



“Dedicated to Justice” • «Au service de la justice»

April 14, 2015

The Honourable Steven Blaney
Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness
House of Commons
Ottawa, Canada K1A 0A6

Dear Minister:

The Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime (CRCVC) is writing to express our concern over reported funding cuts to the Circles of Support and Accountability (COSA) programs. COSA programs are designed “to reduce the risk of future sexual victimization of community members by supporting high-risk sex offenders in reintegrating back into the community”. Across the country, COSA programs have more than 700 trained volunteers who help safely reintegrate offenders from prison back into the community.

An evaluation by the National Crime Prevention Centre (NCPC) five years ago found that COSA dramatically improves public safety, reduces recidivism, and saves money. In fact, for every dollar invested in the program, \$4.60 is saved in terms of justice system and medical costs, loss of productivity, and pain and suffering. Offenders who participate in COSA have a 70% reduction in sexual recidivism compared to those who do not participate in the program. As well, other countries, such as France, Australia, and New Zealand, are in the process of instituting a “Canadian model” of the support program as a part of their criminal justice policies. Yet, due to the end of the five-year agreement with the NCPC branch of Public Safety Canada and the \$650,000 funding from Correctional Service Canada being cut in half, the eighteen COSA sites across Canada are struggling to secure alternate, long-term funding and many are now preparing to close. COSA is the only non-governmental program in Canada that demonstrably prevents victimization.

We believe it is fundamental to public safety to support offenders after they are released, especially those at higher risk of re-offending. Since it is a reality that most sex offenders will eventually return to our communities, their successful re-entry is paramount. More than anything, the clients we serve who are victimized by sex offenders want to prevent what has happened to them from happening to anyone else. We believe funding COSA is a significant way for the government to further demonstrate its commitment to protecting victims of crime and the safety of our communities.

Sincerely,

Heidi Illingworth
Executive Director