

Action Team on Sexual Violence and Bullying

Progress Report and Transition Plan

August 20, 2013

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Background

Rehtaeh Parsons passed away on April 7, and in the wake of her death, numerous questions were raised about the nature of support she received from the justice, education, and health systems.

In response to these questions and the broader issues they raised, Premier Darrell Dexter appointed Marilyn More, minister responsible for the Advisory Council on the Status of Women, to lead an immediate response to the events that led to Rehtaeh Parsons' death, and to recommend longer-term actions to deal with the broader issues underlying the Parsons case: sexual violence, youth mental health, bullying and cyberbullying, substance abuse, and changing societal norms and relationships. We recognize that many of the issues that have surfaced through this work require coordinated and combined services, public education, policy, and legislative effort to address meaningful change in the long term.

Minister More put in place an Action Team on Sexual Violence and Bullying with senior staff from the Department of Community Services, the Advisory Council on the Status of Women, the Office of Policy and Priorities, and Communications Nova Scotia. With the diligent effort and support of the Departments of Justice, Health and Wellness, Education and Early Childhood Development, and Community Services, the Action Team coordinated the information, departmental action, and activities across government. As well, Minister More has worked with her ministerial colleagues from these departments to solicit information and ideas and to provide regular updates on the team's progress. Over the past four months, Minister More and her Action Team have met with over 100 individuals and organizations across the province to pursue an open and honest dialogue on the issues. An overview of whom the team met with, and a summary of feedback, is attached as Appendix A.

To date, the Action Team's work has been carried out in two phases. The first phase considered immediate actions that government could take both to respond to the initial issues and to reassure Nova Scotians that government was moving forward to create meaningful change. This phase concluded with the launch of Sexual Assault Awareness Month on May 3.

After the May 3 event, the team moved into its second planning phase to identify options for longer-term, system-wide improvements. This report marks the end of the second phase, and it identifies both immediate and longer-term directions.

The Way Forward

Understanding complex social issues such as sexual violence and bullying requires multi-disciplinary perspectives that aim to provide insight into the changes necessary to prevent and eliminate such forms of violence. Our preliminary analysis through this work suggests that violence is relational — it is rooted in deeply held social beliefs concerning the nature, quality, and structure of relationships. Because elements of these belief systems pervade so much of our everyday society and governing institutions, effectively addressing these beliefs will require changes at the most fundamental levels of society – our relationships with one another. Key questions resonating through this Action Team work are not so much how sexual violence and bullying exist in our society, but why. What is the nature of relationships with ourselves, with our peers and acquaintances, and with our systems? What is the nature of relationships between systems and institutions?

Our actions have been informed by integrating social, cultural, and other intersecting variables, which seems appropriate for unpacking the complexity of the root causes underlying the continuum of sexual violence and bullying and the harm and tragic consequences they can generate. It is our intention that the following actions be read in light of our relational understanding of violence and the implications for actions to prevent and address it. Based in a relational approach, our actions seek to create, foster, and support relationships of respect, care, and equality in which we can live safe and healthy lives free of violence. This approach resonates with the commitments of the restorative approach already being taken within some communities, institutions, and systems in Nova Scotia (justice, human rights, education, and others), providing significant and important opportunities for collaboration and common action to prevent violence and ensure safe and peaceful communities.

While Rehtaeh Parsons' story has sexual violence and bullying in the forefront, it also involves broader attitudinal and behavioural issues. For youth, there are growing concerns about alcohol and drug use, changing parental roles, and shifting sexual norms. For human services systems, we clearly need to address problems with conflicting mandates, privacy and information sharing, risk aversion, inconsistent service, and competing funding interests. There is insufficient coordination and collaboration among agencies and public service providers.

To reduce the risk factors that led to the tragic outcome for this young woman — and in so doing, prevent more such events — both government and the wider community, including industry, the general public (families, parents, and guardians), and other levels of government, need to look for ways to promote more positive attitudes and behaviours among youth generally.

The committee of ministers and deputy ministers that has overseen the work of the Action Team has approved two interconnected pieces of work:

- 1. Prevention of Sexual Violence & Bullying:** Promotion of more positive attitudes and behavioural norms among youth to reduce sexual violence and bullying, supported by our public policy and programs.
- 2. Improved Responses to Victims and Supports for Survivors:** Improved responses to sexual violence incidents by our justice, social services, health, and educational systems for improved supports for victims/survivors of all ages and their families.

This report from the Action Team on Sexual Violence and Bullying includes 13 actions. Actions 1 to 5 focus on prevention of sexual violence and bullying; actions 6 to 11 focus on improved responses to victims and supports for survivors; and actions 12 and 13 address other related considerations.

“... our actions seek to create, foster, and support relationships of respect, care, and equality in which we can live safe and healthy lives free of violence.”

Prevention of Sexual Violence and Bullying

There has been a nearly unanimous suggestion that government needs to focus on actions to reduce incidents of sexual violence and bullying and to begin to transform the societal attitudes that contribute to these abhorrent behaviours.

There have been very successful “attitude shifts” in our recent history: reduction of drinking and driving, reduction of tobacco use, increase in seat belt use, and increase in recycling. We are still in the midst of other significant, more-complex shifts, including support for same-sex marriage and equality, and understanding of mental health issues.

We came together to respond to a tragedy. We agreed that not only do we want a strong response when youth experience sexual violence and bullying, we want those behaviours to STOP.

We know that public education, policy, and legislation combined with leadership from government, non-governmental agencies, youth, and parent and community groups can support these shifts.

This is the time for all of these partners to reaffirm that sexual violence and bullying are not acceptable, and that their prevention is a priority for our province. The initial focus for this work should be the prevention of sexual violence and bullying among youth. This is not to minimize the experience of adults affected by these issues but rather to place a priority and focus on youth who are particularly vulnerable. As well, most past efforts on prevention have been subject-matter specific; that is, prevention of sexual violence, prevention of bullying, or prevention of suicide. This report is proposing a holistic and integrated approach to prevention that focuses on the causes and contributors that can result in complex social issues such as sexual violence, bullying, and suicide.

Part of the prevention of these behaviours is to help youth make different choices and to build resiliency before such behaviours can affect them. As government, we must cultivate healthy environments and communities and articulate a vision for youth that includes youth-centred services and programs, systems that share information, and resources that wrap around youth when they need it. All of these

services and programs must be easy to access and navigate. Finally, we must do this through deep and broad engagement of youth. Youth and the adults who support them were very clear that imposed solutions are unlikely to take root.

There are pieces of work already underway to support this prevention and intervention approach:

- Communications Nova Scotia has launched a campaign on the need to get consent before sexual activity.
- Department of Justice is developing standards for its Cyber SCAN unit, which will include processes to intervene early.
- Department of Health and Wellness is leading work on suicide prevention.
- Department of Education and Early Childhood Development hosted a large youth conference this summer, with significant youth involvement. It has also developed an anti-bullying handbook for parents and an online anonymous reporting tool to support early intervention to prevent further harm.

A list of actions underway can be found in Appendix B.

There are structural and system challenges for government in advancing the agenda; here are some examples:

- Youth, as an age demographic, has fluid definitions, and this ambiguity inhibits government responses. For purposes of this report, “youth” refers to individuals up to age 25 and, depending on the context, could include all school-age children. For example, digital citizenship curriculum begins in early elementary grades.
- Government is not structured for a streamlined approach to youth. We have multiple departments with youth mandates and staff dedicated to youth. Government’s partners – such as police, schools, and DHAs/IWK – all have their own policies, funding arrangements with governments, and preferred practices.
- Information sharing can be problematic.
- Schools are already acting as the delivery mechanism for many interventions, with some success. However, not all youth can be served through schools. We need community delivery mechanisms that work as part of our overall approach, providing year-round support.

- The Child & Youth Strategy, which itself arose from a tragic event, has to be refocused if it is to provide clear direction and meaningful coordination.
- Funding to youth-serving organizations is not prioritized or well coordinated across government, leading to ad hoc approaches.
- The adults who have the greatest impact on youth are their parents and guardians, but they can be difficult to reach and may not always be able to engage.
- Violence-prevention policy work is complex. Some existing policy and action plans are winding down (for example, the Domestic Violence Action Plan is in its final year of implementation and ends December 2013).
- Culture is affected by media, advertising standards, and sexualized imagery – things over which government has limited control.

The majority of actions contained in this report are equally applicable for youth regardless of gender or sexual orientation; however, it is recognized that sexual violence is predominantly a crime against young women.

Actions:

Prevention of Sexual Violence and Bullying

Actions that government is working to implement immediately:

- 1. Continue to monitor and oversee progress through a centralized team approach** with an expanded membership to include members from all four affected departments (Justice, Health and Wellness, Education and Early Childhood Development, and Community Services). For the next six months, the existing Action Team will continue to play this role. After that, the existing Better Health Care deputy ministers and senior officials committees could assume oversight.

While work will be led from departments, the Action Team and its successor would have responsibility for monitoring, coordinating, and directing preventive and other associated actions in the following spheres:

- a. continued inclusion and enhancement of prevention (including social/emotional learning) in school curricula
- b. professional development for various professionals on topics related to sexual violence and bullying
- c. school-based interventions, including SchoolsPlus, mental health clinicians, guidance counsellors, and others
- d. adoption of restorative approaches to interactions and supports with youth, from both individual and systemic perspectives
- e. awareness and prevention materials aimed at youth, parents, and others
- f. awareness and prevention activities aimed at post-secondary institutions
- g. prioritization of training opportunities and/or grants related to sexual violence and bullying prevention
- h. implementation of accepted recommendations from independent reviews in the education, health, and justice systems
- i. ongoing departmental initiatives related to a comprehensive approach and coordinated response by government

Immediate action: Develop a tracking mechanism for actions, and expand the Action Team to include representation from all four affected departments (Justice, Health and Wellness, Education and Early Childhood Development, and Community Services).

2. **Clarify which of the recommendations of the Task Force on Bullying and Cyberbullying are being acted upon**, including where actions have exceeded the recommendations (for example, the anonymous reporting tool developed by Education and Early Childhood Development). Out of 85 recommendations, 40 have been implemented to date, and 38 more are in progress.

Immediate Action: Release an update on Speak Up: An Action Plan to Address Bullying and Cyberbullying Behaviour.

Actions that require further development:

3. **Launch a five-year social marketing campaign to influence social behaviour related to bullying and sexualized violence.** This long-term campaign must be based on best practice and baseline research to determine elements of the campaign and to target particular ages and stages to achieve optimal results. This research will also be key in measuring progress. The campaign will support a policy and prevention framework. Youth, educator, and parental involvement will also be an important element in developing a multi-faceted, robust campaign. The ultimate goal is permanent and positive behaviour change.

Immediate action: A short-term campaign focused on educating youth about sexual consent was launched in August 2013.

4. **Explore broad service delivery for youth – including how youth are supported, and how information about youth is shared.**
 - a. Adopt the joint Education and Early Childhood Development and Health and Wellness report on where guidance counsellors, mental health clinicians, or other resources are needed, and implement as resources become available. Work with school boards to ensure that funding is directed to this purpose.

- b. In particular, look how to build upon SchoolsPlus and Youth Health Centres, and explore other models such as the HUB from Saskatchewan/ New Brunswick and the Youth Advocacy Centre at the IWK. Consideration should include how these models adopt a restorative approach. Delivery mechanisms should include community-based providers and be accessible year-round.

Proposed next steps: 1) Publish a long-term plan for SchoolsPlus expansion, and publicly commit to acting on the joint internal report on guidance counsellors / mental health clinicians. 2) Explore the feasibility of the HUB model approach.

- 5. **Publicly acknowledge the Child and Youth Strategy, incorporate its legacy into ongoing work, and identify sexual violence and bullying as a focus for youth engagement for the next two years.** In order to do this effectively, it will be necessary to reallocate resources assigned to the Child and Youth Strategy to this effort.

Proposed Next Steps: Create a working group including non-government partners and youth, to develop a child and youth action plan focusing on prevention of sexual violence and bullying.

Improved Response to Victims and Supports for Survivors

Nova Scotia has among the highest rates of sexual violence in Canada. We have uneven and overburdened services for victims/survivors and families. While prevention activities are crucial, we also need supportive and collaborative environments through police and prosecutorial practices, counselling, and mental health services and other supports for survivors of sexual violence.

In 2012, the province announced the development of a Sexual Violence Strategic Framework. Recent events have confirmed the need for a comprehensive response to sexual violence across the province. As a result of these events, the Department of Health and Wellness refocused its work to improve responses to victims/survivors of sexual violence and is developing recommendations to prevent sexual violence. These recommendations will be included in government's action plan for sexual violence for Nova Scotia in fall 2013.

At present, there is no comprehensive support system for victims/survivors of sexual violence. Instead, a patchwork of supports has arisen, with sporadic and crisis-driven funding, and uneven standards of service. There are areas of the province without any organized response for victims/survivors. Many populations are underserved, including youth, persons with disabilities, aboriginal people, African Nova Scotians, LGBTI communities, and others.

There are pieces of work already underway to build a better response:

- The province has announced Funding (\$900,000) for communities to design and demonstrate collaborative response models that work for them.
- In June and July 2013, Health and Wellness hosted a series of workshops that explored elements of supports and services for victims/survivors of sexual violence. Themes from this workshop will inform the development of outcomes used to assess proposals for demonstration projects.
- Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women developed a new resource guide for youth on dealing with sexual violence.

A list of actions underway can be found in Appendix B.

There are structural and system challenges for government in advancing the agenda:

- Some community-based organizations have some distrust of government and frequently report underfunding. There can be significant tension among such organizations, stemming from disagreements on practice models and competition for resources.
- Supports may vary depending on several factors, including whether the sexual violence was reported or charges were laid. The presumption of innocence and the preparation of evidence for trial can be perceived as very unfriendly to victims; yet government must maintain the independence of these processes.
- There are significant financial challenges in providing the same levels of services in all regions of the province.
- Responsibilities for sexual violence are spread across several government departments, and they are not guided by an overarching policy framework.

Actions: Improved Response to Victims and Supports for Survivors

Actions that government is working to implement immediately:

- 6. Engage a community development expert** to monitor progress and prepare for evaluation of community demonstration projects. As part of government's plan for sexual violence, demonstration projects on support services for victims of sexual violence start in the fall of 2013, led by Health and Wellness. These projects are intended to demonstrate innovative and collaborative models that move us to accessible services reflective of communities across the province. Following the demonstration projects, a new funding and accountability framework will be developed for coordinating regional delivery of community-based sexual violence services.

Immediate Action: Engage a community development expert to lead this work.

- 7. Work with school board superintendents and police to develop safety protocols** for situations where sexual violence is alleged, a criminal investigation may be underway, and the alleged victim or the alleged perpetrator is in the school system. Protocols would include changing classes or schools, and the transfer of information.

Immediate Action: Work with school board superintendents and police to develop processes that will apply if the school is informed of an incident by police (or vice versa), including what consent is required from parents and who initiates the process.

- 8. Develop new resources on sexual violence for youth victims and their families**, particularly in the days following any incident. Examples include website content, a resource guide for teens, and information cards.

Immediate Action: *Sexual Assault: safety, help and healing for teens in Nova Scotia*, developed by the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women, and *Bullying & Cyberbullying: What We Need to Know* – a reference for parents and guardians, developed by Education and Early Childhood Development, were released in August 2013.

9. **Request that police, emergency responders, teachers, and youth health centre coordinators use existing professional development training budgets to prioritize sexual violence**, in support of those who may be with the victim/survivor shortly after the incident or disclosure. This training should include supporting the victim/survivor.

Immediate Action: Request (in writing) professional regulatory bodies, industry associations, and unions to prioritize professional development related to sexual violence. Where training is provided by government, this focus should be implemented no later than 2014/2015.

Actions that require further development:

10. **Consider whether women's centres and other women-serving organizations should be funded through the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on Status of Women.** Centralized, coordinated funding within an agency with a more focused mandate would result in improvements in coordination, consistency of approach, transparency, efficiency, and accountability. Funds should be allocated based on service delivery agreements under an accountability framework.

Proposed Next Steps: Work with representatives of women's centres and affected departments to consider and coordinate the transfer of relevant funding to the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women. Complete a cross-jurisdictional scan of funding models to help develop an accountability framework.

11. **Explore extending the capacity of provincial and police-based victim services** relating to court accompaniment and counselling.

Proposed Next Steps: Subject to capacity, develop a proposal to extend provincial victim services court accompaniment to victims of sexual violence, at the victim's request.

Other Areas

The creation of the Action Team has been an extraordinary response to a tragedy. The fact that it has prompted a review of three large systems – education, health, and justice – speaks to the complexity of the issues and the desire to do something better. Minister More could have met with thousands of people who wanted to have their voices heard. We've been able to speak with more than 100 people and organizations, and government has provided many opportunities and resources for people to learn about actions underway. Unfortunately, best efforts at getting information out have not always informed public discussion.

Actions – Other Areas

Our experience has prompted two additional actions:

12. Develop protocols for communicating with the public, including

- a. advertising standards for Crown corporations, government departments, and organizations receiving provincial funding when developing campaigns that target youth
- b. communication responses to tragic events, so that harm is minimized and roles are clear (for example, a protocol to determine when, and if, a book of condolences will be created)
- c. communication of guidelines relating to reporting of suicides, to be shared with media

13. Create a policy framework to ensure there is a coordinated set of actions for government to address violence against women, including domestic violence, human trafficking, and sexual violence. This will provide a mechanism to connect the work arising from this report to ongoing government work such as the Domestic Violence Action Plan following its final year of implementation in December 2013.

Final Thoughts

There has been tremendous work over the past few months to respond to the issues that have been raised. We have proposed next steps, but we also recognize that ongoing work on this issue is required to address the recommendations that will arise from the independent reviews in the health and justice systems. Our team is already working with Education and Early Childhood Development to address the recommendations contained in the *External Review of the Halifax Regional School Board's Support of Rehtaeh Parsons*.

The issues brought forward as a result of the Rehtaeh Parsons case are complex and ever-changing. For example, there should be significant exploration of how sexual violence and bullying impact diverse communities. We need to understand the role we expect for our schools. However, this report and its actions focus on the issues that have come to the forefront during this work. We will need broader understanding of culture and behaviour to inform future work.

This team will continue to hold an oversight role for the next six months to ensure policy coherence with other actions government is taking, to continue developing partnerships, and to ensure support for the actions contained in this report so that they become embedded in the ongoing work of government departments.

Appendix A:

Who Was Met with and What They Said

Action Team Members

Marilyn More, Minister for the Action Team on Sexual Violence and Bullying, and Minister responsible for the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women

Lynn Hartwell, Associate Deputy Minister, Community Services

Tracey Taweel, Associate Deputy Minister, Communications Nova Scotia

Stephanie MacInnis-Langley, Executive Director, Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women

Marah Haywood, Office of Policy and Priorities

Jean Flynn, Director, Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women

Premier's Office staff

The Action Team has met three to five times per week since April 2013.

Minister More has met with the parents and step-parents of Rehtaeh Parsons on three occasions since April 2013.

Minister More and/or the Action Team also met with

- representatives of several women-serving organizations, including the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women
- representatives of several youth organizations, including the Advisory Council on Youth and Leaders of Today
- representatives of the Nova Scotia Task Force on Bullying and Cyberbullying, including Wayne MacKay, Chair
- Education and Early Childhood development staff responsible for implementing the Action Plan to Address Bullying and Cyberbullying Behaviour
- representatives from the health sector, including experts in the areas of sexual assault, youth mental health, suicide prevention, and resiliency
- representatives from the education sector, including the External Review team of Dr. Debra Pepler and Penny Milton, school board superintendents, NSTU, educators, and provincial and territorial Ministers for Education and Advanced Education

- representatives from HRM and the justice sector, including Mayor Savage, HRP Chief Jean Michel Blais, HRP Deputy Chief Bill Moore, and RCMP Chief Superintendent Roland Wells, as well as representatives from Victim Services, the Roundtable on Violence, and experts in restorative practices.

Representatives from the Action Team have attended or participated in several events to date, including the following:

- Speak Up conference for youth, parents/guardians, and educators
- “Be The Peace” – Lunenburg County sexual assault initiative
- Provincial volunteer recognition ceremony
- May launch of Sexual Assault Awareness month
- Big Brothers Big Sisters of Greater Halifax AGM (including leaders from other major Canadian Big Brothers Big Sisters)
- Rotary Clubs of NS, PEI, NL
- Federal/provincial/territorial ministers for the Status of Women
- Acting Together – Responding to Sexual Violence community workshop

There is more work to be done, and several more meetings and events will take place over the next few months.

This is what we heard:

What we heard sexual violence and bullying

- Sexual assault/harassment/bullying issues are complex; compounded by issues around power, relationships, drugs, alcohol, mental health, suicide
- Multi-faceted approach, immediate to long-term, required to change attitudes and behaviours of all Nova Scotians to create healthier, respectful relationships and safer communities; decorum and respect begin with each of us
- Sexualized violence larger than sexual assault
- Huge misunderstanding about what is and is not consent; youth culture today includes some very risky attitudes and behaviours, especially when young women are viewed as accessories and young men go unchecked; culture-specific issues in some communities
- Some youth disrespect and feel disrespected by the very institutions and agencies trying to help them; many youth confused about what's acceptable behaviour, values; some youth in care abuse each other
- Restorative approaches may be useful for bullying interventions but strong concerns in cases of sexualized violence

What we heard youth-related

- Youth have beauty, intelligence, potential
- Many youth say use of term "bullying" makes light of actual harassment impacts
- Youth have to be actively and genuinely engaged in all aspects of any strategy
- Parents struggling to support children and youth with mental health conditions; what parents view as crisis not necessarily triaged as same by health system
- Youth often do not respect the wisdom and experience of their elders
- Some youth see and hear adults talking disrespectfully about youth without the same consequences that youth face when the opposite happens
- Genuine youth engagement has longevity, is consistent, allows youth option to become involved and to disengage, hears their voices, youth feel safe and respected, allows youth/adult partnerships, long-term funding

What we heard working differently together

- Various hub models to provide up-front, timely intervention and coordination, SchoolsPlus, teen health centres, interagency tables — if school-based, how to provide services when students not in school?
- Communities and regions of the province need to be mobilized; emphasis needs to be on partnership building; every organization, agency, level of gov't needs to refocus programming and funding priorities, pick up part of the challenge, stand up for respectful relationships and caring communities, value each other's work, stretch toward common goals, be more intentional, track work related to these issues even when secondary to projects and initiatives so can get credit and be measured
- Number of current programs, services, and organizations, but every one claims to be underfunded; need to develop core elements and strategy that become priorities for funding and outcomes; rural response could look different
- Just increasing funding to current programs will further widen the gaps and inequities
- Different views on counselling theories/practices/outcomes can be divisive
- Many support providing women support where they are; don't force through judicial program or make programming contingent on making statement to police (e.g., victim services); do all police officers even offer victim services info to women who have been sexually assaulted?
- Protocols among agencies need to be regularly reviewed; e.g., counsellors will not begin sessions with 16-and-under victims until statement made to police which, depending on DCS triaging, may delay both if viewed non-urgent; may have unfortunate impacts for youth needing reassurance and intervention
- How to achieve "whole person" focus re supports and interventions? Medical, child welfare, police/judicial models may not provide high supports needed in context of everyday life for high needs & marginalized youth; how to support/protect youth in care or custody; child welfare workers and other supportive adults can be transient so not in place long enough to "attach"
- Number of current strategies have piece of the go-forward: Child and Youth, Mental Health and Additions, Suicide Prevention, Crime Prevention, Alcohol and Tobacco, Sexual Assault Strategic Government/Community Action Plan (formerly Strategic Framework), Bullying and Cyberbullying Action Plan — relevant parts need to be integrated and coordinated for maximum benefits

- Clarification around sharing critical information and privacy concerns should be sought
- Need credible, galvanizing leadership
- United Way funding model useful – once proposal assessed and approved for 3–5 years, organization has flexibility to reallocate funding to handle unexpected changes – trust critical & accountability maintained
- Collaboration takes time and effort – cannot be done “off side of desk” – can youth (entry level) be paid to supplement staff working on collaboration?

What we heard Education/training/awareness

- Technology constantly changing
- Digital literacy needs to start early; parents need training as well
- Training and follow-up of front-line staff in all areas (police, teachers, youth workers, health workers, bar staff) very helpful
- Bystander programs useful in cultural change; give everyone a role
- Media not always using media ethical guidelines around suicide stories; risk of contagion not understood
- Social/emotional development a critical role for public education and all gov’t programs/services; focus on resiliency, coping strategies, mental health, messages of hope, impulse control, supports, etc very effective; need “safe presenter” guidelines and policies
- Parents looking for relevant resources

What we heard justice-related

- RCMP rape kit out-of-date
- Effectiveness/frequency/cost of background and screening checks (criminal/sexual abuse) need to be reviewed

Appendix B:

Actions Already Underway

Prevention & Intervention

The province's Cyber-safety Act is now in effect. It will

- create a team to investigate reports of cyberbullying, and intervene early and quickly to help people understand the seriousness of their behaviour (Cyber SCAN investigators will work in collaboration with police and schools.)
- enable investigators to seek a court order to stop harmful online communication
- empower victims and families to seek a court protection order to stop someone who is cyberbullying from contacting the victim, talking about the victim online, or using any means of electronic communication
- allow courts to confiscate computers, smartphones, and tablets, and cut off Internet service

Amendments to the Education Act will strengthen the ability of school principals to address bullying incidents that occur off school property but have an impact in the school. The amendments also require school boards to co-operate with Cyber SCAN investigators.

Restorative Approaches in Schools will see 60 pilots implementing site-based learning plans to integrate restorative approaches into school communities in year two of this three-year initiative. Extensive modules on conflict resolution and responses to bullying are part of the education package and will also be featured as online resources.

The **SchoolsPlus** program is expanding in the Annapolis Valley Regional School Board, the Tri-County Regional School Board, the Halifax Regional School Board, the Strait Regional School Board, and CSAP, and new sites will be operational in 2013/2014 school year.

At the **Police Leaders Symposium on Bullying and Cyberbullying** in March 2013, Justice hosted Nova Scotia police leaders to explore best practices and new ideas to deal with bullying and cyberbullying. A follow-up symposium will be held in 2013/2014.

A new fee schedule for **physician examination of sexual assault victims, forensic collection, and physician testimony in sexual assault prosecutions** came into effect on May 1 through MSI.

A workshop on innovative approaches to youth at risk for government officials on July 4 & 5 explored a community mobilization model referred to as a “HUB” model that has been implemented in Saskatchewan, as well as a Crime Reduction Model used in New Brunswick.

The Speak Up! Anti-Bullying Leadership Conference took place in August for students, parents/guardians, educators, and community organizations. Through interactive, entertaining sessions, participants gained a better understanding of bullying, cyberbullying, and sexual violence and acquired tools and knowledge to help reduce bullying in schools and communities.

Health & Wellness sponsored the registration fee and travel costs for 11 community organizations to send delegates to Beyond Trauma: A Healing Journey for Women training with Stephanie Covington on May 6, 7 in Halifax. An additional three people were supported to attend Violence Victimization and Trauma: The Complexity of Trauma Responses with Dr. Lori Haskell in Cape Breton on June 19, 20.

Engaging Communities on Sexual Violence – Health & Wellness hosted over 70 participants from community organizations and service providers at a workshop on June 21 to identify themes and the need for specific services and critical success factors and options for service delivery. A similar workshop for 60 plus government officials and DHA/IWK representatives was held on July 16 to share what we heard from the community workshop and receive input on an effective sexual violence response, to inform an action plan.

Health & Wellness hosted a working session to explore Acute Services to Respond to Sexual Violence, attended by over 50 participants on July 24, to identify core components of comprehensive acute sexual assault services, to consider how such services might be provided in Nova Scotia, and to provide input to guide future direction. Dr. Cathy Carter Snell, RN, PhD, SANE-A, Nursing Education Scholar, School of Nursing, Lead Researcher, Forensic Research Network, was commissioned to write a discussion paper Exploring Acute Sexual Assault Services in Nova Scotia, she also attended and presented.

Health & Wellness hosted a preliminary meeting with over 30 youth service providers and youth on August 8 to explore ways to engage youth on the topic of sexual violence.

Further outreach engagement will continue with specific diverse populations to ensure that we have adequate opportunity to explore the unique considerations of these groups.

As part of the work to develop a service response to sexual violence, Health & Wellness retained the services of Dr. Lori Haskell, C. Psychology, and Dr. Melanie Randall, Ph.D., LL.B., who are subject-matter experts in the field of sexual violence prevention. Dr. Haskell and Dr. Randall will prepare a report on effective sexual violence prevention in Nova Scotia. The purpose of this report will be to identify the general focus and actions pertaining to sexual violence prevention that Nova Scotia could consider incorporating into the prevention component of a sexual violence action plan. A final report has been requested by end September.

Help For Victims/Survivors

A public education campaign and materials provide information on where to turn. This includes

- television ads
- online resources at novascotia.ca/help
- information sheets to all junior and senior high schools
- partnerships with cell phone providers to provide educational information to customers
- anti-bullying website (www.antibullying.novascotia.ca)
- *Bullying & Cyberbullying: What We Need to Know* – a reference for parents and guardians
- *Sexual Assault: Safety, Help and Healing for Teens in Nova Scotia*
- anonymous web-based reporting mechanism for parents and students (available in September)

Government is providing \$1.1 million to expand services so victims of sexual violence and their families can get help no matter where they live. Funding includes

- \$200,000 in emergency one-time funding for community-based organizations that experienced an increase in demand for services
- \$200,000 in Community Collaboration Grants
- \$700,000 for demonstration projects to implement collaborative models of response that provide support to victims of sexual violence (to begin in fall 2013)

Accountability

The Cybercrime Working Group presented its recommendations to the Federal Provincial Territorial (FPT) Deputy Ministers of Justice and Public Safety at their meeting in June 2013. Those recommendations were endorsed by the Provinces and Territories. The federal Minister of Justice has indicated that changes to the Criminal Code could be tabled in the fall of 2013.

Appendix C:

Timeline for Action

Actions	Immediate 3-6 months	Mid-term 7-12 months	Long-term >12 months
Action Team oversight	●		
Social marketing campaign (5 year)		●	
Service delivery for youth:			
A. Report on guidance counsellors & mental health clinicians	●		
B. SchoolsPlus expansion / HUB exploration		●	
Update on Speak Up action plan	●		
Refocus Child & Youth Strategy			●
Engagement of community development expert	●		
Consider/coordinate funding transfer to the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women		●	
Protocol development – school boards & police	●		
Extension of provincial Victim Services			●
New resources on sexual assault	●		
Training refocus on sexual violence	●		
Government communications response protocol		●	
Create policy framework		●	