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Our Reference #: M-2020-995

January 24, 2020

Dear Stakeholder:

As you are aware, as part of the government's commitment to supporting victims, the Ministry of the Attorney General (MAG) has been undertaking a comprehensive review of the services provided to victims of crime, their families and witnesses.

Since announcing the review, we have consulted with a wide group of stakeholders during several engagement sessions held across the province in partnership with the Office for Victims of Crime, recognizing that the review of victim services must be informed by the voices of victims, their families and all of our partners. Participants in these sessions included victims and their families, representatives from MAG-funded victim service providers (including Victim Crisis Assistance Ontario providers, Sexual Assault Centres, and Family Service organizations), agencies in the Violence Against Women sector, Indigenous organizations, other community and social service providers, law enforcement, Crowns, thought leaders, post-secondary institutions, and health care providers. Feedback has also been received through written submissions from key stakeholders and members of the public with lived experience via the victim services review email box (see Appendix A for details on feedback received).

Based on this feedback we have identified key themes that will guide our next steps in determining how to make victim services more effective, efficient, and client-centred. These themes are:

- Meeting the most urgent and critical needs of victims, their families, and witnesses;
- Improving the client experience;
- Responding to unique needs of diverse communities; and,
- Building a sustainable victim services system for the future.

In line with the feedback we have received, we will be focusing our next steps on improving public access to information about victims' services and enhancing collaboration and coordination amongst service providers.

My ministry is committed to keeping you updated as we develop options to help make the victim services system more integrated and easier to navigate, and we will continue to work with our ministry partners to explore ways to better serve victims.

We anticipate that this process of collaboration, planning and preparation will continue through the course of the next fiscal year. As this process continues, I hope to be able to call on you to help provide valuable insight. I also understand that you may be seeking additional information regarding funding allocations for victim services programs for 2020-21 and officials from my ministry will provide you with an update as soon as possible.

Ontario remains committed to supporting victims and their families through victim services programs and is working to make it easier for victims of crime and their families and witnesses to get the help they need when and where they need it most.

Thank you for your continued partnership and support for victims as we undertake this important work.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Doug Downey". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Doug Downey
Attorney General

Enclosure

c: Tamara Gilbert, A/Assistant Deputy Attorney General, Victims & Vulnerable Persons Division
Irwin Glasberg, Deputy Attorney General
Joseph Hillier, Chief of Staff to the Minister
Amanda Iarusso, Director of Policy and Legal Affairs to the Minister
Ruth Campbell, Chair, OVC

Appendix: Summary of Key Themes from Stakeholder Feedback Received on Victim Services Review and Transformation

Meeting the most urgent and critical needs of victims, their families and witnesses

Stakeholder feedback reflected that victims in the immediate aftermath of a crime prioritize the following services to meet their most urgent and critical needs:

- System navigation
- Legal support
- Financial consideration, shelter, and employment accommodations (e.g. time off)
- Wrap-around services
- 24/7 service
- Technologically advanced supports (e.g. online-counselling, phone apps, websites)
- Supports for families of victims of crime
- Access to information about victim rights and other resources

Improving the client experience

Stakeholder feedback reflected that victims should experience a service delivery system with the following characteristics:

- Peer support and other counselling modalities to move away from “one-size-fits-all” approach
- Flexibility around program eligibility restrictions
- Enhanced information sharing and coordination across service providers
- Testimonial aids and court supports to avoid re-traumatizing victims
- Trauma-Informed Judicial System

Building a sustainable victim services system for the future

Stakeholder feedback reflected that to establish a sustainable victim services system, the following should be addressed:

- Increased sustainable long-term funding for service providers
- Staff/system sustainability achieved through more funding for service providers
- More preventative approaches such as education in school on victim issues (e.g. consent, what is abuse)
- Strengthening enforcement of Ontario’s *Victims’ Bill of Rights, 1995*

Responding to unique needs of diverse communities

Stakeholder feedback reflected the following challenges for diverse communities in the victim services system:

- LGBT2SQ+ specific supports
- Additional need for supports for male victims
- Additional need for supports for Indigenous communities
- Barriers for rural and remote areas (e.g. lack of access to service)
- Racial bias within systems