



How much Government Funding do Women's Shelters receive in Alberta?

Highlights:

- The Alberta Coalition of Women's Shelters (ACWS) lists 43 locations in our province.
- Financial info on nine (mostly on First Nations reserves) was unavailable.
- Governments gave \$44mln to the remaining 34 shelters.
- The Province was the largest donor at \$34mln or 79% of the total, followed by Municipal Governments at \$5mln and the Feds at \$4mln.
- Some argue these organizations do more than just Emergency Shelter services.
- For resources dedicated **only** to shelter services – Governments provided \$27mln.
- The Province was still the biggest contributor at \$22mln or 80% of the total.
- Municipal Governments and the Feds followed at about \$3mln* each.
- Only one ACWS shelter (Strathmore) admits Men or Boys over 12yo with Mom.
- 6216 Women were admitted to shelters for stays of 1-33 days duration in 2010.
- Yet ACWS trumpets every year the thousands of "turn-aways" as proof of a DV epidemic.
- It could be these desperate women are not about to lie about their families just for a bed.
- There are other questions about exactly what value these shelters are providing.
- **Governments gave Women's Shelters in Alberta between \$27mln and \$44mln in 2010 – and likely much more.**
- **The tax burden per Albertan was \$12 for each man, women and child in 2010.**
- **Each shelter visit cost \$4,534 for duration of 1-33 days.**

**Some figures are rounded and may appear not to add. See data sources for details.*

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How much Government Funding do Women's Shelters receive in Alberta?

Last summer, Earl Silverman and I discussed where to find data about the finances of Women's Shelters in Alberta. Earl was researching the business case for his MASH 4077 Men's Shelter in Calgary as he wanted to better understand operating costs. He was happy when I told him the data was publicly available in the CRA charitable database (Canada Revenue Agency at www.cra-arc.gc.ca). Sadly, it took me some time to get around to this project and I only received the data CD from CRA a week before Earl took his life.

The *Alberta Council of Women's Shelters* (ACWS) website (www.acws.ca) lists¹ 43 Emergency Women's Shelters across the province. As some locations had more than one charity associated with them (such as a foundation and an operating group) I was able to find data at CRA for 44 distinct groups representing 34 members of the ACWS. Nine organizations (21% or 9/43) did not have charity status and so I was unable to collect data for these locations. But most of these were located on First Nation Reserves and are funded through Band-offices who receive direct support from Federal/Provincial Health and Social Services Ministry's.

To calculate the amount of Government support we simply totalled² the financial data for FY2010 (see raw calculations in PDF file "2013 May - ACWS Data Output"). From **Table 1 - Summary of Alberta Coalition of Women's Shelters Combined Financial Data**, we can see that all levels of Government contributed \$43.6 million to these Women's Shelters in Alberta for FY2010. The Province gave the most, funding \$34.4mln or 79% of the total.

It is encouraging that the Shelters themselves raised another \$30mln through a range of initiatives relieving taxpayers of a greater burden. These included: Memberships & Activity Fees, Event Revenue, Solicited Private & Gifted Donations (Tax-Receipted), In-Kind Contributions, Fixed Assets Sales, Investment Income, Foundation Disbursements, GST Rebates and various other means.

However there are some caveats.

1) Reporting. It seems that the raw CRA data has not been properly validated or cleaned as there were troubling errors and inconsistencies. Data points were empty or totals did not add up/match components. For example, the *Calgary Association for Peer Support Services for Abused Women* (BN# 105200430) figures for Total Assets (line 4200) and Total Liabilities (line 4350) were missing. To fill the gap, I inserted a total of listed components. But then to balance Total Expenses exceeding Total Revenue by \$62g (or 14% of Revenue) either Assets must have been reduced or Liabilities increased. But with original figures absent (apart from our derived numbers) it raises questions about the validity of the filed results.

2) Duplication. Another risk when totalling a group's Financial Statements is "double counting". If some of the larger groups like the *Alberta Council of Women's Shelters* (BN#118780634) or the *Calgary YWCA* (BN#108227927) donate funds to smaller organizations, a combined total will overstate Revenues and Expenses as they will be counted twice in the Charitable Expenditures at the *Calgary YWCA* and in Revenue of say, the *Crisis Association of Vegreville* (BN#120970520). But without knowing the details - it is impossible to determine the exact impact. However to "ballpark" that impact, if 20% of Total Government Grants were shared in this way - Total Assets, Total Revenue and Total Expenses would have been lower by about \$9mln (or 10%, 12% and 13% respectively to \$78.9, \$64.6 and \$60.3mln).

3) Multi-Program Delivery. Another factor that could interfere with our calculation of accurate financial support figures for Emergency Shelter Programs is the divergence between facilities in small towns/rural areas and large urban centers. This is the reality of spreading operating overheads over more users/larger more efficient multi-use facilities. Larger operations like the

YWCA in Calgary, Banff or Lethbridge provide a wide range of health, social and community programs to women, girls, families and immigrant groups - not just Emergency Shelters.

In their Program descriptions filed with CRA, the *Calgary* YWCA estimates that it dedicates just 15% of total time and resources to Emergency Shelter services – however it also has the largest single budget in the province at \$17mln in Revenue. The *Lethbridge* Y dedicates 50% of its resources to Emergency Shelter services but has \$3mln in Revenue. A notable absence is the *Edmonton* YWCA. Despite it's size, it is unique not to have any Emergency Shelter services onsite. Instead the *Edmonton* Y offers Family and Crisis Counselling and refers anyone needing Emergency Shelter services offsite to WIN House or the Lurana Shelter. For this reason the *Edmonton* Y is not included in these calculations, but WIN House and Lurana Shelter are.

By weighting our calculations by these “Emergency Shelter” factors specifically dedicated to such services, we get a better estimate of the likely financial resources used to directly support Shelters in Alberta. Thus we find that **Total Government Contributions dedicated to Emergency Women's Shelters in 2010 was \$27.3mln** - with \$21.7mln (or 79% of the total) from the Province. Municipal contributions were next at \$2.9mln, followed by the Feds at \$2.6mln.

4) Gender Exclusion. Most of the ACWS-member shelters have existed for at least 10-40 years (from 1993 back as far as 1973) but it is clear in reviewing Mission Statements that these shelters are only for women, unless a man wants to take a DV treatment program.

The Mission Statement of the *Calgary* YWCA (charity status granted in 1968) is typical.

CRISIS SHELTER - PROVIDING SHELTER FOR WOMEN AND THEIR CHILDREN WHO ARE EXPERIENCING A CRISIS AND/OR TRANSITION IN THEIR LIVES. INCLUDES HOUSING FOR WOMEN WHO HAVE TRANSITIONED FROM THE MARY DOVER HOUSE.

FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION - COUSEILLING SERVICES FOR INDIVIDUALS FLEEING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AS WELL AS ANGER MANAGEMENT COURSES AND OTHER RELATED PROGRAMS (SAFE VISITATION, FAMILY & SCHOOL STOP ABUSE).

YOUTH SERVICES - INCLUDING IN-SCHOOL PROGRAMS AND ANGER MANAGEMENT AND INDEPENDENT LIVING SKILLS. ADVOCACY FOR THOSE IN VULNERABLE SITUATIONS SUCH AS LOW INCOME AND THOSE EXPERIENCING ABUSE.

But only one shelter member of ACWS (Strathmore) admits Men and/or boys older than 12yo. This is an exception as generally boys over age 12 cannot accompany their mothers in most shelters. Some provide Hotel vouchers to such “guests” to stay “off-site” with older sons.

The only other Emergency Shelter in Alberta accepting Men is Diakonos House³. But it is for the exclusive use of Police, Fire, EMS and Armed Forces personnel in Edmonton, Red Deer and Calgary.

5) Shelter Users. In 2010, 6,216 Women were admitted into Alberta's Women's Shelters and stayed for varying lengths of time (from overnight to 33 days). On average each admission was accompanied by 0.66 dependents (child or other).

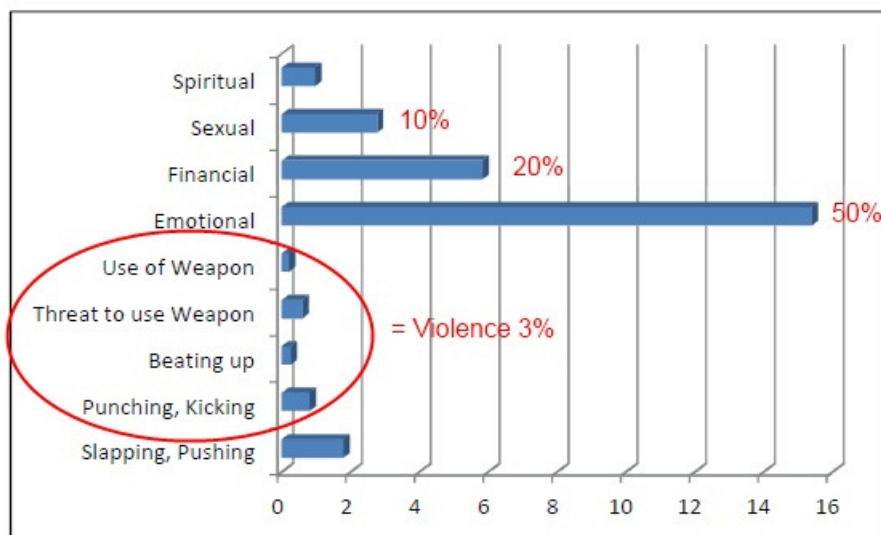
- 58% Aboriginal, 9% visible minority.
- 11% married, 24% separated/divorced and 39% Common-Law.
- Average age 32, 46% living with partner at time of admission to shelter.

- 33% stayed less than 4 days, 47% between 5-21 days and 20% longer than 20 days.
- 47% of children aged 3 or younger and 21% 4-5yo.
- 66% left after completed goals, 20% before completed, 10% na and 4% ejected.

But for each admitted women, 1.6⁴ were turned away because the shelter was a) at full capacity (49% of time) or b) for “other reasons” (51% of the time).

The shelter industry shamelessly peddles these “turn-aways” stats as proof of how much “Domestic Violence” exists in our communities. It ignores the fact that shelter accommodation is basically “a free place” to any unfortunate, desperate or homeless women willing to manufacture a claim of abuse. And they do. **Figure 16**⁵ (below) shows survey results of shelter users asked what kind of abuse they faced before arrival.

Figure 16. Average Frequency of Abuse Per Month (n=350)



Half of users claim to have experienced highly subjective and unverifiable “emotional” abuse - but few admit to having experienced real violence. This does not mean abuse is not happening - just that shelters have created an opportunity where poor and desperate women can lie with impunity and gain short-term accommodation.

No wonder they must turn people away.

Then there are the “other reasons” for denying shelter admission:

- **No claim of abuse.** Yes, priority is given to those who claim abuse – real or created for the purpose of gaining entry. No proof is necessary although Police or EMS referrals appear to be rapidly expedited. No claim of abuse renders an applicant “less qualified”.
- **Safety/Staff Shortages.** Some shelters claim they are forced to “shutdown” or operate on restricted basis because there is not enough staff to function. Safety is frequently mentioned as a related concern. How can this be? Rampant addiction and criminality make these shelters dangerous places unless strongly supervised. Most shelters have a few well-paid staff, augmented by a few poorly-paid ones and a lot of unpaid volunteers. Volunteer turnover is massive and training is always needed to maintain skill sets at basic levels. Concern over safety is not due to roving gangs in the street intent on rape and pillage.
- **“Under the influence”.** Instant denial of acceptance to a shelter. Substance abuse is an admitted problem for 28% of shelter users – but widely acknowledged as under-reported.
- **Zero Tolerance.** A previous ejection from a shelter can be used to deny second admission.

These “other reasons” undoubtedly make day-to-day management easier for shelter staff but also imply a high incidence of poverty/homelessness, addiction challenges and possible mental health issues hidden behind the “turn-away” statistics at shelters – not necessarily an epidemic of DV.

Figure 18. Danger Assessment Scores and Reasons for Discharge (n=720)

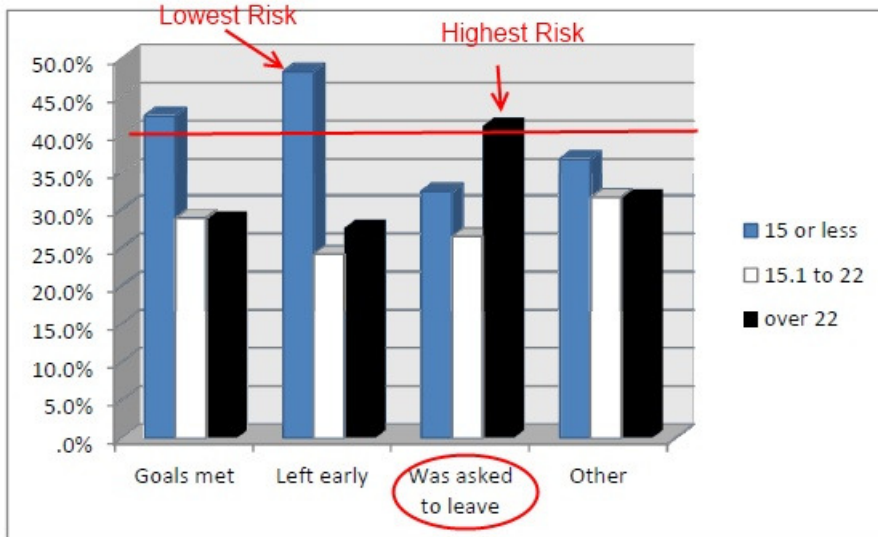


Figure 18 correlates discharge outcomes with behavioural characteristics of “supposed” abusers. The DA Score (Danger Assessment) is a tool designed to rate the risk faced at home by Shelter users. Almost 50% of those who left a shelter “early” (before completion of training in how to de-escalate conflict and other skills) were already considered “at low risk” from their partner. (Of course we have no idea of the effectiveness of DA.)

But if 40% of those shelter residents violent enough to be **ejected**⁶ and maybe have no more skills than when they first arrived are going back into a dysfunctional relationship – what is the point of an Emergency Shelter?

How is ejecting an unprepared, reciprocally violent women back into the home of her potentially violent partner helping to stem Domestic Abuse?

6) Activity Measures.

What is the “variable cost” of shelter stays?

Using data in Table 1 we assume the “Provision of Charity Services” remains 75.1% of Total Expenses (\$37.6mln x 75.1% = \$28.2mln).

\$28.2mln ÷ 6216 Women = \$4,537 per women shelter visit of 1-33 days duration.

What is the per capita taxpayer burden of Government Grants to Women’s Shelters?

Again using data in Table 1 we assume Total Government Contributions of \$43.6mln and use Statcan 2011 Census data for Alberta population of 3.645 million.

\$43.6mln ÷ 3.645 million = \$11.96 per person

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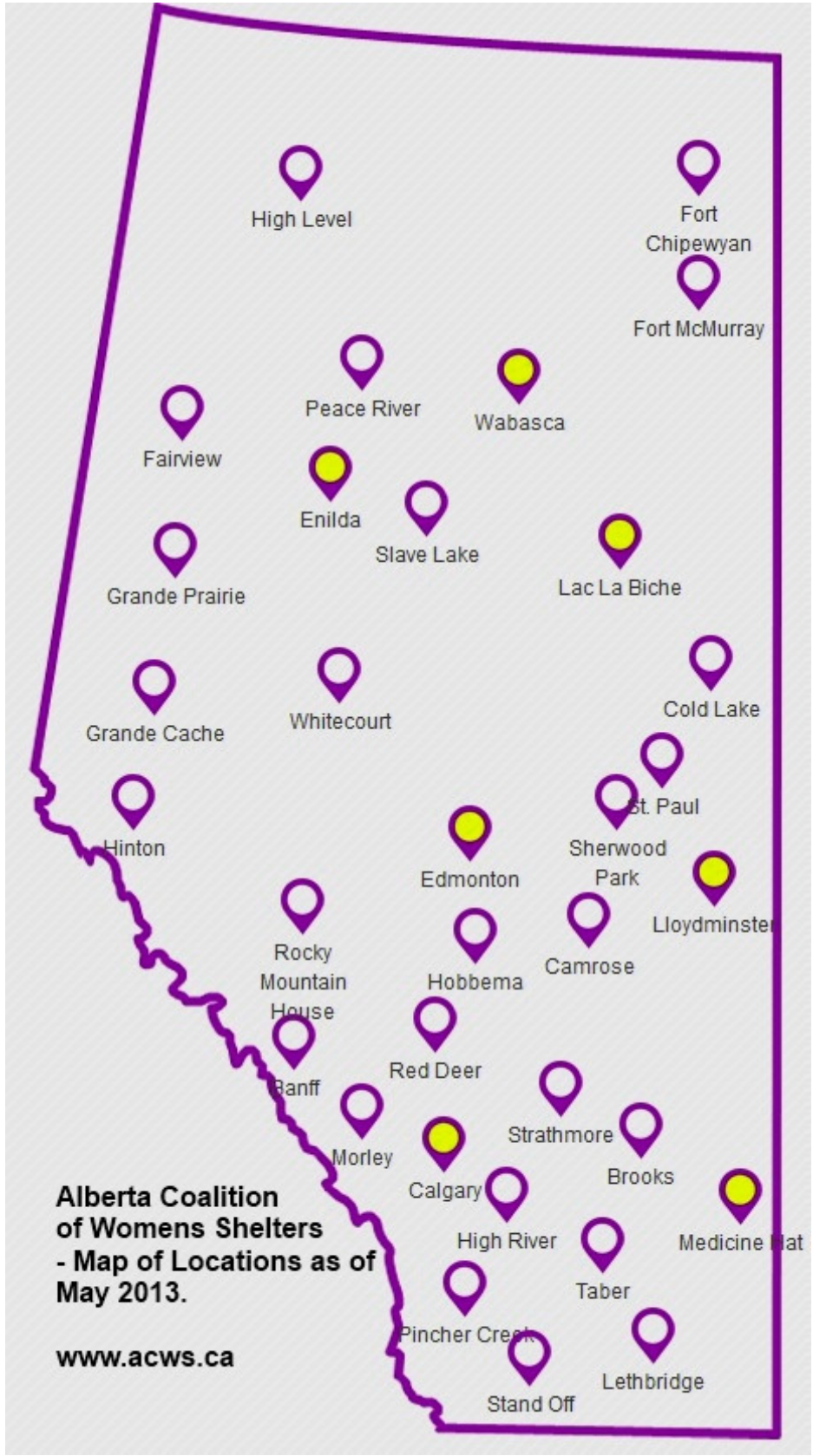


Table 1 – Summary of Alberta Coalition of Women's Shelters Combined Financial Data.

Financial Data for FY2010	Gross Total (million \$)	% Rev	% only for Emergency Shelters	Rel to Gross
Total Assets	\$87.8		\$54.2	62%
Total Liabilities	\$28.0		\$15.6	56%
Total Revenue	\$73.6	100.0%	\$40.8	55%
Total Government Contributions	\$43.6	59.2%	\$27.3	63%
Total Federal (8.9%)	\$ 3.9		\$ 2.6	67%
Total Provincial (78.8%)	\$34.4		\$ 21.7	63%
Total Municipal (12.3%)	\$ 5.4		\$ 2.9	54%
Other Revenue*	\$30.0	40.8%	na	na
<i>*A diverse collection of other, non-government revenue sources: Memberships, Event Revenue, Activity Fees, Private Donations (Tax-Receipted), In-Kind Contributions, Fixed Assets Sales, Investment Income, Foundation Disbursements and GST Rebates.</i>				
Total Expenses - by Function#	\$69.3	94.2%	\$37.6	54%
Provision of Charity Services (75.1%)	\$52.0		na	
Admin & Operating Costs (15.6%)	\$10.8		na	
Fundraising Expenses (2.2%)	\$ 1.6		na	
Total Expenses - by Category#				
Occupancy (7.6%)	\$ 5.3		na	
Total Compensation (69.0%)	\$47.8		na	
Training (1.0%)	\$ 0.7		na	
Consulting (2.5%)	\$ 1.7		na	
Memberships/Union Dues (0.4%)	\$ 0.3		na	
Travel (1.0%)	\$ 0.7		na	
Promotion & Public Relations (1.8%)	\$ 1.3		na	
Office Supplies (3.2%)	\$ 2.2		na	
Banking Services/Fees (0.3%)	\$ 0.2		na	
<i>#A specially <u>selected</u> breakdown by major function/category that may not total 100%.</i>				

This data combines Income Statement & Balance Sheet data disclosed to Revenue Canada for 34 shelters that comprise the Alberta Coalition of Women's Shelters (ACWS).

Endnotes

- ¹ Completed data for FY2010 matches other presentations from ACWS, but due to lags only 2010 and 2011 are available. See “2013 May - Listing of ACWS Shelters” <http://goo.gl/BTAI8>
- ² See data in document “2013 May – ECMAS How much Funding DATA” <http://goo.gl/tXq0y>
- ³ <http://www.diakonosretreat.com>
- ⁴ Turnaways (Capacity) = 4801 and (Other) 4983 = 9784. TA Dependents (Capacity) 3094 and (Other) 2893 = 5987. See Table 4 - Comparative Yearly Data for Admissions and Turnaways across Emergency, Second Stage and Seniors Shelters. Data for 2009-2010. ACWS Annual Statistics 2012-10212. www.acws.ca
- ⁵ Figure 16, p 35. *Practical Frameworks for Change: Supporting Women and Children in Alberta Emergency Shelters* by Irene Hoffert, Synergy Research. March 2011. <https://www.acws.ca/documents/PFCFinalEvaluationReport.pdf>
- ⁶ Figure 1, “Reasons for Discharge – if asked to leave” p31 idem. *Practical Frameworks for Change*