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## NEWS

# Domestic violence needs more funding say advocates



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by [Christine van Reeuyk - Oak Bay News](#)  
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Seven years ago the system failed one Oak Bay woman says the Ending Violence Association of B.C. and they fear the province has gone as far as it can to save lives, without an influx of funding.

“Sunny Park and her family were failed by the system,” said Tracy Porteous, executive director of the Ending Violence Association of B.C. “Not every relationship that is experiencing a high risk of domestic violence is know to the system. But when it is, there’s no reason we can’t save that family’s life ... Domestic violence is the most predictable of homicides.” In September 2007, Peter Lee killed his estranged wife, Sunny Park, their young son Christian and his wife’s parents in their Oak Bay home before killing himself.

“While the nature and severity of that crime was particularly shocking, it was also a chilling reminder that domestic and family violence occur every day in homes throughout our province,” said Children and Family Development Minister Stephanie Cadieux and Suzanne Anton, Attorney General and Minister of Justice in a joint statement.

“Following the deaths of Christian Lee, Sunny Park and their family, government responded with the creation of the Capital Region domestic violence unit, bringing together police, victim services and an MCFD-dedicated social worker. We established a protocol to ensure more effective communication between police, government and community agencies in highest-risk domestic violence cases. New training for child welfare workers and other professionals improved consistency and awareness, while the development of an integrated information-sharing system allowed the Ministry of Children and Family Development to better track the nature of cases, including those that involve domestic violence scenarios.”

A constant recommendation from EVA and other inquests and reports is that victims of domestic violence need advocates to help them with the myriad of complex systems they come in contact with.

“It’s very difficult to navigate your way through what the police policy is, what crown policy is,” Porteous said.

He noted, those include child protection, housing and accessing family law.

“Each one of these systems have different pieces of legislation and different policies and it can be very overwhelming.”

Community-based victim assistance programs can “ring the alarm bell” she added.

“There’s already 18 people dead in our province since January alone. That’s a huge number, yet in the last 20 years, the province of B.C. has not made any further investments in terms of funding new money,” Porteous said.

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In February, the government launched the three-year, \$5.5-million Provincial Domestic Violence Plan.

“The plan aims to enhance services and bridge potential service gaps to ensure that women, children and all those who have been affected by domestic violence have access to the supports and services they need,” said the government release. “The plan supplements our more than \$70-million annual investment in prevention and intervention services, and the \$3.4 million in civil forfeiture grants we provided this year to support initiatives that prevent violence against women. We know more can and must be done. That’s why we’ve committed to introducing a long-term, comprehensive strategy to move towards a violence-free British Columbia.”

While praising the positive changes in family law and outlines defining family violence, EVA is again calling for implementations to the tune of \$30 million in funding citing “skyrocketed” increase in the demand for help from women.

“In fact, 156 recommendations have been made outlining what it’s going to take for our province to prevent the kind of tragedy that happened to Sunny and her family from happening again,” Porteous said. “Generally speaking, what changes have taken place in the last seven years are largely things that can be done with no money. Everything that’s possible to be done in the province of BC with no money is now done. What is missing and what has been called for over and over and over are funding investments to improve the safety of women and their kids.”

She likens the lack of funding to a home with no maintenance for two decades and cracks in the foundation. “Many cracks, and people are falling through them.”

Community-based victim assisted programs are the key, Porteous added, noting Park had an appointment with a community-based assistance program for the day after she was murdered.

“In the investigation we’ve been able to undertake ... we have not been able to find a woman who was murdered who was a client of one of these community-based victim assistance programs,” Porteous said.

The Regional Domestic Violence Unit in the Capital Region formed in July 2010 as a result of the Lee-Park inquest.

“That’s excellent, there’s maybe three or four of those working together across the province in that way,” she said. “There just needs to be more funding available to ensure there’s a coordinated response, not just off the side of a desk.”

For smaller communities to share information and provide wraparound support, 20 communities have “interagency case assessment teams” and 20 more await that program.

If you or someone you know needs help visit [domesticviolencebc.ca](http://domesticviolencebc.ca) online or call VictimLink BC at 1-800-563-0808 available at any time and in multiple languages.

#### Highlights of the Provincial Domestic Violence Plan:

\$1 million to help with the startup and implementation of additional specialized domestic violence units, which will provide direct services to high-risk families.

\$2 million to develop and deliver programs specifically for Aboriginal women, men and children affected by domestic violence - including victims and perpetrators.

\$1 million to provide support and intervention for perpetrators to hold them accountable and support changes in behaviour and attitude.

\$1.5 million in direct supports to women and children for housing and transportation in rural and remote communities.

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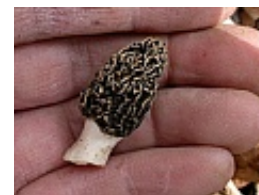
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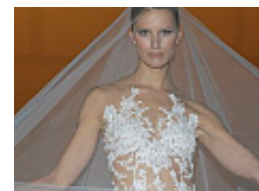
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