



THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS ACTIVE IN CRIMINAL JUSTICE LES ASSOCIATIONS NATIONALES INTÉRESSÉES À LA JUSTICE CRIMINELLE

Written Submission:

Federal Pre-Budget Consultation 2023

By: National Associations Active in Criminal Justice (NAACJ)

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Recommendations:

- 1. Provide new resources, re-allocate existing resources, and leverage existing resource opportunities to well-established and evidence-based community-based programs and services in order to continue enhancing long-term public safety in more cost-effective ways.**
- 2. Work in collaboration with provincial, territorial, and voluntary sector partners to provide greater opportunities and resources that will reduce systemic barriers and will facilitate rehabilitation and reintegration.**
- 3. Implement the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action #25-42**
- 4. Expand proven community-based alternatives as a reasonable and safe default to custody.**
- 5. Enhance access to community-based supports and services that meet the specific needs of Black Canadians.**
- 6. Enhance access to community-based supports and services that meet the specific needs of the families and children of people who are incarcerated.**
- 7. Provide consistent, stable, long-term funding for NFPs to provide comprehensive in-reach, case management and after-care services.**
- 8. Leverage existing programs and opportunities; e.g., National Housing Strategy, Employment and Skills training, etc., and support community-based NFPs in order to adequately provide child care, employment, safe housing, prison in-reach and after-care services, and health and mental health supports that include effective mechanisms to address problematic substance use.**

The National Associations Active in Criminal Justice (NAACJ) enhances the capacity of member organizations to contribute to a humane, fair, equitable and effective criminal and social justice system. It brings together 19 voluntary sector agencies that collectively have hundreds of years of experience promoting and upholding human rights, and that share a commitment to research, social development, and the inherent worth of all human beings.

Guided by evidence and experience, NAACJ encourages meaningful justice and robust social policy that will reduce crime and victimization while building healthier, safer communities for everyone.

With leadership and expertise that spans the criminal justice continuum, NAACJ's membership is ideally placed to stimulate and inform ideas and initiatives through dialogue and understanding with Public Safety Canada partners and others.

This submission supports the Minister of Public Safety, the Minister of Justice and Attorney General for Canada, and the Commissioner of the Correctional Service of Canada to achieve their mandates as directed by the Prime Minister of Canada, and it supports one of the main priorities contained in the recently released mandate letter from the Minister of Public Safety to his Parliamentary Secretary, Pam Damoff. It specifically addresses cost-saving and effective measures to:

1. Develop a Federal Framework to Reduce Recidivism (FFRR) in consultation with provinces, territories, Indigenous communities, Black communities and other stakeholders
 - Support the implementation of the FFRR, and explore opportunities to increase community corrections supports
2. Ensure that federal correctional institutions are safe and humane environments that promote rehabilitation and public safety
3. Prioritize working with and funding Indigenous organizations and communities to create additional section 81 and 84 agreements in accordance with the *Corrections and Conditional Release Act* (CCRA) to ensure that Indigenous offenders have access to culturally-relevant programming and supports in the community
4. Improve access to post-secondary education, CORCAN vocational programming, and work releases, by leveraging community partnerships to connect prisoners with educational and employment opportunities
5. Ensure that the specific needs and interests of older people in conflict with the law are identified and met through the provision of effective and adapted programs, services and interventions.
6. Combat systemic racism and discrimination in the criminal justice system
 - Address the overrepresentation of Black and racialized Canadians and Indigenous Peoples
7. Advance reforms to the pardons program to address systemic barriers, promote reintegration and ensure the system is fair and proportionate.

NAACJ and its member agencies know that recidivism happens in the community, and often as a result of systemic discrimination and lack of supports and resources. Given this reality, it is paramount that community-based supports have the necessary resources to achieve their full potential in order to implement a Framework to Reduce Recidivism (FFRR) that is successful. To

successfully reduce harm and victimization, and prevent more crime, the *Reduction of Recidivism Framework Act* (RRFA)¹ and Federal Framework to Reduce Recidivism (FFRR)² must invest and re-allocate the necessary resources to bolster existing community-based supports.

By providing new resources, re-allocating existing resources, and leveraging existing resource opportunities, well-established and evidence-based community-based programs and services will be better positioned to continue enhancing long-term public safety in more cost-effective ways than traditional criminal justice responses.

For decades, community-based groups have sought the relationships and funding that are so desperately needed to create comprehensive, meaningful progress within justice and corrections. Yet leading not-for-profit (NFP) organizations that provide essential community-based services and supports in the social and criminal justice fields have not benefitted from inflationary adjustments for the cost-of-living and operating, nor from consistent, stable funding opportunities, thereby limiting the scope and extent to which they can respond, grow and adapt along with their communities' needs.

In fact, while 41% of the federal correctional population resides in the community, only 6.5% of the Correctional Service of Canada's (CSC) \$2.6 billion budget is allocated to community supervision.³

Individual and community needs will be better served with greater parity and integrated cooperation toward our common cause of preventing harm and reducing recidivism. As evidenced by the mass incident in the James Smith Cree Nation in Saskatchewan, it is essential that both rural and urban Canadian communities are given consideration to have the capacity to meet the unique needs of their most isolated, impoverished, marginalized, racialized and vulnerable citizens - before harm occurs. All Canadians deserve investments that prioritize the prevention of harm from the lens of healthier, safer communities.

We know that individuals are more likely to become criminalized if they have insufficient or inadequate resources. Without financial stability, reliable shelter, and access to food and health supports, other windows of opportunities close, leaving people with few meaningful choices. As such, it is critical that the **federal government work with provincial, territorial, and voluntary sector partners to provide greater opportunities and resources that will reduce systemic barriers and will facilitate rehabilitation and reintegration**. A significant first step is to **implement the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action #25-42**, i.e., reduce the over-representation and incarceration of Indigenous peoples, respect Indigenous protocols, increase the provision and accessibility of community-based supports and services for Indigenous peoples, and address the underlying causes of harm and historic trauma.⁴

¹ Retrieved online <https://laws.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/R-4.6/>

² Retrieved online: <https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/rsrscs/pblctns/2022-fdrl-frmwrk-rdc-rcdvsm/index-en.aspx>

³ Public Safety Canada [Corrections and Conditional Release Statistical Overview 2020](#) and Correctional Service Canada's [2021-22 Departmental Plan](#).

⁴ Retrieved online https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/british-columbians-our-governments/indigenous-people/aboriginal-peoples-documents/calls_to_action_english2.pdf

By addressing these realities, and investing in people through community-based supports in the short-term, we save tremendous economic and human costs in the long-term.

The approach to effectively reduce recidivism must be integrated across governments and departments, be rehabilitative, not punitive, and provide environments and opportunities that are evidence-based, trauma-informed, therapeutic, person-centred and strengths-based. With laws that obligate us to use the least restrictive measures, incarceration must be utilized as a last resort.

Community-based alternatives have existed since Confederation and have proven evidence of success, and should be expanded as a reasonable and safe default to custody, e.g., community service orders, diversion, reconciliation circles, attendance centres, encounter programs, and s. 84 placements in Indigenous communities can be more effective at reducing recidivism than traditional control measures such as parole, probation and prohibition orders. We must also enhance access to community-based supports and services that meet the specific needs of Black Canadians, as well as the families and children of people who are incarcerated.

But to do so, **NFPs need consistent, stable, long-term funding for in-reach, case management and after-care.** The current 'grants-based' system (versus long-term, predictable, sustainable funding) undermines long-term progress towards achieving reintegration in our communities.

We can prevent harm and victimization by **leveraging existing programs and opportunities; e.g. National Housing Strategy, Employment and Skills training, etc.) and supporting community-based NFPs in order to adequately provide child care, employment, safe housing, prison in-reach and after-care services, and health and mental health supports that include effective mechanisms to address problematic substance use.**

NAACJ and its members recognize that the FFRA and FFRR present an extraordinary opportunity to improve collaboration, implement what works, learn from our efforts, and make critical changes in and around the criminal justice system that will positively impact the lives of individuals, families, communities and generations to come. **We know that a more socially responsible, inter-sectoral approach that focusses on the community can be cost-effective, humane, and produce the long-term results that Canadians seek.**

NAACJ has the collective knowledge, experience, tools, programs and services to reduce our reliance on incarceration, to provide transformative alternatives to punishment, and to support people where they are at through evidence, collaboration, compassion and hope.

Now is the time to invest in individuals and communities to realize our full potential, and re-establish Canada as a global leader in human rights and justice.