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# SUBMISSION FOR PRE-BUDGET CONSULTATIONS IN ADVANCE OF THE FEDERAL BUDGET 2025

BY THE ENDING VIOLENCE ASSOCIATION OF CANADA



**Ending  
Violence**  
ASSOCIATION OF CANADA

## **List of Recommendations**

**Recommendation 1:** \$300 million over 5 years to WAGE earmarked towards specialized, community-based *sexual violence* services and advocacy organizations, including *sexual assault centres*, in order to stabilize the sector and address fundamental funding gaps in the National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence.

**Recommendation 2:** \$25 million per year to WAGE's Women's Program for core funding or renewable capacity building grants for feminist organizations who operate at the *national* level.

**Recommendation 3:** An initial investment of \$1 million for WAGE and ESDC to launch consultations on the development of a National Strategy for the Gender-Based Violence Workforce that addresses issues of precarious work, access to decent salaries, pensions, benefits, and supports for workers, and retention and recruitment issues.

**Recommendation 4:** A commitment to establish and fund a GBV Commissioner to act as an accountability mechanism to monitor and report on the implementation of the National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence and the Federal GBV Strategy. We envision the GBV Commissioner having powers similar to that of an ombuds institution.

## About us

The [Ending Violence Association of Canada](#) (EVA Canada) is a national non-profit organization that works collaboratively with its member organizations and others to provide a unified, pan-Canadian voice on the issue of sexual violence. Through research, education, policy change, and advocacy, we identify and promote the solutions necessary to address the root causes of sexual violence.

## Introduction

Survivors of sexual violence in Canada do not have equal access to services across the country. Sexual violence services have faced years of underfunding, while the demand for their services has steadily increased, particularly since the #MeToo movement and the Covid pandemic.

The [first national survey of sexual violence organizations](#) in Canada found that “access to specialized sexual violence services is not consistent across the country and equity-seeking groups disproportionately experience more barriers to services. The findings point to chronic underfunding of sexual violence organizations by governments despite increasing demand.”<sup>1</sup>

Not only does sexual violence cost the country [billions of dollars each year](#), the current responses that rely on the criminal justice system are not working for survivors. The [Mass Casualty Commission](#) recommended to shift away from carceral-based responses and towards adequately funding community-based services that provide essential services to survivors.

**Sexual assault centres have provided core services to survivors for over 40 years, yet their funding remains inadequate to meet the needs and retain their staff.** Eighty percent of sexual violence organizations have waitlists, and over one quarter of those are over six months long.<sup>2</sup> Survivors who gather the courage to reach out for support should not have to be added to a waitlist of 300 survivors, as was the case last year at the Sexual Assault Centre of Waterloo Region.

While the rates of sexual assault [are on the rise](#) and it remains the [most underreported crime in Canada](#), the federal government must find more effective ways of responding to sexual violence. Adequately funding core community-based, survivor-serving organizations is a crucial first step.

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<sup>1</sup> Abji, Salina, Ashley Major, Stephanie Lanthier, Erin Whitmore. (2023). National Survey of Sexual Violence Organizations and Services. EVA Canada. [https://endingviolencecanada.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Full\\_Survey\\_Report\\_EN.pdf](https://endingviolencecanada.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Full_Survey_Report_EN.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

### **Recommendation 1:**

**\$300 million over 5 years to WAGE earmarked towards specialized, community-based sexual violence services and advocacy organizations, including sexual assault centres, in order to stabilize the sector and address fundamental funding gaps in the National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence.**

The federal government has made significant investments towards addressing gender-based violence (GBV) since Budget 2021, notably by launching the [National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence](#) (NAP) in 2022. The NAP is a promising mechanism for the federal government to contribute to the important work being done throughout the country to address sexual violence. The NAP's stated priorities are stabilizing the GBV sector, investing in prevention, and reaching the most underserved. **Funding sexual assault centres (SACs) meets all three of the NAP's priorities, yet findings** from our [detailed analysis](#) **show that sexual assault centres have been largely overlooked in the NAP's implementation plans for its first year (2023-24).** This means that essential services such as SACs continue to rely on time-limited, project-based funding, community fundraisers, and volunteers to deliver essential crisis and trauma counselling to survivors.

Earmarking \$300 million over 5 years for SACs represents approximately \$600,000 per year for each of the 100 SACs across Canada and would go a long way towards stabilizing the sector. This amount would enable them to cover the cost of a few essential positions, such as frontline workers (counselors, outreach, public education and systems navigation workers), administrative staff, as well as cover a portion of basic operational costs such as rent.

Umbrella advocacy organizations that represent SACs provincially and territorially also need support in order to conduct much needed research, deliver public education, policy and advocacy work, and coordinate the sector to ensure that the limited resources have the greatest impact on the ground.

Investing in SACs, sexual violence services, and advocacy organizations who support them would enable the sector to reduce wait times for survivors and make considerable headway towards ensuring that survivors have access to timely services wherever they live.

## **Recommendation 2:**

### **\$25 million per year to WAGE’s Women’s Program for operational funding or renewable capacity building grants for feminist organizations who operate at the *national* level.**

Feminist organizations who operate at the national level are an essential part of the women’s movement as they provide invaluable research, policy analysis, advocacy work and coordination towards systemic change. However, significant funding cuts to national women’s organizations in the early 2000’s replaced steady funding with a patchwork of time-limited project grants that do not cover operational costs and has been called a ‘deficit model.’<sup>3</sup> It is also important to note that **the National Action Plan to End GBV does not include funding for national-level work.**

With just over 40 national feminist organizations, \$25 million would represent approximately \$625,000 per organization per year. This would allow organizations such as EVA Canada to cover the cost of two workers as well as some basic operational and administrative functions.

For a long time, the sexual violence sector in Canada lacked national coordination. Since EVA Canada has stepped into this role, we have been bringing advocates together to identify cross-cutting challenges and gaps across jurisdictions. This has enabled us to advance key areas that benefit the sector as a whole, by raising the profile of sexual assault centres; filling research gaps (ie. the first ever [national survey of sexual violence organizations](#)); creating a [roadmap to support the GBV workforce](#); and bringing a sexual violence lens to federal policy and legislation. Our expertise has been sought out by the Departments of Justice, Public Safety, WAGE, Canadian Heritage, the Canadian Armed Forces and the RCMP. We have contributed to key pieces of legislation such as Gun Control ([C-21](#)), Publication Bans ([S-12](#)), Coercive Control ([C-332](#)) and the [Red Dress Alert](#). Flexible funding is required for national feminist organizations to be sufficiently nimble to provide this type of input into federal-level policy at it emerges.

National feminist organizations are also a key part of creating accountability around the National Action Plan (NAP). EVA Canada has provided leadership in terms of informing the development of the NAP, by sharing information with the sector, bringing forward voices from the frontlines and holding the government accountable to its promises.

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<sup>3</sup> The Canadian Women’s Foundation, Ontario Nonprofit Network, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives & Lahey, K. (2020). Resetting Normal: Funding a Thriving Women’s Sector. <https://canadianwomen.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Resetting-Normal-Report-Womens-Sector.pdf>

### **Recommendation 3:**

**An initial investment of \$1 million for WAGE and ESDC to launch consultations on the development of a National Strategy for the Gender-Based Violence Workforce that addresses issues of precarious work, access to decent salaries, pensions, benefits, and supports for workers, and retention and recruitment issues.**

National research into the gender-based violence (GBV) workforce found that short-term, project-based funding resulted in precarious working conditions and job insecurity for frontline workers<sup>4</sup>. The sector is characterized by inconsistencies in salaries and compensation, and workers often lack access to pensions, benefits, and other supports. This creates ongoing sectoral challenges with staff recruitment and retention.

Similarly to care work, GBV work is highly gendered in nature and features an overrepresentation of Black, Indigenous, and women of colour<sup>5</sup>. The importance of care work is being increasingly recognized in Canada, but GBV workers are not usually included as part of the care economy<sup>6</sup>. Furthermore, GBV work entails unique occupational health and safety concerns resulting from ongoing trauma exposure.

In Budget 2024, the federal government committed to launch consultations on the development of a National Caregiving Strategy. Although heartening, it is unlikely that GBV workers and their unique needs will be included. Moreover, the government of Ontario has recently committed to investing \$395,000 to develop a Shelter Workforce Strategy, but it remains unclear whether it will include those who work in *sexual assault centres*. **We want to see the federal government take a leadership role in developing a *national* strategy for *all* GBV workers, and not risk re-creating the current siloed approach to supporting GBV workers across the country.** The [Roadmap to a Stronger GBV Workforce](#), which was created after surveying hundreds of GBV workers across the country, can be used as a starting point.

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<sup>4</sup> Fernandes, S. & Lanthier, S. (2024). Roadmap to A Stronger GBV Workforce. EVA Canada.

<https://endingviolencecanada.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/building-supports-1-Roadmap-to-a-Stronger-GBV-Workforce.pdf>

Hoogendam, R. & Maki, K. (2024). Feminist Brain Drain: Labour Issues and Worker Wellness in the VAW Shelter Sector. Women's Shelters Canada. <https://endvaw.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/FBD-Final-Report.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> See Hillel, I. & Xuereb, S. (2023). How Much Do We Care? An Assessment of the Canadian Paid and Unpaid Care Policy Landscape. Oxfam Canada. [https://issuu.com/oxfamca/docs/care\\_policy\\_scorecard\\_report\\_2023\\_-\\_final?fr=sMjjiNzYxNDE2OTQ](https://issuu.com/oxfamca/docs/care_policy_scorecard_report_2023_-_final?fr=sMjjiNzYxNDE2OTQ)

**Recommendation 4: A commitment to establish and fund a GBV Commissioner to act as an accountability mechanism to monitor and report on the implementation of the National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence and the Federal GBV Strategy. We envision the GBV Commissioner having powers similar to that of an ombuds institution.**

In order for the National Action Plan to meet its ambitious objectives, it requires an independent body to provide oversight and ensure accountability. The Mass Casualty Commission (MCC)'s Recommendation V.17 calls for a National Accountability Framework.

The Commission recommends that:

- (a) The federal government establish by statute an independent and impartial gender-based violence commissioner with adequate, stable funding, and effective powers, including the responsibility to make an annual report to Parliament.
- (b) The federal government develop the mandate for the gender-based violence commissioner in consultation with provincial and territorial governments, women survivors including women from marginalized and precarious communities, and the gender-based violence advocacy and support sector.<sup>7</sup>

To fulfill the MCC recommendation, the government should commit to establishing and funding a GBV Commissioner position and office with powers similar to those of an ombudsperson. While this institution would have more expansive powers than only overseeing the NAP, including ensuring Canada met international obligations (e.g. CEDAW, UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls' recommendations), this would provide needed transparency and accountability for the NAP and the Federal GBV strategy. With improved transparency and accountability, there is potential for increased consistency across jurisdictions, and for best practices/effective strategies to be shared nationally.

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<sup>7</sup> Mass Casualty Commission. (2023). Final Report of the Mass Casualty Commission: Recommendations. <https://masscasualtycommission.ca/files/documents/Turning-the-Tide-Together-List-of-Recommendations.pdf>