

Halton police deem 1 in 3 sex assault claims unfounded

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The Halton Regional Police Service is set to review sex assault cases starting from 2016 in the wake of new statistics claiming the force dismisses almost one in every three sex assault claims as baseless.

The data comes from a recent report from the *Globe and Mail* which found Halton and Hamilton police clear 30 per cent of sex assault cases as unfounded, compared to the national average of 19 per cent (1 in 5).

The *Globe* report followed a 20-month investigation by the paper and found comparatively speaking, Halton's numbers in this regard are far above that of neighbouring centres like Toronto, which has only a seven per cent unfounded rate.

The *Globe* found data from 2010 to 2014 indicated, on average, Halton police dropped 64 cases as unfounded each year.

Lenore Lukasik-Foss, executive director of the Sexual Assault Centre Hamilton & Area, told *The Hamilton Spectator* those working on the front lines have long expressed concern about assault survivors not being believed.

I knew this was a problem ... it's a flag that many sexual assault advocates have been raising for a long time, she said.

She added, I thought Hamilton's rate was high ... I was like wow, after seeing the numbers for Hamilton, which are similar to Halton's statistics.

HRPS was quick to respond to the *Globe* report, with Chief Stephen Tanner ensuring Halton's 550,000 residents that staff, leadership and the force's research analysts is conducting a review of the information.

Chief (Stephen) Tanner advises that he and senior staff, as well as analytical units within the Halton Regional Police Service are aware of the *Globe and Mail* article on sexual assault occurrences across Canada, said Halton Police Sgt. Barry Malciw in a statement.



Halton Police Chief Stephen Tanner

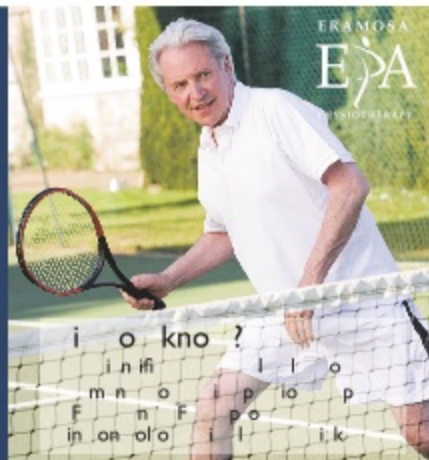
The Police Service is undertaking a review of all unfounded sexual assault occurrences, beginning with 2016, and will issue a media release when that review has been completed, he added.

Malciw said there are many reasons why a sex assault claim may be deemed unfounded.

The reasons may vary from being as simple as an incident being improperly classified in the beginning, to the investigation showing that the incident did not occur, he said.

Halton police offered no timeline for the review but said its Child and Sexual Assault Unit is staffed with highly trained officers and that all members who investigate sexual assault occurrences in Halton must have taken a mandated ministry approved sexual assault training course.

In addition we pride ourselves in being victim-centred, and ensuring that we support all victims of crime, and that priority can never be higher than in the case of sexual assault offences, said Malciw.



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