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News Release

The Correctional Investigator Underscores the National Travesty of Increasing Over-representation of Indigenous Peoples in Canadian Prisons

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

OTTAWA, WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 22, 2020—Damning [statistics](#) released by the Office of the Correctional Investigator (OCI) reveal that the incarceration rates of Indigenous Peoples is one of Canada's most persistent and pressing human rights issues—with the OCI calling it a national travesty.

Since 2010, the number of Indigenous prisoners has increased by 43%, while the number of non-Indigenous prisoners has decreased by 14%. The situation is most troubling for Indigenous women, who now represent 42% of women in federal prisons. This reality underscores the importance of implementing the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, as well as the Calls for Justice of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, within the context of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The Senate amendments to Bill C-83 last spring would also have assisted efforts to reduce this over-representation but were ultimately rejected by the government. The Senate amendments would have breathed life into existing but chronically underused provisions of the *Corrections and Conditional Release Act* through which Indigenous prisoners can serve their sentences sponsored by Indigenous groups and in Indigenous communities. They also provide for transfers of those with mental health issues to community-based healthcare services. Instead, Bill C-83 in its current form further limits access to these provisions as well as to support and connections in the community.

“The OCI's findings reiterate what Senators have observed during our recent visits to prisons,” said Senator Kim Pate. “Bill C-83 contains language promising a return to the use of least restrictive measures for prisoners but we are seeing plans to keep more prisoners in conditions of segregation for longer—plans that risk normalizing over-representation of Indigenous Peoples in prison and in segregation by ‘Indigenizing’ these restrictive conditions. The OCI is calling Canada's

leaders to action. It is time to make good on Canada's promises of reconciliation through robust measures to decolonize Canada's prisons."

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