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## EMPOWER

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We respectfully acknowledge the CRCVC office is located on the traditional, unceded territories of the Omàmiwininiwag (Algonquin peoples) Nation.

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### Correctional Service Canada issues a multidisciplinary committee report

The Transfer of a high-profile inmate from maximum to medium security on May 23, 2023, prompted the Commissioner of Correctional Service Canada (CSC) to request a review of the security reclassification and transfer decisions to ensure compliance with laws and policies. The Review Committee submitted its final report on July 20, 2023, recommending the establishment of a multi-disciplinary working committee, which CSC accepted.

The **Committee** extensively discussed issues concerning victims, emphasizing the importance of adopting a victim-centered approach in all interactions, communications, and services. This approach includes recognizing the diversity of Canada's ethnocultural communities to ensure information and services are accessible to all.

A key focus was minimizing barriers for victims to access their rights under the Canadian Victim Bill of Rights (**CVBR**). Suggestions include improving victim engagement through personal contact and utilizing print and virtual resources effectively. The role of Victim Service Officers (VSOs) was highlighted as crucial in supporting victims, with calls for closer examination and enhancement of tools like the Victim Portal and Correctional Plan Progress Report to better meet victims' needs and be more user-friendly.

Legislative and policy frameworks were also scrutinized, particularly, in terms of information disclosures by the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) to victims. There was a consensus on the need for timely and clear information to aid victims in safety planning and understanding the process. Discussions included the potential barriers within current legislation and policies that restrict information disclosure, suggesting a desire for more transparency and the use of appropriate legal tests for information sharing.

Addressing concerns about the balance of information available to victims versus offenders, the Committee underscored the need to improve information sharing throughout the process. This involves providing comprehensive explanations about sentences, security levels, and decision-making processes at CSC, ensuring victims are well-informed at critical junctures.

Overall, the Committee's recommendations aimed to enhance victim support by improving communication strategies, removing accessibility barriers, and advocating for legislative adjustments to better serve victims' rights and needs in the criminal justice system.

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## National Day of Remembrance for Victims of Terrorism

The National Day of Remembrance for Victims of Terrorism was proclaimed in 2005 and first observed on June 23, 2005, in memory of those who have lost their lives through acts of terror in Canada and around the world.

The day was chosen to coincide with the anniversary of the Air India Flight 182 tragedy, which occurred on June 23, 1985. On that day, a bomb exploded on the flight while en route from Toronto to London, England, killing 329 people aboard, 280 of them Canadian. A similar bomb intended for another Air India flight also killed two baggage handlers at Tokyo's Narita airport. This year marked the 39th anniversary of the Air India Flight 182.

**CBC News** reported that on June 23rd, many gathered at the Air India memorial wall in Vancouver's Stanley Park to remember the victims who died on June 23, 1985. The Memorial Wall bears the names of all "who lost their lives in what is known as the worst terrorist attack in Canadian history."

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## Third Reading of Bill C-332

In the **March 2024** Empower Newsletter, CRCVC reported about Bill C-332. Namely, the article explained that the NDP introduced a bill to criminalize coercive and controlling abuse. This Bill will add coercive behaviour to the criminal code, including threats, humiliation, isolating a person from support, and deprivation of independence. Notably, **coercive control** is defined as patterns of control and abuse that cause fear or terror, including coercion (using force and/or threats to alter behaviour) and control (regulating or dominating a partner's behaviour and choices, isolation, and restricting access to employment, education, or medical care).

On June 12, 2024, **Bill C-322** had its third reading. Thus, bringing it a step closer to criminalizing coercive control.

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## Open Letter to the Government of Canada

Ben Roebuck, Ombudsperson for the Federal Office Victims of Crime, wrote an open letter to the Government of Canada entitled, "**It's time for victims and survivors of crime to have enforceable rights**". The letter dated, July 23, 2024, addressed the Honourable Members of Parliament imploring them to keep up the momentum to uphold and enforce victims' rights under the Canadian Victim Bill of Rights (CVBR).

The government's response to **Improving Support for Victims of Crime**, in April 2023, showed a commitment to enhancing federal efforts to uphold victims' rights under the CVBR. With the 10th year

anniversary of the CVBR approaching in 2025, several improvements have been suggested for meaningful reform.

The Federal Ombudsperson suggests the following:

- Inform victims of their rights when they report a crime.
- Notify victims about available independent legal advice for better protection.
- Provide tangible help and referrals to victim services, if a victim's safety is at risk.
- Assist victims in accessing counseling while respecting their privacy.
- Help victims collect funds when a restitution order is made.
- Ensure testimonial aids are readily available.
- Legislate the authorities of the Ombudsperson to protect survivors who file complaints.
- Consider changes to or remove section 28 and 29 of the CBVR to provide more access to recourse for survivors.
- Ensure new criminal justice legislation complies with the CBVR's quasi-constitutional provisions.
- Monitor the implementation of victim rights with the updated statistical measures and commit to ongoing evaluation and training.
- Affirm that upholding victims' rights serves the interests of justice and proper administration.

These measures aim to improve the treatment of victims and survivors cost-effectively, without infringing on offender rights. The emphasis is on recognizing that violent crime affects individuals and not just the state, and that reconciliation requires the inclusion of victims' voices. Additionally, it acknowledges that many people in prison have histories of trauma and victimization, which could have been mitigated with effective support.

## 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, August 29th, 2024 at 6:30PM

**Where:** Virtually

**To RSVP:** email us at [crcvc@crcvc.ca](mailto:crcvc@crcvc.ca) or call us at 1-877-232-2610



### Take Back The Night

Join CRCVC in the annual Take Back The Night (TBTN) march and rally against sexual and gender-based violence. This year's theme is Break the Violence: Stop Sexual Violence and Conflict. TBTN is a great opportunity for Ottawa residents to support survivors and help promote awareness, advocacy, and activism. March with us to help create safer communities and healthier relationships.

**When:** September 19, 2024

**Where:** Minto Park

**Time:** 6:00 pm

**NOTE:** Call out for speakers, reach out for further information.

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