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March 24, 2016

The Honourable MaryAnn Mihychuk, Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6

Dear Minister:

The Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime (CRCVC) has been a vocal advocate for victims and survivors of serious crimes in Canada. We are writing concerning recent media reports on the Federal Income Support for Parents of Murdered or Missing Children (PMMC) grant, which is available to applicants who have suffered a loss of income from taking time away from work to cope with the death or disappearance of their child or children, as a result of a probable *Criminal Code* offence.

We are concerned because only \$166,320 of the \$20 million set aside has actually gone to families. Less than one percent of the budget has been granted to affected families since its inception. Parents are eligible for the fund if their children were under 18 and were killed or went missing as a result of a criminal act. The program provides \$350 a week for up to 35 weeks. Parents can receive the money only within one year of the incident taking place.

The CRCVC feels the scope of the program is too narrow and is not helpful to enough Canadians. The eligibility requirements are simply too strict. We recommend three significant changes to the current program to expand its availability to Canadians harmed. First, expand the eligibility to children 21 years of age and younger. Second, the PMMC grant should provide financial support for parents to take up to two years off work to recover (70 weeks), and be flexible enough so they can use the time when they need it most (criminal trials are often delayed and can take years to complete). Third, the government should expand the eligibility to include serious injuries as well, which often occur in impaired driving cases. When children are seriously injured, the impact the injury has on the family's health, wellbeing, work life, and financial situation can be just as stressful as a death.

We are encouraged by a media report that you will continue to work with your cabinet colleagues to provide victims of crime the support they need. We would be pleased to consult with your officials on the PMMC grant, if necessary. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Heidi Illingworth
Executive Director