



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

August 23, 2018

The Honourable Jody Wilson-Raybould, P.C., M.P. Minister of Justice & Attorney General 284 Wellington Street Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0H8	The Honourable Ralph Goodale The Minister of Public Safety & Emergency Preparedness 269 Laurier Avenue West Ottawa ON K1A 0P8
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Dear Ministers Wilson-Raybould and Goodale:

The Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime (CRCVC) is a national charity committed to providing support, advocacy and information resources to victims and survivors of serious crime. We are writing to you regarding several recent incidents of mass violence in Canada. In Toronto: the van attack of April 23 which deliberately targeted pedestrians, killing 10 and injuring 16; as well as the Danforth shooting on July 22, where two people were killed and 13 wounded. On August 10, another mass shooting occurred in Fredericton, New Brunswick, in which four people including two police officers were killed. We view these events as “collective traumas” which is trauma that happens to large groups of individuals and can be transmitted trans-generationally and across communities. Some of the symptoms of collective trauma include rage, depression, denial, survivor guilt and internalized oppression, as well as physiological changes in the brain and body which can bring on chronic disease.

At the CRCVC, we are concerned about the depth and impact of such experiences on deceased victims’ family members, wounded survivors, witnesses and first responders. We believe the federal government should develop a comprehensive federal strategy to respond to mass victimization/collective traumas in order to improve social, behavioural and psychological outcomes for the affected populations.

Working with numerous victims and survivors of mass violence/collective trauma, we are acutely aware of the long-term and life-changing consequences of such incidents. These tragic events often involve ordinary people doing everyday things such as traveling on public transport, walking to an appointment or to work, or having a meal out with friends when they occur. These events cause immense shock and raise fear levels among the community as citizens realize it could have been them. It is important to note that the financial impacts on victims and survivors are significant and may not be immediately obvious. The psychological and physical healing process can be long and arduous, meaning that many times victims incur a multitude of expenses that may not be covered by either insurance programs or compensation. This can include funerals, physiotherapy, counselling/psychotherapy, travel to reach injured family members in the hospital, time off work to recover or help family members recover, travel to attend medical treatments,

travel to participate in criminal justice processes, medication, medical devices, etc. Some victims may be able to access provincial compensation programs but awards/assistance vary greatly depending on where the incident takes place and complex application processes means that it can take many months to receive a decision/award. We do not believe that victims should have to rely on help from the public through GoFundMe pages that may or may not be set up in the aftermath of such tragedies.

We suggest that Public Safety Canada and Justice Canada work together to develop a special federal fund that could be managed by the Policy Centre for Victim Issues similar to current programs for: Attending Parole Board Hearings or Canadians Victimized Abroad. We believe that a consistent federal approach should be provided in response to incidents with mass casualties/collective trauma as a result of violence.

Unfortunately in Canada there is significant disparity between provincial and territorial compensation programs and the assistance received is variable. In the larger provinces, unlimited financial assistance can be accessed depending on one's injuries, while smaller provinces and territories only provide very limited emergency funds up to \$1,000 or \$2,000 of counselling support. One province and one territory offer no financial compensation at all.

For families of people killed and those who are severely injured, having to rely on the aforementioned GoFundMe pages is not right in a country like Canada. While Canadians are a generous and caring population, we feel the federal government has a duty to provide some assistance to citizens whose lives are forever changed by collective trauma from violence. We know from research that early intervention and support can lead to resilience in victims and given the long-term nature of the injuries from such crimes, it is sound policy to develop a flexible assistance fund at the federal level that can address and respond to victims' changing long-term financial and healthcare needs. There is ample literature concerning best practices in the response to acts of mass violence (including terrorism), and all agree that financial assistance should be provided expediently in the aftermath of such events.

We also believe Public Safety Canada and Justice Canada should consider developing the capacity to respond to such events with a specialized team of victim services experts, including trained facility dogs, as is done by the FBI across the United States upon invitation by the local emergency response leaders and by the Metropolitan Police in London, UK as examples. This trained team could deploy in the immediate aftermath of an event to support local response efforts and connect victims to various services such as the federal funding we propose in this letter. This initiative wouldn't require much of an investment of funds at the federal level, merely departmental oversight, since there are many experienced victim services professionals and trauma k9's currently ready to be deployed. It is likely the employers of these victim service professionals would allow them to be loaned to become part of such a team when called upon.

Collective traumas fundamentally change the victim's way of life, and healing can be financially devastating to survivors. While the provinces are doing what they can within their own legislation to provide some financial assistance to the victims (where compensation exists), it is not nearly enough for the potential life altering injuries some survivors will have to cope with, nor is financial assistance equitable across Canada. It is well documented that the psychological,

behavioural and social impacts of human made disasters have the potential to inflict the most persuasive, long-lasting and costly consequences to an individual's health. Mass casualties, threat to life, exposure to trauma, and prolonged recovery efforts may result in significant and long-term emotional reactions. There are often higher rates of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, anxiety, and traumatic bereavement in this population.

In our direct experience supporting victims and survivors of collective traumas, we can tell you that social isolation, loss of employment, physical health implications and a lack of access to psychological supports for mental health issues is too common. We believe the federal government can prevent negative outcomes in communities across Canada by offering a comprehensive federal response strategy to victims, injured survivors, witnesses and first responders when mass victimization/collective trauma occurs. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Heidi Illingworth". The signature is written in a cursive style with some loops and flourishes.

Heidi Illingworth  
Executive Director