

WINNING AGAINST DOMESTIC AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE: ALBERTA'S PRIMARY PREVENTION PLAYBOOK

Summary by: Jamie Lalor, RESOLVE Alberta undergraduate volunteer student

“Winning Against Domestic and Sexual Violence: Alberta’s Primary Prevention Playbook” is an implementation plan for how the Government of Alberta and the IMPACT collective (a provincial network that represents 300+ anti-violence organizations) can eliminate drivers of violence including gender inequality, social exclusion and colonization, while also increasing protective factors for women, equity-deserving groups, and Indigenous Peoples. The Playbook was designed in collaboration to provide strategic, actionable, and pragmatic steps on how policy makers and practitioners can focus their efforts on stopping violence before it starts.

This document was pioneered by RESOLVE Alberta steering committee member **Professor Lana Wells**, who created Shift, the first primary prevention research hub in Canada to focus solely on stopping domestic and sexual violence before it starts. Professor Wells is an Associate Professor and the Brenda Strafford Chair in the Prevention of Domestic Violence in the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Calgary. The purpose of Shift is to conduct and mobilize primary prevention research to empower others to create the social conditions that will prevent domestic violence.

A central idea of the Playbook is that “Perpetrators are made, not born.” Wells and her research team explains that “people who perpetrate domestic and sexual violence are created. In families. In schools. In peer groups. In neighborhoods. In sports. In religious communities. At work. In our institutions. Through media and culture. Through wider inequalities² and because of the systems of oppression into which we have all been socialized: capitalism, colonialism, heteronormative patriarchy, and white supremacy.” The authors argue, “if, collectively, we want to stop producing perpetrators of domestic and sexual violence, we must focus our attention on disrupting the pathways to perpetration while changing the cultural and structural conditions that produce, promote, and condone violence, inequality, exclusion, and discrimination.”

This 3-year collaborative policy project identified hundreds of policies, practice, and system change recommendations, and the Playbook specifically drew on the following 12 primary prevention plans and strategies written for the Government of Alberta and the IMPACT collective throughout the duration of the project: These are:

- (1) advancing [gender equality](#),
- (2) Promoting [social inclusion within government policy](#)
- (3) Promoting social inclusion within [community-based organizations](#)
- (4) Advancing [Indigenous self-determination](#)
- (5) A comprehensive provincial strategy to engage more [men and boys](#) because they are overrepresented among perpetrators of domestic and sexual violence and are key to stopping violence.

- (6) An action plan explaining how the Government of Alberta and the anti-violence sector can contribute to preventing [child maltreatment and adverse childhood experiences](#) because these actions will disrupt the intergenerational transmission of violence while ensuring the next generation grows up in safe and empowering environments.
- (7) A case with evidence-based actions that can [build the capacity of each Albertan](#) to be an active bystander and challenge the normalization of violence and inequality within their spheres of influence.
- (8) [A prevention of sexual violence action plan](#) with targeted strategies to transform our cultures, institutions, laws, policies, and practices that create or enable sexual violence, as it is the only violent crime in Canada that is not declining
- (9) A suite of policy recommendations on [financial and economic supports](#) to build protective factors for women and equity-deserving groups
- (10) Specific policy recommendations related to [health, food, housing, and climate change](#) as they can become either risk or protective factors for domestic and sexual violence.
- (11) New legislation, policy and programs that specifically address [technology-facilitated violence](#)
- (12) An [accountability framework](#) that was designed for the Government of Alberta to help identify outcomes and indicators for monitoring progress on violence prevention and advancing equity and inclusion here in Alberta.

By drawing on these foundation reports, the Playbook focuses on proactive change and is centered around four realistic “plays” that the Government of Alberta and the anti-violence movement can implement over the next five years to stop the perpetration of violence. They are:

1. Educate ourselves and all Albertans on the root causes and drivers of domestic and sexual violence.
2. Invest in and grow a primary prevention workforce.
3. Adopt strategies focused on changing cultures and structures that make violence possible.
4. Invest in gamechangers that eliminate the root causes of violence.

Each play has outcomes and specific strategies to measure implementation and success. There are benchmarks listed that can be used to assess whether efforts taking place are making a difference, and there is a list explaining how this change can be measured.

The hope is that this Playbook acts as a catalyst for change with gender-based violence leaders. For those interested, you can access the Playbook through this [link](#). If you would like to further explore Shift: The Project to end Domestic Violence and their publications, please visit their website: <https://preventdomesticviolence.ca/>.

References

Wells, L., Litviniuc, A., Lee, L., & Hansen, B. (2023). *Winning against domestic and sexual violence: Alberta's primary prevention playbook*. Shift: The project to end domestic violence. <https://preventdomesticviolence.ca/>.