

LIS 9316 Government Information – Mark Borden

Federal Entity Report

Introduction

The Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services was most recently established in November of 2003 (Ontario Ministry of Government Services, 2010c). Headquartered in Toronto on the 18th floor of 25 Grosvenor Street (Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, 2014a) the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services has a “staff strength” of 16,506 as of March 31st, 2013 (Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, 2014b). The Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services oversees almost the entirety of law enforcement efforts across the province but has two key operating locations highlighted on their website. The Office of the Chief Coroner and Ontario Forensic Pathology Service is an important branch of the Ministry and are located at 25 Morton Shulman Avenue in Toronto (Service Ontario, 2012). The Office of the Fire Marshal, located at 5775 Yonge St in Toronto, is the second highlighted on the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services website. It should be noted these appear to be functional components of the Ministry rather than secondary locations to their headquarters.

History

On February 3, 1993 the Ministry of the Solicitor General merged with the Ministry of Correctional Services to become a single entity called the Ministry of the Solicitor General and Correctional Services (Ontario Ministry of Government Services, 2010a). The marriage between the two was short lived as they were divided back into separate entities, becoming the Ministry of the Solicitor General and Ministry of Correctional Services respectfully, in 1999 (Ontario Ministry of Government Services, 2010b). The two entities remained separate from one another until April 15th, 2002 when they merged once again to become the Ontario Ministry of Public Safety and Security. In November 2003 the Ontario Ministry of Public Safety and Security was renamed to the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services which remains to this day (Ontario Ministry of Government Services, 2010c).

Major Organization Components

It seems as if the components of the Ministry are divided into two parts according to their organizational chart which are “Community Safety” and “Correctional Services”. Given the history of the Ministry it makes sense that this sort of segmentation would appear. Under “Community Safety” falls the Ontario Provincial Police, Office of the Chief Coroner, Ontario Public Safety, Office of the Fire Marshal and Emergency Management Ontario. “Correctional Services” services on the organizational chart umbrellas Adult Institutional Services and Adult Community Corrections. Continued research yielded a second source illustrating this schism between Community Safety and also highlighted the same major organization components.

Senior Management

According to the Ontario Sunshine list (Ontario Ministry of Finance, 2014) the following people were listed as “directors” for the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services in 2013:

Daniel Alakas	Edward Chong
Jane Albright	Ryan Carothers
Martin Bain	Michael Burger
Charles Cox	Rose Buhagiar
Christina Danylchenko	Melanie Bucking

Mandate

The Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional mandate states that it is responsible for correctional services, public safety and security statues and policing services in Ontario (Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, 2014b). I was unable to find a list of changes to the mandate over time but this certainly must have been the case as the Ministry merged and separated multiple times over its lifespan.

Statues

Stated in the Ministry’s latest publication (Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, 2014b) they administer 16 different legislations. I will rank the top three in order of importance.

1. Ministry of the Solicitor General Act

This established the Ministry of the Solicitor General which was the predecessor to the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services (Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, 2014b). Without this act the Ministry would not exist so I believe it is the most important.

2. Ministry of Correctional Services Act

This act governs all matters relating to the incarceration of inmates in Ontario (Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, 2014b). This act dictates the day-to-day of correctional services and certainly informs their policy decisions so I believe it is extremely important.

3. Coroners Act

Gives power to the coroner’s office and sets out how that office is to conduct their activities (Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, 2014b). I think this is an important piece of legislation given the important role the coroner’s office plays in criminal investigations.

Performance

In October of 2008 (Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services) the Ministry published a document linking their performance with criminal justice statistics provided by Statistics Canada. These include not only criminal code offences but metrics such as remand and recidivism and demographic information about offend and inmates. Reductions of those rates would seem to be how the Ministry is suggesting one way their performance should be measured.

The overall rate of criminal code offences, per 100,000 people, for Ontario has either remained steady or decreased hitting a national low in 2012 (Global Toronto, 2013). In 2008 (Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services) it is stated that the average number of days someone would stay in prison on remand was 35.5. According to Statistics Canada (Porter and Calverley, 2011) the median number of days spent in remand by adult, in Ontario, was under 10 from 2009-2011. Lastly the Ministry states that in 2012-2013 there have been “no escapes from secure areas of an adult institution” (Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, 2014) which may be slyly worded as a quick search on Google yielded a news story of an inmate whom escaped the Kingston penitentiary on Christmas day (Canadian Press, 2013).

Operational Priorities

Ministry’s latest publication has a section devoted to their key operational priorities in the upcoming year. One thing they hope to do is lower the amount of traffic fatalities in Ontario. They will measure this by looking at the provincial average for the last three years and try to ensure that it is lower in 2014. Using the same methodically the Ministry hopes to increase the “clearance rate” for violent crimes, which is the number of reports crimes for which charges are laid, in the upcoming year. Lastly, and again using the same methodology, the Ministry hopes to decrease the number of preventable structure fires in 2014.

Source - Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, 2014

Data and Statistics

I tried searching through the most recent publications on the Ministry’s website but many of them went either to dead links or the PDF files had formatting issues that made them unreadable. As stated above it does appear that the Ministry gets their crime and other criminal justice statistics from Statistics Canada so I am unsure how that relationship works. Instead I sought out data and statistics that the Ministry collects.

In a recent publication by the Office of the Chief Coroner for Ontario we see that the Ministry keeps extremely detailed statistical data on Ornge Air Ambulance Transport service (Office of the Chief Coroner for Ontario, 2013). These stats range from number of calls, type of emergency down to the relationship between the person calling and the person in need of emergency care.

A second type of data gathered by the Ministry, also by the Coroner’s office, is drowning deaths in Ontario (Office of the Chief Coroner for Ontario, 2011). In their most recent publication on the topic of drowning deaths they present robust statistical data about victim demographics, location, and circumstances surrounding the event.

Publications

Perhaps the most important publication that the Ministry produces is their yearly report (Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, 2014b). In this publication they break down their budget, priorities for the upcoming year, future initiatives and look back at the successes and disappointments from the previous year. This publication gives a good yearly summary of where the Ministry has been, and where it is going, making it highly significant.

I would suggest the second most important publication the Ministry produces is the annual report of the coroner's office (Office of the Chief Coroner for Ontario, 2012). Like the Ministry's report it highlights key priorities moving forward but also contains a lot of statistical data they have collected from previous years.

Key News Articles

1. Watchdog to probe streetcar shooting (Clarke, 2013) :

This article looks at the investigation launched by the Ministry into the fatal shooting of a teenager by a Toronto police officer.

2. Citizens to have voice in running jail (Seymour, 2013):

This is a report on the increasing public pressure for the Ministry to fold a citizen's advisory board into correctional services. Specifically looks into the grassroots movement and the official Ministry and Parliamentary responses.

3. Watchdog rips OPP for giving PTSD 'brush-off' (Rush, 2012):

This news article reports on the findings of an investigation looking into how the Ministry is responding to the mental health issues of their employees. In particular the investigation focuses on 23 OPP members have committed suicide in the last 15 years.

4. Hunger strike sheds light on conditions for detainees (Friesen, 2013);

This article looks into the cause of a recent hunger strike undertaken by inmates highlight the Ministry's transfer policy. In this case inmates were transported, in some instances, more than 200 km's from their friends and family making visitation nearly impossible.

Legal Proceedings

Tapp v. Ontario (Community Safety and Correctional Services), 2008 HRTO 396 (CanLII).

Former employee Lloyd Tapp argues that he was harassed and discriminated by his employer, the OPP, while in the service. This fits into one of the news stories as workplace discrimination was cited in the watchdogs report. In this case it appears they came to a resolution outside of the Human Rights Tribunal.

Ontario (Community Safety and Correctional Services) v. Ontario (Information and Privacy Commissioner), 2012 ONCA 393 (CanLII).

The Ministry wanted the first three numbers of a postal code with the number of registered sex offenders living in that area. They were denied the information by the Information and Privacy Commissioner whom the court ruled was in the right.

Government Information

The Ministry is connected to municipalities by providing funding for both correctional and police services. It should be noted that the Don Jail detention centre is fully funded by the Ministry whereas the Toronto Police receive only a portion from them with the bulk of it coming from municipal taxes. The Ministry is also connected to both Parole Board of Canada and the Ontario Parole Board as it is responsible for administering those services.

Source - Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, 2014b

Information Professionals

I think the Ministry could be served by hiring information professionals to serve analyst function roles including data aggregation. In doing this report I saw really relevant statistics located in other branches of the Ministry, like the Coroner's Office and Emergency Services, not showing up in any of the publications. From my outside perspective I do not see a lot of evidence that the different branches of the Ministry really share information with one another which is unfortunate considering how closely related, or inter-related, the work they do is.

I also think the Ministry could also use an information professional in information architect type role to address several issues on their site. Aside from technical issues I found both navigation and categorization of information to be awkward and not intuitive. The search function on the site returned odd results more often than not which is something I think could be benefited by better indexing.

Reflection

There are two challenges I encountered while writing this report I would like to comment on. The first is I was surprised by how often I would have to leave the Ministry website to find information about them or their history. I ended up on the Archives Ontario website early in the process which had a complete timeline of their organizational history as well as outlining the major functions of each preceding entity. Secondly I was surprised to see the amount of dead links and/or corrupted PDF files located on the Ministry website. It seems to be it is not very well maintained at all and really impeded my research at times.

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