

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 24, 2016

**WHAT ANTI-VIOLENCE EXPERTS KNEW BEFORE THE GHOMESHI TRIAL
STILL HOLDS TRUE**

Vancouver – Today Canadians learned the outcome of one of the most high profile and widely discussed sexual assault trials of the decade. Whether or not the presiding Judge determined Jian Ghomeshi guilty or innocent of sexual assault, the Ending Violence Association of BC and anti-violence programs across British Columbia want all survivors to know that we believe you.

It takes courage to report a sexual assault to the police. Some survivors choose to report. Most do not. In fact, 97% of sexual assaults go unreported in Canada. Of those that are reported to police, most do not lead to charges, let alone convictions. Out of every 1,000 sexual assaults in Canada, 997 assailants walk free. (Source: Johnson, “Limits of Criminal Justice Response: Trends in Police and Court Processing of Sexual Assault,” in Sheehy, *Sexual Assault in Canada: Law, Legal Practice and Women’s Activism*, 2012)

“Sexual assault is the most underreported of all violent crime in Canada,” said Tracy Porteous, Executive Director of the Ending Violence Association of BC. “While rates of self-reported victimization in Canada have declined overall, the exception to this is in cases of sexual assault.”

It’s not always simple to fully understand the short and long-term impacts of this particular kind of trauma – not simple for survivors themselves nor others. There may or may not be visible physical injuries, but in every case there will be psychological impacts that can last a lifetime. The impacts can stem from the terror of experiencing a dehumanizing attack on one’s physical bodily integrity; the humiliation that ensues from heinous sexual acts being perpetrated by someone victims often thought they knew; blame and judgment from friends, family, the police and others; and the self blame that most survivors struggle to come to terms with.

Focusing on the behaviour of victims doesn’t help us to understand this violent crime nor does it help us to hold perpetrators accountable for the crimes they commit. Sexual assault in dating relationships, like the ones described by the complainants in the Ghomeshi case, need to be understood within the context of intimate partner violence. 75% of sexual assaults are committed by somebody

known to the survivor (*Statistics Canada, Prevalence and severity of violence against women, 2013*).

We want to express our deep admiration and respect for the survivors who so courageously decided to speak out. Their willingness to come forward has started a public conversation in our country about the crime of sexual assault, a conversation we hope will help create a safer environment for others to come forward.

EVA BC works with communities across BC to end violence against women and children, supporting more than 240 programs who respond to sexual and domestic violence, child abuse and criminal harassment.

-30-

For more information, please contact:

Nancy Boyce
Communications Manager
Ending Violence Association of BC
Tel: 604.633.2506 ext 14
Email: boyce@endingviolence.org