

ONTARIO SAYS NO MORE RESPONDS TO FAILURE OF JUSTICE IN WORLD JUNIOR HOCKEY CASE: A DEVASTATING SETBACK FOR SURVIVORS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

AUGUST 22, 2025

Ontario Says NO MORE, led by SOAR Initiative Canada, is deeply disappointed by the Ministry of the Attorney General's decision not to appeal the acquittals of the five former members of Canada's 2018 World Junior Hockey Team. This ruling is yet another glaring example of how the criminal justice system continues to fail survivors of sexual violence.

From the outset, this trial was tainted by problematic practices that perpetuate rape myths and re-traumatize survivors. The extensive cross-examination over seven days, led by five defense attorneys, was not an effort to find the truth but to discredit the complainant, E.M. The conduct of the trial, including the use of damaging and unfounded stereotypes, reinforced harmful narratives about survivors, particularly about how they should "behave" if they are victims of trauma.

Justice Maria V. Carroccia's verdict, which deemed E.M. "not credible or reliable" based on her trauma responses, reflects a profound misunderstanding of trauma and victim behavior. In light of recent rulings, such as *R. v. Hoggard* (2024), which severely limited the Crown's ability to call expert witnesses on trauma, we saw the direct consequences of those legal missteps. Without the essential testimony of trauma experts, defense counsel distorted the narrative, portraying E.M. as unreliable, with "two personas"—the "sober E.M." and the "fun E.M."—and labeling her as a "party girl" and a "porn star," all based on common, well-documented trauma responses.

This verdict does not only disappoint—it infuriates us. The failure to recognize the complexities of trauma responses and the dangerous normalization of victim-blaming sends a chilling message to all survivors of sexual violence: your experience does not matter, and your pain is not valid.

To make matters worse, the decision not to appeal this verdict is a stark and painful reminder of how deeply entrenched these injustices are within our legal system. By choosing not to challenge this ruling, the Ministry of the Attorney General has effectively endorsed a legal framework that undermines the credibility of survivors, while empowering those who seek to discredit and further harm them.

We stand firmly with E.M., the complainant in this case, as we have always stood with survivors, today, tomorrow, and always. We will continue to advocate for systemic change and work tirelessly toward a future where justice is not just a word, but a reality for all survivors.

Ontario Says NO MORE will not stop fighting for accountability, for fairness, and for the voices of survivors to be heard and validated. This is a call to action, and we will not remain silent.