

David Tilson MP ? Government continues its efforts to put victims of crime first

Victims of crime deserve to have a stronger, more effective voice in the criminal justice system.

For far too long, the scales of justice tipped in favor of criminals and neglected those who had been affected by their crimes. This is why our government has made it a priority to rebalance those scales and help ensure the rights of victims are respected throughout the criminal justice system.

As Prime Minister Stephen Harper noted, "Our government wants victims of crime across this country to know that we have listened to their concerns and that we are squarely on their side."

The landmark Canadian Victims Bill of Rights would help deliver on this commitment by permanently entrenching the rights of victims into a single document at the federal level – a first in Canadian history. Through this historic document, victims would be guaranteed the right to information, protection, participation and restitution.

Their right to information would ensure victims are made aware of available victim services and programs, as well as information relating to the investigation, prosecution and sentencing of the person who harmed them. Their right to protection would ensure the security and privacy of victims is considered at all stages of the criminal justice process – including measures to protect them from intimidation and retaliation – and provide victims with the ability to request their identity be protected from public disclosure.

At the same time, the right of a victim's participation in the criminal justice system would be also entrenched. This would establish their right to present a victim impact statement and ensure their views are considered at various stages of the criminal justice process.

Lastly, a victim's right to restitution would also be guaranteed as a part of this legislation. For certain offences, victims would have a right to seek financial compensation from their offender.

This important legislation builds on our government's strong record of supporting victims of crime. Previously, we delivered the Federal Victims Strategy and established a permanent advocate for victims through the Office of the Federal Ombudsman for Victims of Crime.

We have also invested more than \$120 million into victim-oriented initiatives and provided in excess of \$10 million to Child Advocacy Centres across the country to help young victims of crime.

Innocent victims of crime deserve to have clear, enforceable rights and protections in our criminal justice system. Through the Canadian Victims Bill of Rights, our government is making sure victims are treated with the respect and fairness that they deserve

