



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CAEFS' Response to the Repeated Postponement of the Inquest into the Death of Terry Baker

Ottawa, Ontario (April 11, 2023): Today was to mark the first day of an inquest into the death of Terry Baker, a young woman who died while incarcerated at the Grand Valley Institution for women (GVI) in 2016. On April 5, it was confirmed that the matter will not be going ahead as scheduled and has been postponed to a future date.

This is the second postponement of the inquest into the death of Terry Baker. This latest delay has been caused by the refusal of a party to the process, Correctional Services of Canada (CSC), to produce documents that have been ordered for seizure by the Presiding Coroner further to his investigation into Ms. Baker's case.

In the ruling confirming the adjournment, dated April 5, 2023, the Presiding Coroner expresses his disappointment in the lack of response to his demand by CSC. The demand seeks disclosure of certain relevant documents, in particular documents surrounding two Boards of Investigation that CSC conducted before and after Terry Baker's death. The Presiding Coroner further states in his ruling that proceeding without the requested documents would result in a fundamental failure of justice and that the documents "... could reasonably contain information which could change the jury's findings of fact such as manner of death or add or materially change potential recommendations".

The Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies (CAEFS) supports the decision to adjourn and echoes the Presiding Coroner's disappointment. CAEFS filed written submissions in support of this adjournment when CSC declared its position that the inquest should proceed as scheduled despite its non-disclosure. "We were frankly taken aback by the cavalier attitude taken by CSC on this matter of non-disclosure. It is exceedingly important that the organization tasked with caring for incarcerated people, CSC, do so with transparency and accountability. That CSC attempted to force this inquest onward while at the same time being offside of the Presiding Coroner's lawful demand to seize relevant documents is truly shocking and leaves us questioning their motivations."

Once the requested documents are produced, CAEFS is hopeful that the inquest will proceed without further delay and that the public will learn the truth about what happened to Terry Baker. An inquest is mandatory under the *Coroners Act* when a person dies of non-natural causes while in custody. The purpose of an inquest is to determine the circumstances of a death, and to direct recommendations aimed at preventing future deaths from occurring in similar circumstances.

The Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies works to address the persistent ways in which women and gender-diverse people impacted by criminalization are denied humanity and excluded from community. As part of this work, CAEFS monitors conditions of confinement in the federal prisons designated for women and had worked with Terry Baker while she was incarcerated at GVI. It is because of our direct interest that CAEFS was granted standing at the inquest. "In addition to uncovering the specifics about the death of Terry Baker, we also anticipated

that the inquest would examine the ways in which our society continues to incarcerate and often segregate people with mental health issues and fails to provide them with the treatment or supports that they need” said Emilie Coyle, Executive Director of CAEFS.

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For Comment

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About CAEFS: Since its inception in 1978, the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies (CAEFS) has worked to address the persistent ways in which women and gender-diverse people impacted by criminalization have been denied humanity and excluded from community. CAEFS advocacy utilizes a feminist rights-based approach and recognizes that, to create substantive equality, unique attention and approaches are needed to respond to incarcerated equity-deserving groups.

