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September 21, 2015

Ms. Pamela Arnott, Director & Senior Counsel
Policy Centre for Victim Issues
Department of Justice Canada
284 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON K1A 0H8

Dear Ms. Arnott:

As you know, the Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime (CRCVC) is a federal Not-for-Profit corporation that has provided information resources, long-term support and advocacy to persons harmed by serious crime since 1993. With the coming into force of the Canadian Victims Bill of Rights in July of this year, we are concerned that the rights only apply to offences which occur in Canada. The VBR also applies if the offence is investigated and prosecuted in Canada or if the offender is serving a sentence or conditional release in Canada. Yet, it is our experience that many Canadians are victimized while they are traveling outside of Canada. It is also our experience that this group of victims is underserved when they return home. They often have difficulty accessing support services since our community and police-based programs are designed to respond to local crimes and residents.

We believe the Policy Centre for Victims Issues should allocate funding to create an office that assists Canadian victims of crime committed abroad. This office could serve many clients impacted by crime in foreign jurisdictions, including victims of terrorism or other forms of mass victimization. We believe a specialized office is necessary so that victims are not left to navigate foreign criminal justice systems on their own. An office providing support, information and the ability to directly connect victims to the Emergency Funding for Canadians Victimized Abroad program would be invaluable. When victims can access supports from the outset, they will be much more likely to recover from trauma over the long-term.

We suggest a number of functions for the office since victims face a number of struggles which are intensified when a serious crime takes place overseas. Firstly, staff could connect victims to vital mental health supports. Psychological counselling upon their return to Canada will enable victims to gain or regain the capacity to lead meaningful lives. Secondly, staff could help victims have a voice or visibility in the justice system of another country, as well as accessing information about their case, their rights and about criminal justice procedures in the country where the crime took place. Staff can assist families prepare for and navigate the various burdens they will face, including travel, accommodation, translation services, lawyers' fees, etc. If there are challenges with operating such an office from within PCVI because you do not traditionally serve victims directly, you could contract with an established victim-serving organization like the CRCVC to serve this group of victims.

**CANADIAN RESOURCE
CENTRE FOR VICTIMS
OF CRIME**



**CENTRE CANADIEN DE
RESSOURCES POUR LES
VICTIMES DE CRIMES**

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Working with families impacted by the 1985 Air India bombing, September 11th and other mass victimization events, we can assure you that the ripple effects of violence are significant and inter-generational. We believe that Canada should offer specialized assistance to meet all the needs of all Canadians who have been harmed by crime or an act of terror outside our border because all victims deserve compassionate response, recognition, information and supports. We thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'H. Illingworth', written in a cursive style.

Heidi Illingworth
Executive Director

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