



Government  
of Canada  
Office of the Federal  
Ombudsperson for Victims  
of Crime

Gouvernement  
du Canada  
Bureau de l'ombudsman  
fédéral des victimes  
d'actes criminels



# Annual Report

2022–2023

---

Office of the Federal  
Ombudsperson for  
Victims of Crime

Canada

The Office of the Federal Ombudsperson for Victims of Crime (OFOVC) would like to acknowledge that its staff members live, learn and work on traditional Indigenous territories in Canada.

As an organization, we pay our respects to First Nations, Métis and Inuit Peoples and their ancestors and affirm our commitment to respectful relationships with one another and this land.

#### **OFFICE OF THE FEDERAL OMBUDSPERSON FOR VICTIMS OF CRIME**

Telephone (Toll-free): 1-866-481-8429

TTY (Teletypewriter): 1-877-644-8385

Fax: 613-941-3498

Email: [victimsfirst@ombud.gc.ca](mailto:victimsfirst@ombud.gc.ca)

Website: [www.victimsfirst.gc.ca](http://www.victimsfirst.gc.ca)

© Office of the Federal Ombudsperson for Victims of Crime, 2024

ISSN 2817-7975

# Table of contents

4

## A message from the Ombudsperson

6

## About the Office of the Federal Ombudsperson for Victims of Crime (OFOVC)

8

## 2022-2023 at a glance

Who contacted us

We get contacts from across the country

Why we were contacted

Top English tweet

Top issues raised by those who contacted us

How we engaged our stakeholders

10

## How we worked to effect change

### 10 Stakeholder outreach

Governmental engagement

Academic, community-based and provincial engagements

Participation at events

Newsletter

### 13 Ministerial and parliamentary relations

Parliamentary committees and submissions to government

Public Statement

16

## Working to uphold victims' rights

### 16 Reports produced to inform our work

### 16 Engaging with our communities of experts

### 16 Recommendations to Government

19

## Office modernization

20

## Understanding where we have been to guide where we go next

21

## Looking ahead

22

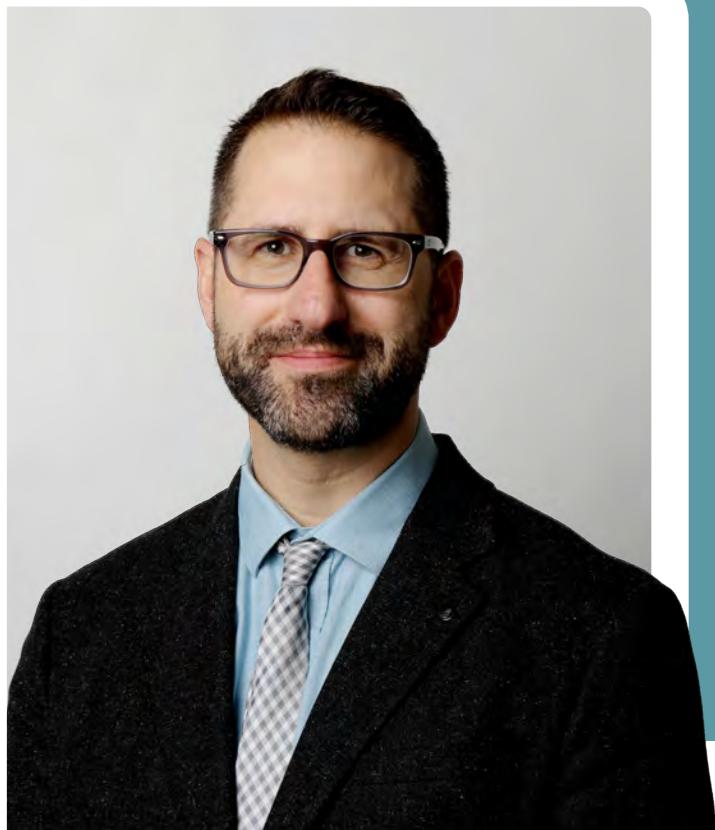
## Operations and financials

# A message from the Ombudsperson

I am pleased to present the 2022-2023 annual report of the Office of the Federal Ombudsperson for Victims of Crime. It covers the period from April 1, 2022, to March 31, 2023, and includes the achievements, projects, and priorities of our Office during my first few months as Ombudsperson as well as time our Office spent without a designated Ombudsperson.

I was honoured to be appointed to serve Canadians as the Federal Ombudsperson for Victims of Crime in October 2022<sup>1</sup>. I have so much gratitude for those who came before me – Steve Sullivan, Sue O’Sullivan, and Heidi Illingworth. I am proud of our dedicated staff who, during the challenging period of a vacant Ombud role as well as since my appointment, work tirelessly on behalf of the victims we serve. I am thankful for the victims and survivors of crime who have entrusted us with their concerns and needs, and for our stakeholders in both government and other organizations across the country. They inform the work that we do and, in many cases, help us move forward in improving the criminal justice system for victims.

I have spent over 15 years as a researcher and educator on victim rights, continuously building my expertise in the field of victimology. I have explored resilience and posttraumatic change with survivors of violence and people with lived experiences of homelessness, and vicarious resilience in victim service providers. I previously served on the Board of Directors for Crime Prevention Ottawa, the Canadian Armed Forces



External Advisory Committee for the Sexual Misconduct Support and Resource Centre, and committees focused on restorative justice, mental health, and youth justice. It is a privilege to be able to continue to build on that work now as Ombudsperson.

In the short timeframe between my appointment and the end of this reporting period, I have had the opportunity to meet with victims and survivors of crime: families whose loved ones were taken from them, sexual assault survivors who fought to get

<sup>1</sup> The position of Federal Ombudsperson for Victims of Crime was vacant from September 30, 2021, to October 24, 2022.

what they needed from the justice system, Indigenous women marching for their stolen sisters – all of them courageous and deserving people standing up for their rights and working to improve the system for others.

This past year, the OFOVC processed, managed and responded to inquiries and complaints from 648 people, including victims and survivors of crime as well as their loved ones and friends, members of the public, and partners and stakeholders. We made numerous interventions on behalf of victims to ensure they were treated fairly across the justice system. Their voices helped us identify systemic issues and informed our recommendations to government as well as our testimony before parliamentary committees to make policies, programs, and legislation more victim-centred. We also attended and held conferences, meetings, and networking events. Our Office hosted our first Academic Advisory Circle to engage with experts in the field of victimology. We look forward to continued engagement and dialogue with our Frontline Service Providers Advisory Circle, and to renewing our commitment with our Indigenous Advisory Circle who share their experiences, their needs and their wisdom.

As I witness how much our country invests in the criminal justice system, ensuring that accused and convicted people have adequate protections, that their rights are respected, and that their needs for rehabilitation are met, I continue to be concerned that similar rights and resources are not provided to victims of crime.

We recognize that federally-sentenced offenders need access to counselling, education, work programs, and help rebuilding their lives in communities. Victims often ask us why similar services are not offered to support their rehabilitation. Most victim services are short-term and do not address the wider and long-term harm caused by victimization.

We recognize that unique intersectional barriers experienced by victims can also reduce access to justice. In cases of gender-based violence, we have been told that people in Canada experience discrimination based on sex when men who harm women have stronger rights. I am eager to see the continued advancement of the National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence and believe that strengthening victim rights is a critical milestone for gender equality.

A great deal of work is needed but we can and will do better.

Every day, I am proud of what my team accomplishes. We listen to victims and survivors when they do not feel heard, we negotiate and resolve complaints when people have been told 'no' repeatedly, and we work towards tangible improvements for victims of crime. This is what justice looks like.

***Together, I know  
we can do more.***

---

Dr. Benjamin Roebuck  
**Federal Ombudsperson for Victims of Crime**

# About the Office of the Federal Ombudsperson for Victims of Crime (OFOVC)

## Our vision

Victims and survivors of crime are treated fairly and with respect across the federal government and criminal justice system.

## Our mission

To take a victim-centred and trauma-informed approach to our work; to listen to and engage with victims and survivors of crime; and to work in a way that is holistic and mindful of intersectionality, seek fairness, and challenge inequality.

## Our mandate

Our mandate relates exclusively to matters of federal jurisdiction and enables the Office:

- ▷ to promote access by victims to existing federal programs and services for victims;

- ▷ to address complaints of victims about compliance with the provision of the *Corrections and Conditional Release Act* that apply to victims of crimes committed by offenders under federal jurisdiction;
- ▷ to promote awareness of the needs and concerns of victims and the applicable laws that benefit victims of crime, including to promote the principles set out in the *Canadian Statement of Basic Principles of Justice for Victims of Crime* with respect to matters of federal jurisdiction, among criminal justice personnel and policy-makers;
- ▷ to identify and review emerging and systemic issues, including those issues related to programs and services provided or administered by the Department of Justice or the Department of Public Safety, that impact negatively on victims of crime; and
- ▷ to facilitate access by victims to existing federal programs and services by providing them with information and referrals.

## Our stakeholders

The OFOVC's stakeholders include a diverse range of people, organizations, and entities, each playing a unique role in the pursuit of justice and fairness for victims and survivors of crime. Beyond, of course, victims, survivors and their friends and loved ones, we engage with law enforcement agencies, the legal



*“I worked hard to get my ban lifted so that I could speak publicly, to hopefully help other victims by sharing my experience. That’s how I heard about the Federal Ombudsman for Victims of Crime. These things need to be spoken about because victims don’t always know what [to do] or how to do [it]. I thank you and your office for your help, since 2019 this Office has been my biggest resource and support throughout this. Sincerely, thank you!”*

community, advocacy groups, community and social services, the media, and the public, to increase awareness of victims' rights. Just as importantly, we collaborate with elected officials such as parliamentarians and their committees, as well as federal, provincial and territorial government departments and agencies, to effect positive change for victims.

Victims and survivors of crime are our raison d'être; they have already been harmed by the perpetrator, so the system established to bring justice should not do further harm. Victims deserve to be treated with compassion and respect. The Ombudsperson serves as their representative, ensuring their voices are heard, their rights are protected, and their concerns

are addressed within the criminal justice system. Hundreds of victims and survivors, or other entities on their behalf, come to the OFOVC for assistance every year. Every one of their cases is treated with respect, compassion, and diligence. As the criminal justice system and victim rights landscape in Canada are complex and feature multiple jurisdictions and actors, the OFOVC is a critical resource for those attempting to navigate those systems. Whether or not a concern is directly related to a federal agency, the OFOVC helps people understand their rights, options, and connects them with support services in their communities across Canada.

# 2022-2023 at a glance



## Who contacted us

Police  
Non-government organization  
Territorial government  
Employer

Registered victim

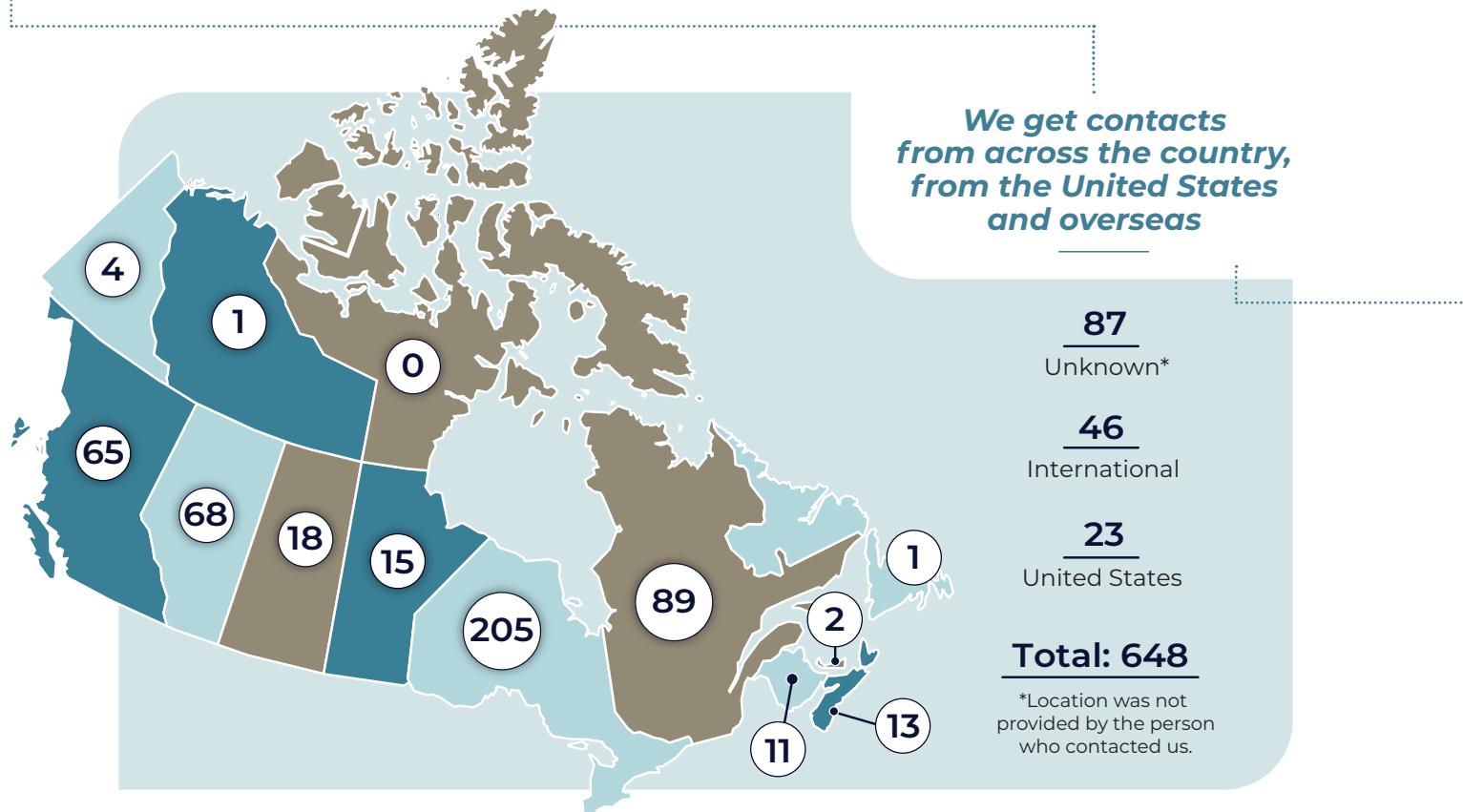
Federal Government

Provincial government

## Media and other inquiries

# Survivor Victim Concerned citizen

Family of victim  
Friend



## How we engaged our stakeholders

**8,953**

Website views

**281**

Twitter mentions

**32**

Facebook shares

**13**

Recommendations to government in writing

**12**

Interviews and media mentions

**3**

Appearances before Parliamentary Committees

**2**

Advisory Circle meetings

**1**

News releases and statements

### Why we were contacted

**28**

Other

**278**

Inquiry

**342**

Complaint

Strengthening role of OFOVC

Offender rights prioritized over victim rights

**8%**

**3%**

**2%**

Safety concerns

**Top issues raised by those who contacted us**

**43%**

Referrals to services

**44%**

Victim rights

### Top English tweet<sup>2</sup>



Federal Ombudsman for Victims of Crime (Office)

@OFOVC



The #JUST Committee report on Improving Support for #VictimsOfCrime was recently tabled. The members unanimously agreed that there is a need to amend section CC 486.4 & strengthen #VictimsRights  
[bit.ly/3YywaUt](https://bit.ly/3YywaUt)



#### IMPROVING SUPPORT FOR VICTIMS OF CRIME

Report of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights

Randeep Sarai, Chair

1450 views

1 comment

8 retweets

12 likes

<sup>2</sup> The social media platform known as Twitter was rebranded to X in July 2023.

# How we worked to effect change



Through collaboration with our diverse partners and stakeholders, the Office made progress towards a more comprehensive, inclusive, and informed approach to the rights and well-being of victims of crime in Canada.

The Ombudsperson identified victim rights to information as the top priority for his first year in Office. Many of the discussions and introductory meetings with stakeholders explored ways to provide victims of crime with information automatically so that they could understand their rights, participate more actively in the criminal justice process, and know how to share concerns about their safety. Dr. Roebuck repeated that this showed respect and compassion.

The OFOVC continued to actively engage with the public and media representatives, realizing they are key to influencing public opinion and discourse on victims' rights and justice.

The Office was active on various social media platforms in 2022-2023 to promote awareness and understanding of the challenges faced by victims of crime. The Office responded promptly to media inquiries to promote its work and gave interviews on specific public interest issues related to victims. The OFOVC's website features recommendations and submissions provided to elected officials and parliamentary committees to increase awareness of the work done by the Office.

## Stakeholder outreach

Immediately following his appointment as Federal Ombudsperson for Victims of Crime, Dr. Benjamin Roebuck, reached out to numerous partners and stakeholders. The Ombud's top priority was to connect with diverse people and organizations, both governmental and non-governmental, to seek collaborative opportunities, learn about their

respective mandates and challenges to help establish work priorities, to strengthen existing relationships, and build new ones.

### **Governmental engagement**

Close collaboration with governmental organizations, both at the federal and provincial/territorial levels, allows the Ombudsperson to contribute valuable insights into the development and review of policies related to victim rights and justice. By working in tandem with key actors, the Ombudsperson strengthens the bridge between victims' concerns and those who create policies and programs, promoting a more comprehensive and responsive approach to addressing the needs of victims of crime in Canada.

Dr. Roebuck was able to engage regularly with federal entities such as the Parole Board of Canada (PBC), the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), the Policy Centre for Victim Issues (PCVI) at Justice Canada, the National Office for Victims (NOV) at Public Safety Canada, and the Correctional Service Canada (CSC).

The Ombudsperson also connected with key figures from the Department of Public Safety, including Chad Westmacott, the Director General of the Community Safety, Corrections, and Criminal Justice Directorate, and Crime Prevention Assistant Deputy Minister (ADM) Talal Dakalbab. Jennifer Oades, the Chairperson of the Parole Board of Canada (PBC), has provided him with insights into the country's parole system.

Additionally, the Ombudsperson's engagements included discussions with RCMP Commissioner Brenda Lucki and Philippe Dufresne, Canada's Privacy Commissioner. Early in 2023, he also attended a gathering that to connect with fellow federal Ombuds and to share tools and best practices.

At Justice Canada, the Ombudsperson met with Deputy Minister (DM) and Deputy Attorney General of Canada, Sharlene Curtis, as well as with Michael Sousa, Senior ADM for Justice's Policy Sector, where he shared his perspectives on future work priorities and collaborative opportunities.

The Office also collaborated with Justice Canada's research and statistics team to delve into the latest trends and perceptions shaping the field and identified potential shortcomings in the department's data capture. To support operations, the Ombudsperson met with Bill Kroll, Chief Financial Officer, and established a working relationship with Sonya Kim St-Julien, the Ombud for employees at Justice.

***“Thank you so much. I knew that you were working on connecting me with the right person and I knew it would take time. You have no idea how thankful I am to you, and the whole team. I think often about the opportunity I was given to even be able to meet you all.”***

Dr. Roebuck also met with Canada's Minister of Public Safety, the Honourable Marco Mendicino, whose portfolio includes Correctional Service Canada and the Parole Board of Canada.

Looking beyond Canada, the Office connected with Victim Support Europe, enhancing its understanding of global practices and challenges.

### ***Academic, community-based and provincial engagements***

Engagement activities with academics and community-based organizations have connected us with dedicated people and groups at the forefront of addressing crucial issues.

Dr. Roebuck met with the University of Calgary's Patrina Duhaney, who was subsequently invited to join the Office's

Academic Advisory Circle to provide advice and share her expertise. Jo-Anne Wemmers and Amissi Melchiade Manirabona, both of the Université de Montréal, also met with the Ombudsperson to discuss the evolving landscape of victimology and seek his support for their research comparing victims' right to participation in Canada and in France.

Dr. Denise Preston, former Executive Director of the Sexual Misconduct Support and Resource Centre at the Department of National Defence, provided the OFOVC with insights into the complexities of responding to sexual misconduct in the armed forces.

The Ombudsperson also spoke with Police Victim Services BC, and with the Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime (CRCVC), to better understand the challenges and opportunities within Victim Services. Aline Vlasceanu, CRCVC's Executive Director, offered perspectives rooted in advocacy and support for victims.

The Office met with representatives from the African Nova Scotian Justice Institute who shared insights into the unique challenges faced by the African Nova Scotian community within the justice system; the possible creation of a Black Survivors working group was also discussed.

In the community-based sector, Carrie McManus, Director of Innovation and Programs at the Alberta-based domestic violence prevention society Sagesse, offered her perspective on innovative programs addressing societal challenges. Our engagement extended to organizations such as the Survivors of False Allegations (SOFA) support group, the John Howard Society led by Executive Director Catherine Latimer, the Elizabeth Fry Society led by Executive Director Emilie Coyle, and Candace House and its

***"Thank you so much; I apologize, I have had to email so many different branches for services. It's hard to keep track of who's responsible for which service and you still gave me information for what I needed; I truly appreciate that."***

Executive Director, Cecile Hildebrand. Each meeting focused on justice and victim support and broadened the OFOVC's understanding of issues to address.

These interactions demonstrate our commitment to a thorough approach, recognizing the importance of academic research and the important contributions of community-based organizations in shaping effective strategies and policies.

### ***Participation at events***

On November 10, 2022, Dr. Roebuck provided welcoming remarks at the Canadian Municipal Network on Crime Prevention Conference on "The Future of Safer Communities".

Early in December 2022, the OFOVC team met with Algonquin College students enrolled in the Victimology Graduate Certificate Program doing their placement at the Victimology Research Centre. Diana McGlinchey, Algonquin College Research Manager, and Dr. Hannah Scott, founding faculty member of Ontario Tech University in the Faculty of Social Science and Humanities also participated.

On December 13, 2022, the Office met with officials from South Korea's Ministry of Justice, who came to Canada to learn more about the implementation of victim rights, and to share their expertise on more recent legal and policy responses to victims of crime in South Korea.

On February 6, 2023, Dr. Roebuck met with international researcher Ali Khan as part of his Winston Churchill Trust Fellowship tour of Canada researching support for gay male survivors of domestic violence. They discussed the needs of 2SLGBTQI+ survivors, and emerging practices internationally to make help-seeking safer.



### ***Newsletter***

The OFOVC distributed two newsletters in 2022-2023 to share updates from the Office and help people learn about our work advancing victim rights.

## **Ministerial and parliamentary relations**

### ***Parliamentary committees and submissions to government***

The OFOVC worked throughout the year to maintain positive and collaborative relations with parliamentarians and committees of the House of Commons (HoC) and Senate. Fostering open communication channels with lawmakers ensures that the Ombudsperson can effectively advocate for the rights and needs of victims of crime, presenting their

perspectives to those who have the power to make transformative changes. These engagements help parliamentarians better understand the challenges faced by victims and inform legislative decisions.

### **Bill C-28**

In June 2022, the Minister of Justice introduced Bill C-28 in response to the Supreme Court of Canada's (SCC) decision in *R v. Brown*, which concerned self-induced extreme intoxication. Bill C-28 was introduced to close a gap in the law and clarify that anyone who becomes voluntarily intoxicated and harms someone is held criminally responsible. The bill was passed in the Senate on June 23, 2022, without any amendments, and received Royal Assent.

Given how quickly the law was passed, the HoC Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights (JUST) initiated a study on the subject matter of Bill C-28 in October 2022, three months after the Bill received Royal Assent.

Just three weeks after being appointed, on November 14, 2022, Dr. Roebuck appeared before the HoC JUST Committee to share his views

and provide recommendations on its study of Bill C-28, An Act to Amend the *Criminal Code* (Self-Induced Extreme Intoxication).

Dr. Roebuck expressed concerns that the SCC decision may result in the spread of misinformation. Other organizations supporting women and survivors of sexual assault also expressed worries that the decision might create a belief that intoxication can be a defence to sexual assault. The Ombudsperson raised concerns about the defence of intoxication being primarily used by men against women who experience violence.

After the JUST Committee began its examination of Bill C-28, the LCJC's Standing Senate Committee began its own examination and report on "the matter of self-induced intoxication, including self-induced extreme intoxication, in the context of criminal law, including in relation to section 33.1 of the *Criminal Code*."

The Ombudsperson appeared in front of the LCJC in February 2023 and reiterated his recommendations presented to the JUST Committee a few months earlier, adding that he

***"A victim who had registered to receive information about the person who harmed them lacked the necessary technological equipment to participate in a virtual parole hearing. The OFOVC reached out to both the Parole Board of Canada (PBC) and the Policy Centre for Victim Issues (PCVI) on behalf of the victim who subsequently obtained the necessary accommodation to participate in the parole hearing."***

was pleased to see the Commons Committee recommend a plain language public awareness campaign, as per his recommendation on Bill C-28. As of March 31, 2023, the Senate Committee had concluded its study and was working on finalizing its report.

### **Bill S-212**

The Ombudsperson was before the LCJC Committee again on February 9, 2023, as the Senate reviewed Bill S-212, An Act to amend the *Criminal Records Act*, to make consequential amendments to other Acts and to repeal a regulation. Bill S-212 was introduced in November of 2021 and would allow for the expiry of criminal records. Criminal records can have long-lasting negative effects on those trying to reintegrate within society after leaving the criminal justice system.

The Ombudsperson emphasized that criminal records impose systemic and economic barriers on marginalized groups, creating social conditions that continue to strip Indigenous families of their resources, reallocating them to settlers. Similar barriers are experienced by Black and other racialized communities in Canada. Dr. Roebuck also explained how false allegations in cases of intimate partner violence can frequently lead to criminalizing the victim, with lasting criminal records limiting access to resources and complicating child custody arrangements.

### **JUST Committee Report: Improving Support for Victims of Crime**

In March 2022, the JUST Committee began a study of the government's obligations toward victims of crime and a review of the *Canadian Victims Bill of Rights* (CVBR). This led to the publication in December 2022 of its report titled "Improving Support for Victims of Crime" which included a section on the OFOVC in Chapter 2. On February 20, 2023, the Ombudsperson sent the committee a

letter thanking them for their report and committed to providing a formal response with recommendations based on what the Office hears firsthand from victims of crime.

A common complaint our Office received is that the right to information under the *Canadian Victims Bill of Rights* (CVBR) is not guaranteed to victims of crime. The Ombudsperson stressed in his letter that information needs to be provided to victims automatically, and he expressed support for national best practices and minimum standards of support for victims and survivors of crime across Canada.

The Office conducted extensive consultations on the committee's report and will be publishing an official response.

### **Public Statement**

Bill C-5 received Royal Assent on November 17, 2022. This bill removed mandatory minimum penalties for some specific drug and firearm offences. On March 17, 2023, the Ombudsperson released a statement noting that while this would help reduce the disproportionate incarceration rates of Indigenous and Black people, victim safety must remain central to decision-making. The Ombudsperson stated that judges and prosecutors must take the time to listen and consider victims' views and he made a recommendation to the government to require judges to document how victim safety was considered in cases where they impose conditional sentencing.



# Working to uphold victims' rights

---

## Reports produced to inform our work

### **Understanding the Experiences of Coercive Control and Sexual Exploitation – Sagesse**

The OFOVC procured the services of experts from Sagesse, an Alberta-based domestic violence prevention society, to conduct a study on coercive control and sexual exploitation. The study was performed by Andrea Silverstone, Sagesse's Chief Executive Officer, Carrie McManus, Sagesse's Director of Innovation and Programs, and Professor Rod Dubrow-Marshall, PhD, Co-Program Leader, Master of Science Psychology of Coercive Control, at the University of Salford and RETIRN (Re-Entry Therapy, Information and Referral Network) in the United Kingdom. The results informed our Office's work and helped establish priorities for the OFOVC. The research paper [Understanding the Experiences of Coercive Control and Sexual Exploitation – Sagesse](#) was published on the OFOVC's website in October 2022.

## Engaging with our communities of experts

The OFOVC was able to gather two of its advisory circles for the first time during the last quarter of the year. The Frontline Service Provider Advisory Circle (FSPAC) was convened on March 7, 2023, and the Academic Advisory Circle (AAC) was convened the next day, on March 8, 2023. Among other things, the two meetings allowed for extensive consultation on the Office's proposed recommendations in response to the JUST Committee report.

The FSPAC membership includes representatives of community and social services such as victim support services, counselling, and rehabilitation. Their contribution is essential to the OFOVC's work to address the holistic needs of victims of crime beyond the immediate legal context.

The AAC members are experts in the field of victimology, and they recognize the challenges that victims face when navigating the criminal justice system. We drew on their expertise to help strengthen our recommendations in preparing a response to the JUST Committee report on improving support for victims of crime.

## Recommendations to Government

The Office collaborates with government officials and federal departments as they play a key role in crafting and amending legislation that affects victims of crime. Government departments and agencies, primarily the departments of Justice and Public Safety Canada, shape and implement laws and policies impacting victims.

The Ombudsperson assumed a special advisor role to both the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Public Safety to inform them of issues raised by victims and to ensure their needs are considered, and that victim-centric policies are integrated into the legal framework impacting victims and survivors.

Over the course of the year, recommendations were made to various governmental entities and parliamentary committees, adding to the



existing list of recommendations previously made by this Office in more than one hundred instances since its creation in 2007. Many recommendations have been submitted more than once and several touched on the same issue, emphasizing how improving victim rights requires determination, effort and resources. The recommendations provided in 2022-2023 are summarized below.

1. Information on how to navigate the Canadian justice system needs to be automatically provided to victims and they should be informed about the administration of the sentence of the person who harmed them.
2. National best practices and minimum standards of support for victims and survivors of crime should be established across Canada.

***“[My spouse] and I wanted to send you a quick message before the craziness of the holidays start to wish you and your families a very Merry Christmas and a happy and safe holiday season. Thank you for everything that you’ve done to help me and so many others.”***

### **Pertaining to Bill C-28:**

3. Intoxication is very common in contexts of violent crime, and women's groups and survivors have expressed significant concerns about the possibility of this defence being abused. We recommend close **monitoring** and that a formal **review be conducted** after two years to evaluate how the defence has been used in court.
4. The diverse perspectives of Canadians that emerged in various committee hearings surrounding this bill need to shape this legislation. **Meaningful consultation** should take place with the goal of amending the legislation if significant concerns are identified.
5. Continued misinformation around the Supreme Court of Canada decision and this legislation can have negative consequences on women and girls. The wording of C-28 is complicated, and we recommend **clear language** and continued messaging to the public to ensure it is properly understood.

***“Thank you so much for your quick reply. The information you shared has been very helpful. I will look into your suggestions and share them with the family.”***

### **Pertaining to Bill S-212:**

1. While the OFOVC supports the automatic expiry of summary convictions after 2 years, a **tiered approach is recommended** for people with Schedule 1 offences or repeat violent offences: rather than an automatic expiry, offenders should **be required to apply after 5 years**.
2. Police record checks should not disclose personal information unrelated to criminal convictions. **Limiting non-conviction records** will better respect privacy relative to matters of mental health, the principle of innocent until proven guilty, and limit harms associated with legal and administrative aggression.
3. These changes must be communicated to **educate the public** and clarify misconceptions, drawing on findings from Public Safety Canada's consultations on automated sequestering of criminal records.
4. It must be specified that a criminal record or expired record cannot be grounds to deny access to housing. **Affirming the human right to housing** is necessary to **remove barriers** and help Canada address the housing and homelessness crisis and reduce street-level violence.



# Office modernization

Internally, the Office has identified resource and skill requirements through an organizational assessment. It is essential to swiftly address these needs, despite the challenge posed by the short three-year mandate associated with the current Ombudsperson position. Recommendations have been made to the Minister of Justice regarding the terms of future Ombud appointees. The Ombudsperson is committed to following up on this matter and providing a comparative analysis between federal Ombuds office mandates and resource allocations and disparities to support his proposal.

Resolving the resourcing disparity between federal Ombuds offices is critical to ensuring equitable, fair and effective services that address diverse needs, notably those of victims and survivors. Through collaboration with its federal peers, the OFOVC wants to enhance the quality and accessibility of services it offers and further the principles of accountability, transparency and justice within government.

The OFOVC is preparing several internal corporate initiatives in support of its efforts, including the development of a Strategic Plan, a Communications, Outreach and Engagement Plan, and the implementation of both a Data Strategy and a Wellness Strategy. Leveraging technology, these initiatives will modernize tools and practices within the Office, increase efficiency, and help attract and retain skilled and specialized staff. This approach requires additional resources, but it will lead to tangible improvements in victim support and the respect of their rights.

*“I have deep gratitude that you have taken the time to respond to my email, doing so with the content that you have.”*

In 2022-23, the Ombudsperson identified that the resources available to the Office compromise its ability to deliver on its mandate. When the Office was created in 2007, the approved budget was \$1.5 million, including costs paid to Justice Canada for services and fees paid for our physical location. Over the past 15 years, the amount has not increased despite more than 40% inflation and increased workloads.

**The OFOVC is the highest federal complaints mechanism in Canada supporting the implementation of victim rights. It is the appeal body for complaints submitted to other federal agencies.**

And yet, it is poorly resourced, and information requested from federal agencies is routinely denied because the Office does not have clear supporting legislation granting powers to compel information.

Investment now is critically important. Victims of crime deserve better.

# Understanding where we have been to guide where we go next

---

As 2022 marked the 15th anniversary of the Office's commitment to advocating for victims of crime and the support available to them, this report is a meaningful occasion to reflect on our journey. Over the years, we have carefully crafted and disseminated recommendations, shared within 140 different documents including letters, remarks and submissions. The sheer volume of our output shows the scale of our involvement and dedication to fostering positive change.

Acknowledging the challenge posed by the substantial volume, we recognize the need for a comprehensive review of all recommendations, regrouping and refining them to attribute or reattribute them to the applicable departments or agencies.

An integral part of this process is checking the status of each recommendation and prioritizing them within a structured framework. So far, our recommendations have not only served as guiding principles but have also influenced legislative actions, emphasizing the tangible impact of our work. As we embark on the next phase of our journey, we remain committed to adjust and follow up on recommendations to ensure they help reshape policies and frameworks that all too often impact victims of crime negatively.



# Looking ahead

I embark on the first full year in my role as Federal Ombudsperson for Victims of Crime with a broader understanding of issues faced by victims and survivors navigating the Canadian criminal justice system, the influencer and partner landscape, and the process to bring about positive changes that will increase the care and compassion shown to victims.

Our Office often establishes enduring relationships with people who contact us for support. Many victims of crime who interact with the Correctional Service of Canada and Parole Board of Canada will continue to interact with those agencies throughout the duration of an offender's life sentence. We know the repetitive cycles of prison transfers and parole hearings are challenging. For victims of crime, every detail of these processes matters, and victims do not want to be treated like an afterthought or an inconvenience. Victims of crime have rights, and we are here to help ensure they are enforced.

In the coming year, we are committed to the following activities:

- ▷ Improving access to information for victims of crime;
- ▷ Providing feedback on criminal justice legislation to ensure victims' interests are considered;
- ▷ Proposing ways to strengthen the *Canadian Victims Bill of Rights*;
- ▷ Delivering a comprehensive response to the JUST Committee report on victims of crime;

- ▷ Modernizing the tools we use to track and respond to victim complaints to improve time to resolution and better identify systemic issues;
- ▷ Launching the first systemic investigation our Office has undertaken since 2017;
- ▷ Identifying ways to improve our authorities and resources to ensure victims of crime have access to an Ombud Office with comparable resources to the federal Ombud for offenders;
- ▷ Strengthening our capacity to consider intersectionality in responses to victimization.

Our team is developing a plan with clear priorities and commitments, and working hard to strengthen our capacity. We are advocating for the resources to ensure we can meet the demands of victims who reach out to us. In the coming year, we will conduct comparative analyses of other federal ombud offices to improve our practices, structure, and better understand how other Ombud offices are resourced. We are committed to building a world-class complaint resolution mechanism for victims of crime that is compassionate and supported by legislation. Victims of crime have been waiting long enough.

These priorities underscore our dedication to continuous improvement and our unwavering commitment to advancing rights and supports for victims of crime.

Dr. Benjamin Roebuck

# Operations and financials

Summary of actual expenditures from April 1, 2022, to March 31, 2023.

Type of expenditure	Amount (\$)
Salaries and wages (including Employee Benefits Plan)	1,067,748
Information and/or communications	9,457
Training and professional dues	44,161
Professional and special services	33,750
▷ legal	13,057
▷ translation	16,694
▷ other	4,000
Repairs and maintenance	163
Utilities, materials and supplies	11,103
Acquisition of machinery and equipment	11,483
Travel and relocation	20
Other	6,892
<b>Total expended by the Ombudsperson's office</b>	<b>1,184,775</b>

Notes:

- ▷ Public Services and Procurement Canada covered the cost of occupation and maintenance for the OFOVC's premises.
- ▷ The Department of Justice Canada covered certain corporate costs for the OFOVC that are not included in the expenditures reported above.