

Colleagues,

The federal corrections system is currently more harsh and regressive than it has been in more than half a century.

The reversal of many of the correctional practices we have fostered over the years due to COVID restraints both within prisons and communities has been difficult for many of us. Working at a physical distance from those we are trying to help and from our colleagues has not been easy yet we have persevered.

The impact of COVID gives us a reason to reconnect with our purpose, to celebrate what we have accomplished during this difficult period and to recommit to building back better once this pandemic has ebbed.

This year, [John Howard Society Week](#), which runs from Feb 14th to Feb 20th, takes on a special meaning.

As an organization with its roots in prison reform and reintegration support, we should take the opportunity to learn from this crisis and support building back a more just, effective, and humane system.

For our JHS Week efforts, JHSC has chosen the theme “Today’s COVID crisis, Tomorrow’s ‘New Normal’”.

Please join us for a series of virtual events [all events take place at 1:30 p.m. (CT)]:

Sunday, Feb 14th

An interview with Catherine Latimer, Executive Director of the John Howard Society of Canada, discussing the history of John Howard, the objectives of John Howard Society Week as well as the challenges and opportunities for the year ahead. [See recording [here](#). See [John Howard Society Week](#) for other updates.]

Monday, Feb 15th

A discussion with [Dr. Rosemary Ricciardelli](#) regarding the [Royal Society of Canada’s](#) recent report addressing [Correctional Services, both During and Beyond COVID-19](#). Tune in [here](#).



Tuesday, Feb 16th

[A workshop for JHS staff](#) with [Munir Veljii](#), BSW, MSW, RSW. As a Registered Social Worker with extensive experience in social services, as well as ample experience working directly with JHS Pacific staff through their innovative in-house counsellor pilot project, Mr. Veljii will discuss wellness and self-care. Tune in [here](#).

Wednesday, Feb 17th

[Reza Ahmadi](#) of [John Howard Ontario](#) will discuss the Covid-19 experience for John Howard Society Community Residential Facilities. Tune in [here](#).

Thursday, Feb 18th

[Lise Clément](#) will chat with us about the [Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation’s](#) joint project with the JHSC and will examine [Solution Labs to Address Post-custody Homelessness](#). Tune in [here](#).

Friday, Feb 19th

The [Honourable Senator Kim Pate](#) will speak about her legislative reform Bills, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (independence of the judiciary) ([Bill S-207](#)) and, An Act to amend the Criminal Records Act, to make consequential amendments to other Acts and to repeal a regulation ([Bill S-208](#)). Tune in [here](#).

Saturday, Feb 20th

Watch our community partners’ video, the Collaborating Centre of Prison Health Education at the University of British Columbia, which outlines their impactful project, [Shifting Focus](#), introducing federal parolees to photography as a medium to document their lives.

John Howard Society Week 2021 (continued)

Learning from the pandemic is important. If you have not yet had the chance, please consider signing our petition which calls for an inquiry into the federal government's handling of COVID-19 and other things to address abusive solitary confinement. You can read and [sign the petition here](#).

I would be grateful if Provincial Executive Directors could share this with their networks.

JHSC continues to engage actively with partners and others to advance **key priorities** and to pursue opportunities:

Improving Health Care: (a) A statement of claim alleging that the substandard health care provided by CSC infringes prisoners' Charter rights to security of the person has been served and a discussion with affected federal Ministers and their officials has been requested.

(b) A constructive meeting with Dean Jane Philpott of the Queen's University Faculty of Medicine was held to explore support in advancing a 'patient advocates' program for federal prisoners which is now provided for in the Corrections and Conditional Release Act.

Post-Custody Housing: (a) In collaboration with CSC, Public Safety, HRSDC, CMHC, John Howard Societies of Alberta, Kingston, Toronto and Edmonton, significant progress is being made on upcoming solution labs designed to come up with possible solutions to the complex problem of post-custody homelessness. We recently received funding from HRSDC to ensure that the voices of those with lived experience are included and now have \$50 honorarium for their participation in telephone interviews. We are enormously grateful for JHS folks who have identified former prisoners willing to share their stories. We would welcome others to ensure that many different experiences are reflected – urban, rural, northern, east, west, central, Indigenous, Black, male, female, etc. Please contact me if you know of people willing to be interviewed;

(b) Western University students at the Ivy Business School presented their project on a business case for prisoner-involved manufacture and use of housing stock (mini-homes).

Reintegration Support: (a) JHSC is supporting [Private Member's Bill C-228](#), which would require the Minister of Public Safety to develop a framework to reduce recidivism through collaboration with others. It calls for evidence-based approaches to provide the needed support for those leaving federal prisons and entering communities;

(b) Senator Pate's Bill to amend the Criminal Records

Act would make relief from old criminal records automatic once the crime free period has passed. This would avoid the expensive, administratively difficult and often arbitrary results that make the existing system so unfair;

(c) The new mandate letter provided to the Minister of Justice encourages the elimination of systemic bias in

the justice system. We continue to listen to Black federal prisoners and former prisoners about the hurdles they face in the reintegration process.

If you wish further information on any of our initiatives, please don't hesitate to contact me.

I wish you all the best for your John Howard Society Week activities in which we celebrate our mandate, advance policies and programs, thank our partners, donors, volunteers and staff, and promote, just effective, and humane responses to the causes and consequences of crime.

Cheers,
Catherine Latimer, Executive Director
The John Howard Society of Canada
johnhoward.ca/

