



**Mennonite Central Committee Canada**

Office of the Executive Director  
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**The Honourable Arif Virani, P.C., M.P.**

Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada  
House of Commons Canada  
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

September 21, 2023

Dear Minister Virani,

On behalf of Mennonite Central Committee Canada (MCC), I congratulate you on your newly appointed cabinet position as Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada. I offer you our prayers as you continue to govern. We look forward to working with you and your team.

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 in over 45 countries 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.

The Department of Justice has an important role to play in this work and we eager to find ways that we can support you in carrying out your mandate of working for a just and fair Canada. We have appreciated the way that your department has worked with other departments, especially to amend the Canadian criminal code to allow for a humanitarian carveout so that aid agencies can continue to program in Afghanistan following the takeover of the Taliban in August 2021.

We encourage continued collaborative approaches with your fellow Ministers to ensure Canada is a place where justice is practiced, at home and in all our international activities.

As you continue to engage in criminal justice reform here in Canada, we encourage a continued focus on addressing the overrepresentation of Indigenous peoples, especially Indigenous women, currently within Canada's criminal justice system.

We ask your department to continue to implement the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action #25-42, to reduce the over-representation of Indigenous peoples in the correctional system. We ask you to ensure that *Gladue* rights for Indigenous people are supported, by funding *Gladue* courts and training for *Gladue* report writers, as well as coordinating nationwide *Gladue* programming. While overall incarceration rates continue to fall in Canada, including for Indigenous offenders, the proportion of Indigenous offenders in federal correctional facilities continue to rise. The [incarceration rate of Indigenous persons](#) was 8.9, or about 9 times higher than for non-Indigenous persons in 2020/2021.

There is no nationwide coordination of *Gladue* programming, and not all provinces and territories provide full *Gladue* services such as *Gladue* courts and specialized *Gladue* report writers. Even in jurisdictions where programs have been established, *Gladue* reports are not necessarily provided for all Indigenous offenders, due to a lack of resources and awareness. There are also a limited number of *Gladue* court report writers and insufficient funds to meet the demand for the reports. This shortage can result in inadequate *Gladue* reports, a pre-sentence report with a minimal *Gladue* component, or the lack of a *Gladue* report altogether.

We also encourage fulfillment of the National Action Plan to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People's Act, in consultation with Indigenous stakeholders. We recognize the work ahead to ensure that all levels of government in Canada respect Indigenous Peoples' right of self-determination, including the right to free, prior, and informed consent. We acknowledge that critical issues of land, sovereignty, governance, and restitution still require urgent attention and express our support for this important work.

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  
Hon. Rob Moore, Shadow Minister for Justice, Conservative Party of Canada  
Randall Garrison, Critic for Justice, New Democratic Party  
Rhéal Fortin, Critic for Justice, Bloc Québécois  
Elizabeth May, Co-Leader, Green Party