

SAVIS hopes to expand services for abuse victims

Ontario's new gender-based violence strategy hailed as 'Feminist Christmas'

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Metroland file photo

Survivors of sexual abuse in Halton Hills could be getting desperately needed servicing, thanks to a pledge from the Ontario government.

words, and that's why it's so important we have an actionable and comprehensive strategy in place."

The Ontario government is promising a 35 per cent increase in funding for sexual assault centres like SEVIS Halton, as well as increased legal services for victims of abuse, including a legal clinic specifically tailored for the LGBTQ community through EGALÉ Canada.

"We have been advocating for this for a very long time," said Arguello, who since the rise of the #MeToo movement has seen over 70 per cent more calls to the centre.

"Now survivors have a platform, and there's a safety net associated with that," she said. "I can't keep up with it. I had to recruit new volunteers."

Currently, the organization has an office in Oakville and operates satellite locations in Burlington,

Milton Acton and Georgetown.

"Acton and Georgetown need services," she said, explaining that counsellors visit Georgetown twice a week and are in Acton once, however, with the volume of calls from Acton, counsellors hold sessions over the phone to meet the needs.

"This type of service is really needed in the community," said Arguello. Victims she says, require the trauma-informed services that SEVIS provides in order to be a safe place for women, free of judgment or re-victimization.

"There is just so much reach that a few dollars could provide," she said. The funding increase will assist SEVIS in expanding their north Halton presence, she hopes.

"For so many women, they have waited so long," said Arguello. "It feels like they're finally listening."

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