

Dr. Roseann O'Reilly Runte  
President and Vice-Chancellor  
Carleton University

August 22, 2008

Re: OCTEVAW's support for a Carleton University Sexual Assault Centre

To President Runte,

The Ottawa Coalition To End Violence Against Women (OCTEVAW) would like to congratulate Carleton University's recent efforts to increase safety measures on campus. OCTEVAW is a coalition of agencies and individuals working together to end violence against women in our community. We are comprised of area women's shelters, sexual assault agencies, community and counselling agencies working with women and children, university researchers, victim services, the police and other concerned community members.

The comprehensive recommendations announced this week including increased cameras, emergency phones, better lighting and increased student patrollers will work towards creating a better feeling of security for the community, especially for women staff and students. The importance of taking proactive steps to reduce violence against women is invaluable and we would like to recognize Carleton's efforts.

The proposal to create a new staff position responsible for sexual assault education and the coordination of counselling and safety services, is an important step forward for university communities. However, our experience is that education and counselling are two complementary yet distinct roles which require specialized resources and skill sets. As we know, only 6% of women who have been sexually assaulted come forward to police, but many more access supportive resources like sexual assault centres and counsellors. Moreover, young women between the ages of 15 and 24 are at greater risk of sexual assault than women at any other age (General Social Survey on Criminal Victimization, Statistics Canada, 2004). This group of women is most likely to be on university campuses where violence occurs.

The stats say it all. The need for a completely separate sexual assault centre is clear. Not to mention that implementing social change and public education throughout a community as dynamic and large as university campuses is a full-time job in and of itself.

We recommend that the new staff position be refined to the coordination of university wide public education campaigns focussing on social change. One such campaign we recommend is “Man Talk” created by Michael Kaufman. It is the first dating violence resource created especially for universities and colleges that engages young men. It is available at [www.michaelkaufman.com](http://www.michaelkaufman.com). That position would then compliment a university funded Sexual Assault Centre created for the purpose of peer counselling, support and the cross-coordination of education.

OCTEVAW supports the efforts of your student-led “Coalition for a Carleton Sexual Assault Centre.” They are proposing a completely student-run, specialized separate space funded by students and the administration alike. Carleton undergraduate and graduate students have already voted 75% in favour of this initiative, for good reason. Student run sexual assault centres not only empower the women providing and accessing crisis-line and in-person counselling, but in essence begin to change the social fabric of a university from the bottom up. Peer support and education has been proven to be the most effective tool for healing and learning alike.

“It is this kind of collective response that is desperately needed: one that moves us away from sensationalizing acts of violence as isolated and random towards seeing them realistically as part and parcel of the epidemic of violence experienced by women every day” (Pauline Jewett Institute of Women’s Studies, Carleton University, 2007).

OCTEVAW is willing to provide guidance to the administration and to the student Coalition regarding the implementation of a Sexual Assault Centre. We will also be keeping an eye on the steps that local university and college campuses are taking to address violence against women. As a community, we believe that we can work together to end violence experienced in the lives of classmates, colleagues, friends, family members, neighbors, and all other women. Violence against women can and must be stopped.

Please feel free to contact the OCTEVAW office at any time.

Sincerely,

Erin Williams,  
Executive Director  
OCTEVAW  
613-725-3601 x105

CC

Julie Lalonde  
Coalition for a Carleton Sexual Assault Centre  
[jlalond7@connect.carleton.ca](mailto:jlalond7@connect.carleton.ca)