

2 October 2018

The Honourable Ralph Goodale, MP, PC  
Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness  
House of Commons  
Ottawa ON K1A 0A6

**Open Letter: Healing Lodges, Community-based Residential Facilities Help to Ensure Public Safety**

As Members of Parliament prepare to vote on an opposition motion about one individual's transfer to a healing lodge, leading national organizations that are well-established in the field of community corrections are writing so that you and your colleagues may make a well-informed decision based on accurate information.

While we are not in a position to discuss the circumstances of any particular case, it is critical for Parliamentarians and the Canadian public to recognize that:

- All healing lodges are unique, just like the individuals they serve
- The Okimaw Ohci Healing Lodge *is* a secure correctional institution
- The designation of "healing lodge" has no bearing on its ability to manage people who are classified as medium security
- All institutions under the auspices of the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) are required to meet an extensive list of security provisions

We urge you and all MPs to allow the Commissioner of CSC to accept her responsibility to conduct a review of the transfer process, and make appropriate decisions within her scope that are based on evidence and experience that contribute to *long-term* public safety.

We applaud your recommendation to the Commissioner of CSC to "work with Indigenous partners to increase the number of community-run healing lodges established under Section 81 of the *Corrections and Conditional Release Act* (CCRA)," further to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Action #35, and we trust you will reinforce this commitment.

By eliminating "barriers to the creation of additional Aboriginal healing lodges within the federal correctional system," your department, in collaboration with communities across the country, will create greater opportunities for people to obtain the healing, programming, treatment and rehabilitation they need *prior* to their release from incarceration.

This is also consistent with research indicating that healing lodges – as well as other community-based residential facilities - improve public safety by addressing individual needs through effective, meaningful and culturally specific programs and services in the community. In fact, it can be significantly more effective for people to work toward positive change through healing and rehabilitation than through simple retribution.

The majority of people in prison will eventually return home as our neighbours. Whether they reside in a healing lodge or other penitentiary, they must be given the opportunity to demonstrate their capability and commitment to become law-abiding citizens.

We implore you and your colleagues to reflect upon the values and principles that we as Canadians want to espouse, and to entrust the Commissioner of Corrections and her team with the tremendous responsibility to contribute to long-term safety through personal development, rehabilitation and healing.

Canadians deserve no less.

Sincerely,

*Original signed by*

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CEO, Native Counselling Services of Alberta

*Co-signed by*

David Henry  
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Rev. Dr. Carol Finlay  
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Kassandra Churcher  
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Irving Kulik  
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Church Council on Justice and Corrections

George Myette  
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Anita Desai  
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cc All Members of Parliament