

Backgrounder:

VICTIMS FUNDING FOR THE SASKATCHEWAN MINISTRY OF JUSTICE

Through its Victims Fund, the Department of Justice Canada will provide \$1.8 million to the Saskatchewan Ministry of Justice. The funding aims to improve programs and services to residents of the province, particularly children, who have been victims of crime.

Child Friendly Courts

Section 486.2 of the *Criminal Code* allows a child or other vulnerable witnesses to provide the court with their testimony from behind a witness screen or from outside the courtroom. This dramatically reduces the stress, fear, and anxiety associated with young victims' testimony and helps them to provide a full and candid account of evidence. This funding will help the Saskatchewan Ministry of Justice meet the technical requirements to provide these options by acquiring additional witness screens and by expanding the use of videoconferencing equipment to facilitate testimony from outside the courtroom. These technical upgrades will take place in five court buildings during the 2011-2012 fiscal year and an additional five court buildings during the 2012-2013 fiscal year.

Stronger Victims Services in Northern Saskatchewan

In 2010, the police-reported violent crime rate in northern Saskatchewan was about six times higher than the provincial average. The Victims Services Branch of the Saskatchewan Ministry of Justice funds five agencies to deliver police-based victim services in five regions in northern Saskatchewan. This funding will enhance the delivery of police-based victim services in northern Saskatchewan in order to continue to offer timely and responsive victim services to Saskatchewan residents.

Victim Services for Families of Missing Persons

This funding will also go toward the delivery of culturally sensitive victim services to respond to the unique needs of families of missing Aboriginal women and other missing persons in Regina, Saskatoon, Prince Albert, and elsewhere in Saskatchewan. This will be done by funding Missing Persons Liaison positions in the Victim Services units of each city's police service. The project will also support the delivery of services, through community-based organizations, designed to provide individual and family counselling and/or specialized support groups for family members of missing persons, including the family members of missing and murdered Aboriginal women.

Training and Collaboration Opportunities for Victims Service Workers

To meet increasing demands, the Victims Services Branch of the Saskatchewan Ministry of Justice needs to ensure staff has access to training and is able to share best practices. This

funding will help coordinate and maintain existing training and assist with developing curricula for new training, in partnership with the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology (SIAST). It will also make it easier for victim service workers to collaborate with the federal government and other provinces and territories through collective learning and the exchange of knowledge. This will allow Saskatchewan to contribute to and benefit from the development of national best practices in victim service delivery.

Federal Victims Strategy / Victims Fund

As part of the Economic Action Plan, Budget 2011 extended the Federal Victims Strategy by announcing funding of \$26 million over two years. The Strategy is lead by the Department of Justice Canada. Working in collaboration with other federal departments to ensure a consistent approach to victim issues, the Department consults with victims, victim advocates, and service providers and others involved in the criminal justice system to identify issues of concern and to inform policy development and criminal law reform.

The Victims Fund, which is an important part of the Federal Victims Strategy, is a grants and contributions program administered by the Department of Justice. The Fund currently has \$10.2 million a year available to give victims of crime a more effective voice in the criminal justice system.

The objectives of the Victims Fund are to:

- promote access to justice and participation by victims in the justice system;
- promote the development of law, policies and programs for victims;
- promote the implementation of principles, guidelines and laws designed to address the needs of victims of crime and articulate the victim's role in the criminal justice system;
- increase knowledge and awareness of the impact of victimization, the needs of victims of crime, available services, assistance and programs, and relevant legislation;
- encourage governmental and non-governmental organizations to identify victim needs and gaps in services, and develop and deliver programs, services and assistance to victims;
- promote capacity-building within non-governmental organizations; and,
- provide direct, limited, emergency financial assistance to individual victims in certain specified circumstances.

More information is available on the Department of Justice Canada's [website](#).