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Dear Friend,

These are tough times for advocates of social justice. "Getting tough on crime" is all the rage, though the best evidence speaks against it. Cutting through the rhetoric to demand "evidence-based" responses to crime is always a challenge. All the more so now, when politicians seem intent on importing the worst of what *doesn't work* from our neighbour to the south via the new *Tackling Violent Crime Agenda*. In fact, it's the bewildering absence of any mention of "what works" that tips off the real *Agenda* here: the triumph of ideology over good social policy.

Imagine. Canadians are about to embark on a prison building binge that - by 2018 - will have cost billions of dollars but will not have made communities safer. We will be directed down this path despite the fact that peer-reviewed evidence, produced in Canada by government salaried, world class researchers warns that growing the rate of incarceration is a waste of taxpayers dollars; that community-based rehabilitation programs are more cost-effective, humane and just; and that the structural causes of crime might actually get worse as prison infrastructure consumes resources for evidence-based crime prevention alternatives.

That's why I'm writing. We in Canada are embarking on a grim social experiment to see if filling prisons and "cracking down on crime" does more than punish those who are already marginalized, stigmatized and disadvantaged. That's the REAL effect of getting tough because, while the rhetoric might sound appealing, the reality is that the burden of increased criminalization falls disproportionately on those least able to defend themselves. The young. The mentally ill. The illiterate. The Aboriginal young, marginalized and illiterate, whose families and communities have been savaged by 500 years of conquest.

Building more prisons and filling them up doesn't make us safer. Not every problem can be fixed with a hammer.

"Doesn't work?" you ask.

Not very well, if history is any guide. "Prisons," mused the former Home Secretary of England, "are an expensive way to make bad people worse." Warehousing the violent with the non-violent, burning up their time in idleness and boredom, and hoarding them into concrete and steel cellblocks, turns even the more redeemable among them into alienated and disaffected cynics.

What **does work** are community-based crime prevention programs that give people a chance to develop

PATRON / PRESIDENTE D'HONNEUR

Her Excellency the Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean C.C., C.M.M., C.O.M., C.D., Governor General of Canada
Son Excellence la très honorable Michaëlle Jean C.C., C.M.M., C.O.M., C.D., Gouverneure générale du Canada

pro-social behaviours and attitudes, to get and keep jobs, to learn life skills and integrate into society in a meaningful and productive manner. **These policies are not "soft", they are simply "smart".**

That's the evidence of history and our long experience working on the front lines of prison reform in Canada.

The John Howard Society in Canada had the seed of its beginning almost 140 years ago in the local jails of Toronto. Its **modern form was crafted by the Chief of Police for Toronto in the midst of the Great Depression.** The John Howard Society became formally established in 1931 in British Columbia. **Today, the Society has a presence right across the country, through a network of over 60 locally governed offices.**

It is because of this history and experience that we are called upon to engage in discussions at the national level on issues relating to criminal justice. Our policy analysis is strengthened by what we have learned in the field.

The John Howard Society of Canada supports the work of our highly skilled, professional staff and dedicated volunteers through research, information sharing and professional development. **We provide a strong and sustained voice for a reasoned, effective, and humane justice system based on the evidence of "what works".**

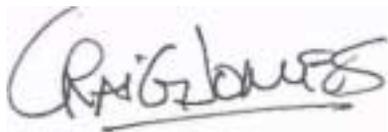
Your contribution to the John Howard Society of Canada will enable us to advocate for many of the things that do reduce crime - things that actually make a difference in the lives of offenders and their families: programs for young offenders and adults, literacy programs, life skills programs, **employment training**, community-based substance-abuse programs, counseling, and aftercare for people who have been released from the correctional system. There's a lot we can do to prevent crime -evidence-based, just, effective and humane.

Now, more than ever, it would appear to be up to us.

Please show your support by returning the enclosed coupon with a contribution to the Society.

Thanks in advance for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Craig Jones". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Craig Jones, PhD
Executive Director

P.S. Your vision and leadership will help to ensure that criminal justice in Canada is based on the best evidence of what works.