



News Release

Sexual Violence: Linked to some of our most serious social and health problems left behind in Budget 2023

Alberta, March 1, 2023 – With a large budget surplus, and 1.8 million Albertans experiencing sexual violence in their lifetimes, it is extremely disappointing the Government did nothing to address the unmet needs of survivors in Budget 2023.

In the Spring of 2022 the Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services (AASAS), on behalf of 15 Sexual Assault Centres across the province, submitted a business case for enhanced and ongoing funding to support survivors of sexual violence in Alberta.

AASAS asked for funding in four program areas to:

- decrease the counselling wait lists (which is upwards of a year in some areas of the province)
- address the increasingly complex needs of survivors
- help survivors to access justice, and
- provide school-based and community-based prevention programs so we can keep our communities safe.

While the government did offer a one-time investment for one quarter of the funding requested, partial one-time funding cannot address this ongoing need. Despite numerous attempts to continue a dialogue and find a solution together, the Government decided to re-allocate their proposed one-time investment without further negotiation with Sexual Assault Centres.

AASAS and Sexual Assault Centres recognize that the Government has many priorities given the numerous challenges that Albertans are facing, but ignoring the needs brought forward in the business case indicates a lack of understanding of how sexual violence is linked to some of our most serious social and health problems – like addictions; chronic and persistent mental illness; homelessness; and unemployment. It raises the question: is sexual violence a priority for this government?

After over 7 months of discussions with government representatives, it should be clear that the needs of Albertans are dire. 43% of Albertans have experienced sexual violence in their lifetime, and statistics show crimes of sexual assault are not decreasing like other violent crimes.

Budget 2023 is the Government's last opportunity before the upcoming election to make a difference and effectively support survivors. Albertans who have experienced the trauma of sexual violence deserve specialized, trauma-informed, evidence-based services, and they deserve them in a timely manner.

“On behalf of all survivors across Alberta - who are your friends, coworkers and family members – I implore you to tell your MLAs, to tell all your candidates in the upcoming election to make sexual violence prevention, and the health of Alberta communities a priority by providing adequate and sustainable funding to our sexual assault services” urged Deb Tomlinson, CEO of AASAS.

Fast Facts

- 43% or 1.8 million Albertans have experienced sexual violence in their lifetime (AASAS, 2020)
- The negative health consequences associated with experiencing sexual violence have been confirmed in numerous peer-reviewed research journals over the last several decades (Dworkin & Schumacher, 2016).
- Sexual violence is a known risk factor for other public health issues including addictions, suicide, homelessness, and domestic violence (Capaldi et al., 2012).
- The crime of sexual violence presents a major risk to public safety. According to the 2019 General Social Survey, only 6% of sexual assault survivors in Canada reported their assault to the police (Cotter, 2019). In other words, when sexual assault occurs, 94% of offenders will not be held responsible.
- While the overall rate of violent crimes in Canada has decreased over the past 15 years, the rate of sexual assault has not (Cotter, 2019).
- In 2021, police-reported sexual assault increased 21% in Alberta (Statistics Canada, 2022).