



ALBERTA
JUSTICE AND SOLICITOR GENERAL

*Office of the Minister
Deputy Government House Leader
MLA, Edmonton - South West*

AR 46696

Sent via email: President@auma.ca

'AUG 04 2021

Mr. Barry Morishita
President
Alberta Urban Municipalities Association

Dear Mr. Morishita:

Thank you for your email and letter of June 28, 2021, regarding changes to the *Victims of Crime (Strengthening Public Safety) Amendment Act* (the Act), which expanded the use of the Victims of Crime Fund to include funds for public safety initiatives. I appreciate the opportunity to provide the following information.

The Act expands the scope of the Victims of Crime Fund, now called the Victims of Crime and Public Safety Fund, to include public safety initiatives that deter crime and prevent victimization while improving supports to victims of serious and violent crimes.

The Victims of Crime and Public Safety Fund supports a province-wide network of victims services, victim service units, and now—public safety initiatives. The provincial fine surcharge that goes directly into the fund increased from 15 per cent to 20 per cent effective April 1, 2020. This will allow us to increase funding for victim services and public safety initiatives from about \$40 million to about \$60 million a year.

The changes we are making not only allow the Government of Alberta to respond to the victims' wishes to receive the supports they need in a more timely fashion, but will also help protect our communities by deterring crime to prevent further victimization.

The fund's expanded scope will help the Alberta government act on Alberta's priorities in preventing further victimization through funding for the Alberta Law Enforcement Response Teams – to combat organized crime, child exploitation, and the illegal drug trade; the Rural Alberta Provincial Integrated Defence Force – to help improve response times in remote areas; drug treatment courts – to help keep more Albertans safe by breaking the cycle of addiction-related crime and to prevent from reoffending; and the hiring of additional provincial Crown prosecutors – to help prioritize the safety of every Albertan with a more fair, more responsive, and faster justice system.

We have also heard too often that victims of violent crime in Alberta do not have the assistance they need to cope with trauma. We know that there is more we can do to provide victims with timely supports that encourage healing and recovery. To further improve supports for victims of crime, the Alberta government had established a working group co-chaired by Ms. Angela Pitt, MLA for Airdrie, and Mr. Nathan Neudorf, MLA for Lethbridge-East, to review the services and supports available for victims of crime in Alberta. The working group engaged a diverse group of victim stakeholders to inform recommendations for consideration for a new service delivery model as well as programs and services aligned to best meet the needs of victims of crime.

Until the new service-based model is launched, the Act discontinued the financial benefit program, which required a lengthy adjudication process, and incorporated an emergency-based interim Victims of Crime Assistance Program. The interim program is intended to provide emergency access to services and supports where other options are not accessible for the interim period, and while the future program is being developed. The interim program provides:

- Emergency Assistance Program – financial assistance following a violent crime to assist with safety and security-related losses and damages, temporary emergency accommodation, ambulance costs, medical aid repair or replacement, etc.
- Court Attendance Expense Reimbursement – reimbursement for expenses related to court attendance for specified events, such as sentencing or providing a victim impact statement.
- Counselling Program – immediate access to short-term crisis counselling supports via a 24/7 support provider to assist in dealing with the psychological impacts related to serious Criminal Code offences.

Victims of crime may continue to apply for:

- The death benefit, which reimburses families of homicide victims for funeral related expenses, and
- The supplemental benefit, which includes a monthly payment to help victims with severe neurological or spinal injuries whereby their injuries require them to be dependent on others for basic functions and daily activities.

Other new programs recently implemented include the Restitution Recovery Program. Restitution is a way for the offender to repay costs related to damaged property, lost money, or extra expenses due to a crime. With this program, if an offender is or has been charged with a crime and sentencing has yet to occur, the victim may apply for restitution. This service is provided at no cost or risk to the victim. For more information, please go to <https://www.alberta.ca/victim-restitution-and-recovery.aspx>.

We are currently evaluating all the feedback from a recent MLA-led review, stakeholder input, and recommendations received from all victim stakeholders, with regard to what supports and services may be incorporated into the new Victims of Crime Assistance Program. This new program will expand on the emergency supports available through the interim program. The new program is anticipated to be implemented in 2022. I realize that the current interim offerings available may not provide the support or services all victims may require. The intention is to develop a new victims program based on a service delivery model, which best meets the diverse needs of all victims in Alberta.

Please be assured that the Alberta government is committed to providing practical and timely supports for victims of violent crime, and is taking action to prevent crime in Alberta communities.

Thank you once again writing to share your concerns. All contributions are crucial to inform the process towards building a model that will truly meet the needs of victims.

Yours very truly,



Kaycee Madu, QC
Minister

cc: Brian Turpin, President, Alberta Police-Based Victim Services Association