous, non-visible minority women (44%).^x The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls identified a lack of adequate and safe transportation as one of the safety risks Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people experience.^{xi} Access to transportation is a crucial strategy for reducing risk and increasing safety for Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people.

“We call upon all governments to ensure that adequate plans and funding are put into place for safe and affordable transit and transportation services and infrastructure for Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people living in remote or rural communities.”

– Calls for Justice for All Governments: Human Security 4.8, *National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls*^{xii}

Shelters shared that survivors who are newcomers to Canada are more likely to experience language barriers and discrimination while using transportation services. They are also more likely to be unfamiliar with the area and local transit systems.

Trauma-informed taxi services have been a great help for shelters providing transportation services to survivors who identify as newcomers to Canada.

SCENARIO

You immigrated to a small town in Alberta a year ago and are still learning English. You are staying in the local domestic violence shelter after fleeing your abusive partner, and you have to go to the other side of the town for a doctor’s appointment. The shelter arranges for a cab to take you to the appointment, but the cab won’t wait for you to finish your appointment unless you or the shelter cover the costs of waiting on top of driving you to and from your appointment. You are scared that if the cab leaves you won’t be able to find your way back to the shelter, you aren’t familiar with the town and the local transit system, and your limited experience with English makes it even harder for you to call a cab or find the correct bus route. You’re also scared that your abuser might find you if you get lost in the town.





“Especially with our newcomer families that we support, there’s lots of language barriers [and] I think [being able to pay taxi companies to wait for clients while they are at their appointments] provided them with a greater sense of safety.”

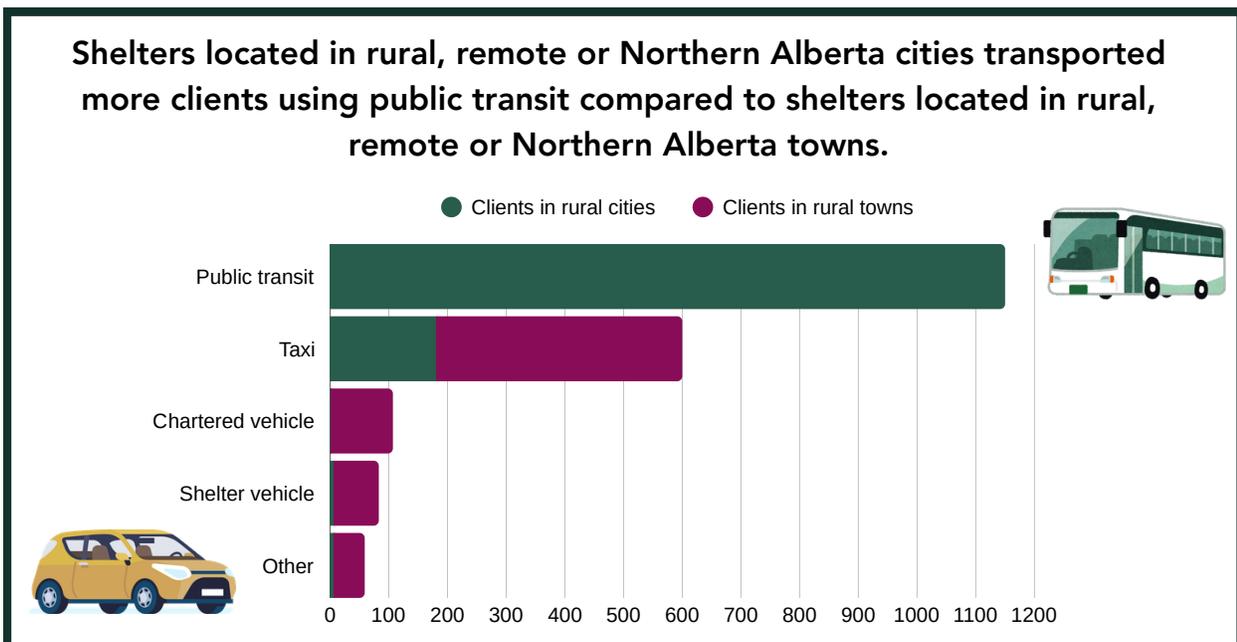
– Anonymous Shelter

This project allowed ACWS and our members to address the transportation barriers that survivors from equity deserving groups experience and to increase their access to safe and reliable transportation. **76% of survivors supported through the project were from equity deserving groups.**

76% of survivors supported through the Transportation Project were from equity deserving groups.

Providing Safe, Accessible and Reliable Transportation

Shelters in rural, remote or northern Alberta cities transported more survivors using public transit, compared to shelters located in rural, remote or northern Alberta towns. In rural, remote or northern Alberta towns, shelters transported all of their clients using private motor vehicles like taxis, chartered vehicles or shelter vehicles.





Shelters shared that there is a lack of accessible and reliable public transit infrastructure in many rural, remote and northern Alberta communities. In many of these communities, walking or taking a cab are the only options for survivors and their children to get to appointments, work, school, and amenities to meet their basic needs. These findings align with current research which shows that only 1.7% of female workers living in rural communities in Canada use public transit to get to work, compared to 20.7% in large cities.^{xi} However, walking is not always accessible or safe, and cab rides are financially inaccessible both for survivors and the shelter.

“Because there’s no public transportation in [our town]... I think it makes it particularly hard on a family that’s just coming out of an emergency shelter and then they’re having to walk in the cold to their job.”
– Anonymous Shelter

“Not having public transportation impacts all of us... we’re the hub community so all of the [surrounding] smaller communities need to access us, but they can’t access us because we don’t have a bus system.”
-Anonymous Shelter

Even when taxis or chartered vehicles are used, shelters shared that some taxi services in rural, remote or northern communities do not operate 24/7, creating barriers to transporting survivors, especially in emergencies over the weekend or at night.

Many shelters also identified safety concerns for survivors accessing local taxi services. Survivors had reported experiencing harassment, sexual solicitation, discrimination, and other negative experiences with taxi drivers. Shelters are often unable to avoid these situations due to a lack of alternative transportation options in their communities.

“Even though we have been using the same taxi company, we have had issues with [the drivers not] being compassionate or trauma-informed... especially when picking someone up to bring them into shelter, they just have not been accommodating and really not made our clients feel safe.”
– Anonymous Shelter

“It’s really disheartening when you have someone calling you on the phone and they’re crying because a taxi driver hasn’t come to pick [them] up or they’re late and they’re trying to leave a dangerous situation, or [the taxi driver is] telling [them] to leave [their] bags.”
– Anonymous Shelter



Many shelters provide safety planning to survivors when they use taxi services. While this results in greater safety for survivors during transportation, more staff time is being taken away from other shelter services to try and keep survivors safe when accessing transportation.

Fortunately, **strong partnerships with local taxi and ride-hailing companies can help shelters mitigate these safety concerns.**

“We had a situation where we had to transport a woman into [a social services organization in a large city] and the cab driver who took her there actually could have just dropped her and drove away, but chose not to do that ... [The cab driver] actually got out and made sure she was connected to whoever she needed to be connected to before he left.”

– Anonymous Shelter

Service Spotlight: WomenFirst

“Safety does not begin at the shelter door; it begins the moment a woman decides to leave. At WomenFirst, we protect women on both sides of the ride by creating a service built for safety and a workplace where women drive without fear or pressure. By supporting all-female drivers and survivor-informed practices, we help ensure that every journey for riders and for drivers is rooted in trust, dignity, and care.”

– Angelika Urich, Founder/Owner of WomenFirst, Inc.

“We set up an account with our local taxi company, so they have a pool of money sitting there when we need [their services] ... It works really well. It’s just seamless and they respond very, very quickly and are really good allies.”

– Anonymous Shelter

Drivers from Driverseat also proactively attended trauma-informed training hosted by one of the shelters, and were able to provide compassionate, flexible, survivor-centered transportation services.

“Driverseat will wait there till the [client’s] appointment is done, so that way, there is no worries about getting another cab and what that would look like, and they were there waiting to support the individual.”

– Anonymous Shelter



Recommendations

Based on promising practices and barriers identified through this project, we have developed a list of recommendations for all levels of government, taxi and transportation services, and the public to ensure that every Albertan is able to access the life-saving services provided by shelters in rural, remote and northern communities.

Recommendations to improve access to transportation for survivors:

1. Establish accessible and affordable public transportation in rural Alberta.

The lack of public transportation infrastructure is a significant barrier identified by shelters in rural, remote and northern communities. In their 2025 10-year Strategy to End Gender-Based Violence^{xiv}, the Government of Alberta has similarly identified that without access to public transportation, it can be difficult for people living in rural, remote and northern communities to escape abuse. **Investing in safe, accessible and affordable public transportation infrastructure within and between rural communities, as well as between rural communities and nearby cities is an effective long-term strategy that keeps survivors safe and allows them to begin rebuilding their lives.**

2. Provide long-term and flexible transportation funding for shelters.

When shelters are provided with long-term and flexible funding for transportation, they can provide sustained transportation services for their clients using a shelter vehicle or by covering the costs of public transportation or taxi services. The short-term funding provided by the provincial government for this project helped to temporarily reduce some of the transportation barriers shelters and survivors face. However, **without sustained funding to continue this work, shelters are no longer able to provide survivors with access to the same amount of life-changing transportation services.** For example, the shelters that utilized Driverseat's services to fill gaps in transportation access and increase safety for their clients are no longer able to afford their services without increased long-term funding.

Many shelters also indicated a **need for more flexibility in provincial funding and grant agreements** to allow for the reallocation of funding to support transportation when needed, so that shelters can use this funding to best serve their community's needs. Broadening eligible expenses to include vehicle insurance, maintenance, gas, etc. allows shelters to use funding to cover the costs of owning and operating a shelter vehicle and would increase a shelter's ability to provide essential transportation for clients and staff, as well as provide more outreach and prevention support in their communities.



3. Introduce token systems for local taxi services and/or public transportation.

Some shelters have a token system or standing account with their local municipalities for public transportation and/or with local taxi companies. When partnering with local taxi companies, shelters typically pay a discounted rate or receive a number of free rides that their clients can use. This enhances support for survivors in shelter by reducing the amount of staff time needed to arrange travel logistics and transportation payments. **Local municipalities and local taxi companies should consider implementing token systems or standing accounts to better support survivors within their communities.**

4. Municipalities should implement mandatory gender-based violence training for licensed taxi companies, public transportation providers, and ride-hailing services operating in their communities.

By embedding gender-based violence awareness training into municipal licensing, contracting, and transportation oversight processes, municipalities, as leaders in community safety, can help ensure drivers understand what gender-based violence looks like and how to provide safe, supportive transportation for all riders. Companies such as DriverSeat and WomenFirst demonstrate how transportation services can work alongside local shelters to better meet survivors' needs in all aspects of transportation.

How YOU can help

There are many ways people can help improve access to services for survivors in their communities and support domestic violence and elder abuse shelters in Alberta.

1. **ADVOCATE** for transportation needs to be addressed and increased funding to shelters in rural, remote and northern communities. Contact your municipal and provincial government representatives and ask them to prioritize implementing these recommendations in your communities.
2. **VOLUNTEER** as a community driver for your local domestic violence or elder abuse shelter.
3. **PARTICIPATE** in gender-based violence and domestic violence awareness training. Ask your local shelter about the training they can provide to help you build confidence and skills to respond to domestic violence in your workplace and your community, and support those experiencing domestic violence in a safe way.
4. **DONATE** to your local domestic violence or elder abuse shelter so they can continue to ensure survivors have access to shelter and life-saving services whenever and wherever they need them.
5. **SUPPORT** businesses like Driverseat and WomenFirst that have committed to providing safe and reliable transportation services to their communities and local shelters. Encourage your local transportation service providers to do the same.



Participating Shelters

Thank you to the sheltering organizations who contributed data and participated in focus groups to inform this report.

- Big Hill Haven (Cochrane, AB)
- Camrose Women's Shelter Society (Camrose, AB)
- Cantara Safe House (Brooks, AB)
- Capella Centre (St Paul, AB)
- Crossroads Resource Centre (Fairview, AB)
- Grande Cache Transition House Society (Grande Cache, AB)
- Hope Haven Society (Lac La Biche, AB)
- Jessica Martel Memorial Foundation (Morinville, AB)
- Medicine Hat Women's Shelter Society (Medicine Hat, AB)
- Mountain Rose Women's Shelter Association (Rocky Mountain House, AB)
- Odyssey House (Grande Prairie, AB)
- Peace River Regional Women's Shelter Society (Peace River, AB)
- Pincher Creek Women's Emergency Shelter Association (Pincher Creek, AB)
- Rowan House Society (High River, AB)
- Safe Home (High Level, AB)
- SPARK Foundation of Lloydminster (Lloydminster, AB)
- Stepping Stones Crisis Society (Cold Lake, AB)
- Taber Safe Haven Women's Shelter (Taber, AB)
- True North (Strathmore, AB)
- Waypoints Community Services Association (Fort McMurray, AB)
- Yellowhead Emergency Shelter for Women Society (Hinton, AB)
- YWCA of Lethbridge & District (Lethbridge, AB)



Endnotes

ⁱGovernment of Alberta Arts, Culture and Status of Women, Building on our Strengths: Alberta's 10-year Strategy to End Gender-Based Violence, May 2025, ISBN 978-1-4601-6166-1, <https://open.alberta.ca/publications/albertas-10-year-strategy-to-end-gender-based-violence>

ⁱⁱDouglas A. Brownridge, et al., "The Elevated Risk of Non-Lethal Post-Separation Violence in Canada: A Comparison of Separated, Divorced, and Married Women," *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 23, no 1 (2008): 117-135, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260507307914>; Douglas A. Brownridge, "Violence Against Women Post-Separation," *Aggression and Violent Behavior* 11 (2006): 514-530, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.avb.2006.01.009>; Holly Johnson and Tina Hotton, "Losing Control: Homicide Risk in Estranged and Intact Intimate Relationships," *Homicide Studies* 7, no. 1 (2003): 58-84, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1088767902239243>.

ⁱⁱⁱLoraine J Bacchus, Meghna Ranganathan, Charlotte Watts, and Karen Devries, "Recent Intimate Partner Violence Against Women and Health: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of Cohort Studies," *BMJ Open* 28, no 7 (2018): e019995, <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2017-019995>; Christian A. Chisholm, Linda Bullock, and James E. Ferguson II, "Intimate Partner Violence and Pregnancy: Epidemiology and Impact," *American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology* 217, no. 2 (2017): 141-144, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ajog.2017.05.042>; Gunnur Karakurt, Douglas Smith, and Jason Whiting, "Impact of Intimate Partner Violence on Women's Mental Health," *Journal of Family Violence* 29 (2014): 693-702, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10896-014-9633-2>; Sarah Shea Crowne, Hee-Soon Juon, Margaret Ensminger, Lori Burrell, and Anne Duggan, "Concurrent and Long-Term Impact of Intimate Partner Violence on Employment Stability," *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 26, no. 6 (2011): 1282- 1304, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260510368160>; Belén Sanz-Barbero, Natalia Barón, and Carmen Vives-Cases, "Prevalence, Associated Factors and Health Impact of Intimate Partner Violence Against Women in Different Life Stages," *PLOS ONE* 14, no. 10 (2019), <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0221049>; N. N. Sarkar, "The Impact of Intimate Partner Violence on Women's Reproductive Health and Pregnancy Outcomes," *American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology* 28, no. 3 (2008): 266-271, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01443610802042415>.

^{iv}Seivwright, Ami, Leanne Lester, and Paul Flatau. 2025. "Service Pathways and Outcomes of Holistic Programs Supporting Women Experiencing Intimate Partner Violence." *Australian Social Work*, June, 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0312407X.2025.2501262>.

^vGovernment of Alberta Arts, Culture and Status of Women, Building on our Strengths: Alberta's 10-year Strategy to End Gender-Based Violence, May 2025, ISBN 978-1-4601-6166-1, <https://open.alberta.ca/publications/albertas-10-year-strategy-to-end-gender-based-violence>

^{vi}It is important to note that the data collected from the claims may not adequately represent the experiences of queer, trans and gender non-conforming survivors of domestic violence and abuse. Clients belonging to the 2SLGBTQQIA community who utilized shelter transportation services may not have felt comfortable sharing their gender identity due to the on-going systemic discrimination and stigmatization experienced by members of the 2SLGBTQQIA community.

^{vii}Emily Gris , Genevi ve Boisjoly, Priyanka Babbar, Joseph Peace and David Cooper, Understanding and Responding to the Transit Needs of Women in Canada, January 2022, <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/57b25a1d579fb3a225546f2e/t/61f60fc732982f3789c5741d/1643521217247/finalreport.pdf>.



^{viii}Ibid.

^{ix}Ibid.

^xAdam Cotter, "Intimate Partner Violence: Experiences of Visible Minority Women in Canada," *Juristat*, 41, no 1 (2021), <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2021001/article/00008-eng.htm>.

^{xi}National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, *Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, Volume 1a*, 2019, mmiwg-ffada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Final_Report_Vol_1a-1.pdf.

^{xii}Calls for Justice for All Governments: Human Security 4.8, National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, *Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, Volume 1a*, 2019, mmiwg-ffada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Final_Report_Vol_1a-1.pdf.

^{xiii}Gabriella Christopher, Aviroop Biswas, Justin J. Lang and Stephanie A. Prince, "Occupational and Sex Differences in Active Commuting among Canadian Workers from 2006 to 2016", *Health Reports*, 35, no. 9, (2024), <https://www.doi.org/10.25318/82-003-x202400900001-eng>.



ACWS

ALBERTA COUNCIL OF
WOMEN'S SHELTERS

For more information, visit our website at acws.ca