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Chair

Mr. Daryl Kramp

Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security

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• (0850)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Daryl Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings, CPC)): Good morning, colleagues, and welcome to meeting 49 of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security.

Today under orders of the day we will be dealing with employment and skills training for offenders.

We have three witnesses with us today. From the Correctional Service of Canada we have Don Head, the commissioner. We have Fraser Macaulay, the assistant commissioner, correctional operations and programs. From CORCAN we have Lynn Garrow, the chief executive officer.

Welcome to all of you.

We will of course have opening statements for up to 10 minutes from our witnesses today. After that we will have our rounds of questioning. The chair will try to find a few minutes at the end of the meeting, 15 minutes or so, to go to committee business to see if we can get our schedules arranged for the future, knowing that we have some challenges with witnesses. But of course we can bring them up, and the committee can make its decisions as to what it wants to do and where it wants to go. We have a little budget issue that we will bring up asking for your approval on committee business as well.

Now we will open the floor to opening statements. Let's go ladies first. Would you like to make a statement? If you would not, we will move to Mr. Head.

Ms. Lynn Garrow (Chief Executive Officer, CORCAN): I will defer to my commissioner.

The Chair: You are the broad support this morning then.

Ms. Lynn Garrow: I most certainly am.

The Chair: That's wonderful.

Mr. Head, you have the floor, sir.

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

As you pointed out, with me today are Fraser Macaulay, the assistant commissioner, correctional operations and programs, and Ms. Lynn Garrow, the chief executive officer for CORCAN, which is an arm of the Correctional Service of Canada.

Good morning, Mr. Chair and honourable members. I'm pleased to appear before this committee today to assist you in your study of the Correctional Service of Canada's ability to provide employment and

skills training to offenders in our custody, be it inside our institutions or in the community.

As you may be aware, CSC operates a special operating agency called CORCAN, which plays a key role in CSC's mandate to enhance public safety by providing offenders with the employment experience and skills they need to become productive law-abiding citizens and skilled workers when they return to the community. Prison industries can be traced back to 1835 in Canada when offenders worked on the construction of Kingston Penitentiary. In 1980 CORCAN was first registered as the trademark for correctional industries in the Correctional Service of Canada and in 1992 CORCAN was made a special operating agency.

CORCAN's mandate is to aid in the safe reintegration of offenders into Canadian society by providing employment and employability skills training to offenders incarcerated in federal penitentiaries and for brief periods of time after they are released into the community. CORCAN operates in over 100 shops in 28 CSC institutions across Canada and three community-based operations covering four business lines, which are manufacturing, textiles, construction, and services. Products and services generated by CORCAN are used internally within CSC and marketed externally, primarily to Canada's public sector. On any given day over 1,250 offenders are working in CORCAN operations across the country. Over the course of a year over 4,000 offenders benefit from the program obtaining over 2.4 million hours of on-the-job skills training. These on-the-job training skills are provided in seven of the top 10 industry sectors by payroll employment.

Additionally, offenders are provided with employment opportunities not only in CORCAN shops but also in an array of institutional jobs where they are able to obtain various skills as, for example, painters, groundskeepers, and tutors. In 2013-14 over 14,000 offenders were involved in an institutional employment assignment and accumulated over 11 million hours of on-the-job training.

As I mentioned, CORCAN is a key rehabilitation program and provides a sense of purpose to offenders while contributing to a safe environment in institutions. Work programs increase institutional self-sufficiency thereby lowering costs of incarceration.

CORCAN strives to provide the most realistic work environment possible given the constraints within institutions, providing goods and services that meet market standards of quality, price, and delivery. In addition, many offenders who earn third party-certified vocational training certificates have the opportunity to apply the knowledge and skills while working in CORCAN shops thereby enhancing the training experience.

In 2013-14 CORCAN generated revenues of \$68.3 million from operations supplemented with a correctional and training fee of \$18.1 million. The correctional and training fee is authorized by Treasury Board ministers to offset the costs incurred by CORCAN that cannot be passed on to clients related to our training mandate and correctional operating environment. CORCAN is required by its charter to be competitive with the private sector on price, quality, and delivery.

Approximately 54% of CORCAN's annual revenue is from CSC, with the Department of National Defence and other federal government departments accounting for most of the balance. CORCAN also sells to other levels of government, not-for-profit organizations, and the private sector. Revenues are reinvested in enhanced training programs, the replacement of equipment, and the development of new business and training opportunities.

CORCAN conducts an ongoing review regarding current labour market trends by providing the monthly labour market bulletins from Statistics Canada to the regional employment and employability managers to ensure that training opportunities align with market trends. It is important to continue efforts in providing community awareness on the barriers offenders face in trying to return to the workforce, by engaging employers and providing them information on the training that is provided to offenders while incarcerated and the benefits of employing them.

● (0855)

CORCAN works closely with external organizations, as all vocational training offered to offenders is third party certified to ensure that all training is recognized in the community and meets private sector standards.

Key vocational training programs are provided in areas such as construction and non-construction trades including, but not limited to, welding, carpentry, the food and service industry, and workplace safety. The CORCAN shops provide offenders with the opportunity to learn technical skills through on-the-job skills training in the four business lines I mentioned. Offenders learn how to use equipment in a setting that supports standards of productivity and quality as reflected in a similar work environment in the private sector, as the majority of CORCAN shops are certified by the international standards organization ISO. This certification demonstrates that CORCAN has the processes, resources, systems, and skills to deliver high-quality services in a timely manner. These standards are maintained through periodic audits to monitor compliance with ISO standards.

In 2013-14 over 4,000 offenders earned more than 2.4 million hours of on-the-job training. This training provided offenders with the opportunity to learn and develop technical skills as well as develop and practise essential skills in a workplace setting. In order to increase the benefits of CORCAN on-the-job training in the institutions, many regions work with the provincial governing body in charge of apprenticeship training, regulation, and certification to have the hours worked by offenders registered towards a trade.

CORCAN also provides on-the-job skills training in three community sites in the Atlantic, Quebec, and Ontario regions. The majority of the offenders working in these shops are supervised in the community. These three sites provide an opportunity for

offenders to complete training they have begun while incarcerated, to obtain employment in the community for the first time, or to transition back into the community when employment opportunities might be limited due to their criminal record. In 2013-14 CORCAN's three community-based shops provided 103 offenders with over 48,000 hours of on-the-job training.

Through community partners such as community colleges and other recognized training providers, CORCAN is able to provide third party certifications in construction and non-construction trades, food services and food safety, and basic safety training that is required in many work sites. In 2013-14 over 5,988 offenders earned 19,438 certificates through vocational training related to many industries and trades, including construction trades such as framing and drywall; non-construction trades such as welding and autobody repair; the food industry, such as culinary arts and food safety; and a variety of safety training such as first aid and WHMIS.

With regard to offender employment opportunities in the community, CSC's community employment services program is intended to provide meaningful employment interventions to conditionally released offenders, increasing the likelihood of safe and successful reintegration. CSC community employment coordinators and contractors work with employers, community partners, and the rest of the case management team to provide offenders with the support, referrals, and job opportunities needed to address their employment needs in the community. CSC has employment coordinators across the country who can help employers find the right employee.

The support an offender receives does not stop when they get the job. CSC continuously works with both the employer and the offender to follow up on his or her progress and compatibility with the organization.

It is important to remember that providing assistance to offenders in finding work is only one aspect of a successful reintegration. Offenders also receive support from professionals in many fields—parole officers, psychologists, social workers, program officers—who all work together to ensure that they experience a smooth and safe transition to the community.

In conclusion, Mr. Chair, I'd like to thank you for the invitation to discuss the commendable work that both CSC and CORCAN staff do to support offenders' employment opportunities and skills training. As you're well aware, promoting public safety is of paramount importance to our organization; therefore, providing federal offenders with effective, meaningful, and relevant employment and employability skills helps us to fulfill our mandate and make our streets and communities safer.

I'd now be happy to take any questions the committee may have.

Thank you.

● (0900)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Head.

Seeing no further opening statements, I'll go to our first round of questioning.

We will start off with Mr. Norlock, sir.

Mr. Rick Norlock (Northumberland—Quinte West, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and through you to the witnesses, thank you for attending today.

We had a brief conversation before the meeting, so I'll cut to the chase because, quite frankly, I'm very happy that this committee is looking into this study. I think it's a good-news story, not that there are improvements that couldn't be made to the CORCAN regime. I'm sure we're going to hear from witnesses where we can get those improvements, and I know for a fact that's what you and your very capable staff are hoping for also. Anyway, it's a good-news story in my opinion.

The reason I say that is not that I necessarily listen to the...and I'm one of those talking heads, because I've gone into the prison system and I've seen it in action and spoken to the inmates, as well as the instructors. I came away with the feeling that there's much more we can do in this area, working with you to see that it's done.

I'm going to ask for a couple of things, because the bottom line when we train inmates is that we want those inmates, once they receive a certification or are on the route to certification.... I'd like to talk to some people who are the recipients of the hard work of our correctional system and the employees there, who are also quite motivated. I'm going to ask if you or your staff would be able to provide the committee with an eclectic mix of several private sector enterprises that have used the services and hired that inmate, so we can get a flavour for what they feel are the results of your labours. Perhaps they can give us some improvements we can all work on.

Because, in the end, what we want—and then I'm going to ask for a comment from you—are people who have the knowledge, skills, and ability to be able to earn a good living for themselves and their family so they don't have to resort to a life of crime. That's the aim of every person at this table, whether they be on the other side or this side, that's what we all hope for. We just sometimes have a difference of opinion as to how we can achieve that. That's my first ask of you.

The second one is you mentioned some of the programs. Have you received any feedback from the private sector with regard to some programs that you might want to embark on that you are not already doing, and if so, what are they? What's your experience from your perspective of the product you're putting out there and that is a person who is better able to function in our society?

Mr. Don Head: I have a couple of quick comments and then I'll get to the very specific questions that you raise. At the beginning of February it was 37 years ago that I first put on a uniform and walked into my first penitentiary. At that time, what was happening in what we would call prison industry very much resembled the traditional high school shops. Offenders were being kept busy making items that were probably closer to hobby craft items than items that could be sold on the market.

Over time, CORCAN has become a very viable entity, one that we're all proud of: proud of the work that the staff do in assisting offenders; and, proud of the work that the offenders themselves do to the point that we have relationships with other government

departments and the private sector in products that we produce. Over the course of quite a number of years CORCAN has shown that it is a viable entity and also a major contributor in supporting offenders and contributing to public safety. Over that time, we've developed many good relationships with the private sector, and I'd be glad to share names with the committee. We'll compile a list and send it to you. We will send a video to the committee that we did within the last year where we had testimonials from individuals, including those just down the street here, who have hired offenders who are working in their workplaces and speak very highly of the skills they bring, and encouraging others to bring them forward. We'll be bringing forward names such as various construction associations, trade unions, even some private sector employers.

You're probably familiar with Lyman lures. Lyman lures are now made by offenders in our institution in Matsqui, a private sector arrangement that worked out. We have a number of offenders employed that now produce these fishing lures. Again, great opportunities are being provided, and we'll definitely bring forward those names.

● (0905)

Mr. Rick Norlock: Thank you very much.

I spoke to you about a former warden in several of our correctional institutions. Monty Bourke is now the commissioner of corrections in the Northwest Territories. He and I were discussing this very issue. I was getting some ideas from him. He said currently in the Northwest Territories there is a great need for tradespeople. They work 12 days on and 12 days off. Of course, in our prison system we know there are a lot of—too many—first nations folks. I know that in Warkworth there is a program that teaches traditional things to our first nations members, but we also need people in our diamond mines, because there's huge need.

I wonder if you have contemplated working with resource industries that are hungry for some of these skilled labourers, especially in areas where there's a high first nations population. I wonder if you could talk about the programs you have for first nations vis-à-vis learning traditional trades and then the new trades of today.

The Chair: Sorry, Mr. Head, in the next round of questioning you will have an opportunity to respond to that, but we're over time right now. We have to move on. You can respond later when things are heading in that direction.

We will now go to Mr. Garrison, please, for seven minutes.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, witnesses, for being here.

I would invite you to go ahead and answer the question from Mr. Norlock.

Mr. Don Head: Thank you for allowing that.

I have a couple of quick comments. All the trades activities in the institutions are open to all offenders. We encourage all offenders—aboriginal and non-aboriginal—to participate, and we can share some statistics with you shortly in terms of those participation rates. But in terms of the broader question, looking forward, clearly there are various sectors we want to become more engaged with. Actually, I believe this committee can help us in terms of reaching out to some of them.

You mentioned, for example, the diamond industry. One of the challenges we have there is with someone with a criminal record being able to get into diamond mining businesses. Their security is almost as tight as mine—I won't say it is tighter, but it's almost as tight as mine—and the issue of a criminal record has come up many times.

That being said, there are other areas we've been exploring, particularly with regard to getting aboriginal offenders more involved. For example, in the construction field, we have been engaged with several first nations communities and their economic development groups in terms of building homes for first nations reserves. We've been quite successful at that, and as a matter of fact, we have agreements with the ones who were doing the work such that we have to ensure that a percentage of the offenders involved in that construction training are aboriginal offenders. We see that as very, very positive. We've had arrangements with the Bay of Quinte Mohawks, and with Muskeg Lake and Whitefish Lake. We've built houses for the communities up in Lac La Ronge, and we have other projects under way.

We are also quite interested in reaching out to the oil and gas industry. There's less concern about an individual's criminal history there than there is in the diamond mining area. We're in some very, very early discussions, through networks of our other partners, to start looking at how we can have the oil and gas industry bring its money and training into our institutions. We have the manpower and the woman power. They have the money; they have the training. Match the two up and get individuals trained, so that as they come out there is a ready supply of workers who can go out into the oil and gas industry across the country and become employed and become law-abiding citizens.

This is an area in which we're starting to knock on doors and one we want to pursue further. Again, there's great interest in terms of opportunities for aboriginal offenders.

• (0910)

Mr. Randall Garrison: Thanks very much, Mr. Head.

I think there is, as Mr. Norlock said, a great deal of agreement around the table on the value of both prison work and the vocational training programs. The annual report of the correctional investigator cited lower rates of admission to segregation, fewer institutional charges, higher parole grant rates, and the fact that those who are released are more likely to obtain and hold a job in the community. I think everybody understands that.

What I want to ask about is a report that your department prepared for the minister in May of 2012, which is a bit less sunny than the report that you presented to us this morning. I want to quote from that report. It said:

One of the biggest weaknesses of CORCAN is the absence of any correlation between either the work or the vocational training programs with labour market analyses. Training inmates for the jobs of yesterday, or for non-existent jobs, or for jobs in already over-resourced fields in competition with non-offenders is a waste of scarce resources and counterproductive to public safety.

That's the report in 2012. My question is, given that since 2012 you've had an increase in your system from 14,000 to 15,000 roughly, have you had additional resources to allow people to access these programs, and what else has changed to give us this sunny report we got today, compared to your very critical internal report in May 2012?

• (0915)

Mr. Don Head: The report in 2012 pointed to areas that clearly we knew that we had to improve on, and over the last two years that's exactly what we've been focusing our attention towards—to ensure that we have good, viable opportunities for offenders in our facilities. Part of that has required us to retool some of the activities that we have been engaged in. Part of the problem that we have in CORCAN is the push-pull between being financially viable, because we are a separate operating agency, and meeting the needs of the offenders. This is always a push-pull.

Although we have some opportunities, for example, as mentioned, in textiles and manufacturing—we produce a lot of furniture that's sold to government departments—we have to make sure that we sell enough so that we are able to reinvest back into CORCAN to keep the opportunities going. Some of the problems that we have are in competing with other markets. When government departments' budgets are cut or tight, they don't spend as much. That puts a strain on us. We have to be very careful about how competitive we become because then there is the whole issue of using inmate labour to produce goods where the private sector is struggling as well.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Back to my beginning statement, in terms of the number of people who access programs, you've got basically 1,000 more people in the correctional system. It doesn't appear to me from the statistics I've seen that there are any more places available in CORCAN or the vocational training programs than there were in 2012, or that you have any more resources devoted to this than you did in 2012. That would mean fewer of those in the system getting the opportunity that we all know would be very positive for them.

Mr. Don Head: What we've been doing, and Ms. Garrow can expand a bit, is expanding certain activities, certain opportunities. For example, some of the construction work that we've been doing for CBSA, the Canada Border Services Agency, creates more opportunities.

We are not in a position to create thousands of new opportunities. That's been a challenge for us. There is absolutely no question about that. It's another 10 new opportunities here, another 20 new opportunities there. That's the way that we've been able to tackle it within the budget that we have.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Your time is up, Mr. Garrison.

We will now go to Ms. Ablonczy, please. You have seven minutes.

Hon. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Head, welcome to you and your officials.

You mention that the case management team provides support and referrals on job opportunities needed to address offenders' employment needs in the community.

I wonder if you could tell us a little bit about the success rate of those efforts.

Mr. Don Head: Overall, the combined work that we do—the combined effort around both employment and correctional interventions, correctional programs—is what produces the public safety results that we have today.

We know, as was pointed out earlier, that offenders who are involved in CORCAN opportunities and involved in their programs addressing issues such as anger management or substance abuse, if they're tackling all those things in their correctional plan, are more than likely going to be able to return to the community in a law-abiding manner. What we see for individuals who go out into the community, particularly during the period that they are under our supervision, is that the rate of reoffending in a violent manner is less than 2%, which is a very positive number.

We also look at their rates of reoffending and coming back to federal custody at two years and five years after their warrant expiry date. The rate of return for individuals after two years is less than 10%, and after five years it's 18% to 20%. What that tells us is that the work that we're doing with them while they're in our care is good, and it sticks, but the farther they get away from the support that they have, unless they have ongoing support networks including employment, housing, family, prosocial associates, their risk of reoffending seems to go up. But the rates of reoffending and coming back to federal custody are still some of the best rates around the world when I compare them to those of my colleagues in other jurisdictions.

Hon. Diane Ablonczy: Have you looked at strategies for extending the support?

Mr. Don Head: Yes, that's one of the biggest challenges we have right now. Again, this is one of the things that this committee can help us do.

We have traditionally talked a lot about job support while individuals are under our care, but we need to talk about that going beyond their warrant expiry. Some of the partners that we've started to talk to, particularly out west, have realized that and have actually become some of our best spokespeople in regard to providing that support.

We've held two major forums now, one in the Pacific region—we actually had two forums there—where we brought groups of people from NGOs, the private sector, and various industries to talk about how we can support offenders beyond their sentences. We just finished one recently in the Alberta corridor—again, another very successful one. We're starting to get some very respected spokespeople from groups such as the B.C. Construction Association, which represents over 100 different construction organizations there, talking about the benefits of not only hiring offenders, but also supporting them throughout the rest of their time in the community.

● (0920)

Hon. Diane Ablonczy: How are offenders chosen to go into the program? Are those indicators being refined?

Mr. Don Head: Yes, that's one of the challenges we have right now. We were speaking just the other day about what work we can do, for example, with community colleges and vocational schools that have a lot of experience in terms of bringing people in and assessing them and training them.

We have more work that we need to do with regard to the initial assessment. Right now, our initial assessment of the needs of offenders is relatively basic. We look at their employment history prior to coming into federal custody. If they haven't been employed, haven't been able to keep a job, we know that they have high needs in that area, and that will be identified in their correctional plan. Then what we call correctional intervention boards that are in each of our institutions will look at the opportunities that currently exist, the types of work activities, employment opportunities in the institutions, and match those needs that have been identified in the correctional plans of offenders to those opportunities and start to plug them into the various aspects of the program.

Hon. Diane Ablonczy: What role does offender preference or choice play?

Mr. Don Head: We obviously encourage the offenders to be active in identifying the kinds of things they'll pursue in relation to their correctional plan.

We're also careful because we know that certain work opportunities in the institutions also provide opportunities for inmates to establish a power base. We have to balance the needs of the offenders, the wishes of the offenders, and the overall safety and security of the institution. We're always monitoring how gang members try to position themselves for some of these better kinds of opportunities.

Hon. Diane Ablonczy: That makes sense.

You mentioned that criminal records can be a barrier.

Is there any opportunity for certain employers to pick and choose among offences? In other words, some offences might be considered more of a barrier to trust than others.

Mr. Don Head: In discussions with various groups, particularly at the forums we've held out west, employers are reluctant to take anybody who has a criminal record in relation to fraud, robbery, those kinds of things. That seems obvious. There is still some reluctance in terms of hiring sex offenders. Those groups are probably excluded more often than other groups.

With regard to those with drug offences, it was interesting. We heard from several construction groups that they're not as concerned about that, as long as the individual has the skills, comes to work, does the job and completes it, and does it a safe manner. If somebody had a drug history and they're following the program, that's of less concern to them. However, the fraud, the robbery, the sex offender types of criminal histories are the ones that seem to be a little more excluded right now.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Ablonczy.

Thank you, Mr. Head.

Mr. Easter, for seven minutes, please.

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, witnesses, for coming, and also thank you for the written presentation. We wish the minister would do the same, as you know.

I note in your presentation that you talk about manufacturing, textiles, construction services, but there is no production of food within institutions anymore. As you would know, that's was one of the things I was greatly concerned about: the loss of the prison farms, the productivity for food within the institution, the management skills, etc.

Has the Correctional Service of Canada or CORCAN done any analysis internally that could be made available to the committee on the loss of the prison farms? Has there been any analysis on what it means in terms of added costs for food, etc.?

• (0925)

Mr. Don Head: No. We have done nothing since the farms were shut down in 2011. Our budgets were adjusted. We modified our approaches to procurement of food. We've gone to national tenders for certain types of products. Since 2011, we haven't pursued that at all.

Hon. Wayne Easter: I guess maybe from a government perspective it's best not to know the cost of the loss of those prison farms.

Let me then turn to the demand for training within the institutions. The correctional investigator in his report talked about the barriers to vocational skills training, and I'll quote what he said:

The single largest barrier to effective participation in work and vocational skills programs is not inmate disinterest, but rather the shortage of meaningful work and training opportunities.

Then he goes into the use of work releases as well.

What is the demand for skills training within the institutions versus the ability to provide that training? Second, one person is going to be in one institution where CORCAN does certain skills training, but the skills training that individual needs may be in another institution. How do you handle those two things?

What's the demand? Are you able to fill that demand, and how do you juggle different locations?

Mr. Don Head: Thanks. It's a really good question.

I think a couple of points are worth noting. There are sort of three types of individuals we need to deal with.

There are those individuals who come into the system and have literally no employment history or employment skills at all. In some cases, it's about giving them an assignment that gets them to get up on time, go to a certain place, stay there for the required number of hours, perform whatever tasks there are, and then repeat that. As you can appreciate, there's a segment of our population that does not have a work ethic, and trying to instill that is part of some of the tasks we have. For example, when we assign somebody to what we call "range cleaners"—cleaning on the ranges in the institutions—it's partly to address that issue.

We also have individuals who come in and have had an off-and-on employment history. It's about trying to find out what it is that's causing them to not keep a job when they've been in the community. Sometimes that's about upping their level of education. Sometimes it's about giving them a different set of skills that are more applicable in the community today. It's about trying to match those kinds of things.

Then we have other individuals who have had good employment histories, and some of those individuals are individuals we use in some of the higher-level shops that we have, for the productivity piece.

There is no question that we do not have exactly the same kinds of opportunities in every institution across the country, but we try to narrow down the needs that we are going to address for the short period of time we have. As you can appreciate, one of the challenges for individuals who have short sentences and are relatively young is that we're not going to change their lives overnight, so it's about trying to get them steered in the right direction.

• (0930)

Hon. Wayne Easter: What kind of coordination is there between CSC and CORCAN in terms of first getting the basic skills? The reality is that a lot of people have literacy problems. They have no writing and reading skills and certainly no computer skills. That happens in the institution under CSC. What's the coordination and the need to have that in order to take the training with CORCAN?

Mr. Don Head: I'll let Ms. Garrow talk a bit about some of the connections that we're doing there.

Ms. Lynn Garrow: It all starts with the correctional plan. Everybody has an individual correctional plan, so everybody has individual needs. Those needs are prioritized.

When the employment need is highlighted, essentially what happens, as Commissioner Head has referred to, is that there is a correctional intervention board in every institution that looks at everybody's needs and at what's available and then assigns them. CORCAN receives inmates who are assigned through the correctional intervention board.

To go back to a bit of your point on what's the need and what's the capacity, essentially, if you look at the needs upon intake, although they're pretty standard, they are low, moderate, and high needs. The vast majority of offenders who have needs in the employment area are in the moderate area, and CORCAN mirrors that in its shops.

Mr. Don Head: Just to add to that, the correctional intervention board is made up of a group of different staff members, including CORCAN staff. They're involved in the review and the assessment of the offender's needs and the opportunities that are available. Although we talk about CSC and CORCAN as if they are two separate entities, they are all my staff, so they work together.

[Translation]

The Chair: Ms. Doré Lefebvre, you now have the floor. You have five minutes.

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. My thanks also go to the witnesses for joining us today.

In the 1996 Arbour report, a number of recommendations were made regarding women in the federal prison system. The report said that the programs provided to women should be in line with job opportunities available in the field. In the 2012-13 Annual Report of the Office of the Correctional Investigator, I also noticed that there were several programs for women's professional training. However, many of the women are asking to acquire skills other than those needed for traditional housework. Apparently, a number of programs for women in the prison system are related to housework.

Are there new activities and what type of professional training is provided to women? Has progress been made with the training and the job opportunities for women in the prison system?

[English]

Mr. Don Head: I'll let Ms. Garrow talk about some of the specific activities in a moment.

One of the challenges that we have with the women offenders is the fact that we have small regional institutions across the country. This makes it hard to get large-scale activities going, as we do in many of the male facilities. As the member is familiar, recreating the laundry operation that you would have seen at Leclerc is difficult to do in the small women's facilities that we have across the country.

We are trying to find more—for lack of a better phrase—modern opportunities for the women than some of the traditional ones that we've done.

I'll let Ms. Garrow talk about some of those things that are being pursued now.

Ms. Lynn Garrow: I'm pleased to say that we're in all five of the regional women's facilities. The shops are extremely small. Largely what we have in there are textiles. The women are making everything from bedding to parts of uniforms for different agencies, such as the coast guard, etc., and inmate clothing.

I've been in the job for about a year and one of the priorities that I take very seriously is to offer more opportunities for women. I was very pleased to be at a conference last week in Edmonton and talking about aboriginal women offenders with people from the private sector and NGOs. We talked about what opportunities there actually were in the labour market and what it was that we felt we could offer. So we are pursuing alternative opportunities.

Currently, in terms of vocational, we have offered non-traditional vocational opportunities, everything from forklifting to flagging. Some of the women have taken it up. We have also offered opportunities in construction. When we've done builds with Habitat for Humanity, for example, in the Ontario region, we actually used two women from the Grand Valley Institution.

There are small changes, but we obviously would like to make bigger changes and we'll be working hard to do that in the future.

• (0935)

Mr. Don Head: If I could add to that, one of the challenges for us, particularly in the Prairie region, is aboriginal women. With a

number of aboriginal women returning to their first nations communities and the employment opportunities in those communities being next to nil, there are challenges. Even though we try to give them the skills to find jobs, they go back to their home communities where employment levels are low.

We are looking at what we can do, for example, around construction of homes. We've also done some work with women in terms of setting up their own businesses, so that if they go back to their first nations communities, they have training about how they can establish their own business, whatever their interest is, to try to sustain themselves going forward.

[Translation]

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre: Is that why only 30% of Aboriginal women participate in the CORCAN training programs? I think between 125 and 140 inmates participate, but only 30% of them are from First Nations communities.

Is it because they feel that there won't be any opportunities for them when they go back to their communities? Is it because they are not interested in the programs in place right now or do the programs seem not to be appropriate for them?

[English]

Mr. Don Head: It's definitely a combination of a couple of things. One is the issue that there are no jobs at home. In some cases, it's the issue of education levels. That's the first thing that we need to work at, to help bring up their education levels. Another challenge for us is that unfortunately a larger number of aboriginal women are doing life sentences compared to non-aboriginal women. As you can see, there are challenges with that.

The Chair: Mr. Falk, for five minutes.

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to the witnesses for coming here this morning.

Mr. Head, I just want to briefly comment on the vocabulary that you used here this morning. You could have used the word "custody" and you chose to use the word "care", and I appreciate that. To me it talks a little bit about the attitude of the Correctional Services here in Canada, and that you really do view the individuals you have not only as being in your custody but being in your care. It's very different.

I'd just like to direct a few questions to Ms. Garrow. When you decide which trades you want to do training for, on what criteria do you base those decisions?

Ms. Lynn Garrow: We look at Statistics Canada—I think it's the top 21 jobs—and I am pleased to say that we're in seven of the top 10. We're very much where the labour market needs are. We look at them nationally and then we look at them regionally as well.

Some of our business lines are not. Laundry would be a good example, but what we're trying to do with laundry is targeting certain segments of the population, such as the mentally ill, who come and work in our *centres de tri*, our processing plants, and in the laundry itself. Where there are lines where we're not where we want to be in the labour market, we look to target specific groups of the offender population to keep them busy, and a lot of it would be the repetitive work, like laundry.

Mr. Ted Falk: You've talked quite a bit about participating in the construction industry. Do you also participate in the heavy construction end of things, with operator training on heavy equipment and truck driving training? Having qualified truck drivers always seems to be a very high need in our country.

Ms. Lynn Garrow: It is a high need, and we are not participating at this point, but we've been looking at various opportunities and have been in early conversations with different industries. We're also looking at some of the colleges, because there are colleges that offer the programs as well. One of the opportunities with oil and gas, which we would really like to get into, would be their funding or contributing to funding some of our inmates to go to these programs.

So we have reached out. I've been on the job a year, so the conversations are still preliminary.

● (0940)

Mr. Don Head: I just might add, we'd have to be very selective of where we do those kinds of opportunities you're talking about. Those would be the kinds of things we'd pursue in minimum security facilities or on community release. The last thing I want is big, heavy machinery inside my secure facilities. I wouldn't want to be explaining to this committee why a great big truck just drove through my fence and took out 80 inmates.

Mr. Ted Falk: I understand.

There's also been some reference to some of the community partnerships you have. Habitat was used as an example. Have you also developed industry partnerships?

Ms. Lynn Garrow: Yes, we are working with construction industries across the country.

I look at our partnerships on three different levels. One is government partnership. We're really partnering well with other agencies and departments within government. We've talked about CBSA. We've done six or seven ports of entry. We're just completing the sixth one. We're working with the RCMP. We have an MOU in Saskatchewan, where we're building modular homes for them out of Saskatchewan Penitentiary.

In terms of partnerships with NGOs, Habitat currently is really where CORCAN is at, again predominantly in the Prairie and Ontario regions. In the Prairie region, we completed five homes for Habitat, and another two are under way. That's occupied over 260 offenders. Those are really good opportunities for us.

Also, with the colleges and trade associations across the country, as I said when I was out in Edmonton last week, I was with Alberta Works, and they're putting me in touch with the Modular Housing Association in Alberta. I'm hoping we'll be able to capitalize on that as well.

Mr. Don Head: To add to Ms. Garrow's list of work that's going on is the collaborative approach we've been taking with first nations communities, as I mentioned earlier. They have economic development money. They have housing needs. Again, we have the manpower and the woman power. We have a good match there, and we want to pursue this even further. There are just so many positive returns from those kinds of partnerships and relationships that will benefit not only the offenders but the community. This is another one that we're trying to expand.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Falk.

We will now go to Mr. Garrison for five minutes, please, sir.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Head, you said that CORCAN staff were also your employees. That brings me to something that's been a particular problem in William Head Institution in my riding, where we've seen the elimination of a carpentry apprenticeship program, and now we're facing the elimination of the electrical apprenticeship program, when those are two of the three occupations in the highest demand on Vancouver Island. My understanding is that this is a failure to re-staff positions of people who are retiring.

I'm just looking for the possible explanation of why you would end those two very successful programs, which were putting people into very high-demand jobs.

Mr. Don Head: I am very familiar with the program, and we looked at extending it several times and trying to weigh that in terms of the overall inventory of the needs of the offenders and the kinds of activities that we could put in place. We've worked very closely with Camosun College, and continue to work with Camosun College in terms of activities. One of the problems that we had with the program at William Head is—and again, tremendous work by the staff—what they were doing wasn't something that we could easily replace in terms of the kinds of activities. It wasn't sustainable the way it was going. We worked with Camosun College in terms of those discussions, and we have some other options that are being explored right now in terms of creating the types of activities that will reflect the market need.

● (0945)

Mr. Randall Garrison: I'm trying to interpret what you just said to me, and it sounds like your failing to fill the positions that were there was the reason for closing down the program.

Mr. Don Head: That's definitely part of it. The program itself was not necessarily leading to the direct kind of opportunities that were needed in the marketplace.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Okay.

It's your emphasis on CORCAN as kind of the only solution this morning.... One of the things that the correctional investigator pointed out is that in the last 10 years there's been an almost 40% decline in the use of work release. When it comes to some of the small institutions for women where you can't run the big programs, or when it comes to meeting the market demands, work release seemed to have been highly successful. When the numbers of people in the institutions are going up, why are we seeing such a big decline in the use of work release?

Mr. Don Head: Work release is just an option for correctional officials to consider in terms of providing opportunities to offenders. They have a shelf life. They have a very specific timeframe—I think it's 60 days—that a work release can occur. There are some exceptional opportunities for extending that. They're not the be-all and end-all. Our ideal approach is to take greater advantage of day parole and full parole opportunities, so offenders can get out, get a job, and keep a job, as opposed to opportunities that are only in 60-day chunks.

Mr. Randall Garrison: According to a correctional investigator, in 2012 there were only—I believe he said—363 people out of the 14,000 in institutions who were able to take advantage of work release. I understand what you're saying is that you'd like more people on parole, but you still have a lot of people in custody. I really don't understand the decline. You haven't really explained to me the decline. Is it just because you've chosen not to use work release?

Mr. Don Head: No. Work release continues to be an option available to correctional officials at the institutional level, but there has to be a right match in terms of the offender, any kind of opportunity, and the kind of support. It needs to fit in with their correctional plan in terms of any other programs that they're doing. Work release continues to be an option that's available, but that's assessed by the case management teams in each of the institutions.

Mr. Randall Garrison: It seems to me that if you have a 40% decline in something then that would unlikely be a result of a bunch of individual decisions. That's a very large decline in the use of work release.

Mr. Don Head: I don't think you're suggesting this, but there is no direction to stop using work release. Work release continues to be a viable option as part of the overall correctional continuum. There is no directive to stop using work release.

The Chair: Thank you, very much.

We will now go to Ms. James. Five minutes, please.

Ms. Roxanne James (Scarborough Centre, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the commissioner and officials for appearing at committee.

I'm going to go back a bit to something that was brought up by my colleague, Ms. Ablonczy. She was asking about the success rates for individual offenders who have received these types of skills training. Commissioner, you went into some statistical information about other programs—and if they take anger management, and so forth—and that the chance of them reoffending with a violent offence is less than 2%. You did indicate that during that period of time after they left the institution that rate can go up. I don't think that I heard specifically about the success rate of someone who has received, for

example, training in welding or in the construction industry. What is the success rate of that individual finding a job in that particular field and retaining that job? I'm not sure I heard the answer to that question.

Mr. Don Head: In terms of the specific tracking on the training and the alignment with the jobs, we don't collect those kinds of statistics; this is something that we're looking at going forward. We're able to determine if an individual has gotten employment out in the community, but not whether it's directly linked to a specific type of training that they received in the institution. Our system is just not automated enough to provide us that kind of data. It requires manual file reviews.

Ms. Roxanne James: You just said that you're looking at possibly doing that in the future, and I think that would be very instrumental in determining whether the programs and the training we're providing in our institutions are actually relating to success and someone having stability in the community and not reoffending. I look forward to hearing more about that in the future.

In your opening remarks you said, “These on-the-job training skills are provided in seven of the top 10 industry sectors by payroll employment.”

Can you explain what you mean by that?

• (0950)

Ms. Lynn Garrow: The payroll statistics are put out by Statistics Canada. In terms of the top 10 that we fit into, there's manufacturing; construction; administration and support, waste management and remediation; accommodation and food services; professional, scientific, and technical services—and that one may sound a little weird, but we actually have an engineering centre where we train inmates on AutoCAD, and that's also available in some of our other institutions. There's also health care and social assistance, and we actually have eyewear lab technicians; we now manufacture eyeglasses for virtually all of the offenders in the Ontario region. The last one is education, where we use coaches, so we have higher-skilled inmates who work with other offenders in our shops. We call them lead hands and things like that.

Ms. Roxanne James: So these statistics are based on the highest-demand jobs or the ones that need to be filled?

Ms. Lynn Garrow: No, these are labour market trends that come from Statistics Canada. They list 21 in total, and we went for the top 10 and looked at those.

Ms. Roxanne James: My colleague across the way, Mr. Garrison, asked about making sure we're providing the training for jobs that are in demand.

Ms. Lynn Garrow: Yes.

Ms. Roxanne James: If you're using labour market information, how often do your programs in your institutions change to match that? Is it something that you look at every year, every five years? I'm just wondering if what you're offering to offenders right now in the institutions is the same that was being offered two years ago, or five years ago, and so on. Or is the turnover based on those labour market statistics?

Ms. Lynn Garrow: Since I've come in what we've done is look at them on a quarterly basis, because that's how they come out. We are aligning our vocational strategy to the on-the-job training. We've looked at what we've offered in the past for vocational skills, and now we're saying that if an institution or a site is going to offer a certain vocational training—because we do have a national plan—it has to indicate what this is going to contribute to the particular offender.

There are essentially two sides to this story. One is that you do require vocational certificates for health and safety, and there are certain prerequisites to work in any of our shops. Then there are additional certificates as you move into the areas that are more demanding, for example, welding, construction, and those kinds of things. And then there are others where the vocational certificates are a little bit longer, and we would do something with offenders like pre-construction, for example, what we do with St. Lawrence College in Kingston, which would come in and work with our offenders for about 10 weeks, and the offenders would then receive a certificate. We do that in various areas. Landscaping is another one that's very popular, and inmates are securing jobs upon release.

That's what we've been doing.

The Chair: I want to thank you very much. The time is up.

We will now go to Mr. Rousseau, please.

Mr. Jean Rousseau (Compton—Stanstead, NDP): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

One of my first remarks would be that it's a well-known fact that there are a lot of criminals hiding in the construction business. There are very remote facilities, with prostitution, and drugs that are very easy to get. It seems kind of awkward that we would like to rehabilitate some of the ex-inmates in those crafts, even though they're in a lot of demand. You would be placing them into a very fragile environment.

Why would we do that?

Mr. Don Head: I don't think I would make as broad-sweeping a statement as was just made, Mr. Chair. I know that many people who work in the construction field are as law-abiding as everybody in this room. I understand the point that you're making, and one could argue that this exists in many different fields. We are obviously looking to get people actively involved in the the kinds of activities, the kinds of trades, that are needed in Canadian society, and obviously aligning with law-abiding companies that hire people, so I'm not quite prepared to accept the broad-sweeping statement that the entire construction field is corrupt.

• (0955)

Mr. Jean Rousseau: Okay, I know, I know. I'm not saying they're all crooks, no, of course not.

Seriously speaking,

[*Translation*]

one of the best skills managers must look for in employees is their psychosocial ability, meaning people skills and decent behaviour. I think that is one of the first skills to hone if we want to achieve proper and effective reintegration. Behavioural skills are what first attracts employers.

What do CORCAN and other similar programs do for that?

[*English*]

Mr. Don Head: That's a very good point, a very good observation. The one thing I will say, and we actually very, very strongly believe this, is that just providing offenders with employment skills is not going to solve their problems. They're in prison and penitentiaries for other reasons, so while we work to address any employment skills gaps, we're also addressing the other criminogenic factors, those factors that led them to their criminal life. That includes the substance abuse programs, anger management programs, the cognitive skills programs, those kinds of things. Because we have an overall case management team approach to dealing with offenders, all the staff, whether they be correctional officers, parole officers, program officers, or CORCAN staff, all work to reinforce those prosocial skills, whether it be in the classroom, whether it be on the ranges, or whether it be in the shops.

It's a very good point. I could give offenders all the employment skills that could be offered in the world, but if I'm not addressing some of those basic criminogenic factors that led to them running into conflict with the law, we'd just be throwing money down the toilet.

Mr. Jean Rousseau: Yes, because in real life they will have to have interviews, present what they did in their past, and everything, so they have to be well prepared in confronting managers and those types of....

[*Translation*]

People skills are what the program does not focus on enough. They can be meaningful for various communities, as well as for the families and the individuals themselves.

What does the program do to promote self-awareness as such?

[*English*]

Mr. Don Head: I think what we see happening in our shops, for example, is that our staff reinforce that. They reinforce that they are working in an environment with other people, reinforcing the very point you made earlier about using good prosocial skills.

We're also working with community employment coordinators and centres and other partners in the community to help reinforce those skills when the offenders come out into the street. As you can imagine, if an offender goes to an interview, and somebody asks a question they don't like, and they get angry and assault the person, then they're coming right back to me, and that's not what we want. The combination for us is working on the skills piece and that human interaction, prosocial skill piece. If I just put my time and energy on one, I'm not going to accomplish what's needed.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Rousseau.

Now Mr. Payne, please, for five minutes.

Mr. LaVar Payne (Medicine Hat, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

Thank you, Commissioner, for coming along with your team here.

My background is in human resources. I was quite interested in your comments regarding the oil and gas industry. Alberta has been the economic engine of Canada the last number of years. As a previous human resources manager, I know that there are a lot of potential jobs available. Power engineering, for example, is in high demand, as are millwrights, instrumentation, electricians, welding, pipefitters, machinists, and the list goes on and on. Because Alberta has been the economic engine of Canada for the last little while, obviously partly due to the oil sands, it's also created manufacturing in Ontario, Quebec, and right across Canada. I see that as a really important aspect.

I'm just wondering if you could give us a little more insight into what's going on with your discussions in the oil and gas sector.

• (1000)

Mr. Don Head: I just have a couple of comments and then I'll let Ms. Garrow talk about her recent meetings.

We're really looking at encouraging them to come inside our facilities, bring these discussions about their needs, and also to bring their money—I'm going to be quite blunt about that.

Mr. LaVar Payne: They have a lot of money.

Mr. Don Head: They have a lot of money. So bring your money and come and train the offenders in whatever it is that you need in terms of the kind of work that you're doing out in the community. Our early-day discussions are as simple as that.

We have a workforce. I have a Canadian workforce. I'm not talking about temporary foreign workers, I have Canadians who need jobs, and who need jobs in order to become law-abiding citizens. So come in and help me help you help Canadians. That's where we're starting the discussions, and I hope this committee helps to open up even more doors for those kinds of dialogues and ultimate responses to that call.

I believe the vast majority of the offenders here, given the right kind of training, given the right kind of programs that address their criminogenic needs, will get jobs, go back out, and become law-abiding citizens and contributors to the tax base of this country. That's only good for all Canadians. That's where we're starting right now.

I don't know if you want to add anything?

Ms. Lynn Garrow: I'll just add one thing.

Currently in one of our shops in Alberta we already do some of the pipefitting pieces. We do manufacture them, so we are starting there.

When I looked at some of the opportunities in oil and gas—I'll just refer back to what the commissioner said—it is expensive training, it's not cheap training. The course at Portage College, for example, is \$10,000 per individual. I've been talking to people, some of them in the aboriginal communities, who are looking at on-the-job training

inside, and everything from doing it through video, so you don't have your big machinery inside. At this point I'm still in the very preliminary areas.

A lot of the jobs that you also mentioned require a lot of highly skilled individuals, so again it's very expensive training. It's not something that I'm in a position at CORCAN to offer to fund. I would love it, but we don't the money or the resources for that at this point in time.

I think partnerships are the way to go, and yes, anything you can do to help that would be really great.

Mr. LaVar Payne: Yes, and I agree that seeing these partnerships is needed. We also have some food processing in my riding and they're always looking for Canadians. They'd just as soon hire Canadians as temporary foreign workers.

Ms. Lynn Garrow: May I answer that?

I was actually quite surprised. I didn't realize that food processing was so big. When I was out west, I actually did meet with the CEO of a food processing company looking to partner with us. When he was talking about providing employment on the outside as well for our inmates, it is an area that I am most interested in.

Mr. LaVar Payne: That's good to hear because—

The Chair: That's basically your time, Mr. Payne, but thank you very much.

We will now go to Mr. Norlock, please, for five minutes.

Mr. Rick Norlock: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I have a couple of things. I'm interested in the video that you talked about because it addresses, I think, some of my preliminary questions. How long is that video?

Ms. Lynn Garrow: Almost 10 minutes.

Mr. Don Head: Yes, it's about six or seven minutes long.

Mr. Rick Norlock: Okay, with the permission of the official opposition, I'm thinking that it would be of interest to us to see the video. It would be of interest to me. If it can be sent electronically, make sure that the analysts get it and we could each play it on our own personal computers or we could show it at committee. I'll ask the chair to think about it.

• (1005)

The Chair: For clarification, Mr. Norlock, of course, it's information that's being submitted to this committee. I just want to see if it's available in both official languages.

Mr. Don Head: Yes, it is, most definitely.

Mr. Rick Norlock: Thank you very much. I'd appreciate it if you could provide that to the committee. We'll have the chair discuss with you the manner in which it can be distributed.

For first nations, of course, we have a special relationship vis-à-vis taxation, where they live, etc. The challenge, I think it was Ms. Garrow or you, Mr. Head, who said that they're going back to reserves where there's virtually no employment.... I was thinking, maybe because of the person I'm married to, that estheticians seem to get a lot of business from the Norlock side of things. I guess I'm saying that those are some of the skills....

I've lived in many areas in the province. If you go to the neighbourhoods that I've lived in, almost every other neighbourhood has someone whose secondary employment is a hairdressing or esthetician salon, and I suspect it's the same around the country. This might be an area that you might want to think of, because it's an area of high employment, and, of course, as a government, in regard to the employment benefits, we're looking at it. We've already looked at it and have made employment benefits in those areas. I see it as an opportunity. I wonder if you could ruminate on that for us.

One of the things I'd like to see done with regard to first nations is that we'll have to work with.... All parliamentarians are going to have to deal with this. We encourage people to return from whence they came. For a first nations territory, for instance, where there's no employment, maybe we need to say the same thing to our first nations communities that we say to other communities, which is that you go where the jobs are. That might be a way to alleviate a return to hopelessness and a life of crime. Once again, it's something that on this side of the fence we're going to have to work on, but work on with you.

I was very interested in what you talked about in regard to the heavy equipment; we wouldn't want a D9 going through a wall somewhere. I'm very much interested in the housing market, because it's a huge area where we can.... I'm wondering if you could suggest to the committee how we can work with Habitat for Humanity, because they have one of the best records. In my particular riding, we've used them, and we've been able to get some federal dollars into the program to help hire the difficult-to-employ people, or, in other words, people with no skills or who perhaps have been not in the federal institutions but the provincial institutions, etc.

Could you suggest to the committee some of the things we can do to help you make that function better with Habitat for Humanity, and then in the construction trades in general, and also how you see public-private partnerships? You have a budget to live by, and you did mention something about the oil and gas industry. Well, the construction industry, I think, can contribute there. As well, I think you have a good working relationship with the trade union movement, which would be of interest to my friends across the way and, quite frankly, to me.

Could you talk about how we as government and as parliamentarians could work with you to make those things happen?

Mr. Don Head: I have a couple of quick comments in that regard.

Habitat for Humanity is one of the projects with which we're quite proud of being involved. We're a contributor. Habitat for Humanity guides that.

The challenges they have, though, are related to money and supplies, and having something flowing consistently. I'll use Manitoba as an example because we've worked very closely with

Linda Peters there. We have worked out an arrangement now whereby some of the construction is actually being done on our property out at Stony Mountain Institution. That's gone a long way toward helping them out to get some things prefabricated and prepared in order to get houses built quicker, even during the wintertime when, as you can imagine, it's a little more difficult to do some of these activities.

It's really about finding the investment to get the supplies. The Habitat for Humanity exercises we've seen are not an issue of not having available manpower. There are a lot of volunteers and our offenders are involved in that. We've helped to address, in one case, the issue of where they could do some prefab construction ahead of time by using some of our buildings and our minimum security at Stony Mountain. It's the money flow and the actual supplies that are needed.

In terms of aboriginal communities, one of the things that....As I mentioned before, the more we can tap into the economic development activities in first nations communities, the more we are able to assist them with their needs but also provide aboriginal offenders with opportunities.

There are some first nations communities that we continue to watch very closely and talk to, for example Osoyoos in British Columbia. Chief Clarence Louie is a significant leader in this area. He may be somebody you would want to talk to as well, as a committee, about moving forward. He's always been receptive to discussions with us and with provincial corrections about providing opportunities for offenders to become employed and the many different ventures his first nations community is undertaking.

• (1010)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Head.

Certainly, yes, I've been to the Osoyoos. It's a magnificent operation there, truly a success story that we would like to see replicated across the country.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Doré Lefebvre, go ahead. You have five minutes.

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to go back to something my colleague Mr. Garrison said about the programs that suffered cuts in a prison in his riding.

There are several federal prisons in Laval. In one of them, the Federal Training Centre, many training programs were offered to male inmates. The programs included masonry, building trades, traffic control for road construction, and so on. Over the past few years, the centre was basically forced to eliminate its programs because of a lack of funding. Instructors lost more and more of their hours or were hired on contract. Was all that connected? Those trades being taught at the Federal Training Centre were very much in demand in the province of Quebec. Did this happen because there were not enough people interested in the programs or because of a lack of funding from Correctional Service Canada? What happened with those programs?

This seems to be the trend in a number of places with specific programs. This has nothing to do with CORCAN. It really affected the penitentiary.

[English]

Mr. Don Head: It's not related to us at all. The situation you described is not related to Correctional Service Canada.

[Translation]

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre: The Federal Training Centre is the name of the federal penitentiary. It used to have instructors hired by Correctional Service Canada who provided the training in prison. Those programs basically no longer exist in that penitentiary. It must be because of Correctional Service Canada since they are the ones covering the costs and operating inside a penitentiary.

[English]

Mr. Don Head: Now I understand better.

One of the challenges that we have, given the CORCAN structure, is the issue of funding. In order for us to expand or sustain less viable activities, we have to generate enough revenue through CORCAN, through the sales of the goods that we're producing. That has become more challenging and more difficult in the last number of years, given the fact that one of the places that we sell to is other governments, so their reduction in budgets means they buy less, which means we generate less revenues, which means we have to make some decisions about what kinds of activities we're able to sustain going forward to make sure that they're viable. One of the things that we've looked at, and one of the things that this committee may want to consider discussing, is whether CORCAN is given the first right of refusal for any purchases by government of the kinds of things that we produce. Right now, government departments are not obligated to come to us, for example, to buy office furniture. Our office furniture is of high quality; it meets all the standards and lasts a long time—I can do a sales pitch here if you want...a 10-year warranty. Right now, federal government departments—I'll just talk about federal government departments—are not obligated to come to us first before they buy any furniture or any other goods.

If we are able to get that kind of sustainability and a better guarantee in terms of the kinds of revenues going forward in future years, then we're able to look at other kinds of programs—expand them and sustain some of the smaller ones. Otherwise, unfortunately, we have to now make business decisions within a correctional environment.

•(1015)

[Translation]

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre: That is relatively understandable.

I suspect there are waiting lists for the inmates who wish to obtain a job or training with CORCAN. Am I mistaken?

[English]

Ms. Lynn Garrow: There's not, per se, a waiting list with CORCAN. We have openings in our shops. It differs every day. Inmates are released; inmates go off to other programs, so it's a very dynamic situation. But no, there's nobody who's not getting into a CORCAN shop because there's no availability.

[Translation]

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre: In other words, no one is on a waiting list for a job at CORCAN, neither the men nor the women. Is that correct?

[English]

Ms. Lynn Garrow: No, not at all.

I'll just address the FTC question. In terms of the shops at FTC, we had new shops built for us which have just come online, so part of the delay in working in the shops was that. The masonry program is still at FTC—I just saw it when I was there in early December.

[Translation]

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre: Yes, but it is really limited compared to what it used to be.

[English]

Ms. Lynn Garrow: I'm not aware of how big it was before, but they were doing beautiful work when I was there.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Garrow and Madam Doré Lefebvre.

Ms. Ablonczy, please, for five minutes.

Hon. Diane Ablonczy: Mr. Head, in your testimony today you've mentioned several times different areas where you feel the committee could be supportive or helpful to the work that CORCAN is doing. I wonder if you could just go through some of those areas so that we can more firmly understand them and maybe pursue them.

Mr. Don Head: Again, starting with the issue of partnerships, I think that the committee could be helpful in engaging some of those partners that we've talked about. We've mentioned the oil and gas industry and we've mentioned construction. Food processing was just recently mentioned as well. This committee has an opportunity to engage leaders in those fields and to ask them to seriously consider turning to Corrections for creating opportunities and hiring offenders with the skills when they come out.

I also believe that the committee can be extremely helpful in the point that I just raised around giving consideration for the first right of refusal for the purchasing by federal government departments of items that we have a track record in, such as the production of furniture. We're now producing various uniforms for a couple of different government departments. Federal government departments having to look to CORCAN before they purchase outside, I think, would go a long way to supporting us.

I also believe that the committee can be helpful in terms of advancing discussions with first nations communities, issues related to economic development and the monies that they receive, and looking at forging relationships with Corrections in areas where we can provide the kind of people who are needed to produce goods. For example, in this case, it's housing. I think there's an excellent opportunity there. I also think that this committee can be extremely helpful in advancing the work that organizations such as Habitat for Humanity do. The more they're able to get projects going, the more I'm able to get offenders engaged in those kinds of projects.

Just a quick aside, we've seen several of the Habitat for Humanity projects where offenders have gone out and started to assist in putting together homes. Other volunteers from the community, including people from various construction companies, have seen the skills and the abilities of offenders. They have actually hired them right there and given them jobs for when they get released. Helping to advance those kinds of activities is good.

The other issue this committee can help advance is some discussions around the issue of a criminal record. A criminal record does not exclude you from being somebody who can become a law-abiding citizen or somebody employed in some workplace. I think this committee can be very helpful in advancing those kinds of discussions. Like you'll see when we send you this video, all those employers know who they hired, they know they have criminal records, but what they're interested in is what those offenders are bringing to that workplace. I think that you can help in advancing this discussion across the country as well.

•(1020)

Hon. Diane Ablonczy: Thank you. That's helpful.

What use is being made of former inmates who have successfully completed this program and gone on to have successful employment in the community? Are they used as mentors or role models? If so, how is that working?

Mr. Don Head: We have some informal processes of mentoring and peer support, particularly for individuals who are released out into the community. They seem to be most helpful in dealing with some of the points that were raised earlier in terms of how individuals help offenders deal with some of the struggles of being back out in the community. We have seen that in a positive way. It's not as structured or as organized as it could be, but there are definite benefits for those who have left the system and gone on to become law-abiding citizens and have obtained jobs, to support other offenders coming out.

The Chair: Fine. Thank you very much.

Thank you, Ms. Ablonczy.

Mr. Easter, go ahead for five minutes, sir.

Hon. Wayne Easter: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

If you have inventory around, Mr. Head, March 31 is coming up, so you had better get advertising. You know how government operates; on March 31, you may be able to sell some of that inventory.

You made a statement earlier, Mr. Head, that surprised me. You said that you don't actually track training and the alignment with the jobs. I think you should. I think Correctional Services Canada and CORCAN should, since "training and alignment with jobs" was one of the key reasons stated by the then parliamentary secretary to this committee when prison farms were cancelled. If you go back and look at the record, you'll see that's true. I really think that was one of the big mistakes of CORCAN and Correctional Services Canada. I was there, at the committee. I think in order to see if the systems and the training are working, there should be at least some tracking of the jobs in the field so we're dealing with real evidence.

Coming back to some of the comments Randall made earlier around funding, some of the discussion seemed to be that you had to sell a certain amount of your product. That's understandable and that makes good economic sense, but there do seem to be some concerns over funding, whether it's the correctional investigator who is explaining it or based on some of the comments you had today. Are funding levels for CORCAN and for training within Correctional Services Canada that relate to that—as I said earlier, literacy, computers, etc.—remaining the same? Can you provide those figures to us for the last five years? We do have the estimates, but they're just so-so. Can you provide those figures to the committee? Are they going up or down or staying the same?

•(1025)

Mr. Don Head: We can provide you the financial sheets for CORCAN.

Hon. Wayne Easter: That's for the last five years?

Mr. Don Head: Yes.

Hon. Wayne Easter: You can send them to the clerk of the committee, and we'll get them.

Second, in terms of looking at the potential training, it's easy to simplify it, because you have to work within each institution, within each region, and with the offenders who happen to end up in that institution. I understand the difficulty of that, but in relation to some of the questions from the government side earlier, is there any—I don't know what you'd call it—market force analysis of job skills shortages? Is there any communication between CORCAN, Correctional Services Canada, and Employment Canada in terms of what is needed within a specific area when you develop your training programs?

Mr. Don Head: Yes. Ms. Garrow will give you some details.

Hon. Wayne Easter: Could you expand on that?

Ms. Lynn Garrow: Absolutely. Although I referenced Stats Canada, we actually use the SDC data, and we do share it within both CORCAN and Correctional Services Canada, including with the community employment counsellors who are out in the community, so that we can position our offenders as well as possible. I would guess we've been able to make more short-term gains on the vocational strategy, because that's easier to do. That's all third party certified, and so we basically do that largely through contracting.

In terms of our actual shops and on-the-job training, as I said, we're in seven of the top 10 areas that have been identified, but we would like to keep abreast. One of the areas I have repeatedly expressed that I want to grow the business line in is construction, because it offers a lot of the different trades. It's probably the biggest bang for the buck. We're up to about \$7 million of revenue in that area right now, but I believe we could do more in terms of modular construction. As the commissioner said earlier, we can do modular construction inside our institutions in some of our buildings, so we're looking for partnerships in that particular area.

Hon. Wayne Easter: The only other area relates to the correctional plan. I understand this has to fit into the correctional plan. How do you work with these offenders with newly added skills when they're released into the community in terms of assisting them in gaining gainful employment?

Ms. Lynn Garrow: We have a limited footprint in the community from a CORCAN perspective. We have three: Community Industries in Moncton, the national engineering centre that I referenced earlier in Laval, and our CORCAN warehouse in Kingston. Through those

three we have hired about 103 inmates. That gives them a transition to the community, and most of those people do leave us to go on to other jobs with private employers.

The other thing is we share the labour market trends and where the opportunities are, because the interesting thing about ESDC's data is that it doesn't just talk about what job opportunities there are in certain areas, it gets pretty specific about, for example, new construction that will be going on in a certain region, opportunities that are coming down the pipe. We do highlight those to the community employment counsellors to say, listen, this is happening in your backyard and it will be coming down the pipe. It depends on the timeframe of the project, but we do share that. There are 17 community employment counsellors located across the country who work with offenders.

As well too we can never forget the NGOs. We have Elizabeth Fry and John Howard who also work with the offenders to prepare them for release and assist them with resumé writing and other issues as well.

• (1030)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Colleagues, on behalf of the entire committee I'd like to thank our witnesses for appearing here today.

We will just suspend very briefly to go in camera for future business.

[Proceedings continue in camera]

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