



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

January 8th, 2020

Honourable Doug Downey, Attorney General
Ministry of the Attorney General
11th Floor 720 Bay St.
Toronto, ON M7A 2S9

Dear Honourable Doug Downey,

The Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime (CRCVC) is a charitable organization dedicated to providing help and support to victims of crime across Canada. We provide victims with information regarding financial assistance options and have helped victims apply to these programs. We offer advocacy to ensure the voice of victims are being heard and recognized by the criminal justice system. At this time, we are writing on behalf of victims across the province of Ontario.

As you know, the government of Ontario has recently made changes to the financial assistance programs for victims of crime in Ontario. The Criminal Injuries Compensation (CICB) has been **cancelled** and the Victim Quick Response Program (VQRP) has now become the Victim Quick Response Program+.

We wanted to take this time to remind you that in November 1985, the United Nations General Assembly (1985) adopted the charter of victim rights — the “Declaration on the Basic Principles of Justice for Victims of Crime and Abuse of Power” that includes and recognizes the importance of compensation for victims of crime. Canada itself aims to honour this through the “Canadian Statement of Basic Principles of Justice for Victims of Crime” (1988 and renewed in 2004).

Our organization believes the aforementioned changes are negatively impacting victims and their access to support. We have a number of concerns about the reasoning which led to this decision and the new legislation regarding the program.

This is something we believe other service providers and victims in Ontario agree with. Many other services in Ontario are also looking for changes and have identified some of the problems with VQRP+. An important problem with VQRP+ identified is the fact that the changes should have occurred with the consultation of experts and community-based workers, which is something our organization knows did not happen. Another important point identified is the limits this new program puts on victims of historical crimes. Given the new eligibility criteria, there are victims of historical child sexual abuse that will not be able to get the support/compensation they so desperately require to work through their trauma and begin healing.



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Furthermore, victims' lives are often never the same after they are victimized. Some victims need to continue functioning in society to deal with the victimization and thus return to work immediately, while others may appear to stop functioning normally and require hospitalization, medication and counselling/therapy for years to come. The point is that each person is doing what it takes for them to survive and they must be given the needed supports. The legislation in the VQRP+ fails to recognize that there is not a clear and accepted method of reacting to being victimized. The maximum allowances placed in the VQRP+ for counselling assumes that a victim's trauma is a quick fix and that victims will not be impacted for years to come. There is a lack of trauma treatment that can be provided in such a small amount of counselling sessions. The current legislations limit many victims from receiving the support they need for the duration that they need it for.

In addition, many of the submission deadlines are short and assume that victims will have been informed of the program immediately after they were victimized. One thing our organization has noticed, even before this change, is that often victims are unaware that financial assistance programs exist. In some cases, victims are not informed by those they are first reporting or disclosing the crime to. It is only after they have suffered in silence and are in desperate need for support that they begin to look for programs. These victims should not be penalized for their lack of information. The submission deadlines need to be lengthened or allow for consideration to be made in cases where victims were unaware that these programs existed. In addition, some victims might not begin to face the severity of the emotional impacts until months or years after the crime. That said, victims who experience declining mental health due to the crime later should not be penalized for it now happening sooner and should still have access to supports, such as counselling.

We understand that your office believes that these changes are beneficial to victims as they provide them with funding immediately. But this is not benefiting every victim. In fact, despite these changes your office believes beneficial, the new program is making it so fewer victims receive support. Many victims contact our office looking for financial assistance after they were victimized. Previous to the change, we were able to direct many victims to CICB. Now, we have to inform many victims that there is no financial assistance program that can help them. A victim that is facing tremendous trauma hearing that there are no supports available to them can cause them to be further victimized and feel hopeless.

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Our organization is frustrated with these changes and we ask that the government of Ontario re-evaluate its decision as soon as possible. This new program is not beneficial to victims and is harming them further. Although your office believes they made a good decision, it is evident that this program has more negatives than positives. We ask that you take into consideration all the victims in Ontario that are being negatively impacted by this change and the new program.

We look forward to your response,

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Aline', is written over a faint circular stamp.

Aline Vlasceanu

Executive Director