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Canadian Cities See a Rise in Violent Crime Post-Pandemic

A recent [report](#) conducted by the Macdonald Laurier Institute found that violent crime has continued to increase nationwide, being felt most acutely in major urban areas. The report outlines that Canadian cities are seeing sharp increases in specific offences, notably sexual assault.

The effects of this spike in crime are not being felt equally across Canada, with the Greater Toronto Area seeing the most pronounced increase in sexual violence. In the York Region, the sexual assault rate has nearly doubled since 2016, rising from 28 to 55.2 cases per 100,000. The Peel Region is witnessing a

similar crisis, experiencing a 30% increase in sexual assaults that saw rates surge from 38 to 52 cases per 100,000 since 2016. These patterns are being felt across the country, with the only major city not experiencing an increase in sexual assault rates being the Ottawa region.

The Macdonald Laurier Institute's report also found that other types of violent crime were on the rise across Canada. Robbery rates, which include offences such as muggings and carjackings, saw an increase in every major city in Canada in 2023, with the sole exception of Vancouver. While aggravated assault did not experience as large an increase, the report noted that 5 out of Canada's 9 largest urban centres have seen their homicide rate increase.

Dave Snow, the co-author of the report, has emphasized the importance that must be placed on the Institute's findings. In an [interview](#) with the National Post, Snow stated, "We can't blame (the spike in robberies) on COVID anymore," urging the government to take action against the nationwide rise in crime.

Addressing Intimate Partner Violence in Nova Scotia

The battle against Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) in Nova Scotia has made significant headway as the province's legislature recently adopted [Bill No. 482](#), titled "An Act to Declare Intimate Partner Violence an Epidemic". The [CBC](#) reported that on September 12th, the bill passed all three readings and was adopted by the legislature, with the entire process taking less than 10 minutes.

The advocacy of trade union representatives played a pivotal role in the rapid passage of the Bill, with Nova Scotia Premier Tim Houston later stating that the members' efforts helped him understand the government's need to take the issue of IPV more seriously. Premier Houston acknowledged this responsibility, saying, "Government actions matter for sure, and government words matter too. That was the message that was shared with me by the group that was here".

The passage of this bill sees Nova Scotia become the first province to declare IPV an epidemic formally. In [last year's summer newsletter](#), the CRVC addressed the government of Ontario's decision not to rule IPV an epidemic after an inquiry into the triple homicide of 3 women. The steps taken by the Nova Scotia legislature act as an encouraging first step towards the nationwide fight to end IPV in Canada.

The Consequences of Court Delays

The severity of the backlog in the Canadian court system came to a head after a man accused of murder was freed of charges after his pre-trial custody limitations expired. Under the guidelines set out by the Supreme Court of Canada in [R v Jordan](#), an individual accused of a crime must be tried within a window of 18 months for cases going to trial in provincial court and 30 months for cases going to trial in superior court.

The accused was arrested in 2021 on charges of second-degree murder, with the 30-month timeframe only lasting until December 2023. On September 12, 2024, the Supreme Court of Newfoundland and Labrador found that the charges against the accused had taken too long to come to trial, according to the guidelines in [Jordan](#), and therefore, must be stayed.

When speaking to [CBC](#), former Crown prosecutor Mike Murray stated that delays are common in the Canadian justice system, coming from both the defence and the Crown. Murray recognized that there are also larger institutional delays that hamper the courts, such as courthouses possessing inadequate resources to meet the demands of the judicial system. The COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent shutdown of courts across Canada have had a significant hand in further exacerbating these delays.

Murray believes the Supreme Court of Newfoundland can work through these backlogs by double-booking courtrooms, explaining that since many Supreme Court cases are civil matters that are quickly resolved before trial, courts are often left empty. While specific methods to alleviate the burden on the judicial system remain a topic of debate, it remains evident that the Canadian court system needs change to properly ensure justice is achieved for Canadians.

Alberta Efforts to Curb Hate Crime

On September 25th, the Crime Stoppers Association of Edmonton and Northern Alberta launched its new "Report Hate" campaign. The not-for-profit partnered with Edmonton Police Services and the Government of Alberta to launch advertisements across the city to amplify awareness about the existing options and ways to report crimes.

The **campaign** places a specific emphasis on people subjected to hate crimes, defined as a criminal offence that is motivated by hate, bias, or prejudice toward an identifiable group based on perceived race, religion, ethnicity, sex, sexual identity, or gender identity. This includes the various ways the crime could be committed, including assaults, graffiti, the distribution of hateful literature, or direct threats.

Per the Organization for the Prevention of Violence (OPV), the number of hate crimes in Alberta is on the rise. In 2023, the OPV conducted a government-funded study that found **over a third of Albertans reported experiencing a hate crime** in the past three years. This rate only increases when surveying visible minorities, revealing that nearly half of those surveyed had experienced hate. The joint “Report Hate” campaign hopes to curb this by serving as an educational tool to amplify and underscore the anonymous nature of reporting, as they understand community members may feel fear and apprehension at reporting a crime.

Crime Stoppers is an international registered not-for-profit that emphasizes collaboration between law enforcement, the media, and the community at large to combat crime. Albertan community members can anonymously report any crimes to Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-8477 or at the **Edmonton Crime Stoppers website**.

Recognizing Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women

October 4th marks the National Day of Action for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, Gender Diverse, and Two-Spirit People (MMIWG2S+). Communities across Canada honour the women and families who have experienced violence and trauma by creating change and committing to end the violence that disproportionately affects Indigenous communities.

September 30th also marks the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. This day honours the children who are survivors of Canada’s residential schools and those who never returned home. **The last residential school in Canada closed in 1996**, therefore, the impact of residential schools is still felt by Indigenous communities across Canada today and is reflected in the disproportionate violence Indigenous women continue to face.

Between 2009 and 2021, **490 Indigenous women and girls were the victims of homicide**. The rate at which Indigenous women and girls are killed is six times higher than non-Indigenous counterparts. Indigenous women and girls only make up about 4% of the Canadian population, yet they represent about 16% of all female homicide victims and 11% of missing women. Overall, Indigenous women are **four times more likely** than non-Indigenous women to be victims of violence.

In 2021, the Native Women’s Association of Canada (NWAC) launched the **Safe Passage** website, which documents the legacy of systemic violence against Indigenous women by highlighting cases of missing or murdered Indigenous women and two-spirit people on an interactive map. Survivors and advocates can access educational tools and culturally relevant support and care. Through this project, the NWAC hopes to create a space where families and survivors can make their stories heard, believed, valued, and shared on their own terms.

For Ottawa community members looking to show their support for MMIWG2S+, they can join Families of Sisters in Spirit (FSIS) on October 4th from 12-3pm at Parliament Hill for the 18th annual **Sisters in Spirit Vigil**.

For additional educational resources on MMIWG2S+, visit the **Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and 2SLGBTQIA+ People National Action Plan, National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls**, and the **Assembly of First Nations**.

Upcoming Events

Homicide Support Group

Our Homicide Support Group is for family members, friends, and close loved ones of homicide victims and is intended to offer peer support to those dealing with violent loss. This support group is offered nationally meaning that we can connect with and support survivors from across the country. *English only.*

When: Thursday, October 24th, 2024 at 6:30PM

Where: Virtually

To RSVP: Email us at crcvc@crcvc.ca or call us at 1-877-232-2610



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CRCVC | 141 Catherine Street Suite 100 | Ottawa, ON K2P 1C3 CA

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