

Communities at Risk Backgrounder

Ensuring the basic security of its citizens is one of the most important functions of any government. After extensive consultations conducted last summer by the Liberal Caucus Task Force for Security Funding for at-Risk Communities, it is the Liberal Party's conclusion that the federal government has an important role to play in protecting the fundamental right of all Canadians to feel safe.

In 2005, the Liberal government developed Canada's very first national strategy to combat racism. The programs under this strategy focused on education and cross-cultural understanding as critical to combating the root causes of hate related violence and vandalism. This initiative was followed by the National Justice Initiative Against Racism and Hate; however, security measures to protect the victims of these crimes are also of critical importance.

For that reason, the previous Liberal government was in the process of developing a further strategy to address the security needs of ethno-cultural places of worship, educational institutions and community centres. Unfortunately, the 2005 election prevented the implementation of that strategy.

Since that time many ethno-cultural and religious organizations have expended significant funds on security measures to protect places of worship, educational institutions and community centres, or have identified the need for such expenditures without the resources to implement them. Many ethno-cultural and religious communities that have committed significant resources to secure their facilities have had to redirect resources from delivering core services to their communities. In many other cases, organizations do not have sufficient resources to implement needed measures to secure their facilities and reassure community members of their personal safety.

There remains a critical need for a federal program to provide financial assistance to Canadian ethno-cultural and religious communities to support security measures for ethno-cultural places of worship, community centres and educational institutions. The Task Force's consultations made it clear that these identifiable facilities require additional support beyond that provided through existing government programs.

While some communities already have some sense of the cost related to the needs identified above, others have yet to quantify those costs. It is always difficult to balance competing demands on the finite resources of the federal government. However, it is clear that the \$3-million pilot project announced last summer by the Conservative government is woefully insufficient to address this problem.

We will carry on with the work began in 2005 by the previous Liberal government with the first Canadian National Strategy to Combat Racism and National Justice

Initiative Against Racism and Hate. A new Liberal government will implement the natural extension of those strategies with a \$75-million program under the department of Public Safety Canada to provide federal support for security measures implemented by at-risk not-for-profit organizations related to ethno-cultural or religious places of worship, educational institutions or community centres.

Given the previous Liberal government had made great progress toward developing such a program when the election was called in 2005, and that the prospect of a future security fund should not encourage further delay of security measures while funds are brought on line, eligibility for funding under the program will be extended to projects undertaken from November of 2005 forward.

PROGRAM DETAILS

1. A \$75-million Security Program will be established under the department of Public Safety Canada to provide federal support for security measures implemented by at-risk not-for-profit organizations related to ethno-cultural or religious places of worship, educational institutions or community centres.

- A Security Assessment and Audit Program will be developed to ensure national standards for risk and security assessments and to create an approved list of accredited security professionals authorized to provide Security Audits for facilities covered by the Security Program. Organizations applying for federal funding under the Security Program will be required to conduct a Security Audit as part of the application process. However, the cost of Security Audits will be an eligible expenditure under the Security Program.
- Applicants will be eligible for security grants amounting to no more than 50 per cent of the total cost of security measures outlined in a Security Audit to a maximum contribution by the Government of Canada of \$250,000 per facility.
- Eligible expenditures under the Security Program will include the cost of renovations, security hardware or equipment put in place for security measures identified by a Security Audit and for related training costs.
- Applications will be assessed on the basis of both program criteria and need.
- Eligible projects must either be proposed new security measures or applicable measures undertaken no later than November, 2005.

2. A Communities at-Risk Review Board will be established comprised of department officials, insurance industry representatives, security experts and community representatives to review program criteria regularly and recommend improvements, as well as, monitor results of the program and report to the public annually through the minister responsible.