

September 3, 2021

**Call to Action for Canada's Political Leaders:**

**Will You Support Canadian Victims of Crime?**

Dear Annamie, Jagmeet, Justin, Erin and Yves-François,

You are five Canadians in political leadership positions.

According to newly published [Statistics Canada data](#), one in five of your fellow citizens will be victimized by crime.

The question is; *which of you will step forward and fight for the rights of the more than 8 million Canadians who will become innocent victims in the next twelve months?*

The [Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime](#) and victim services across Canada fight on the frontline for people like "E.Q." who has endured two decades of domestic violence at the hands of her husband. On top of healing from wounds, E.Q. must navigate Canada's complex legal system in a search for justice, support, and a meaningful chance of getting back her children who were taken away from her. While she has escaped the physical confinement of her ex, her battle continues and will require more support than ever.

We have three key questions for you. Your answers are important. They will help people like E.Q.

1. The [Canadian Victims Bill of Rights](#) (CVBR) was adopted in 2015 with a promise for a Parliamentary review in five years. That was six years ago.

On April 3 2014, the Prime Minister at the time said: *"The new legislation being introduced in Parliament today aims to ensure that victims are at the heart of our judicial system . . . Victims will have enforceable rights in Canada's criminal justice system, will be treated with the respect and fairness that they deserve, and will have a stronger voice."*

Sadly, the CVBR remains a toothless tiger with no tangible benefits for victims and no action plan to lead its implementation.

Thanks only to two petitions brought forward by the CRCVC and a mother who lost three children and her father to a drunk driver was a committee study formed in mid-2021 to determine if the promised review should occur. After two parliamentary committee meetings, the third was cancelled with no explanation or indication of when it might happen again, hardly treating victims *"with the respect and fairness that they deserve"*.

**Question 1: Will you and your party commit to a comprehensive review of the Canadian Victim Bill of Rights and a strategic action plan for its implementation?**

2. Canadians who suffered from gender-based violence before COVID-19 now find themselves trapped at home, forced to live with their abuser. Their support systems and any respite from violence fell out from under them as each lockdown occurred. This is their Shadow Pandemic.

The House of Commons Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights organized a [Study on Controlling or Coercive Conduct within Intimate Relationships](#) at the beginning of 2021 with nine meetings, 28 witness testimonies and 13 brief submissions (including [ours](#)). As defined by the Committee in their [report](#), “Manifestations of coercive and controlling behaviour may include physical, sexual, and emotional abuse, financial control, implicit or explicit threats to the partner or ex-partner, and against their children, belongings, or pets. Coercive and controlling behaviour does not relate to a single incident, but a pattern of behaviour that takes place repeatedly and continuously.”

The committee report concluded that *“As clearly illustrated by the evidence, coercive and controlling behaviour is exacerbated by the pandemic context, while access to services and the justice system are restricted.”*

The committee put forth four recommendations in their [report](#), including but not limited to implement measures to combat the challenges presented by the justice system for victims of coercive and controlling behaviour and intimate partner violence. The recommendations include having the Minister of Justice engage with provincial and territorial counterparts to initiate a taskforce of experts to review existing federal criminal legislation and draft government legislation ensuring coercive and controlling behaviour is an offence in the Criminal Code.

**Question 2: Will you and your party increase support for those suffering in the Shadow Pandemic of domestic violence by legislating “coercive control” into the Criminal Code and adopt measures to prevent this type of gender-based violence?**

3. Canada needs national leadership and standards for victim serving organizations with guidelines, training, research, public awareness, and funding for victim support and healing justice. Furthermore, alongside the review of the Canadian Victims Bill of Rights, data is required to measure and assess the outcomes.

**Question 3: Will you authorize a more independent Office for the Federal Ombudsman for Victims of Crime by allowing it to provide oversight, guidance, and accountability by directly reporting to Parliament and being given the power to compel information and responses of federal departments and agencies?**

Annamie, Jagmeet, Justin, Erin and Yves-François, in the two minutes it took you to read this letter, more than thirty Canadians were victimized by crime.

**These are people who support your party, help our economy, and make Canada a great place to live.**

**Will you and your party stand up and stand beside them?**

**You have the power. Do you have the will?**

We look forward to your reply.

Sincerely yours,



Aline Vlasceanu

Executive Director

*The [Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime \(CRCVC\)](http://www.crcvc.ca) is a national non-governmental organization that believes victims of crime should be treated with courtesy, compassion and with respect for their dignity and privacy. The CRCVC also believes victims must be empowered to regain control of their lives.*

*Since 1993 the CRCVC has been offering assistance and advocacy regardless of whether the perpetrator of the crime has been identified, apprehended, prosecuted or convicted to Canadian victims of crime. All services are free and confidential.*