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News Release

Tona's Law Reflects Years of Senate Work to Uphold Human Rights of Federal Prisoners

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

OTTAWA, NOVEMBER 21, 2024—Despite attempts to defeat it, like the woman whose name it carries, [Tona's Law, Bill S-230](#), survived, withstanding a [procedural challenge](#) to reach third reading. The bill proposes court oversight, remedies and alternatives with respect to solitary confinement and other forms of isolation in federal prisons.

As confirmed by members of the soon-to-be disbanded Ministerial Advisory Panel and former Independent External Decision Makers, five years after the government promised that Bill C-83 would end current draconian forms of isolation in federal prison, [these practices continue](#) with seeming impunity. In response, Tona's Law puts forward crucial safeguards of human rights—measures previously endorsed by the Senate as [amendments to Bill C-83](#) and in the [Senate Human Rights Committee's report](#) on the human rights of federally sentenced persons.

Recent erosion of even the limited oversight mechanisms for federal prisons existing under Bill C-83 underscore the urgency of passing Bill C-83. Of the limited accountability measures the government introduced five years ago alongside Bill C-83

- the mandate of the Ministerial Advisory Panel will soon expire and the panel will be disbanded,
- no external mental health advocates were ever hired,
- insiders advise that contracts of independent external decision makers were not renewed for those who refused to “rubber stamp” correctional decisions,
- the required five-year parliamentary review of Bill C-83 has not been initiated.

The Minister of Public Safety has failed to address the concerns raised by his own now disbanded advisory committee, much less those of the Correctional Investigator, regarding the failure of

Correctional Service Canada to ensure the law is followed. Equally problematic and concerning, the Minister has also refused to respond to [concerns of the Senate Human Rights Committee](#) that the government is not taking these issues seriously.

“Tona Mills, whose name this bill bears, is a survivor of more than ten years of solitary confinement and the stark and irreversible health consequences of isolation,” said Senator Kim Pate, sponsor of Tona’s Law. “Ms Mills is now dying. She has terminal cancer. Her message is clear and unwavering. What happened to her cannot be allowed to happen to anyone else. Now is the time for the federal government to step up and ensure that it does not.”

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