



# Ashley Smith inquest may be webcast

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Ontario's chief coroner may webcast an inquest into the death of teen inmate Ashley Smith so the public can watch the proceedings.

The announcement Tuesday has raised more questions about the controversial inquest, which began May 16 but has been adjourned for the past three weeks while the coroner considers legal motions. It is unclear when the proceedings will resume.

"Of course, the family supports the webcasting of the proceedings," said lawyer Julian Falconer, representing Ashley's mother Coralee Smith and father Herb Gorber, who live in Moncton, N.B.

"But the question remains," he said. "With all due respect, why on earth would webcasting be justification for further derailing the inquest, further delaying the issuance of rulings and requiring us to make even more arguments on the inappropriate control of exhibits?"

Smith, 19, died after tying a ligature around her neck inside her segregation cell at Grand Valley Institution in Kitchener on Oct. 19, 2007. She had been on suicide watch.

The young woman's habit of fastening strips of cloth around her neck had escalated in the last few months of her life, which she spent in solitary confinement wearing nothing more than a padded gown. Weeks before her death, jurors heard that a senior prison official advised staff not to enter Smith's cell unless she had stopped breathing.

The coroner's office has asked lawyers — representing the Smith family, prison guards, the Correctional Service of Canada, nurses, doctors, advocates, media organizations and others — to return to coroner's court in Toronto for a hearing on June 21 to discuss the idea of broadcasting the proceedings over the Internet and its impact on the outstanding motions.

Porter had adjourned the inquest on May 25 to consider a request from the Correctional Service of Canada for the faces of guards to be blurred in videos released to the public.

She is also mulling a divisional court ruling that ordered her to reconsider seizing videos that show Smith being duct-taped to the seat of an airplane during a transfer between prisons and strapped to a gurney for a half a day without food or water at Joliette Institution in Quebec while being forcibly injected with tranquilizers.

Smith was punted to the adult correctional system when she turned 18 because of numerous institutional charges she incurred in youth jail. She was supposed to serve only a few months for stealing a CD and throwing crabapples at a postal worker but her sentence swelled to more than six years. In the last year of her life, she had been transferred between federal institutions across the country more than a dozen times, serving the majority of her sentence in solitary confinement.

