

Honourable Members of the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee
The Senate of Canada

Re: Bill C-10

Dear Sir or Madam:

I am writing to you on behalf of the Social Justice Committee of the Ontario Association of Social Workers (OASW), Eastern Branch to seek your support for changes to Bill C-10, which is now being reviewed by your Committee. OASW Eastern Branch represents approximately 400 social workers who work and/or live in eastern Ontario,

Members of OASW Eastern Branch share with many other community service groups and organizations and, indeed, many members of the public, a deep concern about measures contained in the omnibus Bill C-10, *The Safe Streets and Communities Act*. Overall, we have concerns about the effect of this omnibus bill to create more prisons and incarcerate more Canadians when experience in the United States, in some Canadian provinces, and elsewhere has clearly shown that incarceration is an ineffective way to reduce crime. Further, incarceration is very expensive and does nothing to address the effects of criminal activity on victims.

Our initial position on Bill C-10 was to call for retraction of the omnibus bill in order to allow for debate on the nine individual bills contained in Bill C-10. In our view, this would have been the most democratic way to bring in new effective measures to reduce crime and assist victims of crime in Canada. However, although this view was brought forward to the Commons Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights by the Canadian Association of Social Workers and by other credible organization, it was not the decision of the House to approve that change. In light of that fact, we respectfully urge you to consider two other measures that would greatly help to mitigate some of the potentially negative effects of Bill C-10, as it now stands.

1. The Canadian Coalition for the Rights of Children has raised specific concerns about Part IV of Bill C-10. This section would bring major changes for young people who come into conflict with the law without there having been an opportunity for full debate on the merits of these changes. The Canadian Coalition for the Rights of Children is calling for Part IV of Bill C-10 on youth justice to be extracted from the omnibus bill and

considered separately through a full public debate on youth justice in Canada. This proposal also has the full support of Campaign 2000.

2. Another possible way of mitigating the negative aspects of Bill C-10 has been proposed by Irvin Waller, Professor of Criminology at Ottawa University, who has researched thoroughly the issue of crime, its causes and the most effective ways of reducing it. This proposal was presented to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights. To quote Prof. Waller:

“Being tough on criminals without being tough on causes is tough on potential victims and taxpayers. Pre-crime prevention is not only proven to make Canadians less likely to be harmed by crime but does it faster and more cost effectively than adding prison time to lengthy prison sentences.”

What Professor Waller has proposed is that an amendment to Bill C-10 to create a permanent and cost-effective “crime-reduction board” to lead the federal government’s efforts to prevent crime, reduce victimization, and promote victims’ rights. We believe that concern for the rights of crime victims is shared by all representatives, both in the Commons and in the Senate; a crime reduction board would promote victim rights. It would also, Prof. Waller points out, meet the demands of fiscal critics for spending tax money smartly, while using evidence-based programs to achieve the goal that has universal support in both Houses and in the country, i.e., a reduction in crime.

We urge you to consider the merits of these two proposals for amendments to Bill C-10 and to make recommendations for these changes to the Senate.

We would appreciate a response to this letter, explaining what position you take regarding our suggestions when Bill C-10 is being studied in the LCJC Committee.

Yours sincerely,
Margaret Nelson, Chair,
Social Justice Committee, OASW Eastern Branch