



Offices of Senators Michèle Audette, Bernadette Clement, Mary Jane McCallum,  
Kim Pate, Paul (PJ) Prosper & Paula Simons

News Release

***Senators Call for Correctional Accountability:  
30th Anniversary of the Arbour Commission***

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

OTTAWA, APRIL 1, 2026— Continued human and *Charter* rights violations in Canadian prisons prompted Senators to mark the 30th anniversary of the [final report of the Arbour Commission](#) by calling for the implementation of its recommendations for correctional accountability and remedies to the unlawful administration of prisons.

On April 1, 1996, The Honourable Justice Louise Arbour issued her final report following the Commission of Inquiry into illegal treatment and human rights violations of women who were stripped, shackled and left naked in segregation cells by male guards at the Prison for Women in Kingston. Justice Arbour described the absence of the rule of law in prisons, recommending judicial oversight of corrections and remedies for prisoners.

At question period, [Senators Michèle Audette](#), [Bernadette Clement](#), [Mary Jane McCallum](#), [Kim Pate](#), [Paul \(PJ\) Prosper](#) and [Paula Simons](#) called attention to these unimplemented recommendations, highlighting the increasing overrepresentation of Indigenous Peoples, especially women, in federal prisons, inhumane conditions of confinement, and lack of programming and release options, particularly for Black and Indigenous prisoners and those with disabling mental health issues. Senators underscored the need to breathe life into existing mechanisms for reuniting marginalized individuals with their communities.

The role of Senators includes particular duties to represent the interests of under-served and unrepresented groups. In recent years, the Senate has passed and endorsed [private member's legislation](#), [amendments to government legislation](#), and [Senate committee reports](#) seeking to implement the Arbour Commission's recommendations.

[Bill S-205, Tona's Law](#), incorporating the Arbour Commission's recommendations for court oversight and remedies, is currently awaiting final deliberations in the Senate and a vote to send it to the House of Commons for further consideration.

**Quotes:**

“Unfortunately, Indigenous women, who were the focus of Justice Arbour’s findings in 1996, remain the fastest-growing segment of the prison population. Call for Justice 5.14 of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls calls for action to address the over-incarceration of Indigenous women and the practices within the justice system that contribute to it. The government has not fulfilled its commitment to eliminate the overrepresentation of Indigenous Peoples in prisons.” – **Senator Michèle Audette**

“The Arbour report and the Black Justice Strategy have two important things in common: Smart people took the time to provide great recommendations for us to do better, and these reports require action.” – **Senator Bernadette Clement**

“30 years ago, former Justice Arbour recommended the placement of limits on the use of segregation and noted the need for correctional accountability and remedies for prisoners whose rights were violated. These issues continue, and the overrepresentation of Indigenous women and girls is now far worse and increasing.” – **Senator Mary Jane McCallum**

“It's unfortunate that the Arbour Report's findings are still relevant 30 years later. That's why we need to fully implement things like the Indigenous Justice Strategy in order to make real change instead of just talking about the need for change.” – **Senator Paul (PJ) Prosper**

“In 1996, the year the Arbour report came out, 23% of women in Canada’s federal institutions were identified as Aboriginal. The last time I was at the Edmonton Institution for Women, a full 70% of the women were Indigenous, even though less than 7% of Albertans identify as Indigenous.” – **Senator Paula Simons**

“Tona’s Law provides an opportunity for Senators to support the Arbour recommendations. I look forward to our continued, collective work to highlight and uphold the human and *Charter* rights to help protect those most marginalized—and all of us.” – **Senator Kim Pate, sponsor of Tona’s Law**

- 30 -

**Additional Links:**

[Senator Pate’s Senate Statement on the Arbour Commission](#)  
[Senators’ Arbour Commission Question Period](#)

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