

## **RESPONSE TO COUNCILLOR INQUIRY / SUGGESTION**

### **COUNCILLOR THORN**

Councillor Thorn requested information regarding what the local impact to Victim Services may be with the changes to provincial funding.

### **Estimated Administrative Time to Respond**

☒ Under 4 hours (no motion required)

☐ Over 4 hours (motion required) Estimated Hours: n/a

### **Motion**

n/a

### **Response**

Community Wellness Administration consulted with staff of the Foothills Regional Victim Services, (FRVS) to discuss the potential impacts of the recent restructuring of the Alberta Victims of Crime Act and Victims of Crime funding.

In partnership with the RCMP detachments of High River, Okotoks, Turner Valley and Nanton, FRVS has been providing 24 hour, 7 day per week, on call assistance to victims of crime and tragedy since 1992. Specially trained staff and volunteer advocates provide immediate crisis intervention, emotional support and practical assistance. Referral to appropriate community services, information about victims' rights and support through the criminal justice system, including court support are also routinely provided at no cost to affected individuals through the FRVS. FRVS are also valued partners and named in regional Emergency Social Service response plans to assist with Critical Incident Stress Debriefings and other supports to help decrease the impact of traumatic events on individuals and organizations.

Victim Services Programs across the province have historically been funded through the Provincial Victims of Crime Program which has legislated authority to collect fees and fine surcharges. These funds were previously designated to be used for victim services programs, counselling, and, financial supports to assist victims of crime.

In 2020 The Ministry of Justice and Solicitor General began a review of services to victims and increased provincial fine surcharges to fund the Victims of Crime Program. The existing funds were publicly stated as being redeployed to other areas focused on public safety and deterring crime. This has been noted as a concern as it appears this redeployment changes the intent of the fund and further, may reduce the amount of funds available to support victims of crime.

As part of the consultation process other service delivery models of support to victims of crime were put forward by the Province for consideration. FRVS noted this was done without any explanation of why the existing, and successful, Victim Services model needed to be changed. Further, no clear information has been provided to FRVS or the regional "K" Division RCMP about the impact these changes to the Victims of Crime legislation and program will have to the FRVS program delivery.

FRVS, like most other victim services programs, is operated as a non-profit organization. Because it's largely volunteer run, FRVS operates in donated space in the RCMP detachment. FRVS is in an already difficult position of having to fundraise and apply each year to the Province for their funding. Despite a widely recognized and legislated obligation to provide support to victims of crime, FRVS continues to be challenged to obtain sustainable long term provincial funding. It is still unknown whether funding for the FRVS program will remain the same, increase, be reduced or even eliminated through the proposed changes. This leaves the FRVS program in a vulnerable position.

The Alberta Police Based Victim Services Association which represents FRVS has publicly stated concerns over the proposed changes to the Victims of Crime Fund and these are echoed by our local Victim Services Program. A new victim's assistance model was slated to be launched sometime in 2021. FRVS is waiting to hear an official announcement of the launch, and is hoping that the new model will result in increased and sustainable funding.

### **Attachment(s)**

n/a

Prepared by:  
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August 10, 2021