

Videos in Ashley Smith case will not be blocked

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THE CANADIAN PRESS An undated family handout photo of Ashley Smith. She died in an isolation cell at the Grand Valley Institution for Women in Kitchener, Ont., in October 2007.

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The federal government will not make a last, last-ditch attempt to block graphic prison videos depicting abuses against teen inmate [Ashley Smith](#) from being shown at the inquest into her death next week.

The Correctional Service of Canada said it accepts a Divisional Court judge's [ruling](#) on Wednesday dismissing its bid for an emergency stay of the inquest.

A government spokesperson said the prison service is "not only committed to openness and transparency, but the integrity of these proceedings."

That doesn't mean the legal battles that have plagued the Smith inquest are over.

Next Wednesday, lawyers will reconvene at coroner's court in Toronto to argue about the scope of the inquest and the witness list.

Presiding coroner Dr. John Carlisle wants the inquest to examine the 19-year-old woman's entire time in federal custody; 11 months spent shuttled from one solitary confinement cell to another across the country. She was transferred 17 times before she choked herself to death on Oct. 19, 2007 while a group of guards at Grand Valley Institution in Kitchener, Ont., who were ordered not to intervene unless she stopped breathing, watched.

The coroner, the Smith family and almost every other party with standing at the inquest maintains that the conditions of Smith's confinement had an impact on her mental state; that her self-harm attempts became more frequent with each transfer.

The inquest's purpose, to prevent deaths in similar circumstances, cannot be fulfilled, they say, without looking at the entire sequence of events.

But the prison service and a group of doctors who treated Smith in institutions outside of Ontario disagree. They say the coroner's authority to examine Smith's life begins and ends in Ontario.

The videos to be played next week offer a glimpse of Smith's incarcerated life outside of the province. A portion of the footage will show her being duct-taped to the seat of an airplane, forcibly tranquilized, and left lying in a wet gown on a metal gurney for hours without food or water.

This is the second inquest into Smith's death. The first was derailed after the presiding coroner decided to retire after months of legal wrangling.

"If the Correctional Service wants to be a constructive partner, it would abandon the challenges to the inquest and work with the family to get to the truth," said lawyer Julian Falconer, representing Smith's parents who live in Moncton, N.B.

