

## Check Against Delivery

### **Sexual Assault Centres and Family Violence Shelters – Budget Increases**

**June 11, 2014, Edmonton**

**Honourable Manmeet S. Bhullar, Minister, Human Services**

Good morning and thank you for being here.

Sexual abuse and family violence are serious issues affecting our communities.

In 2011, there were nearly 3,000 sexual assaults reported in the province.

But the actual number may be significantly higher as only 1 out of 10 sexual assaults is reported to police.

That's why it's so important that victims know they will be supported when they report an assault; that they won't be judged or shamed.

As a government and as a society, victims need to know that we are there for them and that they have our support.

To combat these issues, we are adding new supports that will go a long way towards ensuring better access to these resources:

- \$2 million in new funding will go to our partner sexual assault centres across Alberta, bringing our total commitment to \$4 million annually.
- This will help shorten wait lists so victims get the help they need when they need it.
- And it means more staff to improve access in rural areas.
- An additional \$4 million will go to women's emergency shelters for more operational support in high needs areas of the province to address greater demand for shelter spaces and services.
- This means 70 more emergency beds and more outreach workers to support victims.
- Associate Minister Jansen will be telling you more about that.

Our goal with this investment is to ensure that victims and their families get the help they need;

That agencies have the support to hire staff and offer the best programs possible;

And that the staff are trained in best practices to deliver those services.

As you know, combatting child sexual abuse is a top priority for me and our government.

Over the past 10 years, half of all sexual assaults were experienced by children 12 and under.

That's why we held a forum last month - to have experts and Albertans come together to find solutions to end child sexual abuse – the first of its kind in Alberta.

Today's announcement is a continuation of that effort to end the exploitation of vulnerable children.

It also supports our five point plan to improve the child intervention system. Sexual abuse is one of the root causes that bring children into care.

This funding will allow us to improve our response to child sexual abuse by increasing the availability of services.

Agencies will use this new support to help more children than ever before.

Children are also deeply affected when they witness violence between their parents or other caring adults in their lives.

They may become fearful and anxious, believing that the world is a dangerous place.

It can affect their emotional well-being and development, and even continue that cycle of violence from living in an abusive environment.

The more support we can give to the shelters that help victims, the sooner children can begin to heal and regain lives of peace and happiness.

Family violence and sexual abuse are complex issues and to see success, we need everyone's participation and dedication.

I want to thank everyone who is doing this difficult work, and I look forward to continuing our partnership with you.