



Recommendations on Victims Services

Report to Government

Policy & Program Development
Victims of Crime Review Committee

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Recommendation on Victims Services – Report to Government | Alberta Justice and Solicitor General
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Message from the MLA Committee

No one ever chooses to become a victim, but it can happen to anyone. The aftermath of a crime can be challenging to navigate, especially for victims going through one of the most difficult and vulnerable times of their life. It is critical victims have the help they need during this time.

Over the past few months we've had the privilege of working with victim advocacy groups and victim-serving organizations to identify ways to better support victims of crime. We want to start by expressing our deep gratitude to the many organizations and people across our province who go above and beyond every single day to make sure victims are not alone. Your passion, commitment and dedication are an inspiration to all of us and make a true difference in our communities.

Victims need to be protected, they should be the priority. We heard this loud and clear, and we couldn't agree more. It's important to take steps to prevent crime and protect our communities so people don't get victimized in the first place, but funding and support for victims of crime need to be preserved. They need to be accessible and available to victims when they need it. This means protecting funds for victims, but it's also making sure we have a sustainable model that directs funds to where victims need it the most.

Funding is just one part of this equation. We need to make sure the right services are available as well. Victims, regardless of where they are in the province, deserve to have the same level of access to the services they need. The victim services model needs not only to ensure victims have access to the right type of services, but also to make sure that victims in rural areas do not get left behind because of lack of access. We also recognize that the effects of a crime are long-lasting and could extend far beyond the victim's involvement in the justice system. These highlight the importance of having a coordinated system of support and services so that we can help victims as they transition through the different stages of healing.

Our recommendations will help government improve victim assistance in Alberta and implement an approach that puts victims first.

We want to thank everyone who participated in the consultation and took the time to make sure we understand the experiences of victims of crime, what they need and how we can work together to help them through this phase of their life.

Nathan Neudorf, MLA Lethbridge East

Angela Pitt, MLA Airdrie

Introduction

The Victims of Crime review, led by MLAs Angela Pitt and Nathan Neudorf, completes the platform commitment of “conduct[ing] an immediate review of the current model of victim service delivery, victim assistance funding, and victim compensation to ensure there is necessary assistance to victims of crime”.

This review consisted of two phases, conducted between November 2019 and November 2020.

Phase one focused on victim assistance funding and compensation, and was completed in January 2020. This review resulted in legislative amendments (Bill 16) The *Victims of Crime and Public Safety Act* replaced the *Victims of Crime Act*. Government discontinued the Victims Financial Benefits Program.

Phase two started on September 14, 2020. It gathered stakeholder feedback for a permanent Victims Assistance Program and tested potential solutions to address stakeholder concerns with services delivery. An interim program provided support during this review.

Background Information – Services Provided in Communities

In Alberta, 42 community-based organizations and 73 police-based victim services units deliver services to victims of crime. Community organizations include sexual assault centres and child advocacy centres. Justice and Solicitor General (JSG) provides grants so all community and police-based victim services can provide information, support (including court support), and referrals to victims of crime. JSG grants are a portion of community services funding and most, if not all, of police-based services funding.

Background Information – Victims Assistance Program

In fall 2019, phase one of the Victims of Crime review focused on determining a replacement to the Victims Financial Benefits Program, which provided a one-time benefit to acknowledge the victimization. The more severe the injury, the greater the benefit amount, based on an assessment of the physical and psychological injury. This engagement concluded in January 2020 and informed Bill 16, the *Victims of Crime and Public Safety Act*.

Bill 16 passed on June 26, 2020, ending the former financial benefits program. The 1,400 files still to be adjudicated moved to an interim program launched on July 15, 2020. The interim program inherited two compensation-based components from the old program and added a death and supplemental benefit, and three service-based programs:

- The death benefit reimburses funeral-related expenses up to \$12,500;
- The supplemental benefit is for victims who suffered a serious neurological or brain injury that results being fully dependent or partially dependent on someone else (maximum award amount \$110,000 + \$1000/month under the financial benefits program);
- A program to provide up to a total of \$1900 in an emergency for loss or damages such as out-of-pocket safety and security expenses, and emergency accommodation;
- A counseling program to provide access to emergency crisis counselling; and
- A court attendance expense reimbursement program to support sexual assault victims and families of homicide victims so they can deliver a victim impact statement or to attend sentencing.

Recommendations

The following recommendations will help government improve victim services by streamlining governance of community service delivery and building a permanent Victims Assistance Program. These recommendations are based stakeholder input, correspondence to JSG and program staff feedback.

Victims of Crime and Public Safety Fund

1. Develop a Policy Framework to Ensure the Stability of Funding to Victim Programs from the Victims of Crime and Public Safety Fund (the fund)

What we heard: Stakeholders are concerned that changing the mandate to include public safety initiatives puts victim-focused programs at risk.

What we know: The victims of crime budget is a smaller proportion of spending from the fund than public safety spending.

Recommendation: Develop a policy framework that indicates a minimum expenditure from the victims of crime and public safety fund to be spent on victims programs.

2. Provide a Stakeholder Update on the Current State of the Victims of Crime and Public Safety Fund

What we heard: Stakeholders questioned why any surplus is not used to address issues, for example, to modernize the funding model for community-based and victim service organizations).

What we know: A review of practices to allow easier access to the fund confirmed that the fund operates in accordance with Public Sector Accounting Standards. It is part of the government's reporting entity and its expenditures are treated as a budget expense. The fund is no longer growing at close to \$10M annually, instead it accumulated less than \$1 million in 2019-2020.

Recommendation: It is recommended that misconceptions related to the surplus be addressed with stakeholders as part of a stakeholder engagement update.

Service Delivery Model

3. Develop a Sustainable Service Delivery Model that Reflects Nuances for Rural, Urban and Metro Communities but Ensures Equitable Service for Victims

What we heard: Stakeholders provided mixed feedback on the need for a new service delivery model. Most described the current state as effective and some supporting a zone approach. There was, however, strong support for creating structures to encourage consistent services.

What we know: Updating service delivery could streamline the governance structure considerably and would enable greater service reliability and consistency.

Recommendations: Adopt a hybrid governance model constituting a municipal approach for mid-sized and metro communities, and a zone approach for smaller communities, for example, under 15,000 population.

Zones should align with police service delivery regions instead of municipal boundaries as much as possible. (note: this approach would align with a recommendation on police oversight bodies in the *Police Act* review). Further stakeholder engagement would determine zone boundaries.

It is recommended that a community would adopt a municipal model, or be assigned to a zone, depending on size unless a municipality agrees to take on a smaller community. That may require a Memorandum of Understanding and/or an Information Sharing Agreement.

4. Update the Funding Approach for Police-based Victim Services; Community and Specialized Organizations; and, Integrated Justice Responses

What we heard: Victims services units have tiered funding caps, \$150,000 for small and mid-sized communities, \$300,000 for mid-sized municipalities and \$600,000 for metro/urban municipalities. Stakeholders emphasized that this funding structure does not take into account the nuanced needs of a community. For example, a community of 6,000 receives the same funding as a community 70,000.

Stakeholders lobbied for a longer-term funding arrangement and an assessment process that takes into account multiple funding factors beyond population size that could include crime index, volume of calls, crime type and number of victims served.

What we know: Government acknowledges that giving the same funding to communities of vastly different population sizes is a problem. A multi-factor costing assessment determines policing costs for communities under 5,000 population, so the program area knows what reportable data could be used to determine victim services funding.

This report highlights funding for domestic violence responses, because these victims represent the largest victim group and the review did not get much feedback in this area. Specialized domestic violence response initiatives are gaining momentum throughout Alberta and need support to expand.

Recommendation: Remove the current funding cap and create two streams of funding:

1. Operational funding- This stable funding stream could be allocated through a long-term grant (e.g. three-five years) for police-based victim service operations. The amount would be based on reportable data (e.g. crime severity index, population, etc.). JSG program staff would review the funding application annually.

The total budget for operational funding could be divided among zones in a way that reflects a multitude of factors.

It is proposed operational funding apply to multi-stakeholder integrated justice response programs.

2. Grant funding- This would support community-based/specialized organizations and provide emergency and/or special project funding for victim-serving organizations. The amount would depend on applications received and the yearly budget. It is recommended that a grants review committee review this funding stream.

5. Maintain the Current Mandate for Victim Service Units

What we heard: Some victim services stakeholders want to support victims of tragedy in addition to victims of violent crime. Others noted that expanding the mandate would overstretch their capacity to provide services to victims of violent crime.

What we know: Expanding the mandate for victim services could strain existing capacity to provide consistent services to victims of crime.

Recommendation: Maintain the current mandate to serve victims of violent crime during the criminal justice process.

6. Require Policy for Alternate Meeting Location for Victims

What we heard: Stakeholders see the value of co-locating victim services in police detachments/services. However, some victims prefer receiving support outside of a police setting.

What we know: There are examples of victim services providing an alternate meeting space to ensure a victim's comfort. Further, to make co-located services culturally safe, some have Indigenous cultural artifacts in their space.

Recommendations: It is recommended that a zone governance structure maintain police-based victim services co-location with police. However, organizations should be directed to have an offsite "safe space" available for clients.

Further, victim serving organizations should adopt a policy that addresses how they practice cultural safety. Office spaces should demonstrate cultural safety, and staff and volunteers must complete cultural safety training.

Implementing this recommendation would support a call to action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission:

#57. "We call upon federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal governments to provide education to public servants on the history of Aboriginal peoples, including the history and legacy of residential schools, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Treaties and Aboriginal rights, Indigenous law, and Aboriginal–Crown relations. This will require skills-based training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism."

7. Examine Options for Amending the Restorative Justice Program Granting Process

What we heard: Restorative justice is an important option for victims of crime.

What we know: Victim services cannot rely on restorative justice agencies because their funding is unreliable; grant calls are unpredictable and infrequent. For this approach to work, funding needs to be reliable.

Recommendation: That JSG explore ways to update business practices to create more predictability for restorative justice funding. Note: this recommendation aligns with recommendations that are part of the *Police Act* review.

This recommendation would support calls to action from both the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the National Inquiry on the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission:

#31. “We call upon the federal, provincial, and territorial governments to provide sufficient and stable funding to implement and evaluate community sanctions that will provide realistic alternatives to imprisonment for Aboriginal offenders and respond to the underlying causes of offending.”

National Inquiry on the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls:

#5.11, “We call upon all governments to increase accessibility to meaningful and culturally appropriate justice practices by expanding restorative justice programs and Indigenous Peoples’ courts.”

#17.27. “We call upon all governments to pursue the development of restorative justice and rehabilitation programs, including within correctional facilities, specific to Métis needs and cultural realities, to help address root causes of violence and reduce recidivism, and to support healing for victims, offenders, and their families and communities.”

8. Examine Options for Addressing Information Sharing Challenges

What we heard: Stakeholders called for enhanced information sharing and found difficulties with accessing or sharing information in RCMP files, and between some victim serving organizations.

Stakeholders emphasized that information sharing is affected by computer incompatibilities with police systems.

What we know: This is a long-standing challenge for victim service providers. Any solutions would require RCMP cooperation at a corporate level.

Recommendations:

1. When a new service delivery model is rolled out, JSG determine a mechanism with the provincial police service for developing a Memorandum of Understanding, or equivalent, to address issues with information sharing.
2. Allow victim serving organizations/zones and municipalities to apply for a one-time lump sum to modernize technology that will enable remote and secure mobile service delivery. This will remove barriers to victim supports during public health crises and beyond.

9. Develop Volunteer Policy to Ensure Consistency in Role

What we heard: Stakeholders emphasized that volunteers are critical as victim advocates. However, a future service delivery model should not over-rely on volunteers in place of an adequate number of paid staff.

Recommendation: Develop a consistent volunteer policy for victim serving organizations/zones and municipalities to facilitate consistent recruitment and training practices.

10. Explore Ways to Ensure Even Application of Court Support Programs

What we heard/know: There is overlap/duplication for court support in some communities and gaps in others.

Recommendations: Examine further how to support victims navigating through court processes.

This recommendation would support calls to action from both the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the National Inquiry on the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission:

#42. “We call upon the federal, provincial, and territorial governments to commit to the recognition and implementation of Aboriginal justice systems in a manner consistent with the Treaty and Aboriginal rights of Aboriginal peoples, the Constitution Act, 1982, and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, endorsed by Canada in November 2012.”

National Inquiry on the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls:

#17.28. “We call upon all governments to provide increased victim support services specific to Métis needs to help Métis victims and families navigate the legal system and to support their healing and well-being throughout the process of seeking justice.”

11. Determine Support for Victims of Human Trafficking without Legal Status in Canada

What we heard: Stakeholders highlighted concerns with non-Alberta victims of human trafficking; because victims have no legal status in Canada, it is difficult for them to access supports.

Recommendation: It is recommended that JSG share this report with the chair of Alberta’s Human Trafficking Task Force for awareness and consideration in their recommendations.

Victims Assistance Program

12. Ensure there is a Continuum of Care for Victims beyond the Victims Assistance Program

What we know: Victims Assistance Program services have a natural end point; however, victims may need longer term support.

Recommendation: When program services end, there should be a clear path to other supports. Increased collaboration with other agencies and ministries will enable the transition. Further cross-ministry assessment will determine what services victims could be referred to.

13. Administration of Victims Assistance Program to Remain with JSG

What we heard: Stakeholders were not unified on if JSG or another body should administer the Victims Assistance Program’s emergency components. Other bodies could be the local victim serving organization, victim serving zone, municipality or a third-party vendor.

Recommendation: It is recommended that JSG administer the Victims Assistance Program while decisions are made on the service delivery model. Administration can be revisited in the future.

14. Lengthen Application Deadline for Emergency-based Programs in the Permanent Victims Assistance Program

What we heard: There are concerns with the 45-day limit to apply for emergency program(s) for such matters as out of pocket expenses and counselling.

What we know: Many victims of crime need time to process what happened, and the time limit, even with a clause for extension, puts up perceived barriers to victims to apply.

Recommendation: Extend the application deadline to one year for emergency-based supports under the permanent Victims Assistance Program.

15. Expand Services Provided by the Emergency Counselling Program

What we heard: Current counselling options do not reflect victims' needs.

What we know: Indigenous Elder and ceremonial services, and trauma counselling, should be options. In many instances, these may better meet victims' needs than generalized counselling.

Recommendation: Expand service providers for the counselling program to other psychological specialities and Indigenous cultural supports.

This recommendation would support a call to action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

#40. "We call on all levels of government, in collaboration with Aboriginal people, to create adequately funded and accessible Aboriginal-specific victim programs and services with appropriate evaluation mechanisms."

16. Examine Options for Covering Costs Associated with Transportation for Victims

What we heard: Stakeholders emphasized that transportation costs for victims is a significant issue and creates barriers to the criminal justice process as well as to needed supports, such as victim services and counselling.

What we know: Solutions to address transportation costs is a multi-faceted issue. Victim services provide transportation support and the Victims Assistance Program could cover costs.

Recommendation: It is recommended that JSG further explore this issue, because different mechanisms could support costs and because this component depends on other recommendations in this report, such as the funding structure. As a preliminary potential solution, funding could be allocated directly to a victim as part of the Victims Assistance Program. If the funding structure is revised, transportation could be part of operational funding for a victim serving organization, victim serving zone or municipality.

17. Add a Customized Benefit Program for Victims Injured by Violent Crime

What we know: The interim program does not include services to help a victim recover from physical injuries, but crisis counselling is available for psychological injuries.

Recommendation: Expand the Victims Assistance Program to include a customized Blue Cross benefit for violent crime injuries. Explore a health spending account element for additional benefit coverage (glasses, dental, acupuncture, prosthetics).

18. Develop Communication Plan for Advising Past-applicants of the Launch of the Permanent Victims Assistance Program

What we know: Applicants to the interim Victims Assistance Program may have received minimal benefits or been denied. The permanent program may include expanded criteria and supports. The program area has a list of applicants to the interim program.

Recommendation: It is recommended that the program area tell interim program applicants about the permanent program when it is launched. The permanent program may have different eligibility and programs and may provide helpful support.

19. Address Gaps in Funding for Third Option

What we know: Funding to store sexual assault kits and support victims not connected to an ongoing police investigation is an ongoing issue. These victims do not qualify for support under the Victims Assistance Program. Government made a platform commitment to address this issue.

Recommendations:

- 1) Fund “third option” programs through the fund. It is estimated that this recommendation would require \$45,000. Further analysis would determine a more accurate estimate.
- 2) JSG examine options under the Victims Assistance Program to address the needs of sexual assault victims who use third-option programs and/or who do not report to police. Further analysis will confirm if anything in the regulation or policy excludes them. If this group of victims is excluded, a policy or regulation change would be needed.

What We Heard

During engagements, 150 stakeholder groups attended 40 external meetings. There were two rounds of meetings: the first gathered general feedback on strengths and areas for growth, and the second tested potential solutions. Stakeholder groups included those receiving JSG grants to provide victim services and groups representing Indigenous Peoples. All MLAs could observe the online engagement sessions to ensure their awareness.

In addition to online meetings, a stakeholder survey gathered feedback on the permanent Victims Assistance Program and a standalone online session discussed issues unique to Indigenous Peoples.

Integrated feedback informed recommendations to the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

The key messages we heard from stakeholders included:

Service Delivery within Communities

Relationships are Key

- Stakeholders consistently said that strong relationships, collaboration and partnership are working within victim serving organizations.

- This was primarily between victim serving organizations and police, but also included other stakeholder groups like the courts, the Alberta Crown Prosecution Service, shelters and other community agencies.

The Current Funding Structure is Inadequate

- All sessions raised concerns about funding; it was a dominant theme.
- Stakeholders described the current grant process as an administrative burden and red tape, and they prefer longer funding terms.
- Participants raised significant concerns about difficulties working within the existing funding cap and, specifically, the need to increase funding for services and programs.
- Participants suggested the province develop an assessment process that takes into account multiple factors for funding beyond population size, and could include crime index, volume of calls, crime type and number of victims served.
- Under the current funding model, participants also raised concerns about feeling in competition with other service providers over available dollars, which does not support collaboration and relationship-building.
- Participants submitted that a new funding model should address duplication among victim services and other community support agencies, for example, providing court support.

There was Mixed Feedback on a Future Governance Structure for Service Delivery

- Three test concepts for service delivery were zone, government employer, and municipal employer (described in Appendix A). These gathered mixed reaction, but most stakeholders prefer to maintain the current model with increased funding levels.
- Many believe that, other than funding levels, the current model is effective. Others believe it is not effective for victims, because of gaps in services and psychological safety concerns with co-location in police detachments.
- Most stakeholders acknowledged no one test concept would work, the model needs to recognize the unique needs in each area.
- Stakeholders emphasized that victims' needs should be the number one priority; they would not want changes to disrupt the strong relationships between the Crown and community partners.
- Many victim services unit stakeholders emphasized that a new model should be supported by volunteers but not be based on volunteers. There should be sustainable staffing instead of an over-reliance on volunteers.
 - Stakeholders consistently said that volunteers are vital to ongoing operations into preventing staff burn out and increasing staff retention. They also found significant challenges with recruitment and volunteer retention, and said over-relying on this group was inappropriate because their role was draining and difficult, and they are exposed to traumatic situations.

Stakeholders agreed on guiding principles for an updated service delivery approach. They widely supported the following guiding principles:

- a victim-centred, trauma-informed and culturally safe approach;
- reliable access to services (general and specialized);
- court and justice supports;
- modernized service delivery through technology and case management systems and approaches;
- standardized practices, tools, and systems;
- formalized partnership agreements for specialized services;
- financial accountability, including: financial literacy and a requirement for reporting financial information/statements;
- a streamlined and professionalized governance structure; and
- professional standards and a frontline competency model.

There is a Need for Increased Consistency and Coordination

- Stakeholders want more consistent policies and procedures between services, and feel that enhanced provincial coordination or standardization would address this concern.
- Participants consistently asked for provincial procedures or guidelines for victims of sexual assault to ensure all victims are referred to specialized services or a sexual assault center in a consistent and timely fashion.
- Stakeholders raised concerns over the lack of a provincial database to keep track of existing services. Other participants suggested the Alberta 211 service be leveraged.
- Participants suggested the province consider implementing a program advisory committee to enhance service coordination and consistency, similar to police advisory committees in the Public Security Division.
- Stakeholders suggested the province lay the groundwork and foster opportunities for victim services to network and collaborate. Relationship-building opportunities and conversations like the ones facilitated as part of this review are helpful.
- Participants want more consistent and widely available training for volunteers and boards.

There is Support for Co-location with Police however, there is a Need for an Alternate Meeting Space

- Stakeholders emphasized that police-based victim services see a great deal of benefit from co-locating in police detachments and consider this partnership a strength.
- However, specialized CBO emphasized not all victims feel safe in a police detachment. Co-location could be a barrier for many reasons, such as a fear of police, or having outstanding charges.

Information Sharing between Victim Service Providers and with Police is a Challenge

- Stakeholders called for enhanced information sharing. They found difficulties with access to, or sharing information from, RCMP files and between some victim serving organizations.
- Stakeholders noted the COVID 19 pandemic further underscored limitations with information sharing because of technology requirements for secure transmission.

There is a Disparity of Resources in Certain Communities

- Rural stakeholders shared challenges with resourcing and, in several instances, concerns about a services' ability to provide comprehensive services.
 - This also relates to the availability of specialized supports including sexual assault services and domestic violence shelters.
 - These challenges result in many rural services not being able to refer victims to specific and necessary programming found in urban centers.

Access to Transportation is a Barrier for Victims Accessing Supports

- Stakeholders in rural regions specifically described the difficulty and time spent transporting victims to the nearest available resources, sometimes located hours away.
- Stakeholders noted that transportation costs could be supported through their funding and through the Victims Assistance Program.

There are Differences of Opinion on what the Victim Service Mandate should be

- Some participants found the definition of a victim is too narrow, and JSG's mandate does not enable support to all victims who need it.
- Stakeholders described this as an ethical and moral dilemma for decisions to provide services; however, with no other available resources for victims, stakeholders said offering supports "is the right thing to do" in some cases.
- Other stakeholders noted that, if their mandate were expanded, they would be "stretched thin" and potentially be unable to provide support when requested.

Calls to Action from Past Reports should be considered by this Review

- Stakeholders emphasized that service delivery model changes and the permanent Victims Assistance Program the need to reflect the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, the National Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls' recommendations, as well as the principles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Restorative Justice and Indigenous-centered Programs are Important Option for Victims.

- Stakeholders underscored that funding is critical for restorative justice initiatives or programs. There should be thought to supporting these programs so they have longevity instead of having perpetual pilot programs.
- Indigenous stakeholders emphasized the importance of Indigenous victims having access to programs designed and delivered by Indigenous agencies.
 - Stakeholders critiqued current programs and advocated for more culturally responsive programming for Indigenous victims, particularly for domestic violence and human trafficking.

Interim Victims of Crime Counselling Program

The Application Deadline for the Emergency-based Programs within the Victims Assistance Program must be extended

- Stakeholders emphasized during online meetings that the current application deadline for emergency-based programs is a barrier to victims receiving support when they need it.
- The survey supported this: 85 per cent disagreed that a 45-day application period was adequate.
 - When asked why, 86 per cent said the time period constraint does not take into account victims' trauma.

The Emergency Counselling Program should be expanded to Meet the Needs of Victims

- Stakeholders said the current counselling program is not meeting the needs of victims. Specifically, it does not include trauma counselling or Indigenous cultural elements.
- Survey results supported this sentiment:
 - About two-thirds, or 65 per cent, disagreed that the Interim Victims of Crime Counselling Program meets the needs of victims.
 - If the Interim Victims of Crime Counselling Program is expanded, 54 per cent of respondents thought a blend of generalized counselling and trauma-specific counselling would be the most beneficial.

Appendix A- In-depth Feedback on Governance Models tested

Zonal Approach

Under this concept, victim services personnel would continue to be co-located with the provincial police service (Royal Canadian Mounted Police [RCMP]). Rather than 60+ individual VSUs, each having a governance board with specified accountabilities, as in the current state, there would be one board per zone with representation on the board from the communities in that zone (note: no firm number of zones was presented).

- Stakeholder reception:
 - This concept received the most stakeholder support of the three concepts shared.
 - Stakeholders felt this concept would lead to more formal memorandums of understanding with partner agencies to address when and how information sharing and referrals should occur.
 - There was appreciation that this concept would maintain co-location with the provincial police service and would appear to maintain a presence throughout communities in Alberta to enable maintenance of relationships with partners and the delivery of services to victims.
 - The key concern for this concept related to fears that current staff would have to compete for their roles and that if there were a reduction in total number of positions, not everyone with a role today would have one in a future model.
 - Another concern voiced was that smaller communities would be “swallowed up” by bigger communities and victims would lose access to local services.



Government Employer Approach

Under this concept, victim service delivery would be under the leadership and oversight of the Government of Alberta. There would be one executive director, regional directors (number of regions would need to be determined) and managers, and front-line staff within each region.

- Stakeholder reception:
 - While the consistency and stability were described as positives, there were concerns as to the cost of establishing this model, loss of police-based co-location and likelihood that the number of individual VSUs would decrease.
 - Some stakeholders acknowledged that this approach would address concerns raised about police-based co-location (i.e. not all victims feel safe attending a police detachment for victim service support).



Municipal Employer Approach

With a municipal employer approach there would be agreements established with municipalities to provide a structure for victim service delivery.

- The municipality would be the fiscal agent and governance body.
- This approach would utilize municipal infrastructure and provide more mobility opportunities for staff than in a zonal approach.
- Currently only 3 large size municipalities and municipal districts utilize this model. It is unlikely the model would be preferred by medium to smaller sized municipalities due to the liabilities presented for staffing and other expenses-this downside was only somewhat acknowledged.
- Stakeholder reception:
 - Stakeholders acknowledged it could address concerns with co-location (i.e., not all victims feel safe attending a police detachment for victim service support), and has proven to be an effective model within the current state.
 - Others noted that a municipal employer approach prohibits VSUs from having a non-profit status, which hampers the ability to fundraise for “extras” (e.g., victim service support dogs) and may result in having to rely heavily on partnerships with non-profits to address potential funding shortfalls.
 - It was acknowledged that with adequate funding, fundraising would not be necessary.



Appendix B- Summary of Survey Results

Demographics

- There were 238 respondents to this survey though not all respondents answered every question.
- 60% of respondents represented Indigenous clients.
- 40% of respondents were Victim Service Unit (VSU) volunteers.
- The majority of respondents resided in Edmonton (46) and Calgary (34). The other respondents were inclusive of the rest of the province.

Feedback of the Interim Victims of Crime Counselling Program

- 65% of respondents did not feel that the availability of the program to victims of specific types of offences was adequate.
- 84% agreed that counselling services being available in multiple ways ensured accessibility.
- 51% agreed that the program enables easy access to counselling.
- 65% disagreed that the Interim Victims of Crime Counselling Program meets the needs of victims.
- 85% disagreed that a 45-day application period was adequate.
- When asked why, 86% said the time period constraint does not take into account trauma for victims.
- Respondents thought the following interim program options should be integrated into the permanent program:
 - 61% - a greater scope of offences
 - 50% - simplify program administration
 - 24% - application time period
 - 13% - cap on counselling costs
- If the Interim Victims of Crime Counselling Program is expanded in the future, 54% of respondents thought a blend of generalized counselling and trauma-specific counselling would be the most beneficial.
- Respondents thought that the Interim Victims of Crime Counselling Program should be expanded to prioritize services for victims of trauma with some options for other victims (69%).