

#OFOVCCOMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

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The Office of the Federal Ombudsperson for Victims of Crime acknowledges that our office, located in Ottawa, is on the unceded, unsurrendered Territory of the Anishinaabe Algonquin Nation whose presence here reaches back to time immemorial.

OFOVC'S 16th Anniversary

The Office of the Federal Ombudsperson (then Ombudsman) for Victims of Crime (OFOVC) was created on March 15, 2007 by an Order in Council to ensure the federal government upholds its responsibilities to victims of crime. Since that time, people have served as Ombuds.



We have the privilege to listen to victims' and survivors' voices whose unique experiences guide our work to promote awareness of victims' rights and ensure those rights are respected. On the 16th anniversary of the OFOVC, we reflect on the accomplishments of our past Ombuds and we are reminded of the challenges that lie ahead. Too many victims and survivors of crime face ongoing barriers to justice and healing. Our office is committed to listening and working together to build a more just and compassionate society.



Events & Engagements

Since Dr. Benjamin Roebuck became Ombudsperson in October 2022 he has been meeting with stakeholders, appearing before Senate and Parliamentary committees and talking to the media about victims' rights.



Image of Dr. Benjamin Roebuck at his appearance before the Standing Senate Committee on Legal & Constitutional Affairs.

On February 2nd, Dr. Roebuck met with the Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs for the first time to discuss Bill C-28 and the matter of self-induced intoxication. He was invited again on June 14th to discuss Bill S-12 regarding publication bans and the need for victims to be provided with information to make informed decisions.

On February 6th, Dr. Roebuck met with visiting Australian researcher, Ali Khan on the first day of his Winston Churchill Trust Fellowship tour in Canada. He is conducting international research on supports for gay men who experience domestic violence.



Image of Ali Khan, left, Benjamin Roebuck and Mariam Musse

On March 7th and 8th, Dr. Roebuck hosted the first Frontline Service Provider Advisory Circle (FSPAC) and Academic Advisory Circle in 2023. Members of our advisory circles are experts in the field of victim rights and recognize the challenges that victims face when navigating the criminal justice system. We draw on their expertise regularly to strengthen our recommendations, including those in our response to the House of Commons JUST Committee Report – Improving Support for Victims of Crime.



Image of the Academic Advisory Circle

On April 13th, the Ombudsperson and the OFOVC team met with CAVAC to learn more about Quebec's new Victims Bill of Rights and innovative approach to providing information to victims proactively.

Events & Engagements

On April 26th, the Ombudsperson presented at a press conference alongside the Honourable Minister of Justice, David Lametti, Honourable Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Youth, Marci Ien and Morrell Andrews, survivor, advocate and a co-founder of My Voice, My Choice. We applaud all parliamentarians, advocates and survivors who have worked on Bill S-12. This Bill would strengthen the National Sex Offender Registry and would require



Image of press conference with Minister David Lametti, Minister Marci Ien, The Ombudsperson for Victims of Crime Benjamin Roebuck and Morrell Andrews

consultation with victims before a publication ban is imposed, modified or revoked in their case. S-12 would also require a judge to ask at sentencing if a victim would like to receive information about the administration of an offender's sentence. This option would also be added as a checkbox on victim impact statements. In cases with federally-sentenced offenders, S-12 would then allow the court to transfer victim contact information. A victim-centred approach gives victims and survivors the right of choice.

Dr. Roebuck also met with Ministers of Justice and Public Safety, leaders in federal government departments like Public Safety and WAGE, as well as the chairperson of the Parole Board of Canada, Commissioner of Correctional Services Canada, Commissioner of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, and Statistics Canada, Policy Centre for Victims Issues and The National Office for Victims to discuss issues faced by victims and survivors.

The Ombud and our office continue to work and build relationships with external stakeholders. During the past few months, we met with WomanAct, Sagesse Domestic Violence Prevention Society, Candace House, Crime Prevention Ottawa, Victim Support Europe, the Peoples' Counselling Clinic, the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies, Deputy Ombudsman of Ontario, and Northwest Territories' Ombud.

Recommendation letters

Our work at the OFOVC is informed by the experiences of victims and survivors of crime. By listening to victims' voices, we can identify emerging and systemic issues, and make recommendations to the federal government. Our goal is to improve the experience of victims in the criminal justice system and ensure that their rights are upheld. On April 28th, the Ombudsperson wrote to Senator Stanley Kutcher regarding the Call to Action on Physical Punishment of Children in Canada and in support of Bill S-251 to repeal Section 43 of the *Criminal Code*.

Report Spotlight

Annual Report 2020–2021

The OFOVC's 2020–2021 Annual Report was tabled in the House of Commons on February 17th, 2023. Learn more about our accomplishments, investigations into systemic issues with recommendations and submissions to the federal Government, case stories and activities from our former Ombudsperson Heidi Illingworth.

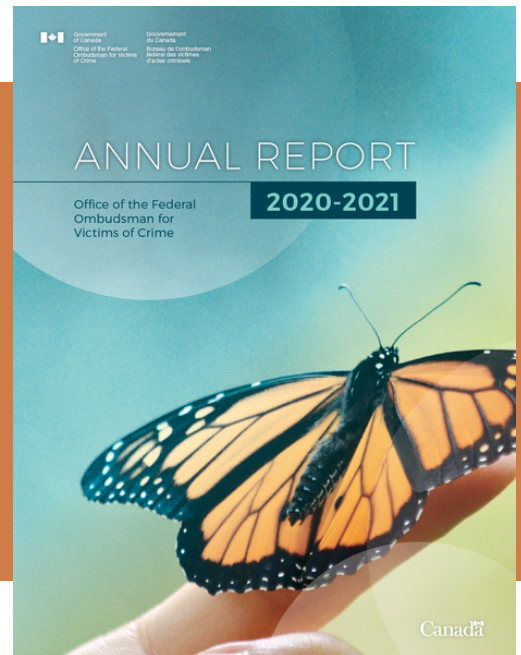


Image of the cover of the OFOVC Annual Report 2020–2021

Improving support for Victims of Crime Report

The Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights (JUST) conducted hearings and produced a report on the status of victim's rights in Canada, to assess the shortcomings of current legislative and policy measures available to victims of crime.

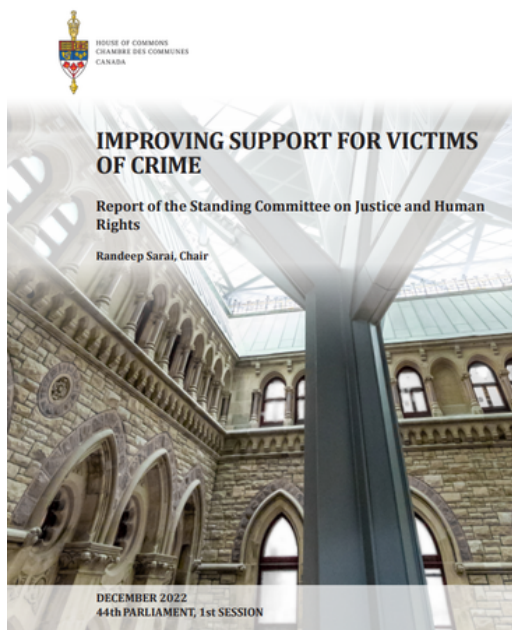


Image of the cover of the Improving support for victims of crime report

Their report touched on issues familiar to this office, both past and present. These include publication bans, providing information to victims, connecting with various identity groups, improving access to services for victims and restorative justice.

We are pleased to see that members of the JUST Committee thoughtfully considered input from victims of crime, academics, victim service providers and the OFOVC. We thank them for their recommendations to strengthen rights and services for victims and survivors of crime. We are currently working on an official response to the report and its recommendations and we look forward to providing our input.

Victims & Survivors of Crime Week

The theme of this year's Victims and Survivors of Crime Week (May 14th to 20th) was "The Power of Collaboration." The Ombudsperson provided a moment of reflection at the opening ceremony. Dr. Roebuck was an expert panelist on the Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime's "30 years of Victim Rights in Canada with CRCVC: A Review" on May 16th and was invited to speak at Victim Service Alliance of Ontario's virtual conference. The Ombudsperson also attended Victim Services Ottawa's volunteer appreciation dinner to thank volunteers for their dedication. Lastly, the OFOVC team attended the Police Victim Services of BC Symposium on May 10th and 11th. It was a full and fulfilling week!

Looking ahead

On July 20th, the Honourable Marco Mendicino, Minister of Public Safety issued a Ministerial Direction to the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) on the transfer of offenders. The direction highlights that more can be done to ensure that a trauma-informed and victim-sensitive approach is factored into the process. The direction corresponds to recommendations made by our office in 2019 and is intended to improve notification to victims surrounding security classification and transfers of offenders, and establish a formal process to notify the Minister of Public Safety. Specifically, it directs decision-makers to consider victim information before a transfer is made and requires CSC staff to always consider whether victims live near the institution where the offender is being transferred. We look forward to collaborating with CSC and Public Safety to take action and improve outcomes for victims and survivors throughout Canada.

In the coming months, we will be hosting our Frontline Service Advisory Circle and Academic Advisory Circle to continue our dialogue and engagement with victim experts to identify the challenges and gaps that victims face throughout the criminal justice system.

The OFOVC will establish a Black Survivor Working Group. We will be partnering with the African Nova Scotia Justice Institute to engage with Black victims and survivors of crime and Black academics, community leaders and experts. It is crucial to address the barriers that prevent Black Canadians from accessing victim services and ensure they have equal access to support and compensation.

Keep an eye out for our official response to the JUST Committee report on Improving Support for Victims of Crime!

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