



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

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

Transition BINDER for the Minister of Public Safety

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

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



Canada

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Our Ombudsperson

Dr. Benjamin Roebuck is an internationally recognized expert in the field of victimology, which is the study of the psychological effects of crime and the relationship between victims and offenders.

Benjamin Roebuck has been appointed as Federal Ombudsperson for Victims of Crime since October 24, 2022, and recently renewed until April 2026.



Prior to this appointment, he spent over 15 years as a researcher and educator on victim rights. He was a professor of Victimology and Public Safety at Algonquin College from 2010 to 2022, and a founding member and Research Chair of the Victimology Research Centre, which was established in 2020. He has been the principal investigator for studies exploring resilience and post-traumatic change with survivors of violence, victim service providers, and people with lived experiences of homelessness. Benjamin holds a PhD in Criminology from the University of Ottawa and is co-author of *Staying Alive While Living the Life: Adversity, Strength and Resilience in the Lives of Homeless Youth*, published by Fernwood in 2018.

Dr. Roebuck previously served on the Board of Directors for Crime Prevention Ottawa and committees focused on restorative justice, mental health, and youth justice. He served as a member of the External Advisory Committee for the Sexual Misconduct Support and Response Centre, which provides support for currently serving and former Canadian Armed Forces members and National Defence public service employees affected by sexual misconduct.

Overview of the Office

The Federal Ombudsperson for Victims of Crime is appointed by the Governor in Council to a renewable term of three years and reports directly to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada. The term of the current Ombud ends April 23, 2026.

The Ombudsperson is appointed to independently review complaints about federal programs or services for victims of crime and impartially recommend solutions or propose changes to laws, programs, or policies on issues that affect survivors of crime.

Mandate

The OFOVC's mandate relates exclusively to matters of federal jurisdiction and is:

- to promote access by victims to existing federal programs and services for victims;
- to address 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.
- to promote awareness of the needs and concerns of victims and the applicable laws that benefit victims of crime, including to promote the principles set out in the *Canadian Statement*



of Basic Principles of Justice for Victims of Crime with respect to matters of federal jurisdiction, among criminal justice personnel and policy-makers;

- to identify and review emerging and systemic issues, including those issues related to programs and services provided or administered by the Department of Justice or the Department of Public Safety, that impact negatively on victims of crime; and
- to facilitate access by victims to existing federal programs and services by providing them with information and referrals.

The OFOVC can review matters that occurred after the Office was created in 2007, unless requested by either the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada or the Minister of Public Safety, and cannot address provincial matters, such as compensation.

Key Roles and Powers

- The Ombudsperson has been designated as a **Special Adviser** to the Minister of Justice. In this capacity they are available to the Minister to offer insight, information and advice on systemic issues facing victims of crime in Canada, and how best to address those issues.
- OFOVC is a federal agency that operates at **arm's length** from Justice Canada. The budget is administrated through Justice Canada and falls within Justice Canada's overall strategic objective of ensuring a fair and accessible criminal justice system (CJS).
- The Ombudsperson has the power to request a **management response** from the Department of Justice or the Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness concerning its recommendations and what actions are being taken or why actions will not be addressed. The Ombudsperson may submit the response to the respective ministers if it is unacceptable or not provided in time.
- OFOVC values collaboration and **works closely with Justice Canada** to ensure that our operations support their objectives whenever possible. Through open and frequent communication, the OFOVC strives to make **meaningful contributions to better meet the needs of victims**. However, the OFOVC is independent and is committed to impartiality and fairness in all its work.
- The OFOVC hears directly from victims and survivors across Canada and consults widely with academics, service providers, and criminal justice personnel. We have **access to critical information** that can help to inform criminal justice policy and legislation.

Reporting Requirements

The Ombudsperson may publicly issue reports, with or without recommendations, concerning any review or matter within the OFOVC's mandate. These reports can be made public 60 days after they have been submitted to the Minister of Justice or Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, as appropriate.

The Ombudsperson is required to submit an annual report on the activities of the OFOVC to the Minister of Justice each year. The Annual Report of 2023-2024 is ready to be tabled in Parliament by the Minister of Justice.



Budget

OFOVC budget is \$1,765,606

- \$1,388,462 for salaries
- \$377,144 for operations and management (O&M)

The OFOVC has not had a significant budget increase since it was created in 2007. It absorbed new responsibilities as part of a formal complaints process introduced by the *Canadian Victims Bill of Rights* (CVBR) in 2015. The OFOVC has experienced a consistent and steady increase in work including a 313% increase in the number of files opened since 2007.

The Department of Justice has acknowledged our financial shortfalls and provided temporary funding for the past three years. We are seeking longer term funding to allow us to fulfil our mandate.

Stakeholder Relationships

OFOVC works with a variety of partners, including federal government departments and agencies with community safety, gender-based violence, corrections and security-related responsibilities. We have a comprehensive victim-focused network which can assist the Minister in their priorities.



Our Advisory Circles

- **First Nations, Inuits and Metis Advisory Circle:** to give Indigenous Peoples a say in decision-making, policy creation, and legislation that directly impacts them.
- **Academic Advisory Circle:** to engage with victimology experts who are specializing in the area of crime victims' resilience, the impacts of trauma and violence, advancing victims' rights and the prevention of victimization in Canada.



- **Frontline Service Provider Advisory Circle:** to engage with frontline experts working across various sectors of victim services and in anti-violence organizations. The FSPAC facilitates hearing the challenges and gaps that service providers see across the CJS related to supporting victims' healing and advancing victims' rights in Canada.

Governing Legislation

The role and mandate of the OFOVC are outlined in the [Terms and Conditions of Employment of the Federal Ombudsman for Victims of Crime and Schedule of Interpretation](#), which also includes responsibilities with respect to staff, limitations on authority, requests for review, accountability and reporting, confidentiality and preparation of reports and recommendations.

Canadian Victims Bill of Rights (CVBR)

Our work is guided by the quasi-constitutional [Canadian Victims Bill of Rights](#) (CVBR) which came into force in 2015. The CVBR provides rights to **information, protection, participation and restitution** which are translated into law through provisions of the *Criminal Code* and CCRA.

Under the CVBR, victims have the right to make a complaint to a federal department or agency if they believe that their rights have not been respected. The OFOVC is not named in the CVBR although most of our complaints are based on the role of the OFOVC, as defined in our OIC, to receive complaints about the actions of federal agencies and departments. No other body is mandated to address complaints from victims about the programs of Justice Canada, WAGE, CSC and PBC. Other agencies are involved in victim complaints including the Civilian Complaints Commission (RCMP), the Sexual Misconduct Resource Centre (DND/CAF) and the Military Police Commission (DND/CAF).

Other guiding instruments:

[Corrections and Conditional Release Act](#) (CCRA)
[Corrections and Conditional Release Regulations](#)
[Correctional Service of Canada \(CSC\) Commissioner's Directives](#)
[Parole Board of Canada Guidelines and/or policies](#)
[Canadian Statement of Basic Principles of Justice for Victims of Crime 2003](#)
[Criminal Code](#)

OFOVC Activities:

Complaints Review and Case Management

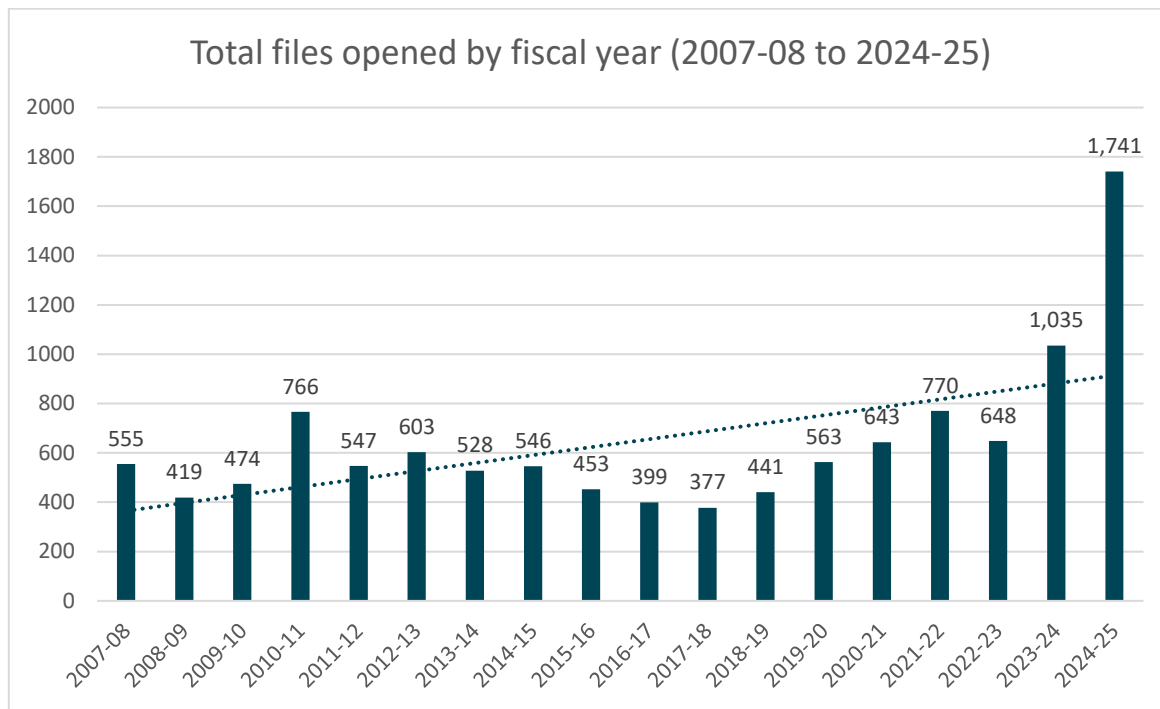
The Complaints Review Team interacts directly with victims of crime and stakeholders who contact the Office. The OFOVC handles victim inquiries and complaints on a case-by-case basis. These complaints are sometimes from people in crisis and require a high level of empathy, de-escalation



skills and community knowledge. We work closely with the victim and stakeholder departments to find achievable and effective solutions.

Victims frequently direct their complaints about PBC and CSC to our office due to a perceived conflict of interest in their ability to provide fair and neutral oversight for their own programs and decisions. Our intervention helps to de-escalate and informally resolve highly sensitive matters and ensure victim rights are upheld.

If a victim's concern falls outside the OFOVC's mandate, the Complaint Review Officer will provide the names and contact information of the agencies or organizations best suited to assist the person.



Systemic Investigations

Part of the Ombudsperson's mandate is to identify systemic and emerging issues that negatively affect victims of crime.

In February 2024, the Office launched a **Systemic investigation on experiences of sexual assault survivors in the criminal justice system (SISSA)** reflective of serious and longstanding public concerns.

- Additional information is available in the priority section of this document.

The Office also announced its intention to conduct a second systemic investigation, **victim participation in PBC hearing on parole board hearings** but was eventually unable to do so with current financial and human resources.



- Many victims go through lengthy preparations prior to a parole hearing and have reported feeling re-traumatized and undermined by repeated and last-minute cancellations.
- JUST Committee recommended improvements to the parole process to better meet the needs of victims
- We announced our plan to launch the investigation in collaboration with PBC.
- This investigation is on hold due to our financial restrictions.

Parliamentary Affairs

The Office works to ensure that policymakers and other criminal justice personnel are aware of victims' needs and concerns and to identify important issues and trends that may negatively affect victims. The Ombudsperson makes recommendations to the federal government on how to enhance its policies or laws and promotes awareness of the CVBR.

Priorities for the OFOVC

Improving victim rights

The Correctional and Conditional Release Act (CCRA) falls short of providing victims with the transparency and information they deserve. CCRA limits information excessively - even upon request - and fails to provide protection and participation in ways that make sense to victims of crime. Identifying our Office as an oversight role and including reference of the CVBR in the CCRA are two easy and no cost legislative change that would provide more meaningful oversight of victim rights in federal corrections and parole.

The [CVBR](#) is a quasi-constitutional law that came into force on July 23, 2015. It was an important step towards enforceable rights for victims of crime in Canada's justice system. After 10 years, it is clear that the CVBR needs improvement.



The House of Commons Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights (JUST) conducted a study, resulting in the December 2022 report: [Improving Support for Victims of Crime](#). In response, we released a report "[Worthy of Information and Respect](#)" which includes 14 recommendations based input from victims, survivors, advocates, and experts.



In 2024, the Ombud wrote an [open letter](#) calling on the Government of Canada to strengthen the CVBR. It was also published in the [Hill Times](#). Some recommendations require legislative change, but others are choices to adopt best practices rather than minimum compliance – a simple shift from obligations to opportunities.

The office will release a **progress report for the 10th anniversary of CVBR**.

Systemic investigation on experiences of sexual assault survivors (SISSA)

On March 11, 2024, the OFOVC launched a national systemic investigation on how survivors of sexual violence are treated in the CJS.

The investigation has involved extensive outreach and consultation with survivors and other experts, stakeholders, government departments and professionals within the justice system, applying an intersectional lens to address diverse experiences and needs.

Consultation completed:

- **Interviews:** 105 survivors and 300+ stakeholders
- **Virtual consultation tables:** 36 consultation tables with a total of 350+ participants
- **Survey responses:** 1000 survivors and 450 stakeholders
- **Written submissions:** 45 written submissions

The final report, anticipated in the fall of 2025, will provide actionable recommendations to integrate a trauma-informed and victim-centered approach in the CJS, including ideas to reduce delays by strengthening victim rights.

Strengthen the Office of Federal Ombudsperson for Victims of Crime

Parliamentarians, survivors, and victim service providers have been advocating to strengthen our office by increasing our powers, independence, and resources to better enforce victim rights. This was also noted by the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights (JUST) in their 2022 report: [Improving Support for Victims of Crime](#).

The OFOVC should be resourced comparatively to other federal Ombud offices. We are one of the few federal bodies able to resolve complaints about victim rights. While Justice Canada has provided one-off supplementary funding for the 2 previous fiscal years, the OFOVC's overall budget and authorities are currently inadequate.

The 3-year term of the Ombudsperson for victims of crime should be aligned to the tenure of other federal Ombudspersons (5-year term). Many victims are in contact with our Office for decades and have expressed dissatisfaction with frequent Ombud changes and year-long vacancies.

The OFOVC is the only comparable federal ombud office funded below \$4 million, despite having a similar complaint volume and complex files that involve trauma exposure. The Office maintains a high-level of stakeholder engagement across Canada and internationally. Survivors and stakeholders have told the Government that the disparity in funding relative to the Correctional Investigator of Canada sends a message to the public that victims of crime are a lower priority than offenders.





Ministerial Considerations

Below are key items requiring your attention within the next 3 months:

- **Meet with the Ombudsperson** early in the mandate to align priorities and consider opportunities to strengthen the CVBR.
 - Typically, the Minister designates a senior staff member in the Minister's Office to be responsible for liaising with our Office.
- **Upcoming OFOVC reports for Ministerial review**
 - **Systemic Investigation:** Provided in summer 2025, 60 days prior to release
- **Upcoming OFOVC reports** which will be provided for review
 - **CVBR Progress Report:** Provided in summer 2025, 60 days prior to release
 - **Annual Report 23-24**, waiting to be tabled in Parliament
 - Includes details on complaints related to corrections and parole

Contact Information

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