

Centretown residents fundraise for Haiti

By Robyn Farrow
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Emotionally charged fundraising events are being held across Centretown in the wake of the Haitian disaster.

A vigil and service open to people of all faiths was held January 24 at Christ Cathedral Church on Queen St. The service brought together members from across the community, including several MPs and the Anglican Bishop of Ottawa.

Ottawa Centre MP Paul Dewar did not attend the service but will be using art to help fundraise for the country.

"Our hearts need to open at this time," said Shane Parker Dean of Ottawa for the Anglican Church, "soften and open, if not break and open."

The 7.0 earthquake, which struck on Jan 12, has led to a death toll of hundreds of thousands on the Caribbean island including 21 Canadians.

Bev Oda, the federal minister responsible for foreign aid, spoke at the service. Oda reaffirmed the government's commitment to match every dollar fundraised by Canadians.

The event was held a day after Prime Minister Stephen Harper's announcement to lift the cap on relief aid from the Canadian government.

"Canadians can be proud of their response to help those in need," said Oda.

Both the Haitian and Canadian national anthems were sung by the crowded church and candles were lit to represent Haiti and the world standing by the country's side.

The service was accompanied by The Cathedral Choir of Men and boys as well as a bagpiper.

Donations were accepted for the World Relief and Development Fund of the Anglican Church.

"Today, not only did [Canadians] dig into their pockets, but they opened their hearts," said Ottawa-Orleans MP Royal Galipeau, who described the singing at the service as an example of the passion felt by Canadians.

Music and poetry are also being used to encourage people to give. Within days of the horrific earthquake, Babylon nightclub in Centretown put together a last minute fundraising event of artists with strong Haitian connections.

Ingrid Windsor, known as Oni the Haitian Sensation, is a slam poet from Ottawa who helped organize and performed at the event.

She said in an email that it was a success. The Ottawa artist raised over \$20,000 in two events. She is hoping to raise a million dollars.

"Everyone is doing something to help," she said "whether it's on Parliament Hill or in a daycare."

Dewar is partnering with Cube Gallery, in the city's West end, and Canadian artists to put on the event.

Works of art will be donated and sold at price or auction. Submissions must be confirmed by Feb 5.

"If you're an artist, consider donating your work" said Dewar in an email. "It's great art and the funds go to an important cause."

He said the idea came from AfrikArt Konnection, a group of local artists.

The sale will take place Feb 9 with a reception starting at 6 p.m and the auction starting at 9 p.m.