

Expand Opportunities for Prisoners, Make Communities Safer

Anonymous Prisoner 2

There are many barriers that prevent prisoners from accessing opportunities that will ultimately make the communities to which most will eventually return safer. I focus on three such barriers below and propose ways to address them for the benefit of all living in Canada.

THE PRISONER PAY SYSTEM

The pay for prisoners has never been adjusted for inflation from rates of pay established in the 1990's (Shook, 2018). In fact, there has not been a change to pay levels for 30 years (ibid). To add insult to injury, a few years ago the previous Conservative government went further to cut prisoners pay by a third to pay for this new 'Room and Board Tax' (ibid). When governments look to save money, why tax the very poorest people in our country? What they should do to save millions is audit every single guard that is being paid over-time. Does this not raise any red flags? If I was CEO of a company and nearly everyone on the payroll was being paid overtime, I would have some serious questions. It is past time that someone asked these questions. The other day I was listening to two guards laughing about earning 32 hours of overtime that weekend alone. If the government was able to account for those costs and take about 1% of that money it could go to pay for normal decent wages to the working prisoners in our country.

MORE OPPORTUNITY FOR PRISONERS BEING RELEASED

There is no real support being given to prisoners being released after long periods in prison. Why does the current government believe that it is a good idea to release people back into society with no support, money or anything to help them successfully reintegrate? The Liberals need to cancel all of Harper s projects and help prisoners. Many of these people have no community support, no money (because of the pay-grade situation described above), and no way to start to rebuild their lives from scratch. These prisoners are moving into neighborhoods across Canada. Do you not think it would be wise for the new government to spare a few extra bucks to help these people reintegrate into society? The current government has less than three years to answer that question.

CANADA MUST ADOPT BILL-251

Canada needs to abolish mandatory minimum sentences. This is the core of Senate Bill 251 (Senate, 2019). It is a logical, legal, and compassionate way to fix one of the many problems with our judicial system. I truly hope that this issue of *JPP* is read by those that really need to read it: politicians in both chambers of parliament, officials in the Department of Justice, employees of CSC, journalists, university students, progressive groups, along with everyone and anyone else who can read. You the reader have a very important responsibility to get this issue of *JPP* out to the people and read widely.

REFERENCES

- Senate of Canada (2019) “Bill S-251 - *An Act to amend the Criminal Code (independence of the judiciary) and to make related amendments*”, 42nd Parliament, 1st Session.
- Shook, Jarrod (2018) “Trudeau government should rethink how it pays prisoners”, *Ottawa Citizen* – February 1. Retrieved from <https://ottawacitizen.com/opinion/columnists/shook-trudeau-government-should-re-think-how-it-pays-prisoners>

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