



Carole Chen, Warden  
Fraser Valley Institution for Women  
33344 King Rd, Abbotsford, BC V2S 6J5

**Re: January 2026 Advocacy Visit Follow-Up**

February 24<sup>th</sup>, 2026

Dear Carole,

We want to thank the Institutional Management Team (IMT) at Fraser Valley Institution (FVI) for taking the time to meet with our Pacific Regional Advocacy Team on February 3<sup>rd</sup>, via Teams. This letter details the overarching issues at FVI that were reported to The Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies (CAEFS) during our advocacy visit on January 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2026. It also includes our summary of the discussion that took place during the meeting mentioned above, relevant laws and policies, and CAEFS' recommendations.

During CAEFS' January visit to FVI, the penitentiary's population inclusive of all three security classifications was 112, with three individuals incarcerated in the Structured Intervention Unit.

### **1. Physical Conditions of Confinement: Access to Working Phones**

**Description:** People incarcerated at FVI continue to report persistent issues with the functioning of penitentiary telephones. Individuals described frequent call disconnections, static interference, and voice-recognition failures that prevent outgoing calls from connecting. These issues are impacting the telephones most readily available within living units and negatively impact individuals' ability to maintain contact with family and community supports. With increased inter-regional transfers from Edmonton and Ontario, consistent access to functioning telephones remains a significant concern for individuals incarcerated at FVI.

The Inmate Wellness Committee (IWC) and Peer Advocates also reported issues with their telephones in the penitentiary committee office and shared that being able to communicate directly with their Minimum-Security Unit counterparts over the telephone is important to their mandate and committee operations.

**Discussion:** IMT noted that phone upgrades are underway and that temporary alternatives are being provided to individuals awaiting upgrades. IMT said they are not aware of any current gaps in individuals' ability to contact family or community supports and stated that any reported phone malfunctions will be addressed immediately.

### **Law/Policy:**

Corrections and Conditional Release Act, section 3(a): The purpose of the federal correctional system is to contribute to the maintenance of a just, peaceful and safe society by (a) carrying out sentences imposed by courts through the safe and humane custody and supervision of [federally sentenced people].

CCRA, section 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.

CCRA, section 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:** A key rationale for establishing regional penitentiaries designated for women was to promote close community and familial contact for federally sentenced women and gender-diverse individuals- a goal clearly articulated in *Creating Choices*. All Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) decisions should be guided by a commitment to facilitating the broadest and most accessible opportunities for connection with community and family. CAEFS further encourages the CSC to meaningfully consider alternatives to custody in a penitentiary as per section 4(c.1) of the CCRA.

## **2. CSC Consultation on Correctional Plans and Correctional Plan Updates**

**Description:** Individuals reported limited consultation by case management teams, particularly institutional parole officers, regarding CSC paperwork, specifically Correctional Plans and Correctional Plan Updates. Individuals reported being required to submit multiple file corrections due to factual inaccuracies in their CSC documentation. Advocates were also informed that many individuals do not feel their paperwork accurately reflects their experiences or progress, and that the language used in Correctional Plans and Correctional Plan Updates is perceived as negative and dismissive of positive achievements.

The population at FVI has continuously expressed a strong desire to be consulted prior to documents being finalized and locked into CSC's management system, noting that Correctional Plans and Correctional Plan Updates can have significant and lasting impacts on both the lives and reintegration opportunities available to incarcerated people.

**Discussion:** IMT stated that individuals are advised to submit requests for file correction when information is factually inaccurate. IMT also noted a recent increase in file correction requests, which they attributed in part to disagreements with assessment outcomes rather than factual errors, noting that differences of opinion do not fall within the scope of the file correction process. IMT and the Lead Advocate discussed the importance of a collaborative and communicative approach to correctional planning as this lends to CSC's dual purpose of rehabilitation and reintegration.

### **Law/Policy:**

CCRA, section 5(c): The CSC is responsible for preparing individuals for release and reintegration.

Commissioner's Directive (CD) 700 (Correctional Interventions), section 10(e): Parole Officers will facilitate the reintegration of [people who are incarcerated] into community at the earliest possible date while ensuring public and staff safety in all case management decisions.

CD 710-1 (Progress Against the Correctional Plan), section 3: The Parole Officer will assist and support the [incarcerated person] in actively participating in meeting the objectives of their Correctional Plan; document all interactions, interventions, observations and assessments; maintain and update the Correctional Plan as per Annex D, in consultation with the [individual who is incarcerated]; monitor the [incarcerated person's] behaviour and compliance with court-ordered obligations; inform the [incarcerated person] about their rights pursuant to



sections 81, 84 and 84.1 of the CCRA; and, consider the provisions outlined in paragraph 26(1)(a) and/or subsection 33(3.1) or 134.1(2.1) of the CCRA for all Correctional Plan Updates for the purpose of preparing for release, where applicable.

**CAEFS Recommendations:** The inclusion of incarcerated people in decisions about their correctional programming and liberty is foundational to realizing the principles of Creating Choices and the purpose of the CSC. The requirement to consult and collaborate with incarcerated people on all documentation and decisions impacting them is entrenched through multiple sections of the CCRA. CAEFS encourages the CSC to foster a deeper culture of information sharing and participation in decision making process between institutional staff and incarcerated individuals and encourage both Institutional and Community Parole Officers to spend more time engaging with the people that they work with to ensure consultation on both Correction Plans and Correctional Plan Updates.

### **3. Access to Community Reintegration Resources within Penitentiary**

**Description:** Advocates learned that there is currently no designated community reintegration worker at FVI. Individuals reported significant challenges in preparing for conditional release, including day parole, due to having no access to internet, limited access to their case management teams, and challenges with accessing functional telephones as noted above. Individuals reported being motivated and eager to plan for their community reintegration but reported feeling challenged by the limited resources available to them in the penitentiary environment.

The population at FVI identified monitored access to the internet, consistent access to working phones, and increased access to external community organizations through conditional release opportunities such as Escorted Temporary Absences (ETA) as potential measures to address these reported barriers to community reintegration.

**Discussion:** IMT noted that there is currently no funded position dedicated to reintegration support and that existing efforts rely on volunteers following the conclusion of the formerly contracted reintegration position. IMT expressed a desire to offer additional ETA opportunities and identified limited community-based options as a constraint. Advocates were encouraged to engage with volunteers currently accessing the penitentiary, and IMT agreed to provide a list of active volunteer organizations to CAEFS advocates.

#### **Law/Policy:**

CCRA, section 3(b): The purpose of the federal correctional system is to contribute to the maintenance of a just, peaceful and safe society by assisting the rehabilitation of [incarcerated persons] and their reintegration into the community as law-abiding citizens through the provision of programs in penitentiaries and in the community.

CCRA, section 5: There shall continue to be a correctional service in and for Canada, to be known as the Correctional Service of Canada, which shall be responsible for (a) the care and custody of [incarcerated people]; (b) the provision of programs that contribute to the rehabilitation of [incarcerated people] and to their successful reintegration into the community; (c) the preparation of [incarcerated persons] for release.

CD 700 (Correctional interventions), section 10(e): Parole Officers will facilitate the reintegration of [people who are incarcerated] into community at the earliest possible date while ensuring public and staff safety in all case management decisions.

**CAEFS Recommendations:** Federally sentenced individuals are often dislocated from their families and communities as a result of incarceration and face limited opportunities within the penitentiary environment to access community



reintegration supports and resources. CAEFS encourages both IMT and the CSC to consider the measures identified by individuals incarcerated at FVI to address and mitigate the population-identified barriers to community reintegration.

#### 4. Aging in Federal Custody

**Description:** Advocates were informed that many elderly people who are incarcerated lack the physical or cognitive capacity to independently connect with external community supports, which can contribute to this population's increased isolation. Individuals at FVI expressed concern that elderly people in custody will be placed in more restrictive environments like medical observation and maximum-security unit, to be more closely monitored by the CSC.

It was reported that incarcerated peers are frequently relied upon to fill care gaps between healthcare staff; however, it was emphasized to advocates that this is not a sustainable or safe long-term solution. Advocates also learned that elderly individuals are required to wake up for 10pm count, which was reported as disorienting and challenging for both those experiencing age-related cognitive impairments and the individuals who reside with them, who are required to provide de-escalation support.

**Discussion:** IMT informed advocates that a proposal is being worked on by one of the peer-led committees at FVI to provide additional aging in custody supports to the minimum-security unit. IMT's healthcare representative also stated they would coordinate with their colleagues in developing strategies to meet the growing needs of FVI's aging population.

##### **Law/Policy:**

CCRA, section 4(c): The Service uses the least restrictive measures consistent with the protection of society, staff members and [people who are incarcerated].

CCRA, section 4(c.1): (c.1) the Service considers alternatives to custody in a penitentiary, including the alternatives referred to in sections 29 and 81.

CCRA, section 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.

**CAEFS Recommendations:** Aging people represent over 25% of the federal prison population overall, and penitentiary environments are structured for able-bodied people in peak physical health, they are not conducive to the needs of people with age related mental and physical health conditions. Aging people experience adverse differential discrimination by the seemingly neutral policies and practices carried out by the CSC, and CAEFS encourages the CSC to consider alternatives to custody for individuals as they age, and for age and the passage of time to be more meaningfully be considered in risk assessments which currently keep women and gender diverse people incarcerated as they age.

#### 5. Access to Indigenous Cultural Supports

**Description:** Individuals reported inconsistent access to cultural materials, including beads, as well as the continued absence of an Indigenous Wellness Committee at Fraser Valley Institution (FVI). A core component of the Indigenous Wellness Committee's mandate is to ensure that Indigenous individuals incarcerated at FVI can purchase beads for cultural purposes and sell bead work to earn income, supplementing the average daily CSC employment pay of \$6.35. The Chair and Co-Chair positions of the Indigenous Wellness Committee have remained vacant for



approximately six months, as previously noted in CAEFS' August 2025 advocacy letter. The Committee was established to represent the needs of FVI's Indigenous population to institutional management and to support continued access to Indigenous cultural programming and supports.

Limited availability of Elders in the main compound was also identified as a significant concern, particularly given that Indigenous individuals comprise the majority of the population at FVI.

**Discussion:** IMT shared that the current Elder may be willing to increase availability by up to two additional days per week. At present, FVI has three full-time Elders and one part-time Elder serving the Minimum-Security Unit (MSU), as well as three Indigenous Liaison Officers. Individuals seeking additional cultural or spiritual support were advised to contact the Warden directly. An update on the status of the Indigenous Wellness Committee remains pending, as the role of committee chair has not yet been filled. It was also noted that clarification is required regarding whether the Indigenous Wellness Committee positions are considered as paid employment.

#### **Law/Policy:**

CCRA, section 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.

CCRA, section 83(2): The Service shall take all reasonable steps to make available to Indigenous [people who are incarcerated] the services of an Indigenous spiritual leader or elder after consultation with (a) the national Indigenous advisory committee established under section 82; and (b) the appropriate regional and local Indigenous advisory committees.

CD 702 (Indigenous [Incarcerated People]), section 6(b): The Institutional Head will ensure [incarcerated people] are provided with the services of an Elder/Spiritual Advisor, in consultation with the Regional Administrator, Indigenous Initiatives.

CD 700 (Correctional Interventions): The Institutional Head will ensure correctional policies, assessments, respect, programs and practices and are responsive to: 1. gender, including the special needs of women 2. ethnic, cultural and linguistic differences, including Indigenous [people who are incarcerated] 3. [incarcerated persons] requiring mental health care and those with physical disabilities

**CAEFS Recommendations:** Over 50% of people incarcerated in federal prisons designated for women are Indigenous, and meeting the needs of Indigenous people in custody must be a priority. It is CAEFS' view that the CSC should, in the spirit of addressing this national human rights crisis and upholding the principles of Creating Choices, prioritize the decarceration of Indigenous people in Canada, especially women and gender diverse people.

#### **6. Access to Conditional Release: Escorted Temporary Absences, Work Releases, and Day Parole**

**Description:** Individuals reported limited access to Escorted Temporary Absences (ETAs), noting that people are not regularly going out on approved ETAs. Additionally, there are currently no work release opportunities available at FVI. Individuals reported that FVI calculates the one-year ETA approval period from the date of the approval decision rather than from the date of the first ETA. Given that first ETAs often occur months after approval, this practice restricts individuals'



access to the continuum of release as per the recommendation of the Parole Board of Canada. Work release opportunities were also identified by the population as essential to supporting community reintegration and supporting individuals in saving sufficient funds to successfully transition to community living.

Individuals reported receiving incomplete or misleading information from institutional parole officers regarding day parole options. Specifically, IPOs were reported as not informing individuals about “parole-other” and instead encouraging release to halfway houses as the only option. Individuals stated that this occurs even when they have stable housing, supportive partners, and strong community networks in place. IPOs were also reported to be recommending shelters as more appropriate release options than residing with relatives or friends who provide positive and stable community support.

**Discussion:** IMT confirmed that ETA decisions take effect as of the date of the decision. To support conditional release needs, overtime has been approved to increase staff capacity.

It was noted that there are operational limits on the number of individuals who can participate in ETAs at any given time, with the penitentiary currently facilitating approximately four to five group escorts per week.

**Law/Policy:**

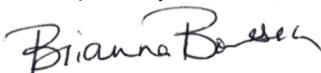
CCRA, section 3(b): The purpose of the federal correctional system is to contribute to the maintenance of a just, peaceful and safe society by assisting the rehabilitation of [incarcerated people] and their reintegration into the community as law-abiding citizens through the provision of programs in penitentiaries and in the community.

CCRA, section 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.

**CAEFS Recommendations:** Ensuring consistent access to reintegration opportunities through temporary absences including escorted temporary absences and work releases aligns with CSC’s legislated purpose, as conditional release provides the strongest opportunity 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

Thank you for taking the time to review this letter and for your continued efforts to improve the outcomes for individuals in your custody and care. CAEFS appreciates IMT’s willingness to engage in dialogue with the people incarcerated at FVI to ensure the voices of those impacted are included in institutional decisions. CAEFS encourages FVI to continue collaborating with the committees at FVI to improve the conditions of confinement and create a penitentiary environment that is aligned with law and policy, and the Principles of Creating Choices.

Respectfully,



Brianna Bourassa  
Lead Advocate, Pacific Regional Advocacy Team, CAEFS

