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‘Ontario Working to Stop Violence Against Women and Support Survivors’
Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres (OCRCC) Responds

Last week, Minister Responsible for Women’s Issues Lisa McLeod [announced a \\$11.5 million increase to shelters and counselling services](#).

While we laud this investment as positive for our shelter sisters and counselling services, this announcement created significant confusion among Ontario sexual assault centres and other violence support services.

In March 2018, the Province of Ontario launched a strategy which would see a significant increase in funding for Ontario sexual assault centres. At that time, the government -- and sexual violence support service providers alike – praised the plan, **which aimed to help survivors of sexual violence “get the support they need, when they need it”**. **Yet despite this commitment – and our attempts for information on it from regional and provincial government representatives – this funding increase has yet to become reality.**

Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres (OCRCC) responds to this with grave concern. For Ontario to be safe for survivors of violence, *all* services, including domestic violence shelters and rape crisis centres, must have the capacity to respond to community need. However, so far, resources to support this capacity have been received by some vital organizations, but not by others.

Since 2014, sexual assault centres everywhere across Ontario have seen a significant influx of new referrals, crisis line calls and intake for counselling services. Awareness of sexual violence is increasing — a significant and positive achievement. With the rise of the #MeToo and #TimesUp movements, community-based sexual assault centres have seen a significant upswing in calls and requests for support. In one year alone, Ontario’s sexual assault centres responded to *over 50,000* crisis line calls¹ —up from 30,000 recorded in 2009.

Without investment in front-line community-based sexual violence services, the pressures on resources have significant impacts on our communities. No survivor of violence should [face a wait for services](#) or to meet with a counsellor.

Sexual violence takes a significant economic and human toll on everything from our economy to our criminal justice sector, to our health care system, to the safety of those in our communities. We know from experience that when services aren’t provided in a timely and supportive way, survivors are often forced to turn to more costly services such as emergency rooms or family doctors. For all these reasons, sexual violence response *is* and *should be* a priority.

OCRCC will continue to speak up with and for survivors of sexual violence. We work with government, and invite them to be allies in improving the lives of survivors of sexual violence in Ontario.

¹ Ministry of the Attorney General, 2016



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Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres (OCRCC) is a network of community-based sexual assault centres in Ontario. Member centres have been supporting survivors of sexual violence and offering prevention education since 1977: services include counselling to survivors of recent and historical sexual violence, accompaniment to hospital, police and court, advocacy and crisis support.

If you or someone you know has experienced sexual violence, go to <https://sexualassaultsupport.ca/support/>