



News Release / Communiqué

For Immediate Release

Correctional Service of Canada's Latest *Response to Ashley Smith Recommendations* is Improving, but Efforts to Date have not Translated into Desired Results

OTTAWA, December 18, 2009 – The Ombudsman for Canada's federal prison system, Mr. Howard Sapers, today issued his second quarterly assessment of the Correctional Service's progress in preventing deaths in custody. "The Correctional Service has engaged in a flurry of activities, but sadly, the number of deaths in custody and serious self-harm incidents have increased since last year," said Mr. Sapers.

To increase accountability and keep the public and the Minister of Public Safety informed, the Office of the Correctional Investigator (OCI) is issuing quarterly reports on the progress that the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) is making in addressing recommendations from the 2007 *Deaths in Custody Study* and the 2008 report into the death of Ashley Smith, *A Preventable Death*, as well as the Correctional Service's own National Board of Investigation into Ms. Smith's death. The Office issued its *Initial Assessment of CSC's Response* in September 2009.

Over the last fiscal year, the Correctional Investigator notes that the number of non-natural deaths in federal correctional custody has increased by 70%; the number of offender placements in segregation remains at an all-time high; the number of self-injurious incidents is on the rise and perceived security needs too often trump necessary clinical interventions. Too many offenders with mental health issues are subject to unnecessary use of force interventions or involuntary placements in segregation. Overall, use of force incidents increased nearly 30% over last year.

"Two years ago Ms. Smith died in a segregation cell and the Correctional Service accepted the challenge to change the conditions and factors that contributed to her death" said Mr. Sapers. "It is time for the Correctional Service to demonstrate to Canadians that it can deliver good correctional results by reducing deaths in custody, reducing self-injurious behaviour and providing appropriate mental health care to federal offenders," added the Correctional Investigator.

Today, Mr. Sapers sent a letter to the Commissioner of Corrections (available at www.oci-bec.gc.ca) recommending that the Correctional Service publicly report on key performance indicators that could be used to demonstrate that its efforts are paying real dividends. These performance indicators would include positive gains in the following areas:

- Segregated inmates with significant mental health issues that have been moved into alternative custody arrangements.
- Comprehensive clinical treatment plans (integrating clinical, security and program needs) developed and implemented by institutional inter-disciplinary teams, and shared with front-line staff as appropriate.
- Comprehensive clinical treatment plans developed by MTAC (Mobile Interdisciplinary Treatment Assessment and Consultation Team), fully implemented by institutional inter-disciplinary teams.
- Improvement in vacancy rates for mental health professionals and reduction in the number of under-filled positions.
- Increased direct (e.g. face-to-face) contacts between mental health professionals and segregated inmates.
- Reduction in the use of force interventions involving offenders with serious mental health problems.
- Policy compliance regarding notification to and response of health care staff or other emergency responders to medical emergencies, including initiation of CPR and use of Automatic External Defibrillators (AED).

Reporting on the above performance indicators will measure, in an open and transparent way, the Correctional Service's progress in addressing the recommendations that flowed from important reports on preventable deaths in custody. The Correctional Service must demonstrate whether its investments and efforts are translating into improved performance and saving lives.

The Correctional Investigator is mandated by an Act of Parliament to be an independent ombudsman for federal offenders. This work includes ensuring that systemic areas of concern are identified and addressed. The OCI reports cited in this release and the latest letter to the Commissioner of Corrections are available at www.oci-bec.gc.ca.

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