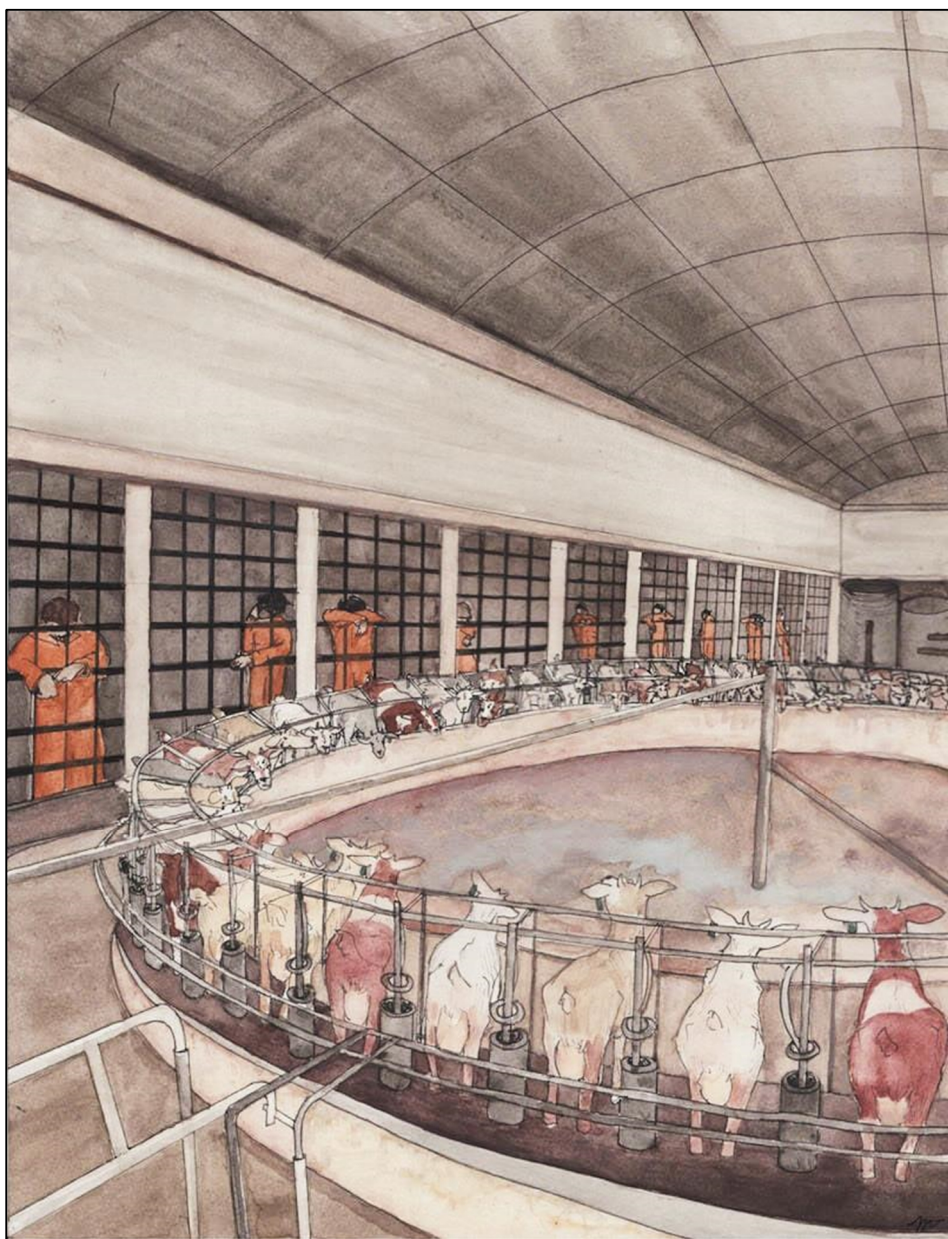


CLASS ACTION! NEWS



ISSUE #21 : SPRING 2021

< Editor's Note >

It is Spring & Issue #21 of 'Class Action News'. This magazine is by & for the 'Prisoner Class' in 'Settler Canada'.



In every Issue we 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 (1/2 page = 325 words max). For author protection, letters & story credits will all be 'Anonymous'.

'Class Action News' is published 4 times a year & is free for prisoners in Canada. If you are on the outside or an organization, please do consider a donation. It really does help to get this inside!

Editor: Tom Jackson
Publication: Class Action News
Publisher: PrisonFreePress.org
PO Box 39, Stn P
Toronto, ON, M5S 2S6
Email: info@ClassActionNews.org

Circulation: 350+
Recirculation: ????

All original artwork, poems & writings are the sole/ soul property of the artist & author.

Fair Dealing & the Canadian Copyright Act Sections 29, 29.1, 29.2:

"Fair dealing for the purpose of research, private study, education, parody, satire, criticism, review, and news reporting does not infringe copyright."

< Contents >

News 3-12
Health & Harm Reduction 13
Resources 14-16

< Artists in this Issue >

Cover: Jamie Neufeld



< Funding for this Issue >

Very special thanks to:
Groundswell Community Justice Trust Fund!

< Donors for this Issue >

Very special thanks to:
David W. & Olga T. & Pam J.!

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' Treaty ≈

If you ain't angry, you ain't paying attention.
- Mumia Abu-Jamal

(S)heros Behind Bars

Every night I turn on the tv news and the top stories are all about the COVID-19 pandemic. Often the news anchor tells the stories of the 'healthcare heroes' that are going 'above and beyond' to help protect and save lives.

In BC, CSC operates the Pacific Inst'n & Regional Treatment Center for men. Located within is a Specialized Unit known as the National Psych-Geriatric Unit (NPGU). This Unit houses some of the most elderly and medically compromised prisoners from all areas of the country.

Along with the medical professionals and social workers, there is a group of women and men prisoners known as Peer Caregivers. This group is hired to offer support to prisoners in the NPGU.

These Caregivers have undergone rigorous security screening for job approval. They then receive ongoing training to teach them the skills needed to provide support to the men in their care.

These prisoners are essentially doing the same work as Care Aides/ PSWs that work in Long Term Care on the outside. The work can include companionship, assisting with meals, escorting to activities, and many more tasks as they come up.

During the COVID-19 pandemic these Peer Caregivers are acutely aware, even anxious, of the potentially devastating consequences should this virus be introduced into the NPGU.

In addition to the measures that the prison has undertaken in order to minimize risks, the Peer Caregivers work to keep the Unit as clean and sterile as possible.

Peer Caregivers have been working tirelessly and often long hours to do their part to protect the vulnerable men in their care.

In addition, these caregivers are role modelling for their peer's behaviours, such as: consistent mask wearing, hand washing and social distancing in order to help reduce the chance of spread in this place.

These Peer Caregivers do all of this work for less than \$6.00 a day.

Plus, Peer Caregivers live in the same Unit as their clients so there really is no 'off time' for them because they are together 24 hours a day. When asked, Peer Caregivers will tell you that they certainly don't do this job for the money.

They do this job in order to support and care for the men in their care. To bring a sense of safety and well-being to them.

They do this job in order to try and make a positive difference in the lives of their clients.

So these Peer Caregivers should also be added to the growing list of all the (s)heroes that are going above and beyond to help care for and protect the some of the most vulnerable in Canada.

Megan Maines

Feb 2021

Raw vs The Law:

Our Fight for Vegetables at OCDC

I was incarcerated on May 10, 2020 at the Ottawa-Carleton Detention Centre (OCDC). To my surprise, a lot has changed due to COVID-19. Many changes I agree with, while others I do not. In response to the jail failing to meet many of our most basic rights during the COVID-19 pandemic, I went on a hunger strike on July 22, 2020 along with over 70 prisoners on both the men's and women's sides of the jail. On the women's side, we demanded an end to strip searches, increased access to hygiene products and food that meets the Canada Food Guide requirements, which the jail is supposed to provide. For me, one of the most important demands was that the jail provides us with fresh fruits and vegetables, which they had failed to do for weeks.

We need fruits and vegetables in order to maintain a healthy diet, which will help our bodies produce serotonin and raise dopamine levels to keep us emotionally well. Usually in jail, I have been able to get a lot of raw vegetables, but this time around I did not get any. We did get the odd serving of carrots, potatoes and peas, but they had been frozen, cooked, and/ or steamed using the "cook chill" preparation method, which leaves the vegetables depleted of their nutrients.

For many of us, the importance of eating our fruits and vegetables has been engrained in us since childhood. Most of our parents would not let us leave the dinner table if we did not eat them or take away our dessert. I never imagined I would be in the position of going 10 weeks without one raw vegetable. This left me

begging for vegetables. I jokingly tried to make trades with the guards to see if they could find me some vegetables, but to no avail. They kept blaming the lack of fruits and vegetables on COVID-19 because the people in the institution who are normally allowed to prepare trays are no longer allowed to touch the food. This did not make any sense to me because prisoners continue to help out with putting together breakfast trays.

Not being able to eat fresh fruits vegetables week after week created a toxic environment. In the women's dorms, there were many more arguments and girls had issues using the washroom - people felt sick, including myself. From my perspective, if the jail is really trying to keep everyone COVID-19 free, they should not be letting us become malnourished because diet is important for health. Being malnourished puts us at greater risk of illness and disease. During this time, everyone became on edge and was acting moody because we were not eating properly. I feel that prisoners should be allowed to cultivate and maintain a garden to provide essential vegetables rather than feeding us highly processed and nutritionally void food. The food often comes soggy, frozen and/ or too spicy. When we got wind that other prisoners were planning a hunger strike, I decided to get on board from the inside. Unfortunately, it was a disaster and it still bothers me to write about it. Our supporters from the community were rallying outside of the jail to show their support to us. Those of us in the dorms were trying to look out the windows and see what was going on outside. As punishment for watching the protest, the guards took our away our television access and the women I was incarcerated with had their methadone put on hold. The guards held their access to methadone over their heads for watching the protest and teased them like circus animals. This made me really upset so I stood up for them and they ended up getting their methadone. When they returned, I resumed the protest and asked the guards, "How about you guys try to go ten weeks without vegetables?" They responded, "Brazeau, shut up or we are moving you". While I understood that the guards could not change things, I expected that they should at least go to their superiors so that they could get the word out. In the end, I

was threatened with misconduct. They told me to pack up my stuff and go to maximum security.

It really hurt me having to beg for something that my body needs and getting punished for it, to be treated like my problems were a joke when they were serious. I have moved on to GVI now, but I still wonder how the people are doing at OCDC.

Thankfully, now that I am away from OCDC, I have access to a garden with fruits and vegetables, and I feel so much better after only being at GVI for a month. In provincial jails, the prisoners are being treated poorly, especially considering they have not even been sentenced yet. Prisoners need support and a balanced diet in order to have a good state of mind for release.

Erica Brazeau

TPRP Launches New Jail Hotline!

Starting on Feb 1, 2021: 416-755-9329

The Toronto Prisoners' Rights Project (TPRP) is launching the Toronto South Detention Centre, Vanier Centre for Women and Maplehurst Correctional Complex Jail Hotline. This hotline is run by volunteers. It will take calls on:

Monday, Wednesday, Friday & Saturday
9-11am & 2-4pm 416-755-9329

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.

This jail hotline will help us offer support to people incarcerated at the Toronto South Detention Centre, Maplehurst Correctional Complex, and Vanier Centre for Women.

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

Stop the Prison Industrial Goat Farm!

Beginning in 2021, Corrections Canada will establish prison farms as a for-profit institutional agribusiness in the form of an intensive livestock operation. Prisoners will factory farm thousands of goats to produce milk for the private sector, reportedly for Feihe International's infant formula exports to China, which goes against domestic and international human rights and trade laws.

What is a prison farm?

Many of Canada's prisons have large tracts of farmland, acquired over the course of Canada's colonial history. Until 2010, Canada had six federally funded prison farms producing food for prisoners. These were mixed operations of crops, vegetables, and animal agriculture (meat, milk, egg production) before they were shut down by the Harper Conservative government.

Why were prison farms closed?

Canada's longstanding federal prison farm program was shut down by the Harper Conservative government between 2009-2011 because the program was not financially sustainable, losing \$4 million annually, and the traditional agricultural model did not teach employable skills. Fewer than 1% of released offenders went on to gain employment in agriculture.

Why are prison farms reopening?

In 2015, the Trudeau Liberals made a campaign promise to reopen prison farms. After election in 2016, the new government began a public consultation to determine what model the new prison farms would adopt, while at the same time investing millions of dollars into the construction of a Chinese infant formula factory between the two Kingston prisons (Collins Bay and Joyceville) where the prison farms would be located. In 2018, it was announced that the new prison farms would be industrial goat dairy, reportedly to supply this facility.

Why infant formula?

Canada has invested millions of dollars at the federal and provincial level to attract the Chinese company Feihe International to build an infant formula factory in Kingston, Ontario under the name Canada Royal Milk. The facility

is situated between the two prisons where the prison farm operations are being established. Since prison farms can no longer feed prisoners due to the new Food Service Modernization initiative adopted by Correctional Service of Canada, prison farms must now supply external markets. The government is building up Canada's goat dairy industry to supply the Feihe facility, which will ship 85-100% of its product to China. Using the prison farms for this purpose presented a solution to the paired problems of reintroducing prison dairy operations for external markets and supporting a multi-million-dollar infant formula investment.

Why goats?

Goats were selected as the core operation for the reopened prison farms in Kingston Ontario because of the "looming demand" for goat's milk to supply the Feihe International infant formula factory, and because goat dairy is not restricted by the same quota system as cow dairy. Feihe needs 75 million litres of goat milk from approximately 140,000 or 150,000 goats to make their plant operate, which vastly exceeds Canada's entire nationwide supply (55 million litres). If Feihe is unable to source a sufficient supply of goat milk, the company intends to build its own 70,000-head milking unit in Ontario.

Why a factory farm?

The definition of a factory farm is "a system of rearing livestock using intensive methods, by which poultry, pigs, or cattle are confined indoors under strictly controlled conditions." This is an exact description of the central component of the new prison farm model: up to 2000 goats intensively farmed in a fully indoor operation. Goats are not suited to Canadian climates (their natural environment would be hot and dry) and are susceptible to a wide range of disease, making a controlled indoor facility the only viable option for an operation of this magnitude. The magnitude of the operation is an effort to gain an "economy of scale" advantage since goat dairy is otherwise not profitable; according to government statistics, a litre of goat's milk costs \$1.30 to produce and sells for \$1.09.

www.EvolveOurPrisonFarms.ca

More than 5,000 COVID-19 Cases Linked to Canadian Prisons

Overall:

Prisoners = 3,968

Staff = 1,100

Contractors = 3

Total = 5,071

Canadian Jurisdictions with Reported COVID-19 Cases Linked to their Prisons as of Jan 25 2021:

Federal | CSC = 1,529 (1,233 prisoners | 296 staff)

NS = 1 (1 prisoner | 0 staff)

QC = 466 (252 prisoners | 214 staff)

ON = 604 (496 prisoners | 107 staff | 1 contractor)

MB = 569 (451 prisoners | 118 staff)

SK = 538 (426 prisoners | 112 staff)

AB = 1,217 (1,006 prisoners | 209 staff | 2 contractors)

BC = 147 (103 prisoners | 44 staff)

Canadian Jurisdictions without Reported COVID-19 Cases Linked to their Provincial-Territorial Jails and Prisons as of Jan 25 2021:

NL, PE, NB, NU, NT, YK

Note on Method:

The preliminary findings presented above were compiled from figures included media reports and publicly available government data sets. Due to the quality of the data available, it is possible that there fewer or additional laboratory confirmed cases of COVID-19 linked to prisoners and/or staff of Canadian carceral institutions than those compiled above as many jurisdictions do not report both types of cases online on a pro-active basis like the Ministère de la Sécurité publique du Québec and Manitoba Corrections. Correctional Service Canada and the Ontario Ministry of the Solicitor General release prisoner COVID-19 case figures on a regular basis through tables accessible through a single web link, but not those of their institutional staff. All other Canadian human caging authorities do not make such data sets available online, including the Saskatchewan Ministry of Corrections, Policing and Public Safety and the Alberta Correctional Services Division that have had several large

outbreaks linked to their provincial jails and prisons, as well as the Nova Scotia Correctional Services Division and British Columbia Corrections that have had fewer outbreaks linked to their provincial sites of confinement.

Kevin Walby, Justin Piché
Criminalization & Punishment Education
Project
Jan 26, 2021

Bell Canada Prison Calls: Class Action!

This case alleges that the defendant breached Ontario consumer protection and other laws by extracting exorbitant fees from individuals placing and accepting telephone calls from correctional facilities in Ontario since 2013.

The defendant is the exclusive provider of telephone services for incarcerated persons in Ontario correctional facilities. The defendant charged unconscionable telephone service rates and made misrepresentations concerning the cost of telephone calls placed from correctional facilities in Ontario.

The Court will decide at a later date if the case will proceed as a class action.

The case seeks to represent all persons currently or formerly incarcerated in an Ontario correctional facility and all persons in Canada who accepted and paid for a collect call originating from a person incarcerated in an Ontario correctional facility.

[Updates will follow as the case progresses]



No, You Won't Get Treatment in Jail.

A new website details the 'Broken Record' of Incarceration in Ontario

Desperate for money so he could feed his drug addiction, Elliot Hudson robbed a convenience store and a gas station. He needed help, he said in a recent interview, instead he got jail.

"I think a lot of people think you are going to be able to access services if you are incarcerated ... it sucks that that person went to jail but at least they are getting the help they need," he said. "That's just not true... I was flabbergasted."

This is one of the misconceptions about how mental health problems and addictions are dealt with in the criminal justice system that Hudson is hoping a new website from the John Howard Society of Ontario will correct.

The website, called "Broken Record" follows a 2015 report from the organization detailing how people with mental illnesses are criminalized in Ontario and the reforms needed from policing to courts to jails. The report prompted "an unprecedented outpouring of stories from families right across the province" of painful, tragic experiences with the justice system, said Jacqueline Tasca, the director of partnerships and strategic initiatives at the John Howard Society of Ontario.

Snippets of some of those stories are interspersed with statistics on the website to explain how a person with a mental illness could become trapped in the criminal justice system, and how that can be exacerbated by racism, poverty and homelessness.

"You open your eyes and it hurts. The room comes into focus just as the first wave of panic hits. Sink, toilet, mattress. You don't remember how you got here. You've been here before," says one screen. It is sandwiched between research: "Most people with mental illnesses are charged with public nuisance offences related to their symptoms. Very few charges are due to real criminal activity," and, "More than 40 per cent of Ontario prisoners show symptoms of a severe mental health problem."

The site also highlights proposed reforms. Among them is more supportive housing and access to health care, which Tasca said is key to preventing crises from occurring in the first place.

Another is changing the response to people in crisis.

About a month ago, Hudson said, a friend was worried about him and asked police to check on him.

"I can't explain the kind of fear that puts into somebody who's been arrested" and been to jail when the police knocked on his door, he said. "It took me days to come down from that, it was so traumatizing."

He doesn't fault his friend though because other options weren't available. But Hudson is optimistic that can change in the way the Broken Record site envisions. A new pilot project is being discussed in Toronto where crisis workers would respond to non-violent mental health calls.

And as the criminal courts face an increasing backlog of cases and jails face COVID-19 outbreaks, Tasca said it more important than ever to look at ways to keep vulnerable people out of custody and connect them with resources. Through mental health courts some people with mental illness are able to be connected with resources and have their cases diverted out of the system so that they don't end up with a criminal record. But access to diversion programs vary and often still requires going to court for long periods of time. Instead the report recommends adopting a pre-charge screening process where a Crown would review the evidence before charges are laid, avoiding cases that would later be withdrawn anyway and the impact of sending someone to jail even for a short time, which can result in people losing housing, jobs and social assistance and worsen mental health issues.

<https://johnhoward.on.ca/brokenrecord/>

Alyshah Hasham

The Star

Feb 2, 2021

All oppression creates a state of war.

- Simone De Beauvoir

Please try to remember that what they believe, as well as what they do and cause you to endure does not testify to your inferiority but to their inhumanity.

- James Baldwin

The Oak Ridge Psychiatric Experiments & the Duty of Care we have to the Mentally ill

When Oak Ridge, Ontario's maximum-security psychiatric hospital, was built outside Penetanguishene during the Great Depression, it was the end of the road for people called "criminally insane."

Its cellblocks housed men who had committed mass murders, serial killings, child murder, rape and arson. Most were found not guilty by reason of insanity. But they might as well have been sentenced to life in prison. For decades, "Penetang," as the institution was called in the media, rarely let anyone leave.

This changed in the 1960s. Psychiatrists, intrigued by the possibilities of new drugs, including LSD, and caught up in philosophy fads, wondered if they could fix these damaged men.

They'd seen how new medications helped people suffering from bipolar disorder and schizophrenia. Some of Oak Ridge's medical staff wanted to go further and treat people with anti-social personality disorder - "psychopaths," in the parlance of the time.

It was tough challenge. Dr. Elliot Barker, Oak Ridge's lead psychiatrist, was able to convince some judges and juries to ignore the strict legal test for insanity and consider the idea of "moral insanity." He believed offenders with personality disorders couldn't understand the pain they caused to others.

Barker and other psychiatrists developed a "therapeutic community" that seems, in hindsight, like something out of a Stanley Kubrick movie. Patients were given LSD and put into an "artificial womb" for weeks. Others were jammed into a small room for something called "The 100 Day Hate-In." A new society was set up inside Oak Ridge where high-functioning patients had official sanction to terrorize and manipulate weaker ones.

Most of these experiments turned out to be rubbish. People didn't develop empathy by being forced together in a tiny room for weeks. They weren't reborn with normal feelings after living in an artificial womb, high on acid and sipping food through a straw.

In 1983, Oak Ridge guards seized the institution and forced the province to end the experiments. Recently, the Ontario Superior Court found these experiments and treatments to be grotesque violations of the rights of the patients involved.

Barker, Dr. Gary Maier and the institution must now pay a total of \$10 million in damages to patients who were subject of these experiments. Some will receive more than \$2 million, while others get as little as \$1,000.

Oak Ridge was torn down earlier this century and replaced with a new maximum-security hospital that is now part of Waypoint, Penetanguishene's mental health treatment complex.

So justice seems to have been done. But people need to keep a few things in mind. In the 17 years that the therapeutic community existed at Oak Ridge, many academics and practicing psychiatrists saw the experiments as cutting-edge science. Journalists from Canada's best newspapers and magazines wrote fawning articles about them. Some writers even took part in its more bizarre experiments.

Academic papers written by Barker, Maier and their colleagues passed peer review and were published in top-tier journals. There was a consensus among policy-makers, theorists, medical practitioners and the legal community that the experiments in Penetang gave hope to the hopeless, a chance for cures and normal lives.

Too bad they didn't work. And much too bad that doctors were willing and able, in full view of their peers and the media, to experiment on vulnerable patients.

So the experiments stopped. But does today's mental health care system have more care and concern for offenders suffering from serious mental illness? It does not.

Take the case of Jeffrey Arenburg. In 1995, he travelled from Nova Scotia to Ottawa to kill someone famous. He stopped at Parliament Hill, but the House of Commons was closed for the summer. Arenburg went to an Ottawa TV studio and gunned down sportscaster Brian Smith as he left work.

Arenburg spent eight years at Oak Ridge. He later served three years in a U.S. jail for assault. By 2014, Arenburg stopped taking his medication and was living on the streets of Ottawa. In 2017, he died there.

People like Arenburg and the patients who endured Oak Ridge's therapeutic community don't get a lot of public sympathy. But all of us, like the doctors who ran Oak Ridge's experiments, have a duty of care to those among us who endure mental illness. Instead,

we warehouse them for a while, let them out, and walk by them as they panhandle.

Trend-chasing psychiatrists didn't help them. But neither do we.

Mark Bourrie
The Star
Mar 1, 2021

Legal Expert 'Shocked' by Imprisoned Nygard's Phone Privileges

Casual observers aren't the only ones wondering why fallen fashion tycoon Peter Nygard has been provided his own phone in jail while awaiting possible extradition to the United States.

Local legal experts say they are unaware of any other case like it in Manitoba.

"I was shocked," said University of Manitoba law professor David Ireland. "I've never been aware of an inmate having exclusive access to their own phone.

"Certainly, in my experience of dealing with clients in custody, I've never had a client who had free access to a phone."

The Manitoba Court of Appeal is currently considering whether Nygard can be released on bail.

Nygard, 79, is being held at Headingley Correctional Centre, where, according to an affidavit provided by assistant superintendent of security Todd Schreyer, he has a cell to himself (it can accommodate three inmates), a television, and a phone he can use from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. each day.

"No other cell at (the jail) has similar phone access," Schreyer said in his affidavit.

"Due to Mr. Nygard's request for constant contact with his legal team, this is the only location at which we can accommodate him and ensure his safety due to the high-profile nature of his case."

Nygard is in protective custody and "does not mix with other inmates," the affidavit says.

Ireland said he takes no issue with Nygard having unrestricted phone access, but the privilege, if granted, should be shared by all inmates.

"I don't think it's a terrible thing, but surely it has to be even," Ireland said.

"Talk about a can of worms. What do you think every other inmate is saying right now? 'Like,

where's my phone. Because this guy is rich he gets his own phone?' That's how I would be feeling if I was at Headingley."

Ireland said everyone in jail is expected to be treated the same, regardless of whether they are on remand, a sentenced prisoner, or facing extradition. "That's the thing about prison. It's the great equalizer - everybody is in the same boat."

Nygard is wanted in New York, where he would face prosecution on nine charges of sex trafficking and racketeering spanning decades.

Meanwhile, extradition can take years, and it is rare an accused facing extradition is not granted bail, said U of M law Prof. Gerard Kennedy.

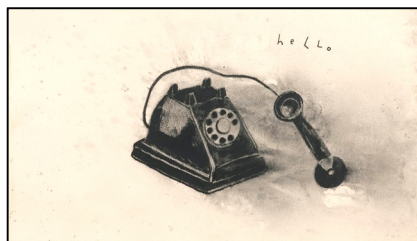
While those in custody are all expected to be subject to the same treatment, "The number of cases that would fall into the not granted bail pending extradition (category) is extremely small, so we could yet hear after the fact that, 'Oh no, it should be treated differently,'" Kennedy said.

"I can certainly understand why this would raise eyebrows, concerning equitable treatment of those held in custody depending on their pre-existing privilege," he said. "We don't know that's the case, but it's not a great look."

A Manitoba Justice spokesperson provided little insight into the decision to provide Nygard a phone, saying only "Inmates are placed in units based on their individual health, security assessment and program needs."

According to a Manitoba Justice fact sheet, provincial inmates are allowed to use jail phones to make unlimited calls to lawyers or community supports between 7 a.m. and 10:30 p.m. each day. Non-sentenced inmates can make three personal calls each day, up to 15 minutes each.

Dean Pritchard
Winnipeg Free Press
Mar 20, 2021



**COVID-19 and Canada's prisons:
We must treat inmates more humanely**

Canadians pride themselves on being decent and fair-minded. We value the dictum that you can tell much about a society from the way it treats its most vulnerable. Thus, we agree that those in long-term care and those over 80 should receive the COVID-19 vaccine first. In addition, most of us don our masks willingly, as symbols of pride in our shared Canadian values about how we care for each other, especially the most vulnerable.

But, at this pandemic time, do Canadians know about the intense suffering behind bars - among those incarcerated in federal and provincial prisons? That the rate of COVID-19 infection is higher in prisons than in the community? Do Canadians understand that these people are also among our most vulnerable citizens? They cannot escape their confines, and are at the mercy of Correctional Service of Canada (CSC). Do Canadians realize that these men and women have been under extreme conditions of confinement since last March?

Many of us have been advocating for the depopulation of our crowded federal prisons (as has happened in many parts of the United States and the United Kingdom) since the early days of the pandemic. It doesn't mean that murderers and rapists will be let loose, but it does mean that low-risk prisoners such as the chronically ill (extremely vulnerable to the ravages of the virus) and those nearing parole dates should be released to serve the rest of their time supervised in the community. Doctors, judges, lawyers, criminologists and many politicians and senators have argued that this approach would have been much safer and kinder. It has not happened. Now, according to CSC's own reporting, the prisons are awash in COVID-19.

Instead of depopulating, CSC has reduced movement in the prisons and divided prison populations into cohorts, meaning that people can come out of their cells only two days a week - if they are lucky. Despite the cohort system, every time COVID-19 is detected, the entire prison is locked down. No movement at all. We have heard from one CSC educator that Canada's prisons now resemble Texas prisons in the 1950s.

Is this what we Canadians want to see happening in our prisons?

Community volunteers and advocates (so necessary, and mandated by CSC for the rehabilitation and long-term re-integration of prisoners) have not been able to continue their work. CSC refuses to implement current technologies, thus technological issues abound, and virtual family visits are constantly cancelled. No group meetings are available anymore, as we in the community enjoy on Zoom or other such platforms. No worship, no book clubs, no Alcoholics Anonymous or Narcotics Anonymous (so vital to recovering addicts). And all virtual family visits, we have heard, were suspended more than a week before Christmas.

The misery for incarcerated is very real. Can this be the Canada we know?

Carol Finlay
Ottawa Citizen
Jan 19, 2021

- Inmate's Voice -

This is a new call-in system for prisoners to have their phone messages automatically uploaded to be listened to by anyone.

☎ 647-288-1300 ☎

This service enables prisoners in Canada to have their voices heard about the injustices they face in prisons/ jails.

Prisoners can leave a recording by calling our complaint line. Those recordings will be uploaded to our website and opened up for discussion publicly.

They are also emailed to several advocates such as the Ombudsman, Ministry of Attorney General, Sylvia Jones and many other local, national, and international media organisations after they are reviewed.

www.InmatesVoice.org

If I don't speak, this silence is also going to kill me.

- Rehana Hashmi

Ontario is exposing prisoners to torturous conditions

As the second wave of COVID-19 sweeps through Ontario jails, leaving many prisoners and staff infected with the virus, it's clear to us that the Ottawa-Carleton Detention Centre (OCDC) and other sites of confinement cannot contain COVID-19. Their attempts to do so involve subjecting prisoners to torturous conditions.

The usual appalling, violent and inhumane treatment OCDC prisoners are exposed to has been worsened by the Ontario solicitor general's pandemic protocols. Prisoners are experiencing more frequent and longer lockdowns. This means prisoners are confined to their cells for 23 or more hours a day. Prisoners have little to no access to mental and physical health resources, showers, phone calls, yard and other basic necessities. Their mental and physical health is declining, as is their access to justice, while fear of death and trial delays increase.

Currently, OCDC segregates newly incarcerated people for a 14-day quarantine period in designated lockdown ranges. The jail lengthens these lockdowns if prisoners display coronavirus symptoms. Some prisoners report being segregated for longer than three weeks, which pushes them to despair. Locking people in cages without meaningful access to outdoor activities, mental health support and showers, is not acceptable public health policy.

A 2018 consent order known as the Jahn Settlement mandates that segregation must only be used as a last resort, must not extend beyond 14 days, and that jails must keep records of prisoner segregation. The order is being routinely violated during the pandemic. Segregation is becoming further entrenched despite being deemed an unconstitutional practice that is tantamount to torture by the Supreme Court of Canada and being in contravention with the Mandela Rules, a set of international minimum standards for prisoner treatment.

In our calls with OCDC prisoners, we also hear reports that jail staff protest unsafe conditions through work stoppages and certain guards do not wear personal protective equipment, downplaying the risks associated with COVID-19 and the harm they cause to prisoners. OCDC staff also mishandle COVID-19 intake protocols.

Newly admitted prisoners are mixed with prisoners cleared from the virus before the completion of the 14-day quarantine period. Such conduct also violates the Ontario Correctional Services COVID-19 Protocols.

The draconian conditions OCDC prisoners are being subjected to are under a shroud of secrecy. The Ontario Human Rights Commission has called on the provincial government to communicate transparently with prisoners regarding their confinement during the pressures and stress of the pandemic and to follow COVID-19 protocols. This is not happening. Recently, we wrote to the superintendent of OCDC, alerting him to the ongoing rights violations related to the COVID-19 pandemic for which he is accountable; we have not received a response from the jail.

If Ontario cannot provide minimum safety standards, prisoners must be released. The Ontario Human Rights Commission has called on the ministry to reduce crowding wherever possible, through temporary absences and compassionate or medical release. Police, Crown attorneys, judges and Legal Aid Ontario must also do their part to consent to pre-trial alternatives to incarceration and fund lawyers. There is no reason for OCDC to be packed, especially at this stage in the crisis.

Without meaningful action to reduce the prison population and the use of barbaric lockdown incarceration measures that fly in the face of minimum legal standards, public health and community safety are imperilled.

Lydia Dobson, Savannah Gentile, Portia Larlee

Ottawa Citizen

Jan 29, 2021

Jail Accountability and Information Line (JAIL) for prisoners in OCDC

The Jail Accountability and Information Line takes calls from prisoners and their loved ones from 1:00pm to 4:00pm Mon to Wed. This line tracks issues experienced by people incarcerated at the Ottawa Carleton Detention Centre.

☎ 613-567-JAIL (5245) ☎

Ontario is pumping \$2.5 million into a program to train new prison guard recruits. It's another example of over-policing.

Rajeon Hoilett has spent many years advocating for prisoners.

As a member of the Toronto Prisoners' Rights Project, he's seen and heard the horrible side of corrections in Ontario which has been exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic. He says prison guards have weaponized the coronavirus against inmates and have refused to seek medical attention for inmates who tested positive.

Hoilett is among the advocates publicly shaming the provincial government for a new partnership with Mohawk College that will cost \$2.5 million annually in taxpayer money to pay corrections recruits during training. This 18-month pilot initiative is in addition to a \$500 million investment in corrections the province announced in June 2020 to hire front-line staff and update aging jails over five years.

Hoilett says the news of this new program is "enraging" and "heartbreaking."

"The government has taken little to no action to address the crisis these prisoners have," said Hoilett, adding the decision speaks to an even larger issue of the government ignoring the demands of suffering communities who are "over-policed and then incarcerated."

"They continue to drag (their) feet to (address) the austerity measures of cutting the kinds of services that our communities rely on," said Hoilett, referring to Black and Indigenous demographics. "Where's the training and education for the kinds of workers that we actually do need in our communities?"

Stephen Warner, press secretary at the office of the solicitor general, said in an email to the Star the program would ensure racial and ethnic biases aren't being perpetuated through "theoretical" and "process-based" components that tackle "complex topics such as human rights, de-escalation, mental health and anti-racism."

But Hoilett doesn't believe institutional racism in corrections will stop with this type of training, which is why his organization hasn't invested in that sort of reform-engaging with prison guards.

"It isn't the case that there are just a few bad apples," Hoilett said, adding racial violence

against Black and Indigenous people is deeply embedded within corrections.

Alison Horton, Vice President Academic at Mohawk College, says the school will offer infrastructure for the program and undergo a "rigorous hiring process" for the educators, but what's actually taught is "up to the ministry."

The ministry of the solicitor general did not provide a curriculum, but has a list of "required learning outcomes" consisting of six categories: professionalism/ workplace safety, safety and security, working with inmates, job specific skills and application, theoretical concepts, and resiliency.

Warner says the training was "modernized" to "provide officers with more job-specific case studies and scenario-based learning with an emphasis on human rights, Indigenous cultural competency training and inmate management techniques."

But Justin Piché, an associate criminology professor and director at the University of Ottawa's Carceral Cultures Research Initiative, says the training can go "out the door" as soon as the new recruits step into the workforce, especially if they want to "maintain good relations" with senior staff who may be prejudiced or racist.

In 2014, Canada's prison watchdog report showed that Black inmates were prime targets for additional charges that involved "subjective judgment" by correctional officers. Officers were most likely to push forward charges like "disrespect toward staff," rather than misconduct that required them to show proof. As a result, Black inmates faced institutional charges, denial of parole or additional time on their sentence.

Piché said the government really should be "divesting" and focusing on "decarceration."

"It's time we move on to community-based alternatives that will position people to keep each other safe," Piché said. "I don't see (prisons) being part of the future that we need to work toward."

Danica Samuel
The Star
Mar 16, 2021

I abide where there is a fight against wrong.
- Mother Jones (Mary Harris Jones)

Facts about HIV and HCV

With some exceptions, HIV and HCV infection is generally more prevalent among women than men in prison, particularly among those who have a history of injection drug use.

In a study of provincial prisons in Quebec, the HIV and HCV rate among incarcerated women was, respectively, 8.8 and 29.2 percent, compared to 2.4 and 16.6 percent among male prisoners.

In a study of female prisoners in British Columbia (B.C.), self-reported rates of HIV and HCV were 8 percent and 52 percent, respectively.

In a 2007 nationwide survey by CSC, the HIV and HCV rate among federally incarcerated women was 5.5 and 30.3 percent, compared to 4.5 and 30.8 percent among federally incarcerated men. Aboriginal women reported the highest rates of HIV and HCV, at 11.7 and 49.1 percent, respectively.

While the majority of women in prison are voluntarily tested for both HIV and HCV, the provision of pre- and post-test counselling has been reported to be poor, and in some cases, non-existent.

Women in prison are more likely than women in the general population to have faced violence and abuse; therefore, counselling accompanying HIV diagnosis is particularly important. Women in prison have concerns about the privacy and confidentiality of their HIV status.

Women have reported being forced to draw unwanted attention. Women (37.0%) reported being HCV-positive. Aboriginal women were identified as a particularly high-risk group because they reported the highest rates of HIV (11.7%) and HCV infections (49.1%).

These data highlight the need to ensure that culturally appropriate, effective interventions that decrease risk-behaviours and increase utilization of harm-reduction measures are offered to meet the needs of Aboriginal women.

Important Hep C Update!

New treatments with excellent success rates are now available!

These are in pill form and have little or no side effects. The downside is the cost of course: \$1000+ per pill.

Vosevi is a combination of sofosbuvir, velpatasvir and voxilaprevir. These three drugs are combined into one tablet. It is taken once a day with food for 12 weeks.

Federal Prisoners: Great news, now you can start your treatment while inside!

Provincial/Territorial Prisoners: Only BC & ON provide treatment. Elsewhere, you will have to wait till 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.

There are 2,700 with chronic hep C in Federal prisons.

There are 4,380 with chronic hep C in Prov/Terr prisons.

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% in prison
HIV = 1-5% in prison

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

BLEACH DOES NOT KILL HEP C

**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, 369 trans or non-binary people have been killed globally.

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

☞ Respect ☞

**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

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).

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

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 in Canada
- Over 5000 children are impacted by parental imprisonment in the GTA
- The number of children affected by parental incarceration only increases 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



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



PRISON RADIO

- Guelph - CFRU 93.3 FM
Prison Radio - Thurs 10-11 am
Call-in 519-837-2378
- Halifax - CKDU 88.1 FM
Black Power Hour - Fri 1:30-3 pm
Youth Now! - Mon 5-6:30 pm
- Kingston - CFRC 101.9 FM
CPR: Prison Radio - Wed 7-8 pm
Montreal - CKUT 90.3 FM
PRS - 2nd Thurs 5-6 pm & 4th Fri 11-noon
- Vancouver - CFRO 100.5 FM
Stark Raven - 1st Mon 7-8 pm

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

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

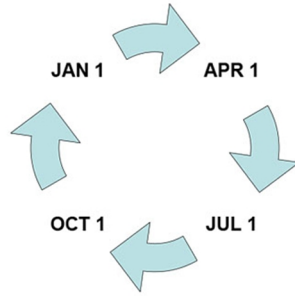
Prisoners and their loved ones are invited to contribute music requests, messages and suggestions for the program.

*Write: CPR c/o CFRC, Lwr Carruthers Hall,
Queen's University,
Kingston, ON, K7L 3N6*

*Email: CFRCprisonradio@riseup.net
Call: 613-329-2693 to record a message or
music request to be broadcast on-air.*

☞ Prisoners Justice Day is Aug 10 ☞

- CLASS ACTION! NEWS -



- MAILOUT DATES -

☞ Issue #21 - Spring 2021 ☞

Class Action News
PO Box 39, Stn P
Toronto, ON, M5S 2S6

download, print, contact:
www.ClassActionNews.org

Next Issue: #22 - Summer 2021

Deadline: Jun 1, 2021

Mail-out: Jul 1, 2021

If you don't like the news ...

... make some of your own !!!

Whatcha got in there that needs gettin' out?

... Hmm ... ?

Art, Poems, Stories, News, Whatever !

