



October 3, 2008

RE: Church Council on Justice and Corrections Questionnaire

Attached please find the response of Canada's New Democrats to your 2008 Election questionnaire. It is the policy of our party to respond on behalf of all New Democrat candidates.

To find out more, we encourage you to consult: www.ndp.ca

Thank you for your interest in the views of Canada's New Democrats on the critical issues facing Canadians.

We appreciate your efforts to help voters make an informed decision on voting day.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Jack' in a cursive style.

Jack Layton
Leader of Canada's New Democrats

1. If legislation is proposed to expand mandatory minimum sentences to more crimes, how will you vote and why?

Any new piece of legislation would have to be examined on its individual merits and whether it was consistent with our commitment to do more to protect our communities, and attack the roots of violent crime. Canada's NDP does not believe that the changes to the Criminal Code or the indiscriminate application of mandatory minimums alone are effective means to safeguard our communities. We maintain that handguns have no place on the streets of our cities and during the last session of Parliament we supported the use of targeted mandatory minimums to address organized crime, gun smuggling, gang-related and violent gun crimes.

2. Would you support a move away from sentencing policies in Canada requiring more prisons? Why? How would you propose to change the current direction?

We are committed to enacting effective prison and sentencing programs to reduce the number of repeat offenders and end the 'revolving door' syndrome, to build up restorative justice opportunities, and to increase training, rehabilitation and drug addiction programs within the justice system.

3. Are you aware of examples of restorative justice programs, (victim offender mediation, community justice circles, family group conferencing etc)? What would you and your government do to promote them, make them more available to the public, make sure they receive sufficient funding?

We are aware of the many restorative justice programs that have met with success throughout the country and around the world and while the administration of these programs falls under provincial purview, we are committed to providing sufficient federal government funding for prevention and awareness campaigns focused on solutions to violence in our communities. In our fully costed platform, we have allocated \$175 M for crime and gun control initiatives which would include community based restorative justice programs as well as a further \$75 M to A Violence Against Women Program and Shelter Support.

4. Do you agree with the need to support problem-solving court approaches? What would you and your government do to secure stable funding for them and to promote their wider application?

New Democrats are committed to working with the provinces and territories to ensure the administration of justice is swift and fair and that our provincial court systems are adequately funded.

5. What strategies do you believe are the most effective for preventing crime? How would you and your government redirect more resources to initiatives that address social problems and other root causes?

Canada's New Democrats believe that the way to build a safe community is through the avoidance of crime, and the development of a healthy community. Toward that end, we are committed to increased federal government funding for community based prevention and awareness campaigns. We also recognize that lack of opportunities, education and social services contribute to increased crime rates and as such will intend to create a year-round youth employment and skills development program delivered through a pan-Canadian network of youth centres. The program will promote skills enhancement, community development, sports, culture, and recreational activities. Its aim would be to divert youth from a path of crime by creating high quality jobs, career opportunities and active involvement by young people in their communities.

6. What would you and your government do to provide better services and care to victims of crime?

In collaboration with provinces and territories, Canada's New Democrats would give domestic violence cases higher priority in the administration of justice, and improve counselling and therapeutic services for abused women and other victims of crime.

We would also aid the victims of crime by ensuring adequate funding for the criminal injuries compensation system, in cooperation with provinces and territories.

As well we are committed to increased federal government investments and support for family shelters for victims of violence and crime.

7. Why is Canada still putting so many Aboriginal people in prison? What would you and your government concretely do to reduce this?

Canada's NDP recognize that the Aboriginal people are disproportionately represented in our criminal justice system and in part this is attributable to poverty and the disadvantaged circumstances that confront our First Nations, Métis and Inuit citizens. Canada's NDP is committed to investing \$5 billion over five years in First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities. This will improve health services, help provide adequate housing, water, and infrastructure to include traditional healing, nutrition, fitness, addiction

treatment and suicide prevention. This commitment will help build the foundation to end poverty.

We will implement aggressive new efforts in education and training of First Nations children, youth and adults. We will respect Ottawa's fiduciary obligations and encourage the participation of public and private sectors with the federal government in skills training initiatives.

We will help develop community economies by providing infrastructure so First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people can fully participate in the Canadian economy. We will enhance access to capital, skills training and natural resources, and remove the punitive 2% funding cap instituted by the Liberals and maintained by the Harper Conservatives.

In addition Canada's NDP will implement Jordan's Principle to guarantee First Nations children are not hurt by jurisdictional disputes between governments. In 2007, the New Democrats introduced the "Jordan's Principle" bill. The bill was passed unanimously by Parliament.

We will work with the First Nations, Metis and Inuit to create restorative justice and healing approaches that provide indigenous youth better opportunities and choices.

Ensure that Residential School survivors left out by the current agreement are fairly compensated.

Respect the inherent right to self-government by accelerating settlement of final agreements, and fairly and equitably implementing existing agreements.

Legally recognize the legitimacy and jurisdiction of indigenous governments.

Immediately ratify the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. We will reverse the Conservative and Liberal governments' refusal to sign the Declaration. We will ensure its provisions are properly respected in Canada and incorporated into Canadian law.

Engage with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit women and appropriate organizations to ensure that their rights and personal safety are assured.

8. Why is Canada still putting mentally ill people in prison? What would you and your government concretely do to reduce this?

Canada's New Democrats will work with the provinces, law enforcement and public health care providers to make available more resources for the diagnosis and treatment of Canadians suffering from mental health problems.

9. Do you support maintaining a provision for the safe release of prisoners at a time when their reintegration into communities can still be supervised?

New Democrats would support action to bring about more effective prison and sentencing programs including safe release initiatives.

10. For the record, if changes are proposed to the Youth Criminal Justice Act to increase the number of youth held in custody, how will you vote?

As previously stated, any new piece of legislation would have to be examined on its individual merits and whether it was consistent with our commitment to do more to protect our communities, and attack the roots of violent crime. New Democrats believe, however, that indiscriminately increasing the number of youth held in custody would be inconsistent with our commitment to public safety and promoting the active involvement by young people in their communities

11. How do you react to the question of seeking clemency for Canadians facing execution in other countries? For the record if the issue of a return to the death penalty in Canada were to be raised, how would you vote?

New Democrats oppose the use of the death penalty everywhere.