

**National Association of
Women and the Law**



**Association nationale
de la femme et du droit**

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CANADA'S UNFAIR TREATMENT OF WOMEN PRISONERS

OTTAWA- The National Association of Women and the Law (NAWL) is submitting a critical report to the Canadian Human Rights Commission (CHRC) alleging that the Canadian government has breached its fiduciary duties to federally sentenced women (FSW) in Canada and has disregarded the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and certain international human rights obligations.

Examples of violations of government obligations include discrimination in the security classification of FSW, the housing of women in men's prisons, the utter lack of adequate programs for FSW at all security levels, the virtual absence of minimum security conditions for women, and the continued use of male guards on the front lines in women's prisons.

NAWL points out the treatment of FSW amounts to breaches of fiduciary obligations owed by the Government of Canada through Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) to all FSW and in particular, to Aboriginal FSW.

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“CSC’s failure to address the systemic issues and discrimination is felt most profoundly by Aboriginal women,” says Kelly MacDonald, an Aboriginal lawyer from BC who authored the report. “Aboriginal women are severely over-represented in the prison population, comprising 27 per cent of the FSW population while comprising only 2.8 per cent of the general population of women in Canada.”

“NAWL is working in coalition with the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies and other women’s organizations to urge the CHRC to take immediate action to address the systemic discrimination and violation of legal duties by the CSC,” says Debra Parkes, NAWL member and professor of law at the University of Manitoba. “The discrimination has been documented in report after report. The Canadian government must be held accountable.”

NAWL is a national non-profit women's organization that promotes the equality rights of women through legal education, research and law reform advocacy.