



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

April 16, 2015

The Honourable Peter MacKay
Minister of Justice & Attorney General of Canada
284 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON K1A 0H8

Dear Minister:

The Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime (CRCVC) is a federal Not-for-Profit corporation that provides information resources, long-term support and advocacy to persons harmed by serious crime. We are writing to address two issues that are often linked: Canadians who are victimized while traveling outside of Canada and those who are impacted by mass victimization. While it is critically important to protect Canadians against acts of violence and terrorism, it is equally important to help victims recover from the trauma they have endured. We believe victims of crime and violence (sometimes mass violence) should have the right to access supports such as psychological counselling upon their return to Canada to enable them to gain or regain the capacity to lead meaningful lives. As a result of being victimized outside of Canada, many victims cannot have a voice or visibility in the justice system of another country, but will nonetheless require supports at home in Canada in order to rebuild their lives.

We are concerned to see the note on the Policy Centre for Victim Issues' website that applications for the Emergency Financial Assistance for Canadians Victimized Abroad program are not being accepted at this time. We believe this fund should be further strengthened and enhanced for Canadians, beyond the current \$10,000 limit, especially in order to provide victims “upon return to Canada, financial assistance for professional counselling” for as long as they require it. Persons who are harmed by violent crime suffer significant psychological trauma and should be able to access mental health supports as they need it and for as long as it is required.

What if a number of Canadian citizens had been killed on the Germanwings Flight 9525 that was deliberately crashed into the French Alps on 24 March 2015? What would the government of Canada's response be? It is our belief that in the post September 11th era, that Canada must develop a national response plan to address mass victimization and terrorist events that occur on Canadian soil or abroad. The response must include comprehensive assistance for victims and survivors to facilitate the normalization of their lives. We believe that legislation is also necessary to guarantee all aspects of aftercare for victims, survivors, eye witnesses, and first responders, regardless of their nationality (as is provided in France, for example).

Working with families impacted by the 1985 Air India bombing, Canadians impacted by September 11th and other mass victimization events, we can assure you that the rippling effects of mass violence incidents are significant and inter-generational. We believe that Canada should offer assistance provisions that meet the physical, emotional and financial needs of all Canadians who have been harmed over the long-term.



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Does Bill C-32, the *Victims Bill of Rights Act*, guarantee domestically available victims’ rights (information, protection, participation and restitution) to Canadians who have experienced serious personal injury crimes outside the country, or whose family members have been murdered outside the country? We do not believe the language of the Bill specifically excludes this group from exercising their rights under the Bill but would like to seek clarification since it pertains mostly to a victim’s involvement in the Canadian criminal justice system. We believe Canadians harmed by crime or an act of terror outside our border also deserve rights, recognition and supports at home.

In 2014, the CRCVC launched a website (www.terrorvictimresponse.ca) to help Canadian communities plan and prepare for mass victimization and terrorist events with funding provided by the Kanishka Project. Past experience has shown that communities large and small are often ill-prepared for the scope of the response required or how to properly address the medium and longer-term needs of victims, survivors, witnesses and responders. We feel that it is incredibly important for Canada to learn from the lessons of other countries in responding to large scale victimization events so that our communities will be resilient should such an incident occur here. Victims, survivors, witnesses and responders who suffer harm cannot be an afterthought.

We look forward to working with your officials to better enable the government of Canada to assist Canadians victimized abroad and/or those who are victimized by mass violence.

Sincerely,

Heidi Illingworth
Executive Director

Cc Sue O’Sullivan, Federal Ombudsman for Victims of Crime