



Anglican Church of Canada

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February 28, 2011

The Right Honourable Stephen Harper
Prime Minister
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa ON K1A 0A2

Dear Mr. Prime Minister:

Greetings.

I would like to add the voice of the Anglican Church of Canada to the expressions of concern that you have already received from Canadian Christian leaders concerning new directions in corrections and prison. I am concerned about the government's plan to build new prisons at a time when crime rates continue to decrease and critical social service programs are being cut.

When a crime occurs, victims, offenders, their families and the public are all affected. Even in the small percentage of cases for which the perpetrator is identified and convicted, incarceration alone does not meet victims' needs for healing and reparation or increase the community's safety. Your policy would apply a costly prison response to non-violent offenders or repeat offenders who are mentally ill and/or addicted, the majority of whom are not classified as high risk. These offenders require treatment, health services, educational, employment and housing interventions, all of which are less expensive and more humane than incarceration. Increased funding for programs of this nature is absolutely urgent and critical.

As you know, research shows that increasing levels of incarceration of marginalized people is ineffective in reducing crime and undermines offenders' ability to become contributing members of our society. Research also proves that measures such as well supervised probation or release, bail options, reporting centres, practical assistance, supportive housing, and programs that promote accountability, respect and reparation are effective in reducing recidivism. Their outcomes have proven to be the same or better in terms of re-offense rates, at a fraction of the cost and with much less human damage. I urge your government to invest in them to a much greater extent.

In keeping with the call of the Holy Scriptures to be in relationship with one another, and in the face of harms we cause one another and our commitment to the work of contrition, reconciliation and restoration to healthy relationships; in accord with the social policies of the Anglican Church adopted by its General Synod; and in solidarity with the Church Council on Justice and Corrections and its position on these matters, I respectfully ask you to modify your government's policy. In doing so please consider

the extent to which it honours the principles of restorative justice. I look forward to hearing your response.

In the meantime, please be assured of my prayers for you, for the Members of Parliament and all whom you govern.

I am respectfully yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Fred J. Hiltz". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Fred J. Hiltz
Archbishop and Primate

cc.

Liberal Party:

Hon. Michael Ignatieff

Hon. Mark Holland, Critic for Public Safety

Bloc Québécois:

Hon. Gilles Duceppe

Hon. Maria Mourani, Porte-parole en matière de sécurité publique

NDP:

Hon. Jack Layton

Hon. Don Davies, Critic for Public Safety