



To: Angela Beecher, Warden
Grand Valley Institution for Women
1575 Homer Watson Blvd,
Kitchener, ON,
N2P 2C5

October 10, 2026

CAEFS' August 2026 Advocacy Letter

Dear Angela,

We want to thank members of the institutional management team (IMT) at the Grand Valley Institution (GVI) for taking the time to meet with our advocacy team on August 26, 2026.

This letter summarizes reports they received and conditions they observed during their visit to the GVI on August 24 and 25, as well as summaries of the discussion between the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies (CAEFS) and members of the IMT following the visit, the relevant laws and policies, and CAEFS' recommendations.

We look forward to your response.

Respectfully,

Jacqueline Omstead, Senior Advocate
on behalf of the Ontario Regional Advocacy Team



Physical Conditions of Confinement

Description: People reported that stoves are yet to be installed and that they are seeking an updated timeline regarding the installation. People shared how difficult it is to use one stove between as many as twelve people. They have also expressed that in some living units some of the burners do not work. Questions were also raised about when the microwave turntables will be returned as this is another barrier to effectively cooking food. People are expected to manually turn their food to effectively distribute heat in the microwave. Generally, people are concerned about the glass ban at GVI (Grand Valley Institution) and would like to better understand the policy, including restriction on items such as nail polish and mirrors.

Additionally, people have expressed safety concerns regarding the color of the water in some living units. They shared that it is often brownish or orange in color and are concerned about the cleanliness and quality. Finally, concerns were raised regarding corroded cables that require repair to improve television quality.

Discussion: The Institutional Management Team (IMT) shared that they still intend to install additional stoves but are waiting for the fire suppression systems to be installed in order to do so safely. The IMT shared that the glass ban is due to security concerns from staff and that they are looking for safer alternatives, where possible. Additionally, they shared that the water quality is not localized to the prison, but a Kitchener-wide problem and that the water is tested every two weeks. Lastly, the IMT shared that they have not heard any concerns around issues with television quality or cable issues, but that they will investigate further.

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.

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.

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

CAEFS' Recommendations: Incarcerated people have the right to live in an environment that is safe, healthful, and free of practices that undermine a person's sense of personal dignity. CAEFS encourages GVI and the CSC broadly to address and be responsive to issues that concern the safety, health and overall well-being of people.

Access to Family

Description: People in the maximum-security unit raised concerns about the current visiting hours not being sufficient, and whether anything can be done to increase them. They shared that current visiting times require their families to leave their houses very early or leave work early, and that they risk getting caught in rush hour traffic. People in medium-security additionally expressed that visiting hours are a barrier to their contact with family, particularly given the increase in population at GVI.

Discussion: The IMT shared they have asked people in the maximum-security unit and people did not have any concerns about the existing visiting times. They are also not aware of the need for more visiting hours in medium security.

Law & Policy:



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

CCRA s. 71(1): In order to promote relationships between inmates 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.

Creating choices, Principle 5: Shared Responsibility “In order to develop the support systems and continuity of service which will enable women to take responsibility for their lives, [women and gender diverse people in prison] must be integrated within their communities. To accomplish this goal, the responsibilities which federally sentenced women have for children and other family members in the community must be recognized and supported”.

CAEFS’ Recommendations: A core purpose of establishing regional penitentiaries designated for women was to support close community and family connections, as outlined in Creating Choices. CAEFS encourages GVI to increase access to visits in the maximum- and medium-security units as family contact is essential to people’s wellbeing and supports successful reintegration into the community.

Adequate Supports for Aging People

Description: Concerns were raised to CAEFS regarding aging women in the MSU who have not been adequately supported and who have unmet healthcare needs. Additional concerns were raised regarding aging individuals incarcerated in the maximum-security unit who have not received adequate support and face further restrictions because of their security classification.

Discussion: The IMT shared that they have introduced ‘Inmate Accommodation Plans’. They also shared that alternatives to custody can be considered, but that that differing eligibility requirements may impact access.

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.

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.

CAEFS’ Recommendations: Aging in a penitentiary is a particularly frightening experience for many individuals in your care and custody, and dedicated attention to their needs is essential to strive for a dignity preserving environment. CAEFS recommends that GVI develop a more proactive and individualized approach to identifying and supporting aging and seriously ill individuals, particularly those who may have difficulty advocating for their own needs.

Overcrowding Leading to Delays in Access to Programs and Healthcare

Description: People expressed concern that the current number of people at GVI may be placing additional strain on accessing programming, healthcare, and other necessary resources. People reported having been put on long waiting lists for programs and that they have had to wait for months to see the dentist.

Discussion: The IMT shared that they are being proactive about supporting people for release at the earliest time possible, including through Section 84s.



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

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. 4(c.2): the Service ensures the effective delivery of programs to [federally sentenced 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: CAEFS is encouraged that GVI is proactively working to support people in accessing parole at their earliest possible release date. Continued attention to programming access remains essential, particularly as programming can play a significant role in CSC's decision making related to release planning and reintegration into the community.

