



# Breaking the Silence

A Coordinated Response to  
Sexual Violence in Nova Scotia

# Context

## **Current Situation:**

- Significantly under-reported issue
- 591 sexual assaults reported to police in 2014
- Impacts children and youth disproportionately
- Statistical data limits comprehensive understanding of impact
- Nova Scotia's rate of reported incidents remains higher than the national average

# Background

- The Sexual Violence Strategy is a 3-year commitment of \$6 M
- Development began in 2014 with extensive research and community engagement
- Strategy launched in June 2015
- 3 Action Areas identified:
  - Services & Supports
  - Prevention & Education
  - Approach & Accountability

# Definition & Principles

## Definition:

- Guided by World Health Organization

*'..any sexual act, attempt to obtain sexual act, or other act directed against a person's sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting'*

## Principles:

- *Strategy is about people*
- *We have to work together with a unified voice*
- *We can do it*

# Prevention Innovation Fund

- Invest to support community based prevention initiatives, expand best practices, better research & evaluation, and better use of technology
- Assist youth groups to reach out to peers in innovative ways
- Support marginalized populations including African Nova Scotians, First Nations, and the LGBTQ community

Sexual Violence Strategy  
Prevention Innovation Grants  
Grants up to \$50,000 available  
\$600,000 in total

**HELP STOP SEXUAL VIOLENCE**

*We all have a role in ending sexual violence*

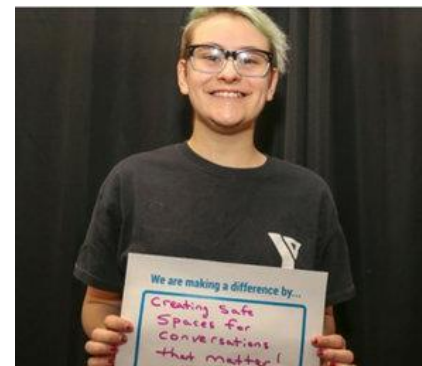
Do **you** have a creative way to reach out to your peers?  
Do **you** have a new idea for how to prevent sexual violence?  
We want to fund it!

**Deadline is December 16th, 2016**

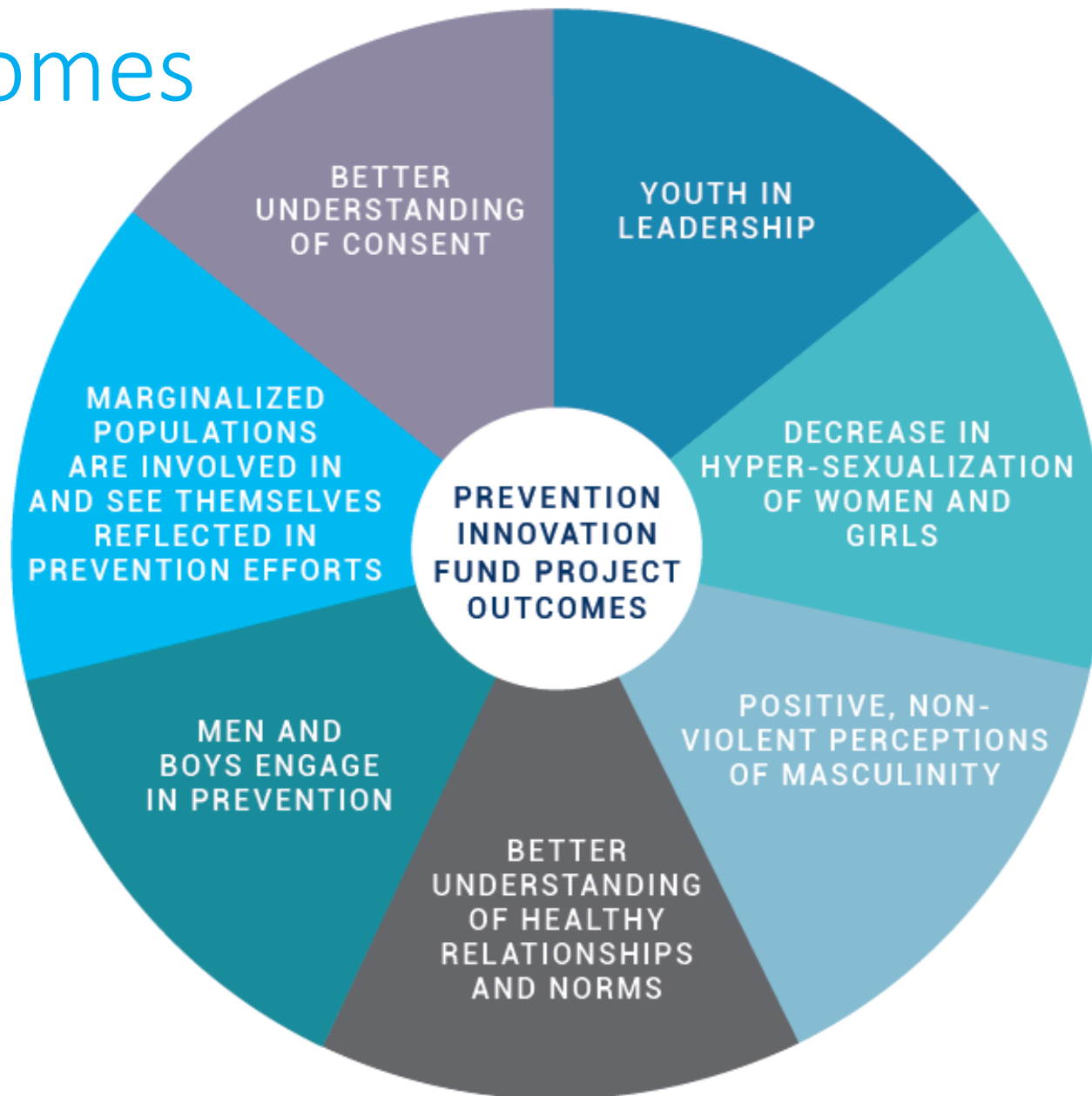
Download the application form  
[novascotia.ca/stopsexualviolence](http://novascotia.ca/stopsexualviolence)  
Questions? Email [strategy@novascotia.ca](mailto:strategy@novascotia.ca)

**NOVA SCOTIA**

- Nearly 100 applications in 15/16
- \$650,000 to 34 organizations
- Over 60 applications in 16/17
- Evaluation is in process
- \$600,000 to be awarded by March 31<sup>st</sup>
- 10 of the funded projects in 15/16 support the work of marginalized groups, including Mi'kmaw, African Nova Scotian and LGBTQI+ communities
- Nearly all of the initiatives engage youth, with 8 being led by young people themselves



# Outcomes



# Public Awareness Campaign

- Year 1 – identified a need for consistent public awareness
- Formed a Provincial Committee to help in the creation
- Geared towards youth and developed with youth input
- Launched in October 2016
- Videos, posters and a website
- Apx. \$300,000 for development, talent, animation and media
- Campaign focuses on sexual consent, bystander intervention, alcohol consumption, cyberviolence, and it provides information on where to get help



# Committee

- 14 committee members from across the province met 10 times throughout the development
- Key message: Everyone has a role in preventing sexual violence.
- Spark / add to the conversation on the issue

# Youth Engagement

- 6 youth engagement sessions at each stage of development
- Online survey to identify top issues to cover in first videos.
- 68 respondent between ages 16-24
- Top ranking: online sexual harassment, consent, partying, photo sharing

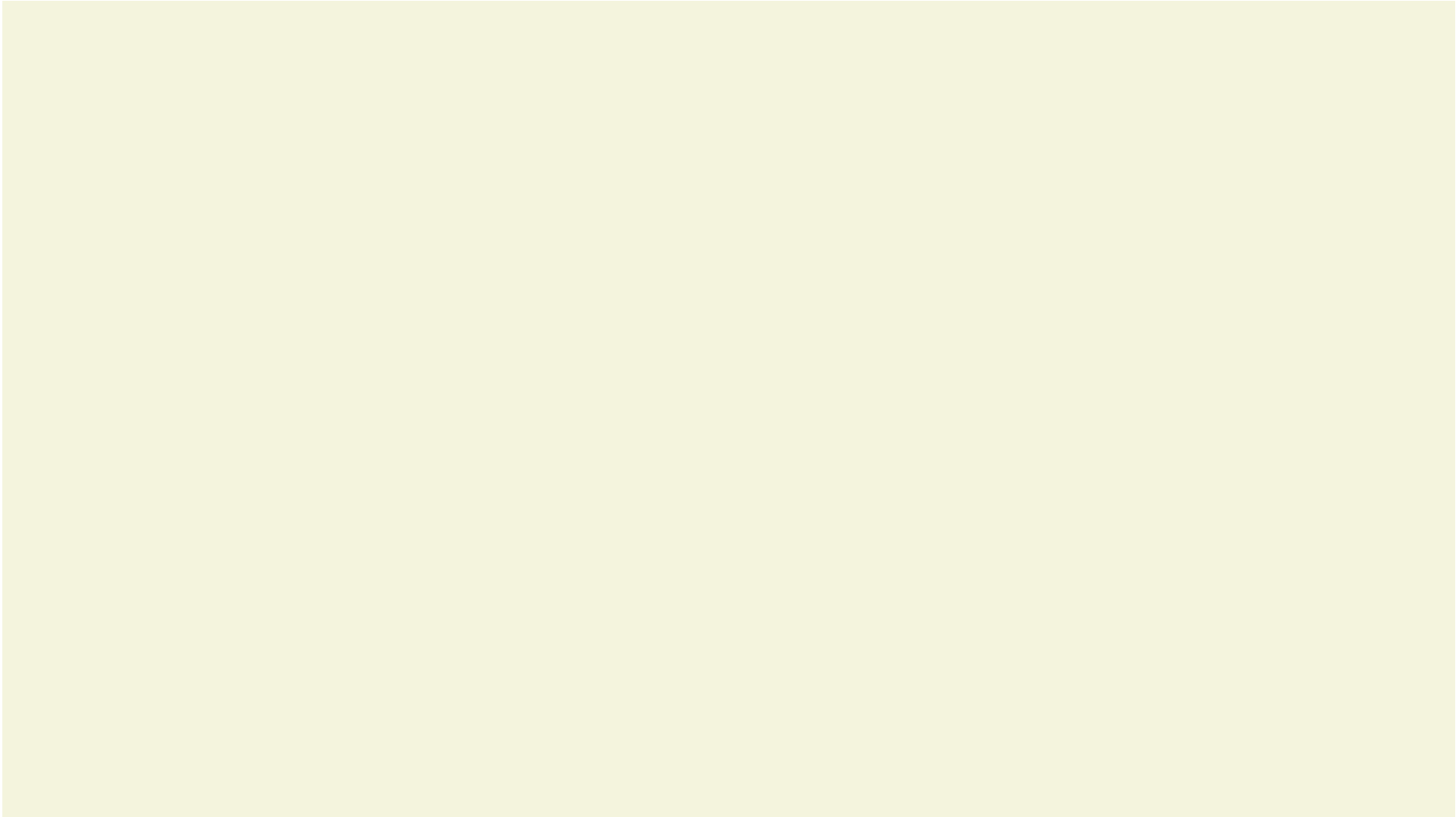
*Sexual Violence with the*  
**BIRDS AND THE BEES**

“I liked that it’s animation rather than real people, seeing as animation usually grabs people’s attention.”

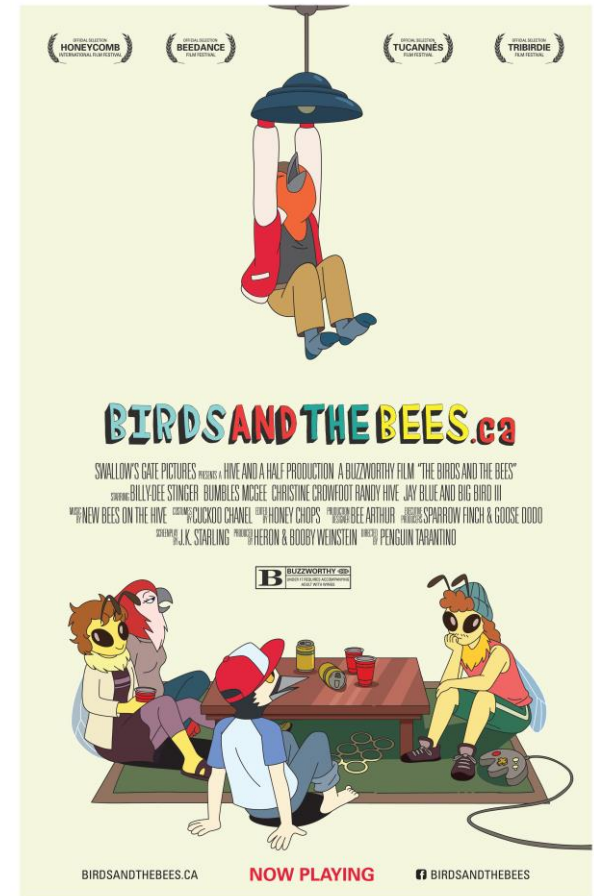
“I like it because there is comedy involved, while also getting the point across.”

“I think the humor in it will make it better for teens to watch.”

“Like how expandable it is. It has room to grow with people’s needs/your program.”



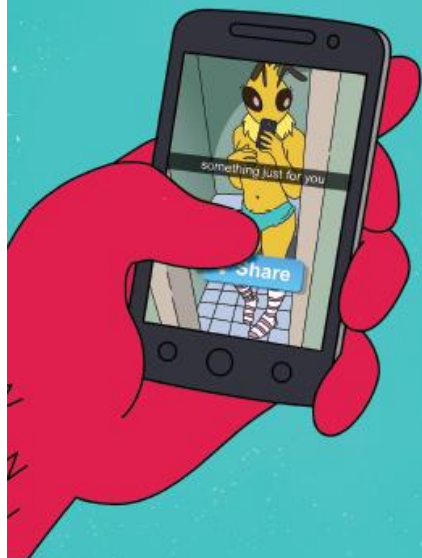
- 60 second video was listed as one of the best ads in the world
- Videos played in cinema across the province and on YouTube, Facebook and Instagram
- 60 sec – more than 45,000 views on YouTube
- 30 sec - more than 20,000 views on YouTube



# Outcomes

- Increased comfort in talking about sexual violence
- Increased understanding in what constitutes sexual violence
- Increased understanding of what consent is
- Increased awareness about where to get help

It was meant for you.  
Don't share, bee brain.



See more at [birdsandthebees.ca](http://birdsandthebees.ca)  
We all have a role in ending sexual violence.

Shaking her tail feathers  
doesn't mean she's asking for it.



See more at [birdsandthebees.ca](http://birdsandthebees.ca)  
We all have a role in ending sexual violence.

A drunk yes is a **big** no.



See more at [birdsandthebees.ca](http://birdsandthebees.ca)  
We all have a role in ending sexual violence.

# What is Sexual Violence

[watch the video](#)



Since the awareness campaign was launched in October 2016, there have been close to 9,000 unique visitors to the website.

Of these, apx. 5,000 were from people living in Nova Scotia.

The page that offers information on “where to go help” has had 624 pageviews.

In the youth focus groups hosted in February, we heard resoundingly that youth would share and promote this site so that they could better find help and/or help a friend.



# What is sexual violence?



Sexual violence is a broad term that describes behaviours and actions that are sexual in nature and are unwanted, coerced, and committed without consent. This includes words – both written and spoken.

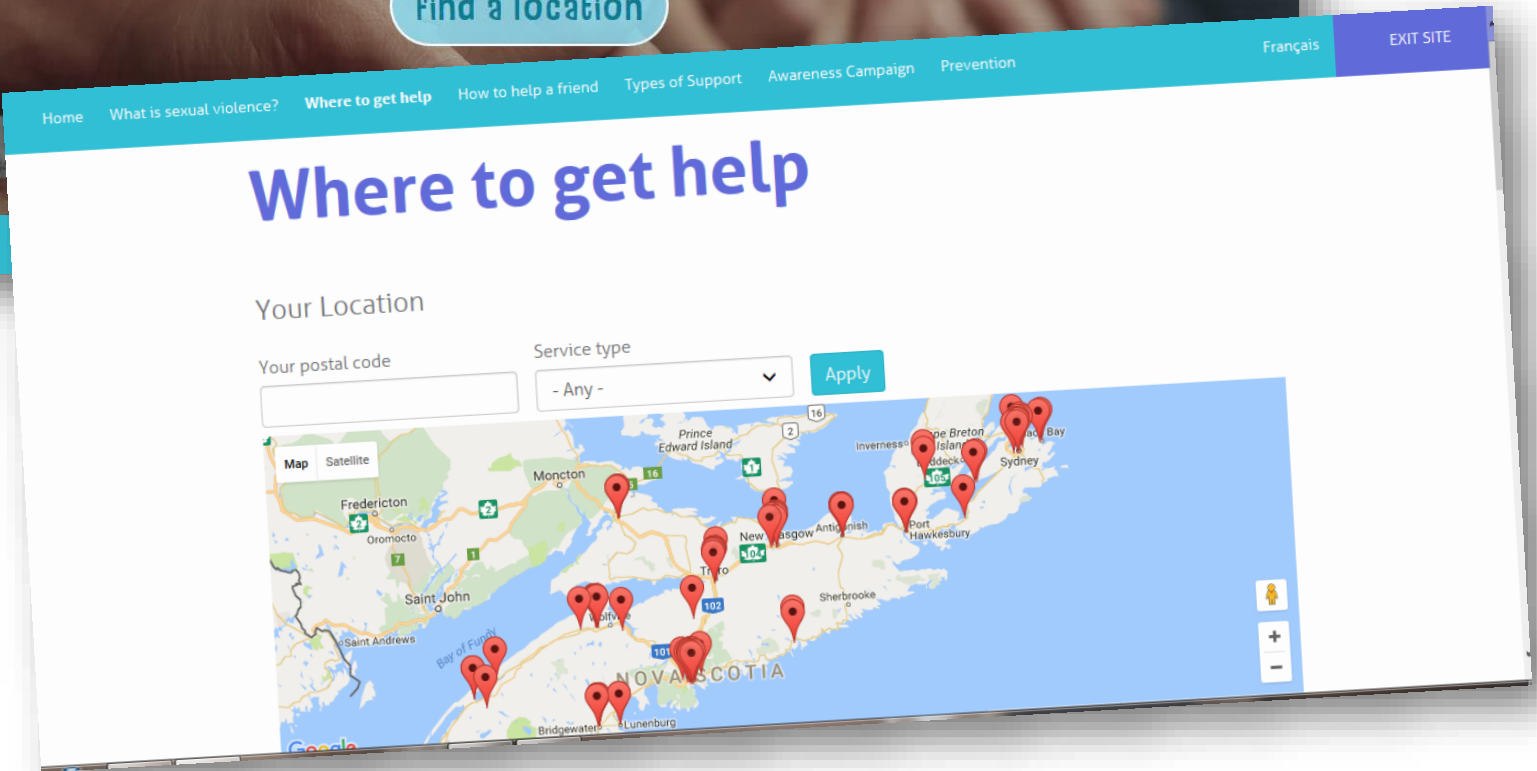
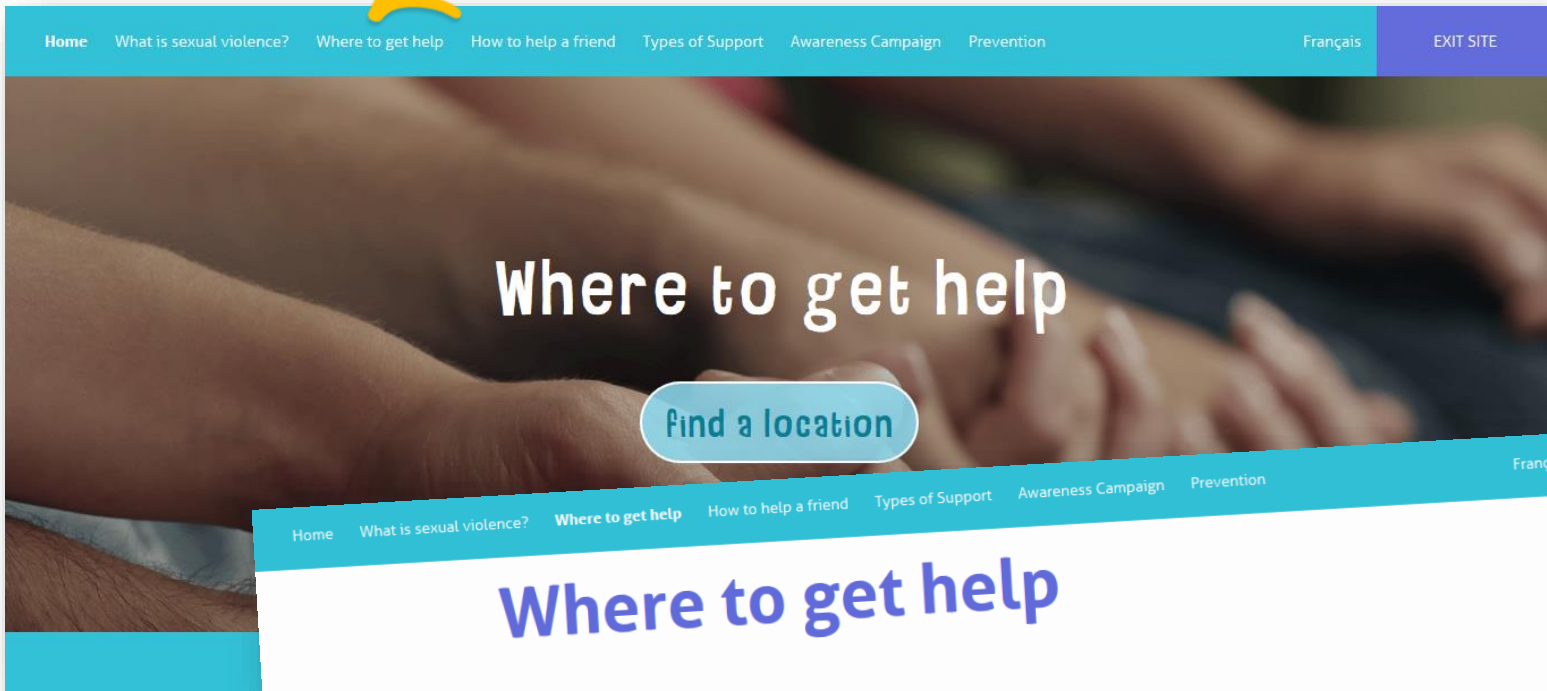
**Sexual violence is about exerting power and control over others.**

It can include a variety of acts and experiences and may also be known as sexual assault, rape, sexual abuse, exploitation, incest, date rape, and human trafficking.

Sexual violence also includes sexual harassment and catcalling, indecent exposure, stalking, showing or distributing demeaning sexual imagery, and online harassment, also known as cyber-violence.



People of all genders can be subjected to sexual violence. However, sexual violence is mostly experienced by women, children — including boys — and transgender and gender non-conforming people.





# How to help a friend



Caring responses from support people can help prevent or lessen ongoing trauma and are a crucial element of the healing process. Support can mean many things, and take many forms.

Some people who have survived sexual violence may want someone to simply listen

<https://breakthesilencens.ca/where-to-get-help>mpassion.

- Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner
- Sexual Assault Centres
- Sexual Health Centre
- Reporting to Police
- Victim Services
- Mi'kmaq Victim Support Services



# Types of Support

There are many types of support that a victim/survivor may draw upon - both formal and informal. There are many ways that people find healing which can include but is not limited to: peer support, friends, family, Elders, traditional ceremonies, spiritual and/or religious communities, and community activism. Below are descriptions of some formal types of support available in Nova Scotia.

## **Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner**

If the assault(s) took place within the last five days, the victim/survivor will be able to access the services of a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE). These registered nurses have advanced training in providing non-judgmental, confidential support as well as conducting medical exams and collecting forensic evidence. People of any gender can access this service (woman, man, trans, non-binary people etc.).

A person may want to see a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner to: take care of any physical injuries, test for pregnancy, test for STIs and begin treatment if necessary, and collect evidence for police.

Evidence will only be collected at the request of the person who has been assaulted. The victim/survivor has a minimum of six months to decide if they want the evidence to be transferred to the police.







[Home](#) [What is sexual violence?](#) [Where to get help](#) [How to help a friend](#) [Types of Support](#) [Awareness Campaign](#) [Prevention](#) [Français](#) [EXIT SITE](#)

# Sexual Violence with the Birds and the bees.

[watch the videos](#)

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# Prevention

Sexual violence continues to remain hidden and victims are frequently blamed and stigmatized. Through the Nova Scotia Sexual Violence Strategy we are working on raising public awareness, enhancing services and supports and also stopping sexual violence from happening in the first place.

Although it can sometimes seem too large to solve, we know that sexual violence is preventable. With multiple organizations, groups and communities directing prevention initiatives, the responsibility of preventing sexual violence is shared by the collective community. With the long-term goal of reducing sexual violence, we must focus our approaches on ways to stop sexual violence from happening in the first place. This is called primary prevention.

Primary prevention approaches work to change environmental factors and social norms known to contribute to sexual violence (ex. sexism, media and marketing practices, technology, harmful use of alcohol, etc.), while also promoting healthy relationships, consent and fostering safer spaces and strong communities.

## **Prevention Innovation Grants**

*Do you have a new idea for how to prevent sexual violence?*

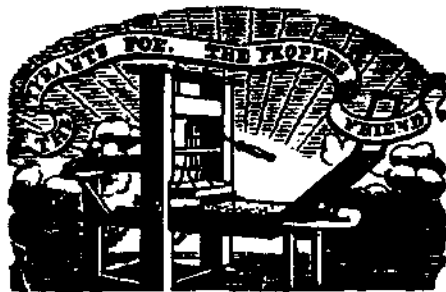
*We want to fund it!*

Wednesday, 1

March 2017

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## The Nova Scotia Advocate

<https://nsadvocate.org>

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# Kendall Worth: My caseworker questioning my doctor is a human rights violation

By [Kendall Worth \(https://nsadvocate.org/author/kendall-worth/\)](https://nsadvocate.org/author/kendall-worth/) - February 28, 2017

1 <https://nsadvocate.org/2017/02/28/kendall-worth-my-caseworker-questioning-my-doctor-is-a-human-rights-violation/#comments>

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KJIPUKTUK (Halifax) – Yes, that it correct. This article talks about how it violates my human rights when a Department of Community Services caseworker does not accept medical documentation submitted by my doctor at face value.

*Kendall Worth. Photo Robert Devet*



I personally **lost a Supreme Court of Nova Scotia**

([http://www.courts.ns.ca/Decisions\\_Of\\_Courts/documents/2014nssc366.pdf](http://www.courts.ns.ca/Decisions_Of_Courts/documents/2014nssc366.pdf)) case to have my own Section 6.3.3 funding reinstated, which amounted to \$66 per month for a high-protein diet. My medical conditions, which include a risk of cardiac disease if I do not eat a high-protein diet, have not gone away. But my funding has.

My doctor recommended the high protein diet, but my caseworker questioned his opinion.

It is my responsibility, and my responsibility alone, to talk with my doctor about my health.

People ask, "why are you so bothered that your caseworkers did not accept your doctor's medical documentation at face value, and decided to further question your doctor, and why do you call it a *human rights violation*?"

So this article answers these questions once and for all.

It is all about my independence. As a person with a disability (*impulse control disorder and learning disability*) my rights were violated as follows:

- My right to advocate for myself was removed.
- My right to live a healthy life was removed when my special diet allowance was taken away.
- My rights to self-determination and self respect was removed.

It reflects a negative attitude towards people with disabilities when my caseworker speaks to my doctor on my behalf. It portrays people like me as sick, defective and deviant, as an object of professional intervention.

But when I talk to people who supervise Income Assistance caseworkers in the Department of Community Services, I get told a caseworker's right to further question my doctor is the law.

I believe that one is just a bunch of baloney, and higher ups are telling me that because they do not want me to complain.

These actions of income assistance caseworkers also create extra work for doctors, taking time away from other patients.

Here are three stories that talk about my predicament from different angles:

In my Halifax Media Co-op article *Rigid rules for Special Diet allowances are hurting* (<http://halifax.mediacoop.ca/story/new-rules-special-diet-allowances-are-hurting/32041>) I talk about the problems when it comes to getting special diet allowances approved through your caseworker.

Then in *Let them drink shakes* (<http://halifax.mediacoop.ca/story/let-them-drink-shakes/32208>) I write about being denied a special diet allowance and looking for alternatives.

And in my commentary [Why aren't politicians listening to people living in poverty?](http://halifax.mediacoop.ca/story/op-ed-why-arent-politicians-listening-people-livin/33989) (http://halifax.mediacoop.ca/story/op-ed-why-arent-politicians-listening-people-livin/33989) I take a step back and talk about the entire big picture.

*If you can, please support (https://nsadvocate.org/donations/) the Nova Scotia Advocate so that it can continue to give a voice to people like Kendall and cover issues such as poverty, racism, exclusion, workers' rights and the environment in Nova Scotia. A pay wall is not an option for us, since it would exclude many readers who don't have any disposable income at all. We rely entirely on one-time donations and a group of twenty or so dedicated monthly sustainers.*

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**Dorothy**  
(<http://none>)

Kendall;

Another good article.

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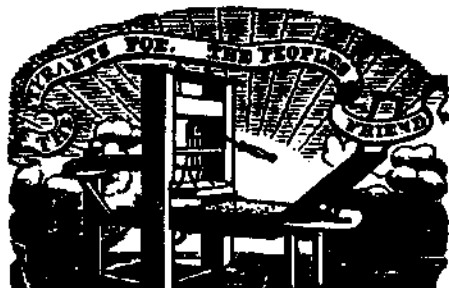
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## Kendall Worth: Farewell to Nova Scotia?

By [Kendall Worth \(https://nsadvocate.org/author/kendall-worth/\)](https://nsadvocate.org/author/kendall-worth/) - February 20, 2017

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KJIPUKTUK (Halifax) – Let's start this article off by taking a look at why I am at a point in my life where I feel I have to at least look into leaving Nova Scotia and moving to Ontario.

In Halifax and other parts of Nova Scotia there are many dark apartments with empty refrigerators. Persons with disabilities should not have to live this way.

*I do think that if other income assistance clients who share my experiences were not so scared to come forward then there would be maybe a bit more light at the end of the tunnel.*

It is all because of our current minister of *Community Services* and the Income Assistance transformation here in Nova Scotia, which is moving as slow as cold molasses when it comes to much needed changes. Meanwhile we have a system that is abusive.

Community Services does not allow persons with disabilities to eat healthy, even people whose conditions are chronic have to prove their medical needs and special diet requirements year after year.

My doctor told me that I needed a special diet to control the effects of one of my disabilities. My caseworker didn't agree and questioned the doctor's recommendation. I took my case all the way to the Nova Scotia Supreme court. (<http://halifax.mediacoop.ca/story/no-special-diet-income-assistance-recipient/31911>) and lost.

Several articles I wrote for both the *Halifax Media Coop* and the *Nova Scotia Advocate* about how I lost my special diet and the annual review speak volumes on why I say this and feel abused.

I feel as if my human rights are violated, and I am not respected as a human being because of the disability I have. I have lost all hope!

## My meeting with Community Services

On Wednesday February 8th of this year I met with two directors at *Community Services*. I showed up at this meeting with a package prepared for them to look at. This package included a letter addressed to one of these directors with notes on what I wanted to share with him.

*You know what, it would have been nice to walk out of that meeting with? Back pay from February 26th, 2013, until present; a written apology for the way the system has abused me; and an apology to my doctors for getting harassed by caseworkers. All that, and my special diet reinstated.*

I also brought my affidavit which got thrown out of Supreme Court back in 2013, and a copy of medical research on Omega 3 oils and fatty acids.

I left that meeting with the feeling that there was no light at the end of the tunnel in terms of getting my issue resolved.

What I also gathered from this meeting is that a policy change stopping caseworkers from further questioning doctors on why I even need a certain special diet in the first place is not going to happen. That is the vibe I got anyway.

It is also not looking good for others who are in the same boat as me.

You know what, it would have been nice to walk out of that meeting with? Back pay from February 26th, 2013, until present; a written apology for the way the system has abused me; and an apology to my doctors for getting harassed by caseworkers. All that, and my special diet reinstated.

## So shall I go?

I have friends who live in Ontario who are trying to talk me into leaving Nova Scotia and moving there for the purpose of getting me into a better system.

Moving to Ontario would hopefully allow me to receive income assistance under a system where what my doctor says about my medical situation is accepted at face value, and where a caseworker will respect me as a human being.

Nova Scotia is a poverty trap for persons with disabilities no matter whether the disability is mental or physical. In Ontario the system has different allowances for persons with disabilities, separate from the regular Ontario Works Program.

I do think that if other income assistance clients who share my experiences were not so scared to come forward then there would be maybe a bit more light at the end of the tunnel.

## Or shall I stay?

Do I want to leave Nova Scotia and move to Ontario? The answer from the bottom of my heart is no, I do not want to make this move!

Here in Nova Scotia I have my immediate family nearby for support when needed. I am close to everyone I have ever known my entire life.

I get to see my niece who is now six years old, and my nephew who is now eight years old between four and six times per year. Even though I do have relatives in Ontario, and I do have a good relationship with them, I strongly feel that the family support I would get in Ontario just would not be the same.

Also I would have to think about the big question. If I were to live in Ontario, how often would I be able to afford to fly back to Nova Scotia to have visits with immediate family? Answer – if I am lucky once a year.


Also by leaving Nova Scotia I would be giving up so many things I have going for me. This includes all the advocacy I do to make things better for people living in poverty.


I could no longer be the chair of BRAG and I would have to give up all the other volunteer work I do.


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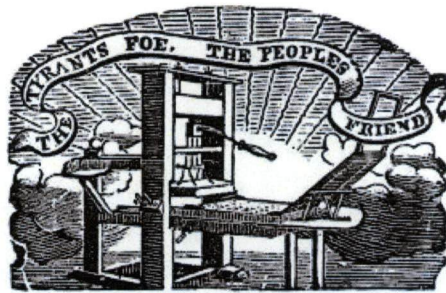


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## Kendall Worth on welfare transformation: proposed grouping by ability a pretty scary thing

By [Kendall Worth \(https://nsadvocate.org/author/kendall-worth/\)](https://nsadvocate.org/author/kendall-worth/) - February 7, 2017

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KJIPUKTUK (Halifax) – Last week I wrote about the presentation about the proposed welfare transformation that Community Services put on line [here](http://novascotia.ca/coms/transformation/docs/ESIStakeholderEngagementRound2.pdf) (<http://novascotia.ca/coms/transformation/docs/ESIStakeholderEngagementRound2.pdf>).

[I raised concerns \(https://nsadvocate.org/2017/02/01/kendall-worth-welfare-transformation-still-more-questions-than-answers/\)](https://nsadvocate.org/2017/02/01/kendall-worth-welfare-transformation-still-more-questions-than-answers/) about the lack of input from people who are actually on social assistance.

But there is more.

Something else that is mentioned in various places in the presentation is *segmenting the caseload*. People on welfare will be pigeonholed according to their skills and ability to work.

There will be three groups of clients.

- Clients with no work expectation.
- Clients who are to return to work eventually, after barriers to employment are resolved.
- Clients who are believed to be able to work right now.

The scary thing is that this could mean that say a client who cannot work because of health or disability could potentially get placed in the wrong group.

It could also mean that clients in one group get less support, while clients in another group could get harassed by their caseworkers to go out looking for work.

Yes, Community Services did an analysis to come up with the three groups, however they could have been more careful.

When it comes to segmentation, brainstorming a great variety of ideas is an important part of that work. However, when it comes to planning the new model the vibe I get is that they already got their minds made up on what they are going to do.

Every person is unique, and every person experiences unique barriers to employment. This is why sophisticated vocational assessments are needed as part of the new system.

But to me it sounds like the type of assessment tool Community Services is planning to use as part of the new system is not a real vocational assessment. I personally know enough about what an actual vocational assessment is that I could write a whole separate article on this.

Anyway, the whole process of what they are talking about in this transformation process is scary.


Of course only time will tell what is really going to happen with this transformation.


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Another good article Kendall.

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