



**M S C M**  
Montreal Southwest Community Ministries

# THE SOU'WESTER

MONTREAL-SOUTHWEST COMMUNITY MINISTRIES

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With the new Federal Budget handed down in March 2012, also being termed by the Conservative government as the Federal Economic Action Plan 2012, many community groups and organizations will be feeling the heat as the months progress. Correctional Service Canada (CSC) is already feeling the pinch with many more cuts to come.

And yet, prisons are being expanded and renovated in expectation of the large influx due to the government's tough-on-crime policies.

Are we doing our part? Are we writing to our MPs with our concerns? Are we getting our voices heard?

We welcome your letters and comments and offer our venue to express your thoughts and opinions.

Contact the Editor at [mscm@sympatico.ca](mailto:mscm@sympatico.ca).

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## TOP COURT RULES

### ABORIGINAL SENTENCING UPHELD

A ruling by the Supreme Court of Canada states the background of violent aboriginal offenders should have a bearing at sentencing likely won't change the landscape of aboriginal crime in Canada.

The country's top court weighed in on the Gladue principle—a directive from Parliament—which asks judges to recognize that a history of colonization, residential schools and cultural repression has affected generations of indigenous men and women, leading to a severe over-representation of aboriginal people in Canada's prisons.

The Supreme Court said

not evaluating the historical context of aboriginal offenders would represent a breach of sentencing guidelines. "Systemic and background factors may bear on the culpability of the offender, to the extent that they shed light on his or her level of moral blameworthiness," the ruling reads.

"Failing to take these circumstances into account would violate the fundamental principle of sentencing—that the sentence must be proportionate to the gravity of the offence and the degree of responsibility of the offender."

The issue stemmed from two very similar cases—one

in BC and one in Ontario. Both men involved had lengthy criminal records and had been designated as long-term offenders. Both were released from jail after serving their sentences and, as a condition of their status, were subject to regular monitoring. Both men were sent back to jail when they broke their conditions and received 3-years from the Ontario and BC courts respectively.

The Supreme Court ruling, however, said it would allow their appeals and substituted the 3-year sentences with 1-year, dismissing the appeals by both the BC and Ontario Crowns.

*Source: Postmedia News*

## LIFELINE PROGRAM SCRAPPED

A \$1.7 million reintegration program, which matches paroled lifers with fellow convicts in a bid to help them readjust to life outside prison successfully, is among the casualties of the recent Federal budget. The Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) had indicated the Lifeline Program will be eliminated by August 31, 2012.

CSC said two reviews conducted in 2009 and 2010 determined there wasn't

enough 'quantitative data' to determine the impact of the program on rehabilitation and reintegration of participants. It was difficult to trace 'positive outcomes demonstrated by an offender' back to the program. As such, the degree to which the Lifeline Program yielded cost-savings through positive institutional and community outcomes could not be established.

The report found 'targeted interventions' were 'strongly needed' to address the unique situation of those

serving life sentences but suggested CSC revisit the way it approaches the need of lifers and how it accounts for Lifeline activities.

The report said there are about 27 people employed by 7 agencies across the country providing Lifeline services, which include interviewing offenders, preparing them for parole hearings, offering crisis intervention and participating in public awareness activities.

*Source: Postmedia News*

## LAVAL INSTITUTION SLATED TO CLOSE RELOCATING LECLERC PRISONERS

*"Let us reform our schools, and we shall find little reform needed in our prisons."*

*John Ruskin*

The medium-security Leclerc Institution in Laval, is home to many rival gang members and organized crime figures and relocating them is a "recipe for disaster", says the prison guards' union.

The federal government's decision to close down the facility along with the Kingston Penitentiary will lead to significant disruptions and create security nightmares, the union warned.

"How are they going to plan and manage those transfers? We don't know," said Union of Canadian Correctional Officers national president Pierre Mallette.

"We know nothing. This is a hastened decision."

He said Leclerc is considered a 'high medium-security' facility, where many high-profile organized crime figures, including Hells Angels bikers, are serving their sentences.

The facility has separate wings for rival gangs to ensure they don't come into contact. But the union said other medium-security facilities in Quebec have open areas where populations mix.

"That is a recipe for disaster," Mallette said.

Moreover, the climate is already tense at the Leclerc

backlash from prisoners left with too much time on their hands. The union says it has 'no information whatsoever' about possible job losses and noted, despite the government's efforts to relocate workers, many will not want to move to a different city.

The Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada, one of the three unions that represent

workers at Leclerc, said 31 people there were given notices that their jobs affected' and could be eliminated.



*Leclerc Institution is home to many notorious crime figures, including members of the Hells Angels.*

facility following the shutdown several weeks ago by federal authorities of the prison's pool that was built and maintained by the inmates since 1984. The decision was made for security reasons, but prison guards fear

Jonathan Huet, Assistant Warden at Leclerc Institution, declined to comment on the closure or provide details about relocation and job losses. Since it opened its doors in 1961, the Leclerc facility has housed a series of notorious Quebec criminals.

*Source: Postmedia News*

## STREAMLINING OFFENDER GRIEVANCE PROCESS

"CSC is streamlining the offender grievance process to produce greater consistency of grievance reviews and to achieve cost savings," CSC spokeswoman Suzanne LeClerc said. Seventeen CSC positions across the country will be affected.

Currently, if an offender has a complaint and it can't be resolved informally, that offender can go through a formal grievance process that starts with the institution, then moves on to regional administrators and then on to headquarters.

That second, regional stage, is the one being eliminated. The streamlining is expected to save the CSC over \$1.5 million.

John Edmunds, President of the Union of Solicitor General Employees, said that the elimination of that process will mean fewer complaints get heard, "and more anxiety and potential violence in institutions."

But Canada's Correctional Investigator, Howard Sapers, who has called the grievance process convoluted and dysfunctional, said that he supports eliminating the second

stage in principle because it will help achieve a fairer, more efficient and less complex grievance system. He also said removing the second stage will create more flexibility to address backlogs in the other stages.

Don Head, Commissioner of the CSC, recently told a parliamentary committee that about 2 dozen federal inmates lodge more than 100 grievances each year with the aim of clogging the system and harassing corrections staff. He said inmates have complained about ice cream being 'too cold' or eggs being 'too small'.

*Source: The Montreal Gazette*

## IN PERSON PROFILE

*The Sou'Wester is pleased to introduce Vanessa, a 3-year volunteer with MSCM and recently appointed as MSCM's Volunteer Coordinator. Vanessa will sit on MSCM's Steering Committee.*

**Q.** Firstly, welcome aboard! Volunteering with **MSCM** over the last 3 years, could you tell us how and why you started?

**A.** I first heard about **MSCM** and Restorative Justice when a former **MSCM** volunteer gave an announcement at my church during Mass one Sunday. Not knowing what to expect, but full of curiosity, I attended an **Open Door** meeting. What I found was a wonderful community of really genuine people who, despite flaws and past mistakes, come together to celebrate each other's humanity. I found it refreshing and inspiring, and it refreshes and inspires me to this day.

**Q.** How do you see your volunteer work fitting in with your career goals?

**A.** Well my career goals lie in the cancer research field so it

doesn't really! The scientific community is at times guilty of being rather disengaged from the rest of society, so my volunteer work keeps me connected with my community and allows me to give back. Ultimately I'd like to leave this world a little better than when I entered it—I guess I've found a couple different ways of doing that.

**Q.** As Volunteer Coordinator what will be your role and responsibilities?

**A.** As Volunteer Coordinator, my primary responsibility is to keep our volunteers connected and active, and be an on-going source of support for them. I will also coordinate the recruitment of new volunteers and help in their orientation.

**Q.** What kind of support will volunteers be provided with?

**A.** All new incoming volunteers will be provided with a general orientation, and a variety of different sessions depending on the work they are interested in doing.

Existing volunteers—don't be strangers! I'm always available for a chat if you ever have any questions, concerns or opinions.

**Q.** Do you have words of wisdom for those thinking of becoming a volunteer?

**A.** Simply words of encouragement to open your minds and hearts to our work here at **MSCM**. Participate in the variety of volunteer sessions when they come up, they are extremely eye opening.

**Q.** How should potential and/or existing volunteers contact you?

**A.** I can be reached at [m scm@sympatico.ca](mailto:m scm@sympatico.ca), or come find me at **Open Door**.

*Editor's Note: Have someone in mind that you would like to see profiled? It's easy! Just give the Editor a nudge, or whisper in her ear and she'll take it from there! Contact the Editor at [m scm@sympatico.ca](mailto:m scm@sympatico.ca).*



Vanessa

*You need to be aware of what others are doing, applaud their efforts, acknowledge their successes, and encourage them in their pursuits. When we all help one another, everybody wins.*

Jim Stovall



*You have not lived  
until you have done  
something for  
someone who can  
never repay you.*

*Anonymous*

Donations of time  
and service are  
also welcome.  
We are especially  
looking for volunteers  
who would be  
interested in  
escorting.

Please contact our offices  
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Please mail your  
cheques to:

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1439 St. Catherine St.  
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## WHO IS THIS?



After stumping most people,  
**The Sou'Wester** is pleased to provide the answer:

**PAULA**

Editor of **The Sou'Wester**, Administrative Assistant and Steering Committee Member for  
**MSCM**.

Congratulations to our winners: Fernand Bessette, Gabrielle and Gordon.

## PLEASE SUPPORT MSCM

**MSCM** is a volunteer organization welcoming ex-offenders back to the community by supporting them in their social, spiritual, social, emotional and practical needs. We foster restoration and accountability and attend to the needs of all those affected by crime.

**MSCM** has relied upon support from the Community Chaplaincy of Montreal (Aumônerie de Communautaire de Montréal) and individual donors like you. The stigma associated with offenders brings financial and other challenges with it. Your contribution helps.

**I support *MSCM and their programs* and am enclosing a donation of:**

☐ \$25      ☐ \$50      ☐ \$100      ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

*Note: Cheques less than \$50 should be made payable to **MSCM**.*

*Cheques greater than \$50 should be made payable to:*

**Anglican Diocese of Montreal, memo: MSCM.**

*Tax receipts will be issued for donations of \$50 or greater.*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

E:mail: \_\_\_\_\_



## THE WINDOW

Two men, both seriously ill, occupied the same hospital room. One man was allowed to sit up in his bed for an hour each afternoon to help drain the fluid from his lungs. His bed was next to the room's only window. The other man had to spend all his time flat on his back.

The men talked for hours on end. They spoke of their wives and families, their homes, their jobs, their involvement in the military service, where they had been on vacation. Every afternoon, when the man in the bed by the window could sit up, he would pass the time by describing to his roommate all the things he could see outside the window. The man in the other bed began to live for those one hour periods where his world would be broadened and enlivened by all the activity and colour of the world outside.

The window overlooked a park with a lovely lake. Ducks and swans played on the water while children sailed their model boats. Young lovers walked arm-in-arm amidst flowers of every colour and a fine view of the city skyline could be seen in the distance. As the man by the window described all this in exquisite details, the man on the other side of the room would close his eyes and imagine this picturesque scene.

One warm afternoon, the man by the window described a parade passing by. Although the other man could not hear the band—he could see it in his mind's eye as the gentleman by the window portrayed it with descriptive words.

Days, weeks and months passed. One morning, the day nurse arrived to bring water for their baths only to find the lifeless body of the man by the window, who had died peacefully in his sleep. She was saddened and called the hospital attendants to take the body away. As soon as it seemed appropriate, the other man asked if he could be moved next to the window. The nurse was happy to make the switch, and after making sure he was comfortable, she left him alone.

Slowly, painfully, he propped himself up on one elbow to take his first look at the real world outside. He strained to slowly turn to look out the window beside his bed. It faced a blank wall. The man asked the nurse what could have compelled his deceased roommate who had described such wonderful things outside his window.

The nurse responded that he man was blind and could not even see the wall.

## THE MAN IN THE MIRROR

If you get what you want in your struggle for self  
And the world makes you kind for a day  
Then go to the mirror and look at yourself  
And see what that man has to say.

For it isn't a man's father, mother or wife  
Whose judgment upon him must pass  
The fellow whose verdict counts most in his life  
Is the man staring back from the glass.

He's the fellow to please, never mind the rest  
For he's with you clear up to the end  
And you've passed your most dangerous, difficult test  
If the man in the glass is your friend.

You can fool the whole world down the pathway of years  
And get pats on the back as you pass  
But your final reward will be heartache and tears  
If you've cheated the man in the glass.

*Found on the walls of a convict's cell.*

### Epilogue

*There is tremendous happiness in  
making others happy, despite our  
own situations.*

*Shared grief is half the sorrow,  
but happiness when shared, is  
doubled.*

*If you want to feel rich, just count  
all the things you have that money  
can't buy.*

*Today is a gift, that is why it is  
called 'the present'.*



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*"Education is what  
survives  
when  
what has been  
learned  
has been forgotten."*

*B. F. Skinner  
American Psychologist*

## **EMPLOYMENT BARRIERS FOR EX-OFFENDERS**

**Editor's Note:** Following *The Sou'Wester's* initial employment barrier—#1 *The Pardons System* published in the March/April issue,—as promised, we are continuing the series outlining the seven recognized employment barriers ex-offenders face in getting hired once out of prison.

### **Employment Barrier #2: Credit and Banking Woes**

Unsettled debts are often symptomatic of prolonged incarceration. But without a good credit score, many employment doors are shut.

Graham Lewis, the Director of Employment Services for St. Leonard's Society's Crossroads program, said the ability to access credit is a big barrier to reintegrating with society and landing a job. "The ability to get a bank loan. The ability to get a cell phone. These are things that we take for granted," Lewis said.

The process of incarceration can happen quickly. Faced with jail time, paying off bills is usually an afterthought for convicts, he said. "They're getting a sentence, so it's the last thing on their mind. At that point, what do they care?" Lewis said. "They don't get the chance to call the cell phone company and say, 'by the way, I'm going to be out of town for 6 months, or 8 months or 2 years.'"

Lewis said the British model could be adapted here, wherein an intermediary contacts the offender to help the new inmate sort out bill and rent payments. "When you're incarcerated in the UK, on the second day, they ask you, do you have an apartment? Where is it? We'll contact the landlord and let them know you won't be there." St. Leonard's and other organizations could potentially fill that role, Lewis said, adding that among his goals is to meet with phone companies to help resolve payments that went overdue while clients were serving time.

"We've had the situation where we've had somebody interviewed, passed the interview process, and on the credit check the employer did, they failed," Lewis said. "So they didn't get the position because of a criminal record. They didn't get it because the person had bad credit."

Although there are no statistics on the pervasiveness of credit background checks by Canadian businesses, the US-based Society for Human Resource Management, which has members in more than 140 countries, released a study in 2010 that found that 47% of employers conducted credit checks for select applicants. Thirteen per cent screened for all jobs, with the primary reasons being risk reduction from theft and embezzlement.

In Kenya, free financial literacy seminars have been shown to help inmates rehabilitate once they have their money management in order. Former inmate, Samuel Egonu said it's the kind of measure that can help people prepare incarcerated Canadians for the outside world once their jail terms wind down. "Hopefully we can take the next step to make some changes and give people a second chance, give people access. Because these days, it's the difference between having credit and not having credit in terms of moves you can make, Egonu said.

In addition, few employers may be willing to hire an ex-convict without a bank account to manage their money. The problem is many people who serve time often leave prison without so much as their prison I.D. and lack the documentation needed to set up a basic bank account.

People don't realize those simple documents often aren't arranged for a felon while he/she is still locked up, said Howard Sapers, Canada's Correctional Investigator.

*Source: Redemption Inc. (CBC.ca)*

## FROM MSCM'S ARCHIVES:

**A FRESH START FOR EX-CONVICTS**

*This article appeared in The Montreal Gazette in 2006.*

It's fine to learn 'life skills' in prison but they're of no use if you can't practice them once you get out, say a group of volunteers who are opening a drop-in centre that will offer friendly contacts and advice.

"When you get out, you are labeled," said the 38-year old prisoner at the Federal Training Centre in Laval. "Whatever you do, in some people's minds you will always be a criminal." That's why this man, serving time in the minimum-security prison for drug-trafficking, thinks it's important to interact with 'normal' people on friendly terms, even while he's still in prison.

He was among 40 people—residents of federal prisons, volunteers from the community and a few chaplains—who recently travelled, some under escort, to a room at the downtown YMCA for a social and educational evening.

The get-together was one of a weekly series organized by a group that has been working to promote interaction between prisoners and the public since 1999. It will take another step in that direction when a drop-in centre, mainly for English-speaking former inmates of federal prisons and their families, officially opens a couple of blocks from the St. Henri Metro station. The public is invited to the open house.

The need for friendly contacts with non-prisoners remains after a prisoner is released, said Mike Curtis, who has been keenly interested in this plight of prisoners since a close friend fell afoul of the law.

"It's fine to learn life skills while you are in prison, but all too often you don't get a chance to practice them once you get out," said Curtis, a volunteer with the Montreal-Southwest Community Ministries.

The drop-in centre at 4123 St. Antoine St. West won't be operating fully until the Fall. But when it's running, it will house the first site of its kind operating mainly in English in Montreal, said Peter Huish, an Anglican prison chaplain and founder of Montreal-Southwest Community Ministries. (The name reflects financial and volunteer support from community and church organizations in southwest Montreal.)

The drop-in centre, to be known as Fresh Start, will offer friendly words and resources to former inmates and others who are lonely or feel the need for friendship or advice, Curtis said.

Montreal-Southwest Community Ministries already organizes visits by volunteers to prisons. It also sets up the social gatherings and support groups that bring together volunteers and recently released inmates.

"Marginalizing and isolating former criminals often leads to their committing new crimes," Huish said.

**Editor's Update:**

*Montreal-Southwest Community Ministries a.k.a. MSCM, celebrated its 10th year anniversary in 2009.*

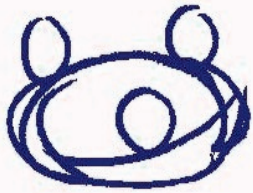
*Open Door (then at the YMCA) celebrates 11 years of life in 2012, and is held every Tuesday evening 7-9 pm now located at 1444 Union (Metro McGill).*

*MSCM's programs include mentoring those who have spent years in confinement and facing the challenges of re-entering society in Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA) and Reintegration Circles and In-Reach programs for those in prison who have no personal resources from outside prison walls work with our member Chaplains who hold weekly chapel activities in the penitentiaries.*

*MSCM is a non-profit essentially volunteer-driven English-speaking organization, working in accordance with the principles of Restorative Justice for a safe community, through the accompaniment and re-integration of those who have served time in a penitentiary.*



*Peter Huish, centre, discusses with offenders issues facing convicts as they leave prison during an Open Door meeting.*



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*One joy scatters a hundred  
griefs.*

*Chinese Proverb*

## WILL YOU MARRY ME?

**T**wo elderly people living in Florida he was a widower and she a widow, had known each other for a number of years. One evening there was a community supper in the big arena in the clubhouse.

The two were at the same table, across from one another. As the meal went on, he took a few admiring glances at her and finally gathered the courage to ask her, "Will you marry me?"

After about six seconds of careful consideration, she answered, "Yes, yes, I will."

The meal ended and, with a few more pleasant exchanges, they went to their respective rooms. Next morning, he was troubled, "Did she say yes or did she say no?"

He couldn't remember. Try as he might, he just could not recall. Not even a faint memory. With trepidation, he went to the telephone and called her.

First, he explained that he didn't remember as well as he used to. Then he reviewed the lovely evening past. As he gained a little more courage, he inquired, "When I asked if you would marry me, did you say yes or did you say no?"

He was delighted to hear her say, "Why I said yes, yes I will and I meant it with all my heart." Then she continued, "And I am so glad that you called, because I couldn't remember who had asked me."



## MIND TEASER

How can you rearrange the letters below into one word?

**E D O R N O W**

— — — — —

*(March/April Issue what word am I? Answer is: Plaintiff)*

## THE LAST LAUGH

- ◆ Acupuncture: a jab well done!
- ◆ A bicycle can't stand alone; it is two tired.
- ◆ You are stuck with your debt if you can't budge it.
- ◆ To write with a broken pencil is pointless.
- ◆ When she saw her first strands of grey hair, she thought she'd dye.
- ◆ A will is a dead giveaway.
- ◆ A boiled egg is hard to beat.