



AVALON
SEXUAL ASSAULT CENTRE

2023-24 COMMUNITY REPORT



**April 2023 -
March 2024**

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**Avalon Centre's main office is
located in K'jipuktuk on
unceded Mi'kmaq territory.**

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Message from the Executive Director



The 2023-2024 year was one of resiliency, determination, and growth at Avalon Sexual Assault Centre. Our team was stretched in new ways as we settled into our role as the provincial leader for sexual violence trauma therapy (SVTT), working tirelessly to expand access for critically underserved communities around Nova Scotia. Together, our therapy team served a total of 651 individuals impacted by sexual violence across all four provincial health zones. As in previous years, we continued to experience increased demand for our Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) program, with SANEs responding to a total of 379 calls across the Halifax Regional Municipality.

This year also marked the end of our five-year Community Navigation project, which we developed as a promising practice through funding from Women and Gender Equality Canada (WAGE). In 2023-24 our community navigator provided low-barrier support for 94 individuals impacted by sexual violence. We are thrilled to announce that we will be continuing to provide community navigation as part of our core programming at Avalon thanks to our ongoing funding from the Department of Community Services.

Taking lessons from our community navigation work, this year we embarked on our journey to develop Avalon's legal support model into a promising practice, thanks to ongoing funding from the Law Foundation of Nova Scotia and new project funding from WAGE. This year, our legal support worker provided support to 43 individuals navigating the legal system and worked collaboratively with our community navigator to co-host Avalon's Community Advisory Committee.

Of course, we have also experienced our fair share of challenges over the past year. In 2023-24, our team continued to feel the deep impact of staff turnover and the growing pains of an organization in transition. In response, we have prioritized efforts to restore Avalon's workplace culture, stabilize our governance framework, and renew our commitments to collective and community care. I am grateful for the support our community has shown us during this time and am in awe of our team's brilliance and dedication through it all.

As we close out the year, I would like to thank our Board of Directors for their trust and commitment to growing Avalon's impact in the community. To our staff, funders, donors, partners and community members—thank you for everything you do. A world free from violence is possible, and I look forward to continuing to build that world alongside each of you.

With care,

Sarah Rodimon, PhD
Executive Director

Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) Program

The Avalon SANE Program provides comprehensive, trauma-informed, and consent-based care to individuals who have experienced sexual assault within the previous seven days. As a vital community-based resource, Avalon SANEs are available 24/7 to support survivors and provide consultation with community members, healthcare providers and law enforcement.

This year, the SANE Program was comprised of a Program Manager, Education & Site Coordinator, and 23 Registered Nurse consultants who are specialized in both medical and forensic aspects of care, such as assessment, treatment and collection of evidence. The Avalon SANE team responds to the core four emergency departments in Halifax Regional Municipality: QEII Health Sciences Centre, IWK Health, Dartmouth General, and Cobequid Community Health Centre.

In the 2023-24 fiscal year, the Avalon SANE team responded to a total of **379 calls**, including: **Medical & forensic exams and treatment for 158 individuals** following sexual assault; **Information and support calls to 221 individuals** and healthcare professionals pertaining to sexual assault care and supports.

In addition to hospital response, SANEs are also required to provide fact or expert testimony when called upon, should a case proceed to court. This past year Avalon SANES have:
Received **30 subpoenas** pertaining to **15 separate trials**
Testified in **5 court cases**

The SANE Program remains dedicated to improving awareness of and access to services, diversifying our teams to reflect our communities and their needs, and fostering partnerships among our stakeholders and local supports with the overall goal of strengthening our community-based care delivery for the wellness of our clients.

Client feedback

"I liked how supportive and comforting my nurses were. They gave me so much detail, nothing was ever confusing."

"They were efficient, advocated for me, and were super kind. They explained everything to me and gave all my options and information."

"I appreciate how quickly they responded. They were very kind and supportive. They let me know I was in control and that we could stop anytime."

"(The SANEs) are changing lives. They gave me the courage to take the first steps to reclaiming my life."

Sexual Violence Trauma Therapy Program

At Avalon, our trauma therapists provide supports for survivors of sexualized violence aged 15+ living in Nova Scotia. Our services are provided online, on the phone, at our main office in Halifax, and in community spaces across the province.

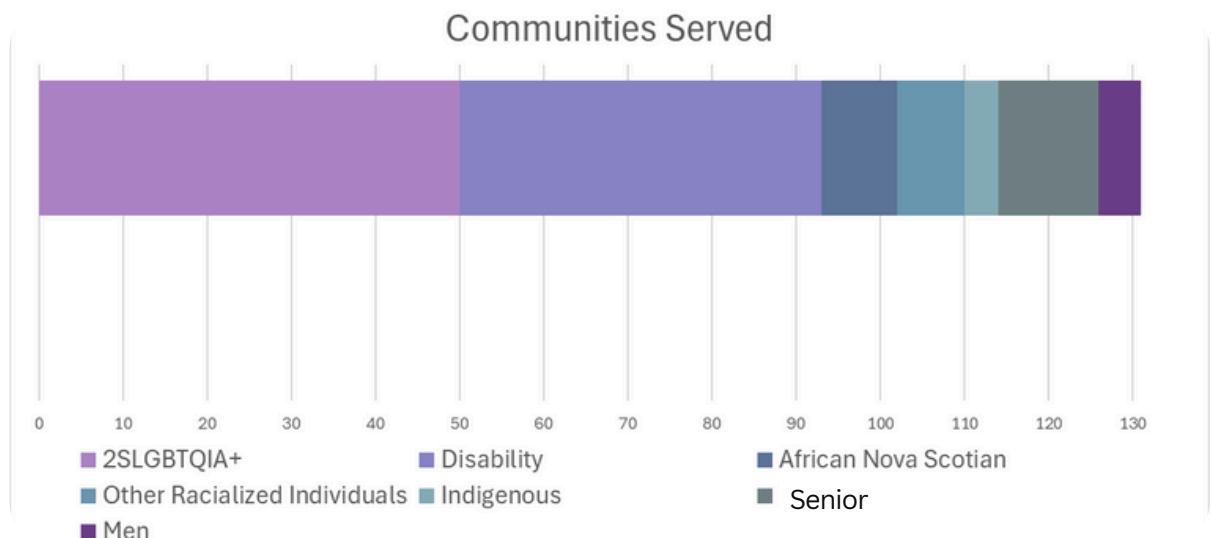
2023-24 was the first year of service delivery implementation for the Community-Based Sexualized Violence Trauma Therapy Program (CB-SVTTP).

This year the CB-SVTTP team served 458 new and 153 existing clients, providing 3,198 direct care hours. These hours include in-person, phone, virtual and community, 1:1 therapy sessions, advocacy sessions, and support-person sessions. In addition to therapy services, our intake team have helped 538 new clients from across all four zones navigate access to information, referrals, and therapeutic support this year.

This team has worked hard this year in support of our waitlist by providing 47 check-ins with clients who reach three and six months of waiting for services. They also developed a resource list of e-mental health tools and have been helping clients to gain comfort with accessing these additional support services.

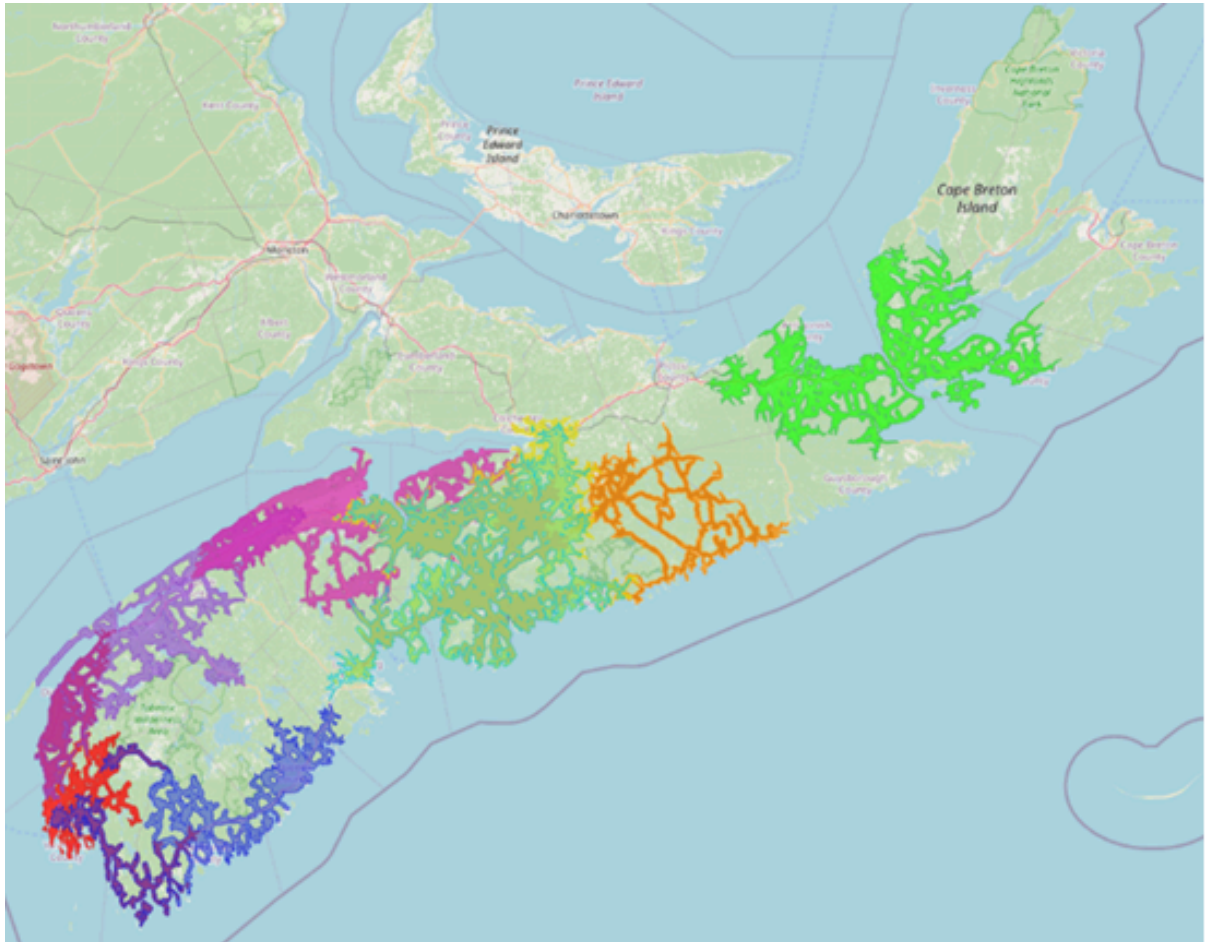
Equity in Access

This past fiscal, 46% of survivors entering services self-identify as members of equity deserving groups. 21% of those clients identified more than one equity identifier during intake.



Geographic Expansion

One of the key goals of our provincial program is to make sure everyone in Nova Scotia has access to sexual violence trauma therapy within a one-hour drive from home, or via virtual care. As of March 31, our geographic coverage for face-to-face services within one hour's drive of the office location, is seen on the map below.

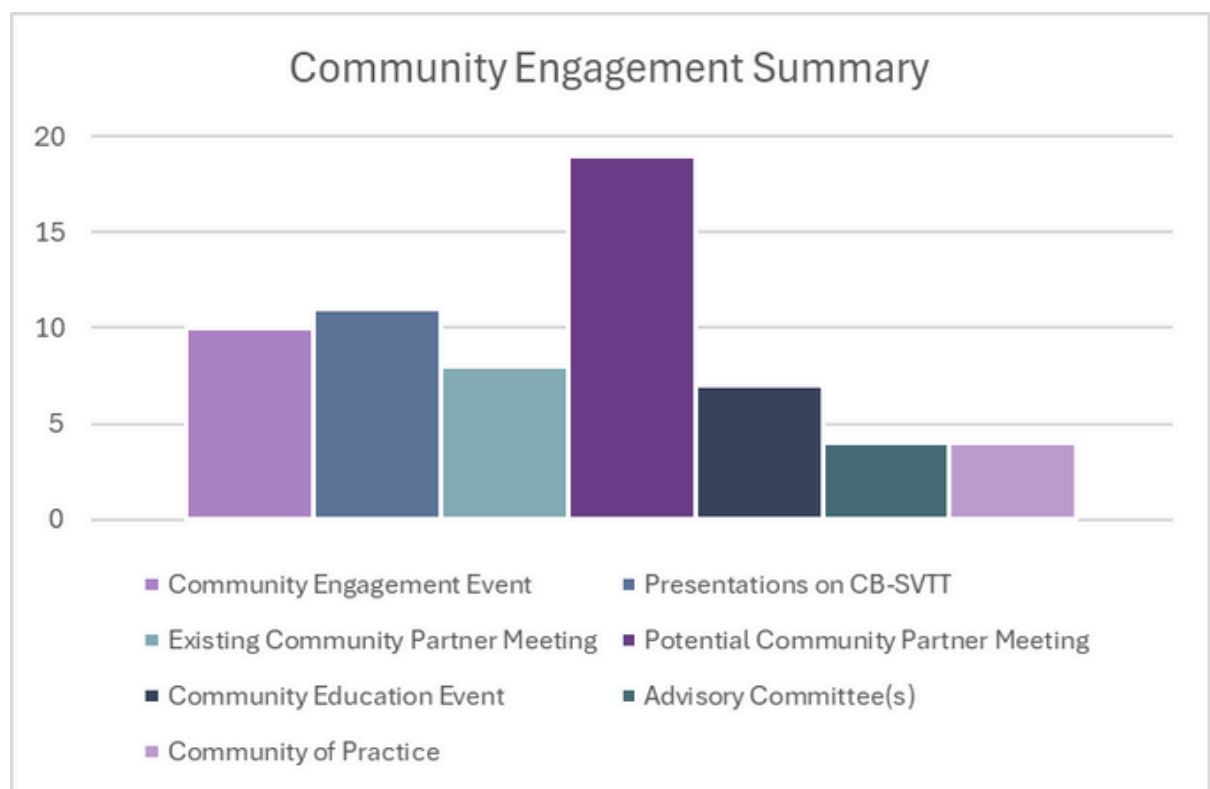


Each colour on the map represents a current therapist, and their (approximately) one-hour reach of available, in-person service.

Virtual and phone sessions are available anywhere internet and/or phone service exists in the province.

Community Engagement

This past year, our trauma therapy team participated in 63 community engagement activities including: meetings with current and future program partners, attending community and committee meetings relevant to sexual violence work, providing program presentations to navigation and referral/support agencies, providing education on topics requested by community partners (vicarious trauma, trauma-informed support of violence victims, grounding and regulation tools, etc.), attending survivor-led advisory groups, and supporting best-practices in trauma therapy through Community of Practice and group learning.



Partnership Agreements

In addition to the partner work that occurred in the scope of broader engagement, this year we have focused on increasing the depth and impact of our current partnerships. In Q4 of this fiscal, we began talks with all our formalized partners to discuss how Avalon can both contribute to the broader work of sexual violence in their organizations and integrate our therapists more meaningfully into the communities they are supporting.

We have signed partnership agreements in five locations across the province where we currently have practicing therapists. In addition to these formalized agreements, we have six more in place awaiting the recruitment of a therapist in those locations.

Community Navigation Program

For the past five years, Avalon has been developing, piloting, and testing its Community Navigation Model as a promising practice, as part of a five-year project funded by Women and Gender Equality (WAGE) Canada. The goal of our Community Navigation Model is to increase service accessibility for survivors from traditionally underserved communities, increase partnerships and collaboration across sectors to better support diverse survivors, and increase available learning opportunities for trauma-informed and community-based approaches to working with survivors.

Over the past five years, the Community Navigation program successfully:

- Reached survivors from equity groups,
- Engaged with survivors through the establishment of Avalon's advisory committee,
- Increased coordination and reflexivity within Avalon,
- Built partnerships with community-based organizations,
- Increased the availability of support options for survivors,
- Developed and provided training to support community organizations,
- Supported survivors during Nova Scotia's Mass Casualty Commission, and
- Increased the public's awareness about Avalon and its services.

In the 2023-24 fiscal year, Avalon's Community Navigator provided **383 support sessions** for a total of **94 survivors** of sexualized violence. While each support session tends to cover a wide range of concerns, of the 383 that were provided here were the focuses:

- 6% (23) on safety planning
- 1.8% (7) on mental health
- 1% (4) on housing
- 36% (137) on food security
- 1.3% (5) on engaging with police
- 2.6% (10) on employment

Avalon's Community Advisory Committee continues to meet monthly to break bread and bring forward key recommendations to our work. The committee is comprised of ten community members who meet once a month to discuss different topics relating to Avalon including but not limited to Avalon's services, programming, events, and operational structures. The recommendations made by the committee are used to inform and strengthen Avalon's work and to hold our organization accountable to the evolving needs of our community.

Based on the incredible results we have seen over the past five years. Avalon is happy to announce that we are extending the program beyond the 5-year project and making Community Navigation a permanent pillar of the work we do.

Legal Navigation Program

Avalon's Legal Support Program is run by a Community Legal Support Worker who helps survivors ages 15+ to understand and navigate the legal system, thanks to generous funding from the Law Foundation of Nova Scotia. This work encompasses a wide range of supports, such as providing information and referrals; accompanying survivors to meetings, appointments, and court; helping to fill out forms or prepare for court proceedings; talking to legal professionals; offering practical and emotional support; and providing a safe space to talk about survivors' experiences with the legal system.

This year, our Legal Support Program provided short- and long-term support to over 43 individuals navigating the legal system. During this time, the Community Legal Support Worker also supervised a practicum student, oversaw the Dalhousie Law Pro-Bono partnership, facilitated trainings to the RCMP and Family Court staff, and participated in various community committees geared toward social justice.

While each session can include multiple needs, support was provided in the following areas:

- 10.3% (18) general navigation of the Criminal Justice System
- 7.4% (13) paperwork support
- 14.4% (25) emotional support calls
- 10.9% (19) court accompaniment
- 48.9% (85) general legal support
- 7.5% (13) referral to other service providers
- 0.6% (1) client case conference

With demand far exceeding capacity, we have introduced a waitlist for community members seeking legal support services and have narrowed our focus to the criminal legal system. We are prioritizing individuals who have trial proceedings scheduled within a six-month period or are wanting accompaniment when reporting to police for the first time.

To increase organizational capacity for both our Legal Support and Community Navigation teams, Avalon began the process of hiring a Navigation Coordinator role to the organization. This role is intended to focus on building out our community navigation and legal support teams through procedure formalization, community collaboration, and succession planning. We are also excited to add a second Community Navigator to the team in Fall 2024.

Community BBQ



Avalon co-hosted our annual Community BBQ in partnership with the Association of Black Social Workers on August 18, 2023. Our barbeque took place at the beautiful Hope Blooms in Halifax, and while the day was quite rainy we managed to have a great time eating, playing lots of games, and listening to both music and spoken word poetry from two members of our Avalon community.

Partnership with Elizabeth Fry Society of Mainland NS



Avalon partnered with Elizabeth Fry Society of Mainland Nova Scotia to secure access to a beautiful office located in Dartmouth. Our two organizations are now sharing space in a heritage building on Ochterloney Street, directly behind the EFryNS primary office. This area is a central and accessible neighborhood for clients to access services, and we are hoping to facilitate more fulsome connections for clients between our two organizations. We are so excited about working closely with EFry and building a strong relationship in the years ahead!

16 Days of Activism



Avalon staff led a social media campaign during the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence. The campaign focused on key recommendations from Turning the Tide Together: Final Report of the Mass Casualty Commission in an effort to bring awareness to the final report and offer more points of entry to such an important document.

On December 6th, 2023, Avalon commemorated the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women. The event began with a candlelight vigil and a walk from Victoria Park to Dalhousie University. The evening continued with a gathering that featured song, speeches, food, and a sense of community. Several organizations joined us, including Shelter Movers NS, Mount Saint Vincent University, Adsum House for Women and Children, the Nova Scotia NDP, and the Association of Black Social Workers (ABSW). This collaborative effort underscored the importance of unity and collective action in addressing and preventing gender-based violence.

Community Navigation Conference

Avalon
COMMUNITY NAVIGATION
Conference

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS
09:30 AM Keynote Panel
10:45 AM Breakout Session 1
12:00 PM Lunch will be provided
02:45 PM Breakout Session 2
04:00 PM Closing Panel
04:30 PM End of conference

CONFERENCE THEMES

- Service navigation support and referrals
- Stakeholder engagement and partnerships
- Building trust with survivors and advocacy
- Peer support models
- GBA Plus in monitoring & evaluation
- Training & Awareness-raising initiatives

MONDAY, JUNE 17, 2024

COFFEE & TEA @ 8:30 AM

HALIFAX CENTRAL LIBRARY
5540 SPRING GARDEN ROAD,
HALIFAX, B3J 1E9

**THE HALIFAX CENTRAL LIBRARY
IS AN ACCESSIBLE SPACE.**

SEASONOVA

This conference is brought to you by Avalon Sexual Assault Centre and SEASONOVA. For more information, contact us at info@seasonova.ca

REGISTRATION REQUIRED

The Community Navigation project's culmination was the creation of a Community Navigation Toolkit, designed for frontline service providers wishing to explore the Community Navigation Model themselves. The toolkit contains lessons learned, insights from Avalon's experience, and recommendations for organizations wanting to build their own Community Navigation program.

To share this toolkit with other community organizations, Avalon hosted a 1-day conference that featured speakers from partner orgs, networking opportunities, and many moments of sharing lessons learned over the past five years. It was wonderful to get together in-person with organizations across the province doing such important work.

Read the toolkit [here](#).

Financial Statements

AVALON SEXUAL ASSAULT CENTRE SOCIETY

Statement of Revenues and Expenditures

Year Ended March 31, 2024

	2024	2023
REVENUES		
Province of Nova Scotia	\$ 2,099,072	\$ 1,212,775
Halifax Sexual Assault Community Support Network	216,322	191,978
Donations, fundraising and other	117,104	57,898
Administrative fees (Note 7)	39,189	39,189
Law Foundation of Nova Scotia	36,528	36,528
Canadian Women's Foundation	20,000	39,082
Sexual Violence New Brunswick	10,000	10,000
Department of National Defense	5,190	42,680
Emergency Community Support	214	-
Mental Health Foundation (repayment)	(17,500)	17,500
	2,526,119	1,647,630
EXPENDITURES		
Advertising and website	3,393	43,047
Board and staff development	98,607	29,465
Capital equipment and maintenance	10,526	1,919
Consulting fees	92,074	74,851
Equipment rental and repair	2,775	1,730
Insurance	49,094	39,483
Interest and bank charges	2,246	1,122
Membership fees	11,356	7,028
Miscellaneous	3,875	10,728
Office	27,728	33,807
Professional fees	130,094	62,007
Program supplies	80,250	9,549
Rental	170,651	107,818
Salaries and wages (Note 8)	1,668,650	1,036,423
Technology	65,760	45,092
Telephone	17,232	4,233
Travel	39,746	12,324
	2,474,057	1,520,626
EXCESS OF REVENUES OVER EXPENDITURES FROM OPERATIONS	52,062	127,004
OTHER INCOME (EXPENDITURES)		
SANE revenues (Schedule 1)	372,800	372,800
SANE expenditures (Schedule 1)	(406,777)	(378,610)
	(33,977)	(5,810)
EXCESS OF REVENUES OVER EXPENDITURES	\$ 18,085	\$ 121,194

Financial Statements

AVALON SEXUAL ASSAULT CENTRE SOCIETY

Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE)

(Schedule 1)

Schedule of Revenues and Expenditures

Year Ended March 31, 2024

	2024	2023
REVENUES		
Department of Health and Wellness	\$ 372,800	\$ 372,800
Retro wage funding	47,702	-
	420,502	372,800
EXPENDITURES		
Administration expense (Note 7)	39,189	39,189
Dues and fees	682	-
Education and training	915	4,438
Memberships	318	439
Miscellaneous	-	240
Office	5,866	5,106
On call nurses	182,192	164,308
Retro wage funding	47,702	-
Salaries and wages	154,995	149,329
Telephone	14,647	12,760
Transportation	7,973	2,801
	454,479	378,610
DEFICIENCY OF REVENUES OVER EXPENDITURES	\$ (33,977)	\$ (5,810)

Please note that the above draft audited financial statements for fiscal year ending March 21, 2024 will be approved at Avalon's Annual General Meeting on September 26, 2024.

OUR FUNDERS



Women and Gender
Equality Canada

Femmes et Égalité
des genres Canada



**And a special thank you to all of our donors,
whose charitable giving makes our work possible!**

THANK YOU!

To all our clients, staff, volunteers, funders, donors, partners, and community members across the province—thank you.

We believe a world without violence is possible and are committed to building that world together.

To all survivors, everywhere—we believe you, and we're here for you.

In solidarity,

Avalon Sexual Assault Centre

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