

# Domestic Violence: Roles of Landlords and Property Managers in Intervening Effectively

Presentation by Professor Lois Gander, Q.C.

7 Cities Conference on Housing First and Homelessness

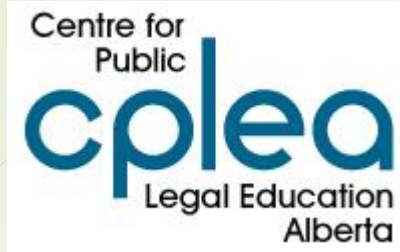
June 8, 2017



# Truth in advertising

**Lois Gander, Q.C.** BA ('70); LLB ('71); LLM ('90)

- Professor, Faculty of Extension, University of Alberta since 1975; semi-retired as of July 2016
- Executive Director of the Legal Resource Centre, Faculty of Extension from 1975 – 2006
- Vice-President, Legal Resource Centre of Alberta Ltd. (since 2013)



# Centre for Public Legal Education Alberta

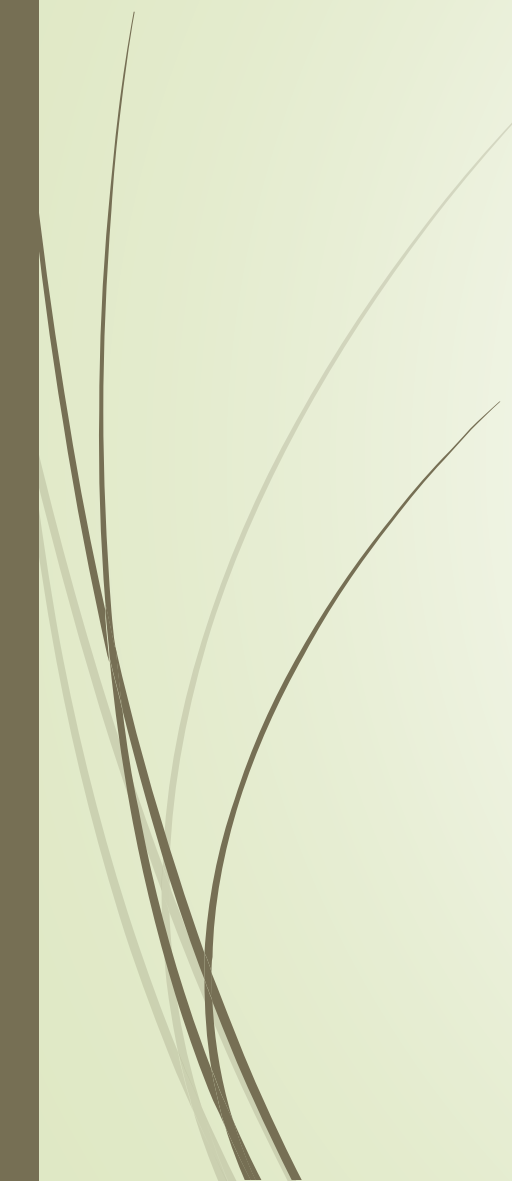
Established in 1975 as the Legal Resource Centre

- to enhance the accessibility and quality of justice realized in Canada
- by creating learning opportunities and building learning communities
- to increase engagement between the justice system and the public.

[www.cplea.ca](http://www.cplea.ca)



# Purpose of the presentation

- Raise awareness of the role domestic violence plays in homelessness
    - of women and children
  - Raise awareness of the roles that landlords and property managers can play in preventing, recognizing, and intervening in domestic violence of tenants
  - Raise awareness of some of the services and resources available to assist victims of domestic violence and those who care about them.
- 



# Hidden Homeless: Residential Tenancies Issues of Victims of Domestic Violence

- 2013 – 2014: How does the Residential Tenancies Act help or harm victims of domestic violence in getting or keeping rental accommodation?
- Findings:
  - Not enough units available so DV makes it even harder to get good accommodation
  - Victims of DV need more financial support: poor credit ratings
  - Victims of domestic violence may have to deal with 5 courts as well as multiple other administrative decision-making processes to deal with their legal issues
  - Need for reform of laws and policies to be more responsive to the needs of victims at various stages in addressing the violence in their lives

Funded by Homeward Trust Edmonton

**Available at [www.cplea.ca/research](http://www.cplea.ca/research)**



# Safer Spaces for Victims of Domestic Violence Act

- ▶ Process to enable victims of domestic violence to end their leases early and without penalty
- ▶ Apply to **Safer Spaces Processing Centre**, Alberta Community and Social Services for a certificate

Call (780) 422-4080

[www.alberta.ca/safer-spaces-certificate-apply.aspx](http://www.alberta.ca/safer-spaces-certificate-apply.aspx)





# Safer Spaces: Applications to date

	<b>Total to Date: May 31, 2017 (Implemented August 8, 2016)</b>	
Number of Certificates Issued	206	
Service Alberta Consumer Contact Centre – Number of Phone Calls	78	
Type of Document Received from Tenant	Court Order	26
	Professional Statement	160
	Other/Unknown*	20
Average Processing Time to Issue Certificate (Days)	1	



# Domestic Violence: Roles of Landlords and Property Managers

2015 – 2017 research project: Centre for Public Legal Education Alberta, the Faculty of Extension, University of Alberta, and Stop Abuse in Families

- What roles can landlords and property managers play in helping to prevent or help victims of domestic violence
- What resources do they need to help them play those roles effectively?

Interviewed six property managers from complexes with more than 100 units of market or social housing recruited through the Alberta Residential Landlord Association.

**Report available at [www.cplea.ca/research/](http://www.cplea.ca/research/)**

Funded by Homeward Trust Edmonton





# Common Scenario

- ▶ Jim, Maria, and their two children moved into their two bedroom apartment three years ago, shortly after the birth of their second child. The lease was in both Jim's and Maria's name and the family seemed to have settled in well. Jim always paid the rent on time and the property manager, Joanne, can recall no complaints of noise or misbehaviour of the young children.
- ▶ When the recession hit Alberta, Jim's hours of work were reduced and Jim's rent cheques started bouncing. Joanne chatted with Jim about the problem. He assured her that he had things under control and that, in the future, the rent would get paid on time.
- ▶ After two more cheques bounced, Joanne decided to serve an eviction notice. She couldn't seem to catch Jim so she posted the notice on the door of the unit. That brought Maria to the office to say she would be leaving with the children because Jim had been getting increasingly violent when he was drinking.
- ▶ That night, Maria called the police because she was afraid Jim would hurt her or the children. The next morning, the young woman living in the unit adjacent to Jim and Maria stopped by the office and complained to Joanne about the angry noises she heard next door. She had even been afraid to go out for her groceries.
- ▶ Joanne did her best to reassure the young woman that steps were being taken to deal with the situation but Joanne is not at all confident herself about what is going on and what she should do.



# Findings



- ▶ Very compassionate and want to do all they can to help
- ▶ Some interest in being better connected to their communities but unaware of inter-agency gatherings
- ▶ Want more education around domestic violence and services or resources to assist tenants

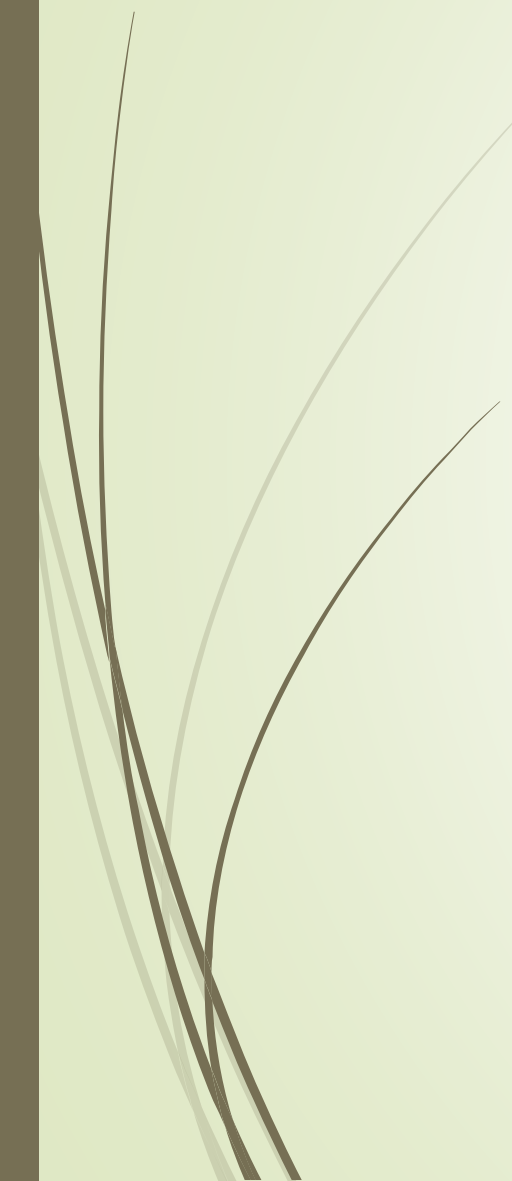


# Conclusions

- ▶ Landlords and property managers are often the first people to become aware that violence is taking place within a family
- ▶ Little recognition of the significance of the roles they can play
  - Prevention
  - Early intervention
  - Escalating violence
  - Resolution

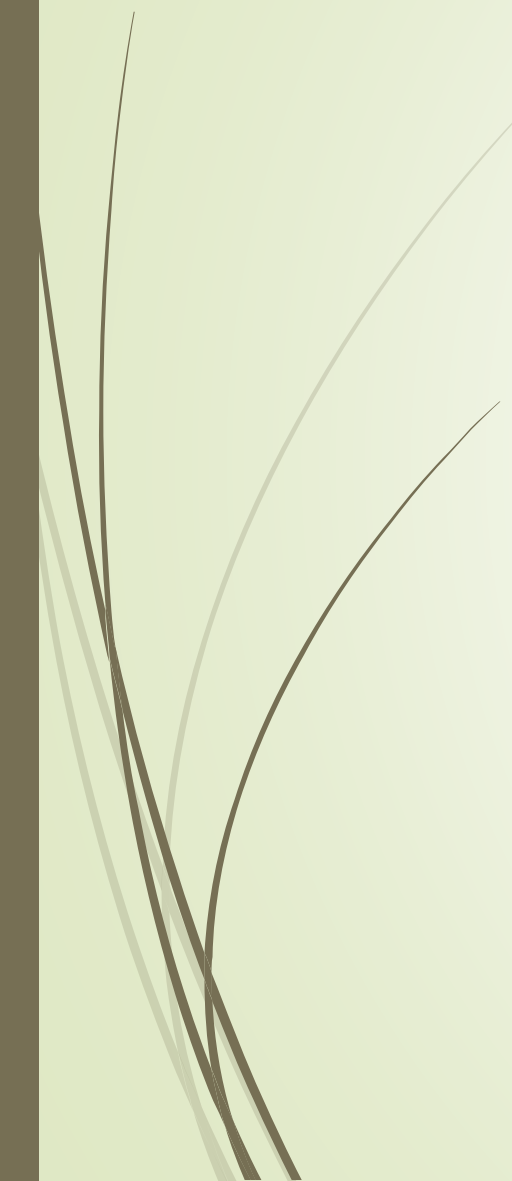


# Prevention

- Denounce domestic violence in all its forms
  - Reduce key risk factors, particularly isolation
  - Build community of residents
  - Integrate housing complex into the neighbourhood
  - Educate tenants about DV and what to do
  - Make services known to tenants
- 

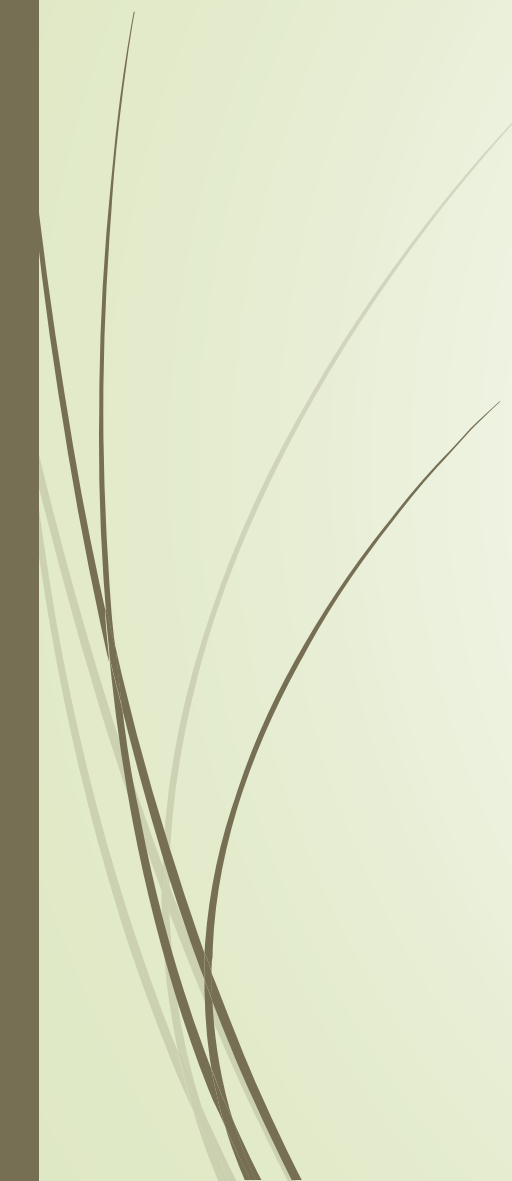


# Early intervention

- Be alert to early signs of difficulties
  - Develop relationship with local police to reduce tenants' apprehension in calling for help
  - Post information about services and resources in common areas
  - Provide staff with simple, discrete materials to distribute to tenants who appear to be at risk
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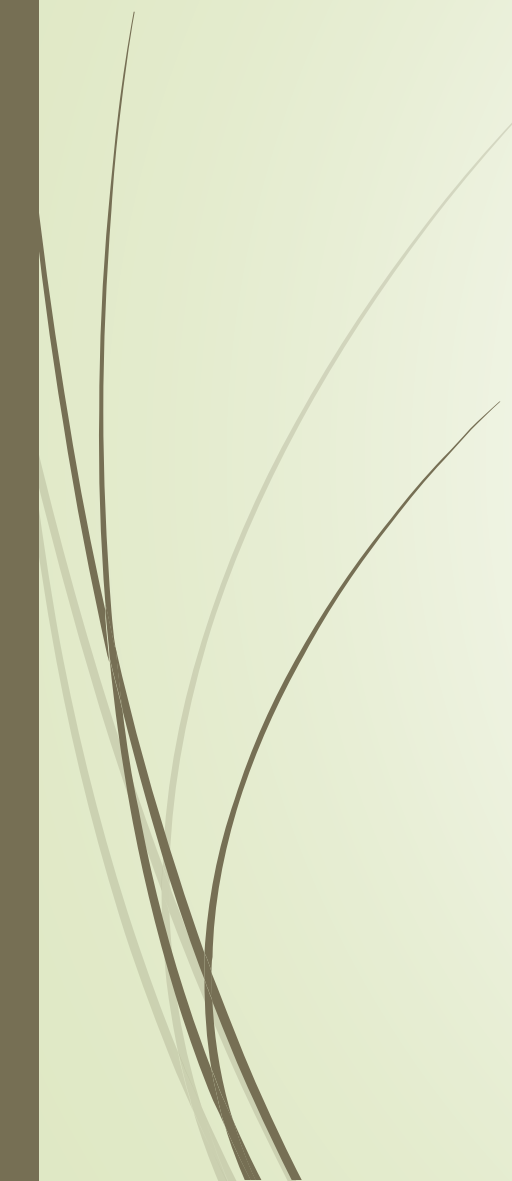
# Escalating violence

- Recognize signs that violence is escalating
  - Develop positive relationships with local police
  - When in doubt, call the police
- 





# Resolution of violence

- Relocate victim to another unit at another site
  - Waive claims to rent, utilities, damage
  - Provide support to other tenants who might be alarmed
  - Use private security to enhance tenants' safety
  - Provide staff with self-care resources or employee assistance programs
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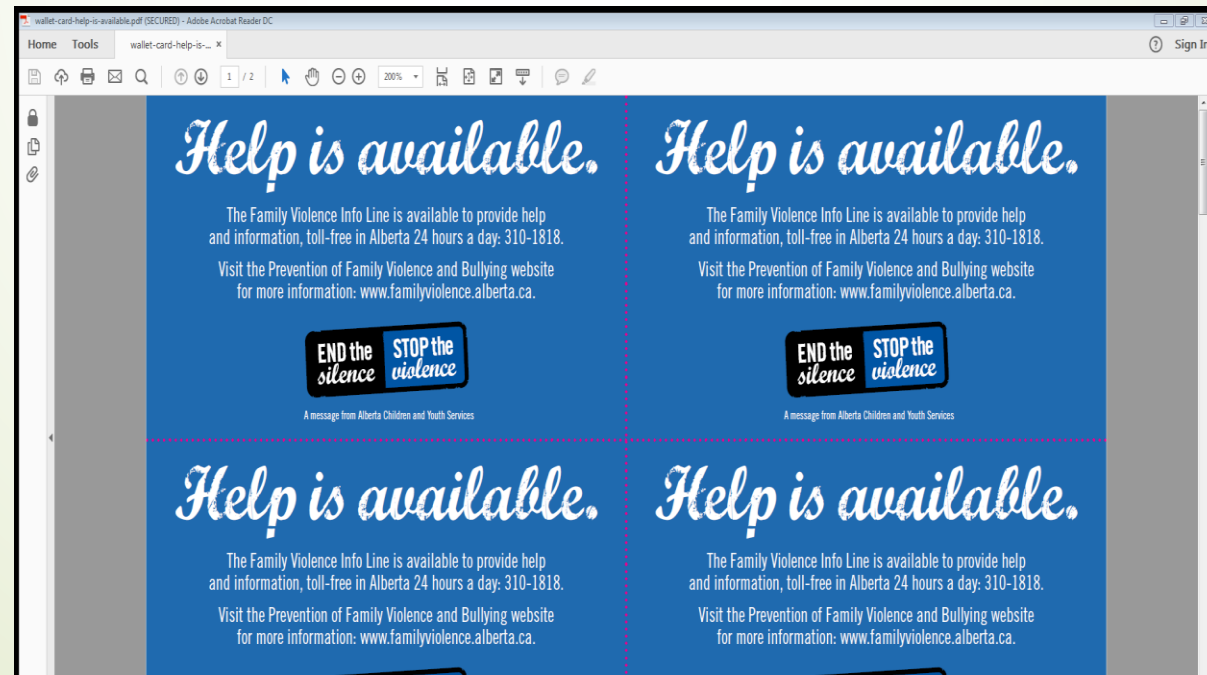
# Recommendations

- Recognize the role landlords and property managers can play in reducing homelessness among victims of domestic violence
  - Provide landlords and property managers with information on domestic violence, services, and resources that can help tenants
  - Include landlords and property managers in interagency or service outreach activities
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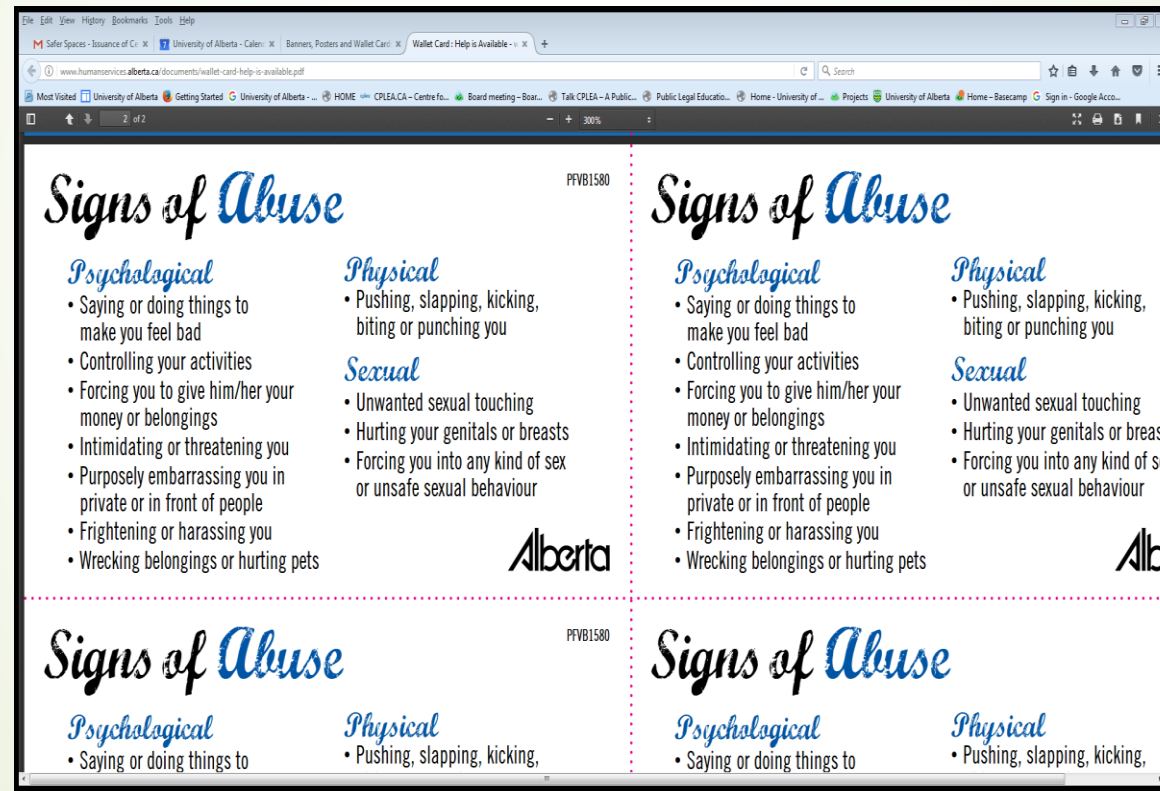
# Domestic violence resources

## ➤ Family Violence Info Line: 310-1818.

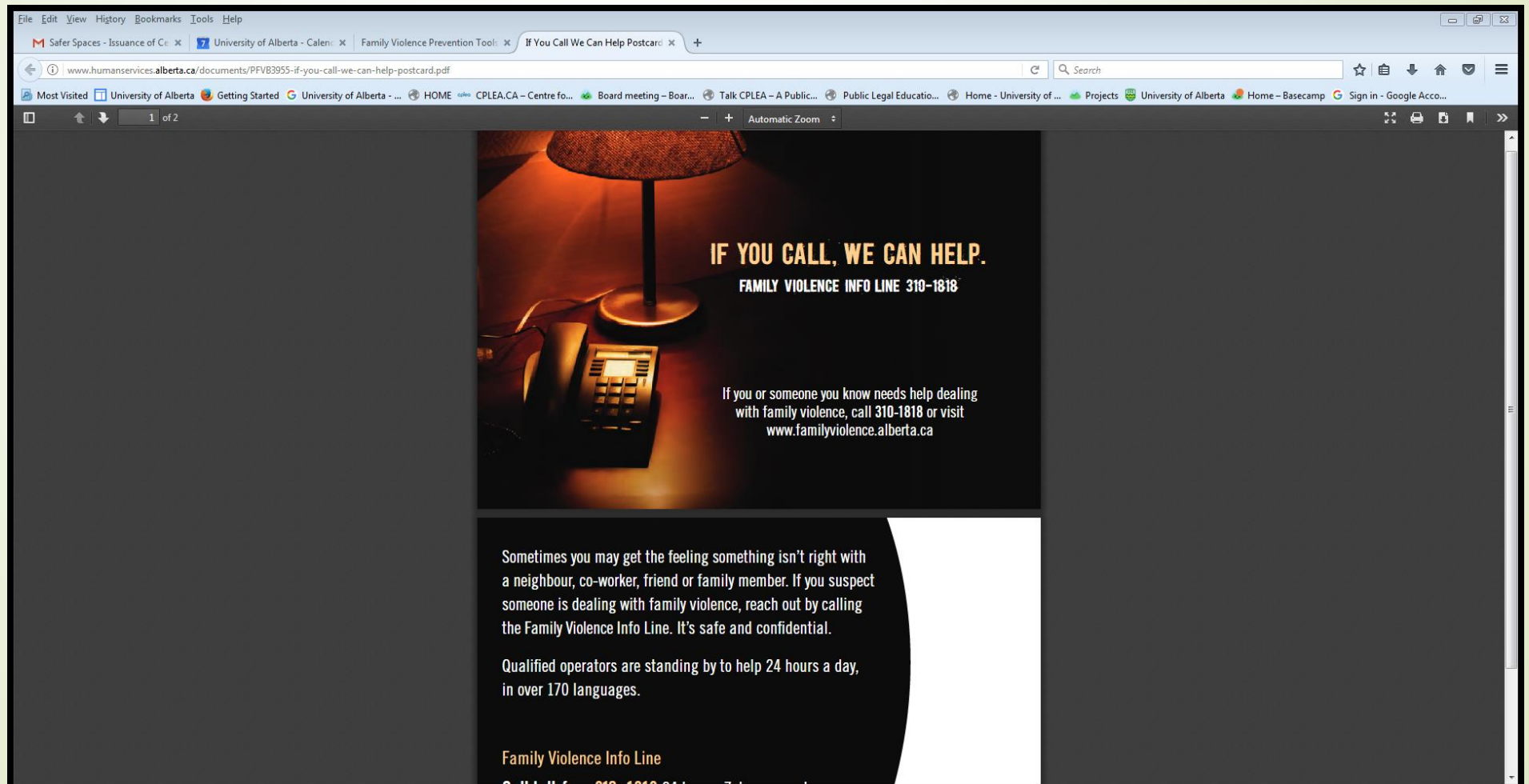
Talk to trained staff over the phone toll-free 24 hours a day, 7 days a week in more than 170 languages



<http://www.humanservices.alberta.ca/abuse-bullying.html>

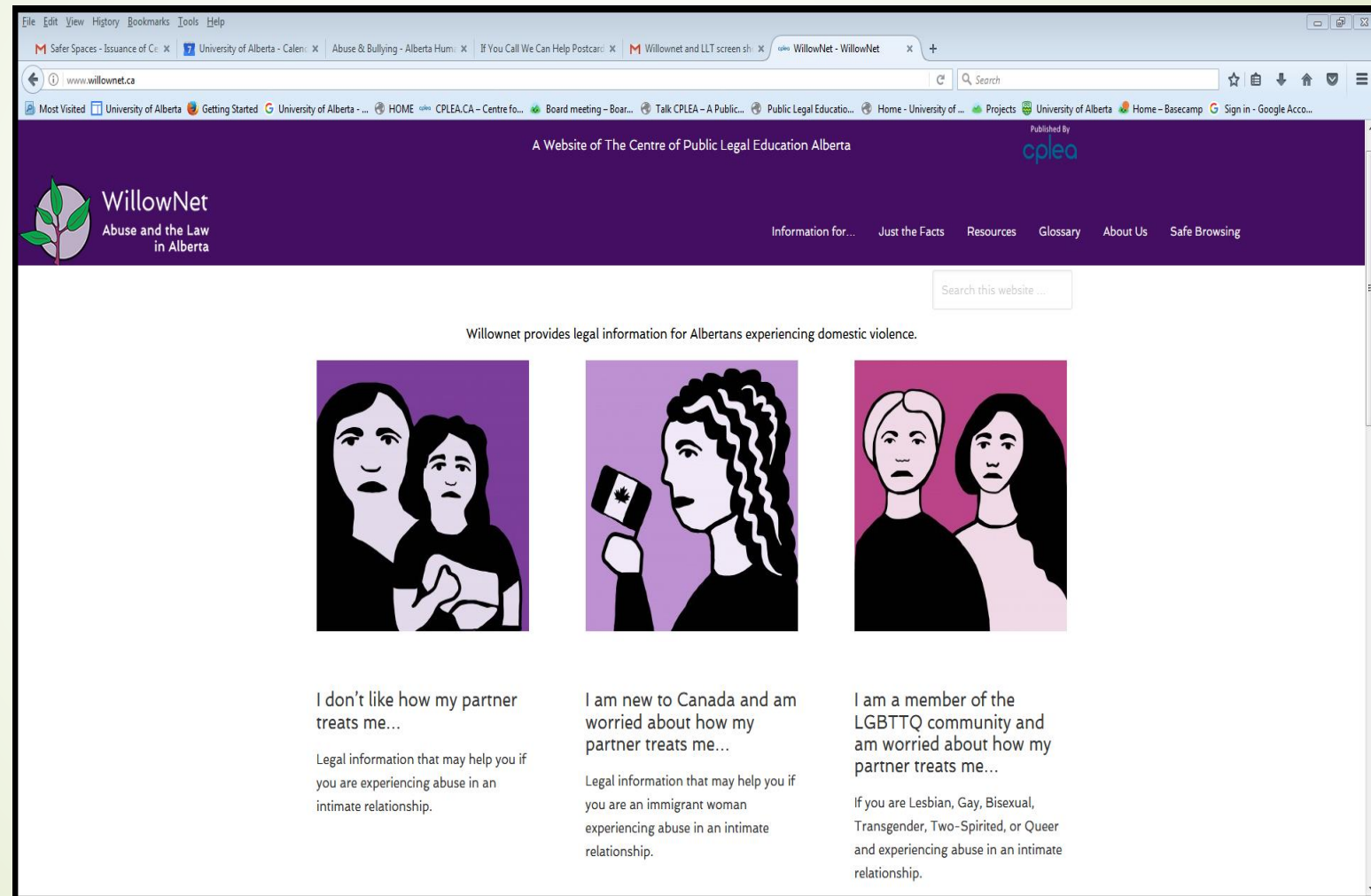


# Posters





# WillowNet: www.willownet.ca



The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying the WillowNet website. The browser's address bar shows the URL www.willownet.ca. The website's header is purple and contains the WillowNet logo (a green willow branch) and the text "Abuse and the Law in Alberta". To the right of the logo is a navigation menu with links: "Information for...", "Just the Facts", "Resources", "Glossary", "About Us", and "Safe Browsing". Below the header is a search bar with the placeholder text "Search this website...". The main content area features a heading: "Willownet provides legal information for Albertans experiencing domestic violence." Below this heading are three vertical cards, each with a stylized illustration and a text block. The first card shows two women, one appearing distressed, with the text: "I don't like how my partner treats me... Legal information that may help you if you are experiencing abuse in an intimate relationship." The second card shows a woman holding a Canadian passport, with the text: "I am new to Canada and am worried about how my partner treats me... Legal information that may help you if you are an immigrant woman experiencing abuse in an intimate relationship." The third card shows two women, one appearing distressed, with the text: "I am a member of the LGBTQ community and am worried about how my partner treats me... If you are Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Two-Spirited, or Queer and experiencing abuse in an intimate relationship."


WillowNet  
Abuse and the Law  
in Alberta

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Information for... Just the Facts Resources Glossary About Us Safe Browsing


Search this website ...

Willownet provides legal information for Albertans experiencing domestic violence.




I don't like how my partner treats me...

Legal information that may help you if you are experiencing abuse in an intimate relationship.



I am new to Canada and am worried about how my partner treats me...

Legal information that may help you if you are an immigrant woman experiencing abuse in an intimate relationship.



I am a member of the LGBTQ community and am worried about how my partner treats me...

If you are Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Two-Spirited, or Queer and experiencing abuse in an intimate relationship.





# Next step: DV Resources for Landlords and Property Managers

- ▶ Province-wide initiative to assist landlords better understand domestic violence, the services available to help victims, and generally to play their roles is assisting their tenants more effectively.
- ▶ Partnering with the
  - Alberta Residential Landlord Association
  - Calgary Residential Rental Association
  - Stop Abuse in Families
  - Alberta Council of Women's Shelters



For more information or to Sign Up!

▶ Contact Professor Lois Gander, Q.C.

**[lois.gander@ualberta.ca](mailto:lois.gander@ualberta.ca)**



Thank you!