



ENGAGEMENT • SUMMER 2017

Getting fair outcomes for victims in Canada's criminal justice system

Context

What we are doing

A key part of the Ombudsman's work is to advise the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada (hereinafter "the Minister") on what victims need and expect in relation to Canada's federal laws, legislation, services and policies.

Right now, the Government of Canada is reviewing Canada's criminal justice system in order to make it more effective, efficient and compassionate. This gives us an important opportunity to suggest changes that could make our criminal justice system more inclusive and supportive of victims and survivors of crime.

The Government is currently focusing on a number of issues and initiatives, including: bail reform, administration of justice offences and restorative justice. In order to ensure that victims and survivors are considered with respect to the Government's agenda, we will be focusing our conversations on these issues, as well as on the *Canadian Victims Bill of Rights*.

We want to hear from victims and survivors, victim service providers, victim advocacy organizations, and other experts. We want to hear from you.

The Ombudsman will summarize what we heard and share those important ideas with the Minister. We will also publish those ideas to our website for everyone to see and share.

What is the "Criminal Justice System Review"?

In November 2015, the Prime Minister mandated the Minister to review changes made in the last decade to Canada's criminal justice system. The stated objective was

"to ensure that we are increasing the safety of our communities, getting value for money, addressing gaps and ensuring that current provisions are aligned with the objectives of the criminal justice system".¹

The Minister's mandate letter identifies several key related priorities including, for example, to increase the use of restorative justice processes and to undertake modernization efforts in collaboration with the provinces and territories to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the system.²

In July 2017, the federal government published details outlining the principles guiding transformation of the criminal justice system. The review calls for a broad examination to ensure that the system is just, compassionate and fair, and promotes a safe, peaceful and prosperous Canadian society.³ The guiding principles are described as including:

- > **Safety for Canadians:** Keeping Canadians safe and holding offenders to account.
- > **Compassion for victims:** Developing a system that shows compassion and respect for victims, meaningfully engages them, and responds to their needs.
- > **Needs of vulnerable populations:** Addressing the needs of vulnerable populations, including Indigenous people and those with mental illness and addictions, and addressing gaps in services to vulnerable groups, both for victims and offenders.
- > **Integrated approach:** Developing an integrated approach with other social and economic support systems related to the criminal justice system (e.g., housing, education, health care) and looking at human problems in a more holistic way.

ENDNOTES

¹ *Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada Mandate Letter*, <http://pm.gc.ca/eng/minister-justice-and-attorney-general-canada-mandate-letter>, consulted July 2017.

² *Ibid. (Mandate Letter)*.

³ Department of Justice Canada, *About Transforming the Criminal Justice System*, 11 July 2017, <http://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/cj-jp/tcjs-tsjp/about-ausujet.html>.