

British Columbia


B.C. expands sexual assault survivor services with \$10M emergency program

Public safety minister says grant program will provide funds to front-line organizations across the province

The Canadian Press · Posted: May 26, 2020 1:41 PM PT | Last Updated: May 26



B.C. Public Safety Minister Mike Farnworth says gender-based violence, including sexual assault, is known to increase during periods of crisis. (Shutterstock)

[comments](#) 

The British Columbia government has announced a three-year, \$10-million grant program to provide swift access to compassionate and comprehensive care for survivors of sexual assault.

Public Safety Minister Mike Farnworth says the COVID-19 pandemic has created challenging times and gender-based violence, including sexual assault, is known to increase during periods of crisis.

He says the grant program will provide funds to front-line organizations across the province, including those working in Indigenous communities.

Ending Violence Association of B.C. will administer the program to help organizations deliver emergency sexual assault response services that are knowledgeable about such traumas and culturally appropriate.

Historic grants

The association's executive director Tracy Porteous says the grants are historic and will expand services to help survivors of sexual abuse.

- [Woman escapes abuse during pandemic, giving hope to others](#)

Porteous said the new funding has been the result of dialogue and discussion with the province over 18 years, when funding to sexual assault centres was cut.

She says rates of sexual assault have increased in recent years, and survivors can face psychological effects that can last a lifetime. In addition, the stigma that surrounds taking about sexual assault can make it very difficult for survivors to reach out for help and for advocacy work.

"Without the specific services in place, our province has been leaving sexual assault survivors behind," she said.

She says the new funding will allow organizations to offer emergency services to survivors that range from providing rides to hospitals to offering private counselling sessions.

"This is a big, big step in the right direction."

With files from On The Coast