

The Anglican Church of Canada



L'Église anglicane du Canada

Office of the Primate

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October 26, 2012

The Honourable Vic Toews, PC, MP
Minister of Public Safety
House of Commons
Ottawa, Canada K1A 0A6

Dear Minister Toews,

As the spiritual leader of the Anglican Church of Canada, I write to you to seek an equitable and effective way forward with respect to interfaith chaplaincy in our correctional institutions.

The longstanding partnership of chaplaincy and Correctional Services Canada (CSC) has served the country well, especially in regard to the "Transformation Agenda" adopted by CSC in 2008. The high priority placed upon creating secure environments, efficient intake processes and integrated correctional programs is assisted to a high degree through the continuing partnership with the chaplaincy.

Chaplains offer invaluable services to offenders, staff, and the community at large through spiritual and pastoral care, education, and specialized programs to help equip offenders for life beyond their prison walls and for their successful reintegration as full and productive members of Canadian society. This lies at the heart of the correctional plans developed for each offender. As stated by The Church Council on Justice and Corrections, chaplains "remind both offenders and staff of their shared humanity...facilitate faith communities...bringing hope to all people." The internationally acclaimed Circles of Support and Accountability, piloted by the Canadian Correctional Services Chaplaincy, stands as an example of their creative contribution to a safer Canada.

As is the case with our military chaplains, correctional chaplaincy is responding to a growing diversity in the prison population by including religious support from many faith traditions primarily through part-time arrangements.

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The decision to cut all part-time chaplains will have a detrimental effect on the functioning of the prison chaplaincy program and risks having a de facto discriminatory effect. Value for taxpayer dollars needs to take into account the importance of providing adequate chaplaincy services to meet the needs of a changing and diversified Canadian population, something that contributes to the overall good and safety of the Canadian public.

Minister, I would ask you to reflect further upon this decision. Its implications are significant and far-reaching. The Anglican Church of Canada is a trusted partner in working with you and others towards a well-functioning and cost-effective chaplaincy for Correctional Services Canada, an equitable approach that responds adequately to the diversity of the Canadian population, and one that is respectful of all faith traditions.

We look forward to having the opportunity to engage with you and other faith partners in seeking a way forward.

Sincerely,

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

The Most Reverend Fred Hiltz
Primate of the Anglican Church of Canada

cc The Right Honourable Stephen Harper, Prime Minister