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—
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Mr. Garry Breitkreuz

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• (1535)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, CPC)): We'll begin the meeting and welcome our guests, Renée Collette and Mr. Don Head. We look forward to your presentations, and as usual, we will allow you to give us whatever information you have.

Mr. Head, I understand that you have approximately twenty minutes, and Ms. Collette, you have about ten minutes, and then questions will proceed to the official opposition. Everyone here knows the routine.

So we will go ahead, Mr. Head, with your presentation.

Thank you.

Mr. Don Head (Senior Deputy Commissioner, Correctional Service Canada): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

What I'd like to do for approximately the next twenty minutes is just give you an overview of the roles, responsibilities, and priorities of the Correctional Service of Canada.

The Correctional Service of Canada, as you are probably aware, is the agency responsible for administering sentences of two years or more. Sentences of two years less a day are the responsibility of the provincial and territorial governments, but anybody sentenced to two years or more is the responsibility of the Correctional Service of Canada.

We are governed by a very unique piece of legislation—the Corrections and Conditional Release Act—as well as by the accompanying regulations: the Corrections and Conditional Release Regulations. We are also subject, like many other government agencies and departments, to about 70 other pieces of legislation, regulations, or various agreements as they pertain to employee relations, financial commitments, obligations, and the way work is delivered.

Our operations are spread out across the country. Many of our facilities, our penitentiaries, operate 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. We're a highly decentralized, structured organization, and the vast majority of our resources go towards paying the salaries of our employees. I'll go into a little more detail about that in a few minutes.

Currently we consist of 54 penitentiaries at different security levels. Under the legislation, we classify offenders as minimum-, medium-, or maximum-security individuals, and our facilities are appropriately classified, as well, as minimum-, medium-, or maximum-security facilities. We also have some purpose-specific facilities, such as regional treatment centres that specifically provide

services to individuals who have mental health concerns. We have one special-handling unit in the country, located in Sainte-Anne-des-Plaines, Quebec, which is the facility that houses our most problematic offenders, those who have shown a propensity for committing violent acts within the institutions towards other inmates or staff.

We also have healing lodges, facilities that are specific for providing correctional services to individuals of aboriginal ancestry. And we also have regional reception centres, facilities where individuals who are first committed to a federal penitentiary are subjected to an assessment process used to determine their appropriate initial security-classification levels and to initiate the development of the correction plans they will follow while they're serving their sentences.

To a large extent, our penitentiaries are very much like little cities. They have responsibilities for water, sewage, building maintenance, food, health services, security, clothing, etc.

We also have across the country 16 community correctional centres. These are facilities that house individuals who are out on some form of conditional release. So they're facilities for individuals who may be out on day parole, full parole, or statutory release with a residency clause.

In addition, we operate just under 200 community residential facilities through contractual arrangements with organizations such as the John Howard Society, the Elizabeth Fry Society, the St. Leonard's Society, and the Salvation Army.

We also have across the country 71 parole offices and eight parole districts, and those are the offices where the community parole officers are located. These are the individuals who are responsible for providing supervision and surveillance of any offenders who are out in the community under some form of conditional release or statutory release, and even of individuals who have long-term supervision orders at the end of their sentences, at warrant expiry.

●(1540)

In terms of our structure, we also have five regional headquarters. Correctional Service Canada is divided into five regions: the Pacific region, which covers the province of British Columbia and the Yukon Territory; the Prairie region, which covers Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, the Northwest Territories, and a portion of Nunavut; the Ontario region, which covers the province of Ontario and the eastern half of the Nunavut Territory; the Quebec region, which covers the entire province of Quebec; and the Atlantic region, which covers all the Atlantic provinces. Our national headquarters are located in Ottawa at 340 Laurier Avenue West.

Part of our structure is a special operating agency called CORCAN. This operating agency is responsible for developing employment opportunities and developing the employment skills of offenders so that when they go back into the communities, there is a better chance for them to find and secure jobs.

They also provide opportunities in the institutions for inmates to work. Inmates engage in building various types of furniture and lockers. They also have contracts with DND to refurbish some of their vehicles. There are many different contracts through which CORCAN provides work opportunities for inmates in the institutions.

We also have five staff colleges where we deliver the vast majority of our staff training. As well, we have one correctional leadership management centre, located in Cornwall, Ontario, where the more senior management training programs are delivered along with training specifically for issues such as crisis management or those for which we need a higher level of consistency across the country.

We have an addiction research centre, located in Montague, Prince Edward Island. This facility is responsible for research primarily on addictions and substance abuse.

Through various partnerships and agreements, we have arrangements with provinces, territories, police services, courts, volunteers, and other NGOs to provide various types of services that are related to offenders.

To give you a quick overview of the offender population and what our staff deal with on a day-to-day basis, on any given day we have approximately 20,800 offenders under federal jurisdiction, with 12,600 of those located in the institutions across the country, and 8,200 under supervision at any given time.

Between 3% and 4% of the offender population are women, and about 18% of the population are individuals of aboriginal ancestry—first nations, Métis, or Inuit. I'll add a note there—and I think many of the members of this committee would know this, Mr. Chair—that this is significantly disproportionate to the overall aboriginal population within the country.

Some specifics about the offender population, some profile data: About 90% of the men that are in the system have previous youth and adult convictions. These are individuals who have spent time in young offender facilities, or provincial correctional facilities.

About 80% of our offenders have substance abuse problems, either alcohol and/or drugs. About 76% of them have committed violent offences at some point in their criminal history. About 26%

have committed homicide offences. Currently about 26% of our entire incarcerated population are individuals who are serving an indeterminate sentence for murder or taking a life. Thirty-five percent have robbery convictions.

●(1545)

About 12% have a current mental health diagnosis and the challenges that go with that. Twenty per cent of the population take some prescribed medication for mental health issues. It's estimated that about 26% of the population have hepatitis C, compared to about 0.8% of the Canadian population. It's also estimated about 1.5% of the offender population have HIV.

About 16% of our entire population have some form of gang affiliation, and that has been increasing over the last few years. A large portion of our offender population have a low education, a low functioning level, and various family problems, including violence within the family and sexual abuse within the family. And a great proportion of the individuals have some issues around significant work experience.

Overall in terms of that population, it's split across the service in terms of the security levels that I mentioned earlier. About 19% of the total population are currently located in a maximum security institution. About 58% are located in medium security institutions. About 15% are in minimum security institutions, and about 8% are located in what we call multi-level facilities. These would be facilities such as the regional treatment centres, which would hold both maximum and medium, and in some cases maybe even minimum, security offenders in order to address their needs.

To give you a quick overview as to a day within the correctional environment, on any given day, 20 to 25 offenders are admitted and released. About 12 offenders reach warrant expiry every day. About 580 individuals are accommodated in our psychiatric or treatment facilities across the country. About 3,500 are enrolled in correctional programs. About 3,200 are enrolled in education programs. About 9,000 are employed in some work activity within the correctional environment. About 150 are granted access from institutions to the community through some form that's allowed under the Corrections and Conditional Release Act. About 5,300 visitors, volunteers, and contractors enter and leave CSC's facilities on any given day.

Our workforce is comprised of approximately 14,500 staff. Many of them are in specialized work areas. About 41% of our staff complement are correctional officers. About 14% of our staff are parole officers. We employ individuals who perform the duties of nurses, psychiatrists, plumbers, engineers, computer specialists, chaplains, psychologists, food service staff, electricians, architects, financial officers, and aboriginal elders.

Our workforce is augmented through the efforts of approximately 10,000 volunteers, including individuals who are members of our citizens advisory committees. Under our legislation, we are obligated to have in place citizens advisory committees and we have them in every one of our institutions and our parole districts across the country.

To give you an overview of the distribution of our staff complement, about 13% of the total staff complement are either in the national or regional headquarters. Seventy-nine percent of the staff are located in the institutions and 8% in the community. Our workforce is comprised of about 46% women and 54% men. Approximately 7% of the staff complement are people of aboriginal ancestry.

To give you a quick overview of CSC's budget, our annual operating budget is \$1.6 billion, of which 60% is for salaries and employee benefits, 30% for operating and maintenance costs, 10% for our capital costs issues. Of the total budget, 89% of our total budget is deemed to be non-discretionary, where we have no ability to reallocate the funds because it's committed through either paying salaries or specific allotments in the budgetary structure.

• (1550)

To give you a sense of where some of that \$1.6 billion goes, approximately \$430 million goes to the security services, the correctional officers, training of correctional officers, analysis programs in the institutions. About \$130 million is committed to delivering health care services within the Correctional Service of Canada. About \$157 million is committed to case management activities. This is the work that primarily the parole officers do in the institutions. About \$100 million is earmarked for the development and delivery of correctional programs across the country. Some \$174 million is dedicated to corporate services—this is everything from financial management to operations of computer systems, human resource activities—and about \$8 million is specifically earmarked for chaplaincy services across the country.

Many of the items in our budget are formula-driven, so they're driven specifically by formulas that have been developed in conjunction with Treasury Board as a way of recognizing the flow of the population at any given time.

Simply to give you a very quick sense of some of the challenges the organization is currently facing, some of which I've briefly mentioned, we have more offenders coming into the federal system with extensive histories of violence and substance abuse. This creates challenges for us in terms of developing and implementing effective programs and interventions to deal with those individuals. There's been an increase in the number of individuals coming into the system who have gang affiliations. We're at 16% now. I mentioned earlier the issue of serious mental health needs and the increase there, as well as the increase in the number of individuals coming into the system who are of aboriginal ancestry, first nations, Métis, Inuit ancestries. This is more pronounced in the prairie and Pacific regions than in the three other regions across the country.

We're also seeing more individuals coming into the system who are being classified at the initial intake stage as maximum-security offenders, individuals who pose a higher risk to either escape or to cause significant incidents within the institutions.

On the back end, we are also seeing more individuals being released, as their first type of release, under statutory release. Under the federal system, as a very quick overview—I think my colleague Madam Collette will talk a little bit more about this—an individual who does not access any form of conditional release, day parole or full parole, if he's not an individual who has a life sentence or an individual who would be detained under the provisions of the act until the end of his sentence, would be eligible for release at the two-thirds mark. This is called statutory release. The remaining one-third of the sentence, though, would be under supervision. So those individuals, although they would be going out into the community, would be under supervision.

This is different from the provincial and territorial systems. Their system of two-thirds release is called an earned remission system. At the meeting, if the individuals have earned all of their remission and are released at the two-thirds mark, unless they have a probation order to follow, they are free and clear at the end of the day. So one of the problems we have with individuals coming into the system now who have these lengthy young offender records and provincial histories is they come into the system under the belief that all they have to do is get to the two-thirds mark and they're free and clear, not understanding that the remaining one-third of their sentence, if they're eligible or if they are released at statutory release, will be under supervision.

• (1555)

Another significant challenge we're facing is the increased number of individuals who are coming in with a two-to-three-year sentence. This is a significant shift for us. About 56% of our current admissions are individuals who have received a two-to-three-year sentence. Previously, the average sentence was around the five-year or six-year mark and our overall programming and intervention approaches were geared to those longer sentences.

Individuals coming in with a two-to-three-year sentence are actually not getting the same level of intervention or programming as those who would have had a longer sentence. Now, this is not a cry for individuals to get longer sentences, but it's a significant challenge that the organization is facing.

As I conclude, Mr. Chair, I'll give you a quick overview of some of the challenges we face around our financial situation within the Correctional Service of Canada. As these various challenges I have mentioned come to fruition, or we deal with them on a day-to-day basis, we're challenged to find new and innovative ways to use our existing resource base to meet those challenges, to provide effective programming for the increased number of aboriginal offenders coming into the system, to put in place the right types of mental health interventions and programs to meet the needs of individuals who have those types of challenges, to finding ways to motivate inmates to participate in programs, because the research is very clear that if individuals are participating in the research-based programs that are being offered by Correctional Service of Canada, the chances of reducing recidivism are much greater if they participate than if they do not. We therefore need to find ways of getting them motivated so that they do participate in these programs.

So we have some challenges around reallocating the money we have available in order to meet these current challenges posed by the changing offender population profile.

One of the other challenges we face from a financial perspective is an issue within the organization we commonly refer to as rust-out. A significant number of our buildings are 30 and 40 years old and were not meant to be used in the way that is occurring on a day-to-day basis right now. As the buildings get older, the maintenance costs go up, and this is money we have to find from within the organization to deal with that. The more we divert the money to deal with the rust-out issues, the less opportunity we have to deal with the program and intervention needs of the offenders.

I'll stop there, Mr. Chair. That was a very quick overview. I know the committee will probably have more specific questions.

The Chair: Thank you.

That was, of course, a lot of information to digest; however, I'm sure there will also be additional questions that we'll save for after our next presentation.

Ms. Collette, would you please proceed?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Renée Collette (Executive Vice-Chairperson, National Parole Board): I am pleased to be here today. My name is Renée Collette and I'm the Executive Vice-Chairperson of the National Parole Board. I'm also the current acting Chairperson of the Board. Who are we? My comments will be of a more general nature, as I prefer to let you ask the questions.

The National Parole Board was established in 1959 to act as an independent administrative tribunal. We do not have any surveillance responsibilities. The NPB thus operates at arm's length from government. Its powers are spelled out in the Corrections and Conditional Release Act, as are the powers of my colleague's organization. We are governed by Part II of the act.

The NPB has the authority to decide the opportune moment to conditionally release offenders into the community as well as to revoke the parole of offenders who breach their release conditions. As well, it can order that offenders remain incarcerated until their statutory formal release date, as my colleague eloquently explained, specifically those offenders whom we have reason to believe could commit a serious offence resulting in death or serious injury, or a serious drug-related offence.

The NPB also administers the Criminal Records Act and has the authority to make decisions, to grant and to revoke pardons. Furthermore, the NPB makes recommendations to Cabinet with respect to the royal prerogative of mercy.

Each year, the Board reviews between 22,000 and 24,000 cases. Parole decisions are written down and documented and available on request to the public. Approximately 21,500 parole decisions have been made public over the last five years. Our hearings are open to the public. Those wishing to do so, including members of this committee, may ask to attend a hearing as an observer. I invite you to do that. Over 5,600 people, including victims and members of the media, have attended parole hearings in the past five years.

• (1600)

[*English*]

Who are the board members? We are 45 full-time members appointed for five-year terms and also about 40 part-time members appointed for three-year terms. Board members are appointed for their competency and are thoroughly trained in risk assessment and decision-making before sitting on hearing panels or making file decisions. They are recruited through a process that identifies the most qualified and are appointed by the government. Our members reflect the multi-cultural diversity of Canada, and their backgrounds represent all walks of life—education, social work, medicine, law, police, and business as well as private and public service management.

Our legislation, the Corrections and Conditional Release Act, defines the board's mandate as contributing to the safety and protection of the public by making decisions on the timing and conditions of release that will best facilitate the rehabilitation of offenders and their reintegration into the community. Therein lies the value of parole, contributing to public safety and to the gradual and supervised reintegration of the offender into the community.

Our legislation guides and directs the decision-making process. It directs us on how to conduct hearings, what we have to consider, the timing of these decisions, and when we have jurisdiction and when we do not; it requires us to follow procedural safeguards and respect the duty to act fairly; and it protects board members from civil action if they have done their job as the law and policy require.

Our decisions are subject to appeal to the appeal division of the board and to the Federal Court of Canada.

The CCRA includes two basic principles that are fundamental to the work of the board: the protection of society is to be the paramount consideration in the determination of any case, and we are to make the least restrictive determination consistent with the protection of society.

[*Translation*]

Who are the individuals affected by our decisions? All federally sentenced offenders serving sentences of two or more years in a federal institutions, and provincially sentenced offenders serving sentences of at least two years in seven of the ten provinces and in the three territories that do not have their own parole board. At present, Ontario, Quebec and British Columbia have their own provincial parole boards. Therefore, most of our work involves federally sentenced offenders.

Who are these offenders? My colleague described them to you, but let me give you a brief profile. The majority of them are repeat offenders. Nine out of ten have already been convicted of an offence in either youth or adult court. Two thirds have already served time in a provincial adult facility and one in four has already served time in a federal institution.

The vast majority of federally sentenced offenders in Canada, or four in five, are serving definite sentences. Their incarceration will therefore come to an end at some point and eventually, and inevitably, they will be released into the community. Offenders serving life or indeterminate sentences are also legally eligible for parole and we are required to apply the same criteria to these cases.

• (1605)

[English]

What kind of information do we base our decisions on? We depend heavily on information that comes to us from a variety of sources, including police, crown attorneys, courts, provincial corrections, federal corrections, federal parole officers, psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers, private agencies, as well as victims of crime.

Our decision-making process is very systematic and disciplined. The risk assessment involves a thorough and comprehensive review of the offender's past, present, and future. The past means the complete history—for example, the nature and severity of the current as well as previous criminal offences; family background; education; employment; peer groups; criminal association; history of drug or alcohol abuse; previous prison terms as well as previous releases on bail, probation, or parole; and impact of the offence on the victim.

The present includes whether the offender has addressed the question of change; a review of institutional behaviour, participation in programs, and the benefits derived; whether the risk of reoffending has been reduced; whether the offender understands the severity of the offence and harm to the victims; and whether the offender recognizes the factors that contributed to his criminal behaviour

Regarding the future, there is an assessment of the offender's release plan, community support, employment prospects, availability of release and prevention programs, supervision controls, and special conditions necessary to manage risk in the community.

What are the outcomes of our decisions? Over a three-year period, nearly three-quarters of those on full parole completed their sentence successfully; 15% are returned for a violation of release conditions; 10% are returned for conviction of a new offence, and out of that, only 1% for a violent offence. Outcomes for day parole are even better.

Under the Criminal Records Act, the NPB receives over 25,000 applications for pardon each year. I have to say that it's going up. Pardons are granted in 98% of cases. Since the Criminal Records Act was introduced in 1970, nearly 350,000 Canadians have been granted pardons. All but 3% of these are still in force, indicating that a vast majority of pardon recipients remain crime-free in their communities.

This was a short summary. I thank you for your attention, and I'm ready for your questions.

The Chair: Thank you very much for your presentations. I appreciate that very much.

I just want to clarify one statistic, Mr. Head. In your presentation, did I hear correctly that 54% of the people working in the institutions are men and 46% are women?

Mr. Don Head: Yes, sir.

The Chair: So the women are mainly working with the men?

Mr. Don Head: That's across the entire spectrum.

The Chair: Right, because you said that about 3% of inmates are women.

Mr. Don Head: Yes.

The Chair: Okay. I wondered if I had heard that correctly.

We will begin with the official opposition.

[Translation]

Mr. Serge Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, BQ): Mr. Chairman, will we be putting our questions to two people simultaneously, or will we be questioning Mr. Head first, and then Ms. Collette?

[English]

The Chair: You may direct your questions to whomever you wish, Monsieur Ménard—either one of the witnesses.

Mr. Wappel, are you going first?

Mr. Tom Wappel (Scarborough Southwest, Lib.): Yes, I'll go first. How long do I have, Mr. Chairman?

The Chair: Seven minutes for the first round.

Mr. Tom Wappel: Congratulations on becoming the chair of this committee.

Thank you very much for your presentations. It brings back a lot of memories to listen to your presentations.

Mr. Head, I have just a few quick questions.

You gave us the stats on the breakdown of types of offenders in the 54 penitentiaries. How many people are in the special handling unit, otherwise known as supermax?

• (1610)

Mr. Don Head: Currently we have about 70 individuals in there.

Mr. Tom Wappel: That's a very small percentage of the total number of inmates.

Mr. Don Head: Yes, it is.

Mr. Tom Wappel: I believe you said they're there primarily not for what they did in terms of crime, but because they're violent within the system.

Mr. Don Head: That's right, or for the potential threat of violence that they pose. Most of the individuals in there have been involved in some very serious assault on another inmate, ranging from beating to murder. A few individuals are being held there because of the potential threat and the means they have for carrying out those threats—the ability for them to muster resources to do something.

Mr. Tom Wappel: If my recollection is correct, when I was there Clifford Olson was there. Is he still there?

Mr. Don Head: Yes. We have a series of individuals. Normally we wouldn't go through who was being held at what facility, but they're individuals who—

Mr. Tom Wappel: That's not a secret, is it? Have I revealed a secret?

Mr. Don Head: No, but normally we wouldn't disclose where individuals were staying. But individuals who pose—

Mr. Tom Wappel: Well, you haven't; I have.

Mr. Don Head: Okay.

Mr. Tom Wappel: He doesn't pose any risk to anyone else, does he? Is he there because he's in protective custody?

Mr. Don Head: In certain cases, individuals have significant notoriety around their case, and with the potential threat that may be directed at them, the SHU may be used as a place to hold those types of individuals.

Mr. Tom Wappel: Thank you very much.

I copied down seven challenges, which is pretty significant. I'm interested in rust-out of buildings. I'm not quite sure what you meant when you said these buildings weren't meant to last, or words to that effect. When you build a prison, one presumes that you know there are going to be prisoners as long as there's a country.

How are these prisons designed, if they're not designed to last?

Mr. Don Head: Some of the older prisons were meant for a very specific purpose without the kind of turnover that's occurring within them. That's what I meant by that comment.

For example, the significant movement of individuals in and out of the system because of the shorter sentences is creating wear and tear on the facilities. In some of our maximum security institutions we have individuals who act up, and one of the ways they act up is by destroying the physical infrastructure. The more that gets destroyed, the harder it gets to replace certain pieces. As the facility gets older, finding those replacement parts becomes more difficult. So it's along those lines.

Mr. Tom Wappel: You said there are 54 penitentiaries. Could you give us the breakdown of how many of those penitentiaries are maximum security, for example?

Mr. Don Head: In the Pacific region there's—

Mr. Tom Wappel: No, in total.

Mr. Don Head: In total there are nine maximum security institutions. I'd have to go through the list to do that, but I can provide that to the committee.

Mr. Tom Wappel: It's just of interest. If the committee is interested, that's fine.

But there are nine maximum security institutions across Canada, and then the rest are either medium or minimum?

Mr. Don Head: Yes, sir.

Mr. Tom Wappel: Let me turn my attention to the National Parole Board briefly, if I may.

You cited some statistics, Madam, that 75% complete their parole. How many of those people who successfully complete their parole subsequently reoffend and are reincarcerated in a federal prison?

Ms. Renée Collette: After the warrant has expired?

Mr. Tom Wappel: After they've completed their parole, according to your definition of “completed their parole successfully”.

Ms. Renée Collette: When we say “completed their parole successfully”, what we mean is that they didn't commit a new crime during the period.

Mr. Tom Wappel: During the period that they were under parole. Correct.

Ms. Renée Collette: Off the top of my head—but I can give you more precise data, probably—it's maybe 30% or 40% who come back over the longer-term period. Depending on how you look at it, if you look at the difference between those who have the benefit of a conditional release, like full parole or day parole, versus those who have completed their sentence with no conditional release at all, the turnout is much better. Those who have benefited from parole don't come back more than half the time compared to the other group. So I say that is not very precise, but that's about that.

•(1615)

Mr. Tom Wappel: The reason I'm asking the question is this. When you're citing all of these statistics, and I know there are a lot of statistics, they're all....

Ms. Renée Collette: My colleague gave me a more precise one. For full parole, one in ten returns to a federal penitentiary.

Mr. Tom Wappel: One in ten, so 10%. So that's a good ratio, because if we look at it the other way, 90% who complete their parole don't reoffend...in a federal institution.

Ms. Renée Collette: That's right.

Mr. Tom Wappel: That's good news. That's a pretty high percentage.

Now I want to go back to Mr. Head quickly.

Eighteen percent, aboriginal inmates. Have there been any studies done by Correctional Service or anyone else in terms of other jurisdictions that have aboriginal inmates? What percentage of their inmates are aboriginals, and how does that compare with Canada's?

Mr. Don Head: We've looked at jurisdictions such as New Zealand, Australia, countries that have significant indigenous people, and indigenous people within their correctional systems. In those cases, again, there's a very disproportionate number of individuals who are in the correctional system. On the percentages, I can't give you the exact numbers in comparison now, but we can provide that to the committee if you so desire. But again, we all start from the perspective that they're disproportionate to the general population makeup.

Mr. Tom Wappel: Would that be also the case, for example, in the United States, generally?

Mr. Don Head: It varies by state. For example, in North Dakota, which has a significant aboriginal population, the number of individuals who are in the correctional system and are of aboriginal ancestry is relatively low, but then you have to look at the powers that have been given to the communities for overall criminal justice activities, and that may be a significant factor that plays into that.

The Chair: Mr. Wappel, we have to move on to the next—

Mr. Tom Wappel: Thank you very much.

It's amazing how fast seven minutes goes.

The Chair: Yes. It was a little more than that.

Mr. Tom Wappel: Thank you, sir.

The Chair: Bloc Québécois, Monsieur Ménard.

[Translation]

Mr. Serge Ménard: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Many members of the public view criminals as outsiders who react in the same way.

Obviously, I realize that this isn't true, but the best way to know that is by looking at the sociological profile of offenders. Quebec has drawn up such a profile and based on the responses that you have given, I know that you have such a profile as well. Has this sociological profile been made public?

[English]

Mr. Don Head: Yes, it's coming out through our research report that talks about the changing offender population profile.

[Translation]

Mr. Serge Ménard: You've prepared a brief summary for the general public?

[English]

Mr. Don Head: Yes, most definitely. In terms of some of the statistics I talked about, it will go into breaking it down by region and more specific information related to women, aboriginal offenders, etc.

[Translation]

Mr. Serge Ménard: Is it available on the Internet?

[English]

Mr. Don Head: Not right at the moment. Once the research report has been approved, it would be released for public consumption.

[Translation]

Mr. Serge Ménard: And when will that be?

[English]

Mr. Don Head: I think before the end of June.

[Translation]

Mr. Serge Ménard: Now then, have you calculated the daily and annual cost to the correctional system of incarcerating one inmate?

[English]

Mr. Don Head: So you're looking at the cost of maintaining an offender by security level.

•(1620)

Mr. Serge Ménard: Yes.

Mr. Don Head: We do that calculation every year and it gets updated. Right now the updated information is for fiscal year 2004-05. I just have to find the break-out.

[Translation]

Mr. Serge Ménard: If you don't mind, could you share that information with us at the end? The question period is rather short.

[English]

Mr. Don Head: Yes, I will.

[Translation]

Mr. Serge Ménard: Ms. Collette, I see that you have performance indicators to measure success and that you use them. Did you in fact say that only 10 per cent of offenders who complete their parole re-offend in the long term?

Ms. Renée Collette: That's correct. Approximately 10 per cent of individuals on full parole re-offend in the long run. In 9 per cent of these cases, the offences are property related, while violent offences account for the remaining one per cent of cases. For those on statutory release, the rate is marginally higher, although I can't recall the exact figure. The success rate is somewhat lower for offenders on statutory release.

Mr. Serge Ménard: You've given us an overview of offenders who have been conditionally released. Is this overview also available for consultation on the Internet?

Ms. Renée Collette: Our annual performance report is always posted on the Internet. In terms of offender profiles, we rely on great deal on statistics and information received from the service. I'm also a commissioner and attend meetings regularly. The federal and provincial inmate population profiles — because we do both — are fairly similar to the one drawn up in Quebec. The profile reveals socio-economic, literacy and mental health problems. The profile paints a very accurate picture of offenders.

Mr. Serge Ménard: You stated that prospective NPB commissioners are interviewed and that you make recommendations to the government.

Ms. Renée Collette: We rate candidates' qualifications. I can give you a few examples, if you like.

Mr. Serge Ménard: Thank you, but we don't have much time. I'd like to know if the government has followed through on your recommendations since the last election.

Ms. Renée Collette: Yes. The ratings process has been in place since 1993 and to date, no one has been appointed to the National Parole Board, whether full time or part time, without having qualified.

Mr. Serge Ménard: Have any appointments been made since January 2006?

Ms. Renée Collette: Yes.

[English]

The Chair: You have about a minute and a half.

Mr. Don Head: I can give you the answer on the cost.

[Translation]

Mr. Serge Ménard: I see.

[English]

Mr. Don Head: The average cost for incarceration for 2004-05 was \$87,919. I don't have the per diem cost; we just do the annual cost. To give you a quick breakdown, for maximum security it was \$113,591; medium security was \$75,661; minimum security was \$83,643; women's facility was \$166,642; and in our community correctional centres it was \$49,043. The average cost for an individual under parole is about \$19,113. The average community supervision cost is about \$20,320.

[Translation]

Mr. Serge Ménard: I would divide these amounts by 365 to come up with the actual daily cost.

I have another important question for you. Have you compared rehabilitation and incarceration costs?

•(1625)

[English]

Mr. Don Head: Yes, the costs are based on the entire operating class for each institution. So, for example, all the costs that are going into the maximum security institutions, including the rehabilitation costs, the security costs, the health care costs—all those costs—form the basis and are then divided by the average population count for each of the levels of security.

[Translation]

Mr. Serge Ménard: That's not quite what I was asking. Have you compared the cost of rehabilitating an inmate with the cost of keeping him incarcerated?

[English]

Mr. Don Head: As mentioned earlier in the brief, we spend \$100 million on delivering correctional programs across the country. We spend \$429 million for security services, so we have the breakout by major activities.

The Chair: Great, thank you.

Before we move to Mr. Comartin, there seems to be a disconnect in the statistics the two witnesses gave us. You said 10% reoffend. But I think Mr. Head said 90% have previous records. I can't see how only 10% of those who have been paroled reoffend, when you on the other hand are saying 90% of the inmates who are there have previous records. How do you reconcile those two statistics?

Ms. Renée Collette: What he is talking about is the parole file. What I'm talking about is the actual person who is in the penitentiary and who would go on day or full parole, and also about those who go on statutory release.

I don't want to mislead either Mr. Ménard or the members of this committee, but statutory release statistics for the past three years showed successful completion as 58%, breach of conditions 30%, and new offences 12%. I'm sorry about my statistics.

The Chair: The other thing, Mr. Head, is that if we could get those studies you referred to on aboriginal inmate comparisons between the countries, and also in North Dakota and the various states, I think they would be very interesting.

Mr. Comartin, you have seven minutes.

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for being here.

Madame Collette, are the criteria we use for appointments in writing?

Ms. Renée Collette: Yes, they're on the website. I can give you a copy too; there's no problem.

Mr. Joe Comartin: And how long have we had those criteria?

Ms. Renée Collette: We have had that process since the end of 1994, in 1994-95.

Mr. Joe Comartin: Are the criteria the same for full-timers and part-timers?

Ms. Renée Collette: Yes, they are.

Mr. Joe Comartin: I assume the individuals start part-time; do any of them not?

Ms. Renée Collette: No, you can apply as part-time or you can apply as full-time, or you can apply for both and be on both lists.

Mr. Joe Comartin: Okay. Do people who start as part-time often move to full-time?

Ms. Renée Collette: It does happen, yes.

Mr. Joe Comartin: Mr. Head, in terms of the present population, I didn't catch this—you may have said it before I came in. Other than the odd person moving in and out, are there any substantial vacancies in our federal prisons?

Mr. Don Head: Do you mean in terms of cell capacity, sir?

Mr. Comartin: Yes.

Mr. Don Head: Yes, currently we are experiencing empty beds at the minimum security level, primarily because the tools we are currently using to assess the security level and risk level of individuals are indicating there's not the right type of individual to go to minimum security.

We are experiencing some issues regarding double-bunking at the higher security levels. In our assessment units, we have double-bunking going on; in some areas of the maximum security facilities we have some double-bunking; primarily it's in medium security that there's double-bunking.

But empty space is basically in the minimum security facilities across the country.

•(1630)

Mr. Joe Comartin: In terms of minimum security, is the use of the conditional sentence having some impact on that, or is it simply because of the classification?

Mr. Don Head: There is speculation that since the introduction of conditional sentences in the Criminal Code, the types of individuals that would have come into the federal system years ago and occupied the minimum-security beds are the types of individuals who now are getting a conditional sentence or some sentence other than the federal term.

At this point in time, that's just speculation. One of the things we discuss when the provincial, territorial, and federal heads of corrections get together is how the various pieces of legislation and changes to the Criminal Code have had an impact on populations at all three jurisdiction levels.

Mr. Joe Comartin: As I'm sure you're aware, the current government has before it a number of proposals. One bill, currently before the House after first reading, would increase the mandatory minimum sentences, which, from everything I can see, would have a significant impact on the capacity you'd need to respond to.

First of all, do you agree with that statement? Second, if you do, have you begun to do any analysis of how many additional beds you're going to need if Bill C-10 alone, the mandatory minimum sentences provision, goes through?

Mr. Don Head: As with any proposed bill that goes through the House, we do analysis to determine the potential impacts, knowing that the analysis will be good only until the bill becomes an act, or brings about a change. Then we'll know what the potential final impact is.

When we look at this, we also have to look at the timing of the implementation and how quickly it would be taken up in the courts. There are many different variables and many different factors. So based on various different scenarios, we've looked at a range of different numbers and potential impacts to try to get at least an estimate of the impact of any changes that may be coming.

Mr. Joe Comartin: Do you have a cost range for Bill C-10 mandatory minimum sentences—pretty well all related to gun crimes—that you can give us?

Mr. Don Head: When we first looked at it going out over a five-to-ten-year period, we estimated that there would be an increase of about 200 to 400 individuals coming into the system. But the initial assessment was based on a set of assumptions different from those in the current bill. So we're currently looking at what the final number will be if that bill is maintained as is. Our initial assessment, based on some earlier speculation, put the numbers around 200 to 400.

Mr. Joe Comartin: How much longer will it be before you complete the assessment specifically on this legislation?

Mr. Don Head: I would imagine that it will be completed within the next few weeks—just so we have a good sense of where we are with this piece—and then we'll be able to assess implications if changes come up through debate.

Mr. Joe Comartin: When that assessment is completed, will you provide a copy of it to the chair of this committee?

Mr. Don Head: I assume we will, yes.

Mr. Joe Comartin: Similarly, we're hearing about other legislation coming, which would increase penalties for drug crimes and change the parole system. Have you done any assessment in those two areas?

Mr. Don Head: Up until this point we've looked only at Bill C-10.

Mr. Joe Comartin: If those come forward as bills, you'll do a similar assessment at that time?

Mr. Don Head: Exactly. Once we get a better idea of what the planning assumptions are, then we can do our initial assessments.

Mr. Joe Comartin: How long from the time you get a copy of the bill does it usually take you to do that assessment?

Mr. Don Head: It can take anywhere from two to four weeks. It depends on the complications, implications, and overlap with other sentences. Some changes are relatively straightforward, and it just takes pure extrapolation to determine what the number would be. For others, though, we have to go back and say, okay, if that happens there, we're going to have to discount something else that might have occurred, and work it through. That's usually when it takes more than a couple of weeks to do.

•(1635)

The Chair: Last question, Mr. Comartin.

Mr. Joe Comartin: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Does the assessment include both capital expenditures as well as operational?

Mr. Don Head: Yes, it does.

The Chair: We'll move over to the government side now for seven minutes.

Mr. Hawn.

Mr. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thanks, folks, for your presentation.

I have a number of questions, starting with Mr. Head.

For the last three years I've spent a fair bit of time talking to corrections officers in Edmonton and elsewhere and I've spent a little time at the Edmonton max, but they did let me out at the end of the day, so I'm grateful for that.

You talked a little about the rust-out of facilities. I'd like to talk a little about the rust-out of people. We didn't address staff in your briefings. You can correct me if I'm wrong, but I think corrections officers have been without a contract for a little over four years. My understanding is the sticking point is pensions and their designation as a hazardous profession where their pension accrual rate could be increased under legislation—potentially as high as 2.67%, but 2.33% would be more the norm—to allow them to retire with full pension a little bit earlier, considering the hazards of their profession and the wear and tear that they endure. Their pensionable time on average after retirement is very low because they've been ridden hard and put away wet and they don't last very long.

Where is that whole process? Is there anything that can be done? What's your suggestion to expedite that whole contract process?

Mr. Don Head: I think the Treasury Board would probably be in a better position, as they're responsible for both aspects of that portfolio. We have been working very closely with Treasury Board officials to try to find solutions to many of the various issues that have been brought up by the union at the negotiating table.

Although the negotiations started under the old legislation, the new legislation actually allowed us the opportunity to do what is called two-tiered bargaining with the union, so Correctional Services Canada could directly negotiate with the union on issues that were solely specifically within the realm of operations of CSC. We completed that phase of the negotiations several months ago. Like I said, Treasury Board is in a better position to provide the outcome of the two specific pieces that you've raised.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: I have a question on the operational part you have negotiated with them over the past number of months. One of the things that was brought up to me was working conditions and the safety of the corrections officers and things like not being allowed to wear vests. There were no vests available from the system. They weren't allowed to wear their own vests. If they brought their own vests in, they were disciplined and sent home, notwithstanding the high incidence of violence against guards. The other one was the non-availability of pepper spray, which was locked away until they needed it, and of course when you need it, you need it.

Are those the kinds of issues that have been addressed by what you just talked about? Have they been addressed to the satisfaction more or less of these officers?

Mr. Don Head: Yes. We worked very closely with the union on a series of what we'll call safety and security issues, including things such as armed escorts for maximum security offenders who are leaving the institution. On the issue of vests, we reached a resolution with them last year on that and we're now just waiting for the actual procurement of the vests that were agreed upon. On the issue of the OC spray, we're just in the final stages coming up with a solution to that approach. On the issuing of handcuffs to staff in security levels of institutions, that issue was addressed last year.

Also, through the two-tiered bargaining process, we agreed with a forum for the union and management to sit down and to discuss very specifically at regular times in the year issues that are specific to the safety and security of correctional officers. The union was very pleased with the outcomes of those discussions.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: Good. I have a question on crowding, vacancies, and so on. You mentioned there are vacancies in minimum security. I don't think there are vacancies in maximum security.

• (1640)

Mr. Don Head: No, sir.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: And what I saw at the Edmonton max is that there's a waiting list for solitary, because when somebody in a maximum security prison gets sent to solitary—comfort is a relative term—it's much more comfortable than in the normal prison existence, whereas in a provincial jail when you're sent to solitary—and this may be an exaggeration—I'm told it's a pair of pink baby doll pyjamas and a bible and knock yourself out.

Has anything been brought up or suggested to address the conditions in solitary in federal prisons to make them less desirable to go and spend time there?

Mr. Don Head: If people go into segregation, our mandate under the law is to work as hard as we can to have them returned to the general population. We actually have two categories of offenders in segregation: we have those who are there involuntarily, because they either pose a disciplinary problem or it was part of a disciplinary sanction at a disciplinary hearing; and we have individuals who are voluntarily in segregation, sometimes for protection reasons, trying to deal with a debt problem that they have in the general population.

At the same time, under the current legislation, when inmates are in that portion of the institution, the legislation is very clear that they are entitled, except for those things that are restricted by being in segregation, to the same kinds of amenities and opportunities that the general population is entitled to.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: It strikes me as a little odd that when people go into segregation, they've got all of the amenities that they have in their normal cells and the only things they don't do are their jobs in the library or the laundry. It doesn't seem to be much of a punishment to me.

Mr. Don Head: Again, the legislative purpose of segregation was to take people out of circulation for a period of time, with the very clear intent of having them reintegrated.

As I said, one of our challenges is on the issue of people voluntarily wanting to go there. Those who go in voluntarily don't want to be there anyway, but the voluntary piece is a problem. It's more in the nature of how to provide the right level of safety for those individuals in that institution.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: I'm asking this question because it was suggested to me. The rate of statutory release from a maximum security prison—and I'm specifically talking about Edmonton because it's one I was familiar with—is driven by the fact that there aren't vacancies and people have to leave.

Mr. Don Head: One of the challenges that we have right now is around the number of individuals who are being released on statutory release from maximum security institutions, not only Edmonton, but others across the country. We initiated a pilot project in Donnacona, in the Quebec region, to try to find a way to manage that.

On the surface, it's hard to explain to anybody, including myself, how somebody can live in a maximum security institution today and be out on the street tomorrow on statutory release. It doesn't sit well with anybody. We have to find ways to prepare them for that release. It's no longer a gradual release; it's basically a day-and-night kind of situation. We have been experimenting with a pilot project in the Quebec region.

The Chair: You'll have to wrap it up.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: I have a quick question for Collette. Are there any statistics that relate to people on statutory release from maximum security prisons and the rate of recidivism?

Ms. Renée Collette: No, I don't believe so. There may be some. I can look into it and try to give that to you.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: I have examples from Edmonton that I think would be startling.

The Chair: We'd appreciate any relevant research that you have.

We'll move to Mr. Cotler and the Liberal Party, but I have one question. Neither of you mentioned who it is you report to. Under the jurisdiction of the minister, we have several departments. What is the relationship between you and the department? Who do you report to?

Ms. Renée Collette: We report to the Minister of Public Safety, Mr. Day. The board is an independent tribunal. I would say that we report directly to the minister administratively speaking, but in our decision-making we're an independent tribunal.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Don Head: The commissioner has very specific powers under the Corrections and Conditional Release Act. He takes direction from the Minister of Public Safety. Again, we're part of the public safety portfolio. The Department of Public Safety is more directly involved in the overall setting of general policy.

•(1645)

The Chair: You'll have to help me out here, because I toured the facilities at Laurier Avenue many years ago. If you report directly to the minister, what do all the people there do? What role do they play in all of this? Do you know?

Ms. Renée Collette: The board is no longer at 340 Laurier. We've moved to 410 Laurier West.

The Chair: But there is a department and a number of employees. There used to be several hundred. What's their role in relation to what you do?

Ms. Renée Collette: The board is part of a certain committee that talks more about policy issues. We're not involved in anything other than what is mandated by law, which is making decisions about parole. So it's a different situation.

The Chair: I understand you report directly to the minister. I just couldn't figure out why all these employees were over there and what they were doing.

Mr. Don Head: A good portion of the people you see at 340 Laurier are national headquarters staff. The public safety department is also located at 340 Laurier—the secretariat, as we commonly refer to it—and they have responsibility for things such as helping to shape correctional policy. Where Correctional Service Canada is responsible for implementing the policy and the legislative frame, the secretariat is involved in setting up policy. We play a contributing role in that. It has roles around aboriginal policing and other things that are within the public safety domain.

Ms. Renée Collette: We have a national office, but our main activities are all in the regions. We are divided into five regions, the same as my colleague talked about. We have one office in each region, and the prairie region has two offices, one in Saskatoon and one in Edmonton. Our board members, part-time and full-time, except for six of us, are all in the regions, not in the national office.

The Chair: Okay. We'll have to explore that later. We only have 25 minutes left here.

Mr. Cotler.

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I want to thank the witnesses for their presentations.

Mr. Head, you mentioned the aboriginal prison population. I think the figure you gave was 18%. Can you break that down in terms of gender? My understanding—unless I'm incorrect—is that aboriginal men make up 17% of the male population, and aboriginal women make up 31% of the female population. Is that correct?

Mr. Don Head: Yes, those are very close numbers, sir.

Hon. Irwin Cotler: Would it also be correct to say that the aboriginal women population at 31% is up from 29% in 2004, and from approximately 24% a decade ago?

Mr. Don Head: Yes. For the most part there has been a slight decline in the federal population, and more recently it is just starting to level out. But in terms of sub-populations, the overall aboriginal population is growing, and the admission of women into the federal system has started to increase.

Hon. Irwin Cotler: Madam Louise Arbour, now the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, did a study on the prison system when she was a commissioner. In a recent interview, some ten years after the inquiry, she said that reforms to the prison system have fallen substantially short of her expectations. She cited three critiques, and I'd like you to respond to them.

One was the growing number of aboriginal women behind bars, to which I referred, which she referenced as being “a disturbing element of a prison system that has failed to act imaginatively or to address fundamental discrimination”.

The second point she mentioned was that “aboriginal offenders are more likely than others to be lodged in maximum-security prisons”.

Third, she is quoted as expressing “disappointment that instead of experimenting with innovative programs for female inmates, Correctional Service Canada programming and treatment remain dominated by male concerns and a male perspective”.

Do you have any response to these critiques?

•(1650)

Mr. Don Head: Sure, sir, a couple of things.

It is interesting that we as a service have not had a chance to directly interact with Louise Arbour about her comments. Our understanding is that they came after the release of the ten-year report and some interactions she had with some other individuals.

In terms of, for example, the comment about growing discrimination around aboriginal women, a lot of work has been going on in our women offenders sector. We have in this sector a deputy commissioner for women, led by Anne Kelly, whose sole purpose since Madam Justice Arbour's report was to reshape how correctional services are delivered for women within Canada.

Some of the significant changes include the establishment of regional women's facilities across the country, no longer just the Prison for Women that was located in Kingston Penitentiary. It's closed now. We have modern regional women's facilities across the country, which allows women to be closer to their home communities.

There has been a lot of work done in the last couple of years in developing specific women-oriented programs. The staff that work in these facilities not only go through the same training as any other correctional officer, but are also subjected to a women-centred orientation training in order to function in those facilities.

There has been a lot of work going on in terms of the programming, women-specific programming for substance abuse, issues of family violence, programs that are very specific to women, programs that are being looked at by other jurisdictions, not only within Canada but around the world, as models for use in delivering their programs for women.

Aboriginal offenders in general being classified higher or at maximum security is an issue and is a concern for us. Some of the tools we use, we know we need to look at differently in terms of whether there's a built-in bias in those tools and to see what movements or gains need to be made in changing the tools to reflect the needs of aboriginal people. But at the same time we know that if we were to scrap the existing tools and go back to basically a purely subjective assessment model done by individual staff, we actually run the risk of having even more individuals being classified higher than the ones who are being classified today.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Hon. Irwin Cotler: Do I have time for a short question, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: Well, you're one minute over already. Maybe we can come back.

Mr. Carrier.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Carrier (Alfred-Pellan, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

What strikes me the most about the Correctional Service is your mission to contribute to public safety by actively encouraging and helping offenders to become law-abiding citizens. That is a noble, worthwhile objective.

Earlier, you stated that there has been an increased in the number of inmates serving three or four year sentences for whom no treatment or programs have been planned. That worries me a little. Do you feel that these offenders have been forgotten and will not get any consideration unless they commit more serious offences?

[*English*]

Mr. Don Head: It's a major concern for us at this moment. We are looking at what steps we can take in terms of accelerating the assessment process for individuals who received a two- to three-year sentence. Given that many of them come in with a substance abuse problem, we're also looking at whether we can initiate their involvement in a substance abuse program when they're in the

assessment units, as opposed to waiting until they get moved to their initial full-placement institution.

Currently a normal process would see about 70 to 90 days of assessment for an individual coming into the system. Then on average across the country—it varies, depending on what part of the country you're in—about 229 days will elapse before an individual is actually enrolled in their first program. So 229 days, plus the 70 days for a two-year sentence, and we are almost at the point of consideration for statutory release, yet the individual hasn't received any programming. So we're currently looking at how we modify the assessment process and the initiation of the first program for offenders, specifically those in that two- to three-year range.

• (1655)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Carrier: Thank you.

You also stated that approximately 500 inmates in various institutions are in need of psychiatric care. Do they in fact receive specialized care in these institutions? Wouldn't it be better to house all of these inmates in one facility where they could receive better specialized care?

[*English*]

Mr. Don Head: In this area, we're pursuing both an institutional and a community-based strategy. We received money last year to put in place a stronger support mechanism and service delivery component for individuals who are going out into the community with mental health issues. I think we're in a very good position to make some gains there.

Before, individuals with mental health problems who were being released into the community were basically left to tap into existing community resources, which, as everybody knows, are overtaxed right now. So we received moneys to put in place a more comprehensive approach to deal with these individuals.

Currently within the Correctional Service of Canada, we're revising our institutional mental health strategy. We're looking at how we currently use our regional treatment and psychiatric centres, at what the best programming delivered in those facilities should be, and at which categories of offenders with mental health issues are the best ones to go to those very specific facilities with more targeted psychological and psychiatric types of services.

At the same time, we're looking at what kinds of support services—such as ambulatory care support—should go into the mainstream institutions to support those individuals, because the number of beds we have in our specialized treatment centres don't match the number of individuals with mental health problems.

Regardless of what we do on the institutional strategy side, we will always have individuals with some form of mental health problem sitting in the mainstream institutions. So we need to have some capacity there to address their needs, until they can either access the specialized program interventions in those facilities or are released and able to tap into the community interventions that are being put in place.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Head.

Mr. Brown, did you have some questions?

Mr. Gord Brown (Leeds—Grenville, CPC): Yes, thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I'd like to thank our witnesses for coming today.

A couple of months ago, I had—I won't say the pleasure—the opportunity to go into Kingston Penitentiary. There's a group there that works towards better preparing prisoners for release. This is a question that pertains both to statutory release and to those out on parole: Is there any way we can see more resources going into preparing people for release?

We've heard from other members here about drug problems and other issues that make it more difficult for prisoners to reintegrate into society. I've heard stories about some who don't have basic life skills and don't even know how to apply for a social insurance number or other identification. They don't know where to begin. Maybe sometimes we expect that these people have these skills. Are there any resources going into helping prepare these people for release?

• (1700)

Mr. Don Head: Chair, I'll start.

One of the things we've been doing specifically with individuals who are being released on statutory release is to try, for lack of a better word, to envelop them with the kinds of supports they need to make the transition in going from the institution.

Kingston Penitentiary, similar to the case in earlier comments related to the Edmonton institution, is a maximum security facility, and for the individuals who are leaving there it's a day-and-night kind of situation, going from a very tight security facility to the street. We've been looking at how to best facilitate that transition to the community, for simple things such as you have mentioned, such as when getting a social insurance number to help them fill out the forms ahead of time. Sometimes through our citizens' advisory committees, sometimes through the volunteers who come into the institutions, we help individuals with those processes.

But we've also looked at even the way we go about releasing individuals on the day of their release. At certain times individuals may be released on a Friday, which makes absolutely no sense, because now they're going from this completely tight security environment out onto the street. There are no social service support networks available over the weekend, and we run a very high risk of something happening. So we have been using provisions under the legislation to release a person a day earlier, so that the contacts with social services or support networks are made before they're facing a weekend, or a long weekend, whatever the case may be.

As I mentioned earlier, we have basically stretched the limits of our resources to do work there, or they continue to be stretched, because we're having to spend a lot more time dealing with the statutory release cases and are drawing on volunteers and citizen advisory committees to play a role in assisting with this issue.

Mr. Gord Brown: Okay. That's what I wanted to hear, that you were going to use those citizen advisory committees a little more.

Madame Collette...?

Ms. Renée Collette: As I think you know, we don't make decisions about statutory release; that's by statute and by law. The

only thing we do is, if the Correctional Services of Canada recommends some conditions, decide whether these conditions are necessary and reasonable in having a gradual reinsertion and reintegration of these people.

I would say the sooner the better. I don't know whether it's a good expression, but as Mr. Head mentioned, the sooner the person is assessed and can be involved in a program and have the kind of support you're talking about, the sooner we can make our decision as well, even prior to statutory release, and then take it from there.

Mr. Gord Brown: Okay. Thank you.

I have one final question, and maybe there's a minute or two left for my colleague, Mr. Norlock. Or maybe not....

When you did the assessment of the impact of Bill C-10.... It assumed there could be 200 or 400 additional prisoners in the system at any given time. Is that...? My assessment is correct there.

Was there any provision for the deterrence factor—that possibly it might deter people from committing those crimes? I know the former minister might not agree with me on this one, but was there any provision in the assessment for that?

Mr. Don Head: Within Correctional Service Canada, we'd have no capacity to measure that. We would just look at the pure inflow-outflow impact of the bill.

Mr. Gord Brown: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Ms. Kadis.

Mrs. Susan Kadis (Thornhill, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to our witnesses also.

You seem to be drawing the correlation—probably both of you, but particularly Mr. Head—between these programs and a lower rate of recidivism. I just want to confirm what role they play and how significant it is to the rate of repeat offenders.

Mr. Don Head: It varies with the program and the intensity of the program. One of the things we can share with the committee is an overview of the various programs and the research about the impact of lowering recidivism. In certain types of programs, we've seen a range anywhere from 17% to 24%, to as high as a 50% reduction. Unfortunately, there's not just one silver bullet or one program that will automatically give you that. It usually comes as a result of a combination of many different things.

One of the problems we've had to avoid is overprogramming offenders—for two reasons. One, we just don't have enough time to do everything we would do on the list. We would be keeping them beyond warrant expiry if we were to take that approach. Two, certain programs may actually be running at cross-purposes, so we have to be very careful as to what the programs are intended to do.

We can provide this committee with the research that talks very specifically about programs such as cognitive skills programming—reasoning and rehabilitation—substance abuse programming, and violence prevention programming.

• (1705)

Mrs. Susan Kadis: What I'm trying to ascertain is whether it's a lack of funding or resources and whether it would make a difference if you had more resources. Obviously, there are coordination issues that you've raised, but would it have a significant impact on the end result?

Mr. Don Head: If you're asking me whether I would take more money to do more programs, the answer is absolutely, yes.

With the programs that we are now focusing on and with our strong belief in terms of the research and the desired outcomes, the more capacity we have to deliver the programs, the more opportunity we have to reduce the recidivism rate overall.

Mrs. Susan Kadis: Okay, that's what I was very interested in.

You referenced societal change, with gangs, substance abuse, etc. Is the system adapting quickly enough to these changes?

Mr. Don Head: No. Part of our problem is that we have not been adapting quickly enough. The changes are more pronounced. When we've done a snapshot, they have been growing incrementally over the last couple of years—a couple of percent a year—until after five or six years, you've got a significant change.

There's no question that we need to find ways to be involved in the policy discussions much earlier, even on things such as changes to legislation that's intended to address gang activities and behaviours. The more we can be involved in the front end of those discussions, the more we can provide input in terms of what it would mean for us and how we can potentially contribute to achieving the overall goal of those amendments.

Mrs. Susan Kadis: Do I have more time, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: One minute.

• (1710)

Mrs. Susan Kadis: Ms. Collette, how often would you see an individual on parole committing a serious or violent crime such as rape and murder? Is this an exception? We hear about it from time to time, and it's obviously very shocking when we do. How common is it?

Ms. Renée Collette: This is very exceptional. I can provide the committee with figures if you wish, but it is very exceptional. I have a paper here that says offenders on parole are responsible for not even 1% or 2% of murders over the years in Canada. When there's an event like that, and it's sad when it happens, it is very public and very visible.

I just want to mention something that's related, if I may.

The Chair: Go ahead.

Ms. Renée Collette: What we're looking for are the risk factors. We cannot change a person to become a completely new man or a new woman. We want people who can function in our society. Nobody is perfect, including me, but I do function in society. We hope that's what we will achieve. What we are doing, first, is establishing what the risk factors are that compelled a person to do what they did. Then what we're looking for is evidence of change that we can count on and the tools they now have to be able to function. It looks simple, but it's not that simple.

I didn't mention it, but of course the board members who have that person in front of them and are trained—and they will receive even more training—are in a better position to assess the risk to public safety and decide whether they're going to grant parole.

The Chair: Before we move to Mr. Norlock, I have a question on the point Mr. Head mentioned, that inmates who participate in programs are less likely to recommit.

Isn't there something that can be done within the prisons to provide an incentive for them to participate in these programs? Can't there be some benefits removed or given to encourage them, if that's one of the ways to reduce the recidivism rate?

Mr. Don Head: We don't have many levers. We have a few. For example, we have an inmate pay regime—as it's commonly referred to—where a monetary reimbursement is made to an offender. It can be linked to their program participation, their work activities. And if individuals choose not to, they can be put on a lower level of pay or no pay at all.

The other levers are really around their ability to get conditional release. But as I mentioned earlier, with some of the individuals who are coming into the system, those who have been in the youth facilities and provincial facilities who come in with this mindset that the two-thirds point is a free and clear point for them, there's not much we can do at this point in time.

We're actually trying to develop what we call “programming for program-resistant offenders” to try to get them motivated and get them started in their first program. But it is a challenge right now.

The Chair: You mean you can't adapt their recreational opportunities, television time? Is that not an option?

Mr. Don Head: No, the way the law is constructed right now, the restrictions are fairly tight.

The Chair: Okay.

Just let me interrupt for a minute. Committee members, we have some business that we have to deal with before we disband today, and that's going to take us 10 or 15 minutes. So this, with your permission, will be the last question.

Mr. Norlock, five minutes.

Mr. Rick Norlock (Northumberland—Quinte West, CPC): Thank you. It shouldn't take long.

Thank you very much for your presentation.

I have Canada's largest medium-security correctional institution in my riding and was very happy to take a tour to see the operation. I was quite impressed by the CORCAN operation there, not only the operation, but the fact that it's using modern equipment, computerized equipment. I'm told by people who run factories in my riding that those are the kinds of individuals they need, people who know how to use computers to operate machinery, because we know that's the way of the future. I was also impressed with the quality of the goods produced by the CORCAN operation.

I believe—and you can correct me if I'm wrong—that people who are engaged in that particular operation and learn the trade actually earn an increase in their per diem—I call them allowances—or their paycheque, actually, which helps them go a long way in their lives in the institution and accounts for reduced time in the institution.

Am I correct so far in that?

Mr. Don Head: They can earn an additional allowance based on the productivity and the work, and that's linked again to the sales of the goods they're producing.

Mr. Rick Norlock: That having been said, is there any consideration to expanding that particular type of operation, not necessarily the making of furniture, but those types of...? Because to me, it's cost-effective—the quality, the product. If it is, then you can expand that.

What are the inhibitors of expanding that type of program?

Mr. Don Head: There are a couple. One is finding, for lack of a better phrase, an anchor business in certain geographic regions across the country. We've had, at times, certain CORCAN activities that have been seen to be in competition with local suppliers or local producers of some form of good, and they have raised issues about the fact that of course inmates are not paid the same as the workers in their factories or their shops. So that's an issue.

Again, the other issue is finding an anchor business and then a group of inmates you can consistently keep there with that skill level. Those who do work in the CORCAN operations are usually individuals who have participated in programs and are more likely going to be better candidates for conditional release and are going to be released. So they get going and get working and they succeed in getting a release out into the community, and then we have to bring somebody in to train again. It's not like there's a ready inventory of individuals with those skills, so it is a bit of a problem.

We are looking at how we best modernize and situate our overall correctional industry activities across the country. We have several CORCAN operations at our minimum security facilities across the country that are farm operations, and we're looking at how we best either stay in that business or move to something different that will allow people to have the kinds of skills they need. Yet at the same time, if we were to stop that, we'd lose an internal supply of food goods that supply the penitentiaries for meals. So there's always this push and pull for every decision we make around the CORCAN activities.

• (1715)

Mr. Rick Norlock: Thank you.

I have one more quick question. This has to do with personnel.

I was advised that the wardens and deputy wardens tend to work from nine to five, Monday to Friday, and if there is in the institution some kind of disruption, before the warden and the deputy warden get there—and my terminology is a little bit on the older side—the keepers basically run the institution.

You're talking about people who have the entire responsibility of running the institution in the absence of the warden and deputy warden. Every job is important, and there's no job we're demeaning here, but currently, I am told, their classification is such that their

salary is actually less than that of the person who hands out basketballs. The sports director actually makes more money than they do.

Is there any consideration currently of changing that classification to make their salary reflect the responsibilities of their job, which is a rather important one, in my view?

Mr. Don Head: The keeper terminology I'm very familiar with. It was the terminology when I started in corrections in 1977. The current terminology is “correctional supervisors”, and there are two issues regarding the correctional supervisors.

Part of the discrepancy in relation to somebody who's in the recreation area and the job of the correctional supervisor is linked to the fact that the correctional supervisor's pay scale or pay grade is tied to the correctional officers' collective bargaining process. The correctional supervisors haven't received the annual increases they normally would have, because they're tied to that process. Once the collective agreement is settled, their pay grid will shift significantly and they will be ahead of the recreation officer again.

At the same time, we have been engaged in, and I've been personally leading, a review of whether there are any other ways of compensating the correctional supervisors for the roles they fulfill on primarily the evening shift and weekends, the times when the wardens and deputy wardens aren't there. We're looking at options, but we don't have the authority to make decisions there; we have to go back to the Treasury Board. But we are looking at what possible options we could pursue.

The Chair: Thank you.

We're going to have to wrap it up. I'd like to thank our witnesses very, very much. We haven't run out of questions yet, so maybe at some future time we'll have to get you to come back to the committee.

If you could make your presentations available to us, any speaking notes you may have had, please give them to the clerk of the committee. I'd appreciate that very much.

Monsieur Ménard, did you have something?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Ménard: Mr. Chairman, I have a suggestion, one with which everyone will agree. Perhaps Ms. Collette could send us a brief report — if such a report exists — on the training given to commissioners.

• (1720)

Ms. Renée Collette: I'd be happy to oblige.

[*English*]

The Chair: Okay, we'd appreciate that. Please send it, along with any other information you think would be valuable, to the clerk of the committee.

Committee members, thank you for your cooperation. I was actually going to stop ten minutes ago.

We're going to have to clear the room and continue proceedings in camera. Let's take a few second to do that. Then we have to decide on some future business of the committee.

[Proceedings continue in camera]

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