

Prisons cost money and if we want to keep building them, we will need to take money from other things. So let's not build more prisons, let's put less people in jail.

Instead of double-bunking, rehabilitative programs for inmates should be doubled. Programs can be drug or alcohol awareness, life skills or job skills. More programs and job skills would make job opportunities for an inmate with a criminal record.

More jobs for inmates will help society and maybe possibly we could even get pardons easier. So the saying "looking over your shoulder at all times" will be extinct and we can move on and have a life without crime.



What we need is funding for programs and more support from outside agencies. Longer and stiffer sentences are not needed. In fact, stiffer sentences will only lead to depression, insanity, and even suicides.

Inmates need a better reintegration plan. We're humans too. No to Bill C-10.



THE JOHN HOWARD SOCIETY
OF MANITOBA, INC.

We're Humans Too

Inmates Speak Out

on Bill C-10



We asked our students in the John Howard Society literacy program to write about life in prison, their thoughts on tougher sentences, and their ideas for how to reduce crime.

Here is just some of what they shared.

See all of their writing at
www.prisonstories.org.

What our government is proposing is to put an absurdly expensive band-aid on a gaping wound. Stiffer sentencing does not alleviate the suffering for victims of crime because it deals exclusively with detention, not prevention. It is by no means a 'conservative' approach to crime, as it makes the taxpayer accountable every time another Canadian is incarcerated.

Jail is an 'out of sight, out of mind' approach to crime. It is a storage facility for a demographic comprised largely of citizens who have slipped through the cracks of an often indifferent society.



Life in jail these days is three 200-lb males to a cell that is 10 feet by 10 feet. At first that might sound average, but throw in a mattress, a cold vent in one corner and a toilet in the other. Now it's just inhumane. And I think they want a problem to happen.

Sorry if you don't like this, but sometimes one of these three guys has to take a number two. And while that sounds disgusting, let me tell you, it smells disgusting! So right now it's 90k a year per person in custody, three people in a cell. If this bill passes, what's the cost to the taxpayers then? How many people per cell in two years?

The majority of inmates come from broken homes and lived in poverty as children. Putting them in jail only continues that cycle, taking them away from their families and leaving another generation of kids to violence, drugs and gangs. I know this because I am currently incarcerated at the Remand Centre. I see the problems with the jails and the inmates who populate them.



Gangs thrive on your misconception that locking them up will stop them. Jails become a type of headquarters. Splitting up gangs and transporting them to different jails across the country in an effort to divide and conquer only creates and multiplies the problem on a national level, creating a syndicate, a network, an organization: the very thing you are trying to combat. I guarantee that gangs not only recruit in the community. Once they're in institutions they will find more ways to lure other inmates to team up. With this bill being passed the prison populations will explode, creating more resources for gangs and organizations to feed upon. You will be brought to your knees through the billions of dollars you spend following your own recipe for disaster.



Bill C-10 lists a lot of consequences but does not offer any real solutions. The United States has been down this road for more than a few decades and has proven through numerous studies that it does not work.

Harper's approach to "tough on crime" is not a fix-it solution, it's simply a cowardly way of locking more people up and keeping them off the streets for a period of time, with no interest in rehabilitation. My opinion is Harper and his friends in Ottawa have their heads up each other's rear ends and are not taking the time to evaluate the evidence that is already proving C-10 is a failure.

We are being warehoused in tiny cells with no access to much in terms of programs to identify our problems which have brought us here in the first place. I believe for the majority of inmates currently incarcerated, a lot of us could make the changes necessary if guided in the right direction to become productive members of society. I believe at least 90% of us are caught in a cycle of the revolving door of justice, because of learned behaviours. If given proper programs and life skills, I think we could free ourselves of jail.



What does it cost to keep an inmate locked up for a year, a hundred grand? And what good does being in prison do them? These guys leave Stony with nothing – nothing but an appointment with a parole officer and an appointment with welfare. No wonder they come back. You're setting them up to fail! You know what would almost be a better use of money? Take that hundred grand, hand it to the guy and say, "Don't come back." I guarantee you'd have fewer of them coming back than with what we're doing right now.