



The Honourable
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July 13, 2023

Reference No.: 478167453

The Honourable David Lametti
Minister of Justice and Attorney General
Department of Justice Canada
284 Wellington Street
Ottawa, Ontario

Dear Minister Lametti:

I am writing to urgently ask that you take immediate action on bail reform and to reduce recidivism.

As you are likely aware, Edmonton has a disproportionately high number of correctional facilities servicing a larger region, and recent murders highlight the continued importance of ensuring that people leaving the criminal justice system have an integrated release plan and the necessary resources to support their successful reintegration into the community.

The importance and urgency of this is underscored by another devastating tragedy in our city. Rukinisha Nkundabatware, a husband and father of seven was senselessly murdered this past week at an Edmonton transit station in a random attack while on his way to meet a friend. The person who is believed to be responsible has been charged with second-degree murder and three counts of breaching bail conditions. The alleged suspect was supposed to be under 24 hour house arrest but at the time of this horrific incident, he was unhoused and living rough on the streets in a tent not far from Belvedere Transit Centre. I struggle to comprehend why someone who could be a risk to others was released into our city without a plan in place to ensure they would not reoffend. We must prevent these senseless tragedies from occurring in our city. I am devastated that another Edmonton family has to go through this unimaginable loss, and that seven children have to grow up without a father. This should have never happened.

This recent tragedy comes two months after an Edmonton mother and child were brutally murdered just outside of a local elementary school in a random attack. The individual allegedly responsible was known to police, had a history of violence and had been in and out of prison for decades. The same is true for the accused who is alleged to have killed two men in Edmonton's Chinatown in 2022. The accused in this case was released into our community without support or an integrated release plan. This is a crisis that requires your immediate attention.



Edmonton is experiencing a significant rise in crime severity, between 2021 and 2022, the city's violent crime rate increased by 16.5 per cent. The Edmonton Capital Region has a high concentration of correction and remand centers: two provincial remand and correctional facilities, a youth facility and four federal correctional facilities — three of which are within Edmonton's boundaries. According to Statistics Canada, Edmonton, along with Saskatoon and Regina, has one of the highest number of parolees per capita of Canada's major cities. Between 2020 and 2023, 3,647 individuals were involved in 19,186 police occurrences after being arrested and released for an initial violent offence, including 26 homicides.

Given this data, it is clear that bail reform is an essential tool to address the challenges we are facing in Edmonton. I am optimistic to see the amendments proposed in Bill C-48, to create new reverse onus conditions for repeat violent offenders, use of firearms and intimate partner violence, and requiring the court to consider an accused person's history of convictions of violence. However, the federal government needs to ensure this bill goes to second reading as soon as possible. Given the urgency of this matter to the lives and safety of Edmontonians, action needs to be taken on this immediately.

Bail reform is an urgent and necessary action the federal government can take to address increasing violent crime rates in Edmonton; however, there also needs to be a systematic review on preventing recidivism. For over a year, I have been advocating that there needs to be better support to ensure that individuals with complex mental health and substance use issues have an integrated release plan and the resources necessary to support their successful reintegration from government-run correctional and health facilities. In Alberta we know that Indigenous people continue to be significantly overrepresented in correctional facilities, and so any amendments to bail reform must be accompanied by integrated supports for those whose release from remand or corrections is appropriate, to ensure they are able to reintegrate into society and contribute.

The system is failing Edmontonians and lives are being lost. The challenges that Edmonton is facing requires a systemic response, and the reforms needed to the criminal justice system exist in a broader community safety and wellbeing ecosystem that needs to be strengthened. This includes increased investments in prevention, reducing recidivism, responding to mental health and substance use crises, and providing adequate affordable housing.

Like other major urban cities across the country, Edmonton is also dealing with a drug poisoning crisis and increased social disorder due to a lack of adequate supportive housing and health-related supports, including mental health and addictions services. Responding to the drug poisoning crisis places enormous pressures on our emergency protective services, including police officers, paramedics, peace officers, firefighters and social agencies.

Safety is a top priority for City Council and we are dedicated to taking action through our [Downtown Core and Transit Safety Plan](#) - we are doing everything we can to keep people safe. We have increased and stabilized funding to the Edmonton Police Service, hired additional

transit peace officers and funded the Healthy Streets Operation Centre located in Chinatown to improve safety in the Downtown core, Chinatown, and other nearby business districts.

The Government of Alberta has stepped up to help ensure that Edmontonians are safe by deploying 12 Sheriffs to assist EPS, providing funding for an additional 50 EPS officers, increased funding to Human-centered Engagement Liaison Partnership teams and to the Police and Crisis Teams and provided funding for increased cleaning in our transit systems and throughout our downtown core.

Earlier today, I spoke with Dale McFee, Chief of the Edmonton Police Service and we are in agreement that we need to take immediate action on bail reform and to reduce recidivism to make our city safer for all of us. This crisis requires policy and systemic change to fix a broken system.

I have a meeting scheduled with Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Services, Mike Ellis, tomorrow morning to discuss how the City and the Government of Alberta can continue to work together to reduce crime and improve public safety in Edmonton.

I will be following up with your office to set up an urgent meeting in Edmonton with myself, Edmonton City Council, Government of Alberta and the Edmonton Police Service to discuss ways your government can help to mitigate this crisis.

The City of Edmonton is doing everything it can within its jurisdiction to improve public safety. I strongly urge the federal government to do the same.

Yours truly,

A. Sohi

Honourable Amarjeet Sohi
Mayor, City of Edmonton

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