

Beaver Creek Institution
Anonymous Prisoner 10

On 15 January 2016, I wrote a letter to the Honourable Jody Wilson-Raybould, Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, concerning the discontinuation of the Old Age Security (OAS) payments to persons serving sentences in prisons across Canada. I received a letter acknowledging that my letter had been received and that it had been redirected to Honourable Jean-Yves Duclos, Minister of Families, Children and Social Development. The acknowledgement letter stated that this would be the proper place to deal with such issues. The response letter from the Honourable Jean-Yves Duclos noted:

Since an prisoner's basic needs—such as food, shelter and medical care—are supported by public funds while they are incarcerated, there are no grounds to provide the additional income of OAS benefits during the period of incarceration.

I submit to you that although there is support for a prisoner during their incarceration, there is the issue of having funds to rely on at the end of their period of incarceration. As well, there is in many cases the issue of their spouses out in society having needed the OAS funds provided by their incarcerated spouse only to have these funds withdrawn and suffering the loss of that income. This loss can have a very negative impact and may lead to a spouse having to go on social assistance or even worse to maintain their lodging. Worse still, they may be forced into the street. In any case, sufficient monetary resources need to be available at the time of a prisoner's release. It would be less burden on all levels of government if the prisoner were able to provide for their families during incarceration and upon release into the community.

I was accepted to receive OAS in the months leading up to its termination for imprisoned persons. Before the termination, it was my intention to send my OAS to my wife to help her to carry on in the community. My wife at the time of the termination of OAS had been my steadfast support out in the community for nearly twenty years. She had countless number of times visited me and spent time in Private Family Visits, all at her own expense. My point of view was that it would only be right to help to repay her for all she had done for me. For almost two decades, my wife worked at a company until she walked in one day and was laid off. Being in her late

sixties, it was very hard to find employment and, in the meantime, she used up the money she had managed to put away. This is just one other example of how my OAS would have been useful in helping my wife to weather the storm out in society until my release from prison.

I truly hope this will help you to understand the position of many prisoners affected by the former government's very irrational decisions during their time in power.