



Open Letter COVID-19 kills; so do violent criminals

May 20, 2020

COVID-19 kills; so do violent criminals

For the last two months, Canadians have shown incredible determination to keep our communities safe. Canadians have unquestionably understood that public health is a shared responsibility.

As life gradually returns to normal, we urge Canadians to renew their participation in public safety. The COVID-19 crisis offers a unique opportunity to make our communities even safer.

Every year, thousands of Canadians are victims of violent crime, such as murders and sexual assaults. In 2018 alone, 651 Canadians were murdered. While the majority of violent crimes result in arrests by our police services, thousands of warrants for violent suspects remain outstanding across the country. Dangerous fugitives pose a threat to our communities, and they must face justice.

Since 2018, the Bolo Program and its Crime Stoppers and law enforcement partners have deployed unprecedented efforts to encourage Canadians to be on the lookout for dangerous fugitives. Millions of Canadians have been reached, hundreds of tips have been gathered, and arrests made. The Bolo Program has even offered rewards of up to \$100,000 for any information leading to the arrest of some fugitives.

But many of Canada's most wanted fugitives remain at large. And the COVID-19 crisis has not spared them.

Standing in line and facing security checks to enter stores makes fugitives very uncomfortable, even if wearing a mask. Criminal activity, such as drug dealing, has been seriously disrupted, leaving them with very few options to sustain themselves. And frequently changing locations to evade justice is no longer sustainable, making them even more nervous.

In short, their already rather complicated lives have become more so. Together, we stand a better chance of locating them.

To fugitives, we want to say: Everyone is on the lookout for you, so just do the right thing. Call a lawyer and turn yourself in.

To those harboring fugitives: There's only one right thing to do, for you, the fugitive and your community. The next time you are alone and in a safe place, call the police or Crime Stoppers.

To victims of violent crime and their families: We stand with you and will stay the course to keep our communities safe and bring you closure.

To our law enforcement officers: We all recognize the opportunity for fugitive investigations the current crisis offers. Investigative actions that did not bring results two months ago may be highly conclusive now. The Bolo Program and Crime Stoppers are here to help you seize these opportunities.

To our fellow Canadians: There are no bad tips. If you think you know something about the whereabouts of a fugitive, call the police, or Crime Stoppers if you want to remain anonymous.

Let us all be on the lookout together for Canada's most wanted, now more than ever, to bring our police officers more tips, to bring victims the closure they and their families deserve, and to keep our communities safe.

And if you are wondering how to be on the lookout with more and more people wearing face masks, go to boloprogram.org to find out.

Linda Annis, Executive Director, Metro Vancouver Crime Stoppers
Max Langlois, Director, Bolo Program
Sean Sportun, Chair, Toronto Crime Stoppers