



# 2024-2025 Annual Report on the Department of Justice's Canadian Victims Bill of Rights Complaint Mechanism

Submitted by the Policy Centre for Victim Issues at the Department of Justice Canada.

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## **1. Introduction**

The *Canadian Victims Bill of Rights* (CVBR) came into force on July 23, 2015.

The CVBR created statutory rights at the federal level for victims of crime. The legislation established statutory rights for victims to information, protection, participation, and to seek restitution. It also required that a complaint process be established by federal departments, agencies, and bodies for alleged breaches of these rights.

In July 2015, the Department of Justice's (the Department's) CVBR Complaint Mechanism (the Complaint Mechanism) was established and its related CVBR Complaint Policy (Complaint Policy) was approved by the Deputy Minister (DM) of Justice Canada. The Complaint Policy was updated in September 2016 (see Section 2, below) and states that, within six months of the end of the fiscal year, a report will be submitted to the DM that will include:

- the number of complaints made to the Department;
- how these complaints were addressed; and,
- the average length of time to address them.

The Complaint Policy also states that the report will be proactively disclosed on the Department's website.

This is the Department's tenth annual report, providing the required information for proactive disclosure on all CVBR complaints received from July 23, 2024, to July 23, 2025.

For the purposes of this report, a "complaint" is any submission that the Department received where a CVBR Complaint Form (Complaint Form) was provided. A Complaint Form is required by the Department to make an official CVBR complaint. An "enquiry" is any correspondence that did not include an official Complaint Form. For completeness, the Department includes both Complaints and enquiries in this report.

## **2. Department of Justice's CVBR Complaint Policy**

The Complaint Policy provides that the Senior Assistant Deputy Minister (SADM) act as a first level of response to review admissible complaints following an internal review from the responsible Director General (DG). If the complainant is dissatisfied with the first level response, they can request to have the DM review their complaint as a second level of review. The Complaint Policy also provides that, where a victim has exhausted the internal complaints mechanism at the Department and they are dissatisfied with the DM's response, the Department will inform the victim about the option to contact the Office of the Federal Ombudsperson for Victims of Crime to express their concerns.

Victims can provide all of the information required to make a complaint using the official Complaint Form, which is available on the Department's *How to Make a Complaint to the Department of Justice Canada* web page. Based on the Complaint Policy, both the web page and the Complaint Form specify that the Department is responsible for the following types of CVBR complaints:

- complaints concerning general information requested by the complainant about the criminal justice system, which relates to the right to information; and
- complaints concerning victim access to the financial assistance available through the Department's Victims Fund to attend parole board hearings, which relates to the right to participation.

If the complaint does not relate to one of the above, it is likely not an admissible complaint related to the Department's CVBR responsibilities.

### **3. Report on CVBR Complaints to the Department of Justice**

#### **3.1 Number of complaints and enquiries made to the Department**

During the 2024-2025 year of operation, the Department received 15 CVBR complaints and 391 enquiries. This compares to the 36 CVBR complaints and 290 enquiries received in 2023-2024, 25 complaints and 200 enquiries in 2022-2023, 27 complaints and 189 enquiries in 2021-2022, 7 complaints and 160 enquiries in 2020-2021, 7 complaints and 88 enquiries in 2019-2020, 10 complaints and 105 enquiries in 2018-2019, 12 complaints and 114 enquiries in 2017-2018, 6 complaints and 88 enquiries in 2016-2017, and 10 complaints and 119 enquiries in 2015-2016.

#### **3.2 How complaints and enquiries were addressed**

The Policy Centre for Victim Issues (PCVI) takes all complaints and enquiries very seriously, and our internal process is to respond to all of them to provide relevant information and explain why the complaint was not related to the Department's CVBR Complaints Policy, except if the communication was frivolous, vexatious, or abusive. Once actioned, limited information from each complaint or enquiry was inputted into an excel database in order to collect the required data for evaluation and reporting purposes.

#### **Victim complaints and enquiries**

All 15 complaints did not require further review and did not escalate through the official complaints process (i.e., DG initial review, SADM review and response, DM review and response).

In 2024-2025, more than half of the 15 complaints and 391 enquiries received from victims were related to provincial administration of justice matters. Other complaints and enquiries received were related to immigration and citizenship matters; civil matters; and, complaints against other federal or provincial government agencies. In cases of provincial administration of justice matters (for example, complaints against police; the outcome of a case; conduct of a Crown prosecutor; provincial family law issues; alleged fraud; and, personal safety concerns) victims were directed to services that may be able to provide them with information or assistance or were provided with a link to the PCVI's Victim Service Directory to help them locate victim services in their area.

### **Other Enquiries**

Enquiries related to the mandate of the Department were forwarded to the appropriate section of the Department for review and response. For example, where an enquiry was:

- not victim-related, it was forwarded to the Department's General Enquiries line for response; or
- addressed to the federal Minister of Justice, it was forwarded to the Department's Ministerial Correspondence Unit for response.

### **3.3 Average length of time to address complaints and enquiries**

The policy requires that a written response will be prepared and sent within 3 business days. On average, the time required to assess and provide an initial response to each complaint or enquiry was 1.9 business days. 397 responses were provided within the allotted 3 or less business day timeframe. Due to the increase in volume, 9 responses were provided within 4 business days. The PCVI aimed to provide a full and substantive response within 3 business days of receipt for every complaint or enquiry. However, on the rare occasion where the PCVI required additional time to provide a full response, the individual received a notification (within 3 business days) to inform them that their information was being reviewed and that a further response would be provided as soon as possible.

## **4. Conclusion**

The Department has met its obligations in 397 cases, with 9 out of 406 responses falling outside of the timelines and protocol set out in the Department's Complaint Policy.

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