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Open Letter to the Correctional Service of Canada on Structured Intervention Units Consultation

On, June 17th and 18th 2021 dozens of community stakeholders were invited by the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) to participate in a consultation on Structured Intervention Units in federal prisons in Canada.

Entering the consultation, CSC had a fixed agenda. None of the undersigned organizations were consulted regarding the topics to be discussed, and no community stakeholders were given the opportunity to add items for discussion. Concerns about the narrow scope of the consultation were largely ignored, and well-documented failings of SIUs were not addressed. When stakeholders attempted to raise concerns, they were redirected by Commissioner Anne Kelly back to CSC's pre-determined agenda.

Absent from this consultation, then, were fundamental and urgent matters requiring immediate action by CSC and the Federal Government, including:

- ending the practice of solitary confinement wherever feasible - and prohibiting prolonged use of solitary confinement in its entirety;
- provision of real alternatives to SIU other than return to maximum security, including transfers to lower security, healing lodges and treatment centres;
- implementing effective, independent oversight for the SIUs;
- granting public access to information from CSC on the operation of SIUs;
- addressing the lack of access to SIU inmates by non-government service providers; and
- Immediately re-establishing the Independent Advisory Panel, an SIU oversight body.

Without addressing these issues, these stakeholder engagements cannot be seen as anything more than a "check-box" – a mechanism to enable CSC to state publicly that they had consulted with stakeholders.

We urge the government (CSC) to turn its attention and efforts to open discussion of these matters and to resolving them without delay.

Signed,

The John Howard Society of Canada
The Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies
Canadian Civil Liberties Association
Prisoners' Legal Services

Volunteers, Millhaven Lifers Liaison Group
Vicki Chartrand, Centre for Justice Exchange
Kim Beaudin, Congress of Aboriginal Peoples
Richard Sauve, St. Leonard's Society
Lana Robinson, Clerk, Canadian Friends Service Committee (Quakers)
Kathy Ferreira, Queen's Prison Law Clinic
Rev. Dr. Carol Finlay, Book Clubs for Inmates
Mary Campbell, Independent Expert
John T Clinton, (retired) Saint Leonard's Society Hamilton