*How to use this template: Fill in the yellow highlighted sections with your own information; delete any leftover highlighted sections and instructions; send to your MPP!*

If you don’t know your MPP, [find it here (click the link](https://www.ola.org/en/members) and scroll down to Find my MPP)

Insert name of MPP

Insert their address/email address

Date

**RE: Ontario sexual assault centre funding and sexual violence survivors in our community**

Dear [name of MPP],

As a community member, I have a longstanding relationship with the Sexual Assault Support Centre of Waterloo Region (SASC). Describe your role or relationship in a sentence or two, for example: *I have volunteered there since 2015, providing hands-on support at their community events and fundraisers; I have been a proud donor for many years, as I believe that access to support for survivors of violence in our community is important*.

In Waterloo Region, survivors of sexual violence are reaching out for help more than ever. SASC is seeing significant service demands. I am getting in touch to ask if you can help.

SASC is a lifeline to sexual violence survivors in our community. If you have a brief non-identifying testimonial to share, insert it here: i.e. *People who have used their services speak positively about the support they have received; A person I know who attended the Centre’s coping skills group shared that this service has changed their life; Young people learn about where to go for help if they have a friend who has been sexually assaulted.* If not, just delete this sentence].

In recent years, however, SASC has seen an influx of crisis line calls and intake for counselling services; in 2021, crisis calls and online support chat requests increased by 32 per cent, and new requests for counselling increased by 58 per cent. The pandemic has worsened the social and economic situation of many, having an impact on survivors of violence in Waterloo Region. The economic fallout from business closures, job loss and more has also increased the risk of sexual violence, exploitation and abuse[[1]](#footnote-1). Community members that have traditionally been marginalized have less access to resources[[2]](#footnote-2). SASC sees this in support-seeker food insecurity, experiences of violence, and complex needs. Many victims of crime do not contact police, or do not see positive outcomes when reporting sexual assault[[3]](#footnote-3)—but whether they report or not, sexual violence survivors can still access support at SASC.

SASC is an essential service in our community. In the pandemic years, they are providing *more* services, yet with the *same* limited funding resources with which they have operated for years.

I am aware that in 2021 Ontario allocated some investments to improve victim services and new sexual assault services in underserved locations. But none of these dollars will reach existing sexual assault centres like SASC. Ontario has also increased funding for mental health support, in light of the pandemic’s impacts: none of these dollars will enhance services at sexual assault centres either. This is disappointing, as the impacts of sexual violence are known to line up with so many common mental health concerns[[4]](#footnote-4): for example, up to 82% of survivors experienced fear or anxiety, some experienced depression, and up to 44% experienced suicidal ideation[[5]](#footnote-5).

Most Ontario sexual assault centres have has been operating in Ontario since the 1990s. During this time, the number of people accessing crisis counselling and long term counselling has multiplied ‒ in some regions by up to 4 times[[6]](#footnote-6) ‒ yet funding has simply not kept pace.

More survivors could be getting support by now. A planned approximate 30% increase to the sexual violence sector was announced in 2018, but then was cut by the current provincial government in 2019. This increase would have addressed significant service pressures following a number of high-profile cases in Ontario. The 2018 announcement would have meant greater capacity to help more people reaching out to Ontario’s community-based sexual assault centres. In 2018, the government ‒ and sexual violence support service providers alike – lauded the plan for a funding increase, which aimed to help survivors of sexual violence “get the support they need, when they need it”. Despite this, under Ontario’s current government, this [funding increase never became reality](https://www.tvo.org/article/why-rape-crisis-centres-need-funding-now-more-than-ever).

Other arms of government have recognized the need for a better-resourced violence response. In December, for example, the Town of Bracebridge passed a resolution recognizing the need for increased community-based sexual assault centre funding, and encouraging the province to provide increased and sustainable funding for sexual assault services[[7]](#footnote-7).

I write now to ask if you will make an effort to make funding that meets the needs of survivors at centres like SASC a reality. I am asking that you:

As MPP, point out that current allocations to respond to local survivors are simply not meeting the existing service demands

As MPP, agree that no survivor of violence should face a wait for services or to meet with a counsellor (currently, many do)

As MPP, ask the Ontario government to reinstate the funding increase that was cut in 2018 (an approximate 30% increase to community-based sexual assault centres in Ontario).

I look forward to hearing from you on what you think you can do to address this. My contact information is below. Sincerely,

Your name

Your address (MPPs are more likely to respond to their local constituents; if you include your address, they will know you live locally)

Your email address/Phone number

1. Global Protection Cluster GBV Protection and Response and Inter-Agency Standing Committee. Last updated: 6 April 2020. *Identifying & Mitigating Gender-based Violence Risks within the COVID-19 Response.* Online: <https://gbvguidelines.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Interagency-GBV-risk-mitigation-and-Covid-tipsheet.pdf>: 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Tasker, J.P. for CBC News. March 10, 2021. *More racially diverse areas reported much higher numbers of COVID-19 deaths: StatsCan: Black Canadians in particular have been far more likely to succumb to the virus than others*. Online: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/racial-minorities-covid-19-hard-hit-1.5943878> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. #  According to Canadian research, just 33 out of every 1,000 sexual assault cases are reported to the police, and just 29 are actually recorded as a crime See: Patel, A. October 30, 2014. for Huffington Post Canada. 460,000 Sexual Assaults In Canada Every Year: YWCA Canada. Online: <http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2014/10/30/sexual-assault-canada_n_6074994.html>

 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. The Learning Network on Violence Against Women. *Overcoming Barriers and Enhancing Supportive Responses: The Research on Sexual Violence Against Women - A Resource Document.* May 2012: 18. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. The Learning Network on Violence Against Women. *Overcoming Barriers and Enhancing Supportive Responses: The Research on Sexual Violence Against Women - A Resource Document.* May 2012: 18. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Provided by Muskoka Parry Sound Sexual Assault Services in December 2021. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Hartill, Mary Beth, for The Bracebridge Examiner/Toronto Star. January 7, 2022. *Say it in numbers: Bracebridge council backing victims of sexual assault A look at the numbers behind sexual assault services in Parry Sound-Muskoka.* Online: <https://www.thestar.com/local-bracebridge/news/council/2022/01/07/say-it-in-numbers-bracebridge-council-backing-victims-of-sexual-assault.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)