



February 23, 2018

Senator Jim Munson, Chair  
The Standing Committee on Human Rights  
Senate of Canada

Re: Correctional System Study

Dear Senator Munson,

On behalf of the National Council of Women of Canada (NCWC) I want to commend you on the study on issues relating to human rights of prisoners in the Canadian correctional system. NCWC through its democratically agreed upon system of policy development has for years supported change and advocated on behalf of federally sentenced women. Former NCWC President Margaret McGee was recognized by the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies with an award for her work and that of NCWC in this regard.

It is surprising to us to hear that over a ten-year period the population of women in federal prisons has grown by some 37 per cent and that this increase shows no evidence of increased criminality on the part of women. Further, that more than half of all of the women inmates have identified mental health needs and that women are designated as high-risk. Surely this is an issue that requires immediate attention.

For some years the issue of a lack of meaningful opportunities for work and employment skills development has dogged women offenders. This must change if there is to be successful reintegration into communities upon release. Women must be assessed using tools designed for women. Taking the focus away from the punitive/punishment model and directing it towards rehabilitation based on the needs of women will go a long way to ensuring women will face a more successful re-entry following incarceration.

Following on the death of Ashley Smith numerous recommendations for change were made. It's imperative that these recommendations be taken seriously and implemented, particularly, as they pertain to so-called administrative segregation. There is no place in the correctional system for a process that contravenes United Nations recommendation for solitary confinement.

Once again, I want to thank you and the committee members for undertaking the study. NCWC members will look forward to your final report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading 'Sandra Cohen-Rose'.

Sandra Cohen-Rose  
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The National Council of Women of Canada (NCWC) has been the leading national voice of women for the past 125 years. A plaque has been erected in Allan Gardens in Toronto recognizing the establishment of NCWC as a National Historic Event. NCWC's initiatives have contributed significantly to the establishment of Canada's social welfare system, and the Council continues to work to improve the lives of women, children and society.