

Womens Prison Network



ISSUE #40 / FALL 2025

< Editor's Note >

Welcome to Issue #40 of Women's Prison Network, a zine by & for women, trans & youth prisoners on Treaty Lands with Canada.



In every Issue we strive to provide a safe space for creative expression, informative news & support resources. These zines feature art, poetry, stories, news, observations, concerns, & anything of sincere value to share.

Health & Harm Reduction info will always be provided, of course - Yes, Do Be Safe!

Quality & Quantity:

Items printed are those that are common for diverse readers, so no religious items please.

Artwork: Black pen (tat-style) works the best.

Cover Artist will receive a \$25 donation.

Writings: only short poems, news, stories, ...

Items selected are those that fit nicely & allow space for others (½ page = 300 words max).

For author protection, letters & story credits will all be 'Anonymous' unless requested.

'Women's Prison Network' is published 4 times per year.

It is sent out for free to Women, Trans & Youth in Prisons in Canada.

If you are on the outside or part of an organization, please consider a donation!!!

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Cover: Harshit Raj



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Very special thanks out to: She !

Canadian Charter of Rights & Freedoms

- The right of life, liberty and security of person (Section 7).
- The right not to be arbitrarily detained (Section 9).
- The right not to be subjected to cruel and unusual punishment (Section 12).
- The right to be equal before and under the law (Section 15).

< Ancestral Territorial Acknowledgment >

We respectfully acknowledge that the land on which Prison Free Press operates is the Traditional Territory of the Wendat, the Anishnaabeg, Haudenosaunee, and the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation.

~ 'Dish With One Spoon' Wampum ~

It costs \$175,000 to \$250,000 a year to imprison one woman and about \$31,000 to support a woman in the community for a year.

- Elizabeth Fry Society, Cost of Incarceration

Ontario ombudsman says 'growing crisis' in overcrowded jails undermines justice system

Ontario's ombudsman is urging Premier Doug Ford to address a "growing crisis" in overcrowded jails with complaints skyrocketing 55% and judges dropping or reducing charges against some inmates because of poor treatment and living conditions.

The problems - including frequent lockdowns, three inmates in cells for two or bunking in broom closets, mould and getting the wrong medications - undermine the justice system, Paul Dubé said in releasing his annual report Wednesday, warning of the potential for bigger problems.

"If you keep raising the populations in a fixed amount of space and then you have staff shortages and there aren't enough people to adequately, safely run the prison, then you have lockdowns ... which leads to frustrations," he told a news conference at the legislature.

"The cauldron starts heating up and the pressures build."

Dubé's call for improvements follows an investigation he launched this month into a December 2023 incident at the Maplehurst Correctional Centre in Milton, where inmates were subject to a mass strip search by the institution's internal riot squad that has resulted in a host of lawsuits against the province.

"The conditions that we are seeing and hearing about in the correctional system not only fail to meet the basic expectations of fairness and dignity, but in some cases actively undermine the very principles of justice and human rights," Dubé said.

"This is a challenge that requires urgent attention and a long-term commitment to meaningful reform," added the ombudsman, whose teams visited 12 jails, including Maplehurst, to see conditions first-hand.

Solicitor General Michael Kerzner's office did not reply to a request for comment on the 103-page report, but has overseen internal investigations into the Maplehurst incident. The results of those probes have not been made public.

In Mississauga for a hospital expansion announcement, Ford told Citytv "there's a process. They'll be held accountable, as simple as that."

New Democrat MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam (Toronto Centre) blamed a lack of resources for an overloaded court system, which leaves people accused of crimes stacking up in jails as they await hearings and trials.

"Over 80% of the inmates are actually just waiting for trial," she said.

"Making sure that we fund the court so it runs smoothly and efficiently, making sure we fund corrections so that we can reduce the overcrowding, all of that is going to make a huge difference in actually reducing the tension, the violence and the horrible conditions."

Complaints by inmates, their families and others to the ombudsman about jails soared 55% to 6,870 last year - the highest number for any provincial service again last year.

Dubé said his office has noticed the state of jails slipping for years.

"I will never, ever forget my visit to the Thunder Bay jail where the inmates were lined up on one side of the hallway and the correctional officers and staff on the other side. And they're both pleading with us to do what we could to bring change."

Rob Ferguson
The Star
Jun 25, 2025



The Canadian Company Staffing 'Alligator Alcatraz'

A Canadian company is providing the muscle for a new Florida detention centre dubbed "Alligator Alcatraz" - and the Canadian government isn't ruling out working with the security giant in the future.

This wishy-washy stance when it comes to jaw-dropping cruelty tied to the United States is yet another stroke in an increasingly clear portrait: one of Prime Minister Mark Carney with his elbows firmly planted to his sides when it comes to big business.

Quebec-based GardaWorld, which has reportedly been awarded a US\$8-million contract for work on the U.S. detention site, has also been awarded more than \$100 million in Canadian government contracts since Carney won the Liberal leadership in March of this year.

Most of these contracts were for work relating to the Canada Border Services Agency, or CBSA, valued together at more than \$75 million.

The disclosures I found were listed under variations of the name "Garda," including "Garda Canada Security Corporation" and "Garda Security Group GP."

A search of all federally registered corporations in Canada shows the only corporations with "Garda" in their name that have been active during Carney's tenure are registered at the addresses associated with the same GardaWorld corporation involved with Alligator Alcatraz.

With the start of operations at the Florida detention centre, experts have argued the United States has crossed a dangerous line when it comes to constitutional rights violations. Lawyers who have sought an injunction against Alligator Alcatraz have said detainees are being held without charges and some have been pressured "to sign deportation orders without the ability to speak to counsel."

In an opinion piece for MSNBC, Andrea Pitzer, the author of a history of concentration camps in four countries, defined this type of imprisonment as "mass civilian detention without real trials targeting vulnerable groups for political gain based on ethnicity, race, religion or political affiliation rather than for crimes committed."

Pitzer argued that Alligator Alcatraz fits this definition. And, she said, concentration camps are a "modern" invention: "The patenting and mass

production of barbed wire and automatic weapons over a century ago made it possible to detain large groups with a small guard force for the first time."

A whistleblower has already come forward to describe the horrors she saw while working at the detention facility.

Lindsey, who worked as a "corrections officer" at Alligator Alcatraz, told NBC News detainees were held in what appeared like "an oversized kennel."

"They have no sunlight. There's no clock in there. They don't even know what time of the day it is. They have no access to showers. They shower every other day or every four days," NBC reported in the piece, published Wednesday. And, she added, "not everybody there is a criminal."

Lindsey's contract, according to NBC News, was with GardaWorld.

Public safety minister and the CBSA respond I reached out to Public Safety Minister Gary Anandasangaree's office - which is responsible for the CBSA - to ask whether they intend to work with GardaWorld in the future.

They told me "our office will not be commenting on this matter."

I emailed them again, wanting to make sure I wasn't misunderstanding things.

"I just want to confirm that you aren't commenting, and therefore I can't say you're ruling out future contracts being awarded to GardaWorld?"

"Our office will not be commenting. Any questions related to future contracts would be for PSPC," they told me, referring me to the department Public Services and Procurement Canada.

PSPC then referred me to the CBSA, who eventually sent a response confirming the existence of active contracts with GardaWorld.

"When awarding contracts, the CBSA systematically verifies the bidder's compliance with security requirements and its ability to meet the contractual obligations," a CBSA spokesperson said on Wednesday.

"As of July 2025, the CBSA holds two active contracts with the vendor GardaWorld pertaining to the Laval [immigration holding centre]." The statement then detailed two active contracts specific to the Laval immigration holding centre,

"to assist with the care and control of its low, medium and high-risk detained clients." One was awarded on July 1, 2023, and another on March 21, 2025 - after Carney was sworn in. GardaWorld did not respond to three requests for comment over a three-week period.

Outrage at GardaWorld's role in Everglades
The detention facility located in the Florida Everglades got its nickname due to what U.S. government officials have suggested is a natural deterrent for detainees hoping to escape deportation.

"You don't need to invest that much in the perimeter," bragged Florida Attorney General James Uthmeier in a post on X. "If people get out, there's not much waiting for them other than alligators and pythons. Nowhere to go, nowhere to hide."

The facility is supposed to turbocharge U.S. President Donald Trump's mass deportation agenda, a cruel and aggressive effort that has seen legal U.S. residents rounded up, activists targeted and detained for extended periods of time, and deportations without due process.

Reports have already started to emerge detailing horrific conditions at the so-called Alligator Alcatraz.

Lawmakers who were given access to the hastily constructed facility described detainees shouting for help as they endured suffocating heat, insect infestations and a lack of adequate food.

News of the Montreal-based company's involvement in Trump's one-stop shop for mass deportation first emerged in reporting from the Miami Herald and the Logic earlier this month.

Days later, the Montreal Gazette reported GardaWorld was "hiring armed guards for a facility in the same Florida community" as the deportation facility.

Outrage soon followed.

On social media, Canadians tagged Mark Carney in angry posts.

"Disgusting and disgraceful! GardaWorld is a CANADIAN company! CANADIAN!! They must NOT participate in the running of a concentration camp for cash," wrote one Bluesky user.

Over on the forum-based social media site Reddit, angry Canadians were frustrated the situation wasn't getting more attention.

"Why isn't anyone making a bigger deal of this? It's a literal concentration camp," wrote one user, with more than 700 others indicating their agreement through "upvotes."

"Let's boycott them!!! They are complicit," wrote another.

Others questioned the future repercussions: "In some years from now, when the trials happen in The Hague, will they claim they were just following orders?"

This isn't the first time GardaWorld has been involved in controversy over conditions at an immigration detention facility it was hired to staff. Immigration detainees went on several hunger strikes at a Montreal-area facility in the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic. Detainees were protesting "what they [felt were] life-threatening conditions," Human Rights Watch reported at the time. The watchdog organization cited detainees who said it was "impossible to stay safe from the virus in the detention facility."

"Ventilation is inadequate because all the windows are shut, the sanitary conditions are poor, and guards sometimes remove their masks.... I felt it was inconceivable that they put us in these conditions where we were unable to protect ourselves from the virus," one detainee is quoted as saying.

The Montreal-area facility in question, at the time, had at least 165 guards who were contracted to staff the facility through GardaWorld.

Elbows down when it comes to big business During the last federal election, Mark Carney and the Liberals skyrocketed in the polls on a pledge to keep their elbows sky-high in the face of U.S. aggression.

Now, the decision to offer "no comment" when it comes to whether the Carney-led Canadian government would rule out working with GardaWorld seems awfully timid - particularly when contrasted with his response to other controversies.

Carney appeared to have no problem launching a dig at a large Chinese company after hearing the B.C. provincial government opted to buy four ferries from the foreign shipyard.

"I see a ferry," Carney reportedly quipped as he looked through binoculars during a tour of a Canadian Forces facility on Vancouver Island on Monday.

"Not Chinese-made."

During a committee meeting last week, Transport Minister Chrystia Freeland told MPs she was "dismayed" BC Ferries had chosen to use a federal loan to purchase the ships from the Chinese company. The Conservative transportation critic had previously raised concerns about outsourcing Canadian jobs and Chinese tariffs on Canada.

Clearly, this government is capable of speaking about spending decisions that don't align with its priorities. So why is it clammng up in the face of big business behaving badly in the United States? A small rap on the knuckles or a "We're looking into it" might have satisfied horrified Canadians. At least it would be something.

Instead, they've opted not to touch the issue, avoiding the risk of offending the Americans.

Carney's government also avoided the risk of offending Canada's self-described largest security company, which GardaWorld management took over last year in a \$13.5-billion buyout - Canada's largest private deal.

It's not the first time Carney has rolled over when faced with a combination of U.S. anger and the bulging wallets of big business.

Take, for example, the Carney administration's capitulation to Trump on the digital services tax. Corporations like Apple, Meta and Amazon were looking at a \$2-billion bill. But after Trump's tantrum, Carney gave these three massive companies a break, rescinding the tax. Meanwhile, the United Kingdom retained its tax on digital services amid similar trade negotiations with the United States.

It's starting to look like the early outlines of a pattern.

Carney was elected on a campaign promise to keep his elbows up in the face of Trump.

Increasingly, it appears the weight of wealth might be all it takes to force them back down.

Rachel Gilmore
The Tyee
Aug 08, 2025

You reach a certain point that, when you've been through enough crap, you know what you want when you see it.

- Kelly Murdock-Billy

How Liberty Village got its name - and the brutal legacy of Canada's first women's prison

Liberty Village may be known for its gleaming condos and vibrant parks, but it once carried a far darker reputation.

About 150 years ago, the west-end neighbourhood was mainly known for two things: industry and incarceration.

In the late 1800s, Liberty Village roared with factories churning out textiles and all manner of machinery, from steam engines and railway cars to agricultural equipment.

Amid this hubbub stood the imposing walls of the maximum security Toronto Central Prison. Wander north and you'd find the Provincial Lunatic Asylum. And just a block away sat the infamous Andrew Mercer Reformatory for Women - Canada's first all-female prison.

The first street these incarcerated men and women stepped onto after finishing their sentences was named after their newfound freedom. The neighbourhood grew around it and then took the same name.

Liberty Village.

It's a touch ironic, given the context - especially when many of the women and girls liberated from Mercer could hardly be considered free, according to one historian.

Girls could be imprisoned for being 'incorrigible'

Between its establishment in 1880 to when it was shut down in 1969 following a laundry list of controversies, more than 20,000 women and girls walked through Andrew Mercer's halls.

Created partly to clamp down on a perceived rise in the number of "female criminals," the reformatory sought to instil Victorian-era virtues in its inmates through training in domestic duties, hard work, a strict schedule and often brutal punishments.

Of course, what constituted a "crime" for women at the time often centred around perceived moral transgressions.

These beliefs were eventually codified into law by Ontario's now-repealed Female Refuges Act. First introduced in the 1890s, the act gave courts the power to send young women to institutions such as Mercer for petty crimes and vaguely defined moral failings.

Offences could range from drinking and begging in public to promiscuous behaviour or even being out after dark without a good reason, said Theresa Raymond, a Toronto historian specializing in the Andrew Mercer reformatory. A later amendment even allowed parents or guardians to bring girls under 21 before a judge for being “unmanageable or incorrigible.”

These largely lower-income and often racialized women would be taught cooking, cleaning and sewing under the watchful eye of Mercer’s matrons, Raymond said. Once their time was up, many would be offered as servants to supposedly upstanding members of society.

Women were not allowed to leave that position, Raymond said, noting it allowed Mercer to continue watching them. “There were some men who ... would at times rape the girls because they were considered property. And if she tried to fight back by going to Mercer or authorities, they wouldn’t believe her.

“Even though they were released from the Mercer, they were never really free,” Raymond said.

Inmates were also moved into asylums for a number of reasons, from sexual nonconformity to so-called feeble-mindedness, Raymond added. “That meant that they could be locked up for as long as they wanted because the asylum did not have a time frame of when to release them.”

As part of Mercer’s reformation process, punishments were doled out to anyone who broke the institution’s many rules, which included bad language or even talking while standing in line. Inmates might be forced to live on bread and water or suffer solitary confinement within tiny, dungeonlike cells in the building’s basement, Raymond said.

The memoirs of Velma Demerson, who was arrested for having an interracial relationship and child with a Chinese man, detailed gruelling work conditions when she wasn’t locked in her cell. Demerson said she was subject to medical experimentation and abuse, recalling moments like receiving experimental chemical injections during and after her pregnancy.

Much of the medical experimentation - ostensibly to advance research in venereal diseases - was rooted in the eugenics movement, according to the work of historian Constance Backhouse.

The reformatory helped further eugenic ideals by segregating perceived criminals from society during their child-bearing years, Raymond added. Demerson’s baby, born at the prison, was taken from her when he was three months old. This became a common occurrence in the institution’s later years, where many babies born to prisoners would be adopted out without the consent of their mothers.

The Mercer address was removed from some of the children’s birth certificates, concealing their origin of birth, supposedly to “protect” the children from the stigma of being born to an inmate. This led to a generation of “Mercer babies,” some of whom remain ignorant of their origins, said Linda Mayhew, a Mercer baby.

Mayhew now runs a genealogy project seeking to track down other Mercer babies. “We’ve researched, between people contacting me or otherwise, 48 mothers that affected over 70 children,” she told the Star. “A lot of them were really quite shocked trying to unravel these stories.”

The horrific conditions at Mercer sparked several riots on its grounds, eventually culminating in a major protest in 1948. Roughly 100 inmates rioted after a 17-year-old girl was brought into solitary confinement and abused by guards, according to Heritage Toronto.

This incident brought on heightened media scrutiny, eventually leading to a scathing grand jury inspection report in 1964 that revealed squalid living conditions, the abuse of inmates and the poor training provided to them.

Saddled by the report and decades of controversy, Andrew Mercer shut its gates five years later. The red brick gothic building was torn down soon after and is buried under what is now the parking lot at Allan A. Lamport Stadium.

Today, all that remains of this dark period of Toronto history is a little house in the northwest corner of Lamport Stadium, believed to be the home of the reformatory’s gardener or groundskeeper.

It was eventually converted into transitional mental health housing, according to Heritage Toronto.

Kevin Jiang
The Star
Aug 22, 2025

Finding Mercer babies

To be Good with Today

I wish
for love
for waterfalls
for health
to be happy
I wish I knew my father

I dream
often
endlessly
vividly
of family
that we could all have love

If I could have one thing
it would be matching shoes
children
open space
to see the stars in the sky
to swim in a river
to be on a beach
the sand in my toes

I wish people understood
how my pain shapes me
my room is a monastery
mistakes don't define you
loyalty
that I'm a person

I love it when
I can make people laugh
the sun comes out
the time after it rains
that God gave me another day
my daughter reads to me
that first cup of coffee
people are inexplicably kind

One thing people don't know
is that I feel
I am strong
I cry
I hit snooze
I give thanks
I pray

If I could have another thing
it would be bacon
good health

acceptance
forgiveness
a kiss from a dog

I want
true purpose
to be in a better place
to see my granddaughter
hope
joy
to be good with today.

- GVIW Book Club Members

The Gals in Green

Vanier girls all in Green
Some the sweetest, some are mean
Some play cards, some play dice
Some colour pictures all day long
Some are weak, some are strong
Some read books, one after another
Some like chatting up storms with their mothers
Some are violent, some so sold
Some are foreign, some need to be told
Some are virgins, others are not
Some act like Barbies, some are bought
We're all different shapes & sizes galore
But one thing we know that's for sure
Is these walls can't hold us forever
Some may be Lifers, some are nevers
We all have families, near & far
We all have hearts, that's who we are
We may be in Green, but just for today
When tomorrow comes, we change our ways!

- Amanda-Lee Batisse



Transfer Me Please!

I'm so fed up, I must confess
 Im feeling angry & getting depressed
 This Justice System is so fucked up
 Or could it be, I'm just outta luck
 I'm a Federal inmate in a Provincial jail
 Can't go nowhere, was even denied bail
 When will it be my turn to go?
 When exactly, I'll never know
 I keep hoping & praying for that day
 When they come to cell & finally say ...
 'Alright Batiste, pack up all your shit
 You're finally moving on to complete your bit'
 I'll be so happy & over-joyed
 I'll finally be able to see my little boy
 I'll now be able to set a date
 For visits with my son, I just can't wait!
 Transfer me please, this is the end
 I'm finally heading to the Pen!

- Amanda-Lee Batisse

Jailhouse Candy

Ingredients:

3 packs of juice crystal
 1 pack of white sugar
 9 packs of coffee whitener
 1 single-size butter
 ¾-1 butter container of water

1) Mix all dry ingredients in a baggie
 2) Add butter melted from cell heater
 3) Add water slowly, less is best
 4) Knead & mix well, form into bite-size portions
 5) Place on some plastic wrap
 6) Allow to dry & set for an hour - or eat immediately.
 And most of all: Enjoy!

- Amanda-Lee Batisse

We live in an era where masses of people
 come and go across a hostile planet, desolate
 and violent.

Refugees, emigrants, exiles, deportees.
 We are a tragic contingent.

- Isabel Allende

Ombudsman calls for 'urgent' correctional reform after record number of complaints

Ontario's ombudsman is urging the province to address a "growing crisis" in correctional facilities, pointing to a record number of complaints about facilities in the last year as well as deteriorating conditions.

Ombudsman Paul Dubé says in his 2024-25 annual report that there was a 55% increase in complaints about correctional facilities, totalling a record 6,870.

Dubé says that while the sector has always been the top source of complaints, the nature and severity of what his office has heard and witnessed demand "urgent attention."

Many of the issues go beyond inefficiencies, Dubé says, to the point of raising questions about basic human rights.

He says many of the complaints regarding corrections were about "severe, entrenched problems" such as overcrowding, frequent lockdowns and inadequate health care, as well as inmates with mental health issues being placed in segregation or Indigenous inmates not having access to a liaison officer.

The ombudsman says his office also recently launched an investigation into a two-day incident at the Maplehurst Correctional Complex in Milton, Ont., in December 2023, when inmates were ordered to strip to their underwear and sit facing a wall with their wrists zip-tied.

"When we fail to uphold the basic dignity of people in custody, we do more than inflict harm - we erode public trust, degrade working conditions for staff, and weaken the very foundations of our justice system," he wrote in the report.

Cases about youth facilities, which include complaints and inquiries, also more than doubled in the last year, jumping to 423 from 202 the previous year, the report says.

A record 3,908 complaints were also filed about municipalities, the report says, and many local officials have been receptive to best practices around fairness, transparency and accountability. The ombudsman says his office received a total of 30,675 cases in the 2024-2025 fiscal year - a 30-year high.

Paola Loriggio
 The Canadian Press
 June 25, 2025

Prisoners' Justice Day: 50 years on, inhumane jail conditions persist

Prisoners' Justice Day (PJD) demands an end to frequent and preventable deaths in custody, while standing up for basic human rights of people in prison. It was initiated by prisoners to honour Edward 'Eddie' Nalon, who was left to die alone in the segregation unit of Millhaven Institution, a maximum-security penitentiary in Bath, Ont. on Aug. 10, 1974.

First observed on Aug. 10, 1975, PJD began as a day of non-violent resistance to government repression. One year later, imprisoned people at Millhaven called for one-day hunger strikes to protest the use of solitary confinement and to support prisoners' rights, in memory of those who died behind bars.

In the late 1970s, prisoners at Millhaven released a list of demands aimed at reducing the harm the state and its officials routinely allow and carry out against people in prison. They demanded:

The right to meaningful work with fair wages; the right to useful education and training; the right to proper medical attention; the right to freedom of speech and religion; the right to free and adequate legal services; the right to independent review of all prison decision making and conditions; the right to vote; the right to form a union; the right to adequate work and fire safety standards; the right to open visits and correspondence; and the right to natural justice and due process.

Some changes have been made since. Notably, the right to vote was granted to prisoners in 2002 following a decision by the Supreme Court of Canada. Unfortunately, nearly all of the demands and the injustices they are meant to address are still relevant today.

The current state of Ontario's prisons, whether federal or provincial, adult or youth, demonstrate a continued need for action. Systemic issues like crowding, inadequate medical care, frequent lockdowns, solitary confinement (by other names), and widespread neglect continue to undermine the safety and human dignity of imprisoned people in Ontario.

Shocking abuses still in place
Shocking human rights abuses also continue. For example, in the spring, a disturbing video was

released showing a coordinated punishment of approximately 200 prisoners at the Maplehurst Correctional Complex, in December 2023. In response to an assault on a guard by a single prisoner, nearly 200 others were collectively punished by being strip-searched, pepper-sprayed, beaten and denied their rights. They reported being deprived of clothing, bedding, toilet paper, medical care and other necessities for days.

The Ottawa-Carleton Detention Centre (OCDC) has also become synonymous with deplorable and dehumanizing conditions. In 2016, three prisoners committed suicide at OCDC. Prisoners are frequently double- and triple-bunked as the systemic issue of crowding is left to fester due to a constantly growing number of prisoners in pre-trial detention. According to an independent review of "corrections," pretrial detention has increased 137% over the past 30 years in Ontario, to the point where approximately 80% of provincial prisoners are awaiting trial or bail determination.

A recent report has also detailed the astounding and concerning number of "serious occurrence reports" in our city coming from the William E. Hay Centre, a provincially funded youth prison in Ottawa. Hundreds of these reports document abuse, mistreatment and physical restraint. These findings suggest a broader systemic pattern of mistreatment of young people and poor conditions at the facility, undermining both their safety and that of the communities they will eventually be released into.

Across Ontario, prisoners continue to be denied adequate access to proper hygiene supplies, nutritious food, fresh air, timely medical care and more. They are held in harsh and inhumane conditions, some while still legally presumed innocent. This Prisoners' Justice Day is a time to reflect on both the successes and ongoing struggles for advancing human rights behind bars over the past 50 years, and to renew our commitment to meaningful change.

Olivia Gemma, Mackenzie Plumb, Liz Venczel
Ottawa Citizen
Aug 08, 2025

Action is the antidote to despair.
- Joan Baez

Book Clubs for Inmates (BCFI)

Book Clubs for Inmates (BCFI) is a registered charity that organizes volunteer-led book clubs within federal penitentiaries across Canada. Currently, BCFI is facilitating 30 book clubs from Nova Scotia to British Columbia.

BCFI runs French and English language book clubs for men and women incarcerated in minimum, medium, and maximum security facilities. Book clubs are usually made up of 10-18 members who meet once a month to discuss books, both fiction and non-fiction of literary merit.

Every month, hundreds of inmates participate in book clubs across the country and each year thousands of brand new books are purchased, read, and discussed.

Book Clubs for Inmates
720 Bathurst St.
Toronto, ON, M5S 2R4

Prison Radio

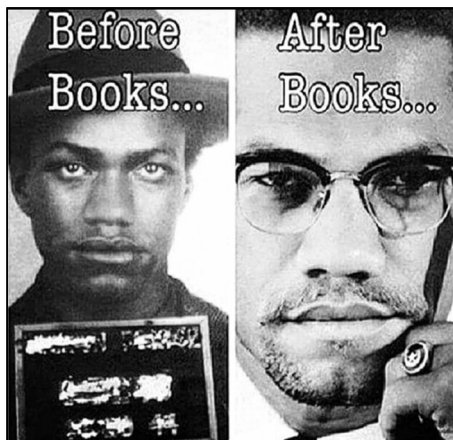
- Halifax – CKDU 88.1 FM
Black Power Hour – Wed 9 pm
- Montreal – CKUT 90.3 FM
PRS – 2nd Thurs 5-6 pm & 4th Fri 11-noon
- Guelph – CFRU 93.3 FM
Prison Radio – Thurs 10-11 am
Call-in 519-837-2378
- Vancouver – CFRO 100.5 FM
Stark Raven – 1st Mon 7-8 pm
- Kingston – CFRC 101.9 FM
CPR – Wed 7-8 pm

The CPR program features content produced by CFRC volunteers and by other campus and community radio broadcasters, including CKUT Montreal's Prison Radio and Vancouver Co-op Radio's Stark Raven programs.

CPR features 'Calls From Home', sharing letters, emails, voice messages and music requests by and for prisoners and their loved ones on the last Wed of each month.

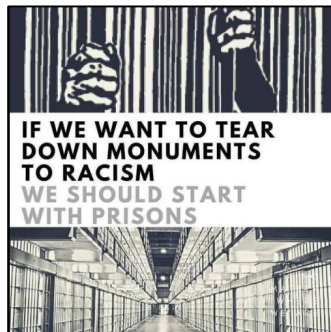
Prisoners and their loved ones are invited to contribute music requests, messages and suggestions for the program.

Write: CPR c/o CFRC, Lower Carruthers Hall,
Queen's University, Kingston, ON, K7L 3N6
Email: CFRCprisonradio@riseup.net
Call: 613-417-3359 to record a message or
music request to be broadcast on-air.



I have often reflected upon the new vistas that reading has opened to me. I knew right there in prison that reading had changed forever the course of my life. As I see it today, the ability to read awoke inside me some long dormant craving to be mentally alive.

- Malcolm X



The way to right wrongs is to turn the light of truth upon them.

- Ida B. Wells

Toll-Free Support Line for SK Prisoners

For prisoners in Provincial jails & Federal prisons in Saskatchewan.

Funds will be used to help inmates purchase call packages to keep them connected to their family, help out with canteen for necessary things & for transportation home. Maintained by prisoner advocacy groups Beyond Prison Walls Canada and Inmates for Humane Conditions.

☎ 1-866-949-0074 ☎

Phone Line for Disabled Prisoners who Experience Ableism and Racism in Ont.

www.djno.ca

OUT of PRISON: 905-973-4332

TRAPP Phone Numbers (Toll Free):

Hamilton - 905-631-4084

Kenora - 807-548-4312

London - 519-690-0836

Milton - 416-775-7938

Niagara - 905-227-5066

Ottawa - 613-768-9951

Jail Hotline for MCC, OCI, TEDC, TSDC & VCV

The Toronto Prisoners' Rights Project (TPRP) provides prisoners with free links to advocacy, referrals, information, and support through the Jail Hotline. This hotline is run by volunteers. It will take calls on:

Monday - Saturday

9-11am & 2-4pm

☎ 416-307-2273 ☎

Why a Jail Hotline?

Prisons and jails carry out human rights abuses every day because they do not think anyone is watching. We are here in solidarity and struggle with prisoners.

Who Should Call This Hotline?

Please share the hotline with your loved ones inside. We cannot accept calls from other prisons or jails or from people in the community.

If you need to contact us outside of the line, you can message us on social media or an email to:

TorontoPrisonersRightsProject@gmail.com

NEW! Jail Hotline for EMDC

Mon - Wed - Fri - Sat

9-11am & 2-4pm

☎ 519-642-9289 ☎

Prison Visiting Rideshare Project

The Prison Rideshare is an ongoing project of Bar None to connect people with rides to visit their friends and loved ones who are in prison in Manitoba.

If you or someone you know is interested in getting a ride to visit one of southern Manitoba's prisons, if you are interested in volunteering, or for more info contact: barnone.wpg@gmail.com

Rides can also be arranged by phone or text message: 204-599-8869 (It's ideal to request a ride at least 5-7 days in advance).

Incarcerated in Canada? Need Information?

Write On! is an all-volunteer group whose goal is to support prisoners in Canada by researching the information you need, such as:

General legal info, prison rules & policies, resources, programs, services, etc.

Write to us at:

Write ON!

234-110 Cumberland St,
Toronto, ON, M5R 3V5

Lockdowns only get attention when they effect the unjailed.

- She

Children of Inmates Reading Program (ChIRP)

"Reading aloud is the single most important thing a parent or caregiver can do to help a child prepare for reading and learning"

"Reading is the gateway to future success in life and in school"

BCFI's commitment to the successful re-integration of inmates and to stronger, healthier communities includes the development of Children of Inmates Reading Program (ChIRP). The mandate of ChIRP is to build and enhance a healthier parent/ child relationship, develop literacy and listening skills, increase vocabulary and attention spans for children and promote a presence of a parent and books.

For the past 10 years, Carla Veitch, a children's educator, has been successfully developing and operating a parent/child reading initiative. Twice a month, Carla, along with another volunteer, enter the institution and offer men the opportunity to select a book for their child and then read that book into a recording device. The book and recording are then mailed to the child.

This initiative provides a direct connection for the child with his or her incarcerated parent. In addition to the opportunity of hearing a parent's voice, the reading initiative underscores the value of reading and the importance of books. For a number of the participants, reading aloud to their child has not been part of their pattern of parenting, nor was it modeled for them as part of their early childhood years.

Children are never responsible for their parents' choices. At the same time, they are the hidden victims not only in the justice and correctional system, but also within our larger community.

Book Clubs for Inmates

720 Bathurst St.

Toronto, ON, M5S 2R4

www.BookClubsForInmates.com

We can't change prisons without changing society, we know that this is a long and dangerous struggle.

But the more who are involved in it, the less dangerous, and the more possible it will be.

- Claire Culhane

Penpal Program for Gay, Queer, Trans Prisoners

The Prisoner Correspondence Project runs a penpal program for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transsexual, transgender, and queer prisoners in Canada, pairing them up with gay and queer and trans people outside of prison for friendship and support.

We also coordinate a resource library of information and resources related to health, sexuality, and prisons - get in touch with us for a list of resources we have, or for details.

If you want to be paired up with a penpal, please send a short description of yourself & interests to:

Prisoner Correspondence Project
c/o QPIRG Concordia
1455 de Maisonneuve W.
Montreal, QC, H3G 1M8

Please indicate French or in English. Veuillez svp nous indiquer anglais ou en français.



Nov. 20 is Transgender Day of Remembrance

Transgender Day of Remembrance (TDoR), is an international event commemorating people killed due to anti-trans violence. In the last year, 375 trans or non-binary people have been killed globally.

And it's a Canadian problem too: 74% of trans youth in Canada have been harassed at school, and 37% have experienced physical violence.

Prison Health is Public Health:

The Right to Hepatitis C Prevention, Diagnosis, and Care in Canada's Correctional Settings

About Hepatitis C

Hepatitis C (HCV) is a preventable and curable liver infection. It is the leading cause of liver disease and transplantation, and one of the most burdensome infectious diseases in Canada. HCV spreads through contact with infected blood, but symptoms may be delayed for years, so many people who are infected are unaware. The only way to confirm a chronic HCV infection is through a blood test.

Hep C Elimination is Within Canada's Reach

Progress in treating HCV is one of the great medical breakthroughs of our time, making elimination possible. Direct Acting Antivirals (DAAs) are a new generation of medications for treating HCV infection. These new therapies are highly effective, curing HCV infection in more than 95% of people treated with daily pills in as little as 8-12 weeks, with minimal side effects.

Canada's Promise

In May 2016, the first-ever Global Viral Hepatitis Strategy was endorsed by the 194 Member States of the World Health Organization (WHO), with the goal of eliminating viral hepatitis as a public health threat by 2030. As a Member State, Canada signed onto this strategy and endorsed the targets contained within it. The WHO strategy includes specific targets, and all countries were tasked with developing a National Action Plan to meet these targets. The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) responded by publishing the Pan-Canadian framework for action to reduce the health impact of Sexually Transmitted and Blood-Borne Infections (STBBIs) in 2018 and the Government of Canada five-year action plan on STBBIs in 2019.

Why Focus on Correctional Settings?

People who are incarcerated (PWA) are 40 times more likely to be exposed to HCV than Canada's general population. In addition, people who are released from incarceration often face barriers to accessing health care in the community. The delivery of HCV care to people in correctional settings in Canada is essential to HCV elimination.

Current State:

Federal - YES !!!

Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) could be well-positioned to achieve HCV elimination in people incarcerated within Federal Canadian Prisons by 2030, with best practices such as universal HCV screening, universal access to treatment, and some harm reduction services available.

Provincial/ Territorial - NO !!!

The same standard of health care is not available to people in correctional centres as in the community in any province, and significant disparities in HCV care exist across provincial correctional centres. HCV elimination is unlikely to occur in the Canadian provincial/ territorial prison system by 2030.

www.actionhepatitiscanada.ca/prisonhealth

Doing 2yrs less? So, when you get out ...

- When released, get right on welfare or disability.
- Federal health care programs like NIHB & IFH may cover costs.
- Go to a Clinic and get your blood test done so you can get into a Treatment Program at no cost to you.

All Federal prisoners with hep C are now eligible for treatment.

BC & ON Prov prisoners with hep C are now eligible for treatment.

Hep C = 18-30% of prisoners
HIV = 1-5% of prisoners

Do Not Share or Re-Use:
needles, ink, ink holders, rigs,
- anything in contact with blood! -

**BLEACH DOES NOT
KILL HEP C**



K.I.P. Canada - Family Visitation

Kids with Incarcerated Parents (K.I.P.) was founded in 2011 to support the needs of the over 15,000 children in the Greater Toronto Area that have a parent in the criminal justice system.

K.I.P.'s Family Visitation Program provides weekend transportation from Toronto to correctional facilities in Southern Ontario for children and families to visit imprisoned loved ones.

During our trips, K.I.P. provides free snacks and refreshments, offers a variety of games and activities, and plays movies.

Our bus is a place where youth and families have a chance to talk about their experiences of having a loved one inside and receive support from mentors and other riders.

Our Family Visitation Program is free for anyone 18 years old and younger. If you are interested in participating in our program, please call or email K.I.P. to register today.

For more information or to book a seat on the bus please contact Jessica or Derek Reid by email at:

*info.kipcanada@gmail.com
or by phone at: 416-505-5333*

A Child of an Incarcerated Parent

The Reality

- Every year over 150,000 adults are remanded into custody which results in approximately 180,000 innocent children who suffer from the traumatic effect of parental incarceration
- Over 5,000 children are impacted by parental imprisonment in the GTA
- The number of children affected by parental incarceration only increased with the passing of the Crime Bill C-10

The Need

- Despite the growing prevalence of these innocent victims the resources available are minimal
- The cost and lack of accessibility to correctional facilities restrict child-parent visits. Consequently, some children can never visit their incarcerated parents

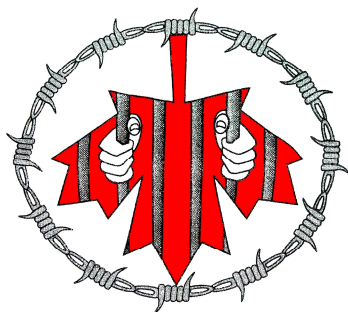
The Impact

- Children of incarcerated parents grieve the loss of their parent
- These children are four times more likely to be in conflict with the law
- Social stigma of incarceration causes some families to avoid discussing the absence of a parent

Research suggests that parental incarceration has a detrimental impact on children. These innocent children suffer the traumatic experience of being separated from their parent. Following parental imprisonment, children are faced with a myriad of challenges including:

- feelings of shame, grief, guilt, abandonment, anger
- lowered self-esteem
- economic instability
- social stigma and isolation
- disconnection from parent
- insecurity in familial and peer relationships
- school absenteeism, poor school performance
- difficulty in coping with future stress & trauma
- compromised trust in others including law enforcement

www.kipcanada.org ~ 416-505-5333



Women's Prison Network
Fall 2025 - Issue #40

PO Box 39, Stn P
Toronto, ON, M5S 2S6

visit, download, print, donate:

WomensPrisonNetwork.org
info@WomensPrisonNetwork.org

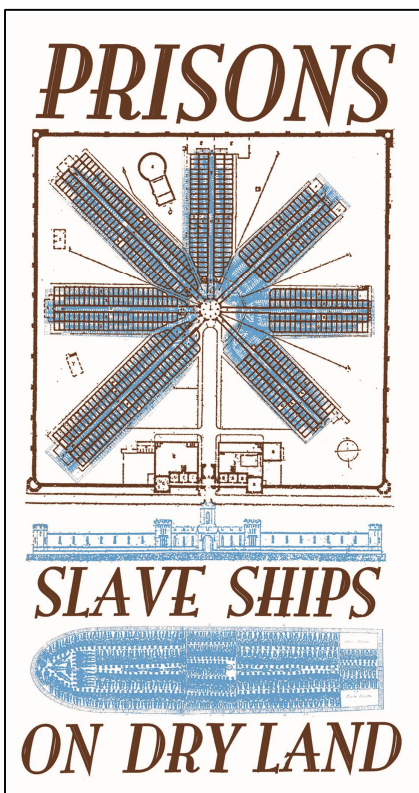
> Mar > Jun > Sep > Dec >

Winter Issue #41 is mailed out:

Dec 1, 2025

Send in your work before:

Nov 1, 2025



PRISONERS JUSTICE DAY

∞ In Remembrance ∞
- August 10 -

There are more than 200 Unnatural
Prisoner Deaths in Canada.
- Each and Every Year -

We maintain a PJD 'In Remembrance' page
on our website for Prisoners who have died
in Federal and Provincial Prisons, Remands,
Lock-ups and Parole in Canada.

If you wish to have someone remembered
there, send us a note or email and we will
honour your request.

PJD@PrisonFreePress.org