



NATIONAL OFFICE

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June 12, 2020

The Honourable Doug Schweitzer
Minister of Justice and Solicitor General, Deputy House Leader
424 Legislature Building
10800 - 97 Avenue
Edmonton, AB
T5K 2B6

Dear Minister:

MADD Canada appreciates your government's recent initiative to reduce the rate of impaired driving and save lives and prevent injuries. We have seen this approach reduce deaths and injuries in other jurisdictions.

Our mission is to stop impaired driving and to support victims of this violent crime. As important as prevention and enforcement are, it is equally important that those impacted by crime receive the support they require. Despite the number of people injured and killed by impaired driving in Canada, victims and survivors of impaired driving are often not offered the same level of support that other victims of violent crime are. They are excluded from government-funded programs. In too many cases, MADD Canada is the only effective support victims and survivors of impaired driving receive.

We are concerned that Bill 16, *Victims of Crime (Strengthening Public Safety) Amendment Act*, will affect the services available to victims and survivors of impaired driving in Alberta, which is not consistent now. Bill 16 has already passed second reading and will expand the Victims of Crime Fund to allow your government to direct money intended for services to benefit to victims and survivors of crime to hire more Crowns and support law enforcement initiatives. MADD Canada is concerned that the expansion of the Victims of Crime Fund is not consistent with its purpose, which is to support victims and survivors of crime.

When you spoke to the Bill in the Legislature, you spoke of public safety but we heard nothing about improving services for victims and survivors of crime. Crowns and law enforcement are public services, not victim services. They act on behalf of the public, not on behalf of the victim/survivor. Law enforcement and prosecutions costs should be paid by taxpayers given the only funding for victim services is through the Victims of Crime Fund.

At MADD Canada, we recognize the needs of victims and survivors go beyond the criminal justice system. In many cases, the justice system is not even available to them and often is a source of frustration and re-victimization. The parent of a young person who was killed while driving impaired will not be engaged in the justice system but will be in urgent need of support. Some impaired drivers may flee the scene to avoid apprehension and prosecution. The needs of the victims and survivors in these cases are no less important because those cases are not going through the justice system.

In addition to the changes proposed in Bill 16, you established a working group to develop a new victim's assistance model with a focus on financial benefits for victims and survivors of violent crime. As you know, victims and survivors of impaired driving are not eligible for support under that program. We request that you expand the mandate of the working group to examine services provided to victims and survivors to identify gaps and recommend improvements. Given the lack of services currently offered to victims and survivors of impaired driving and the support MADD Canada provides in Alberta, we feel we can contribute to that work.



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Despite the surplus in the Victims of Crime Fund, we believe victim services in Alberta suffer from underfunding. In 2018, the *Independent Report on the Incarceration of Angela Cardinal* compared the victim services model in Alberta to “211 Edmonton,” suggesting that in many cases, victims and survivors receive one phone call where “rudimentary and incomplete” information may be provided. The *Report* recommended a “complete overhaul of the current victim service model in the province of Alberta.” We have heard from families who have lost ones that well-intentioned volunteers have shown up at their homes and not really known how to help and there was no follow-up. Injured survivors tell us that they were never contacted by victim services.

As the only anti-impaired driving organization that provides services to victims and survivors, MADD Canada understands that many of the needs of victims and survivors cannot be addressed in the criminal justice system. For example, one of the most significant things MADD Canada does is our annual National Conference for Victims of Impaired Driving. MADD Canada and our local Chapters and Community Leaders in Alberta sponsor people who have lost a loved one or been injured in an impaired driving crash to attend. Our Chapters facilitate monthly support groups and MADD Canada hosts a series of online support groups for victims and survivors of impaired driving. Parents get to connect with other parents, spouses connect with other spouses and survivors get to talk to other survivors about their experiences. In addition to supporting people in the criminal justice system, our services allow people to connect with others who have experienced similar trauma. The benefit of this approach is difficult to measure in words and we hope some of our members will be able to share their experiences with your government.

We would appreciate the opportunity to have conference call or ZOOM meeting to discuss our concerns and suggestions at your convenience. We look forward to hearing from your office. If you have any questions, please contact Steve Sullivan, our Director of Victim Services at ssullivan@madd.ca or 866-876-5224.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Andrew Murie".

Andrew Murie
Chief Executive Officer
MADD Canada