Re: Tackling Gun Violence in Our Communities

Over the past few years, Canada has experienced a troubling increase in gun violence across the country. In neighbourhoods that are affected and communities that are particularly vulnerable, gun violence has had a dramatic negative affect on all aspects of quality of life.

I am disturbed and saddened by the number of incidences that we have experienced across Toronto, and in Davenport.

Gun violence has taken far too many lives in Canada, and the time for action is now. Our federal government has taken notice of this issue and we are using every option available to support law enforcement and local communities in efforts to curb rising violence across the country – particularly in our cities – through enforcement, intervention, and prevention by way of the following actions:

- The federal government is investing $86 million for the RCMP to combat gun smuggling and keep Canadians safe.
- We have made a commitment to ban and introduce a buyback program for all military-style assault rifles legally purchased in Canada. We are also working with provinces and municipalities to ban handguns.
- Our government has invested millions and committed an additional $200 million for community-level prevention and enforcement – over five years – to give money directly to cities so that local police departments can tackle gun violence in their own communities. In Toronto, some of this money will be used for a targeted approach to tackle violence in over 30 key areas.
- We will also work to expand successful diversion programs to keep at-risk youth out of the criminal justice system.

It is important to note that the gun violence we have been experiencing in this country has been a symptom of other issues such as poverty, inequality, and racism. When our communities are empowered and have access to opportunities, they suffer less from violent crime. Tackling gun violence starts, first and foremost, with addressing the serious and systemic root causes of the issue. In an effort to do so, our federal government has funded and established a variety of initiatives in support of a multifaceted approach to keeping our communities safer.

- In 2016, we introduced the Canada Child Benefit (CCB) to help those on the lower end of the income scale provide the best start in life for their children. The CCB has lifted over 800,000 Canadians out of poverty, including 325,000 children. Earlier this year we increased CCB for a second time and it is now helping 9 out of 10 Canadian families keep up with the rising cost of living.
- In order to ensure every Canadian has access to a safe and affordable place to call home, our government has introduced a National Housing Strategy with an investment of over $55 billion in Canada’s Housing sector. Over $7 billion has already been invested since 2015, with $1.3 billion given directly to Toronto Community Housing.
This strategy and the investments associated with it will create more housing for those in need, lift more Canadians out of poverty, and cut homelessness in half.

- In early 2019, we introduced the Canada Workers Benefit (CWB) – a strengthened, more generous, and more accessible benefit that will allow low-income workers to take home more money while they work. Everyone who qualifies for the CWB automatically receives it when they file their taxes. Click here for more information.

- As part of the Youth Employment and Skills Strategy, our government has increased funding and has doubled the number of summer jobs available to youth. Providing more opportunities for youth to develop important skills and enter the workforce can decrease the chance that young people in our communities will turn to crime.

- We live in an open and diverse country, but many in Canada still face systemic racism and discrimination. A few months ago, the federal government launched Canada’s Anti-Racism Strategy with an investment of $45 million to support policies, initiatives, and practices that are meant to contribute to a commitment and a foundation for change in addressing racism and discrimination in Canada. For more information, click here.

I know that all of these funding figures and initiatives can seem abstract in the face of a problem that affects us so deeply, but I want to you know that our government takes the problem very seriously and is working every day to deliver real solutions. There is still so much more to do in the effort to address gun violence, and it is incumbent upon all of us to hold our communities, organizations, and all levels of government to account as we work together to address this issue. I will not rest until everyone in Davenport can feel safe.