



# Poll STATION

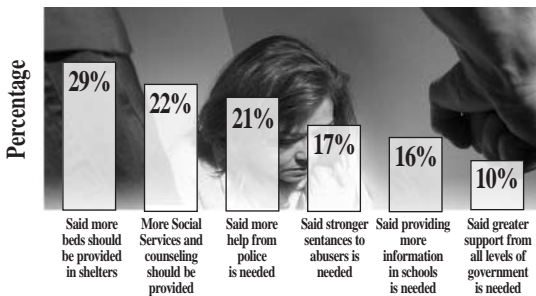
With Linda Banister

**V**iolence within the home can tear families apart and leave family members feeling like victims in the one place we should all feel safe. Currently, Alberta has one of the highest rates of family violence in Canada and the spousal homicide rates are also significantly higher than the national average. This month, the *Poll Station* asked Edmontonians for their thoughts, opinions and concerns regarding this serious issue.

## HOW CONCERNED ARE YOU ABOUT FAMILY VIOLENCE?

To begin, respondents were asked to rate their level of concern on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 meant not at all concerned and 5 meant extremely concerned. Respondents provided an average rating of 4.5 overall, with 87 percent of respondents providing a high rating of 4 or 5. When asked why they think Alberta has such high rates of family violence, 41 percent were unsure what the causes were. Some of the more frequent theories provided by respondents included a lenient justice system, insufficient social services, substance abuse, low income or poverty, and stress.

## WHAT SHOULD BE DONE TO KEEP WOMEN AND CHILDREN SAFE?



Next, respondents were asked what they feel can be done to keep women and children who are in danger safe. Almost one-third (29 percent) indicated that more beds should be provided in shelters, while 22 percent said more social services such as counseling and help lines should be made available. Other frequently mentioned responses included providing more help from police (21 percent), handing down stronger sentences to abusers (17 percent), having more information available in schools (16 percent), and having greater support from all levels of government (10 percent).

When asked what the most important services are that need to be offered by women's shelters, almost two-thirds (64 percent) felt that counseling and support services were most important. This was followed by in-home residential services (33 percent), education on family violence and spousal abuse (32 percent), and provision of a safe and protective environment (22 percent).

Forty-two percent of respondents indicated they

have known someone who required shelter services.

## HAVE YOU PARTICIPATED IN THE WHITE RIBBON CAMPAIGN?

The White Ribbon Campaign is an effort among men working to end men's violence against women. By wearing the white ribbon, the wearer makes a personal pledge never to commit, condone, nor remain silent about violence against women. When male respondents were asked if they had ever participated in the White Ribbon Campaign, only four percent (or two respondents) said they had worn the ribbon or volunteered, while 62 percent had not, and 34 percent said they had never heard of the campaign.

## WHAT MORE CAN BE DONE?

Finally, respondents were asked if there was anything else they felt could be done to reduce the incidence of family violence in Alberta. Although half of all respondents did not provide any other suggestions, frequently mentioned ideas included harsher sentences for abusers (14 percent), more public awareness and education of the issue in general (13 percent), increased support for shelters and protection agencies (five percent), and specifically educating children about family violence and what to do when it happens in their home (four percent).

Mayor Mandel has proclaimed November Family Violence Prevention Month. Artworks by victims of violence are on display at City Hall all month.

The *Poll Station* surveyed 100 City of Edmonton residents on the topic and, while the results of the research are not statistically reliable, they do provide a qualitative indication of what Edmontonians are thinking. ✓

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