



Lilian Kordic
Edmonton Institution for Women
11151 178 St NW Unit 1, Edmonton, AB T5S 2H9
Sent via email.

December 20th, 2024

Dear Lil,

I want to thank the institutional management team (“IMT”) at the Edmonton Institution for Women (EIFW) for taking the time to meet with me on December 5th, 2024, in person at EIFW.

This letter summarizes reports received and conditions observed during our visit to the Edmonton Institution for Women from December 3rd through 5th as well as summaries of the discussion between the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies (CAEFS) and members of IMT following the visit, the relevant laws and policies, and CAEFS’ recommendations.

This letter also includes an annex that summarizes reports received and conditions observed during our visit to EIFW from October 23rd through 24th 2024. As a follow-up meeting was not feasible following our October visit, it was determined in consultation with members of your team that the reports were to be sent via email and a response provided in writing. The reports were sent via email on November 8th, 2024. I understand that due to circumstances that you’ve shared that have been outside of your control, we have not yet received a response to these reports. Once a response is received, we will include it as an addendum and add it to our next letter. For the purposes of this annex, I have redacted individual’s names to prioritize their privacy.

I would also like to acknowledge that this is the first time that I am writing to you on behalf of Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies. I have appreciated the work that you and your team have done to make our advocacy visits possible over these past few months, and your support for CAEFS work overall. I look forward to continuing forward together in the new year.

Respectfully,

Jacqueline Omstead
Senior Advocate

Committees

Description: CAEFS received reports related to committees at EIFW:

- There is currently no Inmate Committee representative in the maximum-security unit, or pod representatives.
- The pod representatives in the minimum-security unit are not being paid

Discussion: The IMT shared that it was possible that the Inmate Committee representative for the maximum-security unit had moved, and that they would follow up on this. Additionally, CAEFS and the IMT discussed the possibility of creating representative positions for each of the pods in the maximum-security unit.

The IMT also offered to follow up on the report that pod representatives in the minimum-security unit were not being paid.

Law & Policy:

CCRA s.74 The Service shall provide [people in prison] with the opportunity to contribute to decisions of the Service affecting the population [of incarcerated people] as a whole, or affecting a group within the [incarcerated] population, except decisions relating to security matters.

CD 083 s. 42: The range/living unit/house representatives on the Inmate Committee may be paid at the discretion of the Institutional Head.

CAEFS' Recommendation: Peer led committees are an essential element of the Creating Choices model of incarceration and are legislated through various principles within the Corrections and Conditional Release Act. Functional committees provide individuals with the opportunity to build community, positively contribute to the penitentiary environment, and to develop transferable vocational skills that will aid in community re-entry. Committees promote a culture of democracy and shared responsibility as well as empowerment. CAEFS was encouraged to hear that the IMT at EIFW sees the value of these committees. CAEFS offers our support and resources to assist in strengthening committees and supporting effective communication between committees and management toward the resolution of systemic issues.

Security Level Reviews

Description: CAEFS received reports from several people that their security level was overridden by the Institutional Head, despite support from their case management team to be cascaded down in security classification or maintained at the same level. People reported feeling defeated by this decision, that the reasons provided were too vague to action, and that they felt that it was keeping them from moving forward in their correctional plan.

Discussion: CAEFS and the IMT discussed the above reports, and the processes for rebuttal, specifically the grievance process. The IMT also suggested that if people were concerned or required further clarification, they should submit a request to their CMT and, if needed, the Institutional Head. CAEFS and the IMT discussed a specific case, with the consent of the individual. The Institutional Head shared that she had received this person's request for a meeting and had arranged for one the following week to discuss her concerns.

Law & Policy:

CCRA s.3: The purpose of the correctional system is to contribute to a just, peaceful, and safe society by carrying out sentences imposed by courts through the safe and human custody and supervision of incarcerated people and by assisting the rehabilitation of incarcerated people and their reintegration into community as law-abiding citizens.

CCRA s.4(f): correctional decisions are made in a forthright and fair manner, with access by the [incarcerated person] to an effective grievance procedure.



CCRA s. 28: If a person is or is to be confined in a penitentiary, the Service shall take all reasonable steps to ensure that the penitentiary in which they are confined is one that provides them with the least restrictive environment for that person, taking into account

- (a) the degree and kind of custody and control necessary for
 - (i) the safety of the public,
 - (ii) the safety of that person and other persons in the penitentiary, and
 - (iii) the security of the penitentiary;
- (b) accessibility to
 - (i) the person's home community and family,
 - (ii) a compatible cultural environment, and
 - (iii) a compatible linguistic environment; and
- (c) the availability of appropriate programs and services and the person's willingness to participate in those programs.

CAEFS' Recommendation: Considering the requirement for fair and forthright correctional decision making, the outcome of a security-level review should not come as a surprise to an incarcerated person or to their case management team. CAEFS recommends that in instances where the Institutional Head's opinion is not aligned with the custody rating scale and / or with the assessment of the case management team, that the person be given, in writing, a clear rationale based on the criteria outlined in section 28 of the CCRA, along with time-framed steps to take to address any perceived risks identified by the Institutional Head, which is aligned with the overarching purpose of CSC.

Access to Conditional Release

Description: CAEFS received reports that only people who are classified as minimum-security are being supported for escorted temporary absence (ETA), other than medical ETAs.

Discussion: The IMT shared that applications for ETAs from all security classifications are considered and that none are automatically declined based on security classification. The IMT shared examples of recent successful cultural and compassionate ETAs completed by people who were classified as medium and maximum-security, respectively. CAEFS offered to support in ensuring that people incarcerated at EIFW understood that all ETA applications, regardless of security classification, would be considered.

Law & Policy:

CCRA s.3: The purpose of the correctional system is to contribute to a just, peaceful, and safe society by carrying out sentences imposed by courts through the safe and human custody and supervision of incarcerated people and by assisting the rehabilitation of incarcerated people and their reintegration into community as law-abiding citizens.

CCRA s.17 (1): The institutional head may [...] authorize the temporary absence of an incarcerated person, other than an [incarcerated person] described in subsection 17.1(1), if [they are] escorted by a staff member or other person authorized by the institutional head and, in the opinion of the institutional head,

- (a) the [incarcerated person] will not, by reoffending, present an undue risk to society during an absence authorized under this section;
- (b) it is desirable for the [incarcerated person] to be absent from the penitentiary for medical or administrative reasons, community service, family contact, including parental responsibilities, personal development for rehabilitative purposes or compassionate reasons;
- (c) the [incarcerated person's] behaviour while under sentence does not preclude authorizing the absence; and
- (d) a structured plan for the absence has been prepared.



CAEFS' Recommendations: Conditional release provides individuals with the strongest opportunities to be successful in their reintegration. According to the Parole Board of Canada, the gradual release of individuals from incarceration, also known as the continuum of release, is the best way to reintegrate people who are incarcerated into community. CAEFS encourages EIFW to work to address this misconception that only people who are classified as minimum-security are supported for ETAs, and to generally prioritize gradual release to mitigate harmful impacts of criminalization and to promote timely reintegration back into community.

Access to Employment

Description: CAEFS received reports that there are not enough employment positions for people to be able to maintain the level of pay that they were receiving during COVID-19, when pay was being provided at \$5 / day regardless of engagement in employment / programming. Reports that this has had financial impacts, particularly for people in the maximum-security unit where people reported that it is not possible to facilitate full-time employment.

Discussion: The IMT emphasized that engagement in programming and education is also considered in determining pay-levels. CAEFS shared that the committees and peer advocates had thought of a number of potential new employment positions and that the representatives would bring them to their next meeting with management.

Law & Policy:

CCRA s. 4 (c.2) the Service ensures the effective delivery of programs to [incarcerated people], including correctional, educational, vocational training and volunteer programs, with a view to improving access to alternatives to custody in a penitentiary and to promoting rehabilitation.

CCRA s.3: The purpose of the correctional system is to contribute to a just, peaceful, and safe society by carrying out sentences imposed by courts through the safe and human custody and supervision of incarcerated people and by assisting the rehabilitation of incarcerated people and their reintegration into community as law-abiding citizens.

CAEFS' Recommendations: The amount that incarcerated people are compensated for their labour within penitentiaries has not been updated since the 1980s. CAEFS recommends that CSC adjust compensation to the rate of inflation in order to support in reintegrating people back into community as law-abiding citizens. Further, CAEFS recommends that CSC increase opportunities for meaningful employment both within the penitentiary and through work-releases. CAEFS appreciates the discretion that EIFW used during the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure that people were able to continue to receive some income, despite restrictions on programming.

Communicating with Family

Description: CAEFS received reports that family members are being removed from people's PIN lists or not added due to security concerns (such as a criminal record).

Discussion: The IMT shared that they have done case-by-base approvals in instances where family members have criminal records and shared that having a criminal record is not a disqualifying factor to being approved on someone's PIN list. CAEFS and the IMT discussed a specific case, with the consent of the individual. CAEFS suggested the possibility of providing supervised phone calls or video visits to continue to facilitate access. Given that the person had already filed an initial grievance, the IMT suggested that filing a national level grievance to resolve her concerns would be most appropriate.

Law & Policy:

CCRA s. 71(1) In order to promote relationships between [incarcerated people] and the community, an [incarcerated person] is entitled to have reasonable contact, including visits and correspondence, with family, friends and other



persons from outside the penitentiary, subject to such reasonable limits as are prescribed for protecting the security of the penitentiary or the safety of persons.

CAEFS' Recommendations: The salient criteria in the regionalization of the Canadian penitentiaries designated from women was the promote close community and familial contact for federally sentenced women and gender-diverse people. Accordingly, all decisions should be made in the spirit of facilitation the most broad and accessible access to community and family as possible.

Health Care

Description: The following report was shared with CAEFS during our October visit and is included in the annex. However, it was also pertinent to raise in this meeting as there were updates.

From October: CAEFS received reports that an individual has a broken nose and elbow. She shared that she is afraid to sleep at night because she has difficulty breathing, and excruciating pain when she accidentally bumps her elbow. She reports having requested to see a doctor for 90 days and has so far only met with a nurse. Her concerns remain outstanding, and she is unclear what steps are being taken to support her well-being. CAEFS asked that the IMT follow up with the individual and provided a consent form.

During our December visit, the individual reported that she has now seen a doctor but that they are awaiting records from Saskatchewan to proceed with further treatment. She also reported that she has only been given Advil and Tylenol to manage the pain in her elbow without a more ongoing treatment plan. She has shared with CAEFS that she would like to see a physiotherapist and / or massage therapist.

Discussion: The IMT shared that there is a new Health Care Lead at EIFW. The IMT shared that people have regular accessing to nurses. The IMT offered to follow up with the individual.

Law & Policy:

CCRA s. 86 (1): The Service shall provide every [incarcerated person] with (a) essential health care; and (b) reasonable access to non-essential health care.

CD 800 s.2: The Regional Director, Health Services, will ensure:

- (a) the provision of health services to [incarcerated persons] in Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) institutions and in the community, in accordance with relevant legislation, professionally accepted standards, CSC policies and practice directives
- (b) implementation of procedures to monitor and evaluate the quality and timeliness of health services and in a manner that promotes patient safety and quality improvement.

CAEFS' Recommendation: Considering CSC's unique responsibility to provide safe and humane custody to people in federal penitentiaries, and wherein those same people are reliant on penitentiary staff and contractors to provide health services, referrals, emergency care, timeframes etc., it is incumbent on CSC to center the dignity and care of these individuals. CAEFS appreciates the IMT's offer to follow up with the individual and looks forward to connecting with the new Health Care Lead, where and when appropriate.

