

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

The New Year will bring a major change—the cutting of contracts for all part-time prison chaplains’ in Canada—leaving Quebec without any English-speaking part-time chaplains. This means our volunteers will not have any ‘official’ access to the prison system. **MSCM** has been and will continue to work hard with our many partners to find viable solutions throughout the New Year.

What can you do? You can write your Member of Parliament. It’s free. Here’s how to find yours: [www.parl.gc.ca/Members of Parliament](http://www.parl.gc.ca/Members_of_Parliament). You can also write the Editors of local newspapers and/or leave your comments on our website:

[www.mscm-qc.org](http://www.mscm-qc.org)  
Let our voices be heard!



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# THE SOU’WESTER

MONTREAL-SOUTHWEST COMMUNITY MINISTRIES

**VOLUME 4 ISSUE 5**  
**NOVEMBER/DECEMBER**  
**2012**

## PART-TIME CHAPLAINS TO LOSE PRISON CONTRACTS

**P**art-time chaplains serving at prisons across Canada—including all but one of the non-Christian chaplains currently employed—are reportedly about to lose their jobs.

Public Safety Minister,

Vic Toews, said Jewish, Muslim, Sikh and other non-Christian inmates would have to turn to Christian chaplains for counselling.

The announcement comes after a controversy in September over a tender that was issued for a Wiccan priest for prisons in BC.

Toews quickly cancelled the tender after a report about it emerged.

“The minister has concluded... chaplains employed by Corrections Canada must provide services to inmates of all faiths,” an email from Toews’ office reportedly said.

*Source: Postmedia News*

## CUTTING PRISON CHAPLAINS WON’T SAVE MONEY

**A** decision to cut 49 part-time minority-faith chaplains serving federal inmates across Canada was met with widespread criticism, both inside and outside the House of Commons.

Oppositions MPs accused the government of attacking religious freedom in direct contravention of the Charter of Rights while Jewish, Muslim and Sikh clerics called it a misguided move that’s unlikely to save money or souls.

Meanwhile, Canada’s prison watchdog and the interfaith committee on chaplaincy tasked with advising the government on spiritual issues involved inmates suggest they were left out of the decision-making process altogether and are still trying to ascertain the impact.

“This is not a costly program,” NDP foreign affairs critic Paul Dewar said.

Given the government’s commitment to religious freedom abroad—it announced with great fanfare the creation of an Office of Religious Freedom—Dewar accused the government of being “hypocritical.”

Liberal justice critic, Irwin Cotler, said requiring inmates of other faiths to seek religious guidance from Christian chaplains is ‘clearly discriminatory’ and contrary to the government’s promise not to give some religions preferential treatment.

The prison chaplain program is said to cost about \$6.4 million, \$1.3 million of which covers the part-time chaplains. There are 49 part-time chaplains, 18 of them non-Christian. There are 80 full-time chaplains serving inmates. Beside one imam serving Ontario, the rest are either Roman Catholic or Protestant.

There are also about 2,500 volunteers providing religious services to inmates, something the government

promises to continue. Spiritual services for aboriginal inmates, which are explicitly provided for in the Correctional and Conditional Release Act, are also unaffected by the policy change.

Rabbi Dina-Hasida Mercy had a 17.5 hour/month contract to provide services to Jewish inmates at various federal prisons. From counseling inmates and teaching Hebrew, to leading prayers and consulting with food service personnel about kosher diets, she said she can’t understand how a Christian chaplain can do it all for all faiths.

“Most people think that this is about cost savings,” she said.

A letter-campaign has been underway—the Interfaith Committee on Chaplaincy, representatives across Canada’s civil society, and the International Prisons’ Chaplaincy Association—are just a few examples. There is also an online petition found on [www.change.org](http://www.change.org).

## UN PANEL CITES TORY TOUGH-ON-CRIME AGENDA JUSTICE REFORMS "PUNITIVE" FOR YOUTH

*"Bill C-10  
is excessively punitive  
for children and not  
sufficiently restorative  
in nature" ...*

*In the  
House of Commons,  
Conservative  
parliamentary secretary,  
Bob Dechert lashed out  
at the UN committee  
because one of its  
members is from Syria.*

Source: The Canadian Press

The federal government's tough-on-crime agenda is 'excessively punitive' for youth and is a step backward for Canada's child rights record, says a United Nations group.

The UN committee on the rights of the child has finished a 10-year review of how Canada treats its children and how well governments are implementing the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In particular, the committee says Canada's Youth Criminal Justice Act complied with international standards until changes were introduced this year.

The government's Bill C-10, an omnibus crime bill that includes stiffer penalties for youth and makes it easier to try them as adults, no longer conforms to the child rights convention or other international standards.

"Bill C-10 is excessively punitive for children and not sufficiently restorative in nature," the committee wrote

in a report published mid-October. "The committee also regrets there was no child rights assessment or mechanism to ensure that Bill C-10 complied with the provisions of the convention."

The committee also repeatedly expressed its concern that aboriginal and black children are dramatically overrepresented in the criminal justice system. Aboriginal youth are more likely to be jailed than graduate from high school, the report said.

To meet the standards of the UN convention, Ottawa should raise the minimum age of criminal responsibility and ensure that no one under 18 is ever tried as an adult, the report said. Authorities should also be developing alternatives to detention, writing rules to restrain the use of force against children in detention and to separate girls from boys in jail, the United Nations committee added.

Governments should determine why so many black and aboriginal youth are involved in

the criminal justice system and figure out how to reduce the disparity, the report recommended.

The committee also chastised Canada for failing to provide equal social services to aboriginal children—especially in the realm of child welfare, an issue now before Canadian courts.

It accused authorities of 'serious and widespread discrimination' in the services they offer aboriginal children, visible minorities, immigrants and children with disabilities.

Justice Minister Rob Nicholson rejects the claim that his crime legislation does not comply with the child rights' convention, said his spokeswoman, Julie DiMambro. The legislation was amended to ensure no one under the age of 18 is detained in an adult facility, she noted.

"Our legislation reflects the need to protect society from serious and violent young offenders," DiMambro said.

"It targets the small number of violent, repeat young offenders and its measures are balanced, effective and responsible."

## YOUTH CRIMINAL JUSTICE ACT QUEBEC CENTRES VOW TO STAY THE COURSE

Despite losing a battle with Ottawa over its plan to get tough on young offenders, Quebec's youth centres are vowing to maintain the province's policy of rehabilitation and reintegration, which has led to some of the lowest recidivism rates in Canada.

"Research has shown that just being punitive doesn't bring about the results we need—you have to look at the whole rehabilitation and reinte-

gration aspect," said Cathy Di Stefano, assistant provincial director with Batshaw Youth and Family Centres, who deals with young offenders. "We know just doing time is not effective. Our programming is going to remain the same," Di Stefano said.

"Since 1908, the identity of young offenders has been protected in Canada," said Pierre Hamel, the director of legal affairs for the Association

des centres jeunesse du Québec. "Now a very large number of youths are susceptible to having their identity revealed, even if they receive a youth sentence. It's already a challenge for them to go back to school or get a job, imagine if their name is in the newspaper or on social-media sites. The new sentencing guidelines seek to punish the offender rather than focus on why the crime was committed," Hamel said.

Source: The Gazette

## IN PERSON PROFILE

*The Sou'Wester is pleased to introduce Ariel Prado who was recently appointed CoSA Project Associate for MSCM's CoSA-Project Division. Ariel has also been a very active volunteer since the Fall of 2008.*

**Q.** *Congratulations on your new appointment! Could you explain to our readers exactly what your role and responsibilities are?*

**A.** Thanks! The position is centred around supporting both the Project Coordinator, Peter, and the Data Coordinator, Anouk. Most of the work I've done so far has had to do with the data coordination. It's not particularly exciting work. There's a national study going on right now, and as part of that study the NCPC (National Crime Prevention Centre) is looking for statistics regarding the circles that operate under **MSCM**. My job has been to help Anouk with recording those statistics. However, my role is meant to be a supportive one, so my responsibilities are fairly flexible.

**Q.** *How and when did you find out about MSCM?*

**A.** I first found out about **MSCM** in the Fall of my first year in Montreal. I was in a class with my friend Becca, who had just started coming to **Open Door**.

At some point I told her that I was interested in studying alternatives to prisons and she insisted that I come to **Open Door** and start looking into restorative justice ideas. I was lucky in that a number of friends I'd already made were interested as well. So I started coming in the Fall of 2008 and have been volunteering with **MSCM** ever since.

**Q.** *We understand you have a very deep interest in restorative justice. What other programs have you been involved in?*

**A.** My interest in restorative justice has helped to shape my perspective over the years. I've grown to recognize that restorative (or transformative) justice is really about restoring and transforming communities. With this realization, I've come to focus on the nature of relations between people as paramount.

I was involved in the formation of the *Alternative University Project*, a project comprised of a group of students interested in, among many things, redefining the relationships between teachers and students. I've volunteered my time with various organizations at this point, but the work I really enjoy doing is work that focuses on healing and often redefining the relationships between different people.

**Q.** *How does your volunteer work with MSCM fit in with your ultimate career goals?*

**A.** At this point, I'm not sure what my ultimate career goals are. I know that I want to work with people, but I couldn't tell you exactly how. I can say that I've grown less and less enchanted with the realm of policy-making. I'm happiest when I'm working on a local level, with a community that I can understand through regular interaction as opposed to statistics and polling. But I don't know what kind of work I'll be doing a few years from now. I'm definitely not a career-centred person, at least not right now.

**Q.** *What advice would you have for anyone thinking about becoming a volunteer?*

**A.** Advice for volunteers? Come check out **Open Door!** It offers a pretty incredible chance for volunteers to meet with a lot of great people with pretty amazing stories. **Open Door** is a great way to get involved with **MSCM** for volunteers who might be just starting to think about the way that the criminal justice system affects our communities and the individuals within those communities.

Awaiting Ariel's Pic

*Why not drop in for a visit?*

**Open Door**

*Meets every Tuesday evening  
7:00—9:00 p.m.*

*1444 Union Street  
(Metro McGill)  
Fulford Hall*

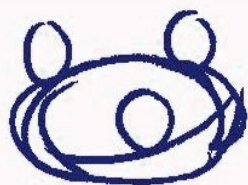
*Check out our website for more  
information.*

[www.mscom-qc.org](http://www.mscom-qc.org)

*Once we discover how to appreciate the timeless values in our daily experiences,  
we can enjoy the best things in life.*

Harry Hepner





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Montreal Southwest Community Ministries

*"A gift consists  
not in what is  
done or given,  
but  
in the intention  
of the giver or doer."*

*Lucius Annaeus Seneca*

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

Please contact our offices  
by phone or email, or visit  
our website:  
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Please mail your cheques  
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## CAN YOU IDENTIFY THIS PERSON?



*Clue: This photo appeared in February 1979 issue of Harrowsmith magazine.  
Commune cornfields in the Ozarks. "Hair today, gone tomorrow" (Male figure only)*

*Got a guess? E-mail Paula at mscm@sympatico.ca.  
Winners will be announced in the next issue.*

*Note: If you have a picture you would like to submit, contact Paula.*

## 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: \_\_\_\_\_

## EDITORIAL

**JAIL OVERCROWDING NEEDS DISCUSSION**

Despite the fact that crime rates are falling, including rates of most violent crimes, jails in Quebec and penitentiaries across Canada are becoming more overcrowded. Overcrowding isn't conducive to rehabilitation. A more enlightened approach is needed.

In August, Quebec opened up holding cells at the Palais de justice in Old Montreal to accommodate mounting spillover from Bordeaux provincial jail in Montreal's north end. As an exceptional measure, this makes some sense. But there doesn't seem to be a clear administrative plan to deal with overcrowding on an ongoing basis.

Double-bunking emerged this past spring as a contentious issue in federal penitentiaries. Some 40% of penitentiary cells in Western Canada designed for

single occupancy now contain two beds or more. The situation is not as bad in Quebec pens, where the figure is more like 20%, but with Leclerc Institution north of Montreal slated for closure, along with Kingston Penitentiary in Ontario, the trend lines don't look promising.

The Conservative government has ruled out building new penitentiaries to replace Kingston and Leclerc. But under provisions of its omnibus crime bill that became law last March—containing mandatory minimum sentences and a ban on accelerated parole review—the number of prisoners can only climb. It's hard to see conditions improving in federal pens, given the link between more double-bunking and increased inmate violence, not to mention worse rehabilitation

outcomes.

Several outlying problems are contributing to overcrowding. Over the past generation, psychiatric hospitals have been emptied out in the name of de-institutionalization, but support services in the mental health field are desperately underfunded. As a result, the mentally ill too often end up in jails and prisons for lack of a better place.

A judicious vetting of cases for day passes and early release is clearly needed on an ongoing basis. But more generally, more care needs to be taken to ensure that people sentenced to incarceration are given appropriate punishment and rehabilitation.

In some cases, that will mean community work and more active rehabilitation outreach instead of hard time spent behind bars.

Your thoughts? Your letters are welcome.

*"There is a higher court than courts of justice and that is the court of conscience."*

*It supersedes all other courts."*

*Mahatma Ghandi*

## EXPERTS:

**CRIME BILL COULD HURT PRISONERS**

Canada's omnibus crime bill will lead to more physical and mental 'degradation' among prisoners and risks their reintegration back into society, warns an article in Canada's leading medical journal.

Bill C-10—which increases mandatory minimum sentences and changes eligibility for conditional sentences—will inevitably produce more prisoners serving longer sentences, Adelina Iftene and Allan Manson, of the faculty of law at Queen's University in Kingston write in the Canadian Medical Association Journal (CMAJ).

The fallout will be dramatic increases in already overcrowded prisons, "more stress, more volatility and the likelihood of more violence," as well as increased spread of hepatitis, HIV and other infectious diseases, Manson said in an interview.

"From both an ethical and public safety perspective, one needs to consider a simple fact," Manson and Iftene write in the CMAJ, noting most prisoners in Canada will eventually be released. "The intrinsic difficulties of reintegration after a period of incarceration should not be compounded by physical and mental health challenges."

"We're in an era where jails are becoming the asylums of the past for many people with mental health problems," Manson said.

Without more resources, more prisoners will overwhelm already overburdened prison mental health services, he said.

And as the numbers of prisoners increase, fewer prisons will be able to offer the correctional programs necessary to motivate inmates, "stabilize their mental status" and give them a purpose, the authors write.

*Source: Postmedia News*



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*"It means a great deal  
to those who are oppressed  
to know  
that they are not alone.  
And never let  
anyone tell you  
that what you are doing  
is insignificant."*

*Bishop Desmond Tutu*

*Source:  
The Gazette*

*Source:  
Human Rights Watch*

## **CANADA APPROVES FEWER TRANSFERS**

### **FEDS COOL TO CANADIANS JAILED ABROAD**

Since 2004, after the International Transfer of Offenders Act became law in Canada, the federal government has increasingly denied transfers to Canadian citizens serving time in penitentiaries in foreign countries, especially after the Conservatives formed a minority government in 2006.

When Canada began signing bilateral treaties with

other countries in 1978, the goal was to have Canadian citizens returned so they serve time in Canadian penitentiaries where there is relatively more emphasis on rehabilitation. It was considered a better option than having an inmate returned to Canada having gone through no rehabilitative programs and disconnected from their support network at the end of their sentence. From 1978

to March 2010, 1531 Canadians were transferred—almost 80% of those were from the United States.

The 2004 International Transfers of Offenders Act has since given the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness more discretion when considering applications referred to the minister by Correctional Services Canada and data shows the door continues to close shut.

#### **Canadians Sentenced Abroad Seeking to Serve their Time in Canada**

Fiscal Year	Applications Received	Transfer Results
2005-06	259	74
2006-07	262	64
2007-08	268	64
2008-09	288	26
2009-10	213	1

#### **Decisions Rendered by the Minister**

Fiscal Year	Applications Approved	Applications Denied
2005-06	108	2
2006-07	62	24
2007-08	100	43
2008-09	86	23
2009-10	24	65

## **OLD BEHIND BARS:**

### **AGING PRISON POPULATION IN THE UNITED STATES**

- ♦ US State and Federal prisoners age 65 or over grew at 94 times the rate of the total prison population between 2007 and 2010.
- ♦ The number of prisoners aged 55 or older nearly quadrupled between 1995 and 2010, growing by 282%, while total number of prisoners grew by less than half—42%.
- ♦ As of 2010, 8% of the prisoner population was 55 or older, compared with 3% in 1995.
- ♦ Of state prisoners age 51 or older, 40.6% have sentences ranging anywhere between more than 20 years to life.
- ♦ 15% of state prisoners age 61 or over have been in prison continuously for 20 or more years.

There is no federal parole.

## A TRUE STORY

**BREAKFAST AT McDONALD'S**

I am a mother of three (ages 14, 12, 3) and have recently completed my college degree. The last class I had to take was Sociology. The teacher was absolutely inspiring with the qualities that I wish every human being had been graced with. Her last project of the term was called, "Smile". The class was asked to go out and smile at three people and document their reactions. I am a very friendly person and always smile at everyone and say hello anyway. So, I thought this would be a piece of cake—literally.

Soon after we were assigned the project, my husband, youngest son and I went out to McDonald's one crisp morning. It was just our way of sharing special playtime with our son. We were standing in line, waiting to be served, when all of a sudden everyone around us began to back away, and then even my husband did.

I did not move an inch...an overwhelming feeling of panic welled up inside me as I turned to see why they had moved. As I turned around I smelled a horrible 'dirty body' smell, and there standing behind me were two poor homeless men. As I looked down at the short gentleman close to me, he was 'smiling'. His beautiful blue eyes were full of God's light as he searched for acceptance. He said, "Good day" as he counted the few coins he had been clutching. The second man fumbled with his hands as he stood behind his friend. I realized the second man was mentally-challenged and the blue-eyed gentleman was his salvation. I held my tears as I stood there with them.

The young lady at the counter asked him what they wanted. He said, "Coffee is all Miss" because that was all they could afford. (If they wanted to sit in the restaurant to warm up, they had to buy something.) Then I really felt it—the compulsion was so great I almost reached out and embraced the little man with the blue eyes. That is when I noticed all eyes in the restaurant were set on me—judging—my every action. I 'smiled' and asked the young lady behind the counter to give me two more breakfast meals on a separate tray.

I then walked around the corner to the table that the men had chosen as a resting spot. I put the tray on the table and laid my hand on the blue-eyed gentleman's cold hand. He looked up at me, with tears in his eyes, and said, "Thank you". I leaned over, began to pat his hand and said, "I did not do this for you...God is here working through me to give you hope." I started to cry as I walked away to join my husband and son.

When I sat down, my husband 'smiled' at me and said, "That is why God gave you to me, Honey, to give me hope." we held hands for a moment and at that time, we knew that only because of the Grace that we had been given we were able to give. We are not church-goers, but we are believers. That day showed me the pure light of God's sweet love.

I returned to college, on the last evening of the class, with this story in hand. I turned in 'my project' and the teacher read it. Then she looked up at me and said, "Can I share this?" I slowly nodded as she got the attention of the class. She began to read and that is when I knew that we as human beings and being part of God share this need to heal people and to be healed.

In my own way I had touched the people at McDonald's, my son, the teacher and every soul that shared the classroom on the last night I spent as a college student. I graduated with one of the biggest lessons I would ever learn—

*"Unconditional Acceptance"*

*Note: The author did not want her name published.*

*"Snowflakes are one of nature's most fragile things, but look at what they can do if they stick together"*

*Vista M. Kelly*



*MSCM would like to take this opportunity  
to wish everyone a happy holiday season!*





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## ***THE LAST LAUGH*** ***DON'T MESS WITH CHILDREN***

A little girl was talking to her teacher about whales. The teacher said it was physically impossible for a whale to swallow a human because even though it was a very large mammal, its throat was very small.

The little girl stated that Jonah was swallowed by a whale.

Irritated, the teacher reiterated that a whale could not swallow a human. It was physically impossible.

The little girl said, "When I get to heaven I will ask Jonah".

The teacher asked, "What if Jonah went to hell?"

The little girl replied, "Then you ask him".

A kindergarten teacher was observing her classroom of children while they were drawing. She would occasionally walk around to see each child's work.

As she got to one little girl who was working diligently, she asked what the drawing was.

The girl replied, "I'm drawing God".

The teacher paused and said, "But no one knows what God looks like."

Without missing a beat, or looking up from her drawing, the girl replied, "They will in a minute."



A Sunday school teacher was discussing the Ten Commandments with her five and six-year olds.

After explaining the commandment to 'honour' thy Father and thy Mother, she asked, "Is there a commandment that teaches us how to treat our brothers and sisters?"

Without missing a beat, one little boy (the oldest of a family) answered, "Thou shall not kill".

The children were lined up in the cafeteria of a Catholic elementary school for lunch. At the head of the table was a large pile of apples. The nun made a note, and posted it on the apple tray: Take Only One—God is Watching.

Moving further along the lunch line, at the other end of the table was a large pile of chocolate chip cookies.

A child had written a note: "Take all you want. God is watching the apples".