



September 08, 2020

Honourable Bill Blair  
Minister Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness  
Government of Canada

Dear Minister Blair

**Re: Bill C-83 Prison Reform**

Due to recent news reports, the members of the National Council of Women of Canada (NCWC) must once again advocate regarding the conditions imposed by Correctional Services Canada (CSC) on prisoners through solitary confinement (administrative segregation) and the new structured intervention units (SIU). A change of name alone cannot be expected to change practice or conditions.

While Bill C-83 was a welcome announcement intended to abolish practices found to be unconstitutional by the Courts, no assurance can be assumed without accountability. Accountability through meaningful data and information is the only counter against accusations of resistance on the part of the CSC. Further, it is crucial that an external body be given the necessary tools and access to records to responsibly monitor and report on the implementation of the Bill.

The United Nations definition of the Mandela Rules, which were updated in 2015, defines solitary confinement as "the confinement of prisoners for 22 hours or more a day without meaningful human contact." The statement continues, "Solitary confinement may only be imposed in exceptional circumstances, and prolonged solitary confinement of more than 15 consecutive days is regarded as a form of torture."

Minister Blair, your government signed onto a set of international standards for the treatment of prisoners. The courts also declared the practice was a violation of prisoners' Charter rights, particularly because of segregation's disproportionate impact on Indigenous inmates and well-documented harm to their mental health.

Therefore, on behalf of the NCWC, I urge you to ensure that this issue is addressed immediately as it places all Canadian federal inmates, who are subject to it, at significant risk of serious psychological harm, including mental pain and suffering, and increased incidence of self-harm and suicide.

Every Canadian deserves fundamental human rights and to be treated with dignity; these two principles must be respected at all times, by all people, in all circumstances.

Sincerely

Patricia Leson, President  
National Council of Women of Canada

***The National Council of Women of Canada (NCWC) works in the spirit of truth and reconciliation, acknowledging Canada is the traditional territory of First Nations and Metis People. We are grateful to join with others in peace and hope, advocating for an improved quality of life for women, children, families, and society.***

C: Senator Kim Pate [Kim.Pate@sen.parl.gc.ca](mailto:Kim.Pate@sen.parl.gc.ca)  
Catherine Latimer, John Howard Society [clatimer@jhscan.wpengine.com](mailto:clatimer@jhscan.wpengine.com)  
Anthony Doob, Professor Emeritus, University of Toronto Centre for Criminology  
[CrimSL@utoronto.ca](mailto:CrimSL@utoronto.ca)  
Monica Cullum, NCWC Convenor, who prepared this letter [monica.cullum@rogers.com](mailto:monica.cullum@rogers.com)