Written Statement made at Press Conference on November 21st, 2018 on Lisa McLeod’s announcement for VAW:

We at the Toronto Rape Crisis Centre Multicultural Women Against Rape are deeply concerned by the decision of the PC government to change plans for the funding increase within the previous Gender Based Violence Strategy, leaving sexual assault centres to cope with already limited resources in a time of increased demand for support services.

Yesterday minister responsible for women’s issues Lisa McLeod announced a $11.5 million increase to shelters and counselling services.

The Toronto Rape Crisis Centre Multicultural Women Against Rape are here to make a statement in response to this announcement.

By repackaging this funding the PC government has sent a clear message that survivors of gender-based violence cannot truly count on the support of their government.

This government could have already issued these funds knowing that survivors have been waiting for months to access services that could be strengthened if this funding had been granted months ago.

Further, McLeod’s statement offered no clarity on who would be getting this increase, how much we would receive or how long it would take to access the funds. Sexual assault centres are funded under the ministry of the attorney general and we have yet to hear a statement of any kind from minister Caroline Mulroney.

Survivors in Ontario can’t wait. At our centre survivors of all genders have been waiting for over 18 months to see a counselor. Survivors have been turned away 50% of the time when requesting someone to accompany them to their sexual assault court proceedings or reporting. They have experienced increased wait times on our 24 hour crisis line. And our Volunteers have been pushed to their service provision capacity.

Given the increase in discussions regarding sexualized violence we have seen since the #MeToo and #TimesUp movements, the previous promised funding would not have augmented services in any way. In a time where rape crisis centres all over the province are struggling to keep up with the increased demand for support, the PC government is leaving survivors behind. And in a time when multiple allegations of sexual misconduct have surfaced against various members of the PC party, we clearly need more services and supports than ever.

As the only rape crisis centre in Toronto we represent thousands of diverse survivor experiences, and we are deeply concerned to know where the current government stands when it comes to education, women and gender diverse people, children, indigenous communities, and survivors of sexual violence.

Further We oppose all the cuts in the Fall Economic Statement. These changes prevent Ontarians from accessing healthcare, dental care, childcare programs, and other vital services that maintain a high standard of living for Ontarians and reduce crime and poverty.

We demand the PC government commit to the same funding underscored in the Gender Based Violence strategy, a 33% increase over 3 years to all 44 rape crisis centres across Ontario and other gender-based violence support services in the original agreement.

We further demand the reinstatement of the 2015 school curriculum and that all gender identities be included in all government policy going further. These issues remain connected.

The government for the people shouldn’t be making survivors across Ontario wait any longer.

Thank you.