

Media Advisory | 22 June 2010

Kingston & Ottawa – The John Howard Society of Canada (JHSC) and the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies (CAEFS) commend the authors of the Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO) on their thorough and rigorous analysis of Bill C-25, the so-called "truth in sentencing" act that Parliament passed in 2009. Bill C-25 limits the discretion of judges to credit time served in pre-sentence custody.

Correctional Services Canada estimates that it will add between 10-11% to Canada's federally sentenced prison population, requiring a costly expansion of Canada's prison infrastructure. Meanwhile our crime rate continues its long-term decline.

"The PBO financial analysis reveals that the government has been less than forthcoming about the cost of this one piece of its crime agenda," said Craig Jones of the JHSC. "Given that the Govt. of Canada's estimates soared 2200% from 90 million to 2 billion overnight shows that the government is indulging in fly-by-night costing. Crime prevention and incarceration are two different agendas, as the American example teaches – and Bill C-25 is not about crime prevention."

"Canadians are being tricked into believing that this and other new laws will make our communities safer. This is the opposite of truthfulness and it comes with an enormous human and financial cost," continued Kim Pate, Executive Director of CAEFS. "These sorts of measures in the United States are bankrupting state governments and leaving more and more citizens without adequate health care, social services, or educational opportunities."

"We deserve to know what these drastic measures are going to actually cost us, as well as how they will be funded. Will they mean a greater likelihood that our children go without medical care unless we can pay for it personally? Will it leave your brother homeless? Will our fathers lose their veteran's pensions? Will our grandchildren have even less access to good public education? Will my sister be taken to jail, instead of hospital, when her mental illness goes untreated and she panics on the street corner? This Bill is not at all about truthfulness. Canadians deserve to know at what cost these destructive and fear-inducing measures are being introduced," concluded Pate.

The PBO's analysis employs state-of-the-art financial modelling including a costing methodology that is market-tested, peer reviewed and based on standard industry principles endorsed by the Treasury Board. "If the government wants to dispute the PBO's findings," says Jones, "it has to produce its own methodology and reveal its own assumptions. At bottom, the PBO used conservative estimates based on publicly available information because they were prevented from getting access to the government's data on Bill C-25. And we're talking *only* about Bill C-25."

"This is not a crime agenda," concludes Jones, whose NGO advocates for 'effective, just and humane responses to the causes and consequences of crime.' "It's a punishment agenda — but all the punishment in the world will not affect the rate of crime. Canadian parliamentarians that supported Bill C-25 have been sold a very expensive illusion."

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