

#OFOVCCOMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

Fall 2024

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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, unsundered Territory of the Anishinaabe Algonquin Nation whose presence here reaches back to time immemorial.

Welcome back #OFOVCCommunity! Now that the leaves have fallen and the fall season sets in, we too embrace changes at the OFOVC, ready to face challenges and welcome the possibilities those bring.

Between May and August, our team actioned 476 files, a 53% increase in comparison to last year. As we look ahead, our caseload is projected to more than double in 2024-2025, highlighting the increasing need for victims to access support and resources.

Despite the growing demands, much of our focus was placed on advancing our Systemic Investigation into the experiences of Survivors of Sexual Assault (SISSA) [launched in March 2023](#) and on our study on hate crime.

Heard. Respected. **VICTIMS FIRST.**
Écoutées. Respectées. **LES VICTIMES D'ABORD.**



Events & Engagements

Our Office has had an unprecedented level of engagement with survivors, advocates, government partners and academics to connect with experts and stakeholders.

Below is an abridged version of who we met and worked with to ensure victims rights are upheld.

Information sharing and awareness

In May, we met with the UK Domestic Abuse Commissioner to discuss their structure, approach, and best practices.



Every year in May, the Department of Justice hosts a Victims' week and our Ombud provided the moment of reflection at its Opening Ceremony.

Dr. Roebuck presented as a keynote speaker on Violence, Resilience, and Posttraumatic Change at the Interdisciplinary Conference in Psychology.



Dr. Roebuck presented at the Pacific Region Victim Advisory Council's webinar on violence, resilience, & posttraumatic change.

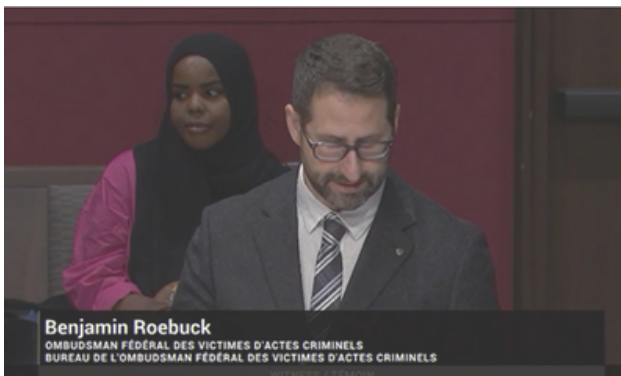
He was also interviewed for an episode of Global TV's show Crime Beat on challenges victims face when navigating parole board processes. That episode aired on November 18: [catch it here](#).

Ongoing investigation and study

June was filled with learning opportunities with organizations such as the Luna Child & Youth Advocacy Centre and the Canadian Centre to End Human Trafficking, who kindly offered to help us coordinate consultation tables to guide our systemic investigation. Our work also led to interviews with the Canadian Centre for Child Protection, and Statistics Canada. The Ombud met with a group of judges from Taiwan to discuss the intersections of criminal and family law. Our team also met with Amira Elghawaby, Canada's Special Representative on Combatting Islamophobia, to discuss collaboration on combating hate crime.

Pushing for legislative changes

Our Ombud met with decision makers and influencers to seek support for the changes our Office recommend:



- Representatives of the United Nations' Development Programme to discuss their work to achieve change through writing and research, data analysis and presentation, support to national and regional analysis, and outreach and advocacy work.
- Jennifer Moore Rattray, the former Ministerial Special Representative to create an Indigenous and Human Rights Ombudsperson and discussed the Call for Justice 1.7 Final Report.

Bill S-249, An Act respecting the development of a national strategy for the prevention of intimate partner violence

In May, Dr. Roebuck appeared before the Senate Standing Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology to discuss Bill S-249.

Our Ombud recommended that the bill be amended to permanently require a national strategy to end GBV that would include IPV. He urged the committee to engage the health care sector, innovative and disruptive interventions and strengthen accountability.

Victims should not have to choose between justice and healing

Our Ombud presented alongside [Survivor Safety Matters](#) founders Alexa Barkley and Tanya Couch, and Sexual Assault and Violence Intervention Services (SAVIS) of Halton in a press conference informing Canadians of the need to amend section 278.1 of the *Criminal Code*.

Section 278.1 allows for private records of victims to be subpoenaed during legal proceedings, including therapeutic and counselling records and personal journals. This release of confidential records interferes with a survivor's ability to access life-saving mental health support and report sexual assault in a safe, fair and equitable manner.

Findings from our systemic investigation on the experiences of survivors of sexual violence will emphasize the need to amend section 278.1.

An Open Letter to the Government of Canada: It's time for victims and survivors of crime to have enforceable rights.

On the ninth anniversary of the coming into force of the CVBR, our Ombudsperson sent an [open letter](#) to the Government of Canada, inviting all parties to work together to strengthen victim rights and amend the CVBR.

We must work together with a sense of urgency to ensure that, before we celebrate the CVBR's 10th anniversary in 2025, victims and survivors of crime have enforceable rights.

May - Sexual Assault Prevention Month

We reemphasize the importance of taking action to help prevent sexual assault by publishing a statement for [Sexual Assault Prevention Month](#).

Deep dive to learn about the experience of survivors

We participated in two focus groups with the [Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic](#) to learn more about legal support for survivors of sexual violence.

As part of our investigation, we have met with and learned from many organizations:

- [Ending Violence Association of Canada](#) (EVA)
- [Outrage Canada](#)
- [Battered Women's Support Services](#)
- [Sagesse](#)
- Statistics Canada
- Bureau of Justice Statistics' (BJS) Victimization Statistics Unit in the USA
- [Office of the Correctional Investigator](#)
- Ontario's [Office for Victims of Crime](#)
- [Financial Transactions and Reports Analysis Centre of Canada](#) (FINTRAC)
- Dr. Kim Stanton who is [conducting British Columbia's Systemic review of the legal system's treatment of sexual and intimate partner violence](#) (IPV)
- [Sexual Misconduct Support and Resource Centre with the Canadian Armed Forces](#)

Rural and urban settings bring very different realities

Our Ombud joined Saskatchewan Ombudsman, Sharon Pratchler, in northern Saskatchewan where they met with survivors, service providers, visited community organizations and provided training on trauma-informed practice and the Canadian Victims Bill of Rights (CVBR). Dr. Roebuck provided the following reflection:

Sharon was so inspiring and kind. I'm confident she personally loves every person in Saskatchewan. I was moved by the beauty of the northern landscape and the humility and transparency of the people we met. We heard about unique barriers for survivors in small or remote northern communities where most people know each other. It can make it harder to report to police or seek medical attention because of the loss of privacy or fear of retaliation.

We also heard that geography is a barrier to accessing services. Sometimes survivors need to leave their community and travel for hours if they want to report a crime or testify in court. Strengthening the availability of reliable technology and allowing people to participate in the legal system virtually improves access to justice for people in the north. Reliable technology improves access to testimonial aids for children and can help survivors to access legal advice that might not be available in their communities.



Joining Forces to Combat Hate & Better Support Victims and Survivors

With hate crimes consistently on the rise, in July, we announced the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Office of the Special Representative on Combatting Islamophobia and with the Special Envoy on Preserving Holocaust Remembrance and Combatting Antisemitism.

Under these MOUs, each organization commits to working with our Office, making referrals and sharing information and best practices, to support victims and survivors of hate crime.

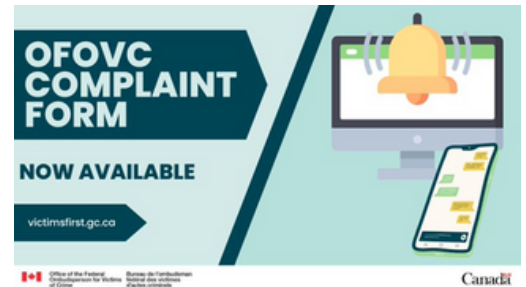
Increasing our reach; being more accessible

Online Complaint Form

We launched an online complaint form! Survivors can now file complaints directly online, improving service delivery and adding security. Feel free to share with your networks!

Website Migration

We are excited to announce that our website has been migrated to [Canada.ca](https://canada.ca). This transition is aimed at improving accessibility and providing a better online experience for all users. Check it out!

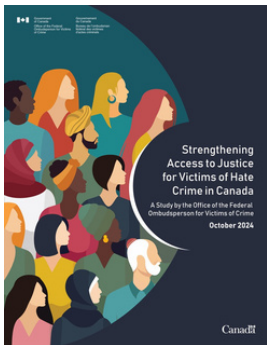


Annual Report 2022-2023

Our 2022-2023 Annual Report was tabled in the House of Commons in June. It includes the achievements, projects, and priorities of our Office! The compilation of our accomplishments of 2023-2024 is ongoing.



Looking Ahead



Hate Crime Study

The results of our hate crime study will be released on December 10th. The report provides insights on challenges and best practices to improve access to justice for victims of hate crime.

Systemic Investigation on the Experiences of Survivors of Sexual Violence

The voices and lived experiences of survivors are the cornerstone of our investigation. Until December 16:

- Survivors can complete an online survey to help us learn from their experiences
- We are accepting written submissions from organizations in Canada who support survivors of sexual violence

Consult our [webpage on our systemic investigation](#) for more details on ongoing consultations tables.

Thank you for your ongoing trust and support. Together we are making a difference.

Let's Stay Connected.

Follow us on social media for updates about our office, helpful resources, and information.

Please share this newsletter with colleagues, friends of family who may be interested.



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