

## **Embracing Hope - Building Communities**

As Torontonians who share a common vision for our city that is guided by the principles of justice, equality and respect for all people, we believe everyone in our society deserves to live in safe, secure and healthy communities. When violence strikes a community, we all suffer. To end violence, our challenge lies in embracing solutions that strike at its core.

A surplus of research shows us there is more than one way to stop violence from infecting a community. The most successful way to avert crime is a concerted effort to get at the root causes of violence.

Too many young people, notably black youth and racialized communities, are being scapegoated and misrepresented. This only feeds into the cycle of violence. While effective law enforcement is a place to start, a more balanced response is needed to fix the underlying systemic conditions that contribute to violence in our communities.

Our increasingly diverse racialized youth, who experience isolation and see no hope for the future are at greatest risk of violence. Unless governments of every jurisdictional level take full responsibility to adopt urgent measures to redress the underlying social conditions of systemic inequality in its many forms, violence in our communities will persist.

We need every order of government and community organizations in all sectors to unite in an ongoing commitment to work together to build an inclusive and caring society by investing in our youth, in our communities, and in our social infrastructure.

We know what is needed - communities where everyone enjoys an equal opportunity to succeed; where young women and men are entitled to an equal chance to learn, play, and grow; where everyone has access to a clean and safe environment, with decent and affordable housing, recreational, and learning opportunities.

Toronto's summer of violence challenges us to enact high impact, evidence-based interventions and public policy measures that advance fair and equitable economic opportunities and create good jobs that pay a living wage, while providing support for those who need additional help to succeed. Further, we need to embrace a comprehensive, youth-focused strategy that revolves around youth-led organizations.

This final element is crucial: the time has come for a community-based approach that ensures those communities most affected by violence have a direct say in the political, social, and economic decisions that directly affect them. They hold in their hands the knowledge Toronto needs to find its way.

Belonging. It's a simple word that holds immense power. By giving every one of our neighbours a sense of belonging, a ray of hope, a real opportunity to prosper, we can make a difference. We can plant seeds of hope, rather than allow violent crime to take even deeper root. We -- as a community committed to fairness, unity, and well-being -- hold that power. We, the undersigned, are united in this belief.