



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

May 12th., 2025

Dear Lil,

I want to thank members of the institutional management team ("IMT") at the Edmonton Institution for Women (EIFW) for taking the time to meet with me on April 17th, 2025, in person at EIFW.

This letter summarizes reports received and conditions observed during our visit to the Edmonton Institution for Women from April 14th – 16th and provides 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.

We look forward to your response.

Respectfully,

Jacqueline Omstead
Senior Advocate



Modified Movement

Description: CAEFS received reports that EIFW was on modified movement for three weeks in response to interhouse visiting, returning to regular movement during the week of our visit. According to a memo shared with CAEFS, the movement schedule was reviewed weekly. Reported impacts included limited access to recreation or outdoor time (1 hour per day), with individuals not attending school or programs confined to their living units for the remainder of the day. CAEFS was also informed that committee executives from the same groups were unable to meet, despite requests for accommodations, if they resided in different living units.

Discussion: The IMT stated that modified movement was implemented in response to interhouse visiting and several serious assaults, emphasizing it was a last resort and that the schedule was reviewed weekly. They denied reported impacts, stating that committees were permitted to meet, that no requests from executive members were received related to coordinating meetings, and that the Inmate Committee was kept informed throughout the period of modified movement. They also reported no disruption to daytime movement, noting that programs and school continued as scheduled and that the main building remains locked regardless of modified movement, and that individuals had 4–5 hours of outdoor or recreation time on weekends.

Law & Policy:

CCRA s.4(c): the Service uses the least restrictive measures consistent with the protection of society, staff members and [people in prison].

CAEFS' Recommendation: CAEFS appreciated EIFW's acknowledgement that modified movements should only be used when all other less-restrictive options have been attempted. However, CAEFS encourages investment and prioritization of upstream, preventative approaches that address the root causes of lateral violence—such as trauma-informed care, peer support, and culturally relevant programming.

Opioid Antagonist Drug Treatment

Description: People reported significant growth in the number of individuals receiving OAT over the past year, estimating an increase from approximately 20 people to nearly half of the compound. While supportive of the program's availability, individuals shared concerns about adverse impacts related to its implementation, including:

- *Reduced access to recreation time:* Movement on the main compound, which previously began at 5:45 p.m. after count clearance, now typically starts at 6:30 p.m. or 7:00 p.m.
- *Barriers to accessing non-OAT healthcare provider:* People reported being redirected to the OAT nurse for unrelated health concerns. Given the increased number of individuals on OAT, delays in accessing the nurse were reported, with limited time available for each appointment (passes are scheduled every five minutes on clinic days).
- *Confidentiality concerns and potential targeting:* CAEFS heard that individuals previously found or suspected of diverting medication are grouped into "Group 1," whose members are called over the intercom to report to the gym. It was reported that it is widely known that Group 1 consists of people associated with diversion, raising confidentiality concerns and reportedly putting pressure on these individuals to continue diverting.

Discussion: The IMT reported that the OAT distribution schedule was designed to minimize disruptions to school and program activities. They explained that, under the integrated health plan, all individuals on OAT have a registered nurse as



their most responsible health care provider, while those not on OAT are under the care of a physician. Although acknowledging occasional periods of high demand, the IMT stated that they believe the service provided exceeds community standards, with individuals meeting with a nurse practitioner monthly. They suggested that some concerns may stem from a misunderstanding of the expanded scope of nurse practitioner roles. The IMT offered to follow up on the reported confidentiality concerns.

Law & Policy:

CD 701 s. 8(b): the confidentiality of an [incarcerated person's] personal health information will be maintained, except where disclosure is permitted pursuant to the CCRA, the *Privacy Act*, or when the information is relevant to [their] risk or to the risk of others

CCRA s.4(c): the Service uses the least restrictive measures consistent with the protection of society, staff members and [people in prison].

CAEFS' Recommendation: CAEFS encourages EIFW to ensure that the operation of the Opioid Antagonist Drug Treatment program does not compromise participants' privacy, safety, or equitable access to health care. Measures must be taken to protect medical confidentiality and to ensure that participation in this evidence-based treatment does not result in unintended adverse impacts on participants or the population overall. When concerns are reported, they should be taken seriously and investigated. Equitable access and non-discrimination must remain central to all health interventions in custody.

Access to Library Services

Description: CAEFS received reports that the library has been inaccessible for two years, and that access to books is only facilitated via request form to the librarian. This change was reportedly implemented in response to concerns about contraband being passed through library books to individuals in the secure unit. People reported that the librarian is only on-site every second week and that requests are sometimes unanswered, resulting in inconsistent access to materials. Limited library access not only restricts recreational reading but also reportedly delays timely access to law and policy, as there are only one or two computers available for accessing resources like the CCRA and CCRR outside of the library.

Discussion: The IMT reported that a single full-time librarian position is shared between EIFW and Edmonton Institution, and that staffing decisions for the library are made at the regional, not site, level.

Law & Policy:

CCRR s.97(3): The Service shall ensure that an [incarcerated person] has reasonable access to (a) legal counsel and legal reading materials; (b) non-legal materials, including (i) Commissioner's Directives, and (ii) regional instructions and institutional standing orders, except those relating to security matters [...]

CD 720, Purpose: To provide appropriate library services similar to those in the community, while taking into consideration the requirements of the correctional environment; To ensure education programs and library services respect gender, ethnic, cultural and linguistic differences, and are responsive to the special needs of women [in federal prison], Indigenous [people], [people] requiring mental health care and other groups.

CAEFS' Recommendation: CAEFS recommends that people at EIFW should have consistent access to a library and to librarians. Access to libraries and librarians in federal prisons should be prioritized as a fundamental component of education and personal development. Libraries support literacy, legal knowledge, and lifelong learning, empowering individuals to make informed choices and prepare for reintegration. In this way, ensuring consistent access to both the library and librarians is



aligned with the overall purpose of the Correctional Service of Canada, as well as numerous other legislated obligations to incarcerated people.

Peer-Led Initiatives

Description: Two individuals shared with CAEFS their efforts to start peer-led initiatives at EIFW that were not supported. One proposed a peer-led AA meeting, and the other a peer-led discussion group focused on queer and trans inclusivity. In both cases, they were informed that such groups must be led by an external community volunteer. While they welcomed community involvement, both individuals felt disempowered by being prevented from leading the groups themselves and expressed concern about the delays associated with recruiting, clearing, and training a volunteer.

Discussion: The Assistant Warden of Interventions was unavailable for the IMT meeting, but other members offered to relay the information to her.

Law & Policy:

CCRA s. 73 [Incarcerated people] are entitled to reasonable opportunities to assemble peacefully and associate with other [incarcerated people] within the penitentiary, subject to such reasonable limits as are prescribed for protecting the security of the penitentiary or the safety of persons.

Creating Choices, Overall Statement of Principle: The Correctional Service of Canada, with the support of communities, has the responsibility to create the environment that empowers federally sentenced women to make meaningful and responsible choices in order that they may live with dignity and respect.

Creating Choices, Principle #1: Empowerment

CAEFS' Recommendation: Peer-led initiatives align with the principles and purpose of *Creating Choices*, particularly the principle of empowerment. These initiatives can provide meaningful support, foster connection, and reduce both lateral violence and social isolation within the prison environment. While the inclusion and support of community volunteers may be beneficial in some cases, their participation should not be a prerequisite for peer-led initiatives to operate.

Access to Family and Community: Telephone Systems

Description: CAEFS received reports about the impact of reduced phone hours on the main compound. Individuals shared that evening community activities (such as Walls to Bridges and choir) leave little or no time to call family before the 10:00 p.m. cutoff, forcing them to choose between participating in reintegration programs and maintaining family connections. Others noted competing commitments, such as office hours or exercise, that further limit phone access. Committees suggested that extending phone hours to midnight would help address these concerns. Separately, people reported not being aware that afterhours phone access could be granted on a case-by-case basis. In one instance, an individual shared that she had not spoken to her mother since the phone hours changed.

Discussion: The IMT reported that the new phone schedule aligns with existing expectations in the institutional handbook to avoid use of common areas after evening count. They denied the reported impacts, stating that activities do not occur every evening, that there is time to access the phones between program end times and when count is cleared, and that full phone access is available on weekends. The IMT emphasized that the new schedule was not intended to restrict access, and suggested that difficulties in accessing the phones may be related to bullying or intimidation, as phone use is self-managed. The IMT encouraged individuals to contact their CMT for accommodations or a Correctional Manager in emergencies.

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.

CCRA s.4(c): the Service uses the least restrictive measures consistent with the protection of society, staff members and [people in prison].

CAEFS' Recommendation: A primary reason that Canadian penitentiaries designated for women were built in each region was to promote close community and familial contact for federally sentenced women and gender-diverse people. CAEFS strongly recommends that this overly restrictive limitation on access to a telephone be rescinded immediately. All CSC decisions should be made in the spirit of facilitating the most broad and accessible access to community and family as possible.

Access to Indigenous Culture

Description: CAEFS received reports that individuals would like access to rattle and drum kits from Halfords to support cultural connection for themselves and their families. One person shared that she has been trying to teach her children traditional songs over the phone and would like to make and send a drum to them but is currently unable to do so. A suggestion was made to host drum and rattle-making workshops so people can still engage in this cultural practice, even if individual kits are not permitted.

Little Sisters reported that their proposal to prepare a stew for a feast following Red Dress Day was denied due to the number of people to be served. While tea, bannock, and berries were approved, they expressed a desire to include a stew as part of the observance.

Discussion: The IMT shared that rattle and drum kits are likely included in the nationally approved catalogue, which may be why they cannot be ordered through Halfords. They offered to follow up on why the stew was not approved but suggested it was likely due to the large number of attendees and the staff resources required.

Law & Policy:

CCRA s.4(g): correctional policies, programs and practices respect gender, ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic differences, sexual orientation and gender identity and expression, and are responsive to the special needs of women, Indigenous persons, visible minorities, persons requiring mental health care and other groups.

CD 702, s. I: authorize traditional food and non-traditional food to be used in a ceremony or celebration pursuant to Annex F.

CD 702, Annex F: Written requests received from the Indigenous Wellness Committee for the provision of traditional foods for cultural/spiritual purposes will be referred to the Indigenous Liaison Officer (ALO). The ALO will review the appropriateness of the request and of the foods identified and make recommendations to the Institutional Head and Elder/Spiritual Advisor. The Institutional Head will retain the right to prohibit foods that are contrary to the safety and security of the institution. Any question on whether the items requested are "traditional" will be referred to the institutional Elder/Spiritual Advisor.

CAEFS' Recommendation: CAEFS appreciates EIFW's recognition of the cultural significance of rattle and drum making for incarcerated individuals. We encourage clearer communication regarding ordering restrictions and the removal of barriers



wherever possible to support creative expression. CAEFS also urges EIFW to prioritize staff resources to support the proposed Red Dress Day feast, as an act of reconciliation in honour of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and two-spirit people.

Access to Escorted Temporary Absences and Work Releases

Description: CAEFS received reports that although many individuals in the minimum-security unit have been approved for escorted temporary absences (ETAs), there are ongoing delays and barriers to accessing them. People shared that it often takes over a month to go out on an ETA after approval, largely due to limited staff to escort first-time outings and a shortage of volunteers thereafter. It was also noted that community members who expressed interest in volunteering had not received responses. Currently, only one person at the MSU is participating in a work release.

Discussion: The IMT shared that core programming is prioritized over Escorted Temporary Absences (ETAs), but noted that EIFW recorded 1,300 ETAs last year—reportedly the highest in the country. They stated that approved ETAs requiring security escorts are monitored and that overtime will be paid if necessary to facilitate these absences. However, they noted that EIFW does not receive funding for a designated escorting officer or driver, unlike men's institutions. The IMT also cited short sentences as a barrier to work releases, as high turnover is less appealing to employers. They added that the volunteer coordinator will be attending an upcoming volunteer fair to help address the shortage of volunteers.

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.

CAEFS' Recommendation: Conditional release offers the strongest opportunities for successful reintegration. The Parole Board of Canada emphasizes that gradual, structured release—known as the continuum of release—is the most effective approach to community reintegration. CAEFS appreciates EIFW's efforts to facilitate access to ETAs and commends them for having the highest number in the country. Ensuring consistent access to escorting officers or drivers—comparable to resources in men's institutions—would further reduce barriers to ETAs and work releases, aligning with CSC's reintegration mandate.

Physical Conditions of Confinement in MSU

Description: House representatives in the minimum-security unit reported ongoing maintenance issues, including broken doors, windows, ovens, and poor water pressure. They noted that while maintenance requests are consistently submitted, they often go unanswered. When responses do occur, maintenance staff reportedly assess the issue but do not complete the necessary repairs.

Discussion: The Acting Assistant Warden, Management Services (A/AWMS) requested a list of the required repairs, which was provided by email following the meeting. He responded with updates, noting that several issues had been addressed and providing the status of outstanding items. CAEFS was encouraged to continue to share reported concerns from the population so that they can be prioritized.

Law & Policy:



CCRA, s. 70: the Service shall take all reasonable steps to ensure that penitentiaries, the penitentiary environment, the living and working conditions of [incarcerated people] and the working conditions of staff members are safe, healthful and free of practices that undermine a person's sense of personal dignity.

CAEFS' Recommendation: CAEFS appreciates EIFW's attention to the reported maintenance issues. While we welcome the opportunity to continue escalating concerns to the IMT, EIFW is encouraged to ensure that written maintenance requests submitted by incarcerated individuals are addressed within the mandated timeframes.

