

IT'S TIME TO CHOOSE TO KEEP WOMEN AND CHILDREN SAFER – AND RESPOND BETTER WHEN VIOLENCE HAPPENS

BC once played a leadership role in Canada in addressing violence against women. After a decade of cuts, and a failure to keep up with increased needs, BC has fallen behind in responding effectively to this crisis.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOMICIDES ARE UP IN BC

According to BC's Coroner Service, from January 2010 - December 2016, 100 people lost their lives to what is considered the most preventable of all homicides. This death toll is up since the last BC domestic violence death review report in 2010 issued by the BC Coroner.

Each year in BC, more than 30,000 women and children affected by domestic violence are referred to violence against women counselling and outreach programs and more than 40,000 new clients are supported by community-based, police-based and court-based victim service programs.

In addition, more than 13,000 people turn to the police for help in stopping physical or emotional abuse from a partner, and 18,000 women and children go to transition houses to escape violence.

LOW WAGES AND HIGHER COSTS OF HOUSING AND OTHER FEES MAKE IT HARDER

Economic stress and the lack of community-based support can make it difficult for women to leave violent situations. Even if women and children can escape from abusive relationships, they are getting turned away from overflowing transition houses.

SEXUAL ASSAULT IS ON THE RISE AS WELL

In the face of these ever increasing rates of sexual assault, the only thing Christy Clark's government has done is cut the funding to all BC's sexual assault centres. Sexual violence is known to affect 1/3 of all women and girls at some point in life, with the largest demographic being young women between the ages of 14 and 24. Research continues to show that sexual violence is under-reported, under-investigated and under-prosecuted.

WE CAN'T KEEP FALLING BEHIND. WE NEED ACTION NOW.

John Horgan and the BC NDP will take action on the urgent call to more effectively respond to prevent violence against women and protect women and children by:

- Making changes in existing crime prevention budgets to make sure dollars go to delivering much needed services and keeping more women safe.
- Reviewing social impact of public policy, much like we do an environmental assessment, with a goal of improving the safety of women and children – including:
 - Looking at investigation and prosecution policies to ensure that women and children are not put at further risk
- Directing more funding to provincial and community-based programs that directly serve women and children – including:
 - Improving coordination and direct services to victims of domestic and sexual violence and child abuse
 - Providing Community Based Victim Services in more places with more staffing to provide direct support
 - Shortening wait lists and expanding the services to more age groups for Stopping the Violence Counselling programs
- Increase funding to be shared between government and the Victims of Crime Surcharge account for violence prevention programs – for a total of \$8 million dollars.

Victims of crime funds shouldn't just sit in a surplus account, they should go to keeping women and children safer.

After years of neglect, it's time for a restart - to choose safety over inaction, and to provide support in communities so that women and children across BC are safer.