

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



UNION OF SAFETY AND JUSTICE EMPLOYEES

**Written Submission for the
Pre-Budget Consultations
in Advance of the Upcoming Federal Budget**

**By the Union of Safety and Justice Employees
(USJE)**

August 7, 2020



USJE Pre-Budget Recommendations

Recommendation 1: That the federal government increase the number of federal parole officers working in the community and in institutions by approximately 10% by providing an additional \$20 million to Correctional Services Canada earmarked for this specific purpose.

Recommendation 2: That the federal government increase supports for Indigenous offenders transitioning back into the community by allocating \$5 million towards hiring 30 additional Indigenous Liaison Officers (and related positions) working in rehabilitation and parole offices throughout Canada.

Recommendation 3: That the federal government reinstate the Community Correctional Liaison Officer program by investing approximately \$2.5 million towards the hiring of 15 to 20 Community Liaison Officers who will work in regions across Canada, and support the crucial work of parole officers in the community.

Recommendation 4: That the federal government allocate \$8 million towards the establishment of approximately 100 full time cleaning professionals and related sanitization procedures within CSC's federal facilities, in order to contain the spread of COVID-19.

Recommendation 5: That the federal government invest \$15 million into periodic and standardized in-person training of RCMP detachment assistants who play crucial client service and data management roles for key police functions.

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UNION OF SAFETY AND JUSTICE EMPLOYEES

The Unions of Safety and Justice Employees (USJE) represents over 16,000 Federal Public Service employees who work for 18 federal departments and agencies in a safety or justice capacity. The largest number work for the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC), and the second largest group work for the RCMP.

Within CSC, USJE represents a diverse range of employees with crucial rehabilitative and administrative functions within federal institutions and within the community setting.

Keeping Canadians safe to enable economic recovery

There can be no sustainable economic recovery if not all Canadians are able to live in safety and security – this includes the thousands of frontline workers who play a safety and justice role across Canada, federal offenders serving time within federal institutions and within the community setting, as well as residents of the communities where CSC facilities are located.

Just like long-term care homes, penitentiaries have proven to be especially ripe for the spread of the coronavirus. In fact, a recent CBC report estimates that those in federal penitentiaries are 9 times more likely to contract COVID than a person among the general population. During the first wave of the pandemic, there were COVID-19 outbreaks in five federal institutions which led to at least 360 inmates testing positive for the coronavirus and two inmate deaths - not including the many CSC employees and contractors who also tested positive.

Although it is extremely unfortunate that there were any outbreaks at some federal sites, USJE believes that outcomes could have been much worse, and that CSC sites are still vulnerable to future waves of the coronavirus if more robust protocols and resources are not put in place.

Without a doubt, failure to implement better pandemic planning and containment measures within CSC institutions will hamper economic recovery in those communities and beyond.

Putting aside the significant needs brought upon by COVID-19, USJE has long been advocating for an increase in human resources, in the form of Parole Officers, Program Officers, and Community Correctional Liaison Officers, to ensure that offenders can be properly supervised and rehabilitated without burning out current staff. Even before the pandemic, USJE sounded the alarm¹ with federal officials on the urgent need to revisit staffing levels and workloads.

¹ *Crisis in Corrections*, USJE, December 2, 2020 <http://www.usje-sesj.com/en/crisis-in-corrections-frontline-corrections-employees-call-on-federal-mps-to-address-serious-public-safety-concerns>

USJE Recommendations for the 2021 Federal Budget

1. Allow for more adequate supervision and rehabilitation of offenders.

A 2019 USJE report² on federal Parole Officer workloads 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.

USJE has heard from its members that they are deeply concerned about their capacity to protect the public when there are inadequate measures in place to do so. They are also worried for their own safety. Factors at play include:

- ✓ the continuing effects of major changes to rehabilitative programming and services made prior to 2015;
- ✓ 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; and,
- ✓ a lack of basic safety and security mechanisms for Parole Officers during site visits in the community with offenders.

Recommendation 1:

That the federal government increase the number of federal Parole Officers working in the community and in institutions by approximately 10%, or 150 additional Parole Officers throughout Canada, by providing an additional \$20 million to Correctional Services Canada earmarked for this specific purpose.

2. Increase supports for Indigenous offenders transitioning back into the community.

It has been well documented that Indigenous offenders are significantly overrepresented in Canada's federal criminal justice system. Last January, Canada's Correctional Investigator, Dr. Ian Zinger, reported³ that the proportion of Indigenous people behind bars had now surpassed 30% of the overall prison population – although Indigenous individuals represent only 5% of the Canadian population. Even more troubling is that Indigenous women now represent 42% of the women inmate population across Canada, according to Dr. Zinger.

² *Protecting Public Safety: The Challenges Facing Federal Parole Officers*, USJE, May 2019, https://s3.amazonaws.com/usge-web/uploads/docs/USJE+Parole+Officer+Report_EN.pdf

³ *Indigenous People in Federal Custody Surpasses 30%*, Office of Correctional Investigator of Canada, January 21 2020, <https://www.oci-bec.gc.ca/cnt/comm/press/press20200121-eng.aspx>

Dr. Zinger states that, “(CSC) needs to make dramatic changes to reduce readmissions and returns to custody... and more safely return Indigenous offenders to their home communities. Reforms of this nature will require a significant and proportional realignment of CSC priorities and resources. The government of Canada needs to lead and direct these efforts.”

USJE agrees with Commissioner Zinger’s position and therefore recommends that additional Aboriginal Officers, and other professionals related to the rehabilitation of Indigenous offenders, be hired to work within parole offices and communities throughout the country.

Recommendation 2:

That the federal government increase supports for Indigenous offenders transitioning back into the community by allocating \$5 million towards hiring 24 additional Aboriginal Officers (and related positions) working in parole offices and in communities throughout Canada.

3. Bring back the effective CCLO Program.

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.⁴

From 2006 until the program’s elimination in 2014 due to federal budget cuts, Parole Officers across the country were supported by Community Correctional Liaison Officers (CCLOs). CCLOs were part of an innovative Integrated Police and Parole Initiative across the country, created to enhance the working relationship between CSC and police forces across Canada. These key CCLO positions were filled with reputable police officers from the RCMP and other local policing agencies across the country.

Over the life of this program, CCLOs were highly involved in the supervision, monitoring and apprehension of offenders who were being monitored in the community or at Community Correctional Centres (CCCs).

CCLOs were not represented by USJE and reinstating this program would mean absolutely no job gains for USJE members. It would, however, enable the strong relationships that have been developed between police forces and community parole officers to resume – for the benefit of all Canadians.

The elimination of this highly effective national program has meant the dismantlement of enhanced sharing of intelligence and information network between CSC and local police forces.

Moreover, Parole Officers in communities across Canada have consistently reported how the elimination of the CCLO program has negatively impacted their ability to keep Canadians safe, as well as themselves as they are called upon to visit offenders living in remote locations while

⁴ See footnote #2

they are alone and unarmed, and without access to the critical intelligence and back up which CCLOs once provided to them.

Recommendation 3:

That the federal government reinstate the Community Correctional Liaison Officer program by investing \$2.5 million towards the hiring of 15 to 20 Community Liaison Officers who will work in regions across Canada.

4. Invest in the implementation of adequate sanitation procedures and related resources.

In its recent appearance before the Standing Committee on Health's (HESA) on the issue of Canada's response to COVID-19, USJE spoke about inadequate cleaning and sanitation measures within CSC institutions.

In sum, COVID-19 has forced USJE to take a much closer look at cleaning protocols within CSC facilities where its members work. Since the pandemic hit Canada, USJE members have worked hard to contribute to enhanced cleaning efforts, even if not part of their official duties.

CSC employees also witnessed how the current practice of relying on a small number of offenders to do the majority of sanitization in very large penitentiaries – with little or no training in pandemic standards – proved to be ineffective and even irresponsible.

However, USJE does not believe that contracting these critical tasks to outside agencies with highly transient employees is the answer either. In fact, using outside cleaning contractors who enter a number of sites increases the chances of the virus spreading between institutions. USJE witnessed this during the outbreak at Mission Institution in B.C., where cleaners were going between two different penitentiaries during the same week.

As another example of the problematic sanitation measures, USJE heard from many members that interview rooms used for multiple staff to meet offenders, either inside federal institutions or within parole offices, are often extremely small and not cleaned regularly.

In fact, in USJE's July 2020 survey of Institutional Parole Officers, USJE found that these rooms often host between 10 and 20 individuals on a daily basis (between 5 – 10 offenders and between 5 – 10 different staff members). 80% of respondents indicated that they did not know how often these rooms were cleaned, or that they were sometimes, rarely or never cleaned, between meetings.

Since CSC facilities carry similar risks as Canada's long-term care homes, we urge CSC to hire full-time properly trained cleaning professionals in each institution, including in federal penitentiaries, Community Parole Offices, and CCCs.

Recommendation 4:

That the federal government allocate \$8 million towards the establishment of approximately 100 full time cleaning professionals and related sanitization procedures within CSC's federal facilities, in order to contain the spread of COVID-19.

5. Invest in RCMP training.

During a productive roundtable discussion with RCMP Commissioner Brenda Lucki in November 2019, RCMP detachment assistants made the case for the provision of in-person training imperatives.

As a result, USJE is requesting that the RCMP be provided with a special funding allocation for in-person training to equip frontline public service employees, including detachment assistants, with the necessary safety, data management, client service and public safety protocols to do their jobs, as well as to support the RCMP's anti-racism efforts.

Strategic collaboration with organizations, including Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada which has made important recommendations⁵ for police reforms, are advised.

Recommendation 5:

That the federal government allocate invest \$15 million into the periodic and standardized in-person training of RCMP detachment assistants who play crucial safety, client service, and data management roles for key policing functions.

Keeping Canadians safe is at the core of USJE's mandate. No doubt, the impacts of the current pandemic has challenged our views related of what safety and security means to all of us, and the high economic and social costs that come when it is threatened.

That is why USJE has outlined recommendations that are fundamental to the wellbeing of the many populations with whom our frontline members interact throughout Canada. We believe that there can be no sustainable economic recovery from the pandemic if those working with vulnerable pockets of our population do not have access to the proper resources and tools to carry out their critical safety and justice roles in these challenging times.

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⁵ *Addressing Gendered Violence Against Inuit Women: A review of police policies and practices in Inuit Nunangat*, Pauktuutit, January 2020, http://www.pauktuutit.ca/wp-content/uploads/Pauktuutit_Address-Gendered-Violence_English_Full-Report-1.pdf