

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

September 6th, 2016

Sexual Violence Awareness Week Committee Holds Public Panel to Discuss Sexual Violence and the Justice System

St. John's, NL- This year's Sexual Violence Awareness (SVA) Week Committee partners are hosting a panel session to examine the role of the justice system and its impact on survivors of sexual violence. Sponsored by The Law Society of Newfoundland and Labrador, the event titled "Sexual Violence and the Justice System" will include community representatives and members of the province's justice system, who will explore ways of increasing support within the justice system for survivors of sexual violence. The event takes place on Monday, September 12th, 7-9pm at St. John's City Hall's E.B. Foran Room.

"In the past few years, there has been significant public attention and discussion around sexual assault cases locally, nationally and internationally. Involvement in the legal system can be very traumatic for many survivors of sexual violence, who often report feeling blamed for their actions and re-victimized through the court process. The public have been left asking questions about the role of Crown and defence counsel, about judges' rulings, questions asked in court and why certain things do or do not happen. Now more than ever, dialogue is needed between justice system stakeholders, community advocates, and survivors of sexual violence," commented Kevin O'Shea, Executive Director of PLIAN and member of the SVA Week Committee. "We see this as the beginning of a discussion surrounding sexual violence and the justice system with a view to addressing misconceptions and identifying and advocating for improved approaches", continued O'Shea. Panelists include survivor advocates, civil and criminal lawyers, a former Crown Attorney, and police.

The event takes place during SVA Week 2016, which is observed and organized all across the province. This year's theme is "Listen, Believe, Support" with the week intended to draw attention to the need for survivor-centred approaches in the judicial system. "As important events and marches are happening in many communities this week, it's critical that we take time to encourage dialogue, examine and understand the justice system and the barriers survivors face", explained Nicole Kieley, NLSACPC and SVA Chairperson. "We hope this event encourages the development of collaborative strategies among key judicial and community stakeholders and leads to both immediate and long term changes."

- Police-reported sexual assaults (all levels combined) increased in most provinces and territories between 2014 and 2015, with the largest increases reported in Prince Edward Island (+14 incidents or a 23% increase in rate), and Newfoundland and Labrador (+62 incidents or a 21% increase in rate). (Police Reported Crime Stats 2015)
- In 2015, the Newfoundland and Labrador Sexual Assault Crisis and Prevention Centre received approx. 1,500 calls to its province-wide crisis line, 370 of which were crisis calls.
- Less than 10 per cent of sexual assaults are reported to the police. (YWCA 2012)
- Newfoundland and Labrador has one of the highest per capita sexual assault rates in Canada. (Stats Can 2011)

-30-

Media contacts:

Nicole Kieley
Executive Director
Newfoundland and Labrador Sexual Assault Crisis
and Prevention Centre
executivedirector@endsexualviolence.com
(709) 747-7757

Kevin O'Shea
Executive Director Public Legal Information
Association of Newfoundland and Labrador
director@publiclegalinfo.com
(709) 722-4745