

April 6, 2023

Honourable David Lametti
Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario,
Canada
K1A 0A6

Dear Minister Lametti,

Re: House of Commons report from the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights

As a national agency committed to supporting, advocating for, and providing information and resources to victims and survivors of serious crime in Canada, the Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime (CRCVC) today, writes to discuss the recommendations in the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights report titled "Improving Support for Victims of Crime". We are writing on behalf of two entities today: ourselves and the CRCVC's Victims Advisory Committee.

In November 2020, the Office of the Federal Ombudsman for Victims of Crime (OFOVC) released a report titled "Progress Report: The Canadian Victims Bill of Rights". In December 2022, the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights released a report titled "Improving Support for Victims of Crime". There is a large amount of overlap between the OFOVC progress report and the House of Commons (HOC) report. However, between the two, the OFOVC report puts forth more tangible recommendations. These recommendations are more aligned with a trauma-informed and victim-centered approach that CRCVC wants to highlight as well.

The CRCVC supports the HOC report in its focus on the essential collaboration between governments, community stakeholders, victim services, etc. Parallely, we want to emphasize the importance of timeliness and appropriate funding for community organizations in order to elevate the stressors for both victims and the systems involved. The CRCVC also supports the recommendations regarding the importance of information dissemination, especially when it comes to publication bans, and finding a more informative process within the justice system when it comes to victims' participation at all stages. These recommendations should turn into

measurable actions leading us to see changes. We want these to be mirrored in policies, advocacy, and services Canada provides to victims of crime.

Some concerns the CRCVC has with the HOC report surround the lack of victim consultation, diversity in witnesses, and the unclear timeline. The report should have included the victims' voices along with the voices of Indigenous communities of Canada. The report does not include any measurable timeframe to see the recommendations being implemented. The CRCVC wants to see these changes implemented, and quickly.

Some concrete actions to put forth to remedy these concerns and ensure the positive development of support for victims of crime are to:

- 1) Amend sections 6, 7, and 8 of the Canadian Victims Bill of Rights (CVBR) to ensure the legal rights of victims are upheld and to clarify that the information to which victims of crime are entitled should be provided automatically rather than on request. Those sections now begin with: "Every victim has the right, on request, to information about..." This text should be changed to read: "Every victim shall automatically be provided with information about...", as stated in the OFOVC report.
- 2) Amend section 17 of the CVBR to remove the burden of enforcing restitution orders from victims of crime. Amending section 17 to ensure that every victim who has a restitution order is entitled to assistance with collection of the judgment enforced against the victim if they have not been paid.
- 3) Amend section 25 (2) of the CVBR to name the Office of the Federal Ombudsman for Victims of Crime as the single authority with jurisdiction to review complaints by victims of crime in relation to how they were treated by a federal department, agency, or body.
- 4) Delete sections 27, 28, and 29 of the CVBR, which deny victims any standing to appeal to courts for review when their rights are not upheld. Amend the Act to provide victims of crime with two mechanisms of accountability: first, the mechanism of judicial review; and second, the administrative right to review decisions not to prosecute.
- 5) Amend section 20 of the CVBR to ensure that the interpretation of the Act requires officials to acknowledge victims' human rights: to the security of the person, access to justice, and procedural fairness in the administration of justice in Canada.
- 6) Outline minimum standards for victims of crime, and victims' participation within the justice system across the provinces to have uniformity and create a process in order to hold provinces responsible. Collection of various data and research on race-based service delivery, in order to analyze the system quantitatively as well. Incorporation of

various cultural lenses including indigenous communities of Canada in any reform is key to inclusivity.

- 7) Create consistent and evaluated training seminars/programs (trauma-informed and victim-centered) for actors within the criminal justice system, regarding the treatment of victims, especially when it comes to cases of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) and Gender-Based Violence (GBV).
- 8) Strengthen and increase the capacity of victim support organizations by providing sustained, stable funding. To increase the funds available through the Department of Justice Victims Fund, direct a small percentage of the fines imposed at sentencing in the prosecution of offenses under federal jurisdiction to be paid into the fund.

We sincerely hope you take our letter into consideration when looking for solutions and making decisions for victims of crime and their access to resources, funding, programs, etc.

We look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,



Aline Vlasceanu

Executive Director

Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime

CRCVC Victims Advisory Committee

CC: Benjamin Roebuck, PhD, Federal Ombudsperson for Victim of Crime