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NEWS



Graham Paine/Torstar

Sexual Assault and Violence Intervention Services (SAVIS) of Halton Executive Director Alma Arguello is struggling to keep up with the demand for services while dealing with limited government funding.

DEMAND FOR RAPE CRISIS CENTRE SERVICES EXCEEDS FUNDING CAPABILITIES

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News last week that the province is infusing \$2 million into rape crisis centres across Ontario means nothing at the moment to the executive director of a longtime Halton provider of sexual assault support services.

Alma Arguello doesn't know yet how much her organization, Sexual Assault & Violence Intervention Services (SAVIS of Halton) will receive from that funding, if anything.

"We don't know anything," said Arguello, who is beyond frustrated at the erratic and insuffi-

cient financial support from the government, which puts organizations like hers in the challenging position of being unable to meet overwhelming demand.

The recent announcement comes in the wake of \$1 million in stopgap funding — introduced last year by the Ministry of the Attorney General to reduce wait times for sexual assault survivors to receive counselling — coming to an end.

SAVIS' core funding comes from the AG's office, approximately half a million annually, but there has been no increase since 1995, said Arguello.

"Since the rise of the #MeToo and #TimesUp movements, SAVIS of Halton has seen a massive growth in the demand for sexual violence support services in the Halton region," said Arguello. "Over the past two years, our request for services have doubled. This demand for services far exceeds the current staff capacity of our agency, and the result is long wait lists for services."

Cuts to services have a direct impact on survivors of sexual violence in Halton who are in need of support in a timely manner in order to appropriately address their experiences of trauma, she