

Prisons in Canada are centers of oppression. Whereas 90% of people who find themselves behind bars are there for non-violent crimes, the stereotype of "Prisoner as Dangerous Psychopath" lives on in the minds of many Canadians. This is clearly reflected in the oppressive practices inflicted on inmates in Canadian prisons and penitentiaries: physical abuse, perennial calls for longer sentences and denial of parole, petty rules, etc. The Canadian prison system is the repository of many of Canada's most reactionary attitudes: sexism, racism, and (of course) homophobia.

The prison authorities do not view the plight of gay men and lesbians with mere indifference, but with glee. The fact that they don't give a shit about inmates or gays is exemplified by their reaction to People Living With AIDS (PLWAs) in prisons and penitentiaries around Canada.

A year has passed since the Royal Society of Canada recommended that condoms and needle-cleaning facilities be made available to all prisoners, and still Solicitor General James Kelleher refuses to allow even these preventative materials into federal penitentiaries.

On the provincial level, Ministers seem to be competing to see who can create the most inhumane situation; Provincial prisons in Québec under Minister for Public Safety, **Gil Rémillard**, routinely place prisoners who test positive for HIV antibodies in isolation. Guards in Québec prisons are so ignorant about HIV transmission that they wear rubber gloves when dealing with seropositive inmates, and are so full of contempt for these inmates that they crack jokes about seropositive prisoners having been given a "death sentence".

At the same time, the Communicable Diseases Policy released by the Ontario Ministry of Correctional Services in April betrays the Ministry's ignorance by citing "opportunistic diseases associated with AIDS and the like" on a list of "highly infectious diseases".

We of Réaction Sida are outraged by the ignorance and callous attitude that riddles Canada's prison system from the lowliest guard right up to Solicitor General **James Kelleher**, including the Minister for Public Safety in Québec, **Gil Rémillard**.

We demand that:

1. Free condoms, dental dams, needles, bleach and water soluble lubricants be made to all prisoners. There is an urgent need for these preventative materials on the inside. Although sex and needle use are not supposed to happen behind bars, they are an every day reality. Under the circumstances, it is certainly preferable to make HIV transmission less likely by making safer sex and needle use materials available to prisoners, than to continue, ostrichlike, to ignore them.
2. Appropriate medication, food and living conditions be made available to all seropositive inmates.
3. Prisoners wanting to take the HIV antibody test be provided with

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2. Appropriate medication, food and living conditions be made available to all seropositive inmates.
3. Prisoners wanting to take the HIV antibody test be provided with anonymity, as well as preparatory and follow-up counselling.
4. Information pertaining to HIV transmission and prevention be made available to all prisoners.
5. All guards receive accurate, up to date and ongoing education about HIV and other disease transmission.

We also demand that the implementation of these and any other measures be made in cooperation with AIDS activists and prisoner's advocates.