



B.C. Public Safety Minister Mike Farnworth, May 2018. (Tom Fletcher/Black Press)

# COVID-19: B.C. grants aim to stabilize sexual assault recovery programs

## \$10 million fund not yet ready to take applications

[TOM FLETCHER](#) / May. 26, 2020 10:30 a.m. / [NEWS](#)

The Ending Violence Association of B.C. has received a \$10 million fund to support services for victims of sexual assault, providing grants for three years to stabilize and expand services expected to see increased demand due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Public Safety Minister Mike Farnworth announced the new fund May 26, with eligibility to be worked out before applications can be taken. Stay-at-home restrictions like the coronavirus pandemic leave fewer opportunities to escape, and “gender-based violence including sexual assault is known to increase during these times,” Farnworth said.

The three-year fund is to stabilize existing sexual violence programs and expand them to more communities, with more culturally appropriate responses for Indigenous and other ethnic communities, Farnworth said.

Tracy Porteous, executive director of Ending Violence Association of B.C., said services have done fundraising and applied for gaming grants to support their efforts. The grants will help provide victims of violence with someone to go with them to hospital if required, and report crimes to police. Porteous cited a Statistics Canada estimate that only five per cent of sexual violence incidents are reported to police.

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As pandemic restrictions are eased, Porteous said she is concerned about a “tsunami of demand” as has been seen in China after a lengthy lockdown of public movement.

The B.C. government currently has a \$40 million annual budget for victim service and violence against women programs across the province. Amendments to the Employment Standards Act have been introduced to provide up to five days of paid leave for people facing domestic or sexual violence, up from 10 days of unpaid leave passed by the B.C. legislature in 2019.

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