



# FYI



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On May 31, your BCGEU Component 1 (Corrections and Sheriff Services) leadership met with officials from the Workers' Compensation Board (WorkSafeBC) to discuss the many serious matters of concern for members in Corrections Services. Attending the meeting for your union was BCGEU Vice President and Component 1 Chair Dean Purdy, Component 1 First Vice-Chair Brandon Cox, and BCGEU Director of Field Services Doug Dykens.

During the last decade, despite a declining inmate population, we have seen increased numbers of assaults in our workplaces – a record of 124 in 2018. The combination of more serious violent offenders and rising inmate-to-officer ratios has put members at a greater risk of serious harm than they have been at any time in the past.

For the past five years your executive has been raising issues of workplace safety, the rise in horrific violence towards corrections officers, and your concerns at the lack of support from BC Adult Corrections. Frustratingly, instead of addressing our concerns, in many cases it seems that there has been increased lenience toward inmates who commit assaults on corrections officers.

This trend must not continue. We can no longer be subject to the growing number of violent attacks taking place around the province. These attacks—criminal in nature—have impacted the lives of many members. As the employer, Adult Corrections has a legal responsibility at the workplace, and the crown has a legal responsibility to treat assaults as a criminal matter.

To address these concerns, at this and previous meetings with WorkSafeBC and Minister Farnworth, we have called for:

- An immediate in-depth, rigorous review of workplace safety in adult corrections in B.C. In order to ensure accountability and consistency, such a review should take place on an annual basis.
- Amendments to the legislative framework that governs WorkSafeBC to provide stronger protections for corrections officers. The high ratios of inmates-to-officers are a major contributor to this trend which has been largely ignored.
- Simple policy and procedure changes that would instantly improve workplace safety, like removing microwaves from living units in maximum security centres. WorkSafeBC ordered them removed from Prince George, but not others.

Your executive is committed to holding the employer accountable and will continue to stand strong to protect our members in Corrections Services. Meetings with Adult Corrections, WorkSafeBC, and government will continue, but we will not limit our work to those channels. Given the lack of action by Adult Corrections, we are developing the next phase of our Prison Safety Now campaign to bring awareness of this disturbing trend to the general public. In order to do so, it's imperative that we stand united, so it is important that when there are opportunities for officers to support the campaign they do so.

Your component leadership knows these concerns are reaching a boiling point among the membership, and we are worried about what will happen.

