|  |
| --- |
| Promoting safer communities and supporting victims May 28, 2020 [Media inquiries](#media-contacts)  Bill 16 expands the scope of the Victims of Crime Fund to ensure victims have the support they need, and to promote public safety and prevent crime.  If passed, the Victims of Crime (Strengthening Public Safety) Amendment Act, 2020 will expand the scope of the Victims of Crime Fund to include public safety initiatives that deter crime to prevent victimization while continuing to provide supports to victims of serious crimes.  The expanded scope of the fund would help support preventative measures through the Alberta Law Enforcement Response Teams (ALERT), the Rural Alberta Provincial Integrated Defence (RAPID) Force, drug treatment courts and the hiring of more Crown prosecutors. More support means more resources to combat organized and serious crime such as illegal drug and gun trafficking and online child exploitation, help stop people stuck in the cycle of addiction-related crime from reoffending, and ensure we have enough Crown prosecutors to keep criminals off the streets so they can’t endanger Albertans in their communities.  “Our government has heard loud and clear from Albertans that they are frustrated with a justice system that does not make them feel safe, secure and protected in their communities. We are ensuring that we provide the system with the tools and resources it needs to prevent Albertans from being victimized, and provide victims with timely support and the assurance that the perpetrators of crime will be brought to justice.”  Doug Schweitzer, Minister of Justice and Solicitor General  To further improve supports for victims of crime, the government has established a working group co-chaired by Tracy Allard, MLA for Grande Prairie, and Angela Pitt, MLA for Airdrie, to review the financial benefits program and consult on the creation of a new victims assistance model that will be launched in 2021. The working group will work with stakeholders and other Albertans this year to get their input on a new model.  “Too often, we have heard that Albertans can’t access supports for victims and don’t have the proper assistance they need. Our working group is seeking feedback to ensure the Victims of Crime Fund has the best possible capability to support victims.”  Tracy Allard, MLA for Grande Prairie  “Ensuring that victims of crime in Alberta have the support they need has been a long-standing issue in our province. I am happy to be part of the solution as co-chair of the Victims of Crime Working Group, and bring attention to public safety and crime prevention.”  Angela Pitt, MLA for Airdrie-East  In the interim, the bill proposes changes to focus on victims who have experienced severe crimes with an interim victims assistance program to provide new areas of support:   * Helping victims with out-of-pocket expenses resulting from violent crime, such as emergency transportation or protective measures. * Speeding up access to counselling for victims of serious violent crime – including sexual assault – and families of homicide victims. * Providing court support to victims and witnesses.   Victims of crime can also still apply for:   * Death benefits, which reimburses the families of homicide victims for funeral costs. * Supplemental benefits, which is a monthly payment to help victims with severe injuries that require them to be dependent on others for basic functions and daily activities.  Quick facts  * A victim surcharge for provincial fines goes directly to the Victims of Crime Fund, which supports a provincewide network of victim service units and services. Effective April 1, the surcharge increased by five per cent to a total surcharge of 20 per cent, allowing government to increase funding for victim services and public safety initiatives from about $40 million to about $60 million a year.    Media inquiries[Jonah Mozeson](mailto:Jonah.Mozeson@gov.ab.ca)  587-985-6077 Senior press secretary and senior advisor, Justice and Solicitor General |
|  |