



The Honourable Kim Pate, C.M. | Senator for Ontario

News Release

Statement on the 15th Anniversary of the Death of Ashley Smith

October 19, 2022 (Ottawa) – Today marks the 15th anniversary of the death of 19-year-old Ashley Smith, a young woman who died alone on the floor of a segregation cell, while those tasked with her care and custody looked on. Her death was ruled preventable by the Office of the Correctional Investigator and a homicide by the jury at the inquest into her death. More women, men and youth have died preventable deaths in the ensuing years.

The inquest into Ashley's death, Louise Arbour in the 1996 *Commission of Inquiry into Certain Events at the Prison for Women in Kingston*, the UN Special Rapporteur of the Human Rights Council on Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the Canadian and Ontario Human Rights Commissions, the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies, Native Women's Association of Canada, and the DisAbled Women's Network of Canada have all recognized solitary confinement and segregation as deeply inhumane practices, particularly for women, Indigenous prisoners and those with mental health issues.

The Government promised that Bill C-83 would remove the practice of segregation in Canada, but reports of the [Correctional Investigator](#), the [Ministerial Advisory Committee](#) and [Senators](#) reveal the stark reality that the practices of segregating and isolating prisoners continues. Worse yet, Bill C-83 eliminated many of the albeit inadequate due process and accountability mechanisms, leaving virtually no oversight of corrections. This is having devastating results for those subjected to the many forms of isolation currently employed and which can result in tortuous conditions of confinement.

On the anniversary of Ashley's death, Senators call for immediate action to implement [Bill S-230](#) and truly eliminate the use solitary confinement and other forms of segregation in Canada. The government can and must remedy the injustices and inequalities faced by women, Indigenous and all racialized prisoners and those with disabling mental health issues.

Ashley's story is a reminder of the continuing need to address the irreversible impact of segregation on women in prison and the incompatibility of mental health issues and punishment. On October 19, Senator Pate calls on Senators and Members of Parliament to honour the memory of Ashley, by meeting her family's request that we alleviate their heartbreak and ongoing disappointment by working together to fulfill multiple decades of promises to reform and oversee the remediation of past wrongs and make Canada a global human rights leader in the creation of fair, equitable and just legal systems.

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