

CEASE  CENTRE TO
EMPOWER
ALL
SURVIVORS OF
EXPLOITATION &
TRAFFICKING

ANNUAL **REPORT**

2025-2026



2026 REPORT FROM CEASE

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



As I reflect on the past year, I am reminded that CEASE continues to evolve in response to the changing realities of sexual exploitation and human trafficking in our communities. This year has been one of growth, challenges, and a deepened commitment to ensuring individuals receive meaningful, and culturally responsive support.

Our partnership with Multicultural Health Brokers Cooperative has been a significant source of learning this year. Through this partnership, we have been challenged to think differently about how we speak about exploitation, online grooming, and sexual violence within culturally diverse communities. Nearly 40% of Edmonton residents identify as racialized, and so we want to continually examine how relevant, and culturally responsive our services are for all communities.

Over the years, the realities of exploitation have continued to evolve. From CEASE's inception, we have responded to individuals wherever exploitation occurs — from the streets of Edmonton to Body Rub Centres to private residences. Increasingly, however, exploitation is occurring online. We recognize that addressing exploitation today requires both frontline support and a deeper understanding of how technology is shaping recruitment, grooming, and sexual exploitation.

This year, CEASE also completed a new three-year

Strategic Plan that will guide our work moving forward. The plan reflects both the realities we are seeing on the ground and the long-term sustainability needed to strengthen our impact.

Our staff continues to demonstrate extraordinary compassion and dedication. They understand the emotional weight of this work and continue to show up each day for individuals navigating violence, addiction, poverty, homelessness, and sexual exploitation. Approximately 45% of the individuals we support were sexually exploited as children, and the average age of women accessing our services is 33 years old. By the time many women arrive at CEASE, they have endured years of violence and trauma. Our staff recognize that healing is not linear and that trust is often built slowly. Through gentleness, and consistency, they journey alongside

women as they move toward hope.

“...WE WANT TO CONTINUALLY EXAMINE HOW ACCESSIBLE, RELEVANT, AND CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE OUR SERVICES ARE FOR ALL COMMUNITIES.”


A central part of this work is the role of survivor voices. Survivors are not only recipients of services, teachers, informing how we respond to

exploitation and violence. Their lived experience continues to shape our programming, challenge our assumptions.

I am also grateful to our board of directors for their encouragement, trust, and leadership. They have provided space for growth, supported innovation, and

recognized that meaningful change often requires courage, risk-taking, and reflection.

This year marked my third anniversary as the Executive Director of CEASE. As I reflect on this journey, I feel a renewed sense of confidence in this role. I am a strong believer that real change begins when we remain close to the people we serve—listening deeply and walking alongside those most impacted by injustice. Thank you to our staff, board, funders, partners, and volunteers, who continue to stand with CEASE and make this work possible. Together, we are creating a future where no person is bought, sold, or exploited, and where equality and justice are not privileges, but rights enjoyed by all.



“TOGETHER, WE ARE CREATING A FUTURE...WHERE EQUALITY AND JUSTICE ARE NOT PRIVILEGES, BUT RIGHTS ENJOYED BY ALL.”

LIZ JOHN-WEST
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

2026 REPORT FROM CEASE

BOARD PRESIDENT



Last spring CEASE engaged with STACK'D consulting to assist with strategic planning for the future. We identified what is most important to our organization: funding requirements to meet demand and need for services provided by CEASE; increase our online presence in order to provide supports where sexual exploitation is most often coordinated; reduce sexual exploitation by challenging norms around purchasing of sex and educating purchasers of sex.

The consultation was a very helpful tool to focus our

energy and attention to areas which we want to strengthen moving forward.

Moving forward with this focus, our successful funding initiatives have ensured we remain financially viable,

allowing us to continue the incredibly important work of CEASE.

We have significantly increased our online presence. We are endeavouring to ensure we are meeting people who need our service in an easily accessible platform. We continue to operate our STOP program in Edmonton,

“**WHATEVER DIRECTION OTHER AGENCIES CHOOSE TO FOLLOW, CEASE WILL REMAIN PASSIONATE AND DEDICATED TO ENDING SEXUAL EXPLOITATION IN ALL ITS FORMS.**”

directly addressing sexual exploitation by educating purchasers of sex of the harms caused by the purchase. Our goal was to expand the STOP program across the province. CEASE has been involved in running this program for almost 30 years. With our experience we feel we are in a strong position to develop the program province wide. We have met with obstacles to our continued involvement, specifically as it relates to our role as coordinator of the STOP program. We have reached out to our collaborators about continued conversations which highlight our respective roles and responsibilities to achieve common goals. Whatever direction other agencies choose to follow, CEASE will remain passionate and dedicated to ending sexual exploitation in all its forms.

I want to sincerely thank the staff and especially Liz John-West for the commitment and passion they bring every day to a worthy but challenging cause. It is an absolute pleasure to be a part of this Board where compassion and humour make the experience so fulfilling.

KAREN THORSRUD
PRESIDENT

CEASE IN NUMBERS

APRIL 1, 2025-MARCH 31, 2026

CEASE supported **195 clients this year**, with **106 being new clients**.

44 clients took part in more than one of the programs CEASE offered.

The Hope Log recorded **248 calls and emails received** by CEASE.

90% of calls and emails came from women in the industry seeking information about CEASE programs or requesting support from case workers.

Files were opened for **106 individuals** so staff can work with them one-on-one.

CEASE **organized 2 campaigns** and **offered 9 programs** for clients this year.

We offered 12 microloans to clients, and **83% of participants were able to pay back their loan**.

Our community and online outreach programs made **519 contacts through both in person, and online platforms**.

CEASE **invested in 3 key partnerships this year**, with focuses on employment curriculum, culture and ethnicity, and statistical data analysis.

ANNUAL REPORT

APRIL 1, 2025-MARCH 31, 2026

CAMPAIGNS

Pin It to End It

In May 2025, CEASE ran a campaign 'pin it to end it' to introduce CEASE's 'You can't buy me' pin. We had eight women promote the campaign with a video message.

Men of Honour

In December 2025, CEASE began Men of Honour Campaign to highlight the many men who live honourable lives—raising their families and living life of service and integrity. The campaign was intended to be a counter narrative to the men who are purchasing women's body for sex acts.

PROGRAMS

Community + Online Platform Outreach (519 contacts)

Outreach into massage parlours remains a critical strategy for connecting with women who may not yet be aware of CEASE and the supports available to them. Through in-person outreach into Body Rub Centres, CEASE staff continue to build trust and establish a consistent, non-judgmental presence within the community. This work creates safer pathways for women to access supports, ask questions, and share concerns about their experiences. Over the past year 519 contacts were made through outreach.

CEASE also expanded outreach efforts through targeted online awareness campaigns, helping women access information and supports in ways that are discreet, accessible, and responsive to their circumstances.

Peer Support Line

In September 2025, CEASE launched its Peer Support Line, offering after-hours emotional support from individuals with lived experience, who understand the realities many callers are facing. The line averages two to three calls per week, with women reaching out from across Alberta seeking connection, understanding, and someone willing to listen without judgment. One caller shared her experiences of childhood trauma, trafficking, and entering the sex trade. After several conversations with peer support workers, she expressed feeling heard and less alone. The Peer Support Line continues to highlight the importance of lived experience and peer connection in the healing journey.

Building Bridges (84 new intakes)

Building Bridges is CEASE's community outreach and systems navigation program. Through this initiative, women receive individualized support in accessing essential services such as housing, healthcare, addiction recovery supports, income assistance, legal resources, counselling, and safety planning.

The program recognizes that many individuals face significant barriers when trying to navigate complex systems alone. CEASE staff work alongside women to help reduce those barriers, provide advocacy, and build connections to long-term community supports. The goal is not only immediate assistance, but empowering individuals with the knowledge and confidence to access resources independently in the future.

Nancy was experiencing a highly exploitative housing situation where she was forced to exchange sexual acts with her landlord in order to maintain a place to live. Facing the risk of homelessness, she felt she had no other viable options for safety or shelter. With support from CEASE she was able to break her lease through Safer Spaces, move

out of the sexually exploiting situation and connected with a housing worker who got her into bridge house. Since that time, Nancy continues working on her completing her schooling and rebuilding her independence. She is now moving forward with a renewed sense of hope and direction, pursuing goals that are self-determined.

Save Match Spend (24 individuals served)

Save Match Spend is a collaborative financial empowerment program offered in partnership with United Way. It provides practical financial literacy education designed to help participants strengthen their financial stability and independence.

Participants learn foundational money management skills including budgeting, saving, banking, debt awareness, and financial goal setting. Individuals also have opportunities to connect with a financial coach for personalized guidance and support. Through this program, participants are encouraged to build confidence in managing finances and planning for long-term stability.

Transform U (14 individuals served)

Transform U is CEASE's employment readiness and empowerment program designed to support women as they pursue education, training, and meaningful employment opportunities. The program focuses on helping participants identify strengths, build confidence, develop workplace skills, and explore future career pathways. Support may include resume development, interview preparation, goal setting, job search assistance, and connections to educational or vocational opportunities.

Transform U recognizes that employment is often an important step toward long-term stability, independence, and healing.

Income Tax Preparation

CEASE provides free income tax preparation services for individuals with modest incomes and simple tax situations. Filing taxes can be an important step in accessing benefits, tax credits, and financial supports that individuals may otherwise miss. For many women accessing CEASE services, completing tax returns helps restore financial stability and access to resources such as GST rebates, child benefits, and other government supports. This year the total tax refund individuals received was \$11,013.43, GST credit of \$10,773.12 and Child Tax Credit of \$50,475.92

Microloans (12 individuals; 83% returned their loan)

CEASE's microloan program provides small, low-barrier loans to help individuals address urgent financial needs or invest in opportunities that support long-term stability.

Through the microloan program, many participants were able to avoid bills being sent to collections, maintain affordable payment plans, improve their credit standing, and reduce significant financial stress. Several individuals successfully paid off high-interest debt, closed outstanding accounts, and became debt free. Others reported improvements to their credit scores, allowing them to qualify for car loans and access other financial opportunities. Beyond the financial outcomes, the program helped create greater peace of mind and stability for women who were working to rebuild their lives.

Bursaries (31 bursaries given amounting to \$50,031)

CEASE continues to invest in education and skill development through bursary support for women pursuing post-secondary education, training programs, and career development opportunities. Bursaries help reduce financial barriers related to tuition, books, transportation, and school supplies. Through partnerships with educational institutions and community organizations, women are supported

in building sustainable futures for themselves and their families. Some of the courses taken include Dental Office Assistant, Social Work, and Health Care Aide.

STOP (73 men in attendance over 5 sessions)

The Sex Trade Offender Program (STOP) is the longest-running program of its kind in Canada and will celebrate its 30th anniversary in May 2026. STOP is an educational intervention program for men charged with purchasing sexual services. The program focuses on the harms connected to the sex trade, including violence against women, human trafficking, exploitation, public health concerns, and the broader impact on families and communities. This year, CEASE also supported Calgary ALERT in developing their own STOP program. Participant reflections included: “What I learned today was my actions and its impact on society and how I can lose everything.” “I learned that buying sex is increasing human trafficking, STIs in the community, and destroys family life.” Funds generated through the program directly support women accessing CEASE services, including emergency grocery cards, transportation assistance, utility support, rent assistance, and victim services.

PARTNERSHIPS

Multi-Cultural Health Brokers

CEASE and MCHB entered into a partnership agreement to bring awareness into various ethno-cultural communities. MCHB identified four cultural groups to work with on sextortion and sexual exploitation. The four groups are Indian, Eretrian, Ethiopian, and Somalian.

Thomson Reuters Social Impact Spring

Earlier this year, Thomson Reuters contacted CEASE to share findings from its report, *Missing and Stolen*:

Disappearances and Trafficking of Indigenous Peoples in Canada, including data emerging from Edmonton. Recognizing the importance of CEASE's work to prevent and address sexual exploitation and trafficking, Thomson Reuters invited CEASE to participate in its 2026 Social Impact Sprint. CEASE was honored to be selected as one of only 22 organizations across North America to participate in this initiative.

Through the Social Impact Sprint, Thomson Reuters dedicated time and expertise to our team, exploring innovative approaches to better support women involved in Edmonton's body rub centres. This collaboration provided valuable insights, strategic guidance, and access to professional expertise that will strengthen CEASE's ability to reach and support some of the most vulnerable women in our community.

FiT Curriculum Partnership

In an effort to enhance CEASE's Employment Program, CEASE has partnered with leaders in the hospitality and anti-trafficking sectors. Through connections established with Marriott International and the University of Maryland SAFE Center, CEASE was invited to explore participation in the Future in Training (FiT) Curriculum, an employment readiness program designed to support survivors of human trafficking and exploitation. The FiT Curriculum, developed through a collaboration between Marriott International, the American Hotel and Lodging Association Foundation, and the University of Maryland SAFE Center, provides comprehensive training resources and a train-the-trainer model that equips organizations to deliver employment-focused programming within their communities.

This partnership is an important step in expanding CEASE's capacity to support women as they move toward sustainable employment, financial stability, and lives free from exploitation.

COMMUNITY EDUCATION + AWARENESS

Over the past year, CEASE delivered numerous presentations and training sessions across Alberta, reaching communities from Cold Lake and Lakeland College to Calgary and beyond. Our education and awareness efforts engaged a diverse range of audiences, including churches, colleges, airports, social service agencies, multicultural organizations, and Indigenous organizations such as Atikameg Child and Family Services.

Presentation sizes ranged from intimate groups of 12 participants to larger gatherings of more than 50 attendees. Through these sessions, CEASE provided education on Human Trafficking 101 and Sextortion, increasing awareness of exploitation, equipping community members with tools to recognize warning signs, and strengthening the capacity of individuals and organizations to prevent and respond to these forms of victimization.

FUNDING SUPPORT

We are extremely grateful to our funders for believing in CEASE's mission and the individuals we serve. In addition to our numerous private donors, we have received life-changing funds from:

The City of Edmonton
Alberta Government
Edmonton Community Foundation
United Way
Taillefer Family Foundation
HRJ
Eldon & Anne Foote Fund for Education
Cara's Friendship Fund
Kate Quinn Fund

CEASE CENTRE TO
EMPOWER
ALL
SURVIVORS OF
EXPLOITATION &
T R A F F I C K I N G

WWW.CEASENOW.ORG