
NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
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June 4, 2019

Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills and Training

Collective efforts aim to prevent sexual violence on campus

RICHMOND – Students, post-secondary institutions, community organizations and the Province are working together to prevent and respond to sexual violence in order to make campuses safer for everyone.

The Moving Forward Together: Building Capacity to Prevent and Respond to Sexual Violence on Campus forum runs June 4 and 5, 2019. It's the first step in a co-ordinated sexual violence prevention approach, which was announced by Melanie Mark, Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Training.

"Campuses should be safe places for everyone," Mark said. "Students have been clear they want all stakeholders in post-secondary education to take action to address sexual violence. Sensitive and serious issues, such as sexual violence, will require some honest conversations and commitment for change. Students, faculty and staff are essential to framing this dialogue."

Provincial initiatives worth \$760,000 will include co-ordinated resources, so institutions can learn from each other, share best practices and access training resources. The funding will also support plain language policies and processes regarding sexual violence and misconduct to ensure that they are clear.

The closed-door forum is one of the initiatives. It brings together about 125 student, post-secondary and community representatives, as well as staff from several ministries. Attendees will hear from speakers on a wide range of topics, share their experiences, discuss issues, and learn about supports and tools available to help build their capacity to prevent and respond to sexual violence on campus.

"Students need and deserve safe spaces to study, and our government is committed to working with them, with institutions and with other stakeholders to make that a reality," said Mitzi Dean, Parliamentary Secretary for Gender Equity. "Collaboration is the key to creating the best solutions to improve safety on campuses for everyone."

Initiatives will also include outreach to students, including surveys to gauge their experiences and perceptions and to help focus future efforts.

"When addressing sexualized violence on campuses, our primary focus must always be on supporting survivors and putting students' safety and well-being first. More students now are becoming aware of the prevalence of sexualized violence at our institutions and that more comprehensive action needs to be taken to address and prevent it," said Anna-Elaine Rempel, Capilano Students' Union president, vice-president of equity and sustainability, director of research and campaigns at Alliance of BC Students, and co-emcee of the forum. "In doing so, we always need to recognize that sexualized violence is a gender-based issue. It is about

holding power over others based on their gender identity and/or expression and primarily targets those from traditionally marginalized communities, including women and gender minorities, especially those who are of colour, 2SLGBTQ+- identifying, Indigenous or with disabilities.”

Approximately one in five women will experience sexualized violence while studying at a post-secondary institution.

Quotes:

Tracy Porteous, executive director, Ending Violence Association of BC –

“When post-secondary institutions are able to respond to sexual violence on campuses from a trauma-informed perspective, when students, staff and faculty are able to share their experiences, perspectives and ideas about prevention and when we are all able to work together, we can increase safety on campuses and ensure all those affected get the help they need.”

Sheldon Falk, chair, B.C. Federation of Students –

“Students have been working to raise awareness about issues of sexual violence and misconduct on campus, but we can’t do it alone. Being at the table with post-secondary institutions, with the provincial government and with other advocates for student safety is a step in the right direction towards building a better campus community.”

Jennifer Jordan, director of student rights and responsibilities at Kwantlen Polytechnic University, forum co-emcee –

“Providing a safe place for our students is the foundation for providing quality post-secondary education, and facilitating the dialogue about their rights and responsibilities is part of that. That’s why it’s so important that efforts like these to address sexual violence prevention and misconduct on campus are made with students as our partners.”

Rhonda Schmitz, director of student development, Selkirk College –

“For smaller and rural institutions, it can be a challenge to access resources to prevent and educate people about sexual misconduct on campus and to respond to it. Being able to share training resources and best practices with B.C.’s other institutions will go a long way towards supporting our students in the best way we can.”

Learn More:

Preventing sexualized violence on B.C. campuses:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/post-secondary-education/institution-resources-administration/prevent-sexualized-violence>

Sexual Violence and Misconduct Policy Act:

http://www.bclaws.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/16023_01

Ending Violence Association of BC: <http://endingviolence.org>

A backgrounder follows.

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BACKGROUND

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AEST

Preventing sexual violence and misconduct on campuses

B.C. is investing \$760,000 in initiatives to prevent and respond to sexual violence on campus including:

- co-ordination of resources and training, so that post-secondary institutions can learn from each other and access common resources;
- plain language supports so that policies and process around sexual violence and misconduct are clear;
- outreach to students, including surveys to better understand student experiences and perceptions of resources and policies;

* the sector-wide Moving Forward Together: Building Capacity to Prevent and Respond to Sexual Violence on Campus forum on June 4 and 5, 2019. Topics include outreach and awareness; education and training; policies and best practices; investigations; as well as transitions from the kindergarten to Grade 12 system.

All 25 of B.C.'s public post-secondary institutions have been required to have sexual violence and misconduct policies since May 2017. The Sexual Violence and Misconduct Policy Act also requires institutions to make their policies publicly available. Provincial regulations and criteria require private institutions with student residences to have polices.

In 2017, the Province sought input from students, faculty and stakeholders about those sexual violence and misconduct policies. Feedback from that public engagement campaign has helped shape the next steps in the Province's action plan, in co-ordination with stakeholders.

To help raise awareness among students, the Province launched a \$200,000 awareness campaign in 2018, which included social media ads on Instagram, Facebook and Snapchat, as well as posters on campuses and in nearby bars and restaurants. The campaign ran during September 2018 and January 2019 to address the fact that roughly two-thirds of sexual assaults on campus occur in the first eight weeks of school (Our Turn – National Student-Led Action Plan to End Campus Sexual Violence, 2017).

Learn More:

Posters from B.C.'s awareness campaign: https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/post-secondary-education/institution-resources-administration/prevent-sexualized-violence/3389_gcp_posters_8-5x11_hr-nt.pdf

Our Turn – Student Society of McGill University: <https://ssmu.ca/blog/2017/10/ourturn/>

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