



ELGIN GROUP POLICE SERVICES BOARD

Municipality of Bayham | Municipality of Central Elgin | Municipality of Dutton Dunwich

Municipality of West Elgin | Township of Malahide | Township of Southwold

February 10, 2023

The Honourable David Lametti
Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada
6023 Monk Blvd. Montréal, Quebec
H4E 3H5

The Honourable Marco Mendicino
Minister of Public Safety
Confederation Building, Suite 203
House of Commons Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6

Dear Minister Lametti and Minister Mendicino:

I write to you in my capacity as Chairman of the Elgin Group Police Services Board to urge immediate action from the federal government to improve Canada's bail system for the protection of the public and our heroic first responders. Fueling our call for reform is our experience with the bail system that quickly returns people accused of crimes to the community only to see them regularly and willfully disregard their release conditions.

There is a growing call nationwide for systematic changes to prevent accused persons on bail from committing further criminal acts. The justice system needs to keep anyone who poses a threat to public safety off the streets, not only to protect our first responders, but also to protect our community as a whole. This protection starts with meaningful changes to the *Criminal Code*, an area solely within the federal government's jurisdiction.

In making this call to action, we understand that bail legislation must balance the rights of the accused, as outlined in Canada's *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, with public safety and confidence in the criminal justice system. We also recognize that the imposition of restrictive bail conditions can lead to social marginalization and criminalization and can make it difficult for some individuals to complete their bail without breaching conditions.

We understand that focusing solely on bail reform in isolation is unlikely to enhance public safety. Instead, we urge you to consider the following:

- 1.) Quick decisions on bail: This will help reduce the amount of time accused people spend in the community before they serve their sentences.
- 2.) Ready access to community resources: Homelessness, mental health issues, substance and addiction issues all make access to bail and adhering to bail conditions very challenging.

Corporation of the County of Elgin
c/o Elgin Group Police Services Board
450 Sunset Drive
St. Thomas, Ontario N5R 5V1

- 3.) Enhanced funding for bail supervision programs: These programs can be a cost-effective way to monitor accused people with higher risk or needs in the community and can help connect individuals with the resources and services they need.
- 4.) Inter-agency collaboration: Enhanced communication and collaboration among social service agencies, courts and police will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of bail.
- 5.) Data collection of bail statistics: Collecting meaningful data will help make evidence-based responses.

We believe that these recommendations will help strengthen Canada's bail system and enhance public safety, while also upholding the rights of accused individuals.

Sincerely,



Dave Jenkins
Chairman
Elgin Group Police Services Board

Cc: Karen Vecchio, MP – Elgin-Middlesex-London
Rob Flack, MPP – Elgin-Middlesex-London
Local Municipal Partners
Elgin Group Police Services Board