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April 14, 2009

*Office of the President and
Chief Executive Officer*

*Cabinet du président
et chef de la direction*

Hon. Robert Nicholson, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada
284 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON
K1A 0H8

Dear Minister:

Police report statistics are the primary source for data on crime rates in Canada. However, only approximately one-third of actual crimes in Canada are reported to police. The result is that the public, media, policy makers and judiciary are operating with incomplete information regarding the extent of crime in Canada and its impact on Canadians.



A complementary source of data on the extent of crime in Canada is provided by Statistics Canada's report *Criminal Victimization in Canada*. This report is generated from data collected from Statistics Canada's *General Social Survey*, which is conducted every five years and involves interviews with approximately 25,000 Canadians aged 15 and older.

The latest edition of *Criminal Victimization in Canada* (2004) states that, "...88% of sexual assaults and 69% of household thefts..." were not reported to police.

Clearly, *Criminal Victimization in Canada* is a critical element in painting a complete portrait of criminal activity in Canada. However, its usefulness is compromised by the fact that it is carried out every five years. A similar survey is conducted annually in many OECD countries.

An illustration of the impact this can have on the reporting of crime rates is the discrepancy between data collected in the *Criminal Victimization Survey* versus crime reported to police. The 2004 *Survey* reports that, since the 1999 *Survey*, rates for theft of personal property rose by 24 percent, for household property by 42 percent and for vandalism by 17 percent. The only type of offence showing a significant decline was breaking and entering, where rates fell by about one-fifth.

360, rue Albert St.
Suite 420
Ottawa, Ontario
K1R 7X7

 613.238.4000
 613.238.7643

www.chamber.ca
info@chamber.ca



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In contrast, total property crimes reported to police, and subsequently reported by Statistics Canada, declined by nearly 7 percent. The percentage change for breaking and entering was consistent between police reports and the *Survey*.

It is clear that crimes reported to police do not represent a complete picture of the total extent of crime in our country and that the *Criminal Victimization Survey*, if carried out more frequently, could greatly improve the policy making process with regard to allocating resources to crime prevention, law enforcement, the judiciary and correctional services.

In 2007, delegates from local chambers across Canada demonstrated their concern with rising crime rates in their communities by adopting a policy resolution calling for the federal government to provide Statistics Canada with the funding necessary to conduct the *Criminal Victimization Survey* annually. This policy resolution was outlined in a letter we sent you in October 2007.

Minister, we ask again that you consider our request. We know conducting the *Criminal Victimization Survey* annually would increase the cost to the government by approximately \$4 million each year. However, we believe it would be well worth the investment giving Canada's criminal justice system another tool to measure crime rates more effectively.

Sincerely,

Perrin Beatty
President and Chief Executive Officer
Canadian Chamber of Commerce

c.c.: Hon. James Flaherty, Minister of Finance
Hon. Vic Toews, President of the Treasury Board
Munir A. Sheikh, Chief Statistician of Canada
Darcy Rezac, Managing Director and Chief Engagement Officer,
Vancouver Board of Trade