

November 26, 2007

**Treatment of female inmates in Labrador unacceptable**

The Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women is disturbed women in custody in Happy Valley – Goose Bay continue to be held naked in the RCMP lockup.

“This should not have happened again,” says Phyllis Seymour, member of the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women. “After the Ikkusek case last year, a report was done and recommendations were made. Why are we still seeing this barbaric treatment of female offenders?”

Emily Jararuse is the second female offender jailed in a Labrador holding cell without clothing after threatening to harm herself. In February, 2006, RCMP stripped Carol Ikkusek after she threatened self harm. Ikkusek sat naked in a cell for two days without a mattress. The RCMP says inmates who are a danger to themselves are normally taken to a secure room at the hospital. In both cases, the hospital room was occupied.

Due to media coverage of Ikkusek’s treatment, the Citizens’ Representative began an investigation. In June, 2007, it released “Alone Among the Few,” a report on facilities for female offenders from Labrador. Among the recommendations was that the provincial government take immediate steps to increase the number of secure hospital rooms in Happy Valley – Goose Bay. “One secure hospital room in a community of nearly 9,000 people that serves a region of up to 40,000 is unacceptable,” says the report.

“There has to be another option,” says Annie Evans, resident of Makkovik and member of the Advisory Council. “Leaving these women naked in jail cells hardly seems like the appropriate response to their emotional distress.”

“Who is going to make sure this never happens again?” asks Seymour. “This involves the Departments of Health and Justice as well as the RCMP. All three agencies need to take responsibility for this horrible situation and do something about it.”

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