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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Dalhousie pulls support for survivors of sexual assault

HALIFAX– Dalhousie University has decided not to adequately fund the Dalhousie Student Union’s Sexual Assault and Harassment Phone Line after its successful pilot year. The phone line offers nonjudgmental, active listening, support and information for anyone that has been affected by sexualized or gender based violence. The phone line from September 6, 2015 to April 25, 2016 ran this past academic year. The phone line was on hiatus over the summer, with a hope to relaunch the service this fall in partnership with the University.

“This is a vital service for survivors on our campuses,” said Rhiannon Makohoniuk, Vice President Internal of the Dalhousie Student Union. “It’s unfortunate that the university has chosen not to partner with us in good faith on the Sexual Assault and Harassment Phone Line, a program that addresses the gaps in service and access that survivors face here at Dalhousie.”

The Report of the Task Force on Misogyny, Sexism and Homophobia in Dalhousie University Faculty of Dentistry recommended that the university seek the guidance of students and invest in student led initiatives.

There has been an outpouring of support for the service. Almost two hundred letters were sent to President Florizone calling on the university to continue support for the service. A video made by the student union with the same message reached over fifteen thousand people. Over eighty people signed up for the phone line training which has been postponed until further notice.

“Students recognize this phone line is an important tool to combat rape culture on campus” said Makohoniuk “To stop supporting the Sexual Assault and Harassment Phone Line after a year of gaining trust and recognition from our members goes to show that the University is not truly committed to student’s safety and wellbeing.”

The Dalhousie Student Union is committed to providing the service to students during the first 8 weeks of school, when sexual assaults on campus are at a high. This service will be a paired down version of the phone line with reduced hours. From September 3 – November 3 the Sexual Assault and Harassment Phone Line will operate from 12PM – 12AM, 7 days a week. Once the service is relaunched students and members of the public can access the Sexual Assault and Harassment Phone Line at 902-425-1066.

The Dalhousie Student Union is the province’s largest student union, representing over 18,500 undergraduate and graduate students at all campuses of Dalhousie University.

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For more information or to set up an interview with a spokesperson contact:

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