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MEDIA RELEASE
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RURAL SHELTERS

Leaving your abusive partner is already difficult enough. Trying to leave when you're in a rural area with limited transportation options, fewer community supports and even less anonymity can be almost impossible.

Minister of Justice and Attorney General Alison Redford announced today that \$150,000 will fund the ACWS pilot project: *Making Amends: Supporting Survivors of Domestic Violence in Rural Alberta*.

By increasing the availability of instrumental supports for women resident in rural shelters, the *Making Amends* project, funded through Alberta's Safe Communities initiative and the Civil Forfeiture Office, will increase shelter capacity to safeguard and support the creation of real positive change for women and children fleeing domestic abuse.

"Women in rural settings need to get to shelter and often don't have access to a vehicle. They also need to get to all of the necessary medical, court and counselling appointments that aid in their healing and help build safer futures," says Carolyn Goard, Director of Member Programs and Services at ACWS. "These funds will help meet some of these needs, and will also help us start to train rural shelter workers on risk assessment and legal system supports that will add to the tools they have to help women and children."

The ties of women to their physical space can be much stronger outside urban centers. A rural shelter worker recently commented, "People's whole lives are tied up in the parcel of land. The woman is not just leaving her partner. She's leaving her way of life. She put a lot of herself into it."

"As we evaluate the unique needs of rural shelters through this project, we look forward to continuing to work with Alberta Justice to ensure sustainability," says Goard. "We're thrilled that Civil Forfeiture has recognized this gap exists for shelters. Just thrilled."

Background:

Alberta's domestic violence shelters are the front-line experts on issues relating to family violence against women and children. The Alberta Council of Women's Shelters (ACWS) is an umbrella, volunteer, non-profit organization of 43 member sheltering agencies across the province. ACWS conducts action-based research projects, organizes training for frontline shelter workers and generates awareness about issues related to domestic abuse.

November is Family Violence Prevention Month in Alberta.

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