



Government
of Canada

Office of the Federal
Ombudsman for Victims
of Crime

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Bureau de l'ombudsman
fédéral des victimes
d'actes criminels

Heard. Respected. **Victims First.**
Écoutées. Respectées. **Les victimes d'abord.**



ANNUAL REPORT 2016–2017

Office of the Federal Ombudsman
for Victims of Crime

Canada

OFFICE OF THE FEDERAL OMBUDSMAN FOR VICTIMS OF CRIME

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Cat. No.: J80E-PDF

ISSN: 1929-4557

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MESSAGE FROM THE OMBUDSMAN

It is my pleasure to present the 2016–2017 Annual Report of the Office of the Federal Ombudsman for Victims of Crime (OFOVC) covering the period from April 1, 2016 to March 31, 2017.

This report details how we fulfilled our mandate by working directly with victims, working collectively on behalf of all victims and working with our stakeholders.

This past fiscal year, we helped victims and other Canadians directly by responding to hundreds of questions and complaints. Our review of many of the complaints helped resolve specific concerns that individuals had raised. At the same time, our work had a more general impact: by drawing the attention of responsible agencies to the issues involved, we helped to shape new policies and practices intended to prevent recurrences of the situations underlying such complaints.

We also pushed forward in our efforts to identify and champion effective policy, program and legislative improvements. These efforts included a data-mapping study to identify research needs and opportunities related to victims of crime. Another initiative was a systemic review of the Federal Income Support for Parents of Murdered or Missing Children grant, which has been vastly underused since its inception in 2013.

Another special area of focus was mass victimization; I proposed a Canadian model, based on international best practices, for ensuring that Canada is positioned to support people affected by mass victimization incidents. I also engaged in an informal dialogue with international colleagues and practitioners on the topic of mass victimization. I made submissions to federal government consultations on a wide variety of issues, including:

- › the Canada Border Services Agency's (CBSA's) security inadmissibility regulations
- › the possible re-employment of imprisoned offenders in farming operations
- › the implications and dangers involved in legalizing the use of marijuana
- › the development of a federal strategy addressing gender-based violence
- › cyber-victimization and ways of addressing it
- › the need to ensure that victims of offences that fall under the military justice system

benefit from the entitlements provided by the *Canadian Victims Bill of Rights* (CVBR)

- › the development of a national security framework with a victim-centred approach
- › possible changes to the record suspension system
- › a review of the complaints mechanisms established under the CVBR

Engaging Canadians is also a key Office responsibility. This report presents ways in which the Office reached out to and engaged with victims, stakeholders and the general public in the past year. I attended major conferences on issues of top concern to the OFOVC in Canada, the United States and Europe, making presentations at several of these conferences. Each time I spoke, I emphasized the need to consider the perspective of victims and survivors of crime.

Of special note, this year marks the 10th anniversary of the OFOVC, which was founded in 2007. The Office has accomplished a great deal in its first decade. I am proud of all that the OFOVC has achieved over the past 10 years. We have consistently spoken and acted to ensure consideration for the rights, concerns and treatment of victims of crime. Today, more than ever before, the rights of victims and survivors are widely recognized and supported in Canada.

While we know that major challenges remain, we will continue our work to overcome those challenges for the benefit of victims, survivors and our society as a whole.

At the conclusion of 2016–2017, I would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to all of the victims, survivors and affected Canadians who have reached out to us or engaged with us. Your stories and your work help to shed light on both the challenges and opportunities that exist in our current criminal justice system and beyond.

Finally, a thank you to my staff, who work tirelessly to bring the Office's vision to life and who care deeply about the victims and survivors they serve.

Sue O'Sullivan
Federal Ombudsman for Victims of Crime

THE OFOVC TURNS 10!

The year 2017 marked the OFOVC's 10th year of operations! During this time, we have worked toward ensuring that victims' needs and concerns are considered in the criminal justice process before, during and after judicial proceedings take place.

We have sought to bring a victim's lens to matters of public policy related to the criminal justice process and public safety. We have done this by building on our experience of listening to victims and amplifying their voices through written and oral submissions to public consultations and parliamentary committees. And we have sought to bring the issue of victims' rights to the fore by organizing and participating in forums across Canada and internationally.

Our work has led to greater consideration of victims and their needs through our recommendations that the federal government:

- › **Legislate defined rights for victims.**
This refers to rights to information about and participation in the justice process, and rights to protection from further harm and to have a court consider making a restitution order against the offender to assist in defraying the financial costs incurred as a result of the crime committed against them. The Office made these and many more recommendations to the government before and during the legislative process that led to the passage of the *Canadian Victims Bill of Rights* (CVBR), which was a significant step forward in this regard. Following the introduction of the CVBR, we continue to push for stronger rights and for victims to be treated fairly, with compassion and dignity.
- › **Strike a balance between the offenders' and victims' rights.**
Many victims of crime struggle with the effects the crime has on them, especially the financial effects. Making offenders accountable for the financial harm done to victims by applying the federal victim surcharge and restitution orders can make a tremendous difference to victims who are struggling to recover from the trauma inflicted upon them.
- › **Fund Child Advocacy Centres to support young victims of sexual abuse.**
These centres help to minimize additional system-induced trauma for young victims of crime. Children are an especially vulnerable population, and harm done to them can lead to physical, emotional and developmental issues that they might never outgrow without help.

› **Institute a public inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls.**

An inquiry will help to identify root causes and point to strategies to address the issues.

› **Address sexual violence in the military and the imbalance between the rights of victims in the military and those in the civilian justice system.**

In 2009, long before the issue hit the headlines, our Ombudsman recommended to the Minister of National Defence that he address the issue of sexual violence in the military. The Ombudsman subsequently drew the Minister's attention to the fact that victims of crime under the military justice system do not enjoy the same rights as those under the civilian system, and recommended that this imbalance be corrected.

While our efforts have been rewarded through the adoption of many of the Ombudsman's recommendations in several policy-making and legislative processes, we are deeply conscious that we still have a long way to go in making victims' rights real in our community.

Alongside our public policy work, we have also worked directly with thousands of victims and survivors of crime who have brought their concerns and complaints about federal agencies to us. In each case, we have provided the information, assistance and support they required to understand and cope with the criminal justice system and make sure their statutory rights were not infringed. In cases where statutory rights were infringed, we assisted victims in finding resolution. Finally, we worked with federal agencies to address gaps in policies and procedures that negatively affected victims. We appreciated the cooperation afforded to us by these agencies over the years.

Going forward, we will continue to work toward ensuring that victims' rights are respected and to push for positive change for victims and survivors of crime in Canada.



OUR MANDATE

The OFOVC was created in 2007 as an arm's-length federal office that helps victims of crime and their families.

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

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

"Got some great professional help this wk by @OFOVC on the specific types of federal services & assistance available to victims in Cnd"

— An OFOVC client

"Thank you, @OFOVC for listening, validating my concerns and reviewing my recommendations for victims of violent crime who have PTSD"

— An OFOVC client





WORKING DIRECTLY WITH VICTIMS

We speak with victims every day. We answer their questions and address their complaints. Victims can call a toll-free line to speak with a bilingual Complaint Review Officer. They can also contact us by TTY, email, fax or regular mail.

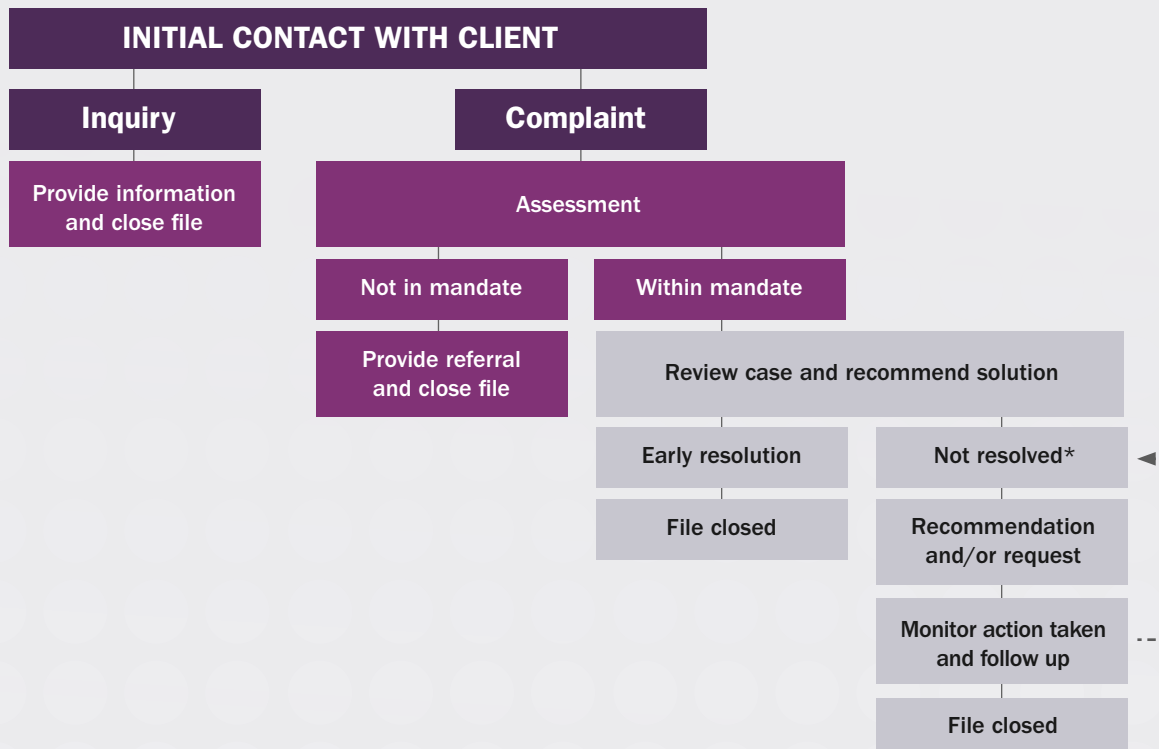
We handle inquiries and complaints on a case-by-case basis. We assess each inquiry or complaint and respond in a timely manner, where appropriate. If a matter falls outside our mandate, the Complaint Review Officer will refer the victim to the agency or organization best suited to provide assistance. Otherwise, our staff will work closely with the victim to find a solution.

We also help victims of crime collectively by reviewing important issues and making recommendations to the federal government on ways to improve its laws, policies and programs, with the aim of better supporting victims and survivors of crime.

CASE MANAGEMENT

For each complaint we receive, we follow an established process as shown in the figure below.

FIGURE 1
OFOVC Case-Management Process



*As required, the OFOVC will monitor and follow up on cases where a specific action has been requested or a recommendation made.

TALKING WITH VICTIMS

In fulfilling our mandate, we accept complaints and inquiries from victims and other Canadians. In response, we provide assistance and referrals. We also help to promote awareness of federal government programs and services for victims and survivors of crime.

We open a file when an individual contacts us with an inquiry or complaint. Subsequent contacts with the individual may include follow-up conversations, additional letters, phone calls or other interactions. We record each contact as an activity in the original file until the file is closed. A single file may document several interactions with an individual.

The number of files opened in 2016–2017 declined in comparison with the previous year. This is due in part to the requirement under the CVBR (2015) for every federal department, agency or body involved in the criminal justice system to institute an in-house complaints mechanism. These additional processes have provided other avenues for victims to file and—in some cases, resolve—complaints. However, victims who have unresolved complaints often contact us. We have generally observed that the complaints we receive are more complex and require considerably more action on our part than was previously the case.

Chart 1 shows the breakdown of files by reason for contact. In 2016–2017, the proportion of contacts involving both an inquiry and a complaint rose to 17 percent of all contacts (from 11 percent in 2015–2016).

CHART 1

Total files opened, by reason for contact (April 1, 2016 to March 31, 2017)

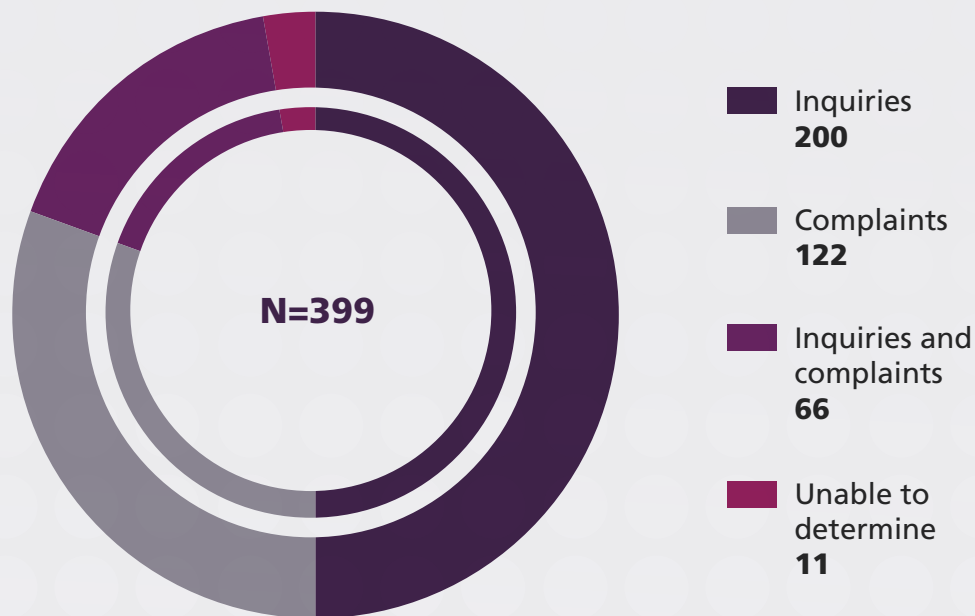


Chart 2 shows the breakdown of files opened by location—that is, where the individual contacting us was from. “Unknown” refers to contacts where individuals did not disclose a geographic location. As in previous years, the breakdown generally reflects population numbers. In terms of language profiles, 2016–2017 saw a slight increase in the number of French-speaking Canadians who contacted us, up to nearly 15 percent from 12 percent in the previous fiscal year.

CHART 2

Total files opened, by location (April 1, 2016 to March 31, 2017)

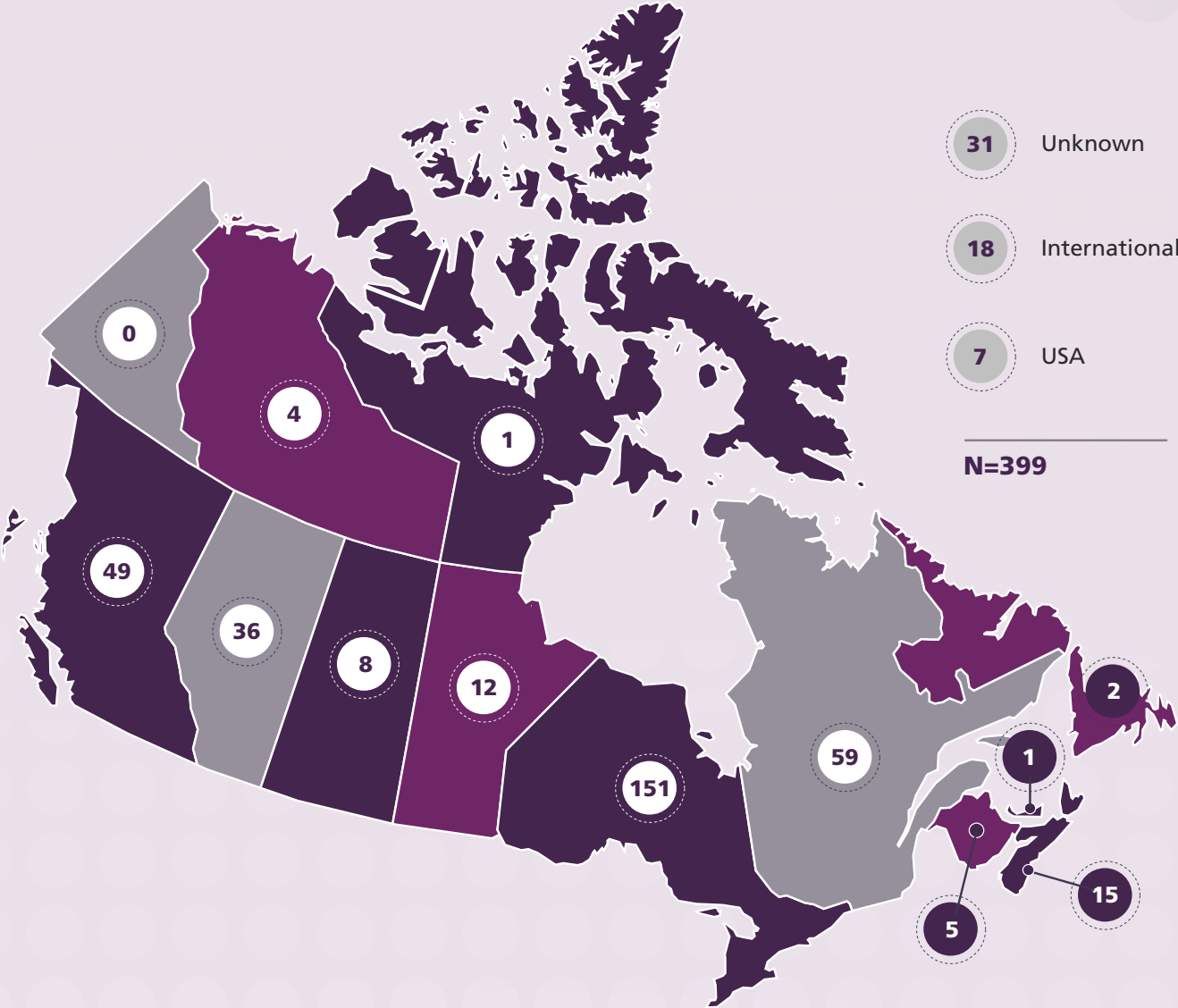
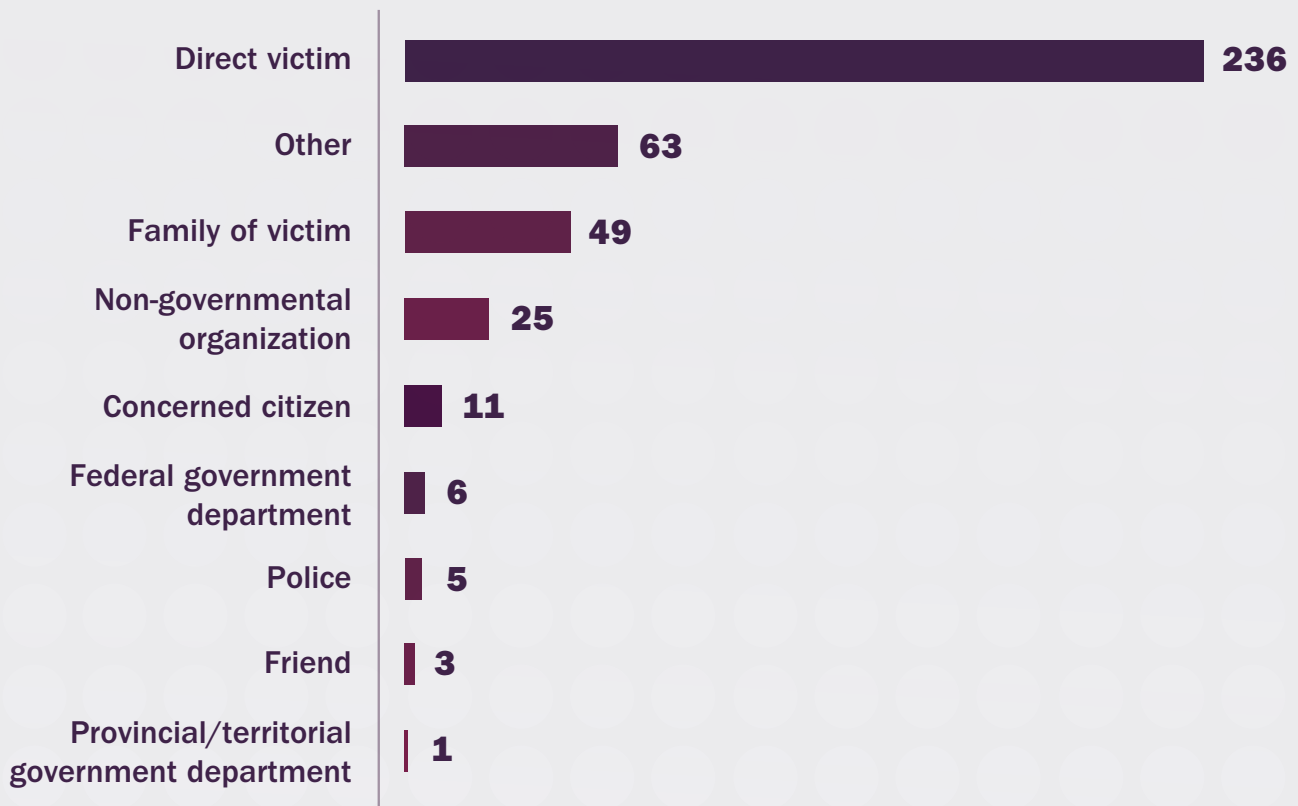


Chart 3 shows the breakdown of files opened, by source of contact. For just over 72 percent of these (288), the original contact came from a victim or the family or a friend of a victim. Another 25 contacts came from non-governmental organizations and 12 came from police services and federal or provincial government departments. “Other” refers to contacts by persons who wished to remain anonymous or could not be identified.



CHART 3

Total files opened, by source of contact (April 1, 2016 to March 31, 2017)



LEARNING FROM VICTIMS

Our conversations with victims and survivors of crime offer valuable insight into the issues and challenges they face. These insights also help us to provide the best possible information and recommendations to the federal government for how to enhance Canada's laws, policies and programs to better meet the needs of victims.

Chart 4 shows the five most common topics raised by the individuals who contacted us in 2016–2017. The most common topics have remained somewhat consistent and cover a variety of issues:

- › **Safety concerns:** Inquiries or complaints about measures that individuals can take to protect themselves, or concerns that victims of crime expressed about an offender's proximity to their home or workplace.
- › **Limited role and mandate of OFOVC:** Inquiries or complaints about the limited role and mandate of the Office. This would include views that the OFOVC should have a broader mandate, additional offices or additional powers.
- › **Victim assistance options:** Inquiries or complaints about services, programs, funding and other forms of victim assistance offered by federal, provincial or territorial and municipal governments, and by non-governmental organizations.
- › **Victims' rights:** Inquiries or complaints about the legal entitlements of victims of crime in Canada.
- › **Other levels of government:** Concerns related to matters that fall under the jurisdiction of provinces/territories and/or municipalities.

CHART 4

Top five topics on which the OFOVC provided assistance to individuals
(April 1, 2016 to March 31, 2017)

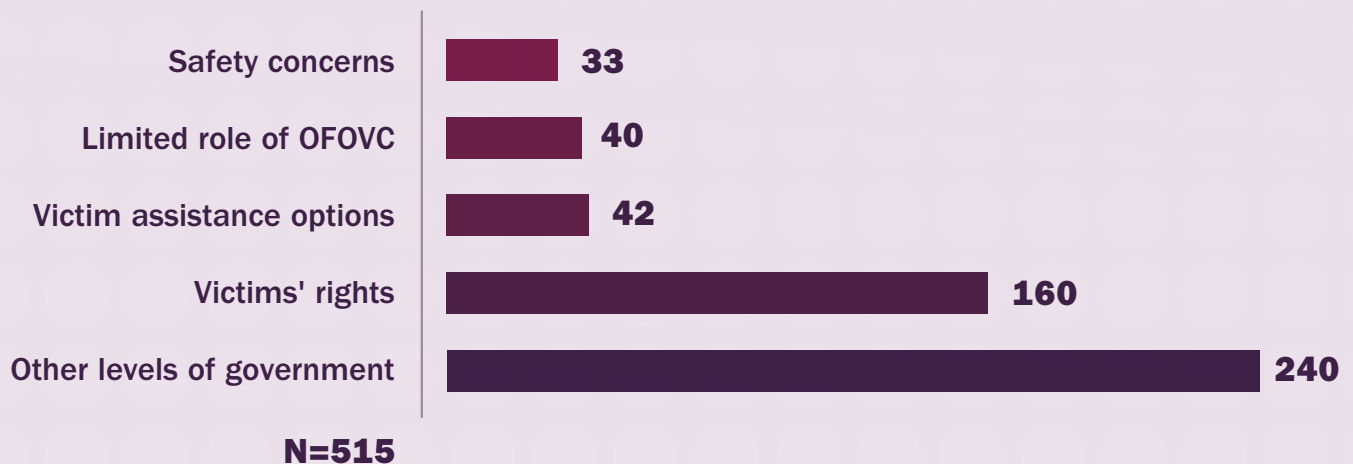
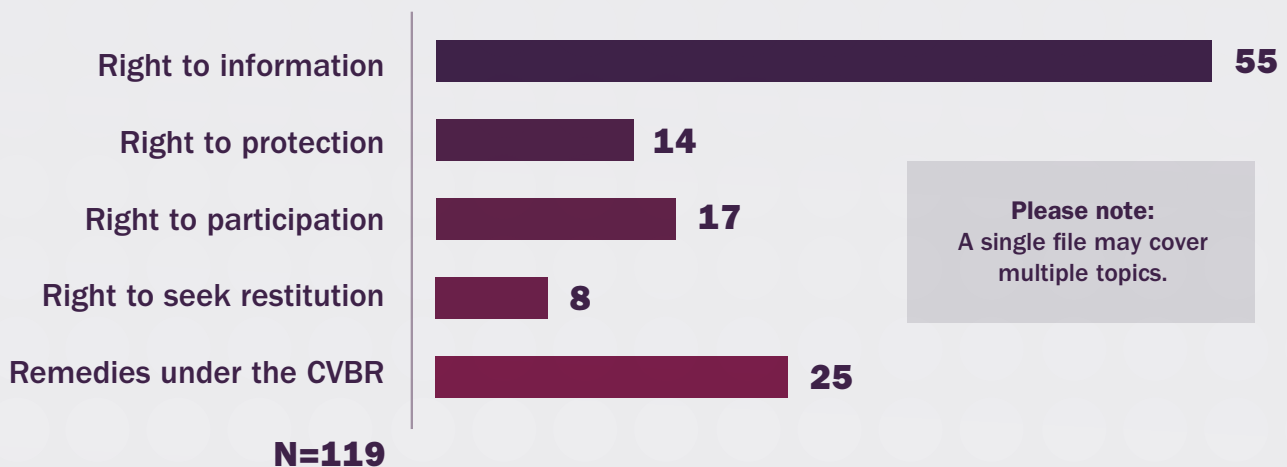


Chart 5 shows the number of inquiries and complaints we received that related specifically to the CVBR. We began tracking this information in 2015–2016, but 2016–2017 was the first full year in which we gathered the data.¹ As in the previous year, our analysis for 2016–2017 shows that victims most often had questions or complaints with respect to their right to information.

In addition to the types of complaints or inquiries that Canadians have about the CVBR, we also track our own referrals to the CVBR-mandated complaint-handling processes of other federal government departments. Following the introduction of the CVBR, federal government departments that are a part of the criminal justice system in Canada are required to have in place a complaint-handling process. We often hear from victims who have found the system(s) confusing, difficult to navigate and overwhelming. As there is no agreed definition of a “complaint” at this time, we also receive complaints that may fall outside the direct scope of the CVBR, but which shed important light on a federal government department’s policies or procedures and how they may negatively affect victims. We may refer these complaints back to the department in question for review and potential action. In 2016–2017, there were 51 instances in which we referred clients to the complaint-handling system of another government department, including Correctional Service Canada (CSC), the Parole Board of Canada (PBC), the Department of Justice Canada’s Victims Fund manager and Global Affairs Canada (GAC). These referrals represented just under 13 percent of all files opened by the OFOVC in 2016–2017.

CHART 5

Topics related to the *Canadian Victims Bill of Rights* on which the Office provided information or assistance (April 1, 2016 to March 31, 2017)



¹ The OFOVC classifies these cases according to the rights listed in the CVBR. However, one case may involve several aspects of the CVBR. Although the OFOVC is committed to ensuring that its data are standardized and consistent, the interpretation and the classification of these cases can be subjective.

SPOTLIGHT ON EMERGING ISSUES

Issue: Lessening the impacts of communication gaps between levels of government on crime victims

When an offender is released or transferred out of federal custody, the victim harmed by the offender no longer has access to federal victim services. Instead, they must navigate an unfamiliar system at the provincial or territorial level. This involves establishing new contacts and building new relationships. Victims have told us that the transition can cause them great stress and anxiety, and make them feel overlooked and re-victimized.

The following two cases show the importance of communication between victim service providers at different levels of government in ensuring a seamless transition of services to registered victims.

CASE 1

Mr. L contacted the OFOVC in January 2016 to express concerns about his experience in preparing for the release of the offender who had harmed him.

In December 2015, Mr. L had been informed by his CSC Victim Services Officer (VSO) that the offender's warrant expiry date was approaching, when the offender would be released from federal custody.

Mr. L was advised that, after the offender's release, the condition to have "no direct or indirect contact with the victim and his family" would no longer be in force. Accordingly, Mr. L decided to apply for a peace bond (a court-issued protection order) to plan for his safety. While general information and referrals were provided by the VSO, Mr. L found that being left to navigate provincial services on his own caused him further stress, anxiety and frustration.

After repeated efforts, Mr. L eventually obtained a peace bond before the offender's warrant expiry date. However, Mr. L wanted to share his story with the OFOVC in the hope that it could prevent other victims from having to go through the same experiences. Mr. L noted that it would have been valuable to be connected with a contact person at the provincial-level who was aware of his case, and who could have helped ensure attention to his needs for safety planning and for information about peace bonds.

The OFOVC helped Mr. L to file a formal complaint with the CSC about his concerns, with the aim of bringing these issues to the notice of CSC officials. Mr. L was not satisfied with the response to his formal complaint. As a result, the OFOVC continued its discussions with CSC officials about possible changes to policies and practices so as to better meet the needs of registered victims.

CASE 2

Mr. C contacted the OFOVC after he received notification from CSC that the offender serving a federal sentence for the murder of his son had been transferred to provincial custody in advance of an appeal trial.

Mr. C was concerned that he had not received this notification in a timely manner. In addition, when Mr. C asked about the location of the transfer, he was told that the offender was no longer in CSC custody, and that he would need to register with the provincial victim services to continue receiving information about the offender. Mr. C filed a formal complaint with CSC under the CVBR. He was not satisfied with the response, and continued working with CSC and the OFOVC to try to find a remedy.

Mr. C noted that it would have been helpful if the federal VSO had been able to facilitate communication between him and a provincial victim services worker. This would have helped Mr. C to establish communication with his new point of contact. It also would have helped ensure that no information was lost during the transition of services, and that Mr. C's safety concerns were addressed.

In view of the concerns and experiences shared by Mr. L and Mr. C, we wrote to the CSC Commissioner in February 2017. Our letter stressed the importance of effective communication between victim service providers at different levels of government to ensure a smooth transition of services to victims. Effective communication would ensure that victims' safety concerns are addressed, and that victims feel respected and supported, regardless of whether the offender who harmed them is in federal or provincial/territorial custody or has been released and is living in the community.

In March 2017, we received the CSC Commissioner's response, which noted that the CSC is supportive of exploring options that could help make the provision of services to victims as seamless as possible between levels of government.

CSC reiterated its commitment to raising the concerns about continuity of services between different government levels with the Federal/Provincial/Territorial Working Group on Victims of Crime. In addition, the Commissioner noted that he planned to raise the issue at an upcoming meeting of the Heads of Corrections Committee.

We continue to monitor the issue and will follow up with CSC.

Issue: Accommodating victims at parole hearings

In two separate cases brought to our attention, victims expressed concerns that they would no longer receive accommodations previously afforded to them at parole hearings.

In these cases, the OFOVC suggested filing a formal complaint with the PBC with regard to their rights to participation and information under the CVBR.

CASE 3

In late July 2016, Mr. M contacted the OFOVC after the PBC informed him that it could no longer provide an audio recording of an upcoming day-parole hearing for the offender who had murdered his daughter. Mr. M is deaf. Even with hearing aids, he cannot absorb most of what is said in a crowded room.

Mr. M noted that he had attended hearings in the past, and that even with electronic aids, he had still missed most of what was said. When he had requested and received an audio recording of the proceedings, Mr. M was able to listen at home, using special headphones.

Unfortunately, the PBC's Regional Communications Officer (RCO) informed Mr. M that the accommodation had been offered by mistake and would no longer be available. Mr. M pointed out that victims have a right to know what happens at parole hearings. The officer responded in a manner that Mr. M found dismissive and disrespectful. He noted that, as the father of a victim, he felt it was his duty to review parole proceedings.

The OFOVC informed Mr. M of his rights and helped him to file his complaint to the PBC under the CVBR. The OFOVC continued to communicate with Mr. M and PBC officials throughout the complaint review process.

The outcome of Mr. M's complaint was that the PBC apologized for what had transpired and provided a transcriber to attend the hearing, thereby enabling Mr. M to read what was said at the hearing. The PBC did not provide an audio recording as it had done in the past, and did not offer an explanation for the change in practice. Nevertheless, for Mr. M, the complaint was resolved because he was able to meaningfully attend the hearing.

The PBC agreed to provide a transcription service to Mr. M in future, as well as to other victims who are deaf or hearing-impaired.

CASE 4

In fall 2016, Mr. G contacted the OFOVC with concerns that he and his brother had been denied permission to have their CSC VSO attend an upcoming parole hearing. Mr. G explained that their VSO had always attended previous hearings as a support person, along with the PBC's RCO. As in the past, Mr. G had indicated to both officers that he wished them to be present at the hearing.

This time, Mr. G was referred to the PBC's Regional Manager, who informed him that the VSO could not be admitted to the actual hearing. The explanation was that the VSO had previously been admitted for training purposes, but continuing to admit the VSO to a parole hearing would create a precedent.

Mr. G noted that his VSO had been present at the actual hearing in February 2016 and that another VSO had been present over the previous eight years. Their attendance had not been for training purposes.

Mr. G cited the *Canadian Statement of Basic Principles of Justice for Victims of Crime*, and noted that he felt that barring the VSO infringed on his right to be treated with compassion and respect.

The OFOVC suggested that Mr. G file a formal complaint with the PBC, given the potential infringement of his rights to information and participation under the CVBR. Mr. G filed the complaint in late September 2016. The hearing was scheduled for mid-October. Soon after the hearing, the OFOVC learned from Mr. G that his VSO was permitted to be present before and after the hearing, but not during the hearing itself. In addition, Mr. G had still not received a response to his complaint.

In late October 2016, the OFOVC liaised with the CSC and requested clarification about the grounds for denying a VSO permission to attend a parole hearing as an observer or support person. At the same time, given the right to information about services available to victims, as outlined in the CVBR, the OFOVC requested that the PBC provide a rationale or policy documentation that would explain to victims this change in practice regarding attendance by a VSO as an observer or support person.

In late November 2016, the PBC responded to Mr. G that the management of parole hearings is governed by the *Corrections and Conditional Release Act*. The PBC did not explain why the VSO could not attend the actual hearing.

Mr. G was not satisfied with this response. Accordingly, in December 2016, the OFOVC again requested that the PBC clarify which policies and existing guidelines suggested that a VSO could no longer be present at the actual hearing. Simultaneously, Mr. G filed a complaint on the same matter with the CSC, which simply forwarded it to the PBC. Nevertheless, the CSC confirmed that the VSO had been allowed to attend hearings in the past. More recently, the PBC's Regional Manager had denied the VSO observer status at the actual hearing, while the CSC manager approved the VSO's presence before and after the hearing.

In late January 2017, the OFOVC met with PBC officials to discuss the issue of whether a CSC VSO chosen by a victim can attend a parole hearing as an observer or support person. The OFOVC also called for clearer messaging on this issue in materials for the general public.

The PBC has informed the OFOVC that letters to the victim and the OFOVC would be forthcoming. The PBC also said that it would be communicating further on this matter with the pertinent CSC officials. We are continuing to follow up on this issue.



**WORKING FOR
ALL VICTIMS**

In addition to working with individual victims and survivors, the OFOVC works to support all victims of crime. With this goal in mind, we review key issues and make recommendations to the federal government about changes to laws, policies, programs and services. These efforts promote broad national change that, ultimately, helps all victims and survivors and strengthens Canada's criminal justice system.

Here is how we focused our efforts on behalf of all victims and survivors in 2016–2017:

- › We undertook a special project on data mapping.
- › We conducted a systemic review of the Federal Income Support for Parents of Murdered or Missing Children grant program.
- › We proposed a Canadian model for supporting victims of mass victimization incidents.
- › We made submissions to the federal government during consultative processes.
- › We proposed improvements to the mechanisms for complaints related to the CVBR.

SPECIAL PROJECT: DATA-MAPPING STUDY

In fiscal year 2015–2016, we undertook a data-mapping study in partnership with Statistics Canada's Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics (CCJS). The objective was to identify research needs and opportunities related to victims of crime. The study aimed to:

- › find out what data sets are in place with respect to victims' issues and services within Canada's criminal justice system
- › identify needs and priorities for data and research
- › set out options for meeting those needs

The study was intended to help with measuring the impacts of the CVBR. This information will support the mandatory CVBR review, which should take place in 2020, or five years after the legislation came into force.

The study's September 2016 report identified gaps in certain areas: measures of victim satisfaction with services; data on the nature, prevalence and incidence of victimization; and key characteristics of victims who access services—for example, whether they are new immigrants or seniors.

The report also suggested options for responding to identified needs for data. These options would ensure that the information is used to shape program development and assist in evaluating programs related to victims' issues.

Status

One of the options identified in the data mapping study was the creation of an aggregate victims' services survey. The CCJS is now developing this with funding from the Department of Justice Canada's Policy Centre for Victim Issues. The survey will help measure how successful the justice system has been in providing services to victims, and whether victims access these services. Together with provincial and territorial directors of victim services agencies, the CCJS is working to develop standardized indicators of the numbers and types of services that victims access. Standardizing the administrative data from victim services agencies across Canada will facilitate data collection and dissemination.

"Thank you for our chat yesterday afternoon. It is always encouraging to speak to someone who carries a sense of genuineness and compassion in their work."

— An OFOVC client

National indicators will support the development of useful policy, legislation and initiatives. In addition to enabling the CVBR's impacts to be measured, the data could provide key information to governments about how the various parts of the justice system have responded to the CVBR, how they encourage victims to participate in the justice system, and the extent to which victims are active in criminal justice processes.

An article on the data mapping study will appear in the Department of Justice Canada's *Victims of Crime Research Digest*, No. 10, to be published in May 2017.

SYSTEMIC REVIEW: FEDERAL INCOME SUPPORT FOR PARENTS OF MURDERED OR MISSING CHILDREN GRANT PROGRAM

As part of our mandate, we identify and review emerging and systemic issues. We define a systemic issue as “an issue that currently impacts negatively on victims of crime, and if not identified and appropriately addressed, has the potential to continue to negatively impact victims.”

In 2016–2017, we began a systemic review of the Federal Income Support for Parents of Murdered or Missing Children (PMMC) grant

program. The aim was to provide the federal government with recommendations on how to increase uptake of the grant and ensure wider distribution of the earmarked funds to victims.

The PMMC grant program has been in place since January 1, 2013. It helps support parents facing one of the most tragic circumstances: the death or disappearance of a child under age 18 as a result of a probable *Criminal Code* offence. The grant provides income support to parents suffering a loss of income as a result of taking time off work under these circumstances.

The PMMC grant was originally designed to provide up to \$10 million for 1,000 families each year. Through our review, we found that the grant has been considerably underused, with less than 1 percent of available funds paid out, resulting in significant underspending of a federal funding envelope dedicated to victims of crime. Overall, actual grant payments to parents totalled only \$223,300 from the time of the grant's launch to the end of 2015–2016.² Administrative costs were about 14 times higher than grant amounts paid to parents of murdered and missing children.

Status

In March 2016, we submitted a draft of our review to Employment and Social Development Canada (the federal department with overall responsibility for the PMMC grant program) so the department could confirm that the material was accurate as stated. The Ombudsman will provide the final review to the Minister of Employment and Social Development Canada in 2017–2018 and will report on it in the next annual report.

SPECIAL AREA OF FOCUS: MASS VICTIMIZATION

Mass victimization incidents include terrorist bombings, active shooter situations and other emergencies that could cause significant trauma to a wide circle of people. Such incidents have major physical, financial and psychological

“I appreciate your support during these difficult times for the parent of a murder victim. Thank you again. Take good care & have a great weekend!”

— An OFOVC client

² More recent data were not available when the systemic review was being drafted.

impacts on victims and survivors, as well as on the wider community. These impacts can persist long after the incident.

In 2016–2017, the Ombudsman continued to push for the creation of a Canadian response program based on international best practices that would ensure Canada is positioned to support victims of mass victimization incidents. The proposal built on recommendations made by the Ombudsman in the previous fiscal year, which called for a broad-based, collaborative, victim-centred response program involving different law enforcement organizations, victim services and levels of government (see the OFOVC's 2015–2016 Annual Report, pages 18 and 19).

The push for change in this area is based on international lessons learned and best practices, which strongly indicate the benefits of integrating victim assistance measures and supports into emergency and terrorism planning. Such measures can contribute to community resilience by addressing victims' needs and any trauma they may have experienced.

Recommendations

The Ombudsman recommended that the responsible authorities undertake victim-centred planning and put in place victim-centred strategies *before* an incident occurs. Strategies should be thoughtfully planned; they should be rooted in evidence-informed models, tools and lessons learned internationally; and they should be developed together with key partners in Canada. This approach would help to ensure that the necessary resources are in place when needed.

The Ombudsman also recommended that the government develop a coordinated program, embedded within the incident command structure set up by law enforcement services, to respond to the needs of victims after a mass victimization incident.

The program would involve the cooperation of the provinces and territories. It would provide training and accreditation to create a pool of “victim specialists”: individuals with expertise in responding to mass victimization who would

be available for victim response to incidents in Canada. The specialists could also be deployed to aid Canadians victimized abroad.

Training provided under the program would emphasize internationally and domestically identified best practices in victim response. Specialists would receive training updates and ongoing professional development to maintain their accreditation and to be prepared to respond to the changing demands of mass victim response.

The Ombudsman provided this recommended model to the Minister of Public Safety Canada directly, as well as to a number of stakeholders and players in the criminal justice system, through presentations and in-person discussions.

Informal networks and collaboration

Since June 2016, the Ombudsman has joined a group of international colleagues and practitioners in a regular informal dialogue on the topic of mass victimization. The group meets monthly via teleconference to share ideas, experiences and lessons learned. It provides a forum for developing contacts with leading experts in the realm of victims' rights. It also offers an opportunity to learn best practices pertaining to victim supports in the context of mass victimization incidents.

The Ombudsman's engagement with this group makes it possible to access pertinent information and research on international best practices and emerging issues related to victims of crime. The lessons learned focus on mass victimization, but have broader applications to the needs of all victims of crime. The information positions the Ombudsman to provide evidence-informed recommendations to the federal government on its programs, services, policies and laws related to victims of crime.

Status

In 2016–2017, the Ombudsman met with officials from Public Safety Canada and GAC to discuss her proposal for a response program. In an August 2016 meeting with GAC, the Ombudsman

extended her vision to also consider ways of assisting Canadians who have been victimized abroad, in line with the rights set out in the CVBR.

In January 2017, at the International Conference for Victims Assistance held in Paris, France, the Ombudsman gave a presentation on the subject of a Canadian response program for cases of mass victimization.

SUBMISSIONS TO THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

CBSA security inadmissibility regulations

In May 2016, the OFOVC was one of 25 stakeholders invited by the CBSA to participate in the development of proposed regulatory amendments related to security inadmissibility (i.e., the grounds on which foreign citizens may be refused admission to Canada). The consultation extended over a 30-day period, and participants were able to contribute through the Consulting with Canadians website. The Ombudsman's input addressed possible impacts on victims and survivors of crime as a result of issues related to the monitoring and control of non-citizens who are ruled to be inadmissible to Canada. The Ombudsman raised questions concerning victims' and survivors' rights to information, protection and participation.

- › **Information.** Victims of inadmissible non-citizens have expressed their frustration to the OFOVC at being unable to access key information, such as dates and decisions of immigration review hearings, the date of an offender's release from CBSA custody and likely destination, and the removal status of an offender.
- › **Protection.** When CSC transfers an offender to CBSA custody, victims have no way of finding out whether the offender is being detained by the CBSA or living in Canada while awaiting an immigration review. Consequently, victims are left to wonder and worry about whether they are protected. The uncertainty can cause victims emotional and psychological stress. Victims who are informed of an offender's status can plan for their own personal safety.
- › **Participation.** Victims and survivors do not have the right to attend and present a statement at Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB) hearings. This means that they lack sufficient opportunities to participate in the process. Criminal behaviour is a factor used to determine whether an individual should be deported. Accordingly, victims should be able to have their voices heard in discussions related to a criminal offence committed against them. They should have a way to provide information for consideration in a decision regarding the deportation of an offender.



Recommendations

The Ombudsman recommended that the prescribed conditions under consideration by the CBSA in its consultation be extended to apply to other grounds of inadmissibility related to public safety and security. Additional grounds could include human or international rights violations, serious crime and organized crime.

The Ombudsman also urged consideration of measures that would ensure due attention is paid to victims' rights to information, protection and participation.

Specifically, the Ombudsman recommended that registered victims receive pertinent information from the time an offender is referred for inadmissibility proceedings until the time the offender is deported or cleared of an inadmissibility allegation or determination.

The Ombudsman also recommended that registered victims have the opportunity to participate by attending IRB hearings on the admissibility, detention or deportation of an offender and providing or reading an updated statement outlining the impact of victimization.

Status

In 2017–2018, we will review the results of the consultation and the regulations that are likely to be proposed. We remain committed to ensuring that victims can access their rights in the context of the immigration system and when offenders are in CBSA custody.

Federal prison farm employment

In August 2016, the Ombudsman made a submission to a consultation process conducted by CSC to inform a study exploring the feasibility of reestablishing agriculture and agri-food operations. The re-establishment of the program would include employing offenders at two former federal penitentiary farms located near Kingston, Ontario.

Many victims of crime have an interest in knowing what, if anything, their offenders are doing to rehabilitate themselves. It is of the utmost importance for victims to receive information about their offender's participation in employment, education and therapeutic programs. This can help victims to feel safer

“Thank you for your follow-up email, including the link, and for keeping me in the loop! Your efforts are much appreciated.”

— An OFOVC client

in their daily lives. It also provides some reassurance that offenders are taking steps to rehabilitate themselves.

Victims and victim services agencies have long advocated for victims' statutory right to access information about their offender's correctional plan and its progress. Under the CVBR, registered victims are allowed to receive correctional plan progress reports from the CSC, provided that the interest of the victim outweighs the offender's right to privacy. Now that registered victims are entitled to request and receive such reports, it is important to ensure that they can readily access the information.

Recommendations

The Ombudsman called for proactive planning by the CSC to ensure that registered victims can promptly access information about their offender's participation in the farming employment program in cases where the victim's interest clearly outweighs the offender's right to privacy. The Ombudsman called for all reasonable measures to be taken so that registered victims of crime can receive this information as easily as possible.

Status

The CSC released the consultation results in November 2016. Feedback from the consultation will be integrated into the feasibility study, which will be used to guide future decisions related to rehabilitation and employment training programs offered at correctional institutions. The CSC is reviewing the issue and exploring options for renewing its involvement in farming. Once a decision is made on next steps, it will be publicly announced.

Marijuana legalization and regulation

In August 2016, the Ombudsman made a submission to the Task Force on Cannabis Legalization and Regulation. The submission focused on a victim-centred perspective on the legalization and regulation of marijuana for non-medical purposes. This perspective, by necessity, includes considering the critically important issue of impaired driving, as well as taking into account other potential forms of victimization.

If rates of cannabis use increase under a system of legal access, impaired driving rates could also rise. This could, in turn, lead to increased victimization: more Canadians could be severely injured or killed on our roads.

Also to be considered are the broader associations between marijuana use and experiences of victimization. The 2014 General Social Survey on Victimization found that persons using cannabis daily reported that they experienced violent victimization at a rate seven times that of Canadians who did not use drugs. The reasons and factors underlying the association between cannabis use and/or abuse and victimization are complex. However, one factor is the possibility that the trauma of prior victimization may make an individual more likely to use marijuana or other substances as a coping or self-medication mechanism to alleviate psychological distress.

The Ombudsman's submission also considered victimization perspectives related to child neglect, maltreatment and abuse, as well as illicit marijuana-related activities (such as burglaries and explosions related to producing marijuana).

An important consideration in developing a framework for legal marijuana use is the need to ensure support for research into the relationship between cannabis use and victimization. The findings could support the development of anti-violence and substance abuse prevention and treatment programs that are effective and evidence-based.

Recommendations

- › **Prevention.** Before legalization, put in place robust, well funded, sustainable tools and resources for preventing and addressing the problem of driving under the influence of cannabis.
- › **Research.** Ensure that research initiatives examine the associations between victimization and cannabis use and abuse as well as the related impacts and outcomes.
- › **Data collection.** Act quickly to enhance and standardize the collection of data on cannabis and victimization.
- › **Public awareness.** Ensure that public awareness initiatives educate Canadians about the risks of cannabis use/abuse in relation to engaging in acts that victimize others.
- › **Funding.** To supplement government funding, direct funds from marijuana revenues to prevention and treatment initiatives.

Status

In December 2016, the Task Force on Cannabis Legalization and Regulation completed its final report, which contained more than 80 recommendations. Some of these reflect the recommendations of the Ombudsman. We will continue to monitor progress as legislation is developed.

Gender-based violence

In August 2016, the Ombudsman participated in a roundtable in Montréal on the subject of "Supporting the Safety and Well-Being of Survivors." The event was hosted by the Honourable Patty Hajdu, Minister of Status of Women Canada. This was part of an engagement process conducted throughout the summer and fall of 2016; its purpose was to contribute to the development of a comprehensive federal strategy addressing gender-based violence (GBV). In September, the Ombudsman met with the Minister to further discuss her recommendations, and also provided a written submission.

The submission noted that GBV is a complex, far-reaching social problem requiring a multi-dimensional solution. Many GBV victims face enduring physical, mental, emotional, social, financial and/or spiritual impacts. Holistic and culturally relevant responses to GBV must be available for women with disabilities, senior women, immigrant and refugee women, Indigenous women and girls, and the LGBTQ2 community.

Federal leadership in this area means addressing gaps within federal legislation, policies and programs so that GBV and other victims are properly informed, considered, protected and supported.

Federal investment and leadership are required to ensure that victims and survivors can benefit from proper supports. Eradicating GBV requires robust initiatives to strengthen prevention and public education.

Recommendations

Canadian Victims Bill of Rights:

- › Address gaps and further strengthen victims' rights under the legislation, especially the rights to information, protection, participation, seeking of restitution, and remedy.
- › Ensure that the legislation is implemented, enforced and evaluated.

Application of victims' rights:

- › Address inconsistencies in the immigration and military justice systems.

Emerging issues:

- › **Cyber violence.** Develop measures dealing with cyber violence.
- › **Restorative justice.** Ensure victims are aware of restorative justice programs.
- › **Publication bans.** Ensure that victims of sexual violence are fully informed about all aspects of publication bans, including the legalities, ways of making their views known, applying for a ban and lifting a ban.



Key building blocks of a GBV strategy:

- › **Collection of data and statistics.** Enhance and standardize collection of data on GBV and victimization in general.
- › **Education, training and awareness.** Ensure that those working in the criminal justice system have victim-centred and trauma-informed training as well as training on victims' rights. Provide leadership on initiatives to increase public education and awareness regarding GBV.
- › **Victim supports.** Develop national guidelines and standards to ensure that victim-centred and trauma-informed supports are in place for GBV victims.

Status

In February 2017, Status of Women Canada released its report on the engagement process, entitled *Breaking the Silence*. As the report shows, several key areas for action identified by participants are consistent with the Ombudsman's recommendations. Examples include:

- › the need for the federal strategy to recognize the unique needs of groups such as LGBTQ2s+ members, women with disabilities, Indigenous populations and others
- › the need for approaches and supports that are culturally relevant, survivor-centred and trauma-informed
- › the need for public education, federal leadership and coordination, and research and data collection

The Seventh Report of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, entitled *Taking Action to Address Violence Against Young Women and Girls in Canada*, was tabled in the House of Commons on March 20, 2017. The report made a number of recommendations aimed at helping to inform the federal government's approach to addressing GBV.

The OFOVC will monitor the development and implementation of the federal strategy. Details will be announced in 2017–2018.

Cyber victimization

In October 2016, the Ombudsman provided a submission to Public Safety Canada's consultations on cyber security. The consultations sought the views of Canadians, the private sector, academia and other stakeholders on the cyber security landscape in Canada. Its aim was to identify trends and challenges and outline a proposed way forward for cyber security in Canada.

Online victimization happens every day and takes many forms. These include cyberbullying, cyberstalking and harassment, online bank and credit fraud, identity theft, cybersexual violence and threats, and online luring. These crimes and forms of victimization have serious and enduring impacts on the individuals harmed as well as their loved ones.

The Ombudsman's submission stressed the importance of taking into consideration the victims' viewpoint as part of the process of developing a renewed approach to cyber security in Canada.

Recommendations

- › **Data collection.** Enhance, regularize and standardize data collection in Canada, and consider introducing a new national survey and/or a centralized reporting database.
- › **Public awareness and personnel training.** Increase public awareness and ensure that criminal justice system personnel have adequate training.
- › **Victim focus.** Ensure that victim-centred supports are available.
- › **Partnerships.** Enhance collaborative partnerships across sectors.
- › **Information.** Ensure that Canadians are informed about existing laws.
- › **Legislation.** Address key gaps in legislation related to online child sexual and physical abuse images.

Status

In January 2017, Public Safety Canada released its Cyber Review Consultations Report. Several potential areas for action identified in the consultations were closely aligned with those recommended by the Ombudsman. They included the need to:

- › increase public education and awareness
- › provide more information on cyber victimization
- › improve training for law enforcement officers and others so they can respond to cyber crime
- › enhance collaboration among strategic partners
- › develop a full legal framework to address cyber crime

“Thank you for your understanding and kind words. Almost everyone, especially in powerful positions, just ignores me and doesn’t even respond!”

— An OFOVC client

Canadian military justice system

In November 2016, the Ombudsman provided a submission to the Office of the Judge Advocate General under a month-long public consultation process in support of that office’s review of the Canadian Armed Forces’ court martial system (the Court Martial Comprehensive Review).

Currently, victims’ entitlements provided for in the CVBR do not apply to offences that fall under the *National Defence Act*, and therefore do not apply to victims of crime in the Canadian military justice system. For example, in a sexual assault case tried in a military court, the victim has fewer rights than and is treated differently from a victim in a sexual assault case tried in a civilian court.

The Ombudsman firmly believes that all victims of crime should have access to legislated rights addressing their needs for information, participation, protection, seeking of restitution, and remedy throughout the investigation and prosecution of an offence and beyond.

Victims and their loved ones benefit from a victim-centred approach when our institutions review existing laws and practices and develop new ones. Such an approach allows victims to feel heard. It enables them to participate in a meaningful way. It promotes healing and resilience. It also reduces the potential for further harm, re-victimization and post-traumatic stress.

Recommendations

- › **Legislation.** It is essential to enact legislation ensuring that victims’ rights provided under the CVBR are reflected in the military justice system so that victims

in that system have the same rights and entitlements as all other victims of crime in Canada. The Ombudsman has called for this since 2014.

- › **Practices.** The Ombudsman also recommended that due attention be paid to victims’ needs and concerns in the Canadian Armed Forces’ internal policies, procedures and practices wherever these relate or could relate to victims of crime. A system that is fair and respectful of victims’ needs and concerns can encourage reporting. This, in turn, can help the Forces become aware of acts of violence and crime within its organization so it can take appropriate action.

Status

In February 2017, the Office of the Judge Advocate General released a summary of the 33 submissions received in the consultations. The summary notes that several contributors felt that in a court martial system, victims should have rights at least equal to—and access to resources at least as good as—those available in the civilian criminal justice system in Canada.

The Office of the Judge Advocate General has indicated that the Court Martial Comprehensive Review will consider each submission. The review was ongoing as of March 31, 2017.

National security

In December 2016, the Ombudsman provided a submission as part of Public Safety Canada’s consultations on developing a national security framework.

National security incidents can have significant and devastating physical, psychological and socio-economic impacts on victims. As a result, security strategies need to address how to mitigate and respond to these impacts. A victim-centred approach to the development of a national security framework will enhance the safety, well-being and resilience of Canadians.

Recommendations

The Ombudsman recommended that Public Safety Canada create a coordinated response program to assist victims of mass victimization or terrorism incidents. Specifically, she recommended that the program:

- › be federally led and involve all three levels of government
- › have support from the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP)
- › ensure that victims of mass victimization and terrorism are treated with respect and compassion and have their rights protected
- › have a capacity for a timely, appropriate, nationwide response
- › include a broad definition of the term “victim”
- › include measures and protocols to address immediate, medium- and long-term needs
- › involve preplanning of protocols with all key partners
- › offer victim service providers accredited training, specifically on how to respond to mass victimization incidents
- › establish an organized system of victim specialists across the country, available for deployment when needed
- › coordinate the flow of information
- › provide a Canada-wide minimum standard of response to incidents while allowing for flexible responses that meet the needs of a specific community
- › create a pool of subject matter experts for consultation concerning the victims’ perspective

Status

The Ombudsman presented her proposed victim response model in several forums in 2016–2017 and continues to engage in discussions with domestic and international partners to identify best practices for a response model.

See also page 20, Special Area of Focus: Mass Victimization.

Record suspensions

In November and December 2016, Public Safety Canada led an online consultation on record suspensions under the *Criminal Records Act*. This was part of a broader review of the Act.

A record suspension (formerly referred to as a “pardon”) sets aside a criminal record under certain conditions. The aim is to help the offender to access employment, educational and other opportunities, and to reintegrate into society.

In December 2016, the Ombudsman provided a submission to Public Safety Canada, emphasizing that any consideration of changes to the record suspension system must give high importance to victims and the organizations that serve them. It is essential to balance the rights of offenders with those of victims, and to ensure that criminal justice amendments apply a victim-centred approach.

Recommendations

The Ombudsman recommended that discussions of record suspensions must have a victim-centred perspective, including:

- › use of appropriate language respectful of victims
- › ensuring accountability to victims, and payment of all restitution orders and fines
- › consideration of public safety
- › avoidance of unnecessary delays in the criminal justice system

The Ombudsman made the following recommendations:

- › **Non-offensive term.** Continue to use the term “record suspension” (or another suitable term, developed through consultation). The former term, “pardon,” may be offensive to some victims and survivors.
- › **Restitution and fine payments.** The eligibility criteria for a record suspension should continue to include payment of fines in relation to victims, such as the victim fine surcharge, and restitution orders imposed by a judge. The government should explore options to ensure that offenders are aware of their restitution orders and to enforce restitution payments.
- › **Screening.** To mitigate the potential for victimization and risks to public safety, the PBC should continue to follow a careful screening process.

Status

Public Safety Canada is expected to release a summary of its consultation in 2017. It has indicated that results of the consultation will help inform the way forward for the review of the *Criminal Records Act*. The OFOVC will continue to monitor for updates on this issue.

REVIEW OF COMPLAINTS MECHANISMS ESTABLISHED UNDER THE *CANADIAN VICTIMS BILL OF RIGHTS*

As noted in our 2015–2016 Annual Report, the CVBR requires each federal government organization involved in the criminal justice system to have a complaints mechanism in place. In practice, this has led to the creation of numerous mechanisms with varying admissibility criteria, complaints forms and time frames.

Victims with a complaint are directed to deal with the responsible department or agency. If more than one organization is involved, victims must file multiple complaints on the same matter. If they have exhausted the process and are not satisfied, they can ask for help from the OFOVC or any other organization with jurisdiction to review complaints.

We have helped victims navigate the complaints processes and submit complaints. Through such interactions, we have observed that the multiple complaints mechanisms have some systemic issues that are having a negative impact on victims and survivors of crime.

Further to the victims' user experience, the new complaint-handling systems make it difficult to gather a single more comprehensive picture of all complaints submitted under the CVBR within a given period. The fragmentation of data makes it difficult to determine whether the CVBR is working as intended, and where improvements might be needed.

Recommendations

In 2016–2017, the Ombudsman continued to push for changes and the streamlining of the newly implemented complaint-handling processes. Efforts included a presentation prepared by the OFOVC, and delivered to federal colleagues, outlining the challenges identified by victims and providing suggestions for addressing them.

In the following months, the OFOVC was informed that its recommendations were being reviewed for potential action. Going forward, we will continue to monitor this issue and provide our federal colleagues with feedback on what we are hearing from victims and survivors.





BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS AND RAISING AWARENESS

To fulfill its mandate, build relationships and raise awareness, the OFOVC engages with organizations, criminal justice personnel and policy-makers working with victims of crime.

ENGAGING WITH STAKEHOLDERS

In 2016–2017, our outreach activities included meetings with victims of crime, agencies that serve victims, advocates for victims and police services. We also participated in a variety of targeted meetings, conferences and symposia.

Highlights of presentations given by the Ombudsman in 2016–2017

- › **Leadership in Counter Terrorism Alumni Association Conference, New York City, United States, April 25 to 29, 2016**
The conference theme was “The Changing Dynamics and Social Implications of Terrorism.” The Ombudsman moderated a panel discussion on the impacts of mass victimization and the sharing of best practices.
- › **Cybercrime Advisory Council Meeting, Ottawa, Ontario, May 17, 2016**
The Ombudsman was a special guest at the inaugural meeting of the Cybercrime Advisory Council, established by the Canadian Advanced Technology Alliance. Bringing together information technology and law enforcement experts, the Council will help to define cybercrime, identify research needs and other gaps, and establish tools for responding. In her presentation, the Ombudsman focused on the need to consider a victim-centred approach to cybercrime, to mobilize research with the aim of better understanding the scope and impact of cybercrime victimization, and to ensure that victim support services are in place to address technology-facilitated victimization.
- › **Victim Support Europe 2016 Conference, Utrecht, Netherlands, May 25 and 26, 2016**
The conference theme was “Taking victim support to the next level: Connect and commit.” The Ombudsman gave a presentation entitled “From Legislation to Implementation: The Importance of Building and Maintaining
- › **Strong Networks.”** The presentation focused on mobilizing victims’ rights within communities.
- › **Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, Victims of Crime Committee, Gatineau, Quebec, June 2, 2016**
The Ombudsman gave a presentation entitled “The *Canadian Victims Bill of Rights*: From legislation to implementation – Are victims’ rights real in your community?” The presentation discussed ensuring implementation of this legislation, the data mapping study (see page 19) undertaken by the CCJS in partnership with the OFOVC and a proposal for a victim response model to mass victimization in Canada.
- › **VOICES Resiliency Symposium, New York City, United States, September 9, 2016**
This annual symposium commemorated the 15th anniversary of the September 11, 2001, attacks. Its theme was “Knowledge to Practice: Pathways to Long-Term Healing.” Presenters included leading researchers and clinicians working in the field of trauma. The Ombudsman moderated a panel on “Responding to and Recovering from Acts of Mass Violence in the U.S. and Abroad.” The discussion examined the common needs of victims and responding agencies in the context of mass victimization incidents.
- › **Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police Conference, “What Happens There Matters Here,” Ottawa, Ontario, September 26, 2016**
The Ombudsman gave a presentation entitled “Balancing the Focus on Victimization and Offenders,” which emphasized the effectiveness and importance of considering victims and their needs during an investigation or incident.
- › **Let’s Talk 13, London, Ontario, October 24, 2016**
The Ombudsman gave a presentation to a group of shelter executive directors. The presentation discussed victim services in Canada, the CVBR and the Ombudsman’s recommendations to the federal government regarding development of a federal strategy concerning GBV.

› **Heads of Oversight Agencies:
Civilian Review and Complaints Commission
for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police,
Ottawa, Ontario, October 25, 2016**

The Ombudsman gave a presentation on key components of a victim-centred approach and its benefits. The presentation focused on ways that using a victim-centred approach can help to promote procedural justice and fairness.

› **Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, Counter-Terrorism and National Security Forum 2016, Ottawa, Ontario, November 16, 2016**

The Ombudsman gave a presentation on the benefits of including a victim-centred approach within counterterrorism strategies.

› **Conference of the Victimology Society of Serbia, video presentation, November 2016**

The Ombudsman gave a presentation, via pre-taped video segment, on the victim landscape in Canada in terms of our progress and where we need to go next to support victims of crime. She discussed the OFOVC and its mandate, the federal/provincial responsibilities, the CVBR and recommendations for strengthening victims' treatment.

› **International Conference for Victim Assistance, Paris, France, January 9, 2017**

This event was organized by France's Ministry of State for Victims Assistance under the patronage of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. Experts from throughout Europe and North America attended.

The Ombudsman's presentation focused on recommendations for a victim-centred response to mass victimization in Canada.

Conferences that the Ombudsman attended in 2016–2017

› **National Victims and Survivors of Crime Week 2016, Gatineau, Quebec, May 29 to June 4, 2016**

The week is an annual outreach initiative by the Government of Canada. Its goal is to raise awareness about the issues facing victims and survivors of crime, as well as

"I truly, from the bottom of my heart, appreciate your communication with me and for your ongoing help, support and action for victims' rights."

— An OFOVC client

the services, assistance and laws in place to help victims, survivors and their families. The Ombudsman attended the symposium and introduced the keynote speaker Colleen Cardinal-Hele, who spoke to the issue of using the power of our voices to prevent and respond to violence against Indigenous women and girls.

› **Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police Annual Conference, Ottawa, Ontario, August 14 to 17, 2016**

The theme of the conference was "Public Safety in a Digital Age: Real Victims – Real Crime." It focused on addressing the threats that technology, including various forms of cyber-based victimization, pose to public safety in our communities.

› **National Restorative Justice Symposium, Halifax, Nova Scotia, November 21 and 22, 2016**

The symposium theme was "Convening a National Dialogue for Renewing Our Vision for the Future of Restorative Justice in Canada."

SOCIAL MEDIA AND WEB COMMUNICATIONS

Website

Our website www.victimfirst.gc.ca received more than 24,000 visits during 2016–2017. We update the website regularly with the Ombudsman's recommendations, special

reports, remarks from any Parliamentary Committee and other items of interest. Pages with information on victims' rights and services for victims attracted the most visitors.

Social media

We are active on Twitter and take a themed approach to tweeting. We aim to heighten awareness of the OFOVC, direct traffic to our website, promote awareness of rights of victims and services for victims, and facilitate access to information about such rights and services. Themes are chosen on a monthly basis and focus on issues that are important to victims. Monthly themes include child abuse, cyber security, human trafficking, domestic violence and fraud awareness and prevention. Tweets inform the public about our mandate and the ways we can help victims; they explain where victims can obtain information and access to needed resources; and they highlight events such as Victims and Survivors of Crime Week.

MEDIA RELATIONS

The Ombudsman was available to engage with the media throughout the year and received requests to comment on important issues, such as victims' rights, the federal victim surcharge and grants under the Federal Income Support for Parents of Murdered or Missing Children. Media coverage helps to focus attention on victims' issues. It also helps inspire the public to push for positive change.

“What makes me happy is that you are so passionate about this work! I am thankful that someone like you is there to advocate for victims.”

— An OFOVC client

PUBLISHED ARTICLES

In 2016–2017, two articles authored by the OFOVC appeared in Canadian publications:

› **“Making victims’ rights real in your community: From legislation to implementation”**

CACP Bulletin (Spring 2016)

Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police

<http://digital.imedianorthside.com/i/673246-spring-2016>

This article provides an overview of rights under the CVBR. It also highlights the fundamental role of law enforcement in moving victims' rights beyond words on paper to meaningful implementation in day-to-day operations. Interaction with police is often the way that victims of an offence first experience the criminal justice system. As a result, police play a key role in informing victims about their rights, the criminal justice system and their role in it as a victim. The article calls for police services to be equipped to provide victims with information about their rights under the new legislation, and to make victims' rights a priority within their organizations and their communities.

› **“Recognizing the role of victim supports in building and maintaining healthy and safe communities”**

Journal of Community Safety and Well-Being, Vol. 1, No. 2 (August 2016)

Community Safety Knowledge Alliance

<https://journalcswb.ca/index.php/cswb/article/view/10>

The article underscores the important role that victim supports play in building and maintaining healthy and safe communities. It calls for meaningful integration of assistance and supports for victims of crime into community safety strategies. It also calls for greater availability of data and research on the experience of victimization, as well as on the impacts and outcomes of interventions with victims of crime.



OPERATIONS AND FINANCE

The OFOVC is an arm's-length program activity of the Department of Justice Canada. The Office employs a full-time staff of nine people who support three units:

- › Case Management
- › Policy and Research
- › Communications

We share administrative services (such as procurement and human resources management) with Justice Canada to maintain cost and operational efficiencies.

REPORTING ON RESULTS

Within Justice Canada's Program Alignment Architecture (2016–2017), the OFOVC helps to support and achieve Strategic Outcome 1: A Fair, Relevant and Accessible Canadian Justice System. As the Ombudsman reports directly to the Minister of Justice, the OFOVC is not included in Justice Canada's governance framework.

Annually, the Department of Justice Canada reports on its results through the Departmental Results Report for the department as a whole. The OFOVC partakes in the reporting process separately. However, for performance analysis, the report directs readers to the OFOVC's annual report and the information contained within this report.

FINANCES AND SPENDING

The OFOVC is committed to responsible fiscal stewardship and transparency. The following summary outlines the Office's expenditures in 2016–2017.

TABLE 1

Summary of actual expenditures (April 1, 2016–March 31, 2017)*

Ombudsman – Annual Report 2016–2017	ACTUALS
Salaries and wages	\$770,754
Information/communications	\$22,694
Training and professional dues	\$13,232
Professional and special services	\$39,307
Legal services: \$3,023	
Translation services: \$34,250	
Other services: \$2,034	
Rentals	\$5,247
Repair and maintenance	
Utilities, materials and supplies	\$4,473
Travel and relocation	\$39,109
Other	\$965
Total expended by Ombudsman's office	\$895,781
Corporate costs (controlled centrally)	\$90,041
Total expended by Justice Canada	\$985,822
<i>*Public Services and Procurement Canada covered the cost of occupying and maintaining the OFOVC's premises.</i>	\$106,404

