

I am writing to you on behalf of Circles of Support & Accountability (CoSA) Canada to ask for your public support for a small expenditure that is likely to prevent a significant number of sexual offences and victimizations in Canada. CoSA Canada needs your support for \$2.5 million dollars per annum in the upcoming Federal Budget. As Mayors of several Municipalities across Canada, we believe CoSA's programs will enhance public safety by ensuring a reduction in offender recidivism thereby preventing further victimization.

CoSA Canada addresses a critical issue affecting all our cities – the traumatic impact of sexual assault and other sex offences on vulnerable people and the crucial need for **effective prevention strategies**. By offering community-based, volunteer led circles to people convicted of sex offences who are designated high risk when released from prison, CoSA represents a vital link in **reintegration** programming for this population. CoSA may be the only option for those who have committed sexual offences released at warrant expiry to access **support while being held accountable for their actions** as they adjust to returning to the community.

The CoSA model, built on **restorative justice principles**, has been proven effective with diverse populations, including **Indigenous, Black, and other people of colour**. The CoSA model is attentive to the harm of **systemic racism** by focusing on the experience of each unique individual. It is a model that works equally well in urban, rural, and suburban contexts in both official languages.

The research is overwhelmingly clear: A 2018 study demonstrated that participating in the CoSA program significantly reduced sexual recidivism, **lowering the risk for new sex offences by 88%**. Twenty-eight studies in several countries show that CoSA dramatically reduces reoffending. Supporting and expanding CoSA prevents further sexual victimization.

CoSA's current operations can be maintained for a very small investment of **\$1.5 million** dollars annually. But other Canadian communities can benefit from CoSA's programs to reduce recidivism. With **\$2.5 million**, CoSA could expand its existing programs and launch new sites to meet increasing demand and prevent even more offences.

CoSA Canada will complete a five-year Public Safety Demonstration project in March 2022. This funding has enabled CoSA to develop a national office, strengthen its network of 15 local sites serving 18 Canadian cities and establish itself as a key criminal justice partner both nationally and internationally. We are working hard at all levels including, federal, provincial, municipal, and the private sector, to diversify our funding sources. But unless funding beyond March 2022 is secured, **25%** of the 15 sites risk

closure and the remaining sites face a **reduction in programming**. Approximately **100 individuals would no longer be able to receive our services**. CoSA's impact and sustainability are on the line.

The federal government has demonstrated its commitment to **reducing recidivism** with all party support by passing Bill C228. Bill C228, *The Reduction of Recidivism Framework Act*, received Royal Assent last June 2021 and contains specific measures to reduce recidivism through a comprehensive strategy.

CoSA is a unique example of a community-based, cost-effective, non-profit organization that succeeds in meeting the measures contained in Bill C228 by having a proven approach and standardized, evidence-based programs that reduce recidivism, prevent further victimization and promote safe and healthy community reintegration of those who have committed sexual offences. Much of the hard work is done – **but funding is needed to continue**.

Finally, in his Mandate Letter, the Minister of Public Safety, the Hon. Marco Mendicino, was tasked to *“Develop a Federal Framework to Reduce Recidivism in consultation with provinces, territories, Indigenous communities, Black communities and other stakeholders. As part of this work, consider how to ensure that federal correctional institutions are safe and humane environments, free from violence and sexual harassment, and promote rehabilitation and public safety.”* Again, funding CoSA Canada represents a significant milestone in achieving that specific mandate.

We, the undersigned, recognize the valuable contribution that CoSA has made in promoting the safe and healthy reintegration to the community of individuals who have served sentences for sexual offences, and we strongly support further funding of CoSA programs in Canada. Most importantly, it will contribute to the **prevention** of further sexual offences and victimizations across municipalities in Canada.

Yours Sincerely,