

February 18, 2020

The Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime (CRCVC) is a national, non-governmental, non-profit advocacy group. Our mandate is twofold: we provide direct advocacy services to victims of violent crimes across the country, and we work with all levels of government in Canada to provide submissions, presentations, information and recommendations in respect of the interests of victims of crime.

2020 marked the five-year anniversary since Bill C-32: Canadian Victims Bill of Rights (CVBR) came into force. In 2019, the Department of Justice's review of Canada's criminal justice system acknowledged that victims often feel re-victimized under the current system and argues that major changes are needed to support the rights of victims, survivors, and their families.

The Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime (CRCVC) agrees that major changes must be made to the Act as it currently stands as it falls far short of delivering the real rights it promised.

The voices of victims and survivors are clear, and CRCVC's practical experience with the Act over the past five years has demonstrated several shortcomings which have a real impact on CRCVC clients and crime victims across Canada including:

- Sporadic and inconsistent implementation of the Act
- Limited training opportunities for criminal justice officials
- No public education effort to inform citizens of their rights.

These shortcomings, and more, were published in the November 25, 2020 Progress Report on the CVBR, published by The Federal Ombudsman for Victims of Crime (OFOVC). (Found here: <https://www.victimfirst.gc.ca/res/pub/PRCVBR-RECCDV/index.html>)

The OFOVC analysis clearly illustrates the objectives set out in the Act have not been met. The CRCVC agrees with the conclusion drawn by the OFOVC.

As you know criminal victimization is a frightening and unsettling experience. It is unpredictable, largely unpreventable, and often unexpected. The effects can be debilitating and demoralizing, leaving victims confused, fearful, frustrated and angry, leaving them with issues that can often be long-term and difficult to overcome.

Victims often do not know who or where to turn in the aftermath of crime. They feel insecure and do not know who to trust or rely on for support. Victims suffer physically, emotionally, psychologically, and financially from their victimization. Adding to all of this is the burden they feel from the complexity of the criminal justice system.

The CRCVC works daily with victims and survivors who are re-traumatized by a system that does not properly and automatically inform them of their rights and the criminal justice processes. Common complaints from CRCVC clients include:

- Finding out about trials AFTER they have occurred
- Discovering their right to submit a victim impact statement after the deadline has passed
- Being unaware of their right to information about their federally incarcerated offender and accidentally coming into contact with their offender when said offender is released into the community.

The CRCVC navigates the weaknesses of the CVBR while helping thousands of victims and survivors every year. Specific examples abound, including;

- Helping registered victims navigate post-trial agencies like Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) and Parole Board of Canada (PBC) as they search for information and participation in hearings of their offenders.
- Assisting victims who have had their rights breached to file complaints and who have not had their breaches addressed or corrected.

This is in direct correlation to the shortcoming of the Act as victims do not have real, tangible remedies available to them.

Five years (1,825 days and counting) have passed since the CVBR came into force, and victims still do not have the real support of their Government behind them. In the lives of many crime victims the passage of time is counted in minutes. How long will the Government of Canada let these victims suffer before and a Parliamentary review of this bill comes into effect?

You have the ability to truly empower victims and place them at the centre of the criminal justice system. This is within your purview as statutory review was required, as outlined within the Act itself.

The CRCVC recommends the review includes:

- giving victims the opportunity to seek legal and administrative remedies if they believe their rights have been overlooked;
- requiring the automatic provision of information by criminal justice professionals;
- guaranteeing support services and assistance for victims;
- collecting nationally consistent data aligned with the rights enumerated in the Act; and
- assisting victims with the collection of court-ordered restitution for the losses they have suffered.



As a Member of Parliament and a representative of the people, the CRCVC is calling upon you to use your voice to speak on behalf of the victims of crime in Canada who have lost theirs.

The CRCVC is happy to further discuss this very important matter with you at your earliest convenience. We are also happy to testify and provide expertise at the Review, if and when it is called.

I look forward to your prompt reply,

Sincerely,

Aline Vlasceanu

Executive Director