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Office of the Federal Ombudsman
for Victims of Crime

Bureau de l'ombudsman fédéral
des victimes d'actes criminels

Heard. Respected. **Victims First.**
Écoutées. Respectées. **Les victimes d'abord.**



ANNUAL REPORT 2012-2013

Office of the Federal Ombudsman
for Victims of Crime



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Message from the Ombudsman



It is my privilege to present the 2012–2013 Annual Report of the Office of the Federal Ombudsman for Victims of Crime (OFOVC).


In the past year, the OFOVC continued its important work of amplifying the voices of victims of crime to ensure that their needs and concerns can be properly understood and fully addressed. To achieve these goals, the Office focused on three broad tasks: responding to questions and complaints from victims and their families; identifying effective policy and legislative improvements; and engaging victims, stakeholders and the general public.

In 2012–2013, more than 600 Canadians contacted the Office with an inquiry or complaint. As in previous years, our review of specific complaints not only resolved the concerns of individual victims and their families, but also led to recommendations for progressive new policies and practices in the hope of preventing similar complaints in the future.

In terms of overall progress in the past year, the OFOVC was also pleased to see the Government of Canada announce plans to develop a Victims Bill of Rights. The OFOVC will be following this development closely and will use the information that victims share with us to help shape the recommendations we will provide to the Government about what the Bill should include.

The issues are complex—a victim's experience of crime is personal and often devastating emotionally, spiritually and financially. Many victims have come forward to share their stories with the OFOVC. As a result, I have had the privilege of sharing these experiences with the criminal justice system at numerous outreach events and appearances before parliamentary committees. Our objective is to enhance awareness of the issues facing victims of crime and provide recommendations on proposed legislation that would better meet victims' needs. We also followed up on recommendations made in our 2012 report, *Shifting the Conversation*, by writing to, and meeting with, ministers and other senior officials.

Our outreach and engagement efforts have helped to increase the prominence of victim issues with stakeholders and Canadians, and promote the dialogue needed to empower change.



As the OFOVC completes its sixth year, I am proud to see continued progress in terms of the Office's overall operations and effectiveness. We continue to refine our organizational framework to support long-term success and enable us to plan and stage events such as the Moving the Conversation Forward Forum in April 2013. Our Office has been working diligently toward the Forum as it will bring together victims, victim-serving agencies and stakeholders to discuss the path forward on how to join together and take action on the priorities of victims of crime.

I am encouraged to see the synergy building and the progress that has been made, noting that there are still challenges ahead and work to be done. This progress would not have been possible without the many victims who have had the strength and courage to share their journey and experiences. I also would like to thank my team of talented, passionate and dedicated staff, along with the victim-serving departments, agencies, stakeholder groups and the general public who not only work on behalf of victims every day, but also share the belief that victims of crime deserve to feel supported, considered, informed and protected. Our collaborative push forward will continue to mobilize and effect lasting change.

As we move into the next fiscal year, I will focus my efforts on developing a fulsome submission to the Government of Canada on the rights that must be included in a Victims Bill of Rights and on highlighting the importance of the implementation and enforcement of that Bill. I also will work to bring forward the information and perspectives we will gather at our upcoming Forum (in April 2013) and continue to push the Government to act on the recommendations outlined in our report, *Shifting the Conversation*.

I look forward to continuing to work with victims and stakeholders to effect real and positive change for victims of crime in Canada.

Sue O'Sullivan

Federal Ombudsman for Victims of Crime



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OFOVC – A Voice for Victims



*“Thank you again for your
diligence and follow-up on this
matter. It means a lot to
victims to have their voice heard in
an otherwise chaotic situation.”*

— An OFOVC client



Mandate

The Office of the Federal Ombudsman for Victims of Crime (OFOVC) was created in 2007 to help victims of crime and their families by providing direct assistance, addressing complaints and ensuring that the federal government meets its responsibilities to victims of crime.

The mandate of the OFOVC relates exclusively to matters of federal responsibility and enables us:

- to promote access by victims to existing federal programs and services for victims;
- to address complaints of victims 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 and Emergency Preparedness, 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.

Working Directly with Victims

The OFOVC helps victims in two ways:

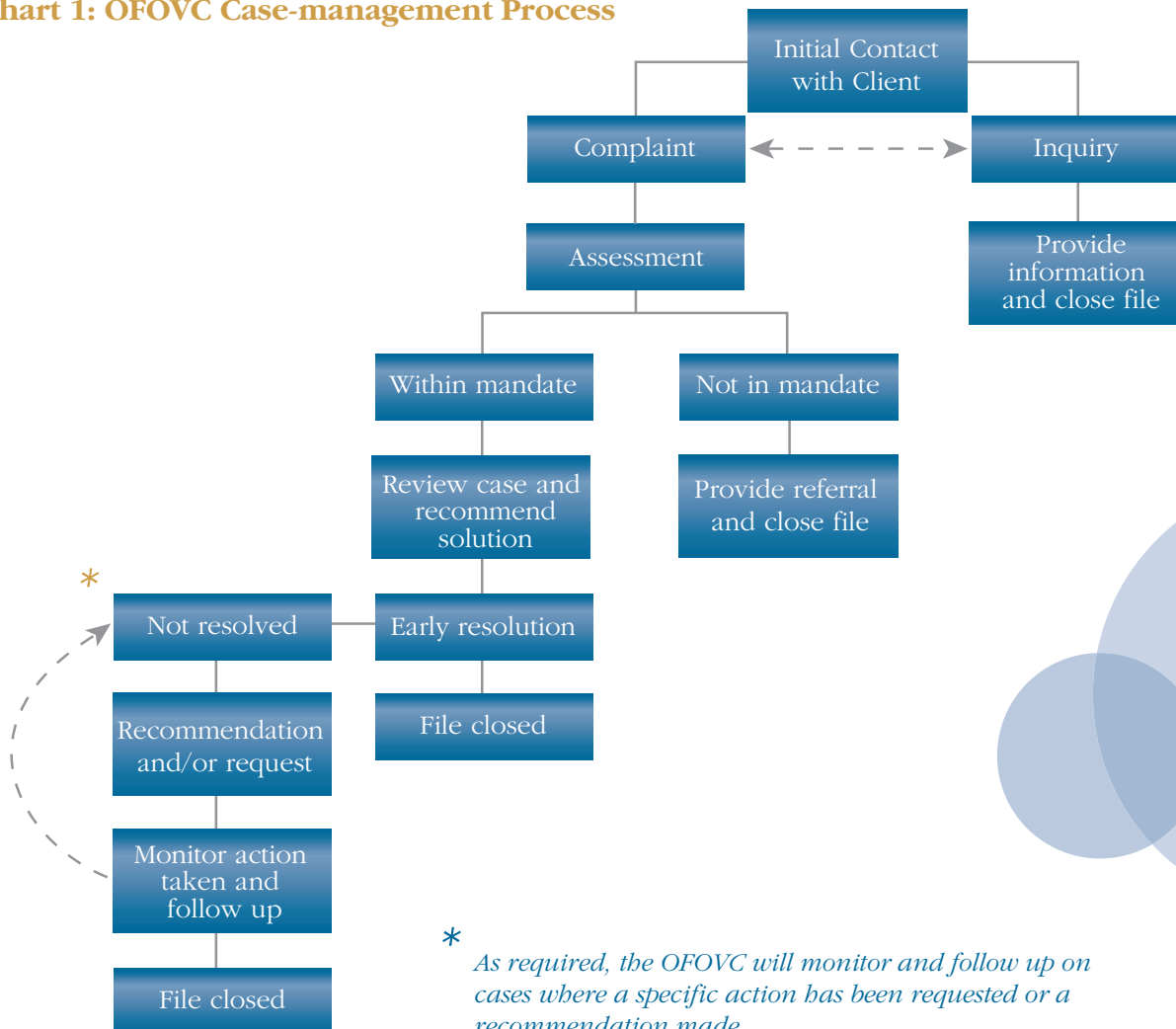
- Individually, by helping victims directly every day, answering their questions and addressing their complaints. Victims can contact the Office directly through its toll-free victim-assistance line to speak with a bilingual Complaint Review Officer, or by TTY, e-mail, fax or regular mail.
- Collectively, by reviewing important issues and making recommendations to the federal government on how to change its laws or policies to better support and assist victims of crime. These types of national, widespread changes ultimately help all victims of crime in Canada.

"I sincerely thank you for all your suggestions. I am glad that I could find assistance with this issue." — An OFOVC client

The OFOVC handles victim inquiries and complaints on a case-by-case basis. If a victim's concern falls outside the Office's mandate, the Complaint Review Officer will provide the names and contact information of the agencies or organizations best suited to assist the person.

For all other cases, OFOVC's staff will work closely with the victim to try to find achievable and effective solutions. For each complaint it receives, the OFOVC follows an established process, as described in **Chart 1**.

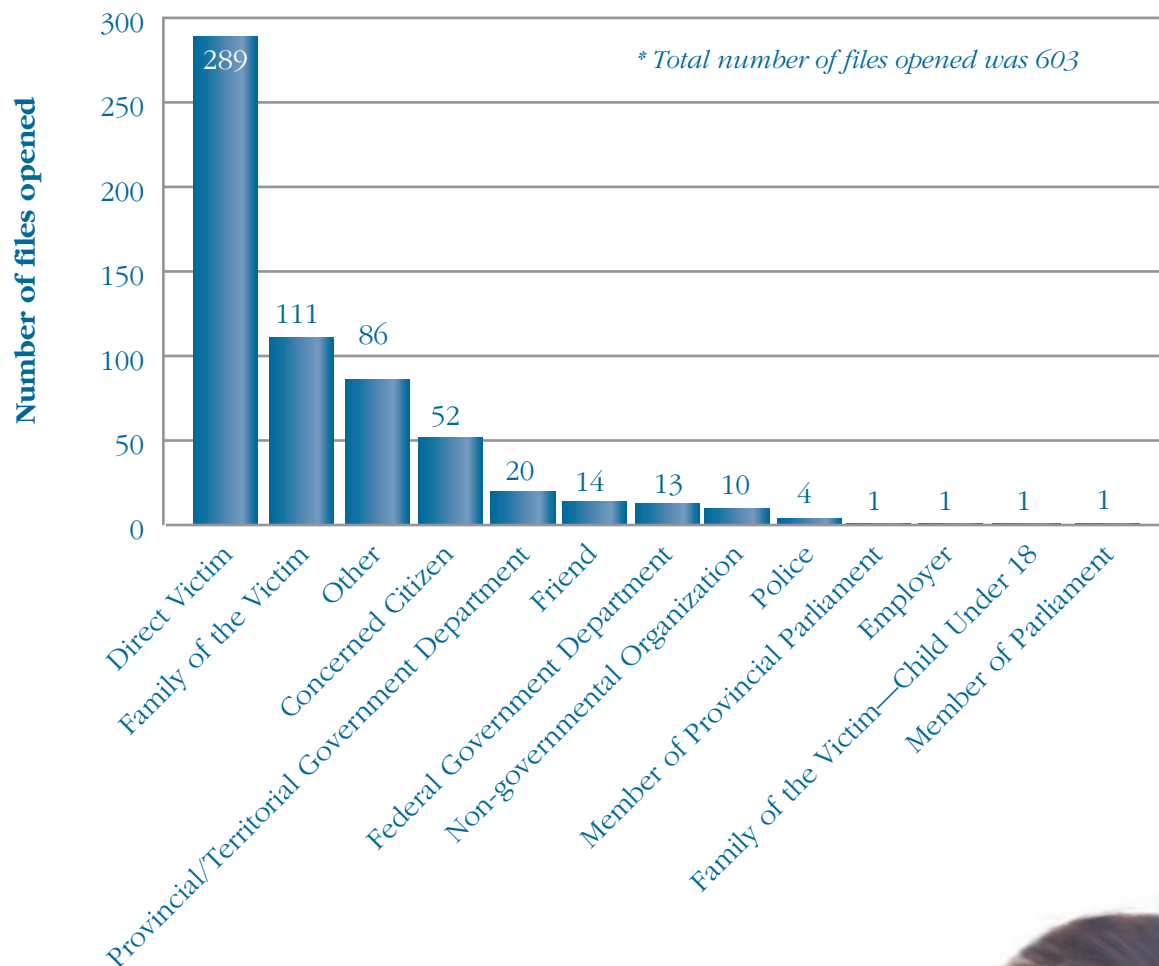
Chart 1: OFOVC Case-management Process



During 2012–2013, the number of Canadians who contacted the Office once again increased, rising by 10% from the

previous year. As shown in **Chart 2**, the vast majority of these contacts came from direct victims and their families.

Chart 2: Total files* opened from April 1, 2012 to March 31, 2013, by type of individual



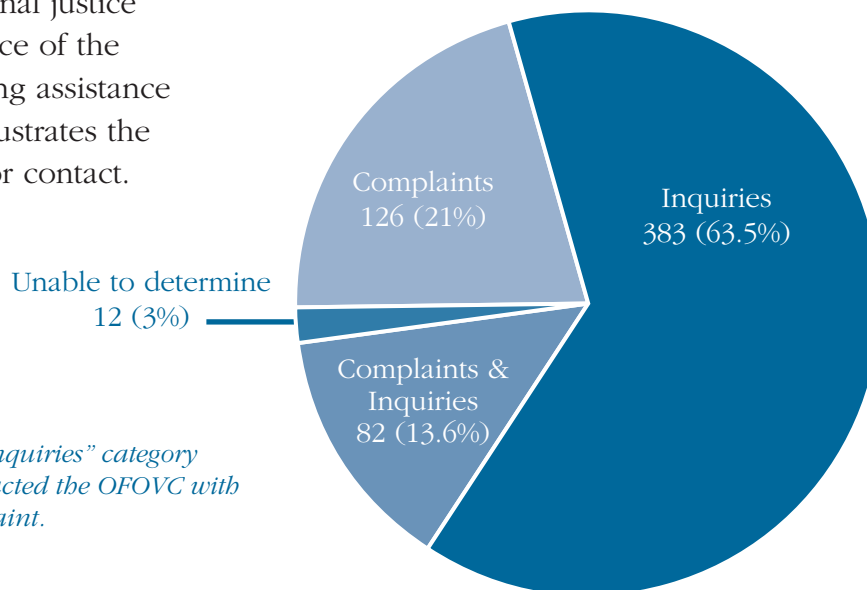
Note: The “Other” category represents contacts that the OFOVC was unable to identify or individuals who wished to remain anonymous.

Correction: Please note that a chart appeared in the OFOVC’s 2011–2012 Annual Report that reported on the number of Third Party contacts made to the OFOVC. The number reported was 84; however, that number was incorrect. The correct number of Third Party contacts made to the OFOVC in 2011–2012 was 117.



Inquiries remain the Number One reason for people to contact the OFOVC, which speaks to the complexities of the criminal justice system and the importance of the OFOVC's role in providing assistance and referrals. **Chart 3** illustrates the breakdown of reasons for contact.

Chart 3: Total files opened from April 1, 2012 to March 31, 2013, by reason for contact

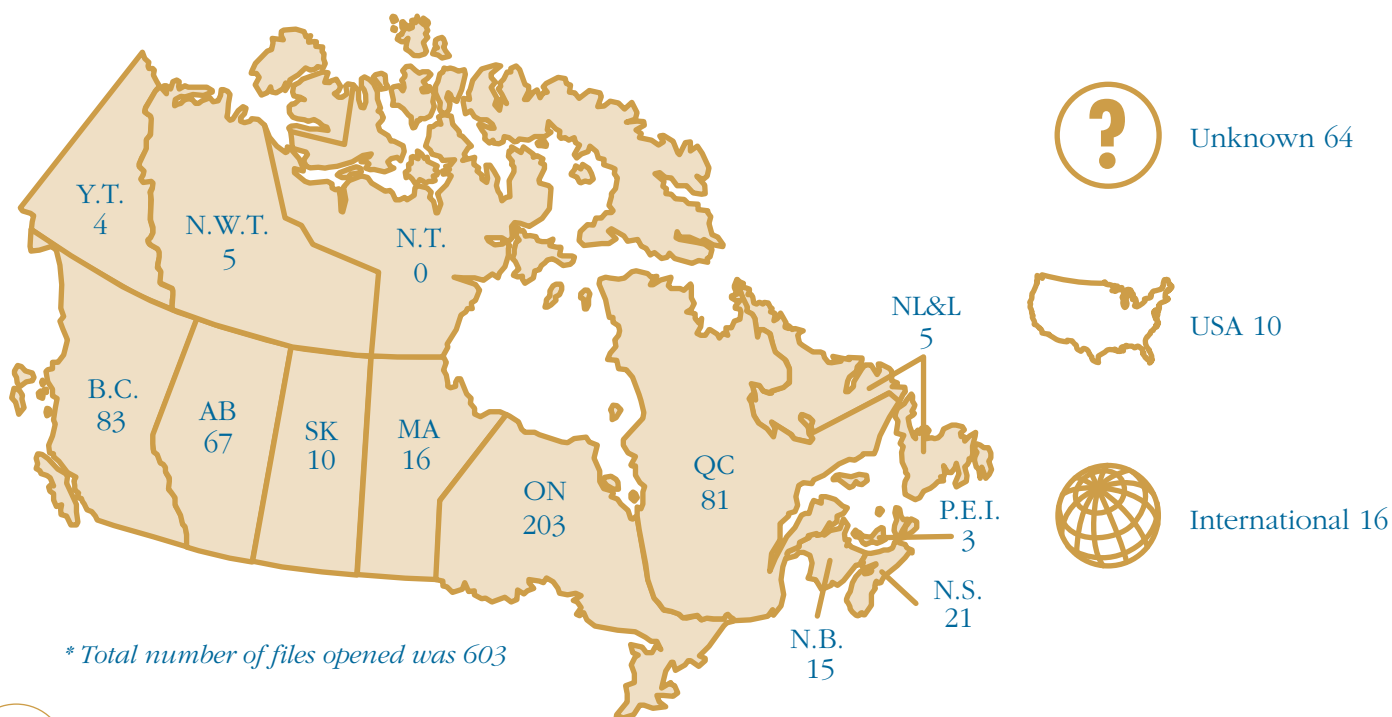


Note: The “Complaints and Inquiries” category reflects individuals who contacted the OFOVC with both an inquiry and a complaint.

As in previous years, the OFOVC assisted Canadians from across the country in 2012–2013. **Chart 4** illustrates that most contacts with the OFOVC originated in Ontario, followed by British Columbia and Quebec.

The proportion of contacts from each province and territory has remained fairly constant since the Office opened in 2007. Approximately 12% of all contacts were initiated in French.

Chart 4: Total files* opened from April 1, 2012 to March 31, 2013, by location



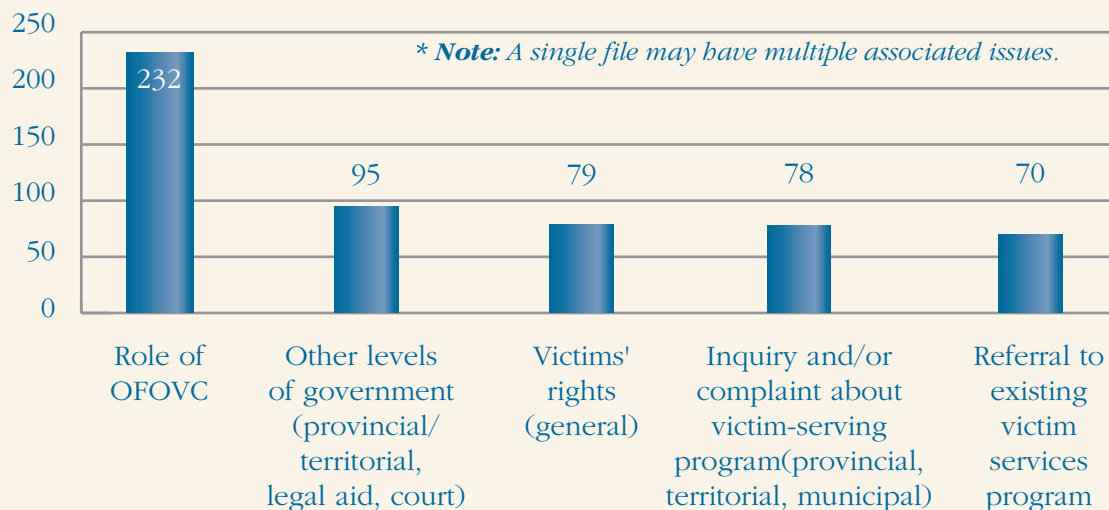
Learning from Victims

Contact with victims not only provides the Office with the opportunity to help them, but also offers invaluable insight into the issues and challenges they face.

This, in turn, informs the Office's plans and priorities. **Chart 5** shows some of the most common topics raised by people contacting the OFOVC.

Inquiries about the Office's role and the services it provides remained the most common reason for victims to contact the OFOVC, accounting for 41% of these contacts. The third most common issue was victims' rights—a consistently significant concern and trend that the OFOVC has seen since opening its doors. The ongoing prominence of this concern highlights the importance of addressing the issue of the lack of victims' rights in Canada.

Chart 5: Top five issues* on which the OFOVC provided assistance/information to individuals from April 1, 2012 to March 31, 2013



Role of the OFOVC: Canadians sought more information about what the Office does and how it can help victims.

Other levels of government: Individuals expressed concerns related to issues that fall under the jurisdiction of the provinces, territories and/or municipalities.

Victims' rights: Individuals asked about, or expressed dissatisfaction with, the legal entitlements that Canada accords to victims of crime.

Inquiry and/or complaint about victim-serving program: Individuals expressed concerns about a perceived lack of compassion, respect and dignity for victims, insufficient communication among service providers, inadequacy of restitution, the not-criminally-responsible provisions of the law, as well as shortage of services for victims or barriers to participation in the justice system.

Referral to existing victim services program: OFOVC staff provided referrals to victim services in other provinces, cities and territories to assist victims.

Case Highlights

The following are summaries of cases from the past fiscal year. They have been chosen to represent some of the positive outcomes for either individual victims or for all victims through systemic change. The names and details in the cases have been changed to protect victims' identities.

Case 1

Videotaped Victim Statements: Clarifying Policies and Procedures

Mr. L lodged a complaint with the OFOVC on behalf of his son about the presentation of his son's videotaped victim statement for a parole hearing. Mr. L first attended a parole hearing in early 2010. During the hearing, the monitor used to show the videotaped statement was visible to everyone in the room except the offender and her supporters—standard practice, according to the parole board in the region.

However, in a subsequent hearing in 2012, this practice was not adhered to as Mr. L noticed that the video monitor was placed in front of the offender. Immediately, Mr. L brought his concerns to his Parole Board of Canada (PBC) Regional Communications Officer because he was worried that his son's video statement might be seen by the offender. Unfortunately, Mr. L's concerns were not addressed by the PBC at that time and the offender was able to view the videotaped statement. This situation prompted Mr. L to then contact the OFOVC with his concerns.

In order to address the complaint brought forward, the PBC's Regional Manager of Community Relations and Training brought the issues to the attention of the Regional Vice Chair to ensure that members of the parole board understood the importance of proper positioning of video monitors. The Manager also confirmed with the hearing officers through their senior case review officers that no change in this practice had occurred. As well, in a letter to Mr. L (copied to the OFOVC), the Manager apologized for the incident and explained the steps that had been taken to ensure this situation would not occur at future parole hearings.

In reviewing the larger, potential systemic issues that could be associated with this complaint, the OFOVC determined that standard practice in this region is to install the monitor used to present videotaped victim statements behind the offender. Given that this standard practice is specific to this region, the Office is currently reviewing the practices followed in other regions.



Case 2

Facilitating Communication between Victims and Corrections Staff

A registered victim contacted the OFOVC regarding an offender who had been placed in an institution located in their community. The victim expressed concerns about personal safety, security and privacy, and about the offender's security classification. An inmate's security classification, based on factors such as length of sentence, is determined during admission to the correctional system and is subject to subsequent reviews. Although the OFOVC is not mandated to review placement or security-classification decisions, it does review and address victims' complaints about federal departments, agencies, laws and/or policies that relate to victims of crime. The OFOVC often finds alternative solutions that resolve these complaints.

Following a review of the complaint, the OFOVC arranged a meeting between the victim and representatives of Victim Services and Corrections staff of the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC). The meeting enabled the victim to get a better understanding of the intake and security-classification process. Afterwards, the victim advised the OFOVC that the parties involved were sensitive to their concerns and that they felt their voice had been heard.



Case 3

Ensuring Timely Notifications for Escorted Temporary Absences

A victim contacted the OFOVC to express concerns about repeated failures to follow proper notification procedures when an offender was granted an escorted temporary absence from an institution for administrative purposes. Typically, a Victim Services Officer (VSO) contacts the victim five days in advance, or immediately, when a decision is made to grant an offender an escorted temporary absence. In this case, however, the Crown attorney advised the victim after the offender had already been released. It was the second time that the victim's family had not been properly notified and the victim wanted the OFOVC to ensure that the CSC took appropriate action.

The OFOVC's review determined that the VSO's failure to properly notify the victim was due to a human error. To ensure it would not happen again, the Regional Victim Service Manager spoke to the VSO about the requirement to notify victims in a timely manner.

The victim also had requested to speak with the supervisor about the incident and the OFOVC helped arrange a phone call. The victim expressed satisfaction that the phone call helped to resolve the issue.

Pushing for Positive Change

As part of the Office's mandate, the Ombudsman makes recommendations to the Government of Canada about policies, programs, services and laws that would strengthen the rights and improve the treatment of victims of crime in Canada. These recommendations are detailed below, along with the issues that gave rise to them and follow-up actions.

Holding Offenders Financially Accountable for Debts to Victims

Issue

In 2011, the House of Commons began to consider Private Member's Bill C-350, *An Act to Amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act (Accountability of Offenders)*, which would require that any monetary awards that imprisoned offenders receive from legal action against the Government of Canada are allocated first to the offenders' outstanding court-ordered debts, on a pro-rated basis, in the following order of priority: child and spousal support; restitution; federal victim surcharge; and civil judgments.

Recommendations

In May 2012, the Ombudsman appeared before the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security to support Bill C-350. The Ombudsman also recommended that the proposed legislation be amended to include garnishing additional sources of funds available to imprisoned offenders, such as wages earned while incarcerated, GST rebates and employment insurance benefits. These funds would be used to pay offenders' outstanding court-ordered debts.

Status

The Senate of Canada referred Bill C-350 to committee in March 2013.

Employment Protection and Leave for Victims' Families

Issue

Introduced in the House of Commons in September 2012 as Bill C-44, *An Act to Amend the Canada Labour Code and the Employment Insurance Act and to Make Consequential Amendments to the Income Tax Act and the Income Tax Regulations (Helping Families in Need Act)*, the Government proposed to provide employment protection and unpaid leave to parents coping with the death or disappearance of a child. At present, victims of crime have no access to employment insurance benefits related to the particular circumstance of victimization.

Recommendations

The Ombudsman appeared before standing committees of both the House of Commons and Senate in support of Bill C-44 and recommended the following amendments: that the *Canada Labour Code* be amended to be more inclusive to victims of crime, to include provisions for employment leave for spouses and siblings, in addition to parents; that employment insurance be available to victims following criminal victimization; and that alternative income supports be available if victims of crime are not eligible for employment insurance.

Status

Bill C-44 received Royal Assent in December 2012, without any amendments.



Better Protection for Seniors

Issue

In March 2012, the Government of Canada introduced Bill C-36, *An Act to Amend the Criminal Code (elder abuse)*, also known as the *Protecting Canada's Seniors Act*. The legislation proposed to add the victim's age and personal circumstances, such as health and financial situation, to the list of aggravating factors that a judge must consider when determining an appropriate sentence.

Recommendation

In December, the Ombudsman provided a written submission to the Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs in support of Bill C-36. In the submission, the Ombudsman pointed out that elder abuse is often not reported to police and called for further action: "The OFOVC urges Parliamentarians to consider issues of elder abuse from a broader perspective and work towards ensuring Canada has the tools not only to effectively respond to elder abuse through sentencing, but to promote awareness and prevent it from occurring in the first place."

Status

Bill C-36 received Royal Assent in December 2012.



Consideration of Victims' Concerns in Advance of Decisions to Transfer or Release Offenders

Issue

When an offender is being considered not only for a transfer, but also for an escorted temporary absence or a work release, registered victims are often dissatisfied about the lack of opportunity to participate in the decision-making process, and the lack of attention paid to their needs. Victims of crime should have the opportunity to have their voices heard, and have their concerns taken into account in advance of a decision to transfer or release an offender. Victims may have specific concerns related to transfers, escorted temporary absences and work releases, such as: destination of release, security classification and supervision of the offender.

The OFOVC has received several complaints regarding this issue. While reviewing a complaint, the OFOVC examined one of the CSC policies, specifically, Commissioner's Directive 784 (CD 784) *Information Sharing Between Victims and Correctional Service of Canada*, which outlines how information is shared between CSC officials and victims. Part of this policy outlines the responsibilities of the parole officer in considering victims' needs when preparing the file used in transfer and release decision making.

The OFOVC concluded that CD 784 could be strengthened by including a requirement for contact between parole

officers and victim service units in advance of a decision to transfer or release an offender. This requirement would help ensure that all the relevant victim information about the offender and/or victims' personal safety is taken into account in the decision-making process.

Recommendations

In August 2012, the Ombudsman wrote to the Commissioner of the CSC to recommend that the CSC review and amend Paragraph 11 of CD 784 to require that institutional parole officers contact Victim Service Units prior to preparing files for decisions about transfers, escorted temporary absences and work releases. This change would further enable the CSC to honour its commitment to the *Canadian Statement of Basic Principles of Justice for Victims of Crime*, which states that "the safety and security of victims should be considered at all stages of the criminal justice process..." and that "information should be provided to victims about the criminal justice system and the victim's role and opportunities to participate in criminal justice processes."

Status

The Commissioner of CSC responded in writing to the Ombudsman's letter in September 2012 offering the following commitment: "...I will request that the appropriate staff review CD 784 with a view to recommending any amendments that could strengthen CSC's ability to benefit from information provided by registered victims as part of its decision-making processes." The OFOVC looks forward to learning the outcome of the review of this policy.

Contact with Victims Following Release of Offender

Issue

The OFOVC has heard from many victims who are concerned about their safety when offenders are released into the community. During the review of a complaint, the OFOVC found that the mandatory conditions of release that an offender must follow, as outlined in the *Corrections and Conditional Release Regulations (CCRR)*, fail to adequately consider and reflect the safety concerns of victims.

The regulations describe a number of specific conditions that must be imposed on all offenders in the community under conditional release, such as:

- obeying the law and keeping the peace;
- reporting any changes in address for employment; and
- not possessing any weapons, etc.

In addition to these mandatory conditions, it is not uncommon for the PBC to impose special conditions on a discretionary basis to prohibit contact between victims and offenders, when released. However, these are not mandatory conditions that the PBC is required to impose in all cases.

Recommendation

In February 2013, the Ombudsman wrote to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness to recommend that the regulations be modified to include a condition that offenders have no direct or indirect contact with the victim and/or members of their family. This would further ensure that the safety concerns of victims of crime are considered.

In addition to this recommendation, the Ombudsman identified that this condition may not be appropriate in all situations, and also recommended that victims, should they wish to maintain contact with the offender, have the option to request to the PBC that the offender be relieved of the no-contact condition.

Status

The Minister had not responded to the Ombudsman's letter prior to April 1, 2013.

"Thank you for your time, patience and support over the past week."

— An OFOVC client

Updates on Previous Recommendations

Shifting the Conversation

In February 2012, the OFOVC published *Shifting the Conversation*, a report on the current state of victims' issues in Canada. The report made a series of recommendations for legislative amendments and policy improvements to ensure that the criminal justice system treats victims in a more equitable and supportive fashion. The recommendations triggered a number of changes.

- **Federal Victim Surcharge**

Shifting the Conversation

recommended that the federal victim surcharge be doubled and made mandatory in all cases. These recommendations were included in Bill C-37, *Increasing Offenders' Accountability for Victims Act*. The Ombudsman appeared before standing committees of the House of Commons and Senate in support of the proposed legislation. The Bill had reached second reading in the Senate and was referred to committee on March 5, 2013.

- **Victims Accessing Information about an Offender's Participation in Correctional Programming**

Shifting the Conversation

recommended that registered victims be granted the right to receive, at a minimum, annual updates about an offender's progress while under the supervision of the CSC or PBC. Under



Bill C-10, *An Act to enact the Justice for Victims of Terrorism Act, and to amend the State Immunity Act, the Criminal Code, the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, the Corrections and Conditional Release Act, the Youth Criminal Justice Act, the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act and Other Acts*, also known as the *Safe Streets and Communities Act*, which came into force in 2012, registered victims can now access, upon request, information about an offender's participation in correctional programs and about convictions for serious disciplinary offences committed by the offender while incarcerated.

- **Victims' Bill**

In *Shifting the Conversation*, the Ombudsman encouraged the Government of Canada to consider her recommendations and to develop an Omnibus Victims' Bill for Canada. In February 2013, the Government announced it would develop a Victims Bill of Rights that would entrench rights for victims of crime in law. At the end of the period covered by this report, public consultations on the Bill were underway.

Missing Persons Index

In January 2013, the Ombudsman provided a written update to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness on recent efforts to create a national Missing Persons Index (MPI). The Ombudsman outlined significant developments on the issue, including a 2012 resolution by the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police calling on the Government of Canada to establish a National Missing Persons Unidentified Human Remains DNA Index, and the development by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police of a best practices definition of missing persons.

The Minister of Public Safety's response to the Ombudsman's update included the following: "...while current legislation does not allow for the creation of an MPI or Unidentified Remains Index within the National DNA Databank, significant steps have been taken to ensure that law enforcement has the necessary tools to investigate missing persons cases. Please

rest assured that this Government takes this issue seriously, and remains committed to working with partners to ensure the safety of Canadians."

The OFOVC continues to push for the creation of a DNA Missing Persons Index.

Guidelines for Victim Statements

In response to the Ombudsman's recommendation made in the previous fiscal year, the Chairperson of the PBC promised to establish better guidelines for the presentation of victim statements. In a letter to the Ombudsman in October 2012, the Chairperson advised that the PBC had created three new fact sheets—*Presenting a Statement*, *Recording a Statement* and *Statement Checklist*—that will help victims who wish to present a victim statement at parole hearings.

Elder-Assisted Hearings

On February 9, 2012, the Ombudsman recommended in a letter that the PBC "increase the level and detail of information for victims related to PBC Elder-assisted hearings." In October 2012, the Ombudsman received a letter from Chairperson Harvey Cenaiko of the PBC advising that a new set of fact sheets for victims had been created, including a new *Elder Assisted Hearings* fact sheet. According to the letter, "the *Elder Assisted Hearings* fact sheet will help victims attending such hearings better understand the process, and responds to issues you have also raised with the Board in the past."



Considering the Needs of Victims Attending Parole Hearings

The OFOVC received a complaint from a victim about his experience attending a parole hearing for the man who had murdered his father. The victim expressed that he had felt highly uncomfortable as he encountered the offender while proceeding to the hearing room, was required to walk past members of the offender's family to access the washroom facilities, and could be seen by the offender while waiting to go into the hearing room.

The Ombudsman recommended that the CSC and PBC review the measures in place to address and respect victims' needs in these circumstances. The CSC

Commissioner notified the OFOVC that the CSC would be establishing guiding principles to better accommodate the needs of victims at parole hearings. An excerpt of the letter said: "I am confident that we will succeed in improving the experience that victims have when they participate in parole hearings held at CSC operational sites." The OFOVC provided feedback to a draft of the CSC's guiding principles and looks forward to the final version.

Production of Records in Sexual- offence Proceedings

Canadian law restricts access to medical or therapeutic counselling, and other personal records during prosecutions of sexual offences. The law is designed to

address victims' reluctance to report sexual offences because they do not want to be forced to reveal intimate details about their personal lives. Ultimately, the law strives to balance the rights of the accused and the complainant. A Senate committee began a statutory review of the legislation in 2011 and the Ombudsman made a series of recommendations to the committee. The committee's final report, published in December 2012, reflected three of the Ombudsman's recommendations:

- That the Government of Canada support qualitative and quantitative research into the effectiveness of the records production scheme under the *Criminal Code*, the crime of sexual assault more generally and the adequacy of existing support services and justice sector responses;
- That the Government of Canada explore the feasibility of studying the adequacy of data relating to victims of sexual offences in connection with sexual offence proceedings, as well as exploring the under-reporting of crime (lack of complaints) brought by victims; and
- That the Government of Canada consider reviewing and amending the *Criminal Code* to require the judge to inform the complainant of his or her entitlement to independent counsel during sections 278.4(1) and 278.6(2) of the *Criminal Code*.

"I am so heartened to know ... that our voices are being brought to the table of decision makers." — An OFOVC client

Building Partnerships and Raising Awareness

Outreach

The OFOVC recognizes that it can best fulfill its mandate by continuing to connect with and engage as many organizations as possible that work with or impact victims.

In order to fully understand the complex issues that victims of crime face, it is essential to gather information from various victims, stakeholders, agencies, other levels of government and international victim-servicing leaders. The Office benefits greatly from its collaboration and outreach opportunities, and works to continually expand and strengthen its network of partners across the country and around the world, share best practices and raise awareness of victim issues.

The Ombudsman was active in the past fiscal year in reaching out to a variety of stakeholders and building new relationships. Ms. O'Sullivan made dozens of presentations across the country to raise awareness about the work of the Office, as well as victims' needs. The Ombudsman's presentation at the Ontario Crown Attorney's Association General Meeting in Collingwood, Ontario, for instance, highlighted the importance of including victims in justice processes. Her presentation in Moncton, New Brunswick, to commemorate the National Day for Remembrance and Action on Violence

Against Women in Canada, allowed her to bring awareness to her role, as well as to the work of the OFOVC and the assistance available to victims of crime.

With regards to international outreach, learning more about other models of victim services and rights, as well as their successes and challenges, is an essential part of the Ombudsman's role. This level of outreach helps Canada to remain an effective and strong leader nationally and internationally, in pushing for change and providing the best possible outcomes for victims of crime. It also allows the OFOVC to share and identify best practices.

One such opportunity to learn from and share with international stakeholders occurred when the Institut pour la Justice, in Paris, France, invited the Ombudsman to present on the work of the OFOVC and the services it provides to victims. Another invitation provided the opportunity to engage with experts, justice practitioners and other stakeholders at a key Victim Support Europe conference in Lisbon, Portugal.

Overall, both of these opportunities promoted international cooperation on victim issues and they will allow for ongoing sharing, dialogue and benchmarking in order to address the priorities and needs of victims of crime in Canada.



OFOVC Forum

A major focus of the Office's work during the year was preparing for "Moving the Conversation Forward for Victims of Crime," a two-day forum to be held in Ottawa in April 2013. The event is designed to bring together more than 150 victims and other key stakeholders to discuss ways to improve Canada's justice and corrections systems.

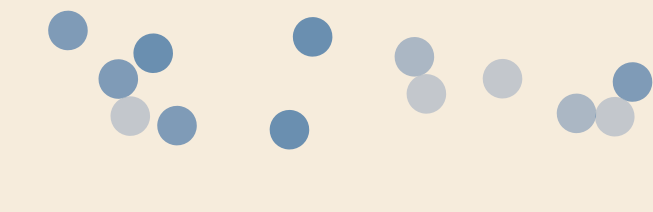
The main purposes of the Forum are to:

- provide a space and opportunity for stakeholders to converge and share ideas, best practices, challenges and experiences in order to strengthen the connections across Canada;
- to assist in fostering cross-jurisdictional awareness of victim issues;
- to find common challenges and priorities that could lend themselves to further action either by the OFOVC, the federal government or other stakeholders;
- to seek recommendations for submission to the Government of Canada on its pending Victims Bill of Rights;

- to help continue to support and enhance synergy in the victim community;
- to better inform the work of the OFOVC as it sets priorities for the coming years; and
- to identify a common, purposeful and meaningful path forward for advancing victims' rights, treatment and support in Canada.

In order to assist the Office in finding the most effective ways to create productive dialogue, the OFOVC worked with field experts who proposed a process of agenda-setting that put victims in a leadership role.

Their process used principles of appreciative inquiry, a method that focuses conversations on the desired future and strengths to build on, and focused on the kinds of changes that might make the biggest difference for Canadians.



As part of the process, a core planning team of 30 people from across the country, representing victims, victims' advocates and victim-serving agencies, was convened. This group provided their insights and experience to shape the most important questions, and then used those questions to interview people with diverse stories.

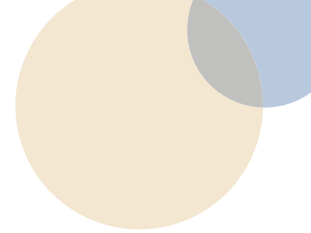
Over the last few months, the core team interviewed more than 80 additional people, who collectively had profound experiences as victims of crime or supporters of victims. The core team and planning committee then drew on those interviews to identify key themes and pulled from those themes in designing the agenda for the Forum.

The OFOVC looks forward to the discussions and dialogue that will come from this two-day event.

National Framework for Dialogue and Engagement

The Ombudsman appreciates that establishing a formal framework for dialogue is essential to the larger goal of ensuring that victims' needs are widely respected and accommodated. As such, work continues on formalizing the Office's National Framework for Engagement and Dialogue, which should be fully up and running in the coming fiscal year. The Office currently uses the Framework in an informal fashion to engage with victims on a variety of issues, such as proposed legislation prior to the Ombudsman's appearances before Parliamentary committees.

"You have given our members a voice by requesting we share with you the needs of our victims, as well as the gaps in service that we would like to see addressed. It is so important to know that you are being heard.... We tell our victims 'you are not alone.' Yesterday, you told our members 'you are not alone.' Thank you so much for that." — An OFOVC client



Internet Presence and Media Relations

The OFOVC continues to proactively and effectively engage victims, stakeholders and the media through media relations, communication products and publications.

Website

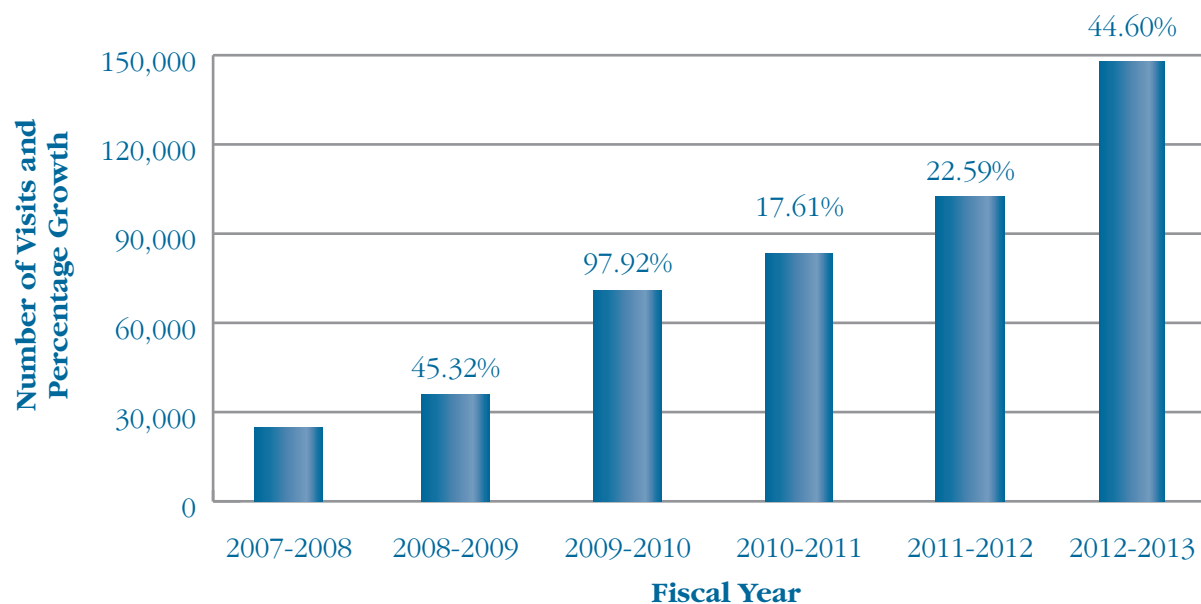
To take a more strategic approach to its use of the Internet, the OFOVC undertook a series of initiatives. The Office redesigned its website in line with the Treasury Board Secretariat's new Standards for Government of Canada websites.

Once the migration was complete, the new website was then assessed from the perspective of victims and stakeholders. The OFOVC contracted a team of experts to conduct qualitative interviews with

target audiences and to report on how well the redesigned site performed in terms of navigation and user experience. The team of experts recommended a number of further improvements, which the OFOVC will be reviewing and following up on in the coming year.

To drive additional traffic to the website, the OFOVC also ran a Google keyword-search campaign. During the campaign, Internet users who conducted Google searches of terms, such as victims of crime, victims' rights and Ombudsman for Victims of Crime, were directed to the OFOVC website. This campaign likely played a significant part in the overall increase in the number of visits to the OFOVC site in 2012–2013, which rose by slightly more than 44% from the previous year, as shown in **Chart 6**.

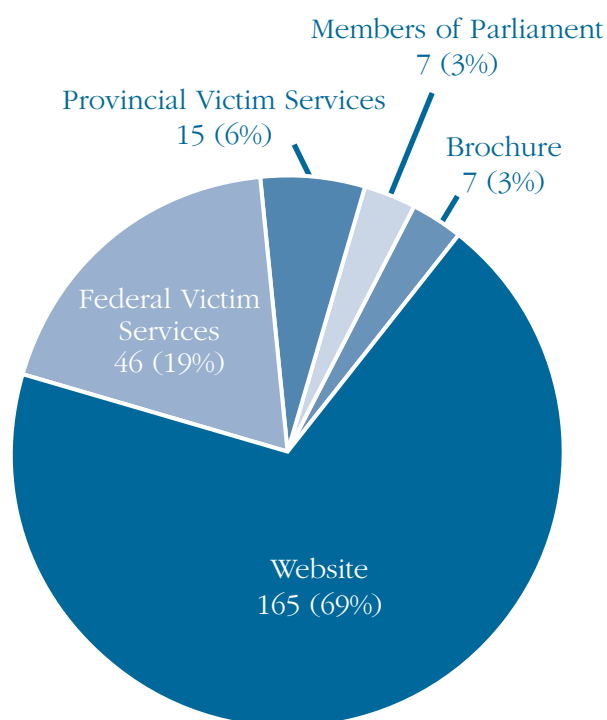
Chart 6: OFOVC website activity, 2007–2008 to 2012–2013





The OFOVC continues to enhance and improve features and content available for users as traffic to the Office's website continues to increase year after year. As illustrated in **Chart 7**, more than two-thirds of the Canadians who contacted the Office in 2012–2013 cited the OFOVC website as the primary source of referral.

Chart 7: Top five sources of referrals to the OFOVC from April 1, 2012 to March 31, 2013



Social Media

To further raise the Office's profile, enhance communication and engage users, the OFOVC began to develop a social media framework and launched YouTube and Flickr profiles. Additional activities and content will be implemented in the near future, and the OFOVC encourages everyone to stay connected and regularly visit its YouTube channel (OFOVC BOFVAC).

Media Relations

The news media provide invaluable opportunities for increasing the public's knowledge of, and stimulating their engagement in, victims' issues. Through the news media, all Canadians—including key policy and decision makers—can learn more about the challenges that victims face. This widespread awareness raising is crucial to fostering further change in Canada and abroad.

Through media engagement, the OFOVC has been able to increase awareness of its role and services, which is integral to the Office's ability to provide support to more victims of crime. As in previous years, the OFOVC continued to make itself available for important discussions and sought opportunities to help further informed dialogue in Canada.

Operations and Budget

Operations

As the OFOVC continued to develop and refine its processes and policies, 2012–2013 marked the first full fiscal year in which the data-tracking improvement system was used. As with any new system, modifications and adjustments were made to increase its effectiveness.

In addition, the Office continued to evaluate its internal operational guidelines to ensure that its activities were in line with those of the Government of Canada, that the Office made sound financial decisions, and that its activities and priorities aligned with key victim issues.

Budget

With respect to finances, the OFOVC operates as an arm's-length program activity of the Department of Justice. In keeping with principles of an effective and cost-efficient organization, the OFOVC

shares services such as contracting and human-resources management with the Department of Justice, where appropriate. The OFOVC remains on track and continues to work within its budget.

Chart 8: Summary of actual expenditures from April 1, 2012 to March 31, 2013

Salaries and wages (Employee Benefits Plan)	\$948,453
Communications	\$3,455
Information	\$67,673
Professional and special services	\$92,316
Rentals	\$7,123
Repair and maintenance	\$1,178
Utilities, materials and supplies	\$5,531
Acquisition of machinery and equipment	\$9,323
Travel and relocation	\$43,006
Other	\$103
Sub-total expended by Ombudsman's Office	\$1,178,161
Corporate costs (controlled centrally)	\$90,217
Total	\$1,268,378*

** An amount of funding was sent directly to Public Works and Government Services Canada (PWGSC) to cover the accommodations of the Office of the Federal Ombudsman for Victims of Crime (OFOVC) employees.*