



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

January 17, 2018

**Marie-France Lalonde, Minister of MCSCS**

Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services/Ministry of Francophone Affairs  
18<sup>th</sup> Floor, George Drew Building  
25 Grosvenor Street  
Toronto, Ontario M7A 1Y6

**His Worship Jim Watson, Mayor of Ottawa**

110 Laurier Avenue West  
Ottawa, ON K1P 1J1

**The Honourable Ralph Goodale, P.C., M.P.**

Minister of Public Safety Canada  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

Dear Ministers Lalonde, Goodale and Mayor Watson:

As of December 18<sup>th</sup>, 2017, Ottawa saw a record number of shootings at 69. Of 14 total homicides in the city in 2017, eight were as a result of firearms. We are writing to you in hopes of encouraging the three levels of government to come together to address the pressing issue of gun violence in Ottawa.

At the Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime (CRCVC), we have been working closely with one of the mothers who lost her son in gun violence last year. As you may be aware, on June 26, 2017, 25-year old Ashton Dickson was shot and killed outside the Mingle Room Bar on Rideau Street in Ottawa. Ashton was left bleeding in the street after an altercation in the bar and sadly succumbed to his injuries. His senseless homicide has left an enormous void in his family and the community. The Ottawa Police have not yet laid charges in this case. Ashton's mother, Donna; his aunt, Julia; and his uncle, Korry are disheartened by the delays in finding justice for their loved one. The family believes CCTV cameras in the downtown core would be a valuable tool in similar complex police investigations where multiple suspects fled the scene. They feel it is problematic that the police had to rely on low-quality cameras on private property to conduct their investigation in Ashton's case.

We are not even two weeks into the New Year, and our city has already experienced various reports of gunshots and our first homicide of 2018. The young male victim was also killed by gunfire. We feel that we can speak for the community at large when we say we are concerned by the amount of gun violence in Ottawa, and that concern is growing.

Gun violence is a public safety issue. It is important for all three levels of our Government fund efforts to prevent gun and gang-related violence and provide tools to police to better investigate these difficult crimes. Installing CCTV cameras in Ottawa's downtown core would be a positive first step that would assist the Ottawa Police during investigations, as well as giving the public an increased sense of safety. Gangs are currently operating with impunity because they know members of their own



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community generally fear reporting their activities and there is little likelihood the police have the resources they need to surveil them.

CCTV surveillance has been effectively implemented in other locations in Canada and worldwide. Thunder Bay, Ontario spent \$167,500 to create an “Eye on the Street program”, which has 16 cameras in 12 locations, and had been used in 15 convictions as of 2011. It has also helped people in distress according to their city manager. In Toronto, the TTC, has cameras at every station, on every bus and subway train while the Toronto Police Service bought 77 cameras to help police the G20 Summit, and got permission to keep about 50 of them afterwards. In Sudbury, the city began using CCTV in 1996 and now have 17 cameras which police have found discourage crimes, help them with investigations, and in one case, helped police monitor the situation during a hostage situation. They have also helped clear innocent people accused of crimes.

Of course, security concerns must be balanced with privacy concerns, but when homicides are going unsolved, we should refocus our efforts on safety and security. Ashton Dickson’s family believe CCTV cameras will help restore public confidence in law enforcement catching those who are responsible for both property crime and violent crime, at minimum in the downtown core. We believe that the city, province and federal level have a mixed responsibility to fund some measures to address the increasing problem of gun violence in Ottawa. The Ottawa Citizen reported the number of shootings in Ottawa (2013-2017) as 69 in 2017, 68 in 2016, 46 in 2015, 29 in 2014 and 32 in 2013. With the potential passing of the *Safer Ontario Act* in 2018, police will be able to assess risk locally and municipalities will decide what is needed. The municipality and police could target certain areas of the city and install CCTV cameras accordingly, perhaps with some provincial and federal financial supports.

In 2012, Halifax began the Ceasefire Halifax program. This program focuses on high-risk communities identified as being plagued by gun violence. The program treats gun violence as an epidemic, and with that approach, has seen an overall decrease in gun violence since this program was introduced. We wanted to also draw your attention to this program, funded partly by Public Safety Canada, and feel funding a similar community-based outreach program that provides non-violent solutions and administers preventative methods in order to derail potentially violent situations would be an important step in preventing further gun violence in Ottawa.

We hope that the recent loss of such a young lives and the inability, thus far, of the police to arrest those responsible are strong indicators of a need for change. Another innocent life lost to gunfire in our Nation’s capital is simply unacceptable.

Yours Sincerely,

Heidi Illingworth  
Executive Director

Cc Councillor Eli El-Chantiry, Chair, Ottawa Police Services Board