



**Ending
Violence**
ASSOCIATION OF CANADA

**Written Submission for the Pre-Budget Consultations in Advance of the
2024 Federal Budget**

by Ending Violence Association of Canada (EVA Canada)

List of Recommendations

Recommendation 1: That the government immediately provide stable and predictable funding for community-based sexual assault centres and organizations offering specialized sexualized violence programming, as a critical and imperative step to implementing the ***National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence*** and in direct response to the recommendations of the Mass Casualty Commission's 2023 final report.

Recommendation 2: That the government establish and fund an independent oversight body to act as an accountability mechanism to monitor and report on the implementation of the ***National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence***.

Recommendation 3: That the government provide a further investment, of a minimum of \$600 million, over the next four years, in Canada's ***National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence (NAP)*** for the development and implementation of the federal components, actions and responsibilities of the NAP.

Recommendation 4: That the government demonstrate its leadership and commitment to end sexual violence in federal departments, agencies and institutions, as well as all organizations and sectors subject to federal oversight, by acting on the recommendations of recent independent and parliamentary committee reports.

Recommendation 5: That the government, through the Public Health Agency of Canada, provide funding and partner with the sexual violence sector to deliver prevention initiatives that address the pervasive and entrenched issue of sexualized violence in Canadian society.

Introduction

Sexual violence is a national public health issue that impacts every community in Canada. Addressing this crisis -- with recommendations aimed at ending sexual violence in Canada -- is the focus of this submission by the Ending Violence Association of Canada for the 2024 federal budget.

The **Ending Violence Association of Canada (EVA Canada)** is a national organization that works to amplify the collective voice of those who believe it is possible to end gender-based violence (GBV). Through research, education, policy, and advocacy, we work collaboratively with anti-violence organizations from coast to coast to coast to identify and implement the institutional and systemic changes necessary to address the root causes of GBV. Our membership includes provincial and territorial networks of sexual assault centres and other anti-violence organizations from across the country.

The following are three reasons why ending sexual violence in Canada is an urgent national public health issue affecting every community:

- Sexual assault costs billions of dollars: dealing with sexual assault and related offences costs the Canadian economy an estimated [\\$4.8 billion annually](#).
- The harm of this preventable violence has [profound physical, emotional and mental health impacts](#) on those who experience it.
- Sexual assault [increased by 18% in 2021](#) making it the most dramatic increase in violent crime in Canada.

Despite this evidence, sexual violence continues to be overlooked as a distinct form of gender-based violence requiring specialized services and actions that are connected to but different from intimate partner and family violence. Sexual violence organizations play a vital and essential role in responding to the public health crisis of sexual violence. These community-based organizations, such as sexual assault centres, focus on preventing and addressing sexual violence through the provision of services, public education, and advocating for more effective laws and policies. Across the country, there are over 100 sexual assault centres that offer specialized sexual violence programming. These organizations and the services and programming they provide are different from shelters and transition houses.

Measures for Budget 2024

Recommendation 1:

That the government immediately provide stable and predictable funding for community-based sexual assault centres and organizations offering specialized sexualized violence programming, as a critical and imperative step to implementing the *National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence* and in direct response to the recommendations of the Mass Casualty Commission's 2023 final report.

Community-based sexual assault centres provide vital services to survivors of sexualized violence, including counselling, support groups, hospital and court accompaniment, and prevention. Nonetheless, funding of sexual violence services has been inconsistent and inadequate, and as a result, service providers struggle to meet an increasing demand. [EVA Canada's 2022 survey](#) of sexual violence organizations found that wait times for counselling in some centres are six months to a year, or longer. Further, there are regions in the country, especially in rural, remote and Northern areas, where there are few services for sexual violence survivors to turn to or where no sexual assault centres exist. In Yukon, for example, there are no sexual assault centres despite having [the highest prevalence rates for sexual assault](#) of the territories.

Community-based sexual assault centres continue to rely heavily on project-based funding, community fundraisers, and volunteers to deliver essential crisis and trauma counselling and other mental health interventions to survivors. However, as stated in the [Mass Casualty Commission's final report](#) released in March 2023:

Project-based funding is inefficient and causes lapses in effective preventive and support services. **Adequate and stable core funding is essential for efficient and effective operation of all organizations forming part of the public safety net in Canada.**
[bolding added]

Community-based sexual assault centres must be recognized as a vital part of that public safety net. Although budgets 2021 and 2022 made considerable investments towards establishing a [National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence](#), there are no guarantees that this funding will be used to respond to sexual violence specifically. Unfortunately, community-based sexual assault centres are often overlooked within broader GBV efforts.

Recommendation 2:

That the government establish and fund an independent oversight body to act as an accountability mechanism to monitor and report on the implementation of the *National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence*.

The federal government has played a leadership role in recent years by providing historic investments toward addressing GBV (\$601.3 million over five years from 2021-26) and in developing its 10-year framework to end GBV – the National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence (NAP). In tandem with the bilateral agreements negotiated with each province and territory, there must be an accountability mechanism for the independent and transparent reporting of the implementation of the NAP and related progress.

The federal government's current [Gender Results Framework](#) is limited in the context of GBV in both its indicators and data collection methods. Rather, a feminist, intersectional, monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and learning (MEAL) framework is required, as recommended by the GBV sector in a [report co-developed by over 40 anti-violence organizations](#), and recognized as best practice by other countries.

In addition, an independent national oversight mechanism is necessary to assess the equitable and coordinated implementation and impact of current actions. One model for accountability was set out in Budget 2023 which proposed [\\$2.2 million over five years](#) to establish an oversight mechanism to monitor and report on the progress of the implementation of the National Action Plan to End the Tragedy of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG). A similar investment is necessary to ensure that actionable and sustained NAP implementation includes co-developed accountability mechanisms and evaluation tools and frameworks that reflect the expert knowledge and real-time understanding that only the GBV sector and survivors can contribute.

Recommendation 3:

That the government provide a further investment, of a minimum of \$600 million, over the next four years, in Canada's *National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence* for the development and implementation of the federal components, actions and responsibilities of the NAP.

In addition to actions taken at the provincial/territorial level, national-level actions are needed to ensure the vision of the NAP is fully realized. A renewed and strengthened federal Gender-Based Violence Strategy, going beyond the existing [It's Time: Canada's Strategy to Prevent and Address Gender-Based Violence](#), is not only an opportunity for greater coordination across jurisdictions and to fill gaps, but an integral component of the NAP to create institutional and systemic change. A [joint statement signed by 23 organizations](#) details the needed national-level investments and actions:

- Funding for national anti-violence organizations that ensure the coordination of, provide valuable research and expertise to, and advocate on behalf of the anti-violence sector and survivors across Canada.

- Coordinating an all-of-government approach to address GBV involving multiple departments.
- Ensuring that international human rights instruments such as [CEDAW](#) and [UNDRIP](#) are enshrined into the legal frameworks at all levels of government.
- Holding federal institutions accountable to survivors and the public with regards to implementing recommendations on culture change, oversight and accountability mechanisms.
- Ensuring equity amongst Canadians, through public education campaigns, a livable income for all, regularizing those with a precarious immigration status, investments in social infrastructure such as affordable housing, income supports, and establishing minimum standards and protections when it comes to online safety and access to emergency services.

For these reasons, we urge the federal government to introduce new funding for federal-level actions within the NAP.

Recommendation 4:

That the government demonstrate its leadership and commitment to end sexual violence in federal departments, agencies and institutions, as well as all sectors subject to federal oversight, by acting on the recommendations of recent independent and parliamentary reports.

Sexual violence and misconduct are prevalent within federal institutions, including the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF), the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), the corrections system, and national sports organizations, as recent reports have made clear. A critical step to ending sexual violence is shifting the culture in male-dominated institutions and sectors. Specific recommendations the government should act on include:

- Support increased transparency and accountability for the implementation of the recommendations in the RCMP's [The Way Forward](#), with specific funding to community-based sexual violence organizations for participation and oversight of Sexual Assault Investigative Review Committees.
- Renewed funding for sexual violence sector-led accountability initiatives with law enforcement, such as [Violence Against Women Case Review \(VACR\)](#), as well as funding for non-policing, community-based systems for reporting sexual violence.
- Funding to examine and respond to sexual violence within federal corrections institutions as recommended by the Office of the Correctional Investigator's report, [A Culture of Silence](#).
- Establish an independent national public inquiry into maltreatment within Canada's sports organizations as recommended in FEWO Report, [Taking Action Towards Creating a Safe Sport Environment for all Athletes in Canada](#).

We highlight the above recommendations with the goal of seeing additional investments or the re-direction of existing investments to measures that foster greater accountability towards sexual violence survivors and the public.

Recommendation 5:

That the federal government, through the Public Health Agency of Canada, provide funding and partner with the sexual violence sector to deliver prevention initiatives that address the pervasive and entrenched issue of sexualized violence in Canadian society.

Sexual violence is a public health issue at epidemic levels in Canada. In 2018, Statistics Canada reported almost [one in 10 Canadians](#) experienced at least one type of sexual abuse before age 15. In 2019, the agency reported that [30% of all women](#) have been sexually assaulted outside of an intimate relationship at least once since age 15.

In light of the magnitude and predictability of sexual violence, and the profound physical and mental health harms caused to victims and survivors, there is a valuable role for the Public Health Agency of Canada to play by partnering with sexual violence organizations to develop and implement far-reaching prevention and data collection initiatives, such as:

- A multi-year social marketing campaign to increase public awareness and prevention of sexual violence
- A national data framework for sexualized violence to ensure consistency in data collection and address current [significant gaps in data](#) on the prevalence and nature of sexualized violence in Canada
- Support for sexual assault centres to engage men and boys in allyship work

These new investments by the federal government will serve as a concrete response to the [Mass Casualty Commission's recommendations](#) that “governments should prioritize a public health approach to prevention of gender-based violence” and for “epidemic-level funding for gender-based violence prevention and interventions”.