



To: Lilian Kordic, Institutional Head
Edmonton Institution for Women
11151 178 St NW Unit 1, Edmonton, AB T5S 2H9

May 22nd, 2026

Dear Lil,

I want to thank you and other members of the institutional management team (IMT) at the Edmonton Institution for Women (EIFW) for taking the time to meet with me on April 30th via Teams.

This letter summarizes reports received and conditions observed during our visit to the Edmonton Institution for Women on April 27th 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,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'J. Omstead'.

Jacqueline Omstead
Senior Advocate



Health Care: Access to Medication

Description: People reported concerns about access to medication, including receiving the wrong medication, having medications discontinued or dosages reduced without consultation or explanation, and medications not being reordered - sometimes due to an uncommunicated prescription change and sometimes due to oversight. There was a wide range of medications that people reported barriers to accessing, including: dietary supplements (e.g., Ensure), thyroid medication, chronic pain medication, antibiotics, antipsychotics, and antidepressants. Individuals reported severe impacts on their mental and physical health from not being able to access their medications including, hopelessness, seizures, nausea and vomiting, pain, “brain zaps,” headaches, blood in urine, weight loss, and irregular bowel movements. Women also reported losing trust in health care and health care providers at EIFW, and expressed frustration that medications they were stable on in the community are changed upon admission to EIFW. This was raised as particularly concerning for individuals suspended from parole who may return to the community within days or weeks, where they would resume their community-based treatment plans.

Discussion: Specific cases were discussed with consent, and the Health Services representative offered to follow up. The representative noted that some medication issues may relate to staff competency and will be addressed through additional training. He also noted that the national formulary may require substitution of some medications and that some individuals may be titrated off medications. The representative added that EIFW has started working with a new local pharmacy and has seen improved medication wait times compared with the regional pharmacy. He encouraged people to report medication issues to Health Services so staff can advocate and work to address concerns.

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.

The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, s.7: Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of the person and the right not to be deprived thereof except in accordance with the principles of fundamental justice.

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

CCRA s. 86.(1): When health care is provided to [incarcerated persons], the Service shall (a) support the professional autonomy and the clinical independence of registered health care professionals and their freedom to exercise, without undue influence, their professional judgment in the care and treatment of [incarcerated persons]; (b) support those registered health care professionals in their promotion, in accordance with their respective professional code of ethics, of patient-centred care and patient advocacy; and (c) promote decision-making that is based on the appropriate medical care, dental care and mental health care criteria.

CAEFS’ Recommendation: CAEFS urges CSC to implement clear, standardized processes to ensure informed consent and continuity of prescribed medications; strengthen staff training and compliance with emergency response requirements; and improve coordination with external health care providers. CAEFS further recommends enhanced access to medication counselling. In order to ensure true professional autonomy in the treatment of incarcerated people and ensure that they are provided with their right to essential health care, the national formulary must be amended to reflect clinical best practices, rather than prioritize security-based restrictions.

Health Care: Responding to Pain and Injury

Description: CAEFS has continued to receive reports from individuals with injuries, including suspected broken bones, who stated they did not receive adequate care when presenting to, or requesting support from, Health Services. Examples included a person who recently gave birth and reported increasing tailbone pain but was told it was “normal” and provided no relief.



Another individual reported having requested an assessment for a suspected broken nose and elbow for more than a year and continues to experience pain and disrupted sleep.

Discussion: Specific cases were discussed with consent, and the Health Services representative offered to follow up. The representative confirmed that suspected broken bones and/or severe pain should be referred to hospital, and encouraged individuals to escalate concerns if front-line responses are not timely or appropriate. CAEFS and the IMT discussed the patient advocacy pilot project, and it was confirmed that this has not yet been launched at EIFW.

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.

Charter of Rights and Freedoms, Section 12: Everyone has the right not to be subjected to any cruel and unusual treatment or punishment.

The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, s.7: Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of the person and the right not to be deprived thereof except in accordance with the principles of fundamental justice.

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: CSC must look to ensure the dignity and well-being of those in its care. To achieve this, CAEFS recommends increased, pro-active external oversight from relevant governing bodies of healthcare professionals working within the penitentiary environment and a renewed focus on holistic, patient-centered care – not just at the policy level, but in practice. This can be supported by the CSC requesting legislative amendment to the Canada Health Act, to include federally incarcerated people as ensured persons, alleviating CSC of much of its increasing healthcare costs and jurisdiction.

Access to Family: Death Notification and Access to Funeral Services

Description: CAEFS received reports of delays in notifying incarcerated individuals of the death of their immediate family members, including spouses and siblings. These delays significantly affected people's wellness and ability to make timely arrangements to attend funeral services. It created considerable stress and hardship for both families and the incarcerated person during an already difficult and vulnerable time. Families reportedly contacted institutions but were told that staff could neither confirm nor deny whether their loved one was incarcerated there, creating confusion and uncertainty about how to proceed.

They concerningly described a lack of compassion in how the news was communicated and in subsequent interactions with staff, as well as insufficient support and information to facilitate escorted temporary absences (ETAs) or even access to services virtually. As a result, some individuals reported feeling disrespected and dehumanized, expressing that they felt treated as "just offenders" and that they had to plead with staff for accommodation and empathy.

Discussion: The IMT indicated that two compassionate ETAs had been coordinated that week and emphasized a commitment to being accommodating. They noted that in one of the reported instances, the institution was not notified immediately which resulted in the delay. Rather than providing the information directly, staff typically facilitate a phone call so family members can share the news, a practice intended to guard against false reporting. The IMT also stated that when contacting the institution, family members should clearly explain the reason for their call to initiate appropriate processes, and emphasized the importance of family engagement in confirming details required to support compassionate ETAs.

Law & 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 (a) carrying out sentences imposed by courts through the safe and humane custody and supervision of [federally sentenced persons]

CCRA s. 4(d): [federally sentenced people] 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. 17.1 (1): The Parole Board of Canada may authorize the temporary absence of an [incarcerated person] who is serving a sentence of imprisonment for life imposed as a minimum punishment and is eligible for day parole if the [incarcerated person] is escorted by a staff member or other person authorized by the institutional head and the Parole Board of Canada is of the opinion that [...] (b) it is desirable for the [incarcerated person] to be absent from the penitentiary for [...] compassionate reasons

CD 710-3 s. 20: When an application for an ETA to attend a funeral is denied, every reasonable effort will be made to ensure that the [incarcerated person] is informed prior to the time and date when the funeral is to take place. The reasons given must be clearly stated and recorded in the CSC Board Review/Decision.

CAEFS' Recommendation: CAEFS recommends that CSC implement a trauma-informed protocol for death notification and funeral access to ensure incarcerated people are notified without delay of the death of an immediate family member, and that people in CSC's care and custody are meaningfully supported to attend funeral services. CAEFS also recommends that incarcerated people receive clear written information on compassionate ETA eligibility, application steps, required documentation, and expected decision timelines. Losing a loved one, especially an immediate family member while incarcerated is a profound loss, and historically, the CSC has made every effort as an organizational priority in prisons designated for women to facilitate funeral access and grief supports. It is highly recommended that such a priority be reinstated.

Access to Escorted Temporary Absences

Description: People reported that Escorted Temporary Absences (ETAs) application forms are not available with the rest of the standard forms in medium security, meaning that people in medium security must request access to these forms from staff. People shared that they are often directed to submit a request form to obtain ETA forms, which delays the process and creates barriers. People also reported that ETA applications were returned by their case management team (CMT) and they were told the applications would not be submitted, for reasons such as operational feasibility, being in medium security, or not being sufficiently connected to their correctional plan - including when requests related to family responsibilities or reintegration. People reported being told that negative decisions based on operational feasibility could reflect poorly at parole hearings and were told to instead withdraw their applications.

Discussion: The IMT stated that the number of ETAs at EIFW exceeds that of other federal penitentiaries and asked that specific cases be brought forward to help identify and address barriers. The IMT also emphasized the importance of well-developed plans with clearly articulated goals and objectives.

Law & 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 [people in prison] and their reintegration into the community as law-abiding citizens through the provision of programs in penitentiaries and in the community.

CD 710-3 s. 2 The Parole Officer, up until the first positive decision, and the Correctional Officer II, following the first positive decision, will (a) process [incarcerated persons] applications for a temporary absence within the prescribed timeframes [...]



Creating Choices, Principle #5 (Shared Responsibility): To develop the support systems and continuity of service which will enable women to take responsibility for their lives, [federally sentenced women] must be integrated within their communities [...]

CAEFS' Recommendation: CAEFS acknowledges and appreciates EIFW's efforts to ensure access to escorted temporary absences (ETAs). Ensuring consistent access to reintegration opportunities through temporary absences, including ETAs, aligns with CSC's legislated purpose, as conditional release provides the strongest pathway to successful reintegration and reflects the principles of Creating Choices. CAEFS recommends that facilitating ready access to all conditional release application forms for incarcerated individuals further supports timely and equitable access to reintegration opportunities.

Access to Library and Educational Services and Programs

Description: People reported that there is no longer a librarian working at EIFW and that they can no longer access the library. People also reported reductions in teaching positions and stated that the Walls to Bridges program was not permitted to run during the summer months. Individuals described feeling "warehoused" and said these changes are affecting their ability to use their time meaningfully and prepare for reintegration.

Discussion: The IMT stated that individuals at EIFW do not have open access to the library, but that they have established pilot library sites within the penitentiary. The described process is to submit a request for specific materials, which are then fulfilled by the librarian (or the program manager, as needed). The IMT advised that the librarian role is shared with Edmonton Institution and that operations remain unchanged. CAEFS suggested creating positions for incarcerated people to work as library assistants to increase access. The IMT stated that Walls to Bridges has not historically run at EIFW during the summer and that staffing constraints during leave periods limit their ability to offer it at that time.

Law & Policy:

CCRA, section 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.76: The Service shall provide a range of programs designed to address the needs of [incarcerated people] and contribute to their successful reintegration into the community

CCRA s.4 (c2): the Service ensures the effective delivery of programs of [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 federal correctional system is to contribute to the maintenance of a just, peaceful and safe society by (b) 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.

CAEFS' Recommendation: CAEFS recommends that CSC ensure reliable, direct access to library services at EIFW by establishing paid librarian roles for incarcerated people. CAEFS further recommends providing consistent, year-round, access to post-secondary programming, including Wall2Bridges, by addressing summer staffing gaps through advance scheduling and contingency planning. Access to post secondary creates a measurable link to successful reintegration outcomes, and programs like Walls to Bridges are already entirely community funded, making the operational burden very low for the CSC.

Physical Conditions of Confinement

Description: People reported mold, rodents, and damaged infrastructure across living units. Specific examples included missing door handles (B House), lack of hot water (A House), and electrical issues (C House). CAEFS also observed a raw



sewage backup in the Structured Intervention Unit (SIU). During our time in the maximum-security unit two individuals housed in the SIU were moved to the interview room while the backup was addressed. The smell was extremely foul and had not dissipated at the time of our departure.

Discussion: The IMT offered to follow up on the specific reports and shared information on inspection frequency and other measures used to prevent and address facility issues. The IMT stated that the SIU sewage issue has since been resolved and noted that similar issues have also occurred in staff areas.

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.

Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms s.12: Everyone has the right not to be subjected to any cruel and unusual treatment or punishment.

CCRR s.83 (1): The Service shall, to ensure a safe and healthful penitentiary environment, ensure that all applicable federal health, safety, sanitation and fire laws are complied with in each penitentiary and that every penitentiary is inspected regularly by the persons responsible for enforcing those laws.

CAEFS' Recommendation: Incarcerated people must be kept within conditions that are safe, healthful, and respectful of their dignity. CAEFS appreciates the structural limitations that EIFW's IMT face, however the impact for incarcerated women and gender-diverse of living within such conditions is no less consequential.

Disciplinary Process: Monetary Fines / Fees

Description: Individuals reported being fined \$20.00 for not attending programs. Given that institutional pay is already extremely limited, such financial penalties were seen as unfair and disproportionate as \$20.00 is equivalent to almost three days of full-time work at A-level pay.

Discussion: The IMT stated there is no automatic fine for missing programs. The IMT noted that some certificate programs have associated costs and that individuals who register may be asked to sign an agreement that includes a no-show fee. The IMT added that this occurs infrequently. CAEFS' offered to follow up on the reported concerns to better understand the specificity of the concerns.

Law & Policy:

CCRA s. 38: The purpose of the disciplinary system established by sections 40 to 44 and the regulations is to encourage [incarcerated people] to conduct themselves in a manner that promotes the good order of the penitentiary, through a process that contributes to [incarcerated peoples'] rehabilitation and successful reintegration into the community.

CCRA s. 41(1): Where a staff member believes on reasonable grounds that an [incarcerated person] has committed or is committing a disciplinary offence, the staff member shall take all reasonable steps to resolve the matter informally, where possible.

CCRR s. 34(b): Before imposing a sanction described in section 44 of the Act, the person conducting a hearing of a disciplinary offence shall consider [...] the least restrictive measure that would be appropriate in the circumstances.



CAEFS' Recommendation: Financial fines or penalties in a context where individuals' income is severely restricted by policy constitute a highly restrictive and punitive measure that can prevent an incarcerated women from meeting her basic needs and being able to afford critical contact with her family. This procedure functions as a disciplinary sanction outside the formal disciplinary process. CAEFS recommends that CSC cease the use of this practice and look to holistic, supportive, and empowering responses that address barriers to engagement in programming.

Treatment by Staff: Use of Non-Person-Centered Language

Description: Individuals reported feeling disrespected by staff, particularly when being routinely referred to as “offenders” or “inmates,” or addressed only by their last names. This practice was described as especially harmful when broadcast over the intercom (e.g., “the following offenders report to...”). One individual characterized this language as “punishment and isolation” language.

Discussion: CAEFS asked whether the IMT had received guidance from WOS regarding a change in language. The IMT confirmed receiving a communication with suggested language changes several months earlier, however CAEFS notes that this issue was raised at the end of the meeting and did not allow for a fulsome discussion.

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

CD 001, s. 2: The CSC Values Statement guides behaviour, decision making and discretionary judgement in the Service. CSC staff are expected to demonstrate the following shared, reciprocal values in all of their interactions with [incarcerated people], colleagues (peers, subordinates and superiors), partners, stakeholders and the public: [...] Respectful behaviours honour the rationality and dignity of persons – their ability to choose their own path, within lawful order, to a meaningful life. A good test of respectful behaviour is treating others as we would like to be treated.

CAEFS' Recommendation: The Creating Choices philosophy is clear: the incarceration of women must provide an empowering, dignity preserving environment. While the CSC is facing constraints via cuts and overcrowding, there is nothing preventing the Service from treating women and gender diverse people with dignity. CAEFS recommends that CSC implement a service-wide standard for respectful, person-centred communication, including considering the demoralizing impacts of being referred to in these manners for women, who enter incarceration with deep histories of victimization already, and replace labels such as “offender” and “inmate” with person-first language and discontinue the routine practice of addressing people only by last name.

Population Count

At the time of the meeting, EIFW had 188 individuals physically present, with a total registered population of 190, and was operating at full capacity. Two individuals were housed in the SIU.

