



**For Immediate Release**  
**Office of the Ombudsman**  
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**OMBUDSMAN'S REPORT ON VICTIMS OF CRIME HIGHLIGHTS NEED FOR CLARITY  
IN THE TRANSITION BETWEEN GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS**

VICTORIA – B.C. Ombudsman, Kim Carter, today released Special Report No. 30, *Victims of Crime; Victims of Change: Transition and Discretion in Crime Victim Assistance Legislation in British Columbia*.

Special Report No. 30 details the experience of a woman who was awarded a pension under the Criminal Injury Compensation program after her husband was killed. The woman, Ms. T., was promised that her pension would continue for the rest of her life and that it would be adjusted semi annually to reflect changes in the cost of living. Several years later, those cost of living adjustments were abruptly discontinued when responsibility for the Crime Victim Assistance Program was transferred from the Workers' Compensation Board to the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General. Without prior warning, Ms. T. and about 390 other victims of crime received an unsigned and undated form letter informing them that cost of living adjustments would no longer be made to their pensions. Feeling she had been unfairly treated, Ms. T. contacted the Office of the Ombudsman.

"This report highlights the importance of carefully planning the transition between government programs," said Ms. Carter. "In particular, public agencies must identify who will be affected by changes to programs and must clarify the ways in which those individuals will be affected. Doing so will help to ensure that the process is fair and appropriate."

After its investigation, the Ombudsman's Office found that the termination of cost of living adjustments awarded under the *Criminal Injury Compensation Act* was based on a mistake of law and concluded that the decision-making process followed by the Ministry was unfair. The Ombudsman recommended the Ministry review its procedures and take measures to reduce the likelihood of similar problems happening again, reinstate the cancelled cost of living adjustments and provide Ms. T. and the other victims of crime with a lump sum payment, including interest, to cover the amount they would have received if not for the improper termination of the cost of living adjustments.

"This case demonstrates the importance of the Ombudsman's role in ensuring transparency and accountability for citizens dealing with public agencies in British Columbia," said Ms. Carter. "I am very pleased that the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General has agreed to accept all my recommendations."

Special Report No. 30 is available from the Office of the Ombudsman or at its website at [www.ombudsman.bc.ca](http://www.ombudsman.bc.ca).

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