

CANADIAN RESOURCE  
CENTRE FOR VICTIMS  
OF CRIME



CENTRE CANADIEN DE  
RESSOURCES POUR LES  
VICTIMES DE CRIMES

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September 8, 2008

The Honourable Chris Bentley, Attorney General of Ontario  
Ministry of the Attorney General  
McMurtry-Scott Building  
720 Bay Street, 11th Floor  
Toronto, ON M5G 2K1

COPY

Dear Minister:

The Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime is writing to you concerning the recent release of the *Report of Financial Assistance for Victims of Violent Crime in Ontario* by the Honourable R. Roy McMurtry. We are calling upon you to ensure that all of the recommendations he made are implemented in Ontario.

We concur that financial assistance is a very important component in the spectrum of Ontario's victim services. Victims of violent crime who are so often devastatingly impacted by actions that are no fault of their own, must be able to count on acknowledgment of the harm they have suffered and immediate financial assistance to help recover from the losses they have endured.

We especially support the recommendation that the province appoint an independent victim advocate who reports directly to the Legislature. We feel strongly that it is an office that should be created in each Canadian province and territory to ensure the appropriate treatment of victims of violent crime by the criminal justice system. We question your quick response in the media to deny this proposal.

We believe Mr. McMurtry has highlighted a crucial point, which is the fact that many victims of violent crime need a voice outside of the criminal proceedings. We believe Ontario should acknowledge this fact by appointing a victim advocate. This would allow Ontario to be a leader in the victims rights movement in Canada; ensuring victims receive support and assistance throughout the prosecution process, as is currently done, as well as ensuring their needs are considered and met in a holistic manner beyond the prosecution of the crime. As you are no doubt aware, most victims of violence do not report what has happened to them, so they do not benefit from the services that focus on supporting victims through the criminal proceedings. To use the words of Mr. McMurtry, “It is critical that the Ministry shift its current victim paradigm, which views crime victims too often through the relatively narrow lens of the criminal process, and move to a paradigm that has victims’ needs at the centre of the lens.”

Lastly, we ask that you introduce legislation to make permanent both the Victim Quick Response Program, as well as the independent hearing process, in order to show Ontario's commitment to continue these important programs in the future. Such legislation should provide for ongoing consultations/reviews with stakeholders to ensure such programs are meeting the needs of the victims they serve.

We believe that Mr. McMurtry's recommendations are excellent and every effort should be made to see them implemented. While the Ombudsman's Report, *Adding Insult to Injury*, was the beginning of the process of improving how victims are treated and served by the Board, McMurtry's recommendations must be implemented in order to ensure we truly meet the needs of all crime victims in Ontario.

Should you wish further contribution on how these recommendations can be implemented to effectively serve Ontario's victims of violent crime, our office would be happy to provide detailed input.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Heidi Illingworth". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "H".

Heidi Illingworth  
Executive Director