

For Immediate Release
2012CFD0036-000943
June 28, 2012

Ministry of Children and Family Development
Status of Women Canada, Ending Violence Association of BC,
BC Lions Football Club, Encana Corporation

Campaign breaks the silence on violence against women

VANCOUVER – It’s estimated that every year in Canada, 800,000 children will witness a woman being abused.

This is just one of the startling statistics being taught to B.C. teenagers through the ‘Be More Than a Bystander’ campaign. The campaign aims to stop violence against women – with the help of professional football players.

“Our government is excited to promote this type of interactive programming in schools across the province,” said Mary McNeil, B.C.’s Minister of Children and Family Development. “Young people hear a powerful message of respect directly from B.C.’s Grey Cup champions who are speaking from the heart and actively promoting healthy relationships and healthy families in B.C.”

Now moving into its second year, the ‘Be More Than a Bystander’ campaign is celebrating a successful first year. BC Lions players have visited 17 secondary schools throughout B.C. over the past year, reaching out to approximately 6,500 youth through assemblies. This upcoming school year, 23 schools will receive visits, reaching out to approximately 8,000 more youth.

“BC Lions are great role models, and when they say it’s the right thing to do to stand up for women and girls, that has a powerful impact on kids,” said Wally Buono, vice president of football operations and general manager of the BC Lions Football Club. “As a professional football club, we are proud to be involved in such a proactive program, which encourages young people to get involved in the conversation and learn good decision-making skills.”

Through interactive workshops in secondary schools, BC Lions bring the positive message that it’s “cool” to respect women and girls, and that it is important to speak up if others are not showing respect. The program aims to help solve the problems of violence and abuse by providing tools and practical ideas about how to communicate that violence is not acceptable.

“This campaign is so important because violence against women and children impacts everyone and takes a huge toll not only on individuals, but on our communities and society as a whole,” said Tracy Porteous, executive director of EVA BC, who recently received the Scotiabank Game Changer Award for her work on the campaign.

EVA BC was also the recipient of the British Columbia Association of Broadcasters’ Humanitarian Award. As a result, B.C.’s private broadcasters are donating a full 52-week advertising schedule on radio and television. Collectively, B.C. broadcasters will ensure ‘Be more than a bystander. Break the silence on violence against women’ receives significant exposure throughout the province.

‘Be More Than a Bystander’ is a groundbreaking initiative between the Ending Violence Association of BC (EVA BC), the BC Lions, Status of Women Canada, the Ministry of Children and Family Development and Encana Corporation.

“I salute EVA BC for making a real difference in the lives of countless women and men, girls and boys through the ‘Be More than a Bystander’ campaign,” said the Honourable Rona Ambrose, Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women. “This is exactly the kind of effort we need to generate dialogue and understanding, and build momentum toward eliminating violence against women and domestic abuse in all its forms.”

“As an active member of the communities in which we operate, Encana is pleased to be a founding partner in this important initiative,” said Richard Dunn, vice-president of regulatory and government relations at Encana Corporation. “By providing positive role models to youth across B.C., this program helps to create healthy communities, which is a priority for Encana.”

In addition to the school sessions, the BC Lions took their positive messages to a training conference for amateur football coaches, held in May. Approximately 20 coaches from around the province learned how to talk with their players about respectful relationships, behaviours and attitudes, both on and off the field. A public education film is in production that will combine footage from the in-school workshops and the football coach clinic.

The Government of Canada provided \$541,900 in funding and the Ministry of Children and Family Development provided \$320,000 in funding in 2011-12. Encana Corporation is donating \$200,000 toward the program. Other active supporters are the City of Vancouver, the City of Surrey, UBC Athletics, the BC Association of Broadcasters, Global BC and RED FM.

‘Be More Than a Bystander’ connects with a major B.C. government initiative – the newly established Provincial Office of Domestic Violence under the Ministry of Children and Family Development. The office is focused on strengthening the services and supports available for children and families affected by domestic violence.

To find out more about Be More Than a Bystander, go to:
www.endingviolence.org/Be+More+Than+a+Bystander

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