

**Diverse Voices Family Violence Conference
November 22, 2012 - Fantasyland Hotel, Edmonton
Hon Dave Hancock, Minister, Human Services**

Thank you. Good morning everyone.

I am pleased to be here with you today.

As we would all agree, violence in all its forms is unacceptable regardless of the relationship between the perpetrator and the victim.

However, one of the worst kinds of violence is that which occurs within relationships of trust.

We all know – and many of us have seen first-hand – violence within close relationships can have devastating effects, if we are silent and don't act to stop it.

But that kind of violence is fully preventable.

I want to thank the conference organizers for bringing this group together to share their expertise and best practices when it comes to preventing and responding to family violence.

And I want to thank you all for attending and being open to learning more so you can help others.

This is the key to making lasting change – a group of dedicated people, working together to learn more and to help more.

As you well know, family violence is a complex issue. Leaving a partner, even one who is abusive is difficult.

Family violence is also pervasive.

It can happen to anyone, of any age, culture or demographic.

And it is costly. The human cost is immeasurable.

But it also strains our public systems – health, police and social services all carry the burden.

We are all here today because family violence is one more thing – it is preventable.

We can stop it before it starts if we work together.

I am here to tell you that I, and my ministry staff, share your commitment to supporting Albertans.

We have built a solid foundation of protection and intervention measures.

Last year at this time, I talked about the new amendment to the *Protection Against Family Violence Act*.

We added offense and penalty provisions to help ensure more consistent enforcement of Protection Order breaches.

Since then, over 500 charges have been laid.

Now, we are embarking on a new strategy that will strengthen our focus on prevention.

I believe we can find more effective ways of engaging individuals and communities to change attitudes so that no form of violence is ever considered acceptable behaviour.

We need to stop family violence before it starts by promoting healthy relationships.

That means addressing everything from bullying at school to dating violence in young adult populations.

Government has hosted two webcasts this month, one on recognizing and preventing dating violence and the other on cyberbullying.

The response to both events was overwhelmingly positive.

We must continue to work to educate girls... boys... adults... everyone, about the signs of violence, the resources available for dealing with it and paths to change.

Your themes of youth and technology reflect the importance of addressing the effect technology has on young people's relationships.

I think we can put our technology to better use, and use it as a way to reach out.

The more we talk about healthy relationships, the more we can empower our youth to recognize and stop destructive relationship patterns.

Family violence really does affect us all.

And so it will take the whole community, in all its diversity, to stop and prevent family violence.

We can do better – and we will do better.

My sincere thanks to all of you for your dedication to improving the lives of people who have been touched by family violence.

I wish you an inspiring conference.

Thank you.