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[Stephanie Cadieux and Balbir Gurm: Say something to help end domestic violence](#)

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Sunday, March 8, is International Women's Day, an opportunity to reflect on and talk about the issues women face around the world. One of those issues is domestic violence.

Domestic violence has claimed the lives of 113 British Columbians over the past decade – and this chilling statistic only tells part of the story.

Because incidents of domestic violence continue to be under-reported, it is difficult to say with certainty how many people suffer through this potentially deadly form of abuse. In 2013 alone, there were 12,359 victims of police-reported intimate partner violence in B.C., though research suggests that only about one in four victims ever reports the crime to police.

Silence has surrounded this issue for far too long. Those experiencing abuse often feel trapped and may not know where to turn for help. Friends, family and others may sense there's something wrong, but don't think it's their business to speak up and safely offer help. In turn, abusers are enabled by society's silence and inaction.

It's not enough anymore to remain silent. Talking about domestic violence is tough, but we can no longer run from the challenge, nor can we dismiss it as someone else's problem. Domestic violence isn't just a women's issue, it's everyone's issue. It affects all of us and we all have a role – and a responsibility – to do what we can to change attitudes and behaviours.

That change is happening right now. There is a growing movement in this province and around the world to challenge beliefs, alter behaviours and speak out against injustice and all forms of violence against women.

The good work being done by anti-violence organizations around the province to drive social change. They also build on the momentum generated by public awareness initiatives like the Moose Hide campaign, Be More Than a Bystander, and B.C.'s Toughest Men, which are reaching a broader audience

and showing British Columbians that we can make things better by working together.

Government has been building on this work through targeted plans in the areas of human trafficking, missing and murdered women and domestic violence. And, as the first step in the new Violence Free B.C. Strategy, we have launched a new social media campaign aimed at ending the silence on domestic violence.

The Say Something campaign offers practical advice and tips to help us take the first step in speaking up and better understanding what each of us can do to safely help those who are experiencing domestic violence.

Knowing how and when to speak up – not to mention how to make sure those experiencing abuse stay safe when you do so – can be a delicate balancing act. That’s why the campaign is focused on sharing strategies we can all use when facing situations of domestic violence.

The host website, saysomethingbc.ca, provides information and an array of resources for victims, perpetrators, service providers and the bystanders who want to help. Whether your sister, daughter, friend, co-worker or neighbour who is experiencing domestic violence free. In order to help them, we need to start with ourselves.

Together, we can end domestic violence. Join

Stephanie Cadieux is B.C.’s minister of children, family and social development. She is also a professor at Kwantlen Polytech University and author of Relationships.

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