

It can happen in a blink of an eye. One never knows when a tragedy can strike and when it does, one can only hope to find the resilience to get through it in one piece.

"Empowering Resilience" is the theme of Victims and Survivors of Crime Week 2017, taking place across Canada from May 28 to June 3. Victims and Survivors of Crime Week raises awareness about issues facing victims and survivors of crime as well as the services, programs, and laws in place to help victims and their families.

One in five Canadians are victimized by crime every year and of these, 1.6 million individuals experienced violent victimization. Vulnerable populations such as youth, women, persons with mental health issues, Aboriginal Canadians and members of the LGBTQ community are disproportionately impacted. However, crime and trauma can impact anyone no matter their age, gender, culture or social economic status.

Crime in Canada costs nearly \$100 billion annually. A majority of those costs are borne by victims to cover things such as medical attention, hospitalizations, lost wages, stolen/damaged property, pain and suffering, and the loss of life.

When a crime occurs, it doesn't just affect one person. It also impacts family, friends and even the entire community. No one chooses to be a victim of crime. Victims and survivors of crime and their families deserve support from their community. Knowing your rights can help support you through the criminal justice system.

In British Columbia, there are two key pieces of legislation that guide the delivery of victim services: The *Victim of Crime Act* and the *Crime Victim Assistance Act*.

Under the *Victim of Crime Act*, if you are a victim of crime in BC, you are entitled to receive information about:

- The victim services available to you;
- The opportunity to have admissible evidence concerning the impact of the offence presented to the court before sentence is imposed for the offence;
- The benefits and financial assistance for criminal injury;
- How the criminal justice system works;
- The status of the police investigation;
- The charges laid against the offender;
- The status of the court case;
- The outcome of court appearance;
- The administration of the offender's sentence such as length of sentence, location of jail, eligibility and review dates of the offender's custody status; and
- Your rights to privacy.

The *Crime Victim Assistance Act* applies to those who have been injured physically or psychologically as a result of certain crimes. Under this Act, victims of certain types of crime are eligible for compensation to assist with the costs of criminal injuries. For example, one may qualify for counselling expenses or medical expenses not covered by medical service plan and income support.

On July 23, 2015 the ***Canadian Victims Bill of Rights*** came into force providing victims of crimes with statutory rights at the federal level to information, protection, participation and restitution, and ensures that a complaint process is in place for breaches of these rights.

The Canadian Victims Bill of Rights:

- Defines who victims of crime are and who can act on their behalf.
- Legislates the rights of victims to: Information, Protection, Participation and Restitution.
- Sets out conditions limiting the exercising of rights and administering of the bill.
- Introduces new measures to support rights to information, protection, participation, restitution and remedy.

Throughout Canada, countless dedicated people work with victims and survivors of crime every day. Service providers and criminal justice professionals give information and meaningful support to victims, survivors and their families as they navigate the criminal justice system.

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