



Tysha Owens – Acting Warden
Nova Institution for Women
180 James Street
Truro, Nova Scotia B2N 6R8

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Re: CAEFS Regional Advocacy Visit, February 2026

This letter details the items that were reported to the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies (CAEFS) Atlantic Regional Advocacy Team during our visits to Nova on March 4th, 17th and 18th, 2026. This letter also includes a summary of the discussion that took place during the meeting on March 24th, 2026, relevant laws and policies, and CAEFS' positions. Thank you, and we look forward to your response.

Follow Up – V&C Delays

Description: Last month CAEFS raised concerns regarding the delay in mail delivery, especially appointment slips, as this delay prevented CAEFS from speaking with individuals at Nova. In March, CAEFS continued to receive reports that mail is delayed for both minimum and medium security. Several people did not receive appointment slips for their meetings with CAEFS. One individual shared that she has missed 4 consecutive appointments with mental health due to mail delays, highlighting that these delays do not impact CAEFS' services exclusively.

Discussion: Management shared that they sent reminder communications to all staff regarding the process of appointment slips last month. Management thanked CAEFS for bringing forward the continued concerns, and committed to addressing this processing issue directly with V&C.

Law and Policy:

CCRA S.3: The purpose of the federal correctional system is to contribute to the maintenance of a just, peaceful and safe society by

(b) 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 s. 71(1): In order to promote relationships between [incarcerated persons] 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

CD s. 85 (13): Under normal circumstances, incoming mail shall be distributed to [incarcerated persons] and outgoing mail forwarded to the Post Office within 24 hours of receipt.

Recommendation: CAEFS recommends that the institution take further steps to ensure timely and consistent processing of mail, including appointment slips, across all security levels. Reliable access to appointment information is essential to ensure individuals can access their family, as well as critical institutional services, including those related to mental health and community support.

Loss of Heating and Hot Water

Description: CAEFS heard from several individuals who were significantly impacted by the loss of heat and hot water in several living units at Nova. During this time, living units 5 through 9 did not have any hot water or heating, for a period of 6 days. Individuals shared that after 2 days additional blankets and 1 space heater per house were provided, however with one small heating source being shared amongst 7-10 people, it was inadequate and the living units and cells remained extremely cold. CAEFS notes that during this time, temperatures often fell below freezing.

It was reported to CAEFS that individuals were permitted one shower over a 3-day period, using facilities in the gym or Private Family Visitation (PFV) unit. Individuals shared that the PFV was extremely dirty, to a degree in which some individuals declined the opportunity to shower. One person offered to get cleaning supplies to clean the shower prior to use, however, was told that doing so would cut into her 10 minutes of allotted shower time. Individuals reported an inability to exercise due to having no shower access, as well as impacts on mental health due to lack of hygiene. Individuals reported to CAEFS that tensions rose within living units as people were generally cold and did not feel clean. At the time of CAEFS visit, House 9 was reported to still not have heat, and House 2 did not have hot water. Individuals participating in the Mother Child Program (MCP) also reported their rooms being cold.

Discussion: Management shared that delays in repairs to the heat and hot water systems were due to a mechanical part that took nearly a week to acquire. Management confirmed that each house was provided with blankets and one space heater. They shared a preference for hearing directly from individuals at the time issues arise, such as with shower spaces or heating, so they can respond more quickly. Management also acknowledged ongoing concerns in Minimum, noting these are likely related to aging infrastructure and the unusually cold winter.

Law and Policy:

CCRF s.12: Everyone has the right not to be subjected to any cruel and unusual treatment or punishment.

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

Recommendation: CSC has an obligation to provide a living environment that is safe, dignified, and humane. CAEFS urges the institution to ensure that all living units are adequately heated, as inadequate living conditions are well documented to adversely affect both physical health and psychological wellbeing. CAEFS further recommends that the institution develop and implement clear emergency plans to ensure continuity of services during mechanical or infrastructure disruptions. These plans should prioritize consistent access to basic needs and essential



services—including heat, water, and hygiene, which are fundamental rights and must be maintained at all times, regardless of operational challenges.

Physical Conditions of Confinement – Sidewalk Conditions and Snow Removal

Description: CAEFS received reports on accessibility concerns regarding the sidewalks leading to House 1. The physical infrastructure of the sidewalk needs repair, as it is uneven and poses a safety risk to those who use wheelchairs. Temporary repairs have been completed; however, still remains a concern for those who use mobility aids or equipment. Individuals shared that following a recent snowstorm, snow removal did not take place until after 4pm, meaning that those with mobility challenges could not safely move about the institution. One individual shared that she required physical assistance getting to and from med-line, due to the snow.

Discussion: Management shared that the sidewalk repairs are set to be completed as soon as the weather allows for pouring of concrete. In regard to snow removal, management suggested calling the Correctional Manager (CM) who could prioritize the snow removal process.

Law and 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.

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

Recommendation: CAEFS recommends that the institution prioritize permanent repairs to the sidewalk leading to House 1 to support safe and reliable accessibility for individuals using mobility aids. While temporary measures have been taken, ongoing concerns suggest that further attention is needed. CAEFS also recommends reviewing snow removal practices to support more timely clearing of pathways, particularly those connected to essential services. Consistent and accessible movement throughout the institution remains important for ensuring equitable access to healthcare, programming, and daily activities.

Access to Healthcare – Dental

Description: CAEFS received reports that individuals were having difficulty accessing the institution's dentist. People shared with CAEFS that the dentist has cancelled his visit to Nova for the past 5 weeks, with one individual having 5 appointments cancelled in a row.

Individuals shared with CAEFS that they often have to submit multiple requests in a row, with some going responded. Others have reported submitting urgent requests, such as active and painful infections, to which the dentist has responded “non-urgent” to the request.



Individuals shared feeling frustrated and helpless in these situations, adding they cannot access alternative providers as they would be able to in community. Ongoing pain and dental problems without timely care are causing individuals to suffer, in some cases impacting their ability to eat and drink water, and overall, emotionally distressing.

Discussion: Management assured that the dentist has not cancelled 5 weeks in a row, noting that on occasion clinics have been cancelled due to weather. Management shared that the waitlist for general care is currently at 46, though this number may be inflated as it includes those with ongoing treatment plans who have not yet been removed from the list. They added that there are 0 people awaiting urgent care. Management offered that the submission of multiple requests creates an administrative burden and causes delays in the dentist's response time. Management encouraged anyone with concerns to bring them forward directly.

Law and Policy:

CCRA s. 4(d): [People who are incarcerated] retain the rights of all members of society except those that are, as a consequence of the sentence, lawfully and necessarily removed or restricted.

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.

CCRA s. 86 (2): The provision of health care under subsection (1) shall conform to professionally accepted standards

Recommendation: CAEFS recommends that the institution ensure timely access to dental care, as repeated cancellations and delayed responses to urgent requests are causing unnecessary pain and distress. Given that individuals in CSC custody cannot seek care in the community, limitations on timely access contribute to prolonged suffering, deterioration of health, and reduced quality of life. CSC's responsibility for care should reflect this dependency and ensure that health services are not unduly restricted where community access would otherwise be available.

Institutional Mother Child Program

Description: CAEFS met with an individual participating in the Mother Child Program (MCP) who shared several concerns. The individual reported that despite submitting requests for formula no less than one week in advance, she is often left with only one bottle remaining before receiving additional supply, resulting in significant stress and leading her to ration formula out of concern for her baby's food security.

The individual shared that following a recent inpatient stay at the IWK for her baby's scheduled surgery, a pediatrician recommended increasing formula intake and introducing baby cereal; however, one week later, the baby cereal has not yet been provided.

The individual shared that during the hospital stay, which lasted 1 week, she was not provided food, as she was not the patient, and was required to use limited funds from her ITF account to purchase meals. She shared that she only ate two meals per day due to insufficient funds. Since returning from the hospital, these unexpected expenses



have impacted her ability to maintain contact with her family and other children, as she does not have funds for phone use.

The individual further shared that she has not had access to childcare for over three weeks, which has forced her to resign from her position at Corcan and is relying on welfare income of \$2.25 per day. She shared that this has created significant financial strain and has limited her ability to meet her basic needs. The individual also shared that the lack of childcare has had a considerable emotional impact, leaving her feeling overwhelmed, without respite, and concerned that her increased stress is affecting her baby.

CAEFS asked that management consider an interim exception whereby funds typically allocated for childcare could be provided directly to the mother, including back pay for the three-week period during which she was unable to work.

Discussion: Management indicated they have followed up on food insecurity concerns with the Program Manager and are confident the issue has been addressed. They shared they were not previously aware of the situation at the hospital, adding that some support had been provided through a hospital social worker. Management explained they will not be providing back pay in the absence of a babysitter, however committed to reviewing the circumstances around the individual's resignation from CORCAN and supporting family contact where possible. They also agreed to review whether the individual has utilized the full extent of available maternity benefits. Management shared that efforts to secure a babysitter are ongoing, though recruitment within minimum security has been unsuccessful thus far.

Law and 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 persons] and the working conditions of staff members are safe, healthful and free of practices that undermine a person's sense of personal dignity.

CRA s. 71(1): In order to promote relationships between [incarcerated persons] 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.

CD 768: Purpose - To foster positive relationships between federally incarcerated mothers and their child, by keeping them together where appropriate, and providing a supportive environment that promotes stability and continuity for the mother-child relationship

Recommendation: CAEFS appreciates management addressing the food security issue in a timely manner and recommends strengthening communication and protocols within the Mother Child Program to prevent future gaps in care. CAEFS strongly recommends rectifying the instance of institutional poverty by providing appropriate compensation or back-pay to the mother for the period she was unable to work, and taking urgent steps to secure childcare, including exploring special approval to hire a qualified individual from medium security. Ensuring access to basic needs, childcare, and support for mothers in the program is critical to the health and well-being of both parent and child.

Population Update

CAEFS would also like to note that the recorded number of incarcerated people at Nova at the time of the



management meeting was 113, with 2 people currently incarcerated in the Structured Intervention Unit.

In closing and on behalf of CAEFS Atlantic Regional Advocacy team, I would like to thank the management team at Nova for continuing to have open dialogue, investigating the reports we raise, and engaging in solutions orientated discussions wherever possible.

Respectfully,

S. Thompson

Shelby Thompson
Lead Advocate, Atlantic Regional Advocacy Team, CAEFS

