

PRESS RELEASE
Petition Launched to Free Canada from Violence

A broad group of Canadians is calling on the public to [sign a petition](#) to free Canada from violence. They include victim advocates, public health, faith-based communities, social justice, municipalities, and academics.

Rev. Frances Deverell led the creation of the petition saying “now is the time for Canada to invest in proven prevention strategies”. Shannon Turner, National Co-Chair of Prevention of Violence Canada which joined as a partner, affirmed that “it is past time that Canada adopt World Health Organization recommendations and invest upstream in prevention to stop violence and trauma before it happens rather than responding after the harm is done”.

Public policies that tackle the root causes of violence, such as poverty reduction, education, and health, are essential to stop violence. Accumulated evidence shows that programs focused on tackling the risk factors for violence before it happens is more effective and cost-effective than the status quo of police, courts, and incarceration. But Canada is not using this evidence. Canadians are victims in 2.2 million violent incidents in a year. These disproportionately impact Indigenous Peoples and other vulnerable groups.

These harmful incidents create trauma, suffering, and pain that have devastating impacts physically, psychologically, spiritually, and financially on victims. The total annual cost of crime is estimated at \$55 billion a year in harm to victims and \$22 billion in criminal justice response through police, courts, and prisons. Priscilla de Villiers, Executive Director of the Victim Justice Network, argues that “strong leadership to invest in proven programs to achieve measurable goals will free Canada from this victimization”.

The programs that are scientifically proven to reduce violence, often at 50% better than the status quo, include curricula to improve life skills and attitudes to violence, parenting support, youth outreach, conflict resolution, mentoring, training, and opportunities for jobs. “These strategic actions will require adequate and sustained funding equivalent to 10% of current federal expenditures on the status quo”, said Irvin Waller, Professor Emeritus at the University of Ottawa and author of *Science and Secrets of Ending Violent Crime*.

Cities require support to assess local challenges, implement multi-sectoral plans, and train officials and practitioners. Canada has much to learn from successful cities such as Glasgow in Scotland.

The petition calls upon the Government of Canada to:

- Make Canada safer for all, by using evidence-based interventions to significantly reduce violence
- Engage with vulnerable groups to develop violence prevention strategies
- Establish a permanent office for violence prevention, reporting to the Prime Minister, to spearhead actions across all relevant ministries, in partnership with the provinces, territories, municipalities, and Indigenous Peoples, and ensure significant, measurable reductions in victimization
- Redirect the equivalent of 10% of current federal expenditures on policing, courts, and incarceration towards adequate, sustained funding for effective local prevention programs

For media inquiries, please contact Frances Deverell, Retired Unitarian Minister and advisor to the Canadian Unitarian Council on Violence Prevention, at frandev66@gmail.com.

The petition can be accessed here: <https://petitions.ourcommons.ca/en/Petition/Details?Petition=e-3218>

For more information on the petition, a backgrounder is available at <http://irvinwaller.org/2021-03-petition-backgrounder-final/>.