



# Urgent action needed to stop sexual coercion and violence in federal prisons

April 13, 2022 – Ottawa, Ontario – Canadian Human Rights Commission

Following news reports that a Nova Institution for Women Correctional Officer has pleaded guilty to six charges of sexual assault perpetrated against three prisoners, Marie-Claude Landry, Chief Commissioner of the Canadian Human Rights Commission, issues the following statement:



The Canadian Human Rights Commission is deeply concerned by numerous reports of sexual coercion and violence in federal prisons. People continue to be victims of sexual assault while under the care and custody of the state, and the Correctional Service of Canada and correctional staff are not doing enough to address the issue.

Canada's federal prisoners are among the most vulnerable members of our society. Canada must ensure that the environment in which they are serving their sentences does not perpetuate additional violence and abuse. This is especially true for Indigenous, Black and other racialized prisoners, who are overrepresented in Canada's federal correctional system.

The Commission joins the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies' call for an independent public inquiry into the issue of sexual coercion and violence against prisoners in facilities designated for women.

The Correctional Service of Canada has an obligation to protect and support the victims of these crimes. We cannot expect the victims to report incidents of sexual coercion and violence without the proper supports and mechanisms in place to protect them from reprisal.

The Office of the Correctional Investigator has made it clear: these crimes cannot be addressed without proper reporting and accountability. Collecting and publishing disaggregated data on incidents of sexual coercion and violence within the walls of federal prisons are key to addressing this issue.

The Commission urges the Correctional Service of Canada and the Minister of Public Safety to take urgent and meaningful action to address sexual coercion and violence in Canada's prisons.

A prison sentence deprives a person of their right to liberty, but it does not deprive them of their right to security. Sexual coercion and violence in prison is unacceptable and criminal.

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