

A REPORT BY THE UNION OF SAFETY
AND JUSTICE EMPLOYEES (USJE)



PROTECTING PUBLIC SAFETY

The challenges facing
federal parole officers in
Canada's highly stressed
criminal justice system

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INTRODUCTION

This survey reflects the views of a large majority of public safety workers who are concerned that Canada's federal justice system does not provide the required working conditions for them to properly assess, supervise and prepare offenders for their safe reintegration into society – offenders, who in some cases, may reoffend and cause more damage to the public and themselves.

From this research – the first of its kind to investigate the deep challenges faced by Parole Officers as a result of budgetary cuts to Canada's criminal justice system – emerges a picture of a federal correctional system that is extremely stressed and nearing a breaking point.

In 2012, the former Conservative government introduced budget cuts to Correctional Services Canada (CSC) under the Deficit Reduction Action Plan (DRAP), a streamlining process that resulted in serious and cascading impacts throughout the federal correction system. Reductions in staff, programs and services have had escalating consequences for the quality of work that Correctional Services employees carry out every day to support the rehabilitation of federal offenders. In the words of Canada's former Correctional Investigator, cuts to CSC annual budgets have had a “number of deleterious effects” on the rehabilitative outcomes for many offenders.¹

Further exacerbating these budgetary measures, the landscape of Canada's federal corrections system is also changing. An increasingly complex offender population (intensive substance abuse issues, gang violence, mental illness and other issues) means more, not fewer, resources are required to support successful rehabilitation and keep communities, employees and offenders safe. New policies are also being introduced by the current government that, while long overdue, are taxing an already overburdened system. Measures to address Indigenous offenders, mental health challenges, and alternatives to solitary confinement are urgently required, but these are at risk of failing without adequate staff and resources to ensure their success.

Underlying a workplace environment in which public safety employees are reporting alarmingly high levels of burnout and job stress, is a culture of fear within CSC. Despite attempts to contain it, harassment is prevalent, and management is not responsive to the concerns of employees on the frontlines of offender rehabilitation.

Little statistical information exists about the impact that cuts overseen by CSC have had over the last seven years. The Union of Safety and Justice Employees (USJE) conducted this survey with Parole Officer members to understand how a long-term trend in under-resourcing Canada's correctional system has impacted the ability of Parole Officers to ensure public safety.

¹ Theobald, C., “Prison watchdog touts rehab while critical of federal budget cuts that cause 'profound implications' for modest savings,” May 15, 2015, The Edmonton Sun.

Both data and personal testimony from Parole Officers across the country indicate that these cutbacks have had a negative impact on the rehabilitative outcomes for offenders and increased the potential risk to Canadian communities.

From the perspective of the Union of Safety and Justice Employees, the Canadian government will not be able to fulfill the project of penal reform without addressing the increasingly challenging correctional landscape faced by the 1,600 Parole Officers working in the federal corrections system. A series of recommendations in this report address concrete ways in which the Correctional Service of Canada and the Ministry of Public Safety can improve working conditions and ensure that CSC is able to fulfil its mandate to deliver the successful rehabilitation of offenders and to keep Canadians safe.

What is a Parole Officer?

Few Canadians know that about half of the 1,600 Parole Officers employed by Correctional Service Canada work exclusively inside federal correctional institutions. Approximately 13,900 offenders are supervised by Institutional Parole Officers working in federal institutions. Another 9,100 more are supervised by Community Parole Officers working in communities across Canada.

The role of Parole Officers is to accurately assess and manage offenders, both inside and outside of federal correctional institutions. Their job is to support the ongoing rehabilitation of federal offenders from the minute they enter the system to their successful reintegration back into the community.

Institutional Parole Officers

Institutional Parole Officers are one of the first lines of contact when offenders begin their federal sentences. Those who assume the duties of Intake Parole Officers carry out Offender Intake Assessments (OAs) for every federal offender entering an institution. These assessments set the offenders on their path toward eventual release back into the community – by helping to identify the risk factors that inform how an offender is managed in the institution, and what is needed to prepare the offender for release back into society.

Institutional Parole Officers also develop correctional plans for offenders which determine the security level of the institution an offender will be first placed in and the kind of rehabilitation programs required to help reduce or manage offender risk. Parole Officers also recommend activities to address the factors that led to an offender's incarceration, and support them in following these plans to increase their chances for success upon release.

Throughout an offender's incarceration, Parole Officers constantly assess his or her 'risk factors' – predominantly the likelihood of re-offending – by monitoring changes in an offender's behavior and altering correctional plans as needed. The Parole Board of Canada relies on these assessments to determine whether an inmate can be conditionally released and safely managed in society.

Community Parole Officers

Community Parole Officers are responsible for monitoring, supporting and managing offenders in the community after they are conditionally released.

When offenders complete their sentence, they can be released from an institution without any control or supervision – or face gradual reintegration into the community following the months or years of supervision and programs required by their correctional plan. Community Parole Officers connect offenders with programs and services to help them successfully and safely reintegrate. They may also make recommendations on special conditions to the Parole Board.

While Institutional Parole Officers work within institutions, most Community Parole Officers meet their clients in the community at: an offender's home; a CSC Community Residential Facility (halfway house); a Community Correctional Centre; a workplace, school or other location. During this regular contact, Community Parole Officers must constantly assess the degree of risk an offender poses to the community and monitor his or her supervision plan to manage that risk.

Parole Officers who work in Community Correctional Centres

Forty-four Parole Officers work in 15 Community Correctional Centres (CCCs) across Canada, doing similar work to Community Parole Officers but based in 24-hour residential facilities which require greater management of security issues. Established in the early 1960s, Community Correctional Centres house offenders who are reaching the end of their sentences and reintegrating into the community.

Unlike in federal institutions, Parole Officers work without the support of Correctional Officers and are responsible for the safety of the facility. Instead, Commissionaires take on a limited security role which is often out of step with the high needs of offenders who are deemed to pose too much risk to live in the community. These Parole Officers undertake such specialized tasks as meeting with offenders to resolve domestic issues, accompanying potentially high-risk community escorts and participating in searches and inspections.

CHAPTER 1: IMPLICATIONS FOR PUBLIC SAFETY

As public safety employees, Parole Officers are central to our justice system's mandate of managing risk and facilitating rehabilitation. They are a key element in protecting the public safety of Canadians. Parole Officers play one of the most important roles in an offender's journey through Canada's penal system. Yet this survey illustrates a group of employees who are concerned that they do not have the time necessary to properly assess, supervise and prepare offenders for release to the public – offenders, who in some cases, may reoffend and cause more damage for the public and themselves.

Survey results show that high offender caseloads, chronic understaffing, and reductions or modifications to CSC programs and services in institutions and communities are presenting insurmountable challenges to managing offender risk. Facing pressure in federal institutions to expedite inmates through the system, Parole Officers report they are unable to spend meaningful facetime with offenders or maximize opportunities for their rehabilitation. With nearly 40 per cent of the federal offender population now under CSC supervision in the community and only six per cent of the correctional budget allocated to services to support them – from the perspective of Community Parole Officers – many offenders are left to fall through the cracks.

This survey also demonstrates how the high cost of employee anxiety, job stress and burnout – from sustained and untenably high workloads – poses an additional risk to public safety. An alarmingly high number of Parole Officers indicate that their experience of anxiety due to having less and less time to work with even more offenders is affecting their psychological or physical health.

This means Parole Officers are suffering through a profoundly challenging time as professionals – creating a situation in which the public is losing the expertise of seasoned professionals as they increasingly turn to sick or stress leave, and new and inexperienced staff replace them. These overburdened Parole Officers also report they are worried about their ability to manage the risk of an offender recommitting a crime once back in the community.

Survey Excerpts from Parole Officers:

“I'm sure important things are being missed and I don't feel as confident in my recommendations.”

“I'm so busy trying to keep my head above water that the chances that I'm missing things is inevitable.”

“This creates anxiety in Parole Officer's because they know they can't properly manage their caseload and write reports to the level required without something being missed or neglected.”

Workload Concerns

Survey data shows that Parole Officers' responsibilities are at a tipping point and more than two-thirds worry that they are not able to adequately protect the public given their current workloads.

Respondents cite competing responsibilities, high needs inmates, increased paperwork and reporting, and covering for absent colleagues as duties that are being added to already full plates, and contributing to an untenable working experience for many Parole Officers. Many worry these unmanageable workloads mean key pieces of information could be missed in the monitoring of an offender, which in turn, could impact the safety of the community where an offender is released.

- 92% agree an increase in the number of Parole Officers would improve their capacity to keep Canadians safe. (Table 4)
- 69% of Parole Officers surveyed say they are not able to adequately protect the public given their current workloads. (Table 1)

Caseload Concerns

Caseloads – the number of offenders assigned to a Parole Officer – have increased for Institutional Parole Officers since staffing cuts made by CSC under DRAP. Of those surveyed, the clear majority of Parole Officers (93%) disagreed with the statement that caseload size or frequency of contact with the offender has no impact on public safety (Table 3).

Almost 85% agreed a decrease in the number of offenders on Parole Officer caseloads would improve public safety in this country.

In federal institutions, Institutional Parole Officers are assigned a caseload of inmates whose progress must be continually monitored. Caseload is determined by the security classification of the institution where the Parole Officer works.

- In a minimum-security institution, one Parole Officer for every 25 inmates
- In a medium-security institution, one Parole Officer for every 28 inmates
- In a maximum-security institution, one Parole Officer for every 30 offenders

Caseload ratios increased in 2014, two years after the Deficit Reduction Action Plan was implemented. Before that ratios were set at one Parole Officer for every 25 inmates, regardless of security level.

Survey Excerpts from Parole Officers:

The following Parole Officer responses reflect their anxiety about being able to adequately manage offender risk and ensure public safety given their current workloads.

“The current argument that I believe many PO's are trying to make is not simply we are over-worked but in fact our work impacts public safety and we take that seriously. Therefore, any increase in work is an increase in stress about making the right decisions...these decisions weigh on us.”

“I don't have time to do thorough file reviews because of all of the legislated reviews I need to do in addition to working with offenders to move cases along. I'm sure important things are being missed and I don't feel as confident in my recommendations.”

“I don't have enough time to see my offenders on my caseload and write reports. It's important to meet regularly with offenders... so you gain a better understanding of the person you are working with. The workload doesn't allow for that.”

“I'm so busy trying to keep my head above water, that the chances that I'm missing things is inevitable. I feel like my integrity is being compromised because I have had to accept that I cannot look under every rock.”

Table 1 – Workload impact on public safety

I worry that I am not able to adequately protect the public given my current workload				
Answers	Institutional Parole Officer	Community Parole Officer	Combined	
Strongly Disagree	1.94%	2.79%	2.28%	12
Disagree	6.79%	5.58%	6.27%	33
Neutral	20.06%	23.72%	21.48%	113
Agree	38.51%	35.81%	37.26%	196
Strongly agree	32.03%	30.69%	31.36%	165
N/A	0.97%	1.86%	1.33%	7
			Answered	526

Table 2 – Decreasing caseloads

A decrease in the number of offenders on my caseload would improve public safety in this country				
Answers	Institutional Parole Officer	Community Parole Officer	Combined	
Strongly Disagree	2.25%	3.25%	2.59%	14
Disagree	2.25%	1.86%	2.03%	11
Neutral	6.45%	9.76%	7.59%	41
Agree	24.51%	29.30%	26.11%	141
Strongly agree	63.22%	52.09%	58.51%	316
N/A	0.16%	3.72%		18
			Answered	541

Table 3 – Does caseload size impact public safety?

Caseload size or frequency of contact has no impact on public safety				
Answers	Institutional Parole Officer	Community Parole Officer	Combined	
Strongly Disagree	74.19%	68.37%	71.67%	377
Disagree	20.00%	23.25%	21.29%	112
Neutral	1.93%	4.18%	2.85%	15
Agree	0.96%	1.86%	1.33%	7
Strongly agree	2.25%	2.32%	2.28%	12
N/A	0.96%	0.00%	0.57%	3
			Answered	526

Table 4 – The need for more Parole Officers

An increase in the number of Institutional and Community Parole Officers would improve public safety in this country				
Answers	Institutional Parole Officer	Community Parole Officer	Combined	
Strongly Disagree	2.26%	2.32%	2.22%	12
Disagree	0.97%	0.46%	0.74%	4
Neutral	3.23%	5.58%	4.08%	22
Agree	29.12%	26.51%	28.01%	151
Strongly agree	63.43%	64.18%	63.82%	344
N/A	0.97%	0.46%	0.92%	5
			Answered	538

CHAPTER 2 – WHY WORKLOADS ARE INCREASING AND THE IMPACT ON PUBLIC SAFETY

The impact of budgetary cuts under DRAP, a shifting federal corrections landscape, and new policy directions in penal reform, (see introduction) have all had impacts on the workloads of Parole Officers in Canada's federal correctional system.

Under the former government, budget cuts to federal corrections introduced in 2012 under the Deficit Reduction Action Plan (DRAP) led to significant reductions in federal public safety resources. An increasingly complex offender population – due to substance abuse, gang violence, and mental health issues – has demanded greater responsibilities from Parole Officers without corresponding increases in staff and resources to manage them. New policy directions for penal reform by the Liberal government are long overdue, however, these have also had implications for a public safety workforce already at a tipping point.

This chapter describes the following workplace challenges for Parole Officers that have arisen in this federal corrections climate.

1. Caseload pressures of high needs offenders
2. Mental health needs of offenders
3. Policy Change for Indigenous offenders
4. Pressure to expedite offenders through the system
5. Lack of resources for assessing offender risk
6. Added responsibilities from administrative segregation
7. Lack of backfilling for employees on leave
8. Increased responsibilities from new policies
9. Additional job duties and increased paperwork
10. Inefficient reporting requirements

Table 5 – What is causing the workload fluctuations?

Please indicate if any of the following have contributed to fluctuations in your workload (respondents could choose more than one):				
Answers	Institutional Parole Officers	Community Parole Officers	Combined	
Additional job duties as a result of changes in policy/procedures	90.06%	84.11%	87.43 %	473
Increasing paperwork	84.61%	81.30%	83.73 %	453
Staff reductions	63.46%	70.09%	66.17 %	358
Lack of resources	56.08%	66.88%	59.88 %	324
Focus on preparing Indigenous offenders for release	70.51%	40.18%	58.04 %	314
Parole Officer positions being left vacant	58.97%	57.00%	57.85 %	313
Increased expectation to use local, regional or national “best practices”	49.35%	62.14%	54.15 %	293
Insufficient clerical support despite increased workload	49.35%	40.18%	45.47 %	246
Pilot projects	36.53%	57.66%	41.58 %	225
Number of Parole Board of Canada hearings	48.71%	31.77%	41.03 %	222
Other support positions being left vacant	43.58%	34.57%	40.11 %	217
Training other employees	41.02%	41.58%	39.37 %	213
Cutbacks to funding	33.65%	44.39%	37.89 %	205
Automatic Reviews	15.88%	45.19%	32.90 %	178
Learning new technology	24.35%	41.92%	29.75 %	161
Increased travel to complete assigned work	2.84%	47.19%	20.51 %	111
Other (please specify)			23.47 %	127
Answered				541

1. Caseload pressures of high needs offenders

Parole Officers repeatedly pointed out that their workload should be based on offender needs rather than caseload size (that is, the number of offenders for which they are responsible). They said a Parole Officer with a caseload of higher needs inmates will clearly be required to spend more time on each individual file compared to one whose caseload is less needy. This issue is summarized here by one Parole Officer:

“Workload equals Aboriginal inmates versus Caucasian, mental health cases versus regular non-mental health cases. Lifers need less work, guys on suspension waiting on their hearing need more work, guys with upcoming releases need more work. Segregation cases take more time.”

2. Mental health needs of offenders

Institutional Parole Officers also repeatedly mentioned that the mental health of the offender should be a determining factor for caseload size. According to respondents, cases in which offenders are suffering from mental health issues are far more complicated and time consuming. The complexity of these cases also means that Parole Officers have less time to address other assigned cases.

In a 2016/17 report, Canada’s Correctional Investigator noted that significantly mentally ill inmates continue to remain in correctional facilities instead of being treated in more appropriate locations such as community psychiatric facilities.² This situation could be improved, he said, if CSC were to offer alternatives to incarceration for seriously mentally ill offenders. This could also alleviate added pressures on Parole Officers who must manage the complex needs of mentally ill offenders on their caseloads.

One Institutional Parole Officer described not having sufficient time in the day to address the needs of all cases due to the complex needs of some offenders.

“We are doing a horrible job helping prepare offenders for release back into the community...These are complex mental health cases. Parole Officers are having to come up with their own version of discharge planning, which is way out of the scope of our work and expertise.”

“Need to go to the welfare office with the offenders, drive them to the hospital for their appointments, find them agencies to do their community work...print bus routes for them because they are not self-sufficient...manage problems with food theft and lack of hygiene...to name a few.”

² The Office of the Correctional Investigator, Annual Report, 2016/2017, <http://www.oci-bec.gc.ca/cnt/rpt/pdf/annrpt/annrpt20162017-eng.pdf> (retrieved, January 8th, 2019).

“With the increase of our work and caseload we are moving away from a significant part of our job which is interventions. We do not have the time to sit down and talk to our guys which is unfortunate because that is what is needed for proper rehabilitation.”

3. Policy change for Indigenous offenders

Parole Officers reported that their workload has increased as a result of meaningful and important initiatives introduced to deal with the overrepresentation of Indigenous peoples in Canada’s penal system. Indigenous offenders comprise 26.4 % of the total federal inmate population while they make up less than 5% of the Canadian population.³

While CSC has introduced a number of policy changes over the past ten years, respondents say it has not increased the staff required to administer initiatives. New policies include considering Aboriginal Social History (ASH) factors in correctional plans and the introduction of the Pathways program, which aims to provide traditional healing environments for Indigenous offenders.⁴

“I appreciate that CSC is making strides to address the overrepresentation of Indigenous offenders but they need to support frontline staff to accomplish this. More and more work is being focused on Indigenous offenders ... so that I have cases that are failing to get regular contact ... It not fair for these offenders that I don’t have sufficient time in my day to address the needs of all my cases.”

“We are being pushed to release Aboriginal prisoners more quickly when they are not ready and still pose a risk.”

“The recent push to hurry the reintegration of Aboriginal offenders is doing them a disservice. If the CSC really wanted to address the specific needs of Aboriginal inmates, they would provide the needed resources to address their traumas, not push them out on parole as soon as they complete a correctional program.”

“I like the focus on Aboriginal issues BUT we're not getting enough time allocated to do the work effectively.”

4. Pressure to expedite offenders through the system

An issue of quantity versus quality emerged in this report. Respondents say Correctional Service Canada is increasingly focused on quickly, or prematurely, assessing, reclassifying and moving larger numbers of offenders toward release instead of allowing time required for high quality assessments.

³ The Office of the Correctional Investigator, Annual Report, 2016/2017, <http://www.oci-bec.gc.ca/cnt/rpt/pdf/annrpt/annrpt20162017-eng.pdf> (retrieved, January 8th, 2019).

⁴ Commissioner's Directive 702, Aboriginal Offenders Commissioner's Directive 702, Aboriginal Offenders <http://www.Correctional Service Canada-scc.gc.ca/politiques-et-lois/702-cd-eng.shtml> (retrieved, January 8th, 2019).

“There is a tremendous amount of stress and pressure to complete transfers, especially from segregation given the new policies ...The amount of time we are able to spend on a report is less and less as it appears the Service is more orientated towards quantity vs. quality.”

“More pressure to transfer to minimum or support for early conditional release. Case prep being started at intake when not all information (police reports or judge's reasons for sentence) is being received.”

5. Lack of resources for assessing offender risk

Correctional Service Canada’s conventional methodology for assessing offender risk results in an overrepresentation of certain offenders – primarily Indigenous – in higher levels of security classification. For offenders, this can affect their parole assessments and mean they may have less access to effective programming or other rehabilitation opportunities while serving time in a federal correctional facility.

Ensuring that offenders – particularly Indigenous offenders – have access to the programs that equip them for their potential reintegration into the community is a complex issue that requires more appropriate resourcing. Parole Officer comments related to this issue included:

“Too many offenders don't qualify for programs and actually need one.”

“Someone on drug strategy or in segregation ends up taking all of our time whereas good cases that need support...are left on their own. As a result, many of our cases end up not getting the supports they need to address issues before they are released. All of this ends up impacting risk and therefore public safety.”

“I think we are failing with respect to rushing offenders through the process, however, this would not be such a concern to me if we had Parole Officer resources to support these changes.”

6. Added responsibilities from administrative segregation

Over the past few years, the Correctional Service of Canada has been slowly updating its guidelines for institutional administrative segregation (solitary confinement). This aims to support the well-being of offenders by reducing the time spent in administrative segregation and ensuring inmates with mental health concerns and others prone to self-harm do not end up in a segregation cell. Recent legislation proposes to ensure that the approach to administrative segregation is entirely different, and based upon the holistic needs of offenders.

While the new directions are entirely welcome, it is imperative that the ratio of Parole Officers to offenders in these new units is sustainable and significantly lower than other ratios.

Administrative segregation was regularly cited in this survey as a chronic issue that contributes to Parole Officers’ inability to complete all job tasks within regular working hours.

“With the segregation obligations and the increase in offenders with mental health issues, it is very taxing to keep up with the pace of all other regular work.”

“From the perspective of a Parole Officer who works in a max institution, the main priority has been for us to focus on alleviating segregation. There's been minimal support in this area thus actual concrete release planning isn't done.”

7. Lack of backfilling for leave

A recurring theme throughout this survey was the chronic lack of backfilling positions (finding a substitute for workers on leave or on assignment). One Community Parole Officer stated that “taking vacation is more stressful than anything” due to Correctional Service Canada’s inability to backfill positions.

Almost 70% of all respondents said when they take leave for a period of more than five days, CSC never arranges for caseloads to be covered. (Table 6) This mean offenders’ access to a Parole Officer is reduced both in the community and the institution. Leaving positions vacant, or at least partially covered, causes stress for those who take leave, and increases workloads for others.

Mandatory training programs are also contributing to the overall stress of Parole Officers because their positions are also rarely backfilled when they are away for training. While many Parole Officers supported more initial training to prepare for the stresses of the job, they raised concerns about the lack of enough Parole Officers in institutions and the community.

Table 6 – Is your position backfilled when you are on leave?

When you take leave for a period of more than 5 days, does the Correctional Service of Canada arrange for your caseload to be covered?				
Answers	Institutional Parole Officers	Community Parole Officers	Combined	
Yes, always	2.58%	12.14%	6.52%	35
Only sometimes	10.03%	32.24%	19.21%	103
Not that I know of	5.17%	2.80%	4.10%	22
No, never	80.58%	51.86%	68.65%	368
I don't know	0.32%	4.60%	0.55%	3
Not applicable	1.29%	4.60%	0.93%	5
			Answered	536

Survey Excerpts from Parole Officers:

What other factors lead to workload fluctuations?

“Parole officers on sick leave or doing special assignments and everyone having to absorb their caseload.”

“In recent years, we have always had vacancies not replaced for various reasons (lack of staff, too long staffing process, short contract, etc.”

“Sick leave not backfilled, workload falls on others.”

What other issues are important for the Correctional Service Canada to address to support you being the most effective in your job?

“We can’t get management to approve a backfill for admin staff who have been out for close to three months. There is a hiring freeze apparently due to the significant budget deficit. Seems like the budget is always underfunded (most of my 22+career).”

“With the increasing caseloads but absence of additional resources, employees are overworked and are becoming mentally and physically exhausted.”

“I often work when I am physically ill because there is no coverage during absences.”

8. Increased responsibilities from new policies

Many Parole Officers said they had added responsibilities because of new policies, guidelines, reorganization and updated Commissioner Directives. Numerous comments listed new assigned tasks and responsibilities for Parole Officers without a concomitant increase in staff to manage this extra work. One Institutional Parole Officer noted that duties that fall under “other job duties” currently make up 10 to 20% of their work.

“In addition to completing 3 intake cases a month, we are now responsible to attend Segregation Review Board, Drug Strategy Board, respond to multiple offender request forms, meet with offenders multiple times to answer their questions, obtain release plans, discuss program gains, complete employment applications, complete detention reviews, amendments to Criminal Profile Reports, Correctional Plan Updates after program completion...The workload has become unmanageable.”

9. Additional job duties and increased paperwork

Changes in government policy and procedures have had an impact on the ability of Parole Officers to complete their daily tasks. The majority surveyed said new policies have led to more duties and an increasing amount of paperwork and reporting. These included new guidelines related to Administrative Segregation,⁵ guidelines surrounding the treatment of Indigenous offenders and additional job duties for Parole Officers who intake offenders when they arrive at an institution to begin their sentence.⁶

10. Inefficient reporting requirements

New or updated policies and Commissioner's Directives have created a situation in which Parole Officers say they spend far too much time writing reports. Numerous Parole Officers expressed concern about the increased intensity and expectations that come from new reporting requirements while resources for more staff has not been made available.

“When stressed about workload and reports getting completed, a Parole Officer is unable to properly make decisions based on thorough work. There is not enough time to review cases in enough detail and often things feel too rushed.... There should be more time spent with offenders and less time completing reports.”

“Increased paperwork creates an environment where you spend less time talking to your offenders.”

⁵ Administrative Segregation Guidelines, Correctional Service of Canada, <http://www.Correctional Service Canada-scc.gc.ca/politiques-et-lois/709-1-gl-eng.shtml> (retrieved, January 8th, 2019).

⁶ Commissioner's Directive 702, Aboriginal Offenders <http://www.Correctional Service Canada-scc.gc.ca/politiques-et-lois/702-cd-eng.shtml> (retrieved, January 8th, 2019).

CHAPTER 3 – HOW WORKLOADS ARE INCREASING AND THE IMPACT ON PUBLIC SAFETY

Both Institutional and Community Parole Officers surveyed said their workloads are too high, and they faced challenges to complete their work in 37.5 hours.

Almost 70% of Parole Officers surveyed said they were not able to complete their assigned workload during an average week. This contrasts with the 73% of Canadian federal Public Service employees who stated in the Government of Canada’s Public Service Employee Survey they are able to complete their assigned workloads during regular working hours.⁷

Survey Excerpts from Parole Officers:

“Workload has gone through the roof. They (management) just keep dumping extra things on us.”

“Boiling a Parole Officer's time down to minutes in terms of workload...does nothing but erode the quality of work that a Parole Office does.”

“I must complete more cases in less time with less necessary information available in a timely manner.”

“Drastic increase in number of offenders within institution without an increase in staffing.”

“You need to give notice three or four months to book off two weeks. Then you still have cases due when you are off so struggle to get them done ahead of time. I work evenings and weekends to get my work done with no remuneration.”

The vast majority of respondents indicated their workloads had increased since beginning their job. More than 93% said their workload was too heavy, with only 5.6% saying it was just about right. (Table 9)

In response to the question during “an average week, are you able to complete your assigned workload in 37.5 hours?”, well over two thirds (69.8%) said that they were not able to complete their assigned workload. (Table 10)

When asked about caseload, 40% said that their current caseload was much too large, while 41.7% said it was slightly too large. (Table 11)

⁷ 2017 Public Service Employee Survey Results for the Public Service, <http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/pses-saff/2017-2/results-resultats/bq-pq/00/org-eng.aspx> (retrieved, January 8th, 2019).

Table 7 – Workload fluctuation

Since starting your job as a Parole Officer has your workload:				
Answers	Institutional Parole Officers	Community Parole Officers	Combined	
Increased	92.25%	88.22%	90.46%	484
Decreased	0.64%	0.94%	0.74%	4
Stayed the same	5.80%	9.90%	7.66%	41
Don't know	1.29%	0.94%	1.12%	6
			Answered	535

Table 8 – Workload fluctuation

Has there been an increase in your workload in the past year?				
Answers	Institutional Parole Officers	Community Parole Officers	Combined	
Yes	86.40%	81.22%	83.92%	449
No	8.41%	13.61%	11.02%	59
Don't know	5.17%	5.16%	5.04%	27
			Answered	535

Table 9 – Current workload assessment

Would you say that your current workload is:				
Answers	Institutional Parole Officers	Community Parole Officers	Combined	
Much too light	0.32%	0.93%	0.56%	3
Slightly too light	0.00%	1.40%	0.56%	3
Just about right	4.87%	6.57%	5.61%	30
Slightly too heavy	43.83%	48.82%	46.06%	246
Much too heavy	50.97%	42.25%	47.19%	252
			Answered	534

Table 10 – Ability to complete assigned tasks

On an average week, are you able to complete your assigned workload in 37.5 hours?				
Answers	Institutional Parole Officers	Community Parole Officers	Combined	
Yes	22.50%	27.69%	24.70%	133
No	71.06%	68.54%	69.83%	375
Don't know	6.43%	3.75%	5.40%	29
			Answered	537

Table 11 – Caseload size

Would you say that your current caseload (number of offenders) is:				
Answers	Institutional Parole Officers	Community Parole Officers	Combined	
Much too small	0.00%	0.46%	0.18%	1
Slightly too small	0.64%	2.33%	1.30%	7
Just about right	7.71%	23.83%	14.15%	76
Slightly too large	42.12%	41.58%	41.71%	224
Much too large	47.58%	28.50%	40.03%	215
Not Applicable	1.92%	3.27%	2.60%	14
			Answered	537

CHAPTER 4: IMPACTS ON PAROLE OFFICERS

The high cost of employee anxiety, job stress and burnout from unmanageable workloads is posing an additional risk to public safety. Hundreds of survey responses describe a troubling situation in which Parole Officers are suffering through a profoundly challenging time as professionals.

An alarmingly high number of Parole Officers indicated that the anxiety related to the daily struggle of having *less time* to work with *more offenders* is affecting their psychological or physical health. More than 86% of survey respondents (Table 12) answered yes to the question “Do you believe that your workload is affecting your psychological or physical health?”

These struggling public safety employees worry that exhaustion, stress or depression can cloud their judgement and lead them to miss an important detail, causing them concern about their ability to manage the risk of an offender recommitting a crime when back in the community. Additionally, when Parole Officers take leave for health reasons, large numbers of offenders are, in some cases, left unassigned for unacceptably long periods of time, meaning they do not have access to the rehabilitative support and supervision of a Parole Officer.

Asked if they have any comments about how their work is affecting their psychological and physical health, Parole Officers highlighted problems sleeping, anxiety, depression, high blood pressure, onset of poor eating habits, among many other issues.

Table 12 – Psychological and physical impacts of workload increases

Do you believe that your workload is affecting your psychological or physical health?				
Answers	Institutional Parole Officers	Community Parole Officers	Combined	
Yes	86.12%	87.03%	86.87%	470
No	9.67%	6.48%	8.13%	44
Don't know	4.19%	6.48%	4.99%	27
			Answered	541

Parole Officer work can also be detrimental to psychological health due to constant exposure to traumatic material and situations. In 2017, USJE conducted a study of the prevalence of operational stress injuries amongst its members, finding that 55% of Parole Officers are exposed to traumatic content several times a week from the files that they read. Forty-seven per cent of the Parole Officers who participated in the study said they listen several times a day to stories of trauma such as abuse, violence, and sexual abuse. Coupled with the high levels of

stress Parole Officers experience from working too much, their work can lead to debilitating psychological injuries.

Survey Excerpts from Institutional Parole Officers:

In this survey, Parole Officers provided numerous detailed descriptions about their daily experiences. The words they used paint a bleak picture of the working conditions for these essential public servants:

“panic,” “drained,” “overwhelmed,” “drowning,” “demoralized,” “stressed,” “rushed,” “contemplating suicide,” “overworked,” “struggling,” “mental exhaustion,” “agitation,” “anger,” “significant anxiety,” “mentally exhausted.”

“Difficulties sleeping. Drained and affecting my home life.”

“Feelings of depression because I feel like I’m drowning in a never ending overwhelming unrealistic work load. Feel like employer does not care and we can all just be easily replaced.”

“I am feeling more demoralized and my resistance to stress and illness are decreasing.”

“I have suffered severe depression and anxiety as a result of bullying and harassment and have had to go off for treatment a number of times... it has significantly impacted my physical and mental health, my family and my finances.”

“There is no break from work. I work from home outside work hours to stay on top of my caseload and catch up when I take leave.”

“I have taken two leaves for physiological/psychological reasons. The pressure on Parole Officers is immense.”

“I’m always stressed about my workload. I never feel as though there are enough hours in the day to complete what’s expected of Parole Officers. There’s always an expectation to do more with less.”

Survey Excerpts from Community Parole Officers:

“The sheer volume of information about the harm our offenders have caused to others as well as the various traumas they have experienced wears on you.”

“I often feel stressed with meeting reports and case work record time frames due to the high number of offenders on my caseload. I often find myself unable to sleep worrying about the amount of work to be done at work the next day.”

“Workplace incivility is at a high and when combined with the unattainable workload, creates a lot of damage to one's psychological and physical health.”

“There is an oppressive sense of anxiety about high accountability and the impossibility of attending to everything.”

“Completely exhausted. Don't want to talk to anyone at night, dread coming into work. I work for the public and am all about the protection of the public and we are treated like we are making widgets.”

Unpaid work

The issue of unpaid work – or work for which Parole Officers receive no compensation whatsoever, not even regular pay or time off in lieu of pay – was examined in a series of survey questions. Approximately three quarters (74.6%, Table 13) of survey respondents said they typically do more than 10 minutes of unpaid work every day, while almost 15% said that they work more than one hour of unpaid work every day. Two out of ten Community Parole Officers indicated that they work more than one hour of unpaid work every day. One Parole Officer summarized this situation saying that “years of working extra hours without compensation takes a toll as the job is demanding enough without feeling unappreciated.”

Table 13 – How many unpaid hours do you work?

Typically, how much unpaid work do you do? (This is work for which you receive no compensation whatsoever, not even regular pay or time off in lieu of pay)				
Answers	Institutional Parole Officer	Community Parole Officer	Combined	
I never do unpaid work	17.68%	12.67%	15.27%	82
Less than 10 minutes a day	11.25%	8.92%	10.05%	54
10-30 minutes a day	35.04%	30.51%	33.33%	179
More than 30 minutes a day	25.72%	27.69%	26.62%	143
More than 60 minutes a day	9.00%	14.55%	11.54%	62
More than 90 minutes a day	1.28%	5.63%	3.16%	17
			Answered	537

Working extra hours is not uncommon in Canada. Indeed, a 2015 study showed that 23% of Canadians say they work overtime “regularly” and another 40% do so “occasionally”.⁸

By way of contrast, Parole Officers indicated that **they regularly work overtime with 90% of respondents (Table 14) answering yes to the survey question “in the past year, did you ever go to work early or stay late outside of your regular or normal working hours in order to keep up with your workload.”**

These figures, while not surprising given the societal norm of working extra hours, are disturbing when Parole Officers indicate they are rarely compensated with paid overtime or lieu time for their extra work by Correctional Service of Canada (Table 13). Many reported that overtime is not granted to Parole Officers as a general practice and that supervisors will only rarely award lieu time.

A stark discrepancy exists in the current culture of Correctional Services Canada, in which Correctional Officers are consistently paid overtime for every hour of extra time worked - while systematically denying an equitable compensation structure to Parole Officers.

A CSC Overtime Audit for 2013/14 shows that **Correctional Officers received 80% of CSC’s total overtime budget**. The WP occupational group – which is evenly split between **Parole Officers and Program Officers** – **accounted for only 1.93% of CSC’s overtime expenditures** during the same period.

Some reasons for this discrepancy are that Corrections Officers make up approximately 43% of CSC staff compared to Parole Officers who represent 9% of staff. But Parole Officers also work in a high intensity environment for which there is considerable risk. Despite this, survey results indicate that Parole Officers are rarely granted official paid overtime, while Correctional Officers continue to regularly receive overtime pay.

Table 14 – Working outside of regular hours

In the past year, did you ever go to work early or stay late outside of your regular or normal working hours in order to keep up with your workload?				
Answers	Institutional Parole Officer	Community Parole Officer	Combined	
Yes	88.42%	93.92%	90.70%	488
No	11.57%	6.07%	9.29%	50
Don’t Know	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0
			Answered	538

⁸ “Half of working Canadians call overtime a ‘choice’, but the vast majority are doing it,” Angus Reid Institute, Public Interest Research, February 16, 2015, <http://angusreid.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/2015.01.16-Overtime1.pdf> (retrieved January 8th, 2019).

Survey Excerpts from Parole Officers:

One Parole Officer, when asked how many times they felt they needed overtime in the past month commented:

“I just work for free. Requesting overtime is too difficult. Work through lunches, breaks, stay late after work. Anywhere from 15 min to 1.5 hours on average.”

Similar comments were repeated dozens of times in answers to open-ended questions about requesting overtime. More than 8 out of 10 responded they did not feel that the supervisor would approve the request.

“Overtime will not be authorized.”

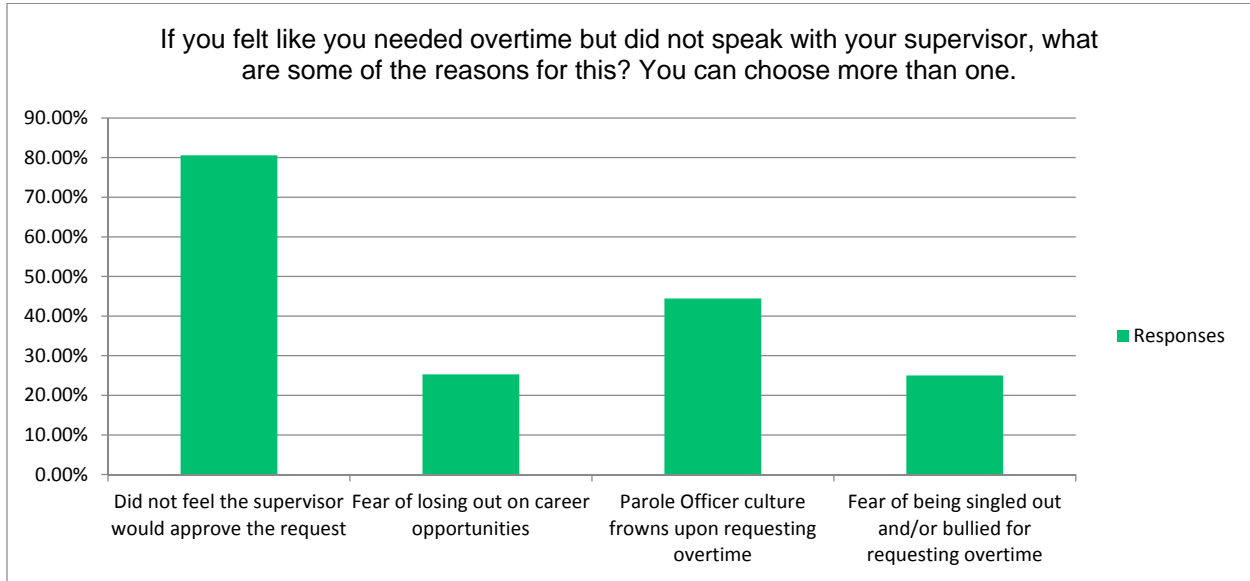
“No point in asking it would be denied.”

“Our workload is far too excessive and in my opinion, overtime will not 'fix' the problem.”

“Not ever supported and it’s viewed as a reflection that you are personally creating the need so all that is required is to change my habits.”

“Most of us are drowning and can barely get our job down in a thorough way in the hours allotted. It is almost expected we will work for free to get things done... More work, not enough time. High rate of burnout.”

Table 15 – Overtime requests (combined Institutional and Community Parole Officers)



CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The evidence presented in this report overwhelmingly demonstrates that Parole Officers working in Canada's federal correctional system are feeling overwhelmed, oversubscribed, unsupported and, as a result, often fearful for the public safety of Canadians. Years of funding cuts to Correctional Service of Canada and some of its programs, combined with an ever-increasing number of tasks and responsibilities placed on the shoulders of Parole Officers have allowed this troubling, if not dysfunctional, situation to emerge.

Without broad and robust changes to the resourcing of Canada's rehabilitative system within Corrections, offenders will continue to be released to communities without having the benefit of full and meaningful interactions with Parole Officers – one of the key actors in their correctional plans. Unfortunately, true recidivism rates – often used to measure correctional performance – are not available due to the fact that data measuring any new offences committed by offenders after they re-enter society is simply not available.

Gradual and well-structured releases of offenders from federal institutions are required to produce better public safety outcomes. These can only succeed if Parole Officers working for the Correctional Service of Canada receive the support they need to effectively do their jobs.

To address the issues raised in this report, the Union of Safety and Justice Employees makes the following recommendations.

USJE Recommendations

- The Correctional Service of Canada must immediately design and implement a plan of action to ensure that Parole Officer caseloads are fully covered when Parole Officers are away on leave. Data and anecdotes presented in this report show that leave for Parole Officers is rarely backfilled and that this practice increases anxiety and concerns on the part of employees that offenders are not receiving appropriate, if any, attention when they are on annual or sick leave, or when they have been asked to complete new training modules.
- Increase the number of Parole Officers in both the Community and in Institutions. An increase in tasks for Parole Officers has not been accompanied by a corresponding increase in employees – meaning that Parole Officers are being asked to do more tasks, and more complex tasks, in the same amount of time. The consequences are illustrated in these survey results: Parole Officers facing an increase in their duties are experiencing burn-out and anxiety about their inability to complete their tasks in a regular work day. To mitigate an increased risk to public safety and to alleviate the pressure on Parole Officers, the federal government must increase the number of Community and Institutional Parole Officers across the country.

- This report has shown that 14.5% of Community Parole Officers complete more than 60 minutes of unpaid work every day. The rate for Institutional Parole Officers is slightly lower at 9%. This is work for which Parole Officers receive no compensation whatsoever, not even regular pay or time off in lieu of pay. A common sentiment from Parole Officers was that years of working extra hours without compensation takes a toll and leads to feeling unappreciated. It was reported that, unlike the situation for Correctional Officers, overtime for Parole Officers is simply never authorized. Based on the findings in this report, and to mitigate an increasingly challenging working environment, USJE recommends that CSC change its policy and begin granting paid overtime to Parole Officers.

The correctional landscape has been changing under the current federal government. Bill C-83 – to eliminate the use of administrative segregation in federal correctional facilities – is one example of a step in the right direction for penal reform. This new legislation will, however, undoubtedly bring more tasks for already overburdened Parole Officers. To be effective, this type of reform must be properly resourced to ensure that workers can effectively implement new changes without harm to themselves, offenders or the Canadian public.

METHODOLOGY

The data for this report was gathered through an online survey with current members of the Union of Safety and Justice Employees who identify as Parole Officers employed by the Correctional Service of Canada.

The 29-question survey was designed to capture demographic data of USJE's Parole Officer members in addition to data related to three main research questions:

- 1) To what extent have Parole Officer workloads fluctuated?
- 2) What are the main reasons for this fluctuation?
- 3) How have these fluctuations impacted Parole Officers themselves and public safety in general?

While the majority of survey questions were designed to gather statistical data related to the main research questions, ten open ended questions gave respondents the opportunity provide their opinions in written format. Many written responses were used to qualify quantitative statistical analyses.

Qualitative and Quantitative data was compiled and analyzed by USJE's researcher.

Survey methods

English and French online surveys were launched on December 1st, 2017. During the 63-day survey period 415 responses were submitted to the English survey and 126 responses to the French survey.

Sample size

The French and English survey responses were combined into a large set of 541 responses from Union of Safety and Justice Employee members who identified as Parole Officers. This represents 39.9% of the 1,355 Parole Officers employed by the Correction Service of Canada.⁹

This response rate creates a margin of error for survey responses of 3% with a confidence level of 95%. This means that if 50% of survey respondents replied yes to a 'yes or no' question there would be a 95% likelihood that 47% to 53% of all respondents replied yes.

Participants and sample size

The Union of Safety and Justice represents approximately 15,500 federal public service workers from 17 different departments and agencies within the Government of Canada.

⁹ Correctional Service of Canada, "Quick Facts", <http://www.Correctional Service Canada-scc.gc.ca/publications/092/005007-3024-eng.pdf> (retrieved, January 2nd, 2019).

APPENDIX

Additional Survey Excerpts from Parole Officers:

1. Lack of backfilling when Parole Officers take leave

“Staff taken out for other duties without backfill.”

“Covering for others who are on longer leave without sufficient support in office.

“Losing fellow POs due to stress leave, covering their caseload, new segregation policy.”

“Staff on leave not being covered.”

“No backfilling for vacation.”

“Lack of backfill when we take time off or complete mandatory training.”

“It is difficult to find backfill for FOCs (Frequency of Contact), increasing the stress before leaving, and when returning. Lower caseload numbers and more Parole Officer Supervisors would not only make it easier to find backfill, but also lower the stress level when taking vacation or being out of the office for work related reasons.”

“Having a fully staffed office, being covered while on leave (vacation or sick)”

“Need more coverage for vacations.”

“Inability to take time off knowing I have no backfill makes me angry & sad, my children hate it when I bring work home or work late.”

“With the implementation of DRAP (Deficit Reduction Action Plan) we have seen a decrease in the number of Parole Officers (POs) in our office as well as MAIs (Manager of Assessment and Intervention) and clerical staff. Historically at our site we operated with eight POs, however, we are lucky to maintain seven and often times we have operated with only seven. The caseloads for maximum security institutions were set at 30, which is unrealistic but even more so since the numbers actually reflect well over 30 at the present time. With the increasing caseloads but absence of additional resources, employees are overworked and are becoming mentally and physically exhausted. At our site, we rarely have backfill if a Parole Officer is out on leave. We are the only max in our region so the responsibilities can't even be shared with another site.”

“Unfortunately, [X institution] often fails to provide coverage for time away and your work gets dumped on others or is there when you return. They don't often fill positions, so when you come back to work, you are catching up. Plus, you're often trying to work ahead before taking vacation anyway.”

“Having more parole officer and less inmates on our case load would increase public safety. This would allow adequate time to do our job in a meaningful way. Having coverage for our job when taking more than 7 days off continuously would affect public safety. In the institution, we often have to deal with high risk individuals and confrontational behaviour that is often escalated more in the institution than in the community because of environment and population.”

“I feel that I can't take more than a week at a time as there is no one to cover me during earned leave.”

“In the community, we desperately need floater parole officers for coverage. This is a must. We have no coverage when we are away and this doubles, triples, our workload.”

2. New administrative segregation guidelines

“The amount of time that is currently spent on segregation cases is a waste of time as the offenders that require our attention are not getting it. Those that are ready for release, Parole eligibility or cascading, these are the offenders that require our immediate attention.”

“Segregation has impacted an intake Parole Officer's work load. Several small tasks have been added that add up to be almost unmanageable.”

“Segregation Policy has resulted in cases requiring immediate action to alleviate segregation. PO's are rushed when SIO's (Security Intelligence Officer) haven't fully reviewed/investigated cases to determine safe alternatives. Site specific policies, such as X Institution's weekly segregation visit go above and beyond the CD (Commissioner's Directive) requirements.”

“Increased in stress due to unreasonable timeframes regarding some policies, i.e. changes to segregation policies.”

“New segregation policy does not protect staff or offenders and simply creates unnecessary paper work and premature release of potentially dangerous offender.”

“From the perspective of a Parole Officer who works in a max institution, the main priority has been for us to focus on alleviating segregation. There's been minimal support in this area thus actual concrete release planning isn't done.”

“I believe that the decisions being made do not take into consideration the actual frontline issues that frontline workers have to deal with. Segregation issues make the entire work environment much more dangerous, the deadlines being shortened make for rushed work and the quality of our work suffers. We don't have time to work with our offenders, we end up scratching the surface of every case.”

“The current focus on segregation is having a direct negative impact as PO's need to focus on these offenders rather than those who could cascade or prepare for release.”

“The new segregation policy increases parole officer's work load but doesn't actually help the inmate.”

“Focus is on fulfilling a mandate and not what is good for the offender. New segregation rules are detrimental to offender and staff safety as a recent example.”

“The new segregation policy is terrible. Costly transferring inmates across country, pressure to move inmates quickly when sometimes there is a need for segregation and need to be patient with them in segregation. Pressure from national filters down hard all the way to POS (Parole Officer Supervisor) and due to pressure POs are not consulted, just told to move them no matter what. This is dangerous for staff, inmates and the public.”

3. Comments regarding the mental health needs of offenders:

“We are doing a horrible job helping prepare offenders for release back into the community. Take RTC (Regional Treatment Centre) at X Institution. We cannot even offer discharge planning services to offenders because there is no Clinical Social Worker. These are cases with complex mental health needs. POs are having to come up with their own version of discharge planning, which is way out of the scope of our work and expertise. We are focusing too much attention on certain populations.”

“Complex cases and mental health clients demanding”

“Mental health cases, too much email, constant addition of new policies and procedures.”

“Need to go to the welfare office with the offenders, drive them to the hospital for their appointments, find them agencies to do their community work so that means spending a lot of time making phones for and with them, print bus routes for them because they are not self-sufficient because of their cognitive and mental health problems, manage problems with food theft and lack of hygiene, and even participate in CCC searches to name a few.”

“Mental health case that takes a lot of time. A lot of time wasted negotiating with the prisoner to avoid segregation.”

“We have an increase in mental health cases with the inter-regionals that require more interventions, with the increase of our work and caseload we are moving away from a significant part of our job which is interventions. We do not have the time to sit down and talk to our guys which is unfortunate because that is what is needed for proper reintegration.”

4. Premature individual case assessment:

“There is a tremendous amount of stress and pressure to complete transfers, especially from segregation given the new policies on segregation. The amount of time we are able to spend on a report is less and less as it appears the Service is more orientated towards quantity vs. quality. The reports that require POs to assess risk, such as CPUs (Correctional Plan Update) for SR (Statutory Release), are not being afforded the time or focus, but more so segregation and

overdue SRSs (Security Reclassification Scales). It appears that the only reports that POs are instructed to do as soon as possible are the ones that are on the Warden's radar.”

“Policy changes to Correctional Programs has resulted in assessing cases way too early. Official documents such as police and court documents aren't available at the time the initial program stream and intensity is identified by the CPO (Correctional Program Officers). MAIs (Managers of Assessment and Intervention) and X Institution continue to require more than is asked within the CD's (Commissioner's Directives) for Intake Assessments. Again, site preference or best practices are excessive, inconsistent and result in increased workload. Also, CSC mandated training in response to BOI's (Boards of Investigation) or Government initiatives which result in multi-hours being removed from our already tight timeframes doesn't help.”

“More pressure to transfer to minimum or support for early conditional release. Case prep being started at intake when not all information (police reports or judge's reasons for sentence) being received requires additional reports such as criminal profile updates and updated correctional plans because case prep was completed too soon.”

5. Inefficient reporting requirements and increased paperwork:

“Redundant reports which contain repetitive information has always been a waste of time. The new/increased alleviation of segregation policies requires time and reports which previously weren't required. The X Institution policy requiring weekly segregation visits exceeds the requirements of the CD's (Commissioner's Directives) and doesn't factor into consideration of caseloads/formulas as X Institution often makes its own rules and had a higher standard and add-ons that streamlining exercises have missed in the past. The new Programs screen on OMS (Offender Management System) isn't user friendly and is an increase to our workload. The new risk assessment replacing the SIR SCALE (Statistical Information for Recidivism Scale) may increase workload. Increased presentations to OMRB (Offender Management Review Board) are a waste of time as well. Many other site best practices are problematic.”

“Too much paperwork in addition to our caseloads. Not enough time for quality supervision”

“Worrying about deadlines for reports and not paying enough attention to the offenders, works on paperwork and again not having time to sit and talk with your offenders for any length of time.”

“So many administrative duties that I do and paperwork that there is so little time to spend with offenders.”

“When stressed about workload and reports getting completed, a PO is unable to properly make decisions based on thorough work. There is not enough time to review cases in enough detail and often things feel too rushed. The pressure for paperwork completion and amount of reports effects this. There should be more time spent with offenders and less time completing reports.”

6. Comments related to the inmate access to correctional programs or other supports:

“We don't have time to get to know our offenders as well as we should. Sometimes changes happen so quickly it is difficult to even remember basic details about our offenders. It becomes an issue of the problem cases getting all the attention. For instance, someone on drug strategy or in segregation end up taking all of our time whereas good cases that need support or an opportunity to discuss risk factors and how to effectively manage them are left on their own. As a result, many of our cases end up not getting the supports they need to address issues before they are released. We are often left scrambling to find bed space or even to have PBC (Parole Board of Canada) conditions at the last minute and then trying to deal with an increasingly stressed and/or angry offender who ends up leaving in a negative head space. All of this ends up impacting risk and therefore public safety.”

“The new ASH (Aboriginal Social History) implementation is extremely time consuming but does nothing to help Aboriginal inmates.”

“I think that we are doing better in terms of desegregation, and I think that we are providing programs at an earlier date, which is fantastic. I think we are failing with respect to rushing offenders through the process; however, this would not be such a concern to me if we had Parole Officer resources to support these changes.”

“Many offenders are receiving shorter sentences and ending up in max and release work takes a back seat and this is not a good practice when our main mandate is the protection of society.”
(Institutional Parole Officer)

7. Increase in mandatory training for Parole Officers

“Training, parole hearings that occur numerous times a month instead of just once because there are so many offenders having hearings and PBC (Parole Board of Canada) can't accommodate.”

“NTS (National Training Standards) training on top of normal work.”

“An abundance of 'mandatory' non-mandatory training outside of POCD (Parole Officer Continuous Development).”

“On-line PO training, emergency involuntary transfers and high needs offenders also contribute to fluctuations in my workload.”

“Too much training that is being expected to be completed without reduction in caseload requirements.”

“Expectations of Parole Officers; always growing. Only WP-04¹⁰ position where a degree is required, not compensated any differently than other WP-04s. Further to this, we complete risk

¹⁰ WP-04 is a Federal Public Service classification.

analyses; added responsibility. The online and in-person training expectations are very high and it is extremely difficult to find time for all of this given the workloads.”

“Unnecessary ‘mandatory’ training.”

“At my site, in the last year the Parole Office has had six new Parole Officers who all required training. In addition to these 6 new POs, we ONLY had one MAI (Manager of Assessment and Intervention) for the bulk of 2017.”

8. Cascading effects of multiple responsibilities

“Centralization has meant a lot comes to us that other departments used to do i.e. sentence management. Other changes like segregation have also increased our work load and expectations, as well as pressure to get intakes done and overrides for programming and support for parole right from intake whether inmates are ready or not.”

“Deportation cases, aboriginal cases, lifers, mental health needs. Cases like these require much more time and interventions.”

“In addition to completing 3 intake cases a month, we are now responsible to attend Segregation Review Board, Drug Strategy Board, respond to multiple offender request forms, meet with offenders multiple times to answer their questions, obtain release plans, discuss program gains, complete employment applications, complete detention reviews, amendments to Criminal Profile Reports, Correctional Plan Updates after program completion, and all of these additional functions while completing intake cases. The result is that currently it takes just as long to complete 3 intake cases as it did to complete 4 intake cases because of all the constant interruptions dealing with non-intake functions. The workload has become unmanageable.”

“Increase in add-ons from other departments. CBSA (Canadian Border Services Agency), sentence management due to associates not always being at institution where offender resides, increase in mental health requirements and segregation requirements.”

“Parole hearings that occur numerous times a month instead of just once because there are so many offenders having hearings and PBC (Parole Board of Canada) can’t accommodate.”

“Many job duties that fall under "other job-related duties" but is adding up to well over 10-20% of my work.”

“Held to a standard which indicated it only takes 30 hours to complete an intake which it may if there are no other inmate requests to answer, segregation inmates to tend to, sharing to be completed (many can’t read therefore you need to read to them), emails and calls about the other offenders on your caseload, doing initial interviews and casework records for them. Anytime you have a transfer pen placement it drags on into your next week which takes time from the next case.”

“Reintegration push.”

“Duties taken from other departments like clerical, sentence management or finance are always foisted on parole officers due to centralization or policy changes.”

“Doing managerial work (i.e. report quality control for colleagues) because the managers are also swamped and risking missing jurisdictional timeframes.”

“The change to the Offender Intake Assessment has increased case turn-over at the minimum. This higher turnover impacts the workload in so far as reviewing and getting to know cases, prepping and presenting to the Parole Board.”

“Increased involvement with CBSA (Canadian Border Services Agency) for deportation cases.”

“Having non-parole related duties being imposed on Parole Officers when other members of the Case Management Team (Unit Assistants, Correctional Officers, Security Intelligence Officers and Correctional Managers) could do the task.”

“Lack of consultation with and respect from RHQ's (Regional Headquarters) and NHQ (National Headquarters) for Parole Officers.”

“Addition of programs to intake. We cannot see our offenders without interrupting programs as many programs run AM and PM. All the extra duties that fall on our desks that are clearly not our responsibility like sharing of appeal paperwork from sentence management. They receive it... They can share it. Employment comments that are redundant because offenders are hired before we have a chance to provide comments. The inability to take holidays because cases are assigned months in advance. You need to give so much notice 3 or 4 months to book off 2 weeks. Then you still have cases due when you are off so struggle to get them done ahead of time. I work evenings and weekends to get my work done with no remuneration

“At the X Institution under the OIA (Offender Intake Assessment) Initiative of "presumptive parole" we are now being tasked with essentially being two different PO's rolled into one. I am an intake PO completing a new intake case every 1.5 weeks, but I am also essentially a receiving site PO completing Detention Pre-Screens, Planning for SR (Statutory Release) prep, receiving DP/FP (Day Parole/Full Parole) applications, completing CP (Correctional Plan) Updates on Progress and to request CS, multiple info-sharings, postponements, Parole hearings, reaching PBC cut off dates and writing up for transfer. These are two different roles and should be kept separate as the current model of "do it at all intake" is not smart for public safety, causes an undue amount of workload pressures and associated mental health strain.”

“By adding a caseload on top of completing Intake Assessments. By keeping program cases -- too many and having to complete full caseload completion to day parole, full parole, statutory release. Offenders remain in X Institution for upwards of 10 months and do not necessarily get to PBC (Parole Board of Canada) any sooner than previous years before the program pilot was committed to X Institution.”

“3 full intake cases per month plus managing several program cases that stay at X Institution. No symmetry, no sense of calm or order.”

“Intake POs never used to carry caseloads and now we are busy with day to day requests calls etc. Increase in casework relating to program pilots, more interviews, more paperwork sharing, reassigned duties from sentence management and cx (Correctional Officer)”

“Just left intake for minimum - crazy workload, not given enough time to implement policy changes fully, expectations at the institutional level are great yet there is NO acknowledgement that the intake POs are getting all the work, plus the extras, done within the timelines given.”

“Programming at intake means that Intake PO’s are responsible for 2 correctional plans, transfers reports, criminal profile (and amendments that follow as official reports trickle in, sometimes detention reviews depending on sentence length because they stay that long. Also- I am just now doing a CPU (Correctional Plan Update) for SRD (Statutory Release Date). This shouldn’t be done from intake.”

“Required to maintain caseload of offenders who remain at intake to complete programs, in addition to completing intake cases. Much too much pressure to have offenders go before the PBC (Parole Board of Canada) even if they are not in the best position.”

“We now carry caseloads of offenders completing programs at intake as well as continuing our normal intake assessment duties. This has created increased workload as program offenders remain at the assessment unit for up to a year after arriving. In many program cases, we complete their intake reports as well as detention reviews, day parole reviews, full parole reviews, and stat release planning. We are constantly switching gears between intake P.O. duties and essentially the duties of an institutional parole officer at a receiving site.”

“Having programming at Intake means that the intake PO now has to deal with day parole requests and hearings and all the associated paperwork in addition to the intake function. These two functions are totally separate and the decision makers did not understand this.”

“Poor practices around intake model. Very difficult to focus on intake cases and manage a caseload in programs. Pulled in all directions.”

9. Workload increase resulting from meaningful initiatives introduced to deal with the overrepresentation of Indigenous peoples in Canada’s penal system

“We are being pushed to release Aboriginal prisoners more quickly when they are not ready and still pose a risk. The CCLAs are too small and overcrowded, leaving out-of-court offenders under-supervised. Inmates with mental health are mixed with the regular population and therefore do not receive the services required for their problem. They are vulnerable vis-à-vis other fellow prisoners.”

"I am not certain how it [caseload] is calculated but it does not take into consideration dynamics specific to women, mental health, and Indigenous Offenders. There is a lot of work to do in order for us to work effectively with our caseloads."

"Work with indigenous offenders is a heavy caseload work wise to meet quality assessments while completing ASH (Aboriginal Social History) and applying ASH throughout all work. More consultations are required with a larger Case Management Team. This requires more time to complete."

"Policy change - increased embedded aboriginal social history requires a reformulation of report writing and significant extra time."

"The Aboriginal Interventions Centre initiative creates an automatic review of Aboriginal offenders upon program completion and unless they for sure are getting released, we have to do a Correctional Plan Update and Security Review. If you have multiple offenders who just did a program, that can create a lot of work in addition to your usual work."

"Pressure to move inmates to lower security, support for release even when their risk is not manageable. Pressure to give them more chances in the community when it is evident they need to be returned to custody to keep the public safe. Pressure to consider the aboriginal social history at such a high level that we consider their actual risk to the public less (automatic reviews for aboriginal inmates that complete program even when limited gains are made). When we do support inmates for things and they mess up, all the responsibility for their actions falls on the PO and very little to the decision maker."

"Stress and mental fatigue to review Aboriginal offenders' security classification too soon after a program completion. This puts pressure on the IPO (Institutional Parole Officer) to push offenders through to a lesser security level. Some offenders haven't internalized risk-relevant program skills to warrant a reduction. There is a significant lack of mental health resources which IPOs are oftentimes left managing. IPOs are not trained to help inmates who are suffering from PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder), childhood trauma. Being forced to deal with these problems with offenders, inmates are potentially being released into the community without adequate coping strategies."

"Mental health of parole officers. Demand to move offenders, especially native offender to minimum immediately from intake. We need to justify why aboriginals are NOT going to minimum."

"We are being asked to review Aboriginal offenders within 30 days of report completion following a program, however that does not give us enough time to assess change in the institutional setting. We'd like to see it be at least 3 months after, not so immediate."

"I feel that CSC focuses too much on numbers, rather than the stories behind those numbers. I find it disconcerting that institutional heads receive monetary rewards for positive offender outcomes when, in reality, those outcomes are just statistics, not the whole story. Offenders

are individuals, with specific histories and needs and should be treated as such. The recent push to hurry the reintegration of Aboriginal offenders is doing them a disservice. If the CSC really wanted to address the specific needs of Aboriginal inmates, they would provide the needed resources to address their traumas, not push them out on parole as soon as they complete a correctional program. I also know there are many offenders with mental health needs and some who request counselling services and we are unable to assist them. We do not have the resources/staff to counselling services. Offenders are then told to speak with their Parole Officers, but with the work load issues I face, I do not have time to talk to them.”

“CSC is very stats focused and money is not allotted to the appropriate areas. Too much focus is on public image as opposed to correcting the views of the public and educating the public on the service. The significant focus on aboriginal corrections and automatic reviews takes the discretion away from case managers and decisions are being made at the wrong times, impacting both the Parole Officers professional analysis and in turn public safety.”

“We are so busy addressing aboriginal needs and getting inmates out of segregation we are not providing quality case management to our offender caseloads! Our Wardens only seem to care about the stats and not about quality!”

“The automatic review of the security levels for aboriginal offenders regardless to how adequately they were able address their contributing factors pressures POs to reduce the security level of offenders before they are ready for it. This has been resulting in those offenders returning to custody for either violating their conditions or re-offending. This does not ensure the public safety.”

“It does not factor in higher need offenders who I spend way more time with. My entire caseload is Aboriginal persons or females who require specific needs and more time.”

“Travel and work with specific offenders not taken into account as much. Mental health, Aboriginal and cases with higher number of special conditions need to have more points considered.”

“Policy is made with no provisions to make follow-through possible; take the Aboriginal Social History and Aboriginal Initiatives, for example - in many different situations we are directed to consult Elders, but CSC does not have Elders in place in the community... we simply CANNOT comply with policy in such situations. It is extremely disheartening, as CSC continually pays lip service to various matters (i.e. Aboriginal offenders, mental health offenders, etc.) but then does not provide the resources needed to actually make positive change.”

10. Impacts on the psychological and physical health of Institutional Parole Officers

“High blood pressure, inability to sleep because of stress, thinking about work and everything I need to do at home, dreaming about work. Feeling overwhelmed. Stress eating. Feelings of depression because I feel like I’m drowning in a never ending overwhelming unrealistic work load. Feel like employer does not care and we can all just be easily replaced.”

“Sick more often. Less time for gym and other physical activity. Effects home life.”

“I have taken 2 leaves for physiological/psychological reasons. The pressure on PO's is immense. Timeframes, expectations and a willingness to perform well all contribute to stress and burnout. Nightmares are common. Thoughts of cases often fill my head in my off-duty hours. The cases we read stick in your mind and I've had dreams about things I've read. It's quite disturbing.”

“The environment is toxic. If telework would be approved, it would help in all aspects to get out of that place and contribute to a more positive mindset when you are there.”

“Continual stress about having everything completed on time. Feeling of being rushed and not submitting quality reports etc.”

“Due to workload pressures, I feel as though I cannot even take a lunch break without sitting at my desk. It would be nice to go outside for a walk at lunch for my mental and physical health.”

“Too much sitting, excessive stress, loss of family time (due to working extra hours), being angry/bitter at having to work extra time - all add to physical and mental health deterioration. Not being paid on time (or at all) is the icing on the cake.”

“I'm always stressed about my workload. I never feel as though there are enough hours in the day to complete what's expected of Parole Officers. There's always an expectation to do more with less. We are micromanaged and our professional judgment is not taken seriously. I suffer from migraines and am now ordered to go for a sleep test because of how exhausted I am all the time.”

“I started taking anti-depressants approximately six months ago. I was crying a lot at work, yelling at my family (i.e. taking my stress home and out on them), and contemplating suicide.”

“I've experienced anxiety attacks, dizzy spells and tension headaches in the last year.”

“It is constantly on my mind even when at home with my family. I experience difficulty sleeping as work is always on my mind.”

“Have become overwhelmed, stressed, had migraines and other health issues, which has resulted in sick time.”

“Being stressed and bringing it back home. Tired and lack of motivation to do anything outside of work. With the amount of work required, it becomes hard to fit in regular life and mental health days. Taking holidays becomes more of a burden because due dates do not change and there is no coverage aside from emergencies. Essentially, this job consumes much of everything you do.”

“The current argument that I believe many PO's are trying to make is not simply ‘we are overworked,’ but in fact ‘our work impacts public safety and we take that seriously,’ therefore any increase in work is an increase in stress about making the right decisions, supporting or not supporting for parole, minimum etc. These decisions weigh on us and for me I find my mind cannot shut off, I'm always re-reviewing my cases in my head on my own time because while at work it doesn't feel like I have time to actually process anything, just race to meet the deadline. This has impacted my health, personal life and work life. I am using EAP (Employee Assistance Program) resources.”

“Parole Officers are significantly impacted as a result of the case file information that we read on a daily basis. Offenders are equally verbally abusive, threatening and attempt to use manipulation tactics against their POs in an attempt to get what they want. CX (Correctional Officer) or security staff are not the only ones impacted by their work conditions.”

“I find it incredibly stressful to be around others who are stressed. It becomes increasingly difficult to try to help them cope and often it becomes a very negative work environment. Many POs I talk to are STRUGGLING and are not even close to maintaining a healthy work/life balance. I wake in the middle of the night thinking about what I need to get done. I worry about taking time off. I don't sleep well on Sundays as I know I have to go back to work the next day and the stress keeps me up. It's hard to manage a desire to do a good job and to have pride in our work and just not having enough time to meet our own personal standards of a good job. I feel emotionally and physically exhausted at the end of most days.”

“Increase in stress and frustration. Feeling like you can't book leave or be sick as the workload will build up.”

“Anxiety has increased over the years; I can't truly enjoy my vacations as I know I'm coming back to a big mess.”

“Loss of sleep, mental exhaustion, agitation, anger, lashing out, no sense of calmness or order, stress, significant anxiety.”

“I have less patience for things. I find myself Getting angry at the little things. I'm tired all the time.”

“I am physically and mentally exhausted at the end of the day. When I get home, I do not feel comfortable interacting with my family. This caused a lot of stress at home and created a negative home environment not much different than the one we have at work. The next day, I come in to work tired and the cycle goes on.”

“Overwork has a negative effect on my psychological and physical health. I recently dropped a position that was a promotion because the workload bothered me both physically and psychologically. The clientele (sex offender) influences my reactions as a parent and how I look after my children.”

“I would like to change jobs”

11. Impacts on the physical and psychological health of Community Parole Officers

“I do not take lunch, other than eating at my desk. I put the work before any physical activity into my day.”

“The sheer volume of information about the harm our offenders have caused to others as well as the various traumas they have experienced wears on you. Not to mention having to meet with offenders daily, knowing what they have done to other people, and trying to build rapport and help them while monitoring public safety. On top of all of that we are inundated with more and more paperwork and documentation. The entire job is physically and psychologically exhausting some days.”

“There is no support for the emotional/mental toll of the work - managing the lives of 18 - 22 adults who cannot manage their own; or for the vicarious trauma experienced on a regular basis; or for the psychological and physical toll of hyper vigilance, or the way that hyper vigilance begins to take over your personal life as well as your work life and the impact this has on your family; or for the psychological impact of working with someone who could turn on you in a second and who has demonstrated the ability and willingness to maim or kill in the past; etc.”

“Feeling tired a lot, no work life balance because you're too tired when you have any down time, you have no energy and needing to take sick days.”

“Typing most of the time affects the body long term. By the nature of the people that we deal with our mental health is not considered. There is a push to this concern right now but it has existed since I started. Just another ticky box. Headaches & loss of sleep due to thinking about what all needs to be done.”

“Missed or rushed lunch breaks create unhealthy eating habits, inability to get needed physical exercise and inability to release and/or reduce stress. This is then taken home and stress is taken out on family members.”

“I have taken sick leave due to the demands of work as well as the toxicity level of the office. Workplace incivility is at a high and when combined with the unattainable workload, creates a lot of damage to one's psychological and physical health.”

“Vicarious trauma has indeed affected me after having done this work for over 30 years. Although management pretend that they are concerned, all that really matters is that the work is completed and the bonuses are received at year end. The bottom line is that I am directly responsible for taking care of both my psychological and physical health.”

“Irritable, looking at retiring early and being retrained. Tired of the content of files. I returned from a maternity leave to have several child abusers and woman who murdered their babies on my caseload. It just made me feel ill and angry every time I met with these clients.”

“Need for better counseling resources. Need for better management support during investigations i.e. death of offenders in the community. A lot of vicarious trauma and we don’t always feel supported by upper management.”

“There is no time to take a breather. There needs to be time for family and breaks. But there is too much to do to aim or balance.”

“Has negatively affected my home life. Weight gain. Stress related headaches and issues related to lack of sleep. workload was a huge part of this.”

“There is an oppressive sense of anxiety about high accountability and the impossibility of attending to everything. The rigid timeframes for non-necessary issues is reflective of a lack of trust for front line staff. Feeling like you are always under scrutiny and blamed for everything makes you feel hopeless.”

“Supervisor is not supportive of having discussions about workload/add-ons. As such, Parole Officers are left to ‘deal with it.’”

“The increased level of work has resulted in an increased output at work to keep up which has reduced energy to expend with family or with physical activity.”

“Not able to stop thinking about work when I am not there.”

“Too much work = stress = anxiety = cannot concentrate = work piles up = too much work - vicious cycle”

“I’m responsible for monitoring high-risk offenders 24-7. I can’t sleep because I worry about risk that goes unmonitored.”

“Being asked to do more with less, feeling inadequate about not being able to keep up with the demand. CSC has a report for everything and the information is totally redundant in many reports but the philosophy continues to call for more report writing which means less time with offenders which should be the focus. This creates anxiety in PO's because they know they can't properly manage their caseload and write reports to the level required without something being missed or neglected.”

“Community parole officers are more likely to experience burn out, the unpredictable nature of our job results in inefficiencies, the amount of time we spend on road for community visits and then having to commute home is draining, we don’t take wellness breaks, there’s little flexibility to engage in fitness activities while on the clock, offenders are entitled and call and text at all hours of the day therefore we need to set boundaries, community parole officers inherently have more accountability and responsibility. Many of us need work from home days

but the imposed district wide telework agreement indicates we have to choose 1 specific day not being a Monday or Friday and always have to stick to that day. We should be trusted to work from home when we deem fit. We lose interest in our jobs, we become robotic and jaded, we lose our sense of humanity when we experience stress and burnout and there is no support for community parole officers.”

“So many years of working extra hours without compensation takes a toll as the job is demanding enough without feeling unappreciated.”

“I am not the same person I was when I started.”

“Stress is a leading cause of health issues; often at work, I work through my lunch hour so that I can leave on time. I eat at my desk, which is not healthy. CSC does not promote health in the workplace. We are not encouraged to take breaks. A healthier workplace would lead to higher productivity as well. I find that I often carry my stress into my home life.”

“I am nearing retirement. I have always loved my job and my work but due to the organizational demands and culture I no longer look forward to going to work and am simply counting off days to retirement.”

“Panic and anxiety increase due to feeling PER (Performance Evaluation Report) will be not met and potential being fired.”

“Excess fatigue leads to lack of energy for personal activities which leads to an increase in weight which leads to sleep problems and general health problems.”

“The impacts are major and have long-term effects. Many sick days have occurred at our office and the overload creates conflict within the team making the work environment negative. For my part, the work overload and stress related to my job give me sleep problems, make me more irritable and have direct impacts on my health.”

“POs are burned out in general, at least in our office. Unfilled positions bring a lot of instability and incredible staff turnover. In addition, we have been without an assistant for several months, which means that we often have to perform additional clerical tasks.”

“Definitely at risk of professional fatigue. Just this week, I worked 44.5 hours without compensation for overtime. Time that I am not able to get back (overwork) and time that I steal from my family (I am too tired and less available).”

12. Issues affecting public safety: Institutional Parole Officers

“I worry all the time that I might miss something because I am so busy. I don’t have enough time to see my offenders on my caseload and write reports. It’s important to meet regularly with offenders. Not just when they are accumulating institutional charges and being segregated. Regular check-ins are important so you gain a better understanding of the person

you are working with. The work load doesn't allow for that. Mostly there is time to put out fires and write reports."

"I struggle to get everything completing during the day. I've developed several shortcuts to complete tasks but this is not good business."

"I don't have time to do thorough file reviews because of all of legislated reviews I need to do in addition to working with offenders to move cases along. I'm sure important things are being missed and I don't feel as confident in my recommendations."

"Burnout and rushing to complete legislated or site specific reports/actions results in less than desirable output. Stress and trauma to our PO's is evident and doesn't appear to be properly accounted for nor does the employer do a good job of caring for our members."

"Parole officer is the gateway between offenders and the publics. Exhausted parole officers cannot properly conduct their duties to protect public."

"The importance of strong release planning. If I had more time, I would work closely with offenders to develop comprehensive and risk relevant release plans. I often find myself releasing offenders to no fixed address, with little identification and little to no resources to assist them in the community. I also am only familiar with the resources within my own region. I know virtually nothing about other regions and the resources they have to offer. Taking into account the recent shift toward inter-regional transfers due to population pressures, this becomes troublesome when returning these offenders to their home region. Many offenders are also in need of regular motivational interviewing. Many with a history of trauma take a long time, if they ever, begin to trust and open up about their issues. If I had more time to create that rapport, I'd be better able to determine their needs and related risk management strategies."

"In my opinion, there is a huge difference between getting a job done and doing it properly/well. When caseload numbers are high as well as site best practices, then it is difficult to do the job well. For example, it is one thing to tell an inmate his parole board hearing date but it is another to take the time to sit with him and explain what to expect and how to prepare. Without having the time to meet with our offenders and actually talk with them it is difficult to accurately assess their risk."

"Having more parole officer and less inmates on our case load would increase public safety. This would allow adequate time to do our job in a meaningful way. Having coverage for our job when taking more than 7 days off continuously would affect public safety. In the institution we often have to deal with high risk individuals and confrontational behaviour that is often escalated more in the institution than in the community because of environment and population."

"Parole Officers are required to complete tasks that are not parole related and so we lose focus on parole and public safety. We end up only actively working on a case up for parole for a few

months just before the hearing rather than working with the offenders a year or years before a hearing. We end up interviewing offenders for such a short duration of time because we are tasked to do other duties.”

“The added stress and mental fatigue increases the chance that we might miss some important bit of information or not see clues that might be right in front of us that an offender might be at the beginning of their crime cycle. We need to have clear minds to be able to connect the dots, assess the offenders’ non-verbal cues, ask the important questions. I’m so busy trying to keep my head above water, that the chances that I’m missing things is inevitable. I feel like my integrity is being compromised because I have HAD to accept that I cannot look under every rock and this has affected my professionalism and care in my work.”

“The workload is busy and I often worry I will miss something in my assessment.”

“The mantra doing more with less impacts public safety. Parole officers don’t have time to review all files when prepping a case for release.”

13. Issues affecting public safety: Community Parole Officers

“Over worked - burnout - as a result inadequate oversight - which then results in decrease of public safety.”

“We spend more time covering our asses as opposed to having the time to interact effectively with the offenders. The pressure is reports done on time and CWR and whatever ridiculous training they come up with next. A lot of time wasted on doing things so upper management can check them off their list.”

“Lack of hands on training. Sure, training is provided but is directed by people who have not done the job. The department falls short of adequately training new PO's and there are many more of them these days with the numbers that are leaving/have left due to retirement and other reasons. We currently have a shortage of male Parole Officers which affects Public Safety.”

“Too much administrative work, FOCs (Frequency of Contact) and offenders on one caseload often means that other tasks are negated i.e. not spending as much time reviewing/recalling aspects within the entire file which could be pertinent in assisting monitoring and ensuring public safety. Negative environment and poor morale can lead staff to have less interest in doing the job that well. Too much burnout makes it appear impossible to keep up and hence can jeopardize public safety.”

“The quality of PO's being hired can affect public safety. Many require adequate training and competitions need to reflect proper selection of PO's. Many don't have as much life experience and thus, while young, there must be a number of tests to evaluate effectively the types of people who are coming into Corrections. You also have to have strong management to look at the ever-changing numbers of staff and how that decrease impacts workload on others and

thus create reduced levels of proper analysis. The negative environment is also a factor in affecting public safety.”

“Being stuck at a keyboard. Nobody's life changed as a result of what was written in a report. It comes from meaningful face to face meetings.”

“We have had problems with complex cases that have fallen through a crack, because of the lack of open dialogue. I feel that we are all tasked with way too much computer requirements that have taken away from our personal interactions.”

“Overwork causes fatigue burnout leading things to be missed less time paid and afforded to offenders who ultimately require it.”

“Lack of sufficient time to properly address offender needs and risk - increased stress can lead to oversights, mistakes - not enough time or energy spent on the things that really matter (i.e. in community, doing more with less means less time for collateral contacts, meaningful discussions, etc.)”

“Worrying about deadlines for reports and not paying enough attention to the offenders, works on paperwork and again not having time to sit and talk with your offenders for any length of time.”

“There is not enough time to work with community partners to assist in bridging the transition from release to freedom. There is a disconnect between the level of services provided to inmates while in the institution and when they are released to some form of conditional release.”

“Realistically, many community agencies are ill-prepared to provide the types of resources or depth of intervention required to do effective risk relevant programming. The bottom line is that this compromises public safety because offenders are not receiving proper risk relevant intervention. Also, CSC's determination to quantify parole work and staff accordingly is burning out an entire generation of parole officers who are being exhausted by the "email treadmill", redundant report writing, one size fits all approach to training for PO's and taking away professional discretion of PO's creating a PO workforce of individuals who can't think subjectively because they've been raised on prescriptive policy.”¹¹

“We need a culture that embraces diversity in thought and ideas. We need time to work collaboratively with our NGO (Non-Governmental Organization) and criminal justice partners to make effective change in the lives of offenders and public safety.”¹²

¹¹ Community POs' answers: Do you have any comments regarding CSC's current direction and how it impacts offender outcomes?

¹² Community POs' answers: What other issues are important for the CSC to address in order to support you being the most effective in your job?