

A Crime Reduction Board for Canada

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It is proposed that Parliament add a short amendment to C-10 to create a permanent Crime Reduction Board for Canada.

The purpose of the Crime Reduction Board for Canada is to reduce crime and harm to victims of crime in Canada by promoting the comprehensive implementation of effective pre-crime prevention programs and fair services and rights for victims of crime.

The Board would be a permanent office that will achieve its purpose, *inter alia*, by:

1. Providing leadership to federal action;
2. Collaborating with the Provinces and other relevant entities to agree and implement a national strategic plan and long term framework;
3. Gathering and analyzing practical knowledge in order to foster widespread application of effective and cost efficient programs;
4. Developing national standards and ways to foster practices and guidelines that meet those standards;
5. Monitoring achievements in reducing crime and harm to victims and making recommendations for additional actions.

Violence Prevention Protects Canadians from Becoming Victims and Harm

The World Health Organization has reviewed the scientific studies on what prevents violence. It asserts that violence is preventable, not inevitable, and recommends investing significantly in proven and targeted pre-crime prevention and services for victims of crime. - WHO, 2004, 2009, 2010

The Minister has framed the Act by calling attention to the 440,000 violent crimes and 1.3 million property crimes recorded by the police in a year. He also cites the \$83 billion that Justice Canada estimates crime costs victims of crime. He has called for quick action to reduce the number of victims and harm done to them.

A permanent Crime Reduction Board for Canada would ensure investment in those actions known to stop Canadians from being victims of crime. It would bring services for crime victims to international standards. Pre-crime prevention is well established as an effective and cost efficient way to reduce victimization and prevent violence. Less crime and violence means less harm to victims, less costs to taxpayers and relief from heavy workloads for police, lawyers and corrections.

Crime Prevention in Canada

Two out of every three Canadians prefer to lower crime through additional funding for education and jobs rather than more police and prisons. - Gallup, 2004;

We know of the proven success of many positive pre-crime prevention programs in reducing the numbers of victims of crime. The World Health Organization has identified programs for which there is strong evidence, such as helping teens at risk complete school, controlling the abuse of alcohol and improving parenting. Indeed, Public Safety Canada includes many of these programs on its website.

But we do not need to just look abroad. We have our own compelling success stories that come from cooperation between police, youth services, academics, insurance companies and more.

In Winnipeg for instance, the number of victims of car thefts have been significantly reduced by an [Auto Theft Suppression Strategy](#) that combines smart enforcement, victim protection and pre-crime prevention. Since 2005, the investment of \$50 million has been recovered with \$40 million saved each year to taxpayers and likely much more in reduced harm to victims.

We can look to south-western Ontario, where sexual assaults are proven to have been reduced by an innovative new curriculum in schools called the [Fourth R: Relationship-Based Violence Prevention](#); This program is being used more and more across Canada but could be used yet more to significantly reduce the number of women who are victims of violence.

But to spread prevention, you have to have a permanent high level leadership centre. This would be the role of the Crime Reduction Board, which must spearhead a national framework, collaborate with provinces, municipal government, police agencies and much more. It must develop national standards and foster Canadian entities learning from each other's successes.

The United Nations knows that. But so does Alberta who has a comprehensive, permanent and evidence based crime reduction and community safety strategy balancing smart enforcement, treatment programs and effective pre-crime prevention. This strategy is framed in terms of reducing the numbers of victims of crime and harm to victims.

Saskatchewan announced a similar framework in September. Their association of chiefs of police praised the initiative for using intervention and prevention in collaboration with partner agencies ...(to) significantly enhance our chances of success. But these Provincial initiatives need a strong and high level federal partner.

In Scotland, the police for Glasgow turned to a public health vision to reduce harm to victims. Today, the national [Violence Reduction Unit](#) is a permanent agency of the Scottish executive established in 2006. It has demonstrated more than 50% reductions in violent crime through a combination of smart enforcement and pre-crime prevention.

England and Wales legislated its Youth Justice Board in 1998 that has demonstrated significant reductions in youth crime from extensive use of pre-crime prevention, known as youth inclusion programs. Their proven success with 70 projects led to spreading the programs more widely.

Federal Role in Crime Prevention and Victim Services

"If locking up those who violate the law contributed to safer societies, then the United States should be the safest country in the world." Horner Committee, 1993

The Conservative led parliamentary committee (Chaired by Horner) in 1993 recommended the appointment of a senior official responsible for crime prevention policy and program development and a significant investment in prevention (equivalent to 5% of what is currently spent federally) as an essential part of efforts to reduce crime in Canada. The Liberal led parliamentary committee in 1996 repeated the recommendation for 5%.

Currently, the federal role in crime prevention is the responsibility of the National Crime Prevention Centre (NCPC), which is only headed by a director general in the secretariat of Public Safety Canada. Its website echoes many Canadian and international projects known to have been effective in pre-crime prevention. The NCPC is not well known to the general public, is extraordinarily limited in funding (recently cut back to 1% of federal spending on criminal justice - approx \$50 million out of total federal CJ spending of \$5 billion or more), and primarily re-tests proven programs. This proposal would strengthen and upgrade the NCPC to a federal Crime Reduction Board for Canada as proposed by the Horner Parliamentary Committee.

In 1998, the parliamentary committee on *Victim Rights – A Voice, Not a Veto* recommended a fully funded Office for Victims of Crime. Within Justice Canada, the Policy Centre on Victim Initiatives (PCVI) does not have the status and funds proposed by the committee. There is also the important Federal Ombudsman for Victims of Crime (FOVC) created in 2007. These have supported important innovations for victims of crime but much more is needed if rights and services for victims of crime in Canada are to be enhanced to meet international standards. The proposed Crime Reduction Board for Canada would strengthen and upgrade the PCVI and combine it with federal efforts to implement effective prevention (but would not change FOVC).

Finances

Prevention programs such as those teaching parenting or helping kids at risk to complete school reduce crime for one seventh of the cost of incarceration. - Rand Corporation, 1994;

If the federal government matched every additional dollar for prisons with an additional dollar for prevention and victim rights, Canada would have significantly fewer victims of crime and so would have alleviated harm to crime victims.

Canadian taxpayers are already shouldering a growth in expenditures on policing from \$8 billion in 2002 to \$12 billion in 2008, much of this born by municipalities. Provincial correctional systems are already building prisons to hold the growing number of inmates detained before trial that has grown from 5000 in 1995 to 13 000 in 2010.

Legislation in the last four years has provided an extensive range of measures to incarcerate persistent offenders for long periods of time. For instance, the changes to the Dangerous Offender section in the Criminal Code enables a more extensive group of offender to be held for life. The truth in sentencing act and other legislation already approved is expected to increase

costs at the Provincial level and the Federal level. Some of these will indeed provide protection to potential victims of crime but what is needed is a smart balance between enforcement, treatment and prevention.

The Minister of Justice justifies the increased costs as small compared to the cost of crime to victims but would it not be better to provide federal leadership to preventing violence and so having fewer victims and less harm through a permanent Crime Reduction Board for Canada.

Less crime and violence means less harm to victims, less costs to taxpayers and relief from heavy workloads for police, lawyers and corrections. It means our municipal, provincial and federal taxes can be used for our economic and social prosperity. Why not add an amendment for a crime reduction board in C-10 to make our streets, schools and families significantly safer?

Irvin Waller

Irvin Waller has been a full professor of criminology at the University of Ottawa since 1982 and is currently President of the International Organization for Victim Assistance.

He has published in many major languages, including two recent and influential books for (potential) victims, taxpayers and legislators – the first called *Less Law, More Order: The Truth about Reducing Crime* (available in five languages) and the second called *Rights for Victims of Crime: Rebalancing Justice*.

Irvin Waller authored the first and extensive evaluation of the prison and parole system in Canada in 1973, was a member of the Solicitor General's task force that reorganized parole in 1974, and was a director general in the Solicitor General of Canada in the 1970's, working on the peace and security package that initiated the proven firearm certification and the original dangerous offender legislation.

In the 1980's, he won US and international awards for his pioneering work and advocacy that led to the UN GA adoption of the resolution that recognized human rights for victims of crime (Declaration of Basic Principles of Justice for Victims of Crime and Abuse of Power).

In the 1990's, he became the founding director general of the International Centre for the Prevention affiliated with the UN based in Montreal. He has won recognition from a number of countries for his work on effective crime prevention. He is regularly invited to comment on policies that will reduce crime and assist victims in Canada and abroad.

Read more at www.irvinwaller.org