

SYNDICAT DES EMPLOYÉ-E-S DE LA SÉCURITÉ ET DE LA JUSTICE



UNION OF SAFETY AND JUSTICE EMPLOYEES

Crisis in Corrections: Frontline Corrections employees call on federal MPs to address serious public safety concerns

Pressure to release offenders earlier to the community, changes to key rehabilitative programs and inadequate staffing to supervise offenders are putting communities and workers at risk.

(OTTAWA -December 2, 2019) Today, days before Members of Parliament head back to the Hill, the **Union of Safety and Justice Employees (USJE)** is calling on the federal government to take immediate action regarding the challenges facing front line employees in their efforts to adequately supervise and rehabilitate offenders -- and to ultimately keep Canadians safe.

Challenges within Corrections

Recent incidents involving federal offenders who have walked away from federal Community Correctional Centres (CCC), where they are mandated to reside under the strict supervision of Correctional Service Canada (CSC), have prompted USJE to increase pressure on elected officials to take immediate action.

Referred to as “unlawfully at large,” such incidents where high-risk offenders have vanished from federally-mandated community-based residences have recently occurred at the Parrtown Community Correctional Centre in Saint John, NB, and in Vancouver.

Just days ago, a Canada-wide warrant was issued for Kenneth Froude, a federal sex offender who was released on parole in Kingston under a Long Term Supervision Order.

A [recent USJE report](#) released found that over two thirds of parole officers reported they are not able to adequately protect the public given the complexity of cases and workload pressures.

“The concerns from the Correctional employees working directly with federal offenders that USJE represents have been consistent across Canada,” said USJE National President Stan Stapleton.

“Our employees are deeply concerned about their capacity to protect the public when there are inadequate measures are in place to do so. Further, their own safety is often at risk,” added Mr. Stapleton.

Through a seven-city tour across Canada during the fall, USJE completed a series of community safety roundtables featuring front line Correctional employees and federal candidates from the five major parties. During these roundtables, USJE representatives working in Corrections reported:

- Constant pressure by CSC to get offenders out into the community quickly regardless of the state of their rehabilitation;
- The continuing effects of major changes to rehabilitative programming and services made prior to 2015 which were designed to teach offenders critical social and employable skills;
- An increase in parole officer caseloads, and in the complexity of these cases;
- Additional reporting and bureaucratic requirements that compromise actual rehabilitation and supervision work;
- A lack of basic safety and security mechanisms for parole officers during site visits in the community with offenders;
- A high number of workers who are on leave due to burn-out and PTSD, or who have left the profession altogether, and who have not been replaced.

“In corrections, regardless of our specific role within a federal prison or in the community, we all share the duty to rehabilitate offenders,” said Carol Osborne, USJE Regional Vice-President for CSC Community and Parole Board (East) employees.

“This is not an area you want to chronically under-staff across the country, or deprive offenders of crucial support.”

“As frontline employees who see up close the impact of these serious challenges every day, we are sounding the alarm bells in hopes that proper measures will be put in place before more CSC employees exit the profession, and members of the public are at serious risk of getting hurt,” Ms. Osborne highlighted.

Asks to the federal government

USJE is calling on the new government to:

- Immediately reinstate the Community Corrections Liaison Officer program cancelled in 2014 which would restore dedicated policing support to help community parole officers do their jobs safely and provide timely back up when offenders break their conditions and pose a risk to the public (approx. \$2 million for up to 15 police officers across the country);
- Immediately reduce parole officer caseloads in the Correctional Community Centres which house the highest risk and highest need offenders (from 13 to 8) so there is less risk to the public;

- Reduce parole officer caseloads in federal prisons from 30 offenders to under 25 to ensure that there is sufficient oversight of inmates before they are cascaded to a lower security institution;
- Provide enhanced security at the 26 Community Correctional Centres by using trained Correctional Officers (not Commissionaires) to ensure employees and the public are safe;
- Undertake an immediate and wholly independent review of the effectiveness of the one-size-fits-all rehabilitation model now offered to offenders, regardless of their crime;
- Offer access to specialized trauma supports for Correctional employees who have high degrees of exposure to traumatic incidents, victim statements, graphic details of violent crimes and offender testimony;
- Ensure transparent, quarterly reporting of the number of rehabilitative, administrative and food services staff as well as offenders serving in each federal prison and community parole office.

While over 40 percent of federally sentenced offenders released are living in the community under supervision, a number that is increasing, only 6 percent of the overall budget is allocated to community corrections.

“The message we are getting loud and clear from CSC employees working with federal offenders is that we’re at a crisis point,” said Stapleton.

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USJE represents over 16,000 Federal Public Service employees who work for various federal departments and agencies in a safety or justice capacity. The greatest number of USJE members work as **CSC employees** within federal minimum-, medium- and maximum-security penitentiaries and in parole offices across Canada. The second largest group of USJE members are **RCMP** employees.

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