

## Some Truth About Canadian Law Enforcement, Legal, and Correctional Systems

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This document was researched and developed in Spring 2009 by Quakers Fostering Justice in an effort to clarify some of what we know to be factually true about these systems in Canada. It is intended to be used as a part of a conversation about how we use our limited resources in Canada.

*We call attention to the effects of the choices we make in Canada, in particular as it relates to how we meet the needs of those most affected by crime: the victims.*

Our current “systems” in Canada are almost entirely focused on those who harm others – the ‘offenders’. We challenge the notion that focusing entirely on punishing those who harm increases public safety. We are also reminded that as people of faith, we are called to compassion, to hearing the voices of the wounded and responding to their cries.

### Facts ... and what they mean to victims of crime

1. There are about 40,000 laws (Federal and Provincial) in Canada (not including uncountable Municipal bylaws, statutes etc.)<sup>1</sup> ...*a large number to keep track of, and not being aware of laws, if you break them, is not a valid defense if you are charged.*
2. Population of Canada in 2007: 32.9 million people.<sup>2</sup>
3. Canadian Police Services reported approximately 2.3 million **Criminal Code** incidences in Canada in 2007.<sup>3</sup> *This means that of all of the calls to police in 2007 to report incidences of harm, the police judged that a criminal code offence had occurred 2.3 million times.*
4. *It is difficult to accurately know how often people choose to report incidences to police after experiencing or witnessing harm.* Based on statistics reported in the General Social Survey (GSS, StatsCan), **violent crime** is reported 34% of the time.<sup>4</sup> *Many professionals (criminologists, victimologists and law enforcement officers) estimate that less than*

<sup>1</sup> From The Fraser Institute. Retrieved March 24, 2009, from [http://oldfraser.lexi.net/publications/critical\\_issues/1998/crime/crime\\_in\\_canada.html](http://oldfraser.lexi.net/publications/critical_issues/1998/crime/crime_in_canada.html)


<sup>2</sup> From the StatsCan; retrieved on March 24, 2009 from <http://www40.statcan.gc.ca/l01/cst01/demo02a-eng.htm>

<sup>3</sup> From Juristat, 2007. Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Survey; retrieved March 24, 2009 from [http://dsp-psd.pwgsc.gc.ca/collection\\_2008/statcan/85-002-X/85-002-XIE2008007.pdf](http://dsp-psd.pwgsc.gc.ca/collection_2008/statcan/85-002-X/85-002-XIE2008007.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> From Juristat, 2007 as above.



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*10% of total crime is reported to police.*

5. Assuming that violent crime reporting rates are similar to general criminal code reporting, and using the value reported in the GSS of 34% reporting, we therefore calculate that there were 6.76 million incidences of crime in Canada in 2007. *(We might expect this to be much higher, if people are more likely to report violent crime than other crime.)* That is about one incidence of victimization for every five people in Canada (presuming each is only harmed once a year).
6. Courts in Canada processed a total of 373,143 criminal code cases in one year, of which 244,572 cases resulted in conviction (for 2005-2006).<sup>5</sup>
7. Therefore, of the 6.76 million incidences, we are able to convict someone in 244,572 cases, or about 3.6% of the incidences. *We investigate, charge and convict someone about 4% of the time...not very good odds. What is the relevancy of the current law enforcement, and legal systems for the other 96% of the time when harms are caused, laws are broken?*
8. Of those 244,572 convictions (in 2005-2006) there resulted 82,647 custodial prison sentences, representing about 1.2% of all criminal incidences.<sup>6</sup> *The relevancy of corrections as a response to all crime in Canada is very small. Why do Canadians believe prison keeps us safer?*
9. The cost of justice in Canada (law enforcement, the courts, legal aid and corrections) was about \$12.658 Billion in 2003.<sup>7</sup> *(We are not able to accurately know how much is spent in more current years, as the Government of Canada has stopped reporting these costs in ways that are accessible to us.) Some say this is an expensive service whose budget increases when they fail in their mandate...when many other budgets in social services that are relevant to crime prevention decline.*  
***Each Canadian contributes the equivalent in spending to \$365 annually to catch, try and punish offenders. Each person charged, tried and convicted costs (on average) about \$51,751.00.***
10. Based on estimates of spending for Victims Services in Canada in 2005/2006 (\$152.2 million).<sup>8</sup>  
***Each Canadian contributes about \$3.88 annually assisting victims. Each person victimized receives (on average) total services equaling about \$22.51. Most victims, of course, don't qualify for any assistance.***

***What is the cost of untreated harm and trauma in our neighbourhoods?  
How does neglecting to treat harm and trauma affect neighbourhood safety,  
and future crime rates?***

### ***Questions? Thoughts? Comments?***

Email CFSC's Quakers Fostering Justice Program Committee  
at [qfj@quakerservice.ca](mailto:qfj@quakerservice.ca) or visit [quakerservice.ca](http://quakerservice.ca)

<sup>5</sup> From Stats Canada, retrieved March 24, 2009 from <http://www40.statcan.gc.ca/l01/cst01/legal19a-eng.htm> and <http://www40.statcan.gc.ca/l01/cst01/legal22a-eng.htm>

<sup>6</sup> From StatsCan, retrieved March 24, 2009 from <http://www40.statcan.gc.ca/l01/cst01/legal22a-eng.htm>

<sup>7</sup> From StatCan, retrieved March 24, 2009 from <http://www40.statcan.gc.ca/l01/cst01/legal13-eng.htm>

<sup>8</sup> From Juristat, retrieved March 24, 2009 from [http://dsp-psd.pwgsc.gc.ca/collection\\_2007/statcan/85-002-X/85-002-XIE2007007.pdf](http://dsp-psd.pwgsc.gc.ca/collection_2007/statcan/85-002-X/85-002-XIE2007007.pdf)