



Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies™
Association canadienne des sociétés Elizabeth Fry
701-151 Slater Street, Ottawa, Ontario K1P5H3
Telephone : (613) 238-2422
Facsimile : (613) 232-7130
e-mail : caefs@web.ca
Home Page : www.elizabethfry.ca

MEDIA RELEASE

10 Years and Waiting

May 9, 2006 (Ottawa) – The Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies (CAEFS), Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) and Strength in Sisterhood Society (SIS) are alarmed at the continued lack of progress on the key recommendations made 10 years ago by Madam Justice Arbour, following the Commission of Inquiry into Certain Events at the Prison for Women in Kingston.

Five years ago, CAEFS and NWAC, supported by more than 25 other national and international organizations, urged the Canadian Human Rights Commission (CHRC) to conduct a systemic review and issue a special report regarding the discriminatory treatment of federally sentenced women at the hands of the Canadian government. The complaint was filed on behalf of all women serving federal terms of imprisonment, on the grounds that the manner in which the women prisoners are treated is discriminatory, contravening s. 3(1) of the *Canadian Human Rights Act*.

"On January 28, 2004, the Canadian Human Rights Commission (CHRC) released its special report regarding the systemic discrimination and human rights violations experienced by women prisoners in Canada, entitled, *Protecting Their Rights: A Systemic Review of Human Rights in Correctional Services for Federally Sentenced Women*, in which they demanded that CSC act immediately to accommodate women's needs, rather than continuing to treat women like men 'based on 'stereotypes and perceptions'," explained Dr. Ailsa M. Watkinson, President of CAEFS. "On April 28, 2006, in response to the release by the Correctional Service of Canada of their 10 year status report, the CHRC issued a public statement in which they indicated, '*the Commission is hoping for more progress in the future on the key recommendations, independent adjudication for segregation decisions and independent external redress*'. We agree."

"We are all concerned about women prisoners' experience and the discrimination they face on the basis of sex. We are also concerned about the discrimination on the basis of race for Aboriginal and other racialized women, especially those classified and segregated in maximum security units," continued Beverley Jacobs, President of NWAC. "It seems that at every turn we are seeing the Canadian government continuing a shameful legacy of ignoring and further devastating our sisters. They ignore us when we are victimized and they ignore those who are criminalized as a result of their resistance to the same authority that furthers their victimization."

"If Louise Arbour reviewed what is happening now, we would likely see another scathing indictment of CSC's treatment of women prisoners. We need action and no more acceptance of CSC's rhetoric. Surely there have been enough reports and enough inaction on the part of Corrections to date to explain why they are not to be believed..." challenged Gayle Horii, of Strength in Sisterhood (SIS). SIS is an organization of women in and from prison and their allies.

"In October 2005, the United Nations Human Rights Committee expressed serious concern about Canada's treatment of women prisoners," said Kim Pate of the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies. "They directed Canada to fully implement the recommendations of the Canadian Human Rights Commission and report back to them in one year. They stress the need to remove male staff from direct contact with women prisoners, to limit the use of segregation, and to establish immediately an independent external redress and adjudication body for federally sentenced prisoners. The implementation of these recommendations is key to remedying the current discriminatory treatment of women prisoners. The Ministers of Public Safety and Justice must act now to demonstrate their commitment to remedying the discriminatory treatment, human rights violations, and other legal and policy violations, as well as the lack of oversight of Correctional Service of Canada."

-- 30 --

Contact:

Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies (CAEFS) is a federation of 25 local, community based service providers who work with and on behalf of victimized, criminalized, and imprisonment women and girls. On International Women's Day, March 8, 2001, CAEFS and NWAC launched the human rights claim on behalf of all federally sentenced women.

Dr. Ailsa Watkinson, President or Kim Pate, Executive Director - 613-298-2422

Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) has been the premier national Aboriginal women's organization since its inception in 1974. The mission of the NWAC is to achieve political, social and economic equality for all Aboriginal women in Canada whether they are First Nations (status and non-status), Inuit and Métis.

Beverley Jacobs, President or Sherry Lewis, Executive Director – 613-722-3033, ext. 221

Strength in Sisterhood (SIS) is a network of former federal women prisoners working in conjunction with other equality-seeking groups promoting the rights of federally sentenced women. Incorporated in 1995 for the purpose of advocating for supports and services for federally sentenced women.

Gayle Horii – 604-943-2921