Liberals fail to support students and survivors of sexualized violence in the budget

HALIFAX- In their 2017-18 provincial budget released earlier today, the Liberal government has failed students and survivors of sexualized violence with negligible funding to survivor supports. The budget did include a small fund for survivors of sexual assault but it is unclear what amount of this will be accessible to students and on-campus groups.

“Sexual Assault on campus has been identified as a major issue over and over again” says incoming President of the Dalhousie Student Union, Amina Abawajy “This government has repeatedly blocked the legislation students have called for and now are creating a fund that we may not even be able to access”

This year the Dalhousie Student Union ran and won a levy to start a Survivor Support Center that will help educate student on issues of consent, lobby the government and university for better practices regarding sexual assault on campus and provide front line services to students who have experienced sexualized violence and harassment. After two years of seeking external-funding students decided the need was too vital to wait for funding from either the government or the university.

“Students are already struggling under the current Liberal government with skyrocketing tuition fees, and it really shouldn’t be up to students to pay for their own support services for sexual assault,” says Abawajy “Students called for a dedicated $2 million fund for students and on campus groups, and it is disappointing to see that government chose to run a surplus over combatting sexualised violence on campus.”

This budget extends the loan forgiveness program, allowing students five years to complete their programs rather than four. However, this does not address the unsustainable structure of rising tuition fees.

Students continue to call for a grant based student assistance programs, an immediate reduction in tuition fees, and for adequate campus sexual assault legislation from the Nova Scotia Liberal government that would ensure quality policies, data collection, services and procedures for survivors of sexual assault.

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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