



The Facts:

- Crime has significantly decreased in Canada, hitting its lowest record in 2013 since 1969.
- However, there are **more innocent people** in jail than convicted ones due to a huge backlog in hearings, according to *The Globe and Mail*.
- The number of visible minority inmates has risen by 75% over a period of ten years, according to the federal prison ombudsman.
- Experts say far too many people are being held in jail when they could be serving bail outside of prison, which is better for re-integration and helps save money.
- The Conservative government cut funding to part-time chaplains in 2012 which primarily affected chaplains for minority faiths, including Muslim inmates.
- Chaplaincy was privatized in 2013 and inmates from minority faiths have complained of discriminatory treatment.
- The federal prison's only full-time Muslim chaplain resigned in protest in 2014.

The Issues:

- Inmates are entitled to human rights; however, there are concerns that freedom of religion is being curtailed in federal penitentiaries.
- The current government refuses to sign on to the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture; Some experts say this would result in greater scrutiny of Canada's use of solitary confinement.
- Black, Aboriginal, and mentally-ill inmates, are more likely to be placed in solitary confinement than other inmates, according to **Canada's prison ombudsman**.

The Parties:

Conservatives:

- Cuts to chaplain services affecting minority faiths.
- Privatized chaplaincy.
- Won't sign on to Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture.
- Dismissed calls to limit use of solitary confinement.

.....

Liberals:

- The Liberals criticized the current government for cutting chaplaincy services in prisons for non-Christian inmates as "**clearly discriminatory**".

NDP | Green:

No public statements but have both criticized Conservative policies.

Questions to ask candidates:

- How would you resolve the backlog in the courts?
- What sort of support do you think there should be for inmates seeking religious counseling in prisons?
- Would you restore funding towards chaplaincy services that would ensure equal access to spiritual services for all faith groups?