

The Church Council on Justice and Corrections



Le Conseil des Églises pour la justice et la criminologie

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Standing Committee on Finance
Sixth Floor, 131 Queen Street
House of Commons
Ottawa ON K1A 0A6

Attn: Guyanne Desforges

Dear Ms. Desforges,

The Church Council on Justice and Corrections (CCJC) wishes to endorse the recommendations recently made by the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies (CAEFS) to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance, as part of the Pre-Budget consultations for the Government of Canada's 2012 budget.

Previous studies and a multitude of evidence tell us that the government's proposed omnibus crime bill will not bring about safety for our citizens but will rather off-load significant social problems to the prison system while reinforcing violent behaviour as a result of the nature of incarceration itself.

We encourage Minister Toews to consider the spiritual humanity of victims, society and offenders alike to be of common concern in formulating a new justice system; a system which concerns itself with the issues of poverty and sexual and domestic assault, which significantly influence the criminal behaviour of female and male inmates.

A recent study from the Economics Department of the University of Western Ontario researched the cost of child abuse in all its forms and found that the cost is close to 16 billion dollars per year in Canada alone to respond to child abuse. This included judicial costs topping up at \$616,685,247 (for policing, court trials, Legal Aid, the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board and penal costs including incarceration, parole and statutory release). As the authors note, "The cost to society in general is significant".

The CCJC believes this statement echoes a more Restorative Justice conviction, that the cost to

+community, the third and often silent partner in restoration, is ignored when violent behaviour in adulthood, as a result of early sexual and physical assault, is presented as if occurring in a vacuum. Instead, the harm of such early abuse seriously affects the lives of a majority of prison inmates.

“Audra Bowlus, one of the study's co-authors and professor in Western's (University) Department of Economics, says ‘A well-planned investment of substantial public funds in early detection, prevention and treatment of child abuse would significantly benefit victims.’ ‘An interesting aspect of economic costing is that it often provides a middle ground on which both fiscal conservatives and anti-violence activists can meet,’ says Tanis Day, an independent consultant who also co-authored the report. Both can agree that something that affects society so negatively and to such an extent must be prevented.”

The study is available to the Minister to read at:

http://www.lcc.gc.ca/en/themes/mr/ica/mckenna/mckenna_toc.asp

We endorse, in principle, the Societies' recommendation for social accountability and the establishment of some governance entity such as a national women's governance committee, with the ability to enter, monitor and report on the adherence of women's prisons to the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and Canada's international obligations.

We echo as well the urging by the Societies “that the Omnibus crime bill not be tabled or passed as it now exists but rather that tax dollars are spent instead on public housing, child care, pensions, health care (including mental health), public education, services for victims and other social needs”. Investing public monies in these areas directly contributes to the health and wellbeing of those who otherwise may turn to a life of crime to sustain their needs.

Respectfully Submitted,

Janet Handy
Executive Director
The Church Council on Justice and Corrections