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[ywcalgary.ca](http://ywcalgary.ca)

October 2, 2019

The Honourable Travis Toews, President of the Treasury Board and Minister of Finance  
208 Legislature Building  
10800 - 97 Avenue NW  
Edmonton, AB T5K 2B6

The Honourable Grant Hunter, Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction  
130 Legislature Building  
10800 - 97 Avenue NW  
Edmonton, AB T5K 2B6

Dear Minister Toews and Associate Minister Hunter,

**RE: 2019 Alberta Provincial Budget and Red Tape Reduction YWCAs of Alberta**

We are writing to you today to provide recommendations on the upcoming Fall 2019 budget. As a collective of Alberta's largest and longest serving women's organizations, we have seen Alberta's economy rise and fall over the 100 years we have been in business. We see the serious impacts of difficult economic times in the experiences of our clients, the vulnerabilities they are facing and the barriers to their success.

We know hard financial decisions must be made to secure Alberta's future, enhance our economic competitiveness and create the conditions for a socially prosperous Alberta for all. That is why; we have developed a set of budget, and red tape reduction solutions to achieve this important goal and ensure that it is inclusive of all Albertans. Our focus is on how the civil society sector can be a partner in delivering essential health and housing services, addressing mental health and addiction, and achieving coordinated workforce development to the benefit of all Albertans.

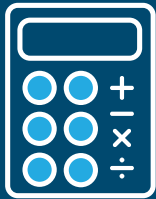
Thank you for your consideration of our recommendations. We welcome a meeting to debrief during a budget lock-up, and explore red tape reduction solutions.

Sincerely,

Sue Tomney, Chief Executive Officer, YWCA Calgary  
Connie MacDonald, Chief Executive Officer, YWCA Banff  
Amber Niemeier, Interim Chief Executive Officer, YWCA Edmonton  
Lena Neufeld, Program Director, YWCA Lethbridge

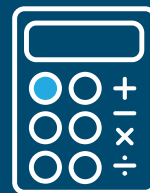
cc:

The Honourable Premier of Alberta Jason Kenney  
The Honourable Minister of Children Services Rebecca Schulz  
The Honourable Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women Leela Aheer  
The Honourable Minister of Community and Social Services Rajan Sawhney  
The Honourable Minister of Health Tyler Shandro  
The Honourable Minister of Labour and Immigration Jason Copping  
The Honourable Minister of Indigenous Relations Rick Wilson  
The Honourable Minister of Seniors and Housing Josephine Pon  
The Honourable Minister of Justice and the Solicitor General Doug Schweitzer



# Making Life Better for Vulnerable Albertans

# TOWARDS A BALANCED BUDGET



1.

## Procurement & The Civil Society Sector

The McKinnon Report was clear – Alberta’s healthcare system requires a major reset to serve Albertans better. The report recommended expanding the use of civil society organizations to deliver Alberta Health Services (AHS) programs and the development of a procurement council.

Currently, procurement of service delivery to civil society organizations should not result in paying staff 30% less for the same work. This effectively depresses wages in the civil society sector, making it difficult for organizations to compete with Alberta Health Services pay and benefits, and it also negatively affects the quality of care provided to Albertans.

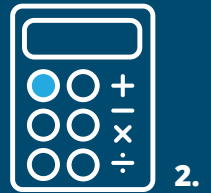
### Budget Ask

- All costing for procurement of services delivered by civil society organizations must include the true cost of that work: staffing and pay at the industry standard and costs for operations.

### Red Tape Reduction

- Ensure all procurement of social services across the Alberta government consistently accounts for the real cost of this work. This includes a matrix of pay for positions that is up-to-date with industry benchmarks and appropriate estimations of day-to-day costs of operations.
- Establish a Procurement Advisory Council that focuses on creating more innovative and effective procurement methods. The Council membership should include representatives of civil society organizations that deliver government-funded services related to domestic violence, homelessness, mental health and housing.

# TOWARDS A BALANCED BUDGET



## Prevention is the Best Medicine

Albertans deserve the opportunity to live a healthy and happy life. It has become harder for Albertans to achieve the same health outcomes as other Canadians, as much as it is hard for the Alberta government to do so with its current spending model. YWCAs across Alberta touch the lives of women and their families across their life span – we see the positive impact that social services have on Albertans every day.

Evidence shows prevention through the implementation of social services is a more efficient use of public health dollars and produces better health outcomes. Social supports include recreation, cultural and religious services, social and psychological supports, housing and access to healthy food. In the long term, Albertans that are able to meet their basic needs are healthier, more resilient, and reduce their use of public health care.

### Budget Ask

Examine how to redirect health spending to the social services system that is focused on raising the quality of life and health outcomes of Albertans.

### Red Tape Reduction

Standardize evaluation of social services programs so they all measure their impact on the quality of life of Albertans.





## Opioid Response Strategy

Opioid addiction is a critical issue for all Albertans. The proposed Opioid Response Strategy is essential to combating this crisis. Alberta's Emergency Management Agency is renowned in Canada, for its effectiveness at responding to major emergencies. Based on best practice, an Opioid Response Strategy should include the practices and strategies used during a major emergency event.

### Budget Ask

Invest \$40 million over four years to launch the Opioid Response Strategy.

### Red Tape Reduction

Using an emergency management model, facilitate cross-systems integration response teams at the local level with Alberta Health Services, civil society organizations, Justice, Health and Community and Social Services. to tackle the opioid crisis. This increases communication and aligns funding priorities and programmatic responses.

## Mental Health & Addiction Strategy

Mental Health and Addiction is a key part of YWCAs' work across Alberta. YW Calgary's Transitional Housing shelter practices harm reduction. Which means clients are have access to housing and social supports wherever they are at in their recovery journey. This an important principle to embed in any mental health and addictions strategy, as it centres the needs of the clients as they work towards resilience. We know collaborating with Alberta Health Services will make our work more effective and have the lasting healing impact we desire.

### Budget Ask

Invest \$100 million to create a Mental Health and Addictions Strategy that focuses on creating a more culturally competent and responsive mental health and addiction system.

### Red Tape Reduction

Employ a cross-system approach to patient information sharing that expedites information sharing in balance with privacy. Effectively saving time and reducing the risk of re-traumatization of the patient.



## Shelter for Vulnerable Albertans

Shelters and permanent supportive housing **save lives and money** for our justice and healthcare systems. In 2018 alone, nearly **5,000 women and children experiencing domestic violence accessed a domestic abuse shelter** in Alberta. This is in addition to the **5,700 Albertans that were reported as being homeless during the 2018 Point-In-Time-Count**. Homeless Albertans need access to safe shelter as soon as possible to reduce the impacts a lack of housing has on their health and wellbeing and the financial cost placed on our emergency responders. Shelters also provide Albertans experiencing crisis with a way to end their cycle and connect them with basic needs, health care, counselling and housing.

### Budget Ask

- Maximize the use of the Federal-Territorial Partnership through the National Housing Strategy to develop permanent affordable housing in Alberta.
- Continue to invest in shelter and supportive housing funding for youth, adults and domestic violence victims in urban and rural communities.
- Continue to invest in Housing First programming. Examine potential to invest in clinical supports for Housing First clients to achieve better outcomes for Albertans with complex needs.

### Red Tape Reduction

Create three-year funding contracts for shelter and Housing First programs. This would reduce government and non-profit staff's time in renegotiating contracts, provide adequate time to measure results and impact of this work and reduce red tape associated with excessive reporting requirements.



## Violence Against Women

Alberta has one of the highest rates of missing and murdered Indigenous women in Canada. Research also shows that a woman who experiences domestic abuse is more likely to have a concussion than a man who plays full-contact hockey. Statistics like these are unacceptable. The Alberta government must take a powerful stance against the violence experienced by women, including indigenous women in our province. Indigenous women increasingly access off-reserve housing and social supports like our women's emergency and domestic violence shelters. Creating a safe environment will reduce the vulnerability of women and support their path towards resilience.

### Budget Ask

- Ensure all legislation related to human trafficking or domestic violence prioritizes funding for cultural competency of indigenous traditions for front-line staff and first responders.
- Invest in medical resources for domestic violence shelters to respond to the medical needs of survivors.

### Red Tape Reduction

Reduce the red tape associated with making claims related to human trafficking, domestic violence and sexual assault. This includes making it easier to access protection orders.

## Saving the Girl Next Door Legislation

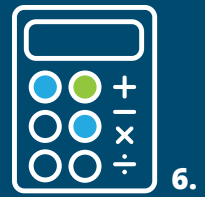
Systems change is required to bring light to the critical issue of human trafficking. Prevention of human trafficking begins with raising awareness of the dire nature of this issue, legislative change and funding prioritized for combatting this problem. The women that access the YW emergency shelters are particularly vulnerable for being trafficked because they are experiencing complex financial, social and emotional barriers.

### Budget Ask

Dedicated funding for training in shelters (emergency and domestic violence) for recognizing the signs of human trafficking.

### Red Tape Reduction

- Enhance data collection ability in shelter systems to track and report cases of human trafficking without compromising the privacy of clients.
- Ensure any supports accessed by someone who is identified as experiencing human trafficking (i.e. Alberta Works) are expedited.



## Perpetrators of Domestic Violence

Each year, YW Calgary provides counselling to over 700 men who have been perpetrators of domestic abuse. This counselling program works to heal the perpetrator. This full-circle perspective is unique – YWCA knows that the whole community must heal to truly end domestic violence in our province.

### Budget Ask

Continue investment in domestic violence treatment programs in Alberta as a primary intervention measure that includes all genders.

### Red Tape Reduction

Create a three-year funding contracts for these programs. This would reduce government and non-profit staff's time in renegotiating contracts, provide adequate time to measure results and impact of this work and reduce red tape associated with excessive reporting requirements.

## Access to Affordable Transportation

The Alberta government's support of the fair-access program has been critical to YWCA's clients who regularly use public transit to get to work, school or health appointments. Continued support of this successful program is critical to building strong and safe communities.

### Budget Ask

Continue investment in the Fair Access Program across Alberta to ensure all Albertans have equal access to amenities in their local communities.

## Transit in Rural Alberta

Albertans living in rural areas have little access to the public transit needed to attend school, work or health appointments. This also creates barriers for women at risk of, or experiencing human trafficking or domestic abuse. This was made more acute in 2018 with the elimination of Greyhound bus service. This negatively impacts Indigenous women who we know are at greater risk of violence and often choose to leave rural areas to access supports in urban centres.

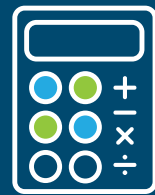
### Budget Ask

- Complete feasibility study for a public-private-partnership bus service that connects rural and urban Albertans.
- Build on lessons learned from Rural Bus service pilot completed in Medicine Hat, Lethbridge & Red Deer County routes; to expand rural bus service.

### Red Tape Reduction

Remove legislative and bureaucratic red tape that does not incentivize the development of rural bus service.





## Collecting Data to Measure Impact

Data reporting and collection is a major administrative burden of the civil society sector. At YW Calgary, the organization produces over 200 reports on a daily basis for a single program. This is in addition to the large amount of data collected on the clients we serve – a woman accessing our transitional housing has to answer over 60 questions as part of the intake process. It is unclear how this data is used to inform budget priorities, program improvement or policy change.

### Budget Ask

Examine ways to reduce the reporting burden for civil society organizations that are contracted by the Alberta government to reduce duplication in data collection and more effectively use staff time.

### Red Tape Reduction

Eliminate data collection and reporting requirements that do not result in program effectiveness for Alberta government-funded programming and are not an efficient use of staff resources.

## Civil Society Fund

Alberta's civil society sector is innovative, lean and nimble. **Civil society groups are not simply cheaper service delivery organizations – they are a competitive sector for people to work for and access supports from.** A Civil Society Fund focused on innovation would be a catalyst for accessing the latent potential of this sector. **The YWCA Banff Hotel is an example of a social enterprise for social profit, ensures the organizations viability through the good and hard times.** Having a fund that supports the ongoing development of our work and the work of our partner organizations would be monumental to the success of this sector and the impacts we have on Albertans.

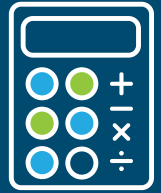
### Budget Ask

\$20 million Civil Society Fund supported by the Alberta Lotteries Fund to support innovative cost-shared programs delivered by community Groups.

### Red Tape Reduction

Make it easier to access social innovation-related financing.





## Rural Crime Strategy

An Indigenous woman is more likely to go missing in Alberta and British Columbia than in any other province. We know that Indigenous women in rural areas are more at risk of physical and sexual violence in part due to the limited policing presence in rural communities. Increasing investment in policing presence in rural Alberta will make it safer for Indigenous women.

### Budget Ask

Increase funding for rural policing in Alberta with a focus on collaboration with indigenous communities.

### Red Tape Reduction

Revise the *Policing Act* to ensure that rural police positions are funded based on the level of criminality in the community not based on the population of the municipalities they serve.

## Domestic Abuse in the Criminal Code

Domestic abuse is not a criminal offence under the *Criminal Code of Canada*. Instead, someone who commits domestic violence is charged with assault. This effectively erases the widespread nature of domestic abuse and downplays the seriousness of this act.

### Budget Ask

Dedicate dollars to advocate to the federal government for a revision of the *Criminal Code of Canada* so it includes domestic abuse as a unique offence.

### Red Tape Reduction

This approach keeps the definition and judgement of domestic violence within a free and fair court process.



## Make it Easier for Vulnerable Albertans to Access Training

For vulnerable Albertans, getting a good job is a measure of our province's economic wealth and health. A coordinated Workforce Development Strategy is critical to making it possible to get skills, training and employment for all Albertans.

### Budget Ask

Invest in developing a Workforce Development Strategy that coordinates all programs and outcomes.

### Red Tape Reduction

Reduce duplication and patchwork approach to workforce development.

## Supporting Alberta Families to Get Back to Work

In our current fiscal times, Alberta's families work hard to keep food on the table and roofs over their heads. That is why it is becoming increasingly common for both parents to go back to school and/or work to make ends meet. Accessible and affordable childcare is an essential ingredient to ensuring parents can go to work or school with peace of mind that their children are safe.

### Budget Ask

- Examine the potential to expand this to Universal Childcare. Invest in \$25/day childcare that is targeted to Albertans in most financial need.
- Invest in the Alberta Child Benefit (ACB) to support the 130,000 Alberta families, and 235,000 children in need.

### Red Tape Reduction

Ensure that once approved for childcare benefit, that a family can use any accredited childcare facility with limited red-tape.

