

Honourable Steven Blaney
Minister of Public Safety
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

February 10, 2015

Re: Funding for Circles of Support and Accountability

Dear Minister Blaney,

By attaching my name to this letter, I am supporting the request by Circles of Support and Accountability-Ottawa (CoSA-Ottawa) **that funding for their program from the federal government be continued.**

Correctional Services Canada (CSC) has provided financial support to CoSA-Ottawa since 2002. Early in 2014, CSC gave notice that its funding for Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA) projects would be terminated at the end of March 2014, citing budget constraints as the reason for the termination. We appreciated your intervention last March that resulted in the re-instatement of funding for CoSA for Fiscal Year 2014-15. However, without future funding from the federal government, CoSA-Ottawa is in grave danger of closing its doors, prohibiting them from offering service to 11 men currently in their program and an estimated five men who will be released in the coming months. Without the support of CoSA, the risk of further victimization will be greater, and public safety will be compromised.

Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA) began in 1994 in Hamilton, Ontario and has since spread across Canada and the world. CoSA is a unique program that trains volunteers to provide support and accountability for high-risk offenders after their release from prison. Nation-wide, CoSA now has approximately 700 volunteers supporting the crime-free re-integration of 150-200 sexual offenders each year.

CoSA has proven to be an effective crime prevention initiative. To date, four studies demonstrating the effectiveness of the CoSA model have been published in peer-reviewed journals, all of them showing a reduction in the rate of sexual and other reoffending among CoSA participants. The recently published evaluation of the 5-year National CoSA Demonstration Project, which was funded by your Department through the National Crime Prevention Centre, adds to the growing body of international research on CoSA programs. This evaluation, along with similar research, indicates that CoSA is an important tool in the reintegration of high-risk, high-needs sexual offenders in Canada and plays an essential role in reducing sexual victimization and keeping communities safe. We know that you are interested in "new ideas to keep our communities safe." CoSA is a primary example of such a program - it should not be abandoned by the federal government.

The funding that CoSA has received from CSC and your Department is important. It demonstrates that Public Safety Canada is a partner with CoSA in the shared goals of public safety and effective offender reintegration, and recognizes that CoSA is an effective community-based program that achieves these goals. As well, federal funding for CoSA provides credibility that helps CoSA leverage funding from other sources.

While CoSA-Ottawa actively seeks funding from other sources, it does not have stable funding for its core program. **I request that you confirm funding for CoSA-Ottawa to ensure that this effective, cost-effective crime prevention program continues.**

Signed,

Contact Info
