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November 25, 2007

Chief William Blair
Toronto Police Service
40 College Street
Toronto, ON
M5G 2J3

Dear Chief Blair:

I am writing to ask you to impose an immediate moratorium on the use of tasers by the Toronto Police Service.

Over 300 people have died in North America in the past six years after being shocked with this weapon by police officers. In Canada alone, the number of reported deaths has now risen to 19. A number of those deaths have occurred in the past two years amidst suggestions of multiple or prolonged taser discharges. This, in spite of the fact that an August 2005 study commissioned by the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police warned that "police officers need to be aware of the adverse effects of multiple, consecutive" taser discharges on human subjects.¹

There are a number of other disturbing reports of the improper use of tasers by law enforcement officers across Canada that are detailed in two studies published by Amnesty International in 2004² and 2007.³

¹ Canadian Police Research Centre, *Review of Conducted Energy Devices. Technical Report TR01-2006*, August 22, 2005, page 18 and page 34; see also British Columbia Office of the Police Complaint Commissioner, *Taser Technology Review Final Report, OPCC File No. 2474*, June 14, 2005, pages 31-32, and Cronin, James M. and Joshua A. Ederheimer (U.S. Department of Justice Office of Community Oriented Policing Services and Police Executive Research Forum), *Conducted Energy Devices: Development of Standards for Consistency and Guidance*, 2006, page 23

² *Canada: Excessive and Lethal Force? Amnesty International's concerns about deaths and ill-treatment involving tasers* (AI Index: AMR 20/002/2004), pages 9-13

³ *Canada: Inappropriate and excessive use of tasers* (AI Index: AMR 20/002/2004), pages 9-12

In many of the documented cases, tasers were used against civilians who were already detained in custody, sometimes in handcuffs, and often under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

In the last five weeks three men have died in this country after they were tasered by law enforcement officers in British Columbia and Nova Scotia. At the beginning of this month, the *Toronto Star* reported that a man who had been tasered by a Toronto Police officer on October 27th was seriously injured and had to be hospitalized after he was hit in the eye by the taser's probe. These incidents raise serious questions about the safety of these weapons, and the training received by the police officers who use them. As a matter of sensible risk management I expect that the Toronto Police Service would want to re-examine its taser policy during a moratorium.

Torontonians deserve immediate action and leadership from their police force on this issue. Only an immediate moratorium on the use of tasers will ensure that they continue to have full confidence in their city's police officers.

Yours truly,



Frank Addario
President