



*Office of the Provincial Advocate
for Children and Youth*

*Bureau de l'intervenant provincial
en faveur des enfants et des jeunes*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Provincial Advocate to Challenge Coroner's Ruling in Ashley Smith Inquest

TORONTO, March 29 - Ashley Smith, 19, was found dead in a segregated prison cell at Grand Valley Institution for Women in Kitchener, Ontario on October 19, 2007. She had tied a piece of cloth around her neck and strangled herself to death after having been transferred 17 times throughout institutions in the Maritimes, the Prairies, Quebec and Ontario. Most of her time was spent inside barren segregation cells wearing nothing but a tear-proof suicide gown and shackles. The inquest is scheduled to start in Toronto on April 4, 2011.

- The Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth for Ontario, Irwin Elman, has applied to the Ontario Divisional Court to set aside a ruling made by the Coroner at the Inquest into the death of Ashley Smith.
- The Coroner, Dr. Bonita Porter, ruled on November 12, 2010 the Inquest should be expanded to include that "which may have impacted [Ms. Smith's] state of mind [on the date of her death]" so the inquest can fulfill its mandate of examining the cause of death and establishing how similar deaths can be prevented.
- On March 28, 2011, the Coroner ordered the evidence that Ms. Smith was forcibly medicated and restrained at Joliette Institution, and other abuse that occurred elsewhere will not be heard at the Inquest.
- The Provincial Advocate is gravely concerned that the evidence of abuse of a youth behind prison walls should be heard by the Inquest jury. Dr. Porter's ruling excludes this evidence from being heard. Therefore the Provincial Advocate is challenging the Coroner's ruling.

As stated by Mr. Elman:

"It is impossible to think forcing a youth to take medication and restraining her for endless hours are not related to her death which occurred 90 days later. The mistreatment of Ashley by the staff at Joliette should be explored before the Inquest jury. We need to have a full understanding of the circumstances surrounding the death of Ashley Smith."

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