



Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada

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April 13, 2011

Parole Board of Canada
Attention: Pardon User Fee Complaint
410 Laurier Avenue West
Ottawa ON K1A 0R1

COMPLAINT TO THE PAROLE BOARD OF CANADA REGARDING INCREASE IN FEES FOR PARDON APPLICATIONS

On February 24, 2011, I wrote to the Parole Board of Canada (PBC) expressing concern regarding the proposed increase to the pardon application fee. The PBC dutifully responded, indicating that the proposed increase “represents the cost of processing a pardon.”

I am filing this complaint that the response from the PBC fails to address my original concerns.

A need for a pardon often arises in a person’s life when he or she is seeking to secure gainful employment. A job not only provides finances for living expenses, it also provides purpose and a social network that helps to connect an individual with a community. These are important steps in the rehabilitation process. The PBC response does not seem to take into account the financial costs, such as social assistance, when people remain unemployed because they cannot receive a pardon.

The PBC response does not address my concern that “the people most affected by this proposed increase are disproportionately poor, disadvantaged, and marginalized.” While those of some means will be able to pay for a pardon, those who are impoverished or economically disadvantaged will be kept further away from gaining employment. The increased fee imposes a profound inequity on the system.

A pardon is one step in the rehabilitation process. The PBC response indicates that the user fee must help make the program effective. I wish to suggest that the increase makes the program less effective, because fewer people will be able to afford this step in the rehabilitation process.

Finally, the proposed fee increase feels punitive, by suggesting “you were bad, therefore pay up.” In contrast, a vision of restorative justice sees the community working with individuals who are reintegrating into society as productive citizens. The high application fee seems particularly unjust, for it imposes a hardship on a person not only after prison, parole and fines are complete, but after a period of demonstrated good conduct.

Therefore, I ask the PBC to convene an advisory panel, to reconsider the decision to increase pardon application fees.

I wish to nominate John Hutton as my representative on the Advisory Panel.

A Winnipeg social worker and mediator, John has more than 25 years of experience working and/or volunteering in the field of social services. Having earned his Bachelor of Arts from the University of Winnipeg in History, John then attended the University of Manitoba where he completed a Master of Social Work degree in the area of social policy and administration. Most recently, John has been the Executive director of the John Howard Society of Manitoba for three years. He has also worked for the United Way of Winnipeg as a manager in the community investment department, as a mediator case-worker in a victim-offender mediation program, and as an advocate for refugees and unemployed workers. As well, John spent several years as a voluntary service worker with the Mennonite Central Committee, running projects in Winnipeg, Florida and Brazil.

The John Howard Society of Manitoba has been following the pardon issue closely and last fall, John led a delegation to Ottawa to speak against proposed changes to the pardon legislation set out in Bill C-23B.

John Hutton, MSW
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I thank you for this opportunity to share my concerns with the PBC. I continue to hold your important work in my prayers.

Yours in Christ,



The Rev. Susan C. Johnson, National Bishop
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cc: National Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada
The Most Rev. Fred Hiltz, Primate, Anglican Church of Canada
John Hutton, Executive Director, John Howard Society of Manitoba
Caleb Ratzlaff, Assistant Coordinator, The Church Council on Justice and Corrections