

PRESS ADVISORY
ASHLEY SMITH INQUEST VERDICT
JURY RULES DEATH A HOMICIDE

December 19, 2013

A five-person jury in the Inquest into the death of Ashley Smith has delivered a verdict of homicide. Through its verdict, the jury found that Ashley's death was caused by the actions of officials from the Correctional Service of Canada. Ashley asphyxiated to death on October 19, 2007 in a CSC segregation cell while officers stood outside and failed to intervene. Evidence at the inquest proved that the officers were following an order from prison management that they not enter the cell while Ashley was still breathing. The jury made dozens of recommendations directed at wholesale reform of how CSC treats women in its custody who suffer from mental illness.

Coralee Cusak Smith, the mother of Ashley Smith, commented: **“We are grateful to the jury for the courageous decision they made. Finally the truth about what happened to my daughter has been told. Those that were responsible for preserving Ashley's life caused her death. The jury's verdict will not bring Ashley back, but I hope it will prevent another family having to go through what we have gone through. We will always be grateful for what the jury did for Ashley's memory.”**

Trial lawyer Julian Falconer, who acts for the Family of Ashley Smith, stated, **“The jury's verdict of homicide is an indictment of how Ashley was treated in CSC custody, from the guards who were at the front of her cell when she died all the way up to the Commissioner of Corrections. It is clear from this jury's verdict and recommendations that the Correctional Service of Canada failed Ashley at every stage and in every possible way. The jury has given CSC a roadmap for how to remedy these failings. We hope CSC will follow these recommendations to the letter, but CSC has shown itself time and again to be unable to reform itself. Without very rigorous external oversight, CSC will continue to fail women like Ashley.”**

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