

Good morning. My name is Marilyn More and I am pleased to be here with you all this morning. Friends and Colleagues, Moving Forward Together and addressing Sexual Violence is everyone's responsibility.

We collectively have a unique opportunity to make significant change in Nova Scotia around sexual violence issues. I won't defend the status quo. I don't have any interest in spending more time talking about why we haven't made more progress, except in ways that will move us forward now and in the future.

We have the attention of our province, our country and the world. We know Nova Scotians are generally caring and respectful, but sexual violence must be acknowledged as a serious public health and social justice issue. We need to act now, but not necessarily by doing more of the same things in the same way.

We need to work on the attitudes and behaviours behind sexual assault. Survivors and their families should be able to receive help no matter where they live -- and foster community partnerships that prevent sexual violence from happening in the first place.

To support that work, the government is investing to help organizations address a rise in need in the short term and fill gaps in services across the province in the longer term.

I spent most of my life volunteering and working for community-based organizations. I appreciate how hard you work. Day- in and day-out you all demonstrate flexibility and a willingness to get the job done in the face of increasing demands, and intense pressure. In fact, the nimble way you respond to an ever-changing, ever-challenging environment is a model for many, including government, to learn from.

And, I will tell you what I have seen over the past three weeks is a collective determination to do things differently in this province. This determination applies across government as well. There is very limited new money to apply to action on this issue, BUT what we are doing is working differently:

- Supporting the work of the Action Team in every way possible.
- Working across departments and up and down within departments with a renewed focus.
- Adding a sexual violence and bullying lens and action on as much of our current work as possible, including funding programs, professional development, communications, policy development.

- Assigning pieces of the collaborative effort to folks across government with those skills sets, experience and expertise.
- Fast tracking initiatives already underway.
- Letting different perspectives, service-delivery models, budgets, and lines of accountability blur for all the right reasons to better serve Nova Scotians.

And just as importantly, we are reaching out to our partners – you and the rest of the voluntary sector, sector leaders in areas such as health, education and justice, citizens who have ideas and want to help.

Knowing we are all critical to the way ahead.

We need to make sure survivors and their families can get the help they need no matter where they live – and foster community partnerships that prevent sexual violence from happening in the first place. To support that work the government is investing \$1.1 million dollars to help community-based organizations and coalitions meet some of their short-term pressures and work together with government to create a more coordinated approach.

1) On May 1, the beginning of Sexual Assault Awareness Month, we announced that \$200,000 is now available to address increased demand for services after our recent tragedy and the focus on where to go for help.

The fund will help provide front-line supports to those who need it during the initial response. Community-based organizations that provide services to individuals who have experienced sexual violence are eligible to apply -- including sexual assault centres, women's centres, youth groups, transition houses, aboriginal groups, and men's support groups.

2) We have heard from many people here today and across this province that we need a coordinated provincial approach when responding to sexual violence.

And so to help change the culture around this issue and help more survivors get support, \$700,000 over two years will be available to start three to four inter-agency or community-based service delivery models.

We will evaluate these collaborative and connected supports and services -- and work with communities to develop best practices that could be implemented in other parts of the province.

3) Today I am also announcing there will be \$200,000 in grants available to support and foster further collaboration and partnership among organizations that work hard day-in and day-out to address sexual violence.

This fund will essentially provide a bit of seed money to ensure organizations right across this province can broaden and diversify their reach through regional, provincial, shared action coalitions. The emphasis should be on jointly developing innovative ideas and approaches to support victims of sexual violence and to help prevent it from happening in the first place.

As some of you know all too well, many parts of our province have few services and we must strive for a comprehensive, coordinated strategy so all Nova Scotians receive at least basic service.

Plus, we can take collective action to change our culture, especially as it relates to respectful relations, safety, and health.

More information about funding streams will be available in the coming days.

To close, sexual violence affects all of us – whether we are survivors, parents, grandparents, friends and neighbours. We must work together in new ways to create safer places to live, learn, work and play. The time is now.

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