



Mennonite Central Committee Canada

Office of the Executive Director
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The Honourable Dominic LeBlanc, P.C., M.P.

Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions, and Intergovernmental Affairs
House of Commons Canada
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

September 21, 2023

Dear Minister Leblanc,

On behalf of Mennonite Central Committee Canada (MCC), I congratulate you on your newly appointed cabinet position as Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions, and Intergovernmental Affairs. I offer you our prayers as you continue to govern. We look forward to working together.

As a worldwide ministry of Anabaptist Christian churches, MCC works to share God's love and compassion in the name of Christ by responding to basic needs and working for peace and justice, in Canada and around the world. Our faith calls us to imagine and work for a world where all can live at peace with God, with one another, and with creation.

In Canada, MCC works on restorative justice in communities and prisons to help strengthen relationships based on respect and responsibility. We encourage healthy ways to respond to harm and conflict and break cycles of violence.

Out of this work, MCC encourages the Government of Canada to fully fund the implementation of the Reduction of Recidivism Framework Act (RRFA) and the Federal Framework to Reduce Recidivism (FFRR). This includes funding in the amount of \$1.5 million a year to Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA) Canada, including proportional funding to circles that operate in Francophone settings.

As you seek to reduce budgets, we encourage a strong focus on the cost effectiveness and sustainability of supporting already existing community-based services and programs with demonstrated positive results

Community-based alternatives have existed since Confederation and have proven evidence of success. These include community service orders, diversion, reconciliation circles, attendance centres, encounter programs, and s.84 placements in Indigenous communities. These measures make existing conditional release programs significantly more effective at reducing recidivism.

Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA) is a community-based response to men who have committed one or more sexual offences and are being released into the community without adequate support to assist them in reintegration. CoSA is guided by the primary aim of no more victims and works towards creating safer communities. Existing research (Wilson, Cortoni and McWhinnie, 2009)

demonstrates that sexual re-offending rates for men who participate in CoSA are 80% lower than for men who do not participate in CoSA.

We also encourage continued investment in community-based restorative justice mechanisms and supports to reduce the overrepresentation of Indigenous peoples within the justice system. Individuals are more likely to become criminalized if they have insufficient or inadequate resources. Without financial stability, reliable shelter, and access to food and health supports, other windows of opportunities close, leaving people with few meaningful choices. As such, it is critical that the federal government work with provincial, territorial, and voluntary sector partners to provide greater opportunities and resources that will reduce systemic barriers and will facilitate rehabilitation and reintegration.

We look forward to further engagement with you and your colleagues over the coming months. Be assured of our prayers and support as you carry out this important work.

Respectfully,



Rick Cober Bauman
Executive Director
Mennonite Central Committee Canada

CC: Rt. Hon. Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada
Pam Damoff, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety
Raquel Dancho, Shadow Minister for Public Safety, Conservative Party of Canada
Peter Julian, Critic for Public Safety, New Democratic Party
Kristina Michaud, Critic for Public Safety, Bloc Quebecois
Elizabeth May, Co-leader, Green Party