

To our community,

In response to recent disclosures of violence against women, Jian Ghomeshi's departure from the CBC and [Ghomeshi's response](#) to this, Sexual Assault Centre London reaches out to those affected by sexual violence in London and Middlesex.

We at Sexual Assault Centre London know that you are likely to hear many interpretations of this situation in your community and in the media. To us, the stories of women who faced sexual harassment in the workplace, physical and sexual violence, and violence in dating scenarios within the [chronology cited](#) are too common.

These women's stories do not detail "adventurous forms of sex that included role-play, dominance and submission"¹; or benign miscommunication within BDSM practice. Instead, they reflect these women's experiences of sexual and physical violence.

We are also aware of survivor-victims' fear of reprisal for sharing their stories. In the recent cases, many of the women chose not to file police complaints, and "the reasons given for not coming forward publicly include the fear that they would be sued or would be the object of Internet retaliation"².

These fears reflect the concerns of all survivors of sexual violence. They also point to the many root causes of low reporting and conviction rates of sexual assault in Canada. For example:

- Many survivors do not report due to stigma, embarrassment, self-blame, a fear of not being believed, and concern for repercussions in their personal relationships – particularly when the offender is a friend, family member, acquaintance or co-worker
- The majority of sexual assault offenders are in fact known to the victim in some way³
- Acquaintances, friends, dates or relatives are more likely to use tricks, verbal pressure, threats, negative consequences, or victim-blaming rhetoric (i.e. "You know you wanted this"; "If you tell about what happened here, you will be in trouble") during episodes of sexual coercion⁴. This inevitably impacts upon a victim's ability to react, resist or report what happened
- False allegations of sexual assault are not a common social problem. Accidental misunderstandings of consent during sex are not a common problem. The laws on consent are clear. What *is* a common social problem is (1) the reality that survivors of sexual assault are regularly not believed or supported when they disclose their experiences of violation and (2) offenders are not held accountable for their actions. In reality, the majority of all reported sexual assault cases are simply not reported at all (less than 10%)⁵ – and those that *are* reported are not always resolved through the criminal justice system. Due to the limits of the criminal justice system response, a small minority of those initially charged with sexual assault actually see convictions⁶.

¹ Donovan, K. and Jesse Brown, for the Toronto Star. *CBC fires Jian Ghomeshi over sex allegations*. Published on Sun Oct 26 2014. Online: http://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2014/10/26/cbc_fires_jian_ghomeshi_over_sex_allegations.html

² Ibid.

³ Statistics Canada, 2003, *The Daily*, 25 July

⁴ Hakvag, H. *Does Yes Mean Yes?: Exploring Sexual Coercion in Normative Heterosexuality*. Canadian Woman Studies/les cahiers de la femme. Volume 28, Number 1. York University Publication: 122

⁵ METRAC. *Sexual Assault Statistics Sheet*. Online: <http://www.metrac.org/resources/downloads/sexual.assault.statistics.sheet.pdf>

⁶ The Learning Network. *The Network Comes to Life*. May 2012: 2. Available online:

http://www.vawlearningnetwork.ca/sites/learningtoendabuse.ca.vawlearningnetwork/files/LN_Newsletter_May_2012_Issue_1.pdf



With these realities in mind, Sexual Assault Centre London reaches out to survivors of sexual violence in London and Middlesex, their support people, and to anyone who may find themselves as a bystander in situations of sexual violence, particularly as it may occur in the workplace.

For example:

- It may be a friend, acquaintance or co-worker who tells you that something happened to her or him
- It might be an employee who tells you that something happened to her or him
- You may have had an experience with workplace or dating sexual violence yourself.

If something has happened to you, there are people who will believe and support you. You can talk to a trusted friend, family member, or contact a sexual assault centre support line at 519 438 2272 or 1-877-529-2272. Ligne de Soutien Pour Femmes Francophones Victimes de Violence: 24h sur 24, 7 sur 7: 1-877-336-2433. If you are considering reporting, we can help you think through your options. If you are not considering reporting, that's okay too. All calls are free and confidential.

If you are a friend or colleague of someone who is dealing with sexual violence, there are things you can do. You can be an ally to the person who is victimized, instead of the aggressors.

If you are an employer, there are things you can do. You can speak up, or step in. You can ask for help from others if you are not sure what to do, and then step in together. You can take leadership to understand your obligations to safety as an employer, and ensure that these are in place at your workplace. You can be an ally to the person who is victimized, instead of the aggressors.

Sexual Assault Centre London recognizes the impact of sexual violence on women in Ontario. We believe that education and information goes a long way toward the prevention of violence. Together, we will make a difference.

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