



St. Leonard's Society of Canada | Société St-Léonard du Canada

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Response to Office of The Correctional Investigator (OCI) & Canadian Human Rights Commission's (CHRC) Joint Report *Aging and Dying in Prison*

OTTAWA, ON – February 28, 2019: Canada's federally sentenced population is aging. St. Leonard's Society of Canada (SLSC) is greatly encouraged by today's release of the *Aging and Dying in Prison: An Investigation into the Experiences of Older Individuals in Federal Custody*, from the OCI and CHRC.

SLSC and its members have long recognized the concerns of older people¹ in prison, and the ability to adequately protect the health, safety, and dignity of this population within Canada's prison environment. As this population continues to grow – currently one quarter of the overall prison population – SLSC continues to urge that appropriate strategies be put in place to meet the needs of aging and elderly people in conflict with the law. SLSC's members have the will and expertise to support these individuals, and we believe they should be provided services in the community.

Managing the sentences of older individuals presents unique challenges for correctional administrators and community-based service providers; and, will come into sharper focus as harsher sentencing and more stringent releasing practices accelerates aging for an incarcerated and paroled population that reflects and outpaces the larger, greying Canadian population. Striving for such developments requires a shift in mentality and attitude in the way that the aging and elderly are perceived and treated. This shift is occurring within the SLSC membership.

On September 5, 2018 The Honourable Ralph Goodale, P.C., M.P., Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness shared his Mandate Letter to Anne Kelly, Commissioner of Correctional Service of Canada. With particular relevance to the release of today's *Aging and Dying in Prison* report, CSC was called upon to work with organizations to ensure that the needs of seniors are met, "both within institutions and upon release." The mandate letter further stresses the importance that services, interventions, assessment tools and correctional approaches be tailored to address the full diversity of CSC's population. SLSC fully endorses these statements, and the recommendations of the *Aging and Dying in Prison* report provide an excellent foundation from which to generate meaningful change within Canada's correctional system.

Many of the recommendations contained in today's report can be put into action swiftly in collaboration with the community corrections sector. A humane and informed justice policy that fosters community safety benefits everyone. SLSC congratulates the OCI and CHRC for providing a voice to the thousands older individuals who are currently incarcerated or released to the community.

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¹ In the criminal justice context this typically refers to people in conflict with the law age 50 and over, due to the accelerated aging effects of an institutionalized lifestyle. Age 50 is typically demarcated by recognized authorities such as the OCI as the threshold for aging institutionalized individuals.