

IT'S NEVER OKAY:

ONTARIO'S GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE STRATEGY

May 2018

Ontario.ca/ItsNeverOK

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Dedication

It’s Never Okay: Ontario’s Gender-Based Violence Strategy is dedicated to the people of Ontario who have experienced or been affected by violence.

Thank you for your courage and bravery. We are all working for you to be safe.

A Personal Message from the Premier



When I first unveiled *It's Never Okay*, our action plan to stop sexual violence and harassment, I said that we can and must do better. Yet despite the progress we've made since then—thanks to the tireless effort and hard work of so many people in our province—sexual harassment and gender-based violence remain shockingly prevalent in our society.

While this reality can be discouraging, it also compels us to work together, even harder, to do everything we can to support survivors and end all forms of violence based on gender, gender expression or gender identity. That means having open conversations about gender-based violence in our communities and taking concrete, measurable actions to address the problem.

In Ontario, we've made it easier for women experiencing domestic violence to break their lease and find free legal advice. And we created five days of paid employment leave and up to 17 weeks of unpaid leave for survivors of domestic and sexual violence. We've made progress, but we still have a long way to go.

It's Never Okay: Ontario's Gender-Based Violence Strategy is our next step. It builds on what we learned and accomplished through our first action plan, our long-term strategy to end violence against Indigenous women, and our strategy to end human trafficking. It renews our commitment to building a safer province free of gender-based violence.

“We can't just assume that people coming forward will change everything. That alone is not going to create the change that we need to see. We all have to be vigilant and we have to shine a light in all parts of our lives to create those safe places that we know are possible.”

— **PREMIER KATHLEEN WYNNE**

January 25, 2018

A Personal Message from the Premier

This new strategy will help us challenge and change attitudes and behaviours through public education and training programs; improve culturally appropriate services and support for survivors, including those in rural communities; and ensure that our province's justice system is accessible to survivors and responsive to their needs.

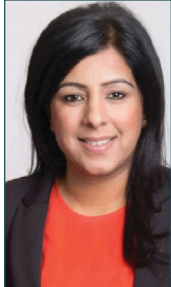
Gender-based violence is a reality in every community in this province and we need everyone to be a part of this important conversation. That's why we developed this strategy with Indigenous partners, community partners who work with those who have experienced gender-based violence and people with lived, diverse experience.

We have a responsibility to end gender-based violence in every corner of our province. We must be vigilant. And we can't stop until we've built a society where everyone is safe and respected.

Together, we can end the cycle of violence and build a safer, more caring Ontario.

Kathleen Wynne
Premier

A Personal Message from the Minister



To be continued...

...that is the promise our government made, at the conclusion of *It's Never Okay*, our plan to stop sexual violence and harassment that we launched in 2015.

And so in 2018, we are renewing our commitment to work to end violence against women with the launch of *It's Never Okay: Ontario's Gender-Based Violence Strategy*.

We need to act because survivors around the world have been saying “me too.”

Me too: *My boss crossed the line, but I couldn't speak up.*

Me too: *I didn't want sex, but I was afraid to say no.*

Me too: *My partner gets so angry it scares me.*

Statistics show that one in three women will experience sexual violence in their lives. Far too many women have experienced violence.

Survivors of gender-based violence have shown profound courage in naming the problem and demanding action. Gender-based violence is still a reality in every community. We all have a role to play in making Ontario safer.

And yet, too many survivors remain unable or not ready to speak up. Many have had their voices silenced by racism, colonialism and discrimination.

This year, my community of Peel Region has been particularly impacted by gender-based violence. Too many women have been silenced permanently, leaving behind family and friends.

We can and must do better to support survivors, and to change attitudes, improve safety in homes, in workplaces, on campuses and in communities.

A Personal Message from the Minister

As long as people in Ontario continue to experience gender-based violence, our work is not done.

I would like to thank our partners and the front-line workers who helped build this strategy.

I would like to thank the Violence Against Women Roundtable for sharing their invaluable knowledge, leadership and expertise over the course of this year and throughout our journey of implementing *It's Never Okay: An Action Plan to Stop Sexual Violence and Harassment*. And, I want to acknowledge the people who came forward with their own stories of trauma and survival. We see you, we hear you, and we are truly grateful.

In 2015, we said “It’s never okay”, and we’re saying it again, this time in chorus with a global movement demanding change.

Our goal is nothing less than an Ontario where everyone is cared for, where everyone is safe and where everyone lives free from violence.

Harinder Malhi

Minister of the Status of Women

Gender-based violence is **never** okay.

It's not the survivor's fault.

It's not wrong to say it happened.

It's not wrong to be silent.

But **no one** should have to carry the pain of violence in their hearts, in their families, in their relationships.

It's time to end gender-based violence.

“We call on all Ontarians through their actions and beliefs to make change happen. We cannot do it without you.”

— **IT'S NEVER OKAY: An Action Plan to Stop Sexual Violence and Harassment (2015)**

What is Gender-Based Violence?

Gender-based violence is any form of violence based on gender, gender expression or gender identity. Gender-based violence is the ultimate expression of gender inequality and misogyny. Gender-based violence takes many forms: sexual violence, domestic violence, harassment and financial abuse.

While anyone can experience gender-based violence, we know that women and children are more at risk because of social power structures. And the risk is even greater for women of colour, Indigenous peoples, Francophones, newcomers, women with disabilities, members of the LGBTQI2S community, and women who are living in rural and remote communities.

Gender-based violence can include:

- Domestic and intimate partner violence
- Physical violence
- Sexual violence and abuse
- Emotional/psychological violence
- Harassment
- Financial abuse
- Forced labour, slavery, servitude, human trafficking
- Femicide
- Structural or systemic forms of violence that create or uphold gender inequality (e.g. colonization, racism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, ageism, etc.)
- Cyber violence

IN CANADA, WOMEN ARE:

Eleven times
more likely to be
sexually victimized

Three times
more likely to be
stalked

Four times more likely to
be a **victim of intimate
partner homicide**

It's Never Okay: Ontario's Gender-Based Violence Strategy

A New Strategy and a Continued Commitment

Many survivors have been carrying experiences of violence within themselves for years. Many have blamed themselves, or believe that abuse is 'just the way it is.'

But that is coming to an end. We are in a cultural moment. Survivors are coming forward as never before. Asking for help. Demanding change.

When survivors ask for support, it's our duty to respond. We also must create safe spaces and shine a light on every corner where gender-based violence could happen. We all have a role in ensuring our communities are healthy, inclusive, and safe for everyone.

It's Never Okay: Ontario's Gender-Based Violence Strategy is a comprehensive plan to end gender-based violence, and a commitment to a safer future for women and girls in this province.

It's Never Okay: Ontario's Gender-Based Violence Strategy will provide up to \$242 million to reinforce the government's commitment to end gender-based violence and will build on the important work and investments we have made through our other

initiatives to address violence: *Ontario's Domestic Violence Action Plan (2004)*, *It's Never Okay: An Action Plan to Stop Sexual Violence and Harassment (2015)*, *Walking Together: Ontario's Long-Term Strategy to End Violence Against Indigenous Women (2016)* which was the first of its kind in Canada and developed in collaboration with Indigenous partners, and *Ontario's Strategy to End Human Trafficking (2016)*.

This new strategy includes actions across four key areas: **improving services and supports** for survivors for people with diverse needs and lived experiences, their families and communities; **intervening early and effectively** to prevent the cycle of violence; **changing attitudes and norms**; and **improving system response** to offenders.

Economic Stability Can Prevent Gender-Based Violence

There is a direct link between economic empowerment and gender-based violence. Women with domestic violence experiences have more disrupted work histories, are on lower personal incomes, have had to change jobs more often and are employed at higher levels in casual and part time work than women without these experiences.

Employment is also a key pathway for women to leave a violent relationship. The financial security that employment affords can enable women to escape becoming trapped and isolated in violent and abusive relationships, and to maintain, as far as possible, their home and standard of living.

Ontario is investing in a number of initiatives that will improve economic prospects for women:

- Building 100,000 new child care spaces to make it easier for new parents to re-enter the workforce.
- Increasing the minimum wage.
- Releasing *Then Now Next: Ontario's Strategy for Women's Economic Empowerment*, which will help remove long-standing barriers that have kept women from benefitting equally in Ontario's rapidly changing economy.

Ontario's Gender-Based Violence Strategy includes commitments to:

IMPROVE SERVICES AND SUPPORTS

1. Ensure appropriate supports are there for survivors when they need them—more trauma-informed counselling and crisis support, more services for diverse populations, more spaces at emergency shelters, more support to find transitional housing as well as supporting more culturally appropriate spaces to heal.
2. Increase the capacity of Sexual Assault Centres and the Support Services for Male Survivors of Sexual Abuse programs to meet the growing demand for services and help more vulnerable populations, such as mature minors. The increased investment will also help increase access to services for survivors in rural communities.
3. Enhance access to safe spaces for women and children, counselling, services in rural/remote communities, and innovation initiatives. This will mean:

- Up to 1,000 more women and children will be provided with a safe bed.
 - At least 600 women will get housing supports through the Transitional Housing Support Program.
 - More individuals from diverse populations will be provided with inclusive, culturally-appropriate and safe services within shelters.
 - Diverse populations (e.g. LGBTQI2S, Indigenous, Francophone, immigrant, black and racialized, and persons with disabilities, etc.) at risk or experiencing gender-based violence will get culturally appropriate counselling.
 - 2,000 more women and children will get counselling they need along with long-term counselling to support transitions from crisis to stability.
4. Implement safe pets options in shelters so women can keep their pets with them when fleeing violence or have other safe options for their pets.
 5. Expand the **Language Interpreter Services (LIS) Program**. LIS provides spoken and sign language interpreter services 24 hours a day, seven days a week for victims of domestic and/or sexual violence. The program enables survivors of gender-based violence to access the broader service system.
 6. Increase funding to **Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence Treatment Centres (SADVTC)**, our 35 hospital-based sexual assault and treatment centres, to improve access to high quality, specialized care.
 7. Make the Roundtable on Violence Against Women permanent and provide additional funding to support its continued valuable advice.
 8. Support the implementation of the strategy with an intergovernmental table on gender-based violence, which will enable greater coordination and collaboration across government.

“The Violence Against Women Roundtable applauds the recent announcement of a Gender-Based Violence Strategy for Ontario. It reflects many of the concerns and issues that violence against women advocates have raised, and we look forward to working with the government to implement the strategy.”

— **PAMELA CROSS and FARRAH KHAN**

Co-Chairs, Ontario's Roundtable on Violence Against Women

A Permanent Roundtable on Violence Against Women

Ontario will continue to engage Ontario's Roundtable on Violence Against Women in order to ensure continued dialogue with the sector and gather expert advice. In doing so, the roundtable's informed and collaborative voice will continue to put forward ways of ending gender-based violence and help ensure Ontarians are free from the threat, fear or experience of sexual violence and harassment.

INTERVENE EARLY AND EFFECTIVELY

9. Enhance support for the Supervised Access Program to address services pressures so children and families can have quicker access to services that can help keep them safe from violence during family separation.
10. A Sexual Violence and Harassment Toolkit for the Child Welfare Sector will provide youth, child protection workers, and caregivers with resources and information on the experiences and potential vulnerabilities of children and youth when they are coming into care, when they are in care, and when they are transitioning out of care. A resource guide and training materials specifically to support LGBT2SQ Children and Youth involved with the Child Welfare System will also be developed.
11. A collaborative course for child protection staff and staff working in the Violence Against Women sector is in development. This joint training model will promote further collaboration between the two sectors when providing services to children and families experiencing domestic violence.
12. Increase funding to the Family Court Support Worker Program to provide supports to survivors navigating the family court process who may be at a heightened risk of violence. The new funding will enhance the capacity of the program to address unmet service demands and ensure that victims can more readily access services that can help keep them safe.
13. Expanding the Child Witness Program to offer individual counselling, in addition to the existing group counselling delivery model, and to increase supports to Indigenous-led preventative services. Among other things, this program provides early intervention to child witnesses of abuse to help them heal and reduce the need for more intensive supports later.

CHANGING ATTITUDES AND NORMS

14. Provide more professionals in a wider range of sectors with the tools to recognize and intervene in situations of violence in their workplaces and with their clients, including:
 - Learning and development supports on gender-based violence for the front

line staff of Ontario's social assistance programs (i.e. Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program) to provide survivors with improved access to community and program supports that promote the safety, economic self-sufficiency, health and well-being of survivors of gender-based violence. The Family Responsibility Office will work with ministry partners (e.g. Ministry of the Attorney General) on strategies to increase education and awareness of its program and options available for women and their children who are fleeing violence and facing financial barriers.

- Education and professional learning for Early Childhood Educators, including developing resources.
- Providing professional development opportunities for principals and vice-principals on how to respond to acts of cyber violence through the Healthy Relationships in a Digital World Project.
- Helping students to develop an understanding of the root causes of gender inequality, and—from a very early stage—understand healthy relationships and consent.
- Supporting publicly assisted colleges and universities in providing front-line staff (campus security guards, campus sexual violence response team, and health services staff) with training that will assist them in appropriately

responding to reports and/or disclosures of sexual violence.

- The Student Voices of Sexual Violence survey gathered information from postsecondary students about their experiences, general attitudes, and beliefs related to personal safety and sexual violence. The survey results are expected to assist postsecondary institutions to improve services, build awareness, and update policies and processes related to addressing issues of sexual violence.
 - Support education and training to Service Managers and housing providers on the Special Priority Policy.
 - Support the development of SAIL (**Supportive Approaches through Innovative Learning**) information kits that will provide trauma-informed learning and development to front-line social assistance staff, providing them with the tools to appropriately respond to reports and/or disclosures of gender-based violence, including human trafficking.
15. Challenge the underlying conditions, attitudes, behaviours and values that lead to violence through an expanded, modernized, evidence-based public education program that will include:
- Bystander education to equip individuals with the tools to recognize, intervene and respond to gender-

based violence. This work will build on Ontario's successful #WhoWillYouHelp and #ItsNeverOkay campaigns, helping to raising awareness and change attitudes and behaviours.

- Recognizing that we need men to be partners in ending violence against women, we will make a greater investment in community-based education and initiatives which engage men and boys in all communities, This builds on and will be informed by previous initiatives like *It Starts with You. It Stays with Him, Draw the Line*, and *I am a Kind Man* and the work of *Neighbours, Friends & Families*.
16. Extend the Creative Engagement Fund to support artistic projects that raise awareness and provoke discussions about sexual violence and harassment. Twenty projects have been funded to date. This includes:
 - “Art 4 Change”, a Hamilton-based project, which developed a multidisciplinary program to encourage dialogue around sexual violence and harassment. Through exhibitions, performances, installation and lectures, this project addressed rape culture and bystander intervention in the community.
 - “Weave and Mend,” a Toronto-based project, which engaged young homeless Indigenous women and racialized women to build public art installations, which became safe public spaces for dialogue on gender-based violence.
 17. Extend and expand our free independent legal advice pilot program for survivors of sexual assault province-wide to ensure survivors have access to confidential legal advice so they can make an informed decision about what is best for them, no matter how much time has passed after a sexual assault has occurred.
 18. Pilot Canada's first dedicated LGBTQI2S Community Legal Clinic specifically to address the community's unique needs and facilitate training on safer and inclusive spaces for the over 70 community legal clinics across Ontario.
 19. Enhance the service and system capacity of the **Partner Assault Response (PAR)** Program to better respond to the needs of offenders with the aim of increasing victim safety. The additional investment to the PAR program will ensure service providers have the additional capacity to meet service demands and will allow for work on a long-term program redevelopment initiative, including differentiated responses to reduce re-offending.
 20. Develop new policing standards on sexual assault and domestic violence occurrences. These standards will be based on best practices and developed through extensive consultation with a variety of stakeholders and partners.
 21. Following consultation with violence against women advocates, enhance the

IMPROVE JUSTICE SYSTEM RESPONSE

'Victim Notification System' to improve communication between survivors of violence and the correctional system, particularly at critical times such as when offenders are released.

22. Continue the Supporting Police Response to Sexual Violence and Harassment grant program. The grant provides funding to police services, in collaboration with community partners, to help ensure the necessary tools and resources are in place to better respond, and support survivors throughout the investigation process. As part of the first grant cycle, 15 projects have been funded to date, including the implementation of multi-sector sexual assault case review committees, similar to the Philadelphia Model, to track the treatment of sexual assault cases by police and develop training on best practices to improve on sexual assault investigative practices.
23. Assess the trans policy in correctional facilities through development of a research project proposal to survey current and former trans inmates about their experiences in custody related to their gender identity and/or expression, including placement, supports, medical care, and discrimination and harassment. Results would be used to inform future updates of policies and programs.
24. Convene an integrated justice symposium to bring together leaders in the area of violence against women, justice and other areas to discuss ways to identify emerging issues of gendered violence, ways to improve sexual assault survivors' experiences with the justice

Creative Engagement Fund

Project ArmHer is a multi-disciplinary arts project in Sudbury that provides a forum for sex workers to tell their stories of sexual violence through performance, exhibits and audience workshops.

system, and ideas on alternate approaches that could meet their needs.

25. Work with justice and community partners to explore innovative and alternative justice approaches—such as restorative justice programs—to enhance, in appropriate cases, the choices available to survivors of sexual violence beyond the traditional criminal court model. Survivors and advocates have raised concerns about the treatment of sexual assault survivors in the justice system and have called for more options to be available for survivors of sexual violence beyond the criminal court model.

This strategy is based on extensive consultation. More than 200 agencies, Indigenous partners and survivors of gender-based violence shared their diverse experiences and their insights into how Ontario could better respond to the needs of survivors. The Roundtable on Violence Against Women provided invaluable advice and a strong voice on gender-based violence issues. We are indebted for the guidance and advocacy of the many survivors and those working to end gender-based violence.

Intersecting Identities and Gender-Based Violence

- One in three women, and one in six men, will experience some form of sexual assault in their lifetime.
- In Canada, Indigenous women self-reported rates of spousal and non-spousal violence were almost three times higher than non-Indigenous women.
- Immigrant women self-reported lower rates of violence (4.9 per cent) than non-immigrant women (6.8 per cent), but research indicates this is as a result of barriers to reporting.
- Women with disabilities were nearly twice as likely as women without disabilities to have been sexually assaulted in the past 12 months.
- In Ontario, women who identified as lesbian or bisexual are more than twice as likely to be stalked.
- In 2012, Statistics Canada reported that 13 per cent of police-reported hate crimes were motivated by hatred of sexual orientation and compared to other forms of hate crimes, incidents related to sexual orientation are the most violent.
- Female seniors make up 60 per cent of survivors of police-reported family violence against seniors, and senior women account for 62 per cent of all family-related senior homicides.
- According to research, when racialized women report violence, their cases are taken less seriously and perpetrators often receive less harsh punishments within the criminal justice system.
- Twenty per cent of transgender Ontarians reported experiencing physical or sexual assault because of their gender identity alone.
- Compared to women in older age groups, younger women have the highest rates of sexual assault, stalking, and cyber-bullying.

More Services, Better Supports

For people who experience gender-based violence, the trauma can last a lifetime.

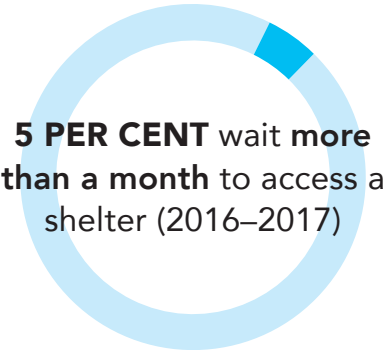
It could be sexual harassment by a coworker, childhood memories of an abusive parent or other adult, or being targeted at school. People who experience trauma and violence may require help to rebuild their lives, to heal, and to be safe. Ontario has been working to make sure that the right care is there when it's needed, including counselling, medical care, legal support, safe housing and more.

But more needs to be done. The recent rise in survivors speaking out about sexual violence and harassment has helped others understand that they are not alone, and many more are reaching out.

Demand for services and supports has never been greater.

The government has committed up to \$181.8 million in investments to support survivors to ensure support is there when it is needed. The strategy will:

- Increase investments in vital services such as counselling, crisis telephone lines, emergency shelters, transitional housing supports, and legal supports to serve more survivors from diverse populations and communities.
- Increase the capacity of Ontario's 42 Sexual Assault Centres to meet the growing demand for services and help more vulnerable populations such as mature minors and survivors in rural communities.



- Strengthen the capacity of Victim Crisis Assistance Ontario Program service providers, so they can meet increased client volumes and continue to deliver timely and responsive services, such as safety planning, referrals to the right community supports and early intervention services, to victims of gender-based violence and their families in the immediate aftermath of crime.
- Boost funding for the **Victim Quick Response Program (VQRP)** over three years to address the increased demand for financial assistance for things such as emergency expenses, travel expenses to attend medical treatment, crime scene clean-up and funeral expenses for homicide victims. The VQRP addresses the immediate needs of vulnerable victims following a violent crime through enhancing safety and meeting practical needs. From 2015/16 to 2016/17, there was a 55 per cent increase in the volume of requests to VQRP. Domestic violence and sexual assault victims account for approximately 70 per cent of VQRP requests.

Expanding Access to Supportive Housing

Ontario is investing \$425 million over four years to provide 2,475 additional units for people who need increased support in a safe place to live, as part of its recent investment in the Province's *Comprehensive Mental Health and Addictions Strategy*.

- Expand the Language Interpreter Services program, which provides spoken and sign language interpreter services 24/7 for survivors of domestic and/or sexual violence.
- Make capital investments to enable new service delivery models, including addressing significant accessibility renovations in Violence Against Women Shelters, or supporting the creation of more culturally appropriate space at Indigenous shelters

“Investments into women’s shelters and services that are centered around what survivors need, when they need it, are integral to ensuring we achieve positive long-lasting change. Guided by the four pillars, this significant investment will assist us in moving toward and realizing a future without violence in Ontario.”

— **MARLENE HAM**

Executive Director, Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses (OAITH)

The strategy means a safe bed for 1,000 more women and children fleeing violence, transitional housing supports for at least 600 more women, and counselling for 2,000 more women and children.

Our priority is safe, inclusive, culturally appropriate services for everyone. Because when survivors come forward they need help to start to move from crisis to a more stable life.

Mental Health and Addictions

One in three people in Ontario will experience a mental health or addictions issue in their lifetime.

In March 2018, Ontario committed to make the biggest provincial investment in Canadian history in mental health and addictions services—a four-year investment of \$2.1 billion that will reframe the system to deliver more accessible and better integrated care. This will make it easier to access services through a local school, family doctor's office or community-based organization. It will also help reduce wait lists and make it easier for people to access the care they need when they need it. By 2021, the vision is for people to be able to quickly get a mental health and addictions screening, crisis counselling and referral services through whichever method they choose through a new help line—online, by text or on the phone.

Some key elements of this investment include:

- Expanding access to publicly funded psychotherapy to more people with mild to moderate anxiety and depression. This funding will include cognitive behavioural therapy, which has proven to be highly effective.
- Establishing new Youth Wellness Hubs which will provide more young people with access to community-based services such as therapy and counselling in 2018-2019.
- Creating more supportive housing units over four years for people living with mental health and/or addictions issues who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness.
- Providing more supports designed to meet the specific needs of priority groups of children and youth, including LGBTQ2S, racialized and Indigenous children and youth.

More Help for Children and Youth to End the Cycle of Violence

Growing up in a violent home can make a lasting impression on children.

Studies suggest that the cycle of violence may continue with children who witness family violence. No child should have to live this way. And no child should grow up thinking they're alone, or that violence is okay.

That's why Ontario is investing up to \$29.7 million for services and supports for children and youth who have been traumatized by violence, as well as for preventative and early intervention measures to address root causes of violence. It will:

- Provide access to over 370 more children to the services they need through the Child Witness Program.
- Hire more child and youth workers or early childhood educators for violence against women emergency shelters, to support access to programming and counselling.

- Increase funding for Indigenous-led violence prevention services to support more Indigenous children and youth, and help break the cycle of violence.

Front-line violence against women agencies highlighted the need for greater supports for families who have experienced violence to better navigate the family court system. The strategy will increase funding to the Family Court Support Worker program to help survivors of domestic violence navigate the family court process. There will also be additional funding for the Supervised Access Program to help relieve service pressures, so children and families can more quickly access services that can help keep them safe from violence during family separation.

“Today I stand with all of the people, all over the province, who are trying to create those safe places. I recognize that I am in this with so many people. We all have responsibility and will continue to work together to create that safety for you—whoever you are, and wherever you are in Ontario.”

— **PREMIER KATHLEEN WYNNE**

January 25, 2018

Changing Minds, Challenging Attitudes

When Ontario launched the advertising campaign **#WhoWillYouHelp**, it had a measurable success in changing the opinions and challenging the behaviors that lead to gender-based violence.

People are now more aware of what constitutes sexual violence and harassment. Bystanders feel more empowered to intervene. Educators are teaching students from an early age about gender equality, consent and healthy relationships.

We are doing this because it's not enough to help people after violence happens. We need to build a society where it stops happening.

We need to continue to shift the culture around gender-based violence. The government is investing up to \$12.9 million for public awareness, professional development and innovation.

Results of Ontario's successful **#WhoWillYouHelp** and **#ItsNeverOkay** campaigns showed **more than 60 per cent of Ontarians** "strongly agree" they have an obligation to intervene if they witness sexual violence or harassment, an increase of **more than 20 per cent** from the start of the campaign. These campaigns generated **over 82 million impressions**.

Healthy Relationships in Ontario's Curriculum

The well-being and safety of all learners is a key goal of our government. The Ontario curriculum provides opportunities for students to learn safe online practices, healthy relationships, consent (such as how to use refusal skills and stand up for themselves, in addition to learning how to listen, and show respect for others) as well as issues such as gender-based violence in an age appropriate way. The curriculum has been designed so that all children and young people, including those of all sexual orientations, and gender identities, are able to see themselves in the curriculum.

To stop gender-based violence, people need to recognize violence and its causes. The strategy will:

- Implement a modernized, evidence-based approach to preventing gender-based violence using culturally appropriate, community-led work, which will continue to challenge the behaviours, attitudes, conditions and values that enable gender-based violence.
- Extend the Creative Engagement Fund for artistic projects that raise awareness and provoke discussions about gender-based violence and harassment.

TRANSITION TO WORKPLACE

- Train more workers from more sectors—including early childhood educators, campus security guards and housing service managers—so they can recognize the signs and respond appropriately.
- Employers play an important role in preventing and responding to violence. We will educate employers on their legal and human resources responsibilities to prevent violence in their workplaces by providing funding grants for projects for education and prevention of workplace violence, and by engaging community stakeholders and domestic violence and policing services in providing resources on workplace rights.

DID YOU KNOW
that between **September 2016**
and **September 2017**:

1,419 workplace harassment events
were recorded

1,917 field visits
were conducted

3,146 workplace harassment orders
were issued through increased enforcement by the *Dedicated Harassment Enforcement Team*

Improving Justice System Responses

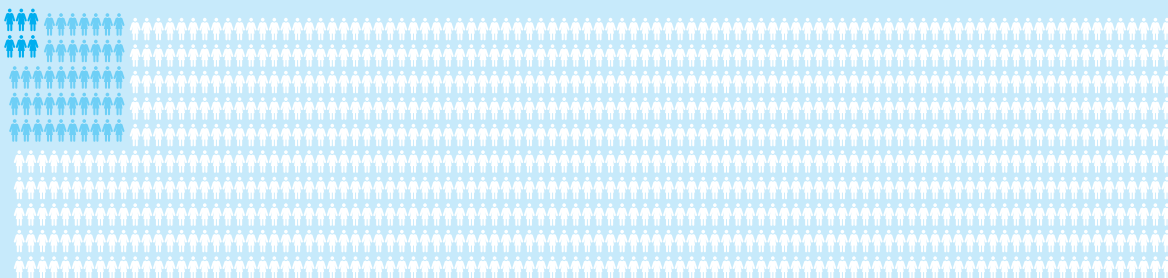
It's important that offenders are held accountable for their crimes. But sexual and domestic violence incidents are historically some of Ontario's most under-reported crimes.

Many survivors say the justice system needs to be easier to navigate. The process needs to be trauma informed and less intimidating. Survivors need to feel safe coming forward.

The strategy will:

- Extend and expand the Independent Legal Advice pilot program across the province for survivors of sexual assault to ensure survivors have access to confidential legal advice so they can make informed decisions about what is best for them no matter how much time has passed.
- Establish Canada's first dedicated LGBTQI2S Community Legal Clinic pilot to specifically address the community's unique needs, and facilitate training on safe and inclusive spaces for more than 70 community legal clinics across Ontario. Historically the LGBTQI2S community has faced discrimination in the justice system. This will provide specialized legal supports for the community, estimated to be 11 per cent of Ontario's population.
- Increase survivors' access to court-based support offered by the Victim/Witness Assistance Program by piloting service outside regular business hours and on weekends, and exploring opportunities for engagement with hub models of service delivery.

In Canada, out of every **1,000 sexual assaults**, **only 50** are reported to the police and **only 6** lead to conviction



- Strengthen Ontario’s 63 Partner Assault Response programs with an investment over three years which will enhance the service and system capacity to better respond to the needs of offenders with the aim of increasing victim safety.
- Develop new policing standards on sexual assault investigations and domestic violence occurrences.
- Explore innovative and alternative justice approaches—such as restorative justice programs—to provide, in appropriate cases, more choices to survivors of sexual violence beyond the traditional criminal court model.

“The announced increase to base funding for victim services recognizes the rising caseload and sheer complexity of supporting those impacted by crime and tragedy. The provincial government is a strong advocate for victims, survivors and the hard-working members of the Ontario Network of Victim Service Providers who support them at what are often times the most difficult points in their lives.”

— **SHERI MACDONALD**

Executive Director, Ontario Network of Victim Service Providers

What is Restorative Justice?

A form of justice that is an alternative to the traditional criminal prosecution model.

Restorative justice is not one specific model, but rather an approach to justice that addresses the harm caused by crime and its root causes, typically by providing an opportunity for the offender, victim and community to participate in a process with a focus on healing and reparation. It must be flexible enough to be applied to a variety of cases depending on the nature of the offence, and the particular circumstances of the offender, victim and community. Benefits may include victim empowerment, participation and validation; responsiveness to victims’ needs; holding offenders accountable; community involvement; and the potential to change the future behaviour of offenders.

Independent Legal Advice Pilot

The Independent Legal Advice pilot program for Survivors of Sexual Assault provides up to four hours of free, confidential legal advice to survivors of sexual assault in three locations (the Cities of Toronto, Ottawa and the District of Thunder Bay). It is available to survivors by phone or in person, at any point after a sexual assault has occurred.

The program is delivered to survivors through two models: a voucher model and a clinic model, which is in Toronto.

In both models, only legal advice is provided, not legal representation.

Since its launch on June 28, 2016 in three locations over 600 survivors of sexual assault have accessed this pilot program and over 1000 hours of free legal advice have been offered to survivors of sexual assault.

By piloting different locations and the two models, the government hopes to learn about best practices in program design and delivery which will help determine the future direction for this program.

Building on a Legacy, Fulfilling a Promise

Three years ago, Ontario launched *It's Never Okay: An Action Plan to Stop Sexual Violence and Harassment*. Its final page ended with a promise:

To be continued...

“In the wake of recent high-profile incidences of sexual violence, #metoo, and a deepening awareness of the issue, the needs of sexual violence survivors—and Ontario’s support of this population—has never been so timely. The *Gender-Based Violence Strategy* is groundbreaking. We are thrilled with the comprehensive nature of the plan. We look forward to being involved in all aspects of its implementation.”

— **LENORE LUKASIK-FOSS**

Chair of the Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres

It's Never Okay: Ontario's Gender-Based Violence Strategy fulfills that promise. We're more committed than ever to the fundamental goal to end gender-based violence.

This strategy is the continuation of a movement for change. We continue to call on everyone across this province to take a stand—*to look within ourselves to hold each other to account*—and to make a real difference. It's up to us all to make Ontario a caring, safe and inclusive place for everyone.

And as we do that work together, our story is still *to be continued...*

Appendix

Review of Sexual Violence and Harassment Counselling Services and Helplines

A ROADMAP FOR CHANGE

In *It's Never Okay: An Action Plan to Stop Sexual Violence and Harassment (2015)*, the government committed to review publicly-funded sexual violence and harassment counselling services and helplines as a way of providing better support to survivors.

This commitment included a focus on assessing the coordination and integration of Ontario's counselling services and helplines. The Ministry worked with a third party to conduct intensive consultations in the summer of 2017 that provided the Ministry with survivor-focused, evidence-based analysis in the five focus areas outlined below. The consultations solicited feedback from various sources including 140 survivors that participated in group interviews, 28 service provider interviews, 300 online surveys from both survivors and service providers and 9 interviews with Ministry partners.

This research was critical in guiding the development of *It's Never Okay: Ontario's Gender-Based Violence Strategy*.

Identifying existing competencies and best practices, gaps in services, and areas where services could be better coordinated

Survivors consulted most commonly identified the following needs:

- Being listened to without judgment or blame;
- Being believed;
- Connecting with others, including counsellors, who understand their experiences and their community identity (e.g., LGBTTIQQ2SAA+, Indigenous, Francophone, faith-based identity)
- Not experiencing discrimination and oppression because of their identity;
- Using trauma-informed supports and strategies that increased their safety and strengthen connection to the services;
- Accessing services that reflect an understanding of how multiple

identities (e.g., racialized identity, gender, faith), multiple experiences of trauma (childhood trauma, domestic abuse, multi-generational trauma) and community experiences (both historical and current) impact sexual violence and healing;

- Specific counselling goals (coping skills, improved self-esteem);
- Specific service goals (timely access, continuity of services, choice, long-term counselling); and
- Indigenous survivors expressed the need for holistic forms of healing (e.g., cultural-based counselling services, access to public transit, legal support, child care and spiritual counselling including Elders and peer based healing).

Identifying barriers and variations in access to services

Wait times were identified as a barrier to accessing required services. Service providers reported funding constraints affect their ability to meet demand for services and sometimes create wait times. Providers expressed concern that delays can make problems worse and require even greater levels of support. Some individual agencies are mitigating the impact of wait times by offering alternative support options.

Other barriers relating to the social location of the survivor were also identified (e.g., rural location, belonging to a community that stigmatizes survivors). Service approaches that are trauma-informed, anti-racist, anti-oppressive, and intersectional can help survivors overcome these barriers.

The overrepresentation of Indigenous women as survivors of sexual assault must be understood in context (e.g., colonialism, lower-socio-economic, health status, racism, and increased rates of violence against Indigenous women). Indigenous women are less likely to access legal or medical services due to the historical and ongoing systemic oppression and discrimination.

Indigenous women and men stated that healing is impossible when healing services are provided by the same people who are responsible for and continue to deny their responsibility for the current situation of Indigenous communities.

Examining how efficiently and effectively provincially-funded counselling and helpline services are meeting the diverse needs of survivors of sexual violence and harassment

Survivors' perception of the effectiveness of system coordination varied, emphasizing that referrals

from provider to provider can have a significant negative impact on their experience. Survivors who accessed many kinds of service providers appeared to be more likely to indicate that services were not well coordinated.

Warm transfers typically describe referrals that are actively facilitated by service providers (e.g., coordinating a conference call between service providers), and were perceived by survivors as more effective and more likely to result in access to the referred service.

Research indicates that when survivors are provided with trauma-informed services that are inclusive and intersectional they are more likely to have their common and specific needs met.

Survivors were more likely to identify having their individual and service needs met when accessing counselling and support that was specific to sexual violence such as a sexual assault centre.

Suggesting ways to measure performance with respect to meeting survivor needs

The need to build on service providers' evaluation of their own programs and services, and use evidence-based program planning to demonstrate better outcomes for survivors was recognized.

Service providers consulted recognize the importance of service coordination. There were also inconsistent perceptions of what defines short-term and long-term services among service providers.

Survivor group participants consistently reported a need for more long-term, sustained counselling services, particularly for those with complex needs.

Exploring adjustments to the funding and/or delivery system to better meet the needs of survivors of sexual violence and/or harassment, including the needs of diverse populations

There is an opportunity to increase coordination among the Ontario ministries who fund and deliver relevant programs to support survivors. This could also aid in defining a shared continuum of care for survivors and identifying and promoting promising practices between ministries.

Performance measurement could also be shifted to focus on survivor's outcomes over outputs such as the number of clients served.

A provincial-level measurement and understanding of the unmet demand for counselling services was also suggested as a means to find system-level strategies for monitoring, managing, and reducing wait times.

Ministry of the Status of Women

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