



*“Dedicated to Justice” • «Au service de la justice»*

November 1, 2012

Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills, and Social Development and the Status of  
Persons with Disabilities (HUMA)  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1A 0A6

Dear Members of the committee,

The Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime (CRCVC) is writing to you with respect to Bill C-44, the *Helping Families in Need Act*. We are writing to you because we were not invited to appear before you as a witness.

Since 1993, the Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime has provided a voice for victims and survivors of serious crime in Canada. We offer long-term support, information resources and advocacy to hundreds of victims and their family members each year. The CRCVC did not arise out of a single event and we work on the front-line with persons impacted by many different forms of crime and violence.

The Centre works with numerous families impacted by the death or disappearance of their child as a result of crime. For this reason, we support the enactment of Bill C-44 to amend the *Canadian Labour Code*, ensuring that employees dealing with the death or disappearance of their child as a result of crime have the right to a leave of absence. We would also like to raise some considerations for you to reflect on.

As you know, Bill C-44 will amend the *Canada Labour Code* to introduce new provisions allowing unpaid leave for parents whose child dies or disappears as the result of a suspected *Criminal Code* offence without fear of losing their job. This only applies to employees under federal jurisdiction. Parents can take up to 104 weeks off work in the case of a crime-related death and 52 weeks off in relation to a crime-related disappearance. In addition to Bill C-44, the government has also announced there will be a new grant to provide \$350 per week, for up to 35 weeks, to parents of murdered or missing children who are under 18 years of age and whose death or disappearance is the result of a suspected *Criminal Code* offence.

The loss of a child as a result of crime is perhaps the most traumatic event a parent can experience. The struggle to cope with the disappearance or the death of a child is one that is so life altering it impairs the ability to function normally. Offering time off work and financial support to parents in such circumstances will help them take the time they need to process the trauma they have endured and find some stability after their loss. There may also be a police investigation and criminal court proceedings to deal with, which complicates and often further traumatizes victims.

It is important to note that parents of murdered or missing children come from many different economic backgrounds. Many parents are unemployed, work from home, stay-at-home parents,



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or unable to work. We feel that Bill C-44 is overly narrow in scope, in that it applies only to employees under federal jurisdiction. In our opinion, this will exclude many parents from accessing the benefits provided by this legislation. Also, while providing a grant of \$350 per week, for up to 35 weeks, to parents is a welcome benefit, it will also have a very narrow application, as few children are victims of homicide in Canada each year. The vast majority (approx 90%) of homicide victims are adults. We feel that those who do not "qualify" are those who are most vulnerable in our society.

It is also unclear how many families/individuals this legislation will benefit. In her testimony before the Committee, Minister Raitt said, "In the federal jurisdiction, we're only looking at numbers of approximately 75 for murdered or missing children—75 employers across the country, that's it." What about other types of crimes where children are 18 years of age are killed, such as impaired driving? Will these parents be eligible? The government has included in the bill the room to exclude any offences they want in the regulations. What offences will be excluded?

We have raised some considerations for you in the study of this bill. It is always our goal to bring forward the voices of our clients and the observations they have made. Overall, Bill C-44 is a positive piece of legislation for some parents whose children are murdered or disappear, but it would be advisable to ensure that it is applicable to all Canadian parents. Doing so, will make a real difference in the lives of victims/survivors in Canada.

Sincerely,

Heidi Illingworth  
Executive Director