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Press Release

For release on June 1, 2016 after Minister Naqvi's release of OCDC Task Force Recommendations

Elizabeth Fry Society of Ottawa response to Task Force on OCDC

The 42 recommendations released today by the OCDC Task Force have the potential to effect significant change for people incarcerated at OCDC. We would like to make it clear from the outset that we believe the majority of people who are incarcerated there and at jails and remand centres across the province should not be incarcerated. The trend analysis conducted as part of this task force demonstrated that 69% of all people incarcerated at OCDC are there on remand, legally innocent individuals, the vast majority of whom, we contend, are no risk to public safety and should be out on bail until trial.

Despite a steady decline in crime rates, remand rates in Canada have nearly tripled in the past 30 years and this is a trend that has contributed to the situation we see represented at OCDC in this report. Thus some of the most important work we can do to reduce overcrowding at OCDC has to do with the recommendations around Bail and Remand and we invite Attorney General Madeleine Meilleur to join Minister Naqvi in making this commitment to substantive change.

Bryonie Baxter, Executive Director of the Elizabeth Fry Society of Ottawa, made the following comment on the Task Force recommendations and process: "I was pleased to be invited to be part of this Task Force and would like to thank my fellow Task Force Members for their commitment and dedication to this process. This was not easy. We had five weeks and a widely divergent set of positions and expectations. That said, I believe what we have achieved has the potential to effect real and substantive change if the recommendations are put into effect. We owe this to all of those who took the time to contribute, especially to the incarcerated individuals at OCDC who completed questionnaires and provided input, and to all who are incarcerated at OCDC. I would like to thank Minister Naqvi for taking the bold step of publically releasing the recommendations so quickly which, I think, signals a real commitment to change on the part of the Minister."

"Some of the short term recommendations in the report are already being acted upon. However, most of what I consider to be the more profound changes are medium to long term ones, and we do intend to

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hold keep a careful eye to ensure that actual, substantive and progressive change occurs from these recommendations within the allotted timeframes. These recommendations include:

- Working with the Ministry of Health and Long-term Care to potentially transfer delivery of health care services in Ontario's adult correctional institutions to the Ministry of Health;
- Funded "bail beds" for accused persons whom the court feels might require supervision but could be appropriately housed and supervised within the community;
- Increased pre and post charge diversion programs for people with addictions and mental illness;
- While The Elizabeth Fry Society of Ottawa's position is the elimination of Segregation, the Task Force recommendation for a significant reduction in the use of segregation at OCDC is a positive first step.
- A comprehensive health care review at OCDC and expanded addiction and mental health supports, including a commitment to exploring alternative housing options such as mental health facilities and addiction treatment spaces for sentenced individuals with mental health needs.

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