

January 2015

AN AUDIT OF THE ADULT CUSTODY DIVISION'S CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES AND PROGRAMS

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The Honourable Linda Reid
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly
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Dear Madame Speaker:

I have the honour to transmit to the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia my report, *An Audit of the Adult Custody Division's Correctional Facilities and Programs*.

We conducted this audit under the authority of section 11 (8) of the *Auditor General Act* and in accordance with the standards for assurance engagements set out by the Chartered Professional Accountants of Canada (CPA) in the CPA Handbook - Assurance.

The purpose of this audit was to determine whether the Adult Custody Division is planning for, and providing, the facilities and programs it needs to meet its mission.

My report contains several recommendations to assist the Adult Custody Division in demonstrating its effectiveness with the resources that it has available, in proactively managing its performance, and in making decisions that are fully informed by evidence.

We wish to acknowledge the dedicated staff at the Adult Custody Division for their cooperation with this audit and for the important role that they play in our criminal justice system.

Carol Bellringer, FCA
Auditor General
Victoria, British Columbia
January 2015

TABLE OF CONTENTS

AUDITOR GENERAL'S COMMENTS	4
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	5
SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS	7
RESPONSE FROM THE MINISTRY OF JUSTICE	8
DETAILED REPORT	10
Background	10
Audit objectives and scope	15
Audit conclusion	16
Key findings and recommendations	16
<i>Providing safe, secure custody through correctional facilities</i>	16
<i>Reducing criminal behaviour through programs</i>	21
<i>Complying with current policy and legislation</i>	24
APPENDIX A – Adult Custody Division Working Group: Special Population Management Strategies	31

JURISDICTIONS ACROSS CANADA have been challenged with meeting increasing demands on correctional services. As a result of concerns raised about overcrowding in BC correctional centres, we carried out this audit to determine whether the Adult Custody Division of the Ministry of Justice is effectively managing capacity to ensure safe and secure custody, and providing programs to reduce re-offending.

Correctional centres in British Columbia are over capacity, operating at 140% occupancy on average with individual centres ranging from 107% to 177%. Prison overcrowding increases risks to both inmates and staff, and contributes to rising tension and the potential for conflicts. Although the Adult Custody Division regularly inspects, assesses risks, and monitors and reviews critical incidents, it cannot adequately demonstrate whether operating its prisons at these levels provides for safe custody.

In this audit, we also found that inmates are not getting timely access to programs that can reduce their risk of re-offending once they are released. Our 2011 report, *Effectiveness of Community Corrections*, had similar findings regarding the provision and completion of programming in the Community Corrections Division. Re-offending has a direct cost to taxpayers and poses safety risks to communities.

For the Adult Custody Division to achieve its mission, it needs to focus more on proactively managing to achieve desired results. This includes mapping out what the Division wants to achieve and how it will get there, as well as making decisions that are fully informed by evidence.

Given these audit findings, we have made several recommendations to support the Adult Custody Division in planning for, and providing, the facilities and programs it needs to meet its mission.

Many factors contribute to custody pressures, criminal behaviour and re-offending; this audit only examined one part of the criminal justice system. Improving outcomes requires strategies and approaches that consider the broader criminal justice system.

We wish to acknowledge the dedicated staff we met throughout this audit and the important role they play in our criminal justice system. Their cooperation with this audit is appreciated.



Carol Bellringer, FCA
Auditor General
Victoria, BC
January 2015



CAROL BELLRINGER, FCA
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CORRECTIONAL CUSTODY REFERS TO the imprisonment of individuals who have been convicted of a crime, or who are being held awaiting a trial, sentencing or review. In Canada, correctional custody is a shared responsibility between federal and provincial/territorial governments.

The Government of British Columbia is responsible for the custody of adults over 18 years of age who are serving a provincial jail sentence of up to two years less a day, being held while awaiting trial or sentencing, or being held pending an immigration review.

Just under 16,000 inmates were admitted into BC's nine correctional centres in 2013/14, with an average daily inmate count of 2,425. Approximately half were sentenced offenders, and half were inmates awaiting trial or sentencing.

The Adult Custody Division, within the BC Ministry of Justice, is responsible for providing in-custody correctional supervision for all adult inmates. The Division's mission is to **“provide safe and secure custody of inmates and deliver programs that promote public safety and reduce criminal behaviour.”** Providing safe and secure custody fulfills court judgements and reducing criminal behaviour increases public safety. Reducing re-offending can also reduce the social and economic costs associated with crime, and the direct costs of incarcerating individuals.

We carried out this audit to determine whether the Adult Custody Division is planning for, and providing, the *facilities* and *programs* it needs to meet its mission.

Overall, we found that the Division's lack of attention to performance management, evidence-based decision making, and offender programming increase the risk to inmate, staff and public safety. More attention to these areas would increase the likelihood that the Division directs time and money into programs and facilities that are effective.

Correctional facilities

In 2010, BC was experiencing one of the highest rates of double-bunking among Canadian provinces, with the average occupancy rate across all centres at 176%. Overcrowding can increase tension and risks of conflict between inmates and staff, make separating incompatible inmate populations more challenging, and reduce opportunities for rehabilitative programming.

Over the last seven years, Treasury Board has approved approximately \$475 million in capital expansion projects that, when completed, will add over 800 new cells, increasing bed space by 58% since 2007. This is relieving some of the overcrowding pressures. Due to these capacity expansions and a recent drop in inmate numbers, the Division's facilities were operating at 140% occupancy on average at the time of the audit, with individual centres ranging from 107% to 177%. These figures are based on available

living units in correctional centres. We observed that during the period of our audit the Division had a number of units closed for budgetary reasons, which affects available capacity.

We found the Division was unable to demonstrate that it has the right amount or type of facilities needed to provide safe, secure custody. The Division does assess the safety and security of its facilities by engaging in regular inspections, risk assessments and monitoring, as well as critical incident reviews. However, the Division has not:

- ♦ defined performance expectations for safety, security and occupancy, or assessed its current performance;
- ♦ demonstrated that it has analyzed the increasing number of inmate safety and security incidents to identify how differences in facility operation, design or occupancy affect safety and security;
- ♦ analyzed the characteristics of the inmate population to fully inform short and long-term decisions regarding facilities; or
- ♦ fully assessed the effectiveness of strategies used to manage capacity, such as housing sentenced and non-sentenced inmates together and regularly moving inmates between centres to relieve pressures.

We also found that the Division was meeting some, but not all, of its legislated requirements and policy expectations for accommodating inmates. In our sample of inmate files, we found that 70% of inmates received timely access to living space that is suited for their population designation (e.g., general population, protective custody) and security classification (open, medium, secure). However, we found that the Division did not consistently house non-sentenced inmates separately from sentenced inmates, as outlined in the *Corrections Act Regulation*.

Offender programs

The Division offers core programs for sentenced inmates (offenders) that are specifically designed to reduce re-offending, by targeting issues that contribute to a criminal lifestyle and influence inmates' patterns of thinking and behaviour.

For the sample of offender files we examined, we found that the Division in most cases did not meet legislation or policy expectations to provide offenders with timely access to core programs. The Division recommended core programs that aligned with case management plans in only 27% of the files that we examined. In total, only 15% of sampled offenders fully or partially completed those core programs.

We also found the Division has not ensured that the programs offered are effective. It has no framework in place to drive the planning, implementation and evaluation of offender programs. It has not determined whether it has the right number and type of programs in place to reduce criminal behaviour. Evaluations conducted by the Division to date have shown that only one of the five core programs offered reduces re-offending. Furthermore, the Division has not analyzed the inmate population to identify current and future program needs so that it can direct resources at higher risk/needs cases.

We recommend that the Adult Custody Division of the Ministry of Justice:

- 1** develop and implement a complete performance management framework of goals, objectives, strategies, performance measures and targets to achieve safe and secure custody, and reduce criminal behaviour. This would include defining appropriate occupancy levels for correctional centres.
- 2** periodically assess trends in safety and security within and across correctional centres to understand how differences in operation, design or occupancy contribute to incidents and use the results to reduce the risk of reoccurrences.
- 3** develop and implement an approach to forecasting facility space and program needs that accounts for the complexity of the inmate population, such as changes in population groups or shifts in population trends.
- 4** ensure that decisions regarding facility space and programs fully reflect key characteristics of the inmate population (such as security designation, population classification, legal status, etc.).
- 5** periodically assess the effectiveness of all programs intended to reduce re-offending and use the results to identify and implement improvements in programming.
- 6** implement a quality assurance system across correctional centres to monitor and continuously improve the classification and case management of inmates.
- 7** examine the impact of housing sentenced and non-sentenced inmates together and implement an appropriate approach for meeting the requirements of the *Corrections Act Regulation*.
- 8** review the case management process to identify and address the barriers to offenders getting timely access to the programs they need to reduce criminal behaviour. This would include evaluating and improving the reliability of the risk/needs assessment used to identify programs for offenders.

AS A RECOGNIZED LEADER in the field of corrections, we continually seek ways to improve the delivery of our programs and services for the citizens of British Columbia. For this reason, BC Corrections appreciates the work of the Office of the Auditor General in their Performance Audit of the Adult Custody Division's facilities and programs. The resulting recommendations provide an opportunity for us to build on our best practices and meet our vision, mandate and goals that focus on reducing reoffending, protecting communities and providing safe and secure custody of inmates.

We would like to thank all of our dedicated correctional professionals who work on the front lines 24/7 in our centres to meet these goals and to provide public safety to communities throughout the province. We would also like to extend a special thank you to the many staff who worked diligently to ensure the auditors received the information and assistance required to conduct this audit.

BC Corrections accepts there are areas that can be improved upon, particularly with respect to performance management, quality assurance and the delivery of programming. At the same time, we are pleased that the Auditor General recognized a number of areas where we are succeeding. The Auditor General acknowledged that we place the highest importance on the safety and security component of our mission and that we regularly monitor, assess and follow up on safety and security issues. They also accepted that we have been successful in reducing capacity pressures through our capital expansion projects that have added significant capacity throughout the province.

The ministry and BC Corrections accept the Auditor General's findings and are taking action to address the issues identified by the audit, as outlined below in our responses to the recommendations.

RECOMMENDATION 1: *Develop and implement a complete performance management framework of goals, objectives, strategies, performance measures and targets to achieve safe and secure custody, and reduce criminal behaviour. This would include defining appropriate capacity levels for correctional centres.*

The Adult Custody Division will implement a performance management framework to add measures and targets to our strategic plans and project objectives to achieve safe and secure custody, and reduce criminal behavior.

RECOMMENDATION 2: *Periodically assess trends in safety and security within and across correctional centres to understand how differences in operation, design or capacity contribute to incidents and use the results to reduce the risk of reoccurrence.*

Through the regular assessment of safety and security incidents, BC Corrections will look for trends and indicators that point to factors that contribute to safety incidents occurring and use the results to reduce the risk of reoccurrence.

RECOMMENDATION 3: *Develop and implement an approach to forecasting facility space and program needs that accounts for the complexity of the inmate population, such as changes in population groups or shifts in population trends.*

RECOMMENDATION 4: *Ensure that decisions regarding facility space and programs fully reflect key characteristics of the inmate population (such as security designation, population classification, legal status, etc.).*

In response to recommendations 3 and 4, BC Corrections will continue to refine our forecasting techniques for facility space and program needs. We will explore what factors could forecast shifts in the complexity of the inmate population. And where such factors can be established, we will use that forecast information to inform decisions regarding facility space and program needs.

RECOMMENDATION 5: *Periodically assess the effectiveness of all programs intended to reduce re-offending and use the results to identify and implement improvements in programming.*

BC Corrections will continue to assess the effectiveness of all core programs which are intended to reduce reoffending and use the results to identify and implement improvements in programming, as we have done in previous evaluations.

RECOMMENDATION 6: *Implement a quality assurance system across correctional centres to monitor and continuously improve the classification and case management of inmates.*

Building on the performance management framework outlined in recommendation 1, the Adult Custody Division will implement a case management quality assurance system to monitor classification and improve the case management of inmates.

RECOMMENDATION 7: *Examine the impact of housing sentenced and non-sentenced inmates together and implement an appropriate approach for meeting the requirements of the Corrections Act Regulation.*

The Division will look at ways to examine the impact of housing sentenced and non-sentenced inmates together and ensure our approach meets the requirements of the Corrections Act Regulation.

RECOMMENDATION 8: *Review the case management process to identify and address the barriers to offenders getting timely access to programs they need to reduce criminal behaviour. This would include evaluating and improving the reliability of the risk/needs assessment used to identify programs for offenders.*

The Adult Custody Division will use the performance management framework and the case management quality assurance system to identify and address barriers to offenders getting timely access to programming that reduces criminal behavior.

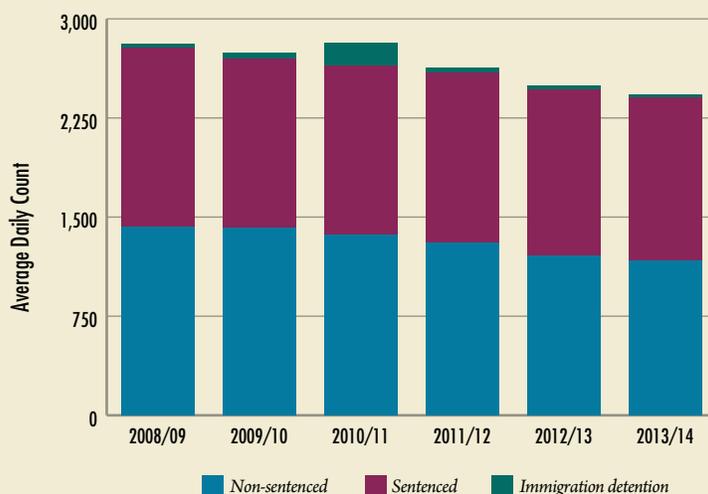
BACKGROUND

Correctional custody refers to the imprisonment of individuals convicted of a crime, or held awaiting a trial, sentencing, or review. Other forms of correctional supervision include conditional sentences, parole, and probation. In Canada, correctional supervision is a shared responsibility between federal and provincial/territorial governments. Provincial and territorial systems are responsible for adult offenders serving sentences of less than two years, persons held while awaiting trial or sentencing, offenders serving community sentences (e.g., probation or conditional sentences), and youth offenders.

In British Columbia, the responsibility for enforcing court ordered supervision lies with BC Corrections, within the Ministry of Justice. Within BC Corrections, the Adult Custody Division (the Division) oversees adults who are serving a provincial jail sentence (up to two years less a day), or are being held while awaiting trial, sentencing, or an immigration review. The Community Corrections Division is responsible for supervising offenders living in the community (approximately 22,000 individuals are supervised in the community on a given day). Youth custody services are under the responsibility of the Ministry of Children and Family Development.

The Division’s mission is to **“provide safe and secure custody of inmates, and deliver programs that promote public safety and reduce criminal behaviour.”** Holding inmates safely and securely in custody fulfills court judgements and reducing criminal behaviour increases public safety. Reducing re-offending reduces the social and economic costs associated with crime, as well as the direct costs of incarcerating individuals.

Exhibit 1: BC inmate population profile



Source: BC Corrections

The Division operates primarily under the *Corrections Act* and the *Corrections Act Regulation*. Over 1,500 full- and part-time staff manage and operate nine correctional centres across BC. Government figures show that it cost \$145 million to operate the Division in 2013/14, or approximately \$202 per inmate, per day.

The Division reported that just under 16,000 inmates were admitted into BC correctional centres in 2013/14, with an average daily count of 2,425. Approximately half were sentenced inmates and half were awaiting trial or sentencing. In 2013/14, the average length of stay was 71 days for sentenced offenders and 33 days for those awaiting trial or sentencing. Immigration detainees, held through agreement with Canada Border Services Agency under the federal *Immigration Act*, typically make up a small percentage of inmates held in provincial custody. [Exhibit 1](#) shows the breakdown of prison populations in BC over the last six years.

BC correctional centres

The Division’s nine correctional facilities range in age, design, size, and level of security. The three security levels – secure, medium and open – are a function of facility design and the degree to which inmates are able to move freely within the facility. Living units within facilities are designated into different population groups, such as general population, protective custody, and inmates with mental health needs. This allows for specialized forms of supervision for each group. [Exhibit 2](#) outlines current correctional centres in BC, and their security level.

Exhibit 2: BC correctional centres and security levels (June 2014)		
Correctional centre	Security level (secure/medium/open)	Total # of cells
Alouette Correctional Centre for Women (ACCW)	All levels	192
Ford Mountain Correctional Centre (FMCC)	Medium	94
Fraser Regional Correctional Centre (FRCC)	Secure (2 temporary open units)	304
Kamloops Regional Correctional Centre (KRCC)	Secure (1 temporary open unit)	185
Nanaimo Correctional Centre (NCC)	Medium	190
North Fraser Pretrial Centre (NFPC)	Secure	300
Prince George Regional Correctional Centre (PGRCC)	Secure (2 open units)	151 – male 25 – female
Surrey Pretrial Services Centre (SPSC)	Secure	365
Vancouver Island Regional Correctional Centre (VIRCC)	Secure	207
Total number of cells in BC		2,013

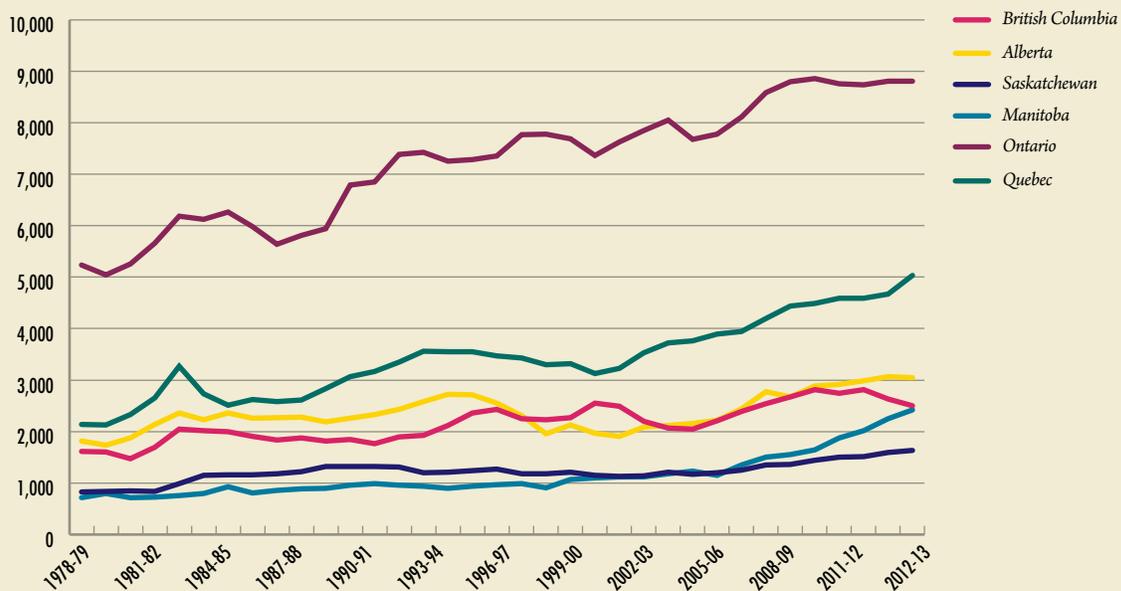
Source: BC Corrections

Trends in inmate populations

Federal and provincial/territorial inmate populations have increased over the past three decades. [Exhibit 3](#) shows some of the increases in inmate counts since 1978/79. Factors that can impact inmate populations include:

- ◆ general population growth;
- ◆ trends in the type and number of crimes;
- ◆ shifts in policing;
- ◆ changes in legislation and sentencing; and
- ◆ variations in legal case processing times.

Exhibit 3: Provincial Adult Custody Services, average inmate counts (in custody) 1978/79 - 2012/13



Source: Statistics Canada

According to Statistics Canada, the annual average number of inmates in BC has increased by 42% since 1990/91. In that same time, BC Statistics reports that the total BC population increased by 36%. This growth in the number of inmates, as well as the closure of 10 provincial facilities in 2002, contributed to extensive double-bunking in cells, almost all of which were designed for single occupancy. In 2010, the Canadian Parliamentary Budget Officer reported that BC was experiencing among the highest rates of double-bunking in Canada, with the average occupancy of 176% across its correctional centres. Due to facility expansions and a recent drop in inmate numbers, correctional centres were operating at 140% occupancy overall at the time of the audit, with individual centres ranging from 107% to 177% (see [Exhibit 4](#)). On average, this means that over half of inmates were sharing cells. These figures are based on the

number of available living units in correctional centres; some units were closed to meet budget targets.

According to BC Corrections and corrections literature, prison overcrowding can adversely affect staff and inmates. This includes:

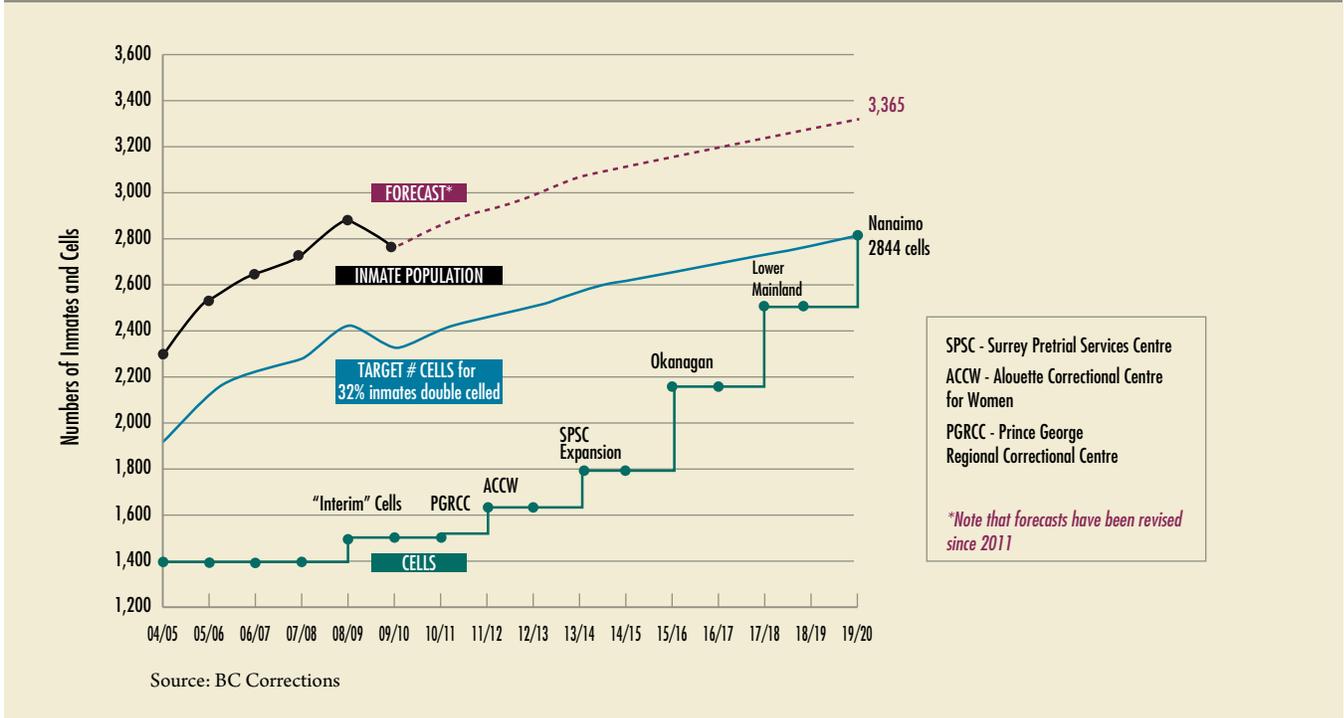
- ◆ greater challenges separating incompatible inmates;
- ◆ reduced opportunities for rehabilitative, training, educational and recreational programming;
- ◆ increased tension and risk of conflict between inmates and staff; and
- ◆ higher rates of illness and suicide among inmates.

Exhibit 4: Selected daily occupancy rates in BC correctional centres

Correctional centre	Occupancy rate Mar. 2011	Occupancy rate Nov. 2012	Occupancy rate Jun. 2014
Facilities for females			
Alouette Correctional Centre for Women (ACCW)	81%	84%	110%
Prince George Regional Correctional Centre (PGRCC)	108%	80%	112%
Surrey Pretrial Services Centre (SPSC)	222%	N/A*	N/A*
Total	119%	83%	110%
Facilities for males			
Ford Mountain Correctional Centre (FMCC)	105%	103%	107%
Fraser Regional Correctional Centre (FRCC)	164%	153%	142%
Kamloops Regional Correctional Centre (KRCC)	179%	146%	154%
Nanaimo Correctional Centre (NCC)	96%	96%	161%
North Fraser Pretrial Centre	194%	179%	122%
Prince George Regional Correctional Centre (PGRCC)	175%	152%	165%
Surrey Pretrial Services Centre (SPSC)	170%	144%	136%
Vancouver Island Regional Correctional Centre (VIRCC)	157%	147%	177%
Total	161%	146%	143%
Total Overall	157%	138%	140%

*Note that in November 2012, women were no longer housed at Surrey Pretrial Services Centre
Source: BC Corrections

Exhibit 5: BC Corrections 2011 Capital Asset Management Plan implementation steps



To manage those risks, BC Corrections’ 2007 and 2011 Capital Asset Management Plans proposed to expand custody capacity (see Exhibit 5). Treasury Board subsequently approved approximately \$475 million in capital expansion projects that, when completed, will add over 800 new temporary and permanent cells (representing a 58% increase over 2007 capacity). This includes the recent expansion of the Surrey Pre-trial Services Centre and the upcoming build of the Okanagan Correctional Centre. The most recent BC Corrections forecasting data approximates that the average daily count of inmates is expected to increase to 3,000 in 2022/2023. This would mean an average occupancy rate of 121%, with 35% of inmates double-bunked.

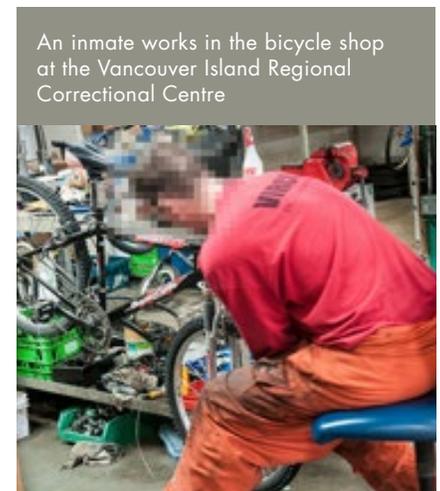
BC Corrections programming

Within correctional centres, the Division offers inmates a range of programs, as required by the *Corrections Act Regulation*. Programming covers different topics, including: religion, recreation, education and training, and programs designed to assist inmates in reducing the risk they present to the community.

To reduce the risk of re-offending, the Division offers core programs designed to influence inmates’ patterns of thinking and behaviour that contribute to a criminal lifestyle.

Core programs currently available in BC correctional centres include:

- ◆ *Respectful Relationships*: designed to provide participants with a greater understanding of abusive behaviours and develop strategies to end the violence in their lives.



Source: BC Corrections

- ◆ *Substance Abuse Management Program*: designed to reduce substance abuse relapse and help offenders develop healthier lifestyles.
- ◆ *Violence Prevention*: designed to reduce aggressive behaviour.
- ◆ *Emotions Management for Women*: designed to help female offenders develop basic skills for managing difficult emotions in a way that leads to healthy, productive outcomes.
- ◆ *Relationship Skills for Women*: designed to teach female offenders how to become more skilled at developing and maintaining healthy relationships.

[Exhibit 6](#) provides an overview of other programs offered at BC correctional centres.

Exhibit 6: Non-core programs at BC correctional centres

In addition to core programs, inmate programming offered at correctional centers can include:

- *Essential Skills to Success* – short classes teaching life skills, such as how to complete a resume
- *Work and vocational skills* – hands-on work experience (fire suppression, carpentry, kitchen)
- *Educational programs* – partnerships with educational institutions help inmates achieve diplomas and improve their education
- *Literacy skills* – improving inmates’ reading and writing skills
- *Guthrie House* – intensive treatment and counselling ([see p. 23](#))

Source: BC Corrections

AUDIT OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE

We examined whether the Adult Custody Division is:

- ◆ planning for, and providing, the facilities it needs to deliver safe and secure custody;
- ◆ planning for, and providing, the programs inmates need to reduce criminal behaviour; and
- ◆ providing inmates with access to facilities and programs that are consistent with current policies and legislation.

The first two objectives of the audit focused on the effectiveness of the Division in meeting its mission, and the third assessed compliance with current policy and legislation.

We based our audit expectations on applicable policy and legislation, correctional planning guides, discussions with Division staff, and the advice of two subject matter

experts. We also reviewed the BC government's *Capital Asset Management Framework*, capital planning frameworks, examples from other jurisdictions, and similar audits conducted by other legislative audit offices.

We reviewed BC Corrections documents from 2007 to 2013, as well as some earlier documents to understand long-term capacity pressures and trends. We interviewed corrections staff from headquarters, and at eight of the nine correctional centres. We also examined a random sample of 132 inmate files, including intake assessments, living unit placement, and program case management. This work began in September 2013 and concluded in June 2014.

We conducted the audit in accordance with the standards for assurance engagements set out by the Chartered Professional Accountants of Canada (CPA) in the CPA Handbook – Assurance.

AUDIT CONCLUSION

We concluded that the Division:

- ◆ could not demonstrate that it was planning for, or providing, the facilities it needs to deliver safe and secure custody;
- ◆ was neither planning for, nor providing, the programs that inmates need to reduce criminal behaviour; and
- ◆ provided most inmates with accommodation, but not to programs designed to reduce the risk that inmates present to the community, as outlined in policy and legislation.

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Providing safe, secure custody through correctional facilities

Providing the right number and mix of correctional facilities (prisons), along with other correctional tools (staff, technology, operational policies), assists in reducing risk and meeting intended outcomes for safety and security.

To meet the safety and security portion of its mission, we expected to find that the Division had:

- ◆ established goals, objectives and performance measures for safe and secure custody;
- ◆ analyzed its inmate population to identify the facilities that it needs;

- ♦ assessed whether its current facilities deliver safe and secure custody; and
- ♦ developed, assessed and implemented strategies to address any gaps between the facilities it has and those it needs.

Overall, the Division could not demonstrate that it was identifying and providing the facilities it needs to deliver safe and secure custody.

The Adult Custody Division has not defined what safe and secure custody means or how it will be achieved

We expected to find that the Division had a performance management framework to guide its decision making and achieve its mission for safe and secure custody. [Exhibit 7](#) outlines the key components of the planning process that we expected to find. [Exhibit 8](#) provides examples of what the components might look like.

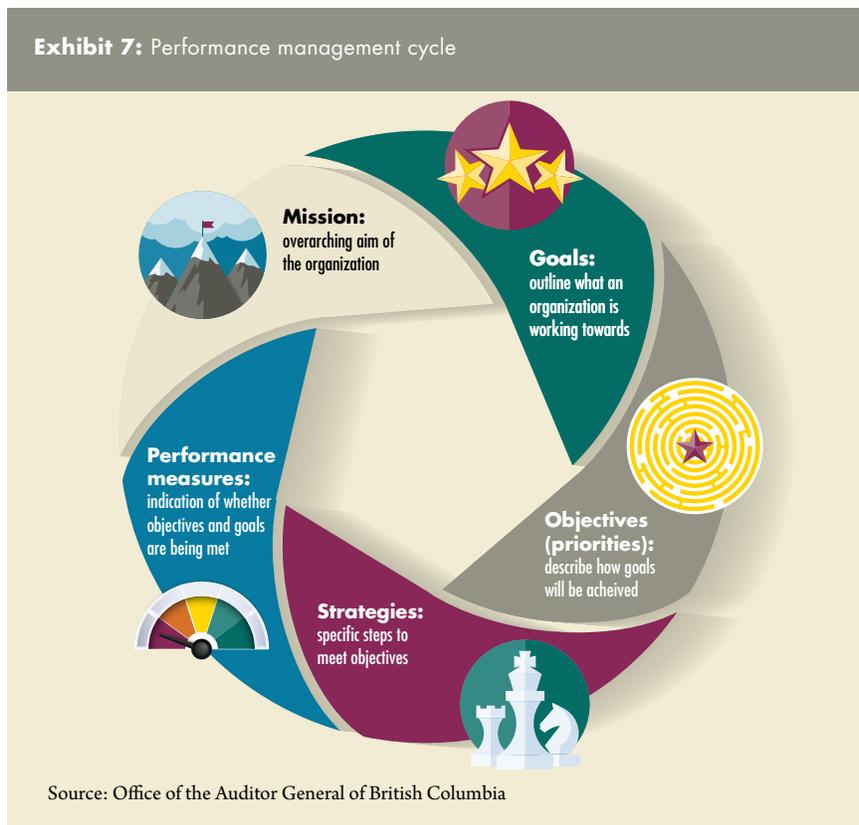


Exhibit 8: Examples of goals, objectives and performance measures from other jurisdictions

Goal: “Development of prison capacity... sufficient for a 10-year projection to accommodate all inmates in a facility appropriate for their needs and risks.” (*Carter Goble Lee, Correctional Facility Needs Assessment and Master Planning*)

Objective: “Develop, implement and evaluate [the number and type of] new beds [needed] to appropriately house offenders.” (*Idaho Department of Corrections Strategic Plan*)

Performance Measure and Target: “Decrease the rate of inmate on inmate assaults per 100 inmates by 3%.” (*Colorado Department of Corrections Strategic Plan*)

We found that the Division has goals for responding to a growing inmate population and reducing overcrowding (a component of safety and security). However, it has not defined what “safe and secure” means, how it will achieve this through goals and strategies, or how it will measure performance. Consequently, the Division lacks an overall framework to drive and support decision making, and has no means of gauging and reporting its progress and success.

Without defining what must be measured, it is impossible to gauge effectiveness and identify areas of particular challenge. Tracking performance against goals and objectives informs management decisions and highlights areas for improvement.

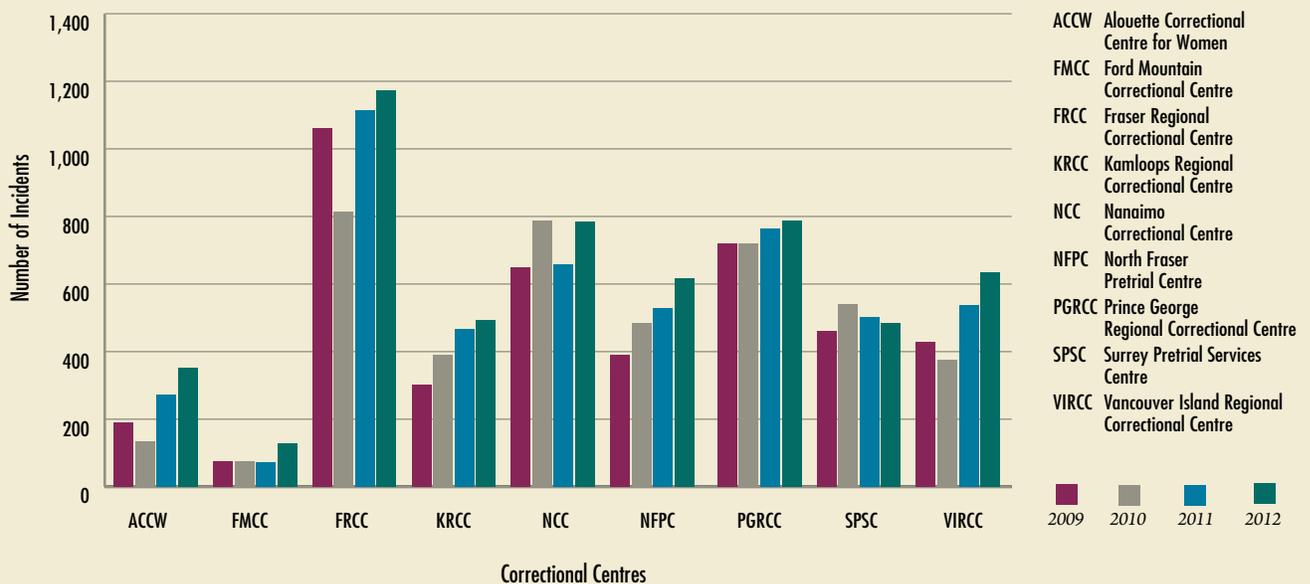
RECOMMENDATION 1: *We recommend that the Adult Custody Division develop and implement a complete performance management framework of goals, objectives, strategies, performance measures and targets to achieve safe and secure custody, and reduce criminal behaviour. This would include defining appropriate occupancy levels for correctional centres.*

The Adult Custody Division regularly assessed the safety and security of correctional centres, but did not analyze trends over time

We expected to find that the Division had assessed whether its facilities deliver safe and secure custody.

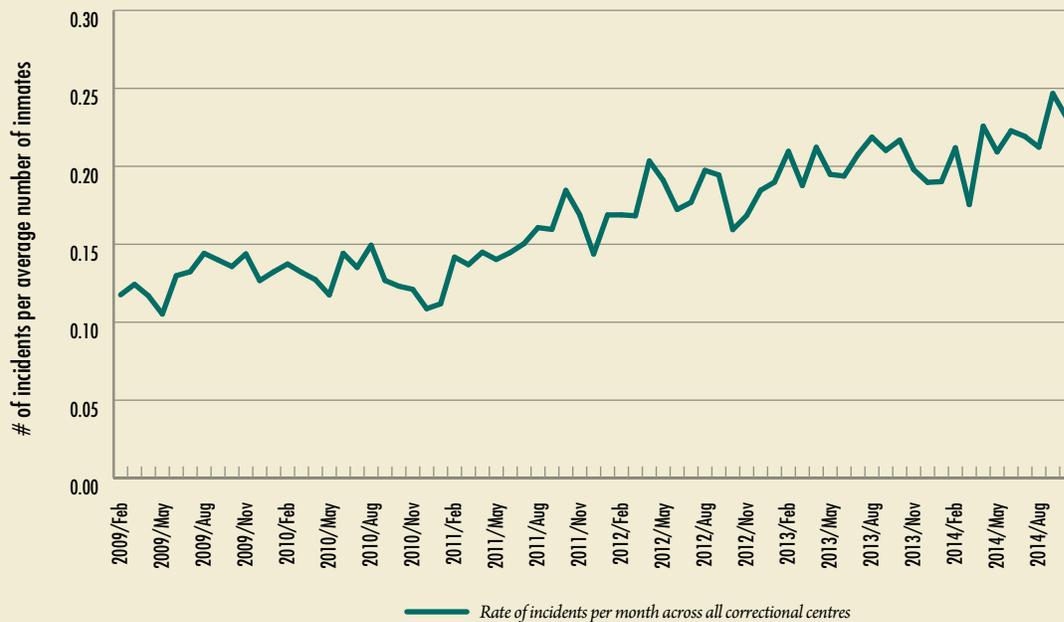
We found that while the Division regularly monitors, assesses and follows up on safety and security issues, it cannot say whether its facilities are safe and secure, because it has not defined its expectations. Nevertheless, it has processes that can identify deficiencies in safety and security and contribute to an understanding of correctional centres' safety and security. For example, the Division responds to safety and security issues after an incident occurs through incident reporting, critical incident reviews and operational reviews. The Division also conducts regular assessments of facilities and has established committees to discuss emerging trends and issues, and to work collaboratively between centres.

Exhibit 9: Safety and security incidents reported at BC correctional centres (2009 - 2012)



Source: BC Corrections

Exhibit 10: Rate of safety and security incidents per month (February 2009 - September 2014)



Source: BC Corrections

However, the Division could not demonstrate that it is analyzing trends over time or the differences between its facilities (i.e., the number and type of incidents occurring and why) to identify how differences in operation, design or occupancy contribute to safety and security incidents. Specifically, the Division has not evaluated how the current occupancy rate of 140%, or its target of 119%, affects safety.

Figures show that the number of safety and security incidents has increased in all BC correctional centres between 2009 and 2012 (see Exhibits 9 and 10). The Division told us that this reflects an increase in staff reporting, not necessarily an increase in incidents. Analyzing this data could confirm this and provide greater insight into trends.

In 2007, the Division put in place a system to track safety and security incidents, including: behaviour, critical events, contraband, injury/illness, security, and violence. Taking this work a step further by analyzing data would assist the Division with understanding safe and secure occupancy levels and identify barriers to meeting goals and objectives. Tracking what is working and not working within correctional centres would allow for continuous improvement.

RECOMMENDATION 2: *We recommend that the Adult Custody Division periodically assess trends in safety and security within and across correctional centres to understand how differences in operation, design or occupancy contribute to incidents and use the results to reduce the risk of reoccurrences.*

The Adult Custody Division has not fully determined facility needs for inmates

We expected to find that the Division identified, collected and used inmate data to make fully informed decisions about the type and amount of space it needs – now, and in the future. This would include forecasting future demand for Division accommodation and programs. Furthermore, we expected to find that the Division would use that information to develop, assess and implement strategies to address any gaps in facilities capacity.

We found that the Division collects relevant information on inmates, but does not consistently use that information to determine its short- and long-term facility needs. Also, forecasting data used by the Division to predict future demand does not account for the complexity and characteristics of the inmate population. We found that the Division has developed strategies to provide inmates with accommodation, but it does not evaluate the relative merits of those strategies. This would involve assessing the risks and benefits of strategies, such as housing sentenced and non-sentenced inmates together, and regularly moving inmates between centres to relieve pressures.

Understanding needs and implementing strategies to address gaps can reduce capacity pressures and mitigate safety and security risks. This is especially important when planning for correctional facilities, which take considerable time and money to build. Projecting the demand of the long-term prison population allows jurisdictions to plan for anticipated changes and make informed investment decisions.

We found that the Division's capital investment recommendations of the amount of future space required were informed by actual and projected population growth. The Division used forecasts to estimate the **amount** of space it needs (i.e., whether to build a new facility); however, it did not use inmate data to project the **type** of space necessary. It did not account for the complexity or characteristics of the inmate population, such as changes in population groups (e.g., mental health needs, legal status) or shifts in population trends (e.g., average length of stay for inmates, admissions rate). Despite fluctuations and cyclical trends in the inmate population, the Division has not identified key drivers of those trends to help understand system pressures, generate forecasting scenarios, and improve planning for the future.

In some situations, the Division's decisions *were* based on an assessment of the data it collects. For example, we found that the Division's decisions to change the designation of living units were generally based on an assessment of the current inmate population. Also, the Division has done some preliminary work to identify the needs of high risk populations through the Special Populations Working Group ([see Exhibit 11](#)) to inform future decision making.

In other situations, the Division explained that decisions were often made based on short-term needs, what is possible in the moment, judgement and other considerations. For example, recent facility design is intentionally standardized, based on the Division's judgement that a generic facility, built to the highest security level, will allow the greatest flexibility for housing all inmates at the lowest cost. We also observed that

the Division has closed some living units in recent years to achieve targeted budget reductions. The Division informed us that unit closures were based on experience of what the Division can safely handle, and monitored for safety implications.

Exhibit 11: Special Populations Working Group

Some inmates present specific safety and security challenges. In 2013, the Division convened the Special Populations Working Group to discuss challenges associated with these populations and develop province-wide strategies to manage them.

The Working Group considered the needs of these populations, including: causal factors, the impact of gang-affiliated inmates, and trends.

In January 2014, the Working Group issued a number of findings and recommendations, including recommendations to mitigate risks through current facility use and future facility design. The recommendations have not yet been implemented. ([See Appendix A for a list of recommendations.](#))

Source: BC Corrections

We acknowledge the importance of using experience and judgement to inform decisions, but the closure of units can limit options for housing complex inmates, and runs counter to the Division’s goal of reducing overcrowding. Further, by not connecting new facility design to analysis of inmate characteristics and evidence of what works, the Division could not demonstrate how important elements, such as the ability to separate incompatible population groups, have been integrated into design decisions for new facilities, such as the Okanagan Correctional Centre.

Given the importance and risk associated with decisions regarding correctional facility usage and design, a more complete analysis of inmate population needs and the implications of the strategies pursued was warranted.

RECOMMENDATION 3: *We recommend that the Adult Custody Division develop and implement an approach to forecasting facility space and program needs that accounts for the complexity of the inmate population, such as changes in population groups or shifts in population trends.*

RECOMMENDATION 4: *We recommend that the Adult Custody Division ensure that decisions regarding facility space and programs fully reflect key characteristics of the inmate population (such as security designation, population classification, legal status, etc.).*

Reducing criminal behaviour through programs

In addition to providing safe and secure custody, the mission of the Division is to “deliver programs that promote public safety and reduce criminal behaviour.”

Programs can reduce re-offending by helping inmates address their criminal tendencies and understand triggers for their behaviour.

We examined whether the Division identifies and provides programs that reduce criminal behaviour. We expected to find that the Division had:

- ◆ established goals, objectives and performance measures that support its mission;
- ◆ analyzed its inmate population to identify the programs inmates need;
- ◆ assessed whether its current programs reduce criminal behaviour; and
- ◆ developed, assessed and implemented strategies to address any gaps between the programs it has and those it needs.

Overall, we found that the Adult Custody Division does not identify and provide the programs inmates need to reduce criminal behavior.

Providing the programs needed to reduce criminal behaviour of offenders is not the Division's priority. Instead, the Division told us that it places highest importance on the safety and security within facilities. We agree that safety and security should take precedence in times of crisis, but note that the Division needs to also offer effective offender programming if it wishes to reduce criminal behaviour.

The Adult Custody Division has not defined how it will reduce criminal behaviour through offender programs

We expected to find that the Division had a framework of goals, objectives and performance measures to drive the planning, implementation and evaluation of offender programs and achieve its mission. We found that the Division does not have such a framework. Without a map of what the Division wants to accomplish, it is impossible to gauge success and identify challenges.

The Division had engaged in detailed program planning through the first Advancing Offender Programs initiative (2008 – 2012), establishing detailed goals, objectives and strategies. However, those goals and objectives are no longer in effect. Goals and objectives outlined for the second iteration of the initiative remain in draft form, and the Division has not established performance measures.

In the absence of clear strategic and operational direction, the Division risks misdirecting its programming efforts and resources. Without performance measures in place, the Division has no means of gauging and reporting its success or identifying opportunities for improvement.

This is addressed by [Recommendation 1](#), that the Division develop and implement a complete performance management framework of relevant goals, objectives, strategies, performance measures and targets.

Only one of the core programs offered by the Adult Custody Division has proven to be effective at reducing criminal behaviour

We expected to find that the Division evaluated the effectiveness of its core programs, to allow for continuous improvement. We found that the Division has not fully assessed whether the number or type of core programs it provides reduces criminal behaviour. Understanding whether programs are effective, and directing resources accordingly, will help the Division to get the most value from its resources.

The Division has evaluated three of its five core programs (Respectful Relationships, Substance Abuse Management, and the Violence Prevention Program), and only the Violence Prevention Program was found to reduce re-offending; offenders participating in the Respectful Relationships program re-offended more than those in the comparison group. Despite these results, the Division continues to offer all five core programs.

The Division also provides inmates with a number of programs outside of core programming. This includes work, education and vocational training. The Division recently evaluated two specialized programs with encouraging results. One of the programs, the Guthrie Therapeutic Community, showed that inmates who completed the program re-offended significantly less than other inmates ([see Exhibit 12](#)).

RECOMMENDATION 5: *We recommend that the Adult Custody Division periodically assess the effectiveness of all programs intended to reduce re-offending and use the results to identify and implement improvements in programming.*

The Adult Custody Division has not adequately identified the program needs of offenders or fully implemented strategies to improve outcomes

The Division’s policy is that programs and services should correspond to offenders’ needs and past criminal conduct, and resources should be aimed at higher risk/needs cases. Therefore, we expected to find that the Division identified, collected and used inmate data to determine the type and number of programs it needs now and in the future. Furthermore, we expected to find that the Division would use that information to develop effective strategies to address gaps between the programs it offers and those it needs.

We found that the Division has not analyzed its inmate population to identify the programs it should offer to reduce criminal behaviour. We found that the Division had identified strategies to improve programming, but not all of them were implemented, including: a review of capacity; development of a risk/needs assessment; and, development of a quality assurance system.

The Division lacks province-wide, long-term planning to assess programming needs and requirements. The Division has not analysed trends in offenders’ risks and needs, and its forecasts do not predict the type of offenders expected to come into custody. Without an understanding of offenders’ needs, the Division risks not providing the programs best suited for reducing criminal behaviour.

Exhibit 12: Guthrie Therapeutic Community – an example of program success



The Guthrie Therapeutic Community is an addictions treatment program designed to help motivated inmates “change established patterns of negative thoughts, feelings and behaviours that lead to drug use and criminal behaviours.” The Community uses peer interaction in an intensive community environment. Each individual is responsible for participating in, and contributing to, all activities of daily life within the community and are expected to demonstrate change in themselves, and encourage it in their peers.

The program was developed by the BC Corrections Branch in partnership with the John Howard Society at the Nanaimo Correctional Centre in 2007 and was the first of its kind in Canada.

Source: BC Corrections

To meet immediate needs, the Division recommends programs for individual offenders based on criminal background, charges and risk areas. Some short-term decisions around whether to run a specific program are based on an assessment of the current population in a correctional centre. However, without an improved risk/needs assessment, a tool for reliably identifying offenders' risks and needs, the Division lacks certainty that inmates are properly assessed. As a result, the Division is unable to determine whether it is delivering the right number and mix of programs to targeted (higher risk) offenders to improve outcomes. This is in contrast to the approach taken by the Community Corrections Division, as identified through a previous audit ([see Exhibit 13](#)).

Exhibit 13: Assessing risks and needs of offenders in Community Corrections

Community Corrections and Adult Custody differ in a number of ways. One such way is the assessment of risks and needs. When a sentenced offender is admitted to a Community Corrections office in BC, probation officers complete a comprehensive assessment of risks and needs through a Community Risk Needs Assessment.

These assessments accurately predict future re-offending, which means the Community Corrections Division can fully identify and address the offender's risks and needs.

Source: Office of the Auditor General of British Columbia, 2011 Report, *Effectiveness of BC Community Corrections*

Research emphasizes the importance of connecting offenders' risk and needs with the programs they receive. Targeting offenders at higher risk for re-offending and focusing on known triggers of criminal behaviour, as well as delivering programs by well-qualified staff, results in the greatest impact.

These findings are addressed by previous recommendations: the Division should amend its approach to forecasting to account for the complexity of the inmate population ([Recommendation 3](#)), and ensure that decisions regarding programs are fully informed by analysis of relevant characteristics of the current inmate population ([Recommendation 4](#)).

Complying with current policy and legislation

In addition to examining the Division's overall effectiveness in providing facilities and programs to achieve its mission, we looked at whether the Division provided inmates with facilities and programs consistent with expectations established by policy and legislation.

We tested compliance with legislation and policy by randomly sampling 132 inmate files from 2012, split into two tests of 66 files each. We compared the Division's recommended placement and programming for each inmate with what inmates received, and whether it was received in a timely manner. We did not assess whether staff made correct decisions regarding inmate classification and recommendations for programming.

Results from our sample found that the Division housed 70% of inmates according to their population designation and security level, but recommended core programs that aligned with case management plans for only 27% of sampled inmates. Furthermore, only 15% of sampled inmates fully or partially completed core programs recommended in case management plans. Findings were consistent with interview evidence and other documents.

We noted that the Division lacks a consistent system of oversight or quality assurance across all correctional centres to ensure that it can identify errors (i.e., an inmate incorrectly placed with an incompatible roommate) or persistent barriers (highlighting where policies are misunderstood). The Division told us that some informal oversight and quality assurance is occurring as staff regularly monitor inmates (i.e., a mental health liaison oversees inmates with mental health needs). Taking further steps to minimize errors in accommodation and programming can improve the Division’s overall effectiveness.

RECOMMENDATION 6: *We recommend that the Adult Custody Division implement a quality assurance system across correctional centres to monitor and continuously improve the classification and case management of inmates.*

The Adult Custody Division is generally housing inmates according to security level and population designation

We expected to find that the Division met current policies and legislation around inmate accommodation ([Exhibit 14](#) describes aspects of Division policy). This includes:

- ◆ accommodating inmates according to their intake assessment within 24 hours of admission or re-classification;
- ◆ accommodating inmates awaiting trial or sentencing separate from other inmates; and
- ◆ accommodating inmates held under the *Immigration Act* or *Immigration and Refugee Act* separate from other inmates.

Exhibit 14: Inmate classification process

When inmates are admitted into a correctional centre, they are classified by security level (secure, medium, open), and by population designation (general population, protective custody, mental health needs, enhanced supervision placement, or segregation).

Classification officers use information provided by external sources (legal system, police services) and by inmates themselves to determine their placement within the centre. Policy requires that classification, or inmate assessment, is completed for all inmates within 24 hours of admission or transfer.

The objectives of inmate classification are:

- protect society, staff and inmates against additional offences;
- assign each inmate to the lowest level of security that each case permits;
- provide access to suitable health care, education, work, and programs;
- provide opportunities for self-improvement to inmates who meet criteria for special programs; and
- satisfy the intent of the inmate’s sentence.

Source: BC Corrections

We found that the Division completed inmate assessments in all cases where one was required, and that inmates were housed within 24 hours as per their population designation and security classification 70% of the time.

Matching inmates to their appropriate security level and population designation reduces the risk of self-harm, harm to others, or security breaches. One of the three basic principles of inmate case management, in the Adult Custody Division policy manual, is that the *“level of security, control and supervision that offenders receive should correspond to their risk level.”*

Incorrect matching most frequently occurred for inmates with complex needs such as mental health needs, inmates classified to lower levels of security, and in circumstances where space was unavailable for a particular population designation.

Our sample included seven inmates with mental health needs, of which only one was held in a correctional centre that had a designated mental health needs unit. The Division told us that, in their experience, not all inmates with mental health needs require accommodation in the designated unit, and that higher functioning individuals are well-suited to remain on a regular general population or protective custody unit. While this may be the case, we noted that the Division has no mechanism for assessing the suitability of an inmate with mental health needs for a regular unit, or policy guidelines for housing inmates with mental health needs. Some staff in the Division told us that placing inmates with mental health needs on regular units puts them at a higher safety risk because they are more vulnerable. [Exhibit 15](#) provides a snapshot of the inmate population with mental health needs.

Exhibit 15: Inmates with mental health needs

The Division estimates that 56% of inmates admitted into the corrections system are diagnosed with a substance use and/or mental illness. Others may have a mental illness but have not been diagnosed. Inmates with mental health needs vary in the severity of mental illness and their ability to work with others.

Source: BC Corrections

In our sample, 20% of inmates were held on units where the security level exceeded their classification. All of these inmates were held on secure units, despite being classified to open or medium security. The Division told us that such inmates can nevertheless participate in programs and derive benefits that correspond with their lower security classification. However, this is inconsistent with the intent of the Division’s inmate classification system to assign each inmate to the lowest level of security that each case permits.

Implementing a quality assurance system across correctional centres to monitor and improve the classification of inmates ([Recommendation 5](#)) as well as enhancing the forecasting and analysis of the inmate population ([Recommendations 3 and 4](#)) would help the Division to meet the accommodation needs of all inmates.

The Adult Custody Division is not consistently separating inmates by their legal status

We expected to find that sentenced and non-sentenced inmates would be separated within correctional centres. Non-sentenced inmates, including those awaiting trial or sentencing and immigration inmates, are deemed innocent until proven guilty. *The Corrections Act Regulation* stipulates that where circumstances allow, inmates who are not sentenced should be separated from those who are sentenced (see [Exhibit 16](#)).

Division staff told us that efforts are made to separate sentenced and non-sentenced inmates, and it operates two facilities with this intent – the North Fraser Pretrial Centre and Surrey Pretrial Services Centre. However, all of the non-sentenced inmates in our sample (which included 45 individuals held at five correctional centres) were held in living units consisting of mixed sentenced and non-sentenced populations.

The current practice introduces risk that innocent individuals will be exposed to convicted offenders and be influenced by their criminality. Anecdotally, some Division staff indicated that mixing inmate populations may be limiting for sentenced inmates, who might have fewer opportunities to participate in programs targeted at sentenced inmates. Other Division staff said there are no problems associated with this practice. The Division has not assessed the implications of housing sentenced and non-sentenced inmates together.

Exhibit 16: *Corrections Act Regulation*

The Correction Act Regulation outlines a number of rules, requirements and services for inmates held in provincial custody.

Section 3 of the regulation, which contains direction for inmates who are not sentenced, states:

“The person in charge must ensure that an inmate who is not sentenced... or who is detained under the Immigration Act (Canada) or the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (Canada), is, where circumstances allow, housed separately from inmates who are sentenced.”

Source: *Corrections Act Regulation*

RECOMMENDATION 7: *We recommend that the Adult Custody Division examine the impact of housing sentenced and non-sentenced inmates together and implement an appropriate approach for meeting the requirements of the Corrections Act Regulation.*

The Adult Custody Division is not meeting its policy expectations for offender programming

We expected to find that the Division provided timely access to programs designed to assist inmates reduce the risk they present to the community, in accordance with legislative and policy requirements ([Exhibit 17](#) outlines Division case management policies). This would include:

- ◆ completing case management plans that identify programs to address offenders’ needs within three weeks of admission (for those sentenced to 90 days or more);
- ◆ referring offenders to programs according to their case management plan; and
- ◆ ensuring offenders attend the programs outlined in their case management plans.

Results from our sample showed that the Division does not consistently provide offenders with timely access to the required core programs. Less than half of the files sampled (45%) had a completed case management plan, as stipulated by policy. As a consequence, only 27% of the files sampled contained core program recommendations that aligned with a case management plan.

Exhibit 17: Identifying and addressing inmate needs through case management

For offenders sentenced to 90 days or more, the Division identifies factors that contribute to an offender’s criminal conduct and develops a case management plan to manage the offender during their sentence. Division policy stipulates that a case management plan to address criminal tendencies be developed in consultation with the offender within three weeks of the start of their sentence. The process starts with an inmate needs assessment, which rates offenders according to their level of need (no difficulty, some difficulties, severe difficulties) in ten pre-defined categories (e.g., behavioral and emotional stability, drug usage, attitude).

The case management plan then identifies how the offender will address those needs through the correctional centre’s programs and activities. Case managers are responsible for ensuring that the offender is enrolled in core programs and activities that most closely correspond to their needs and are most likely to affect behavioural change. Division policy specifies that in the case of waiting lists for programs or counselling, higher risk/needs offenders take priority.

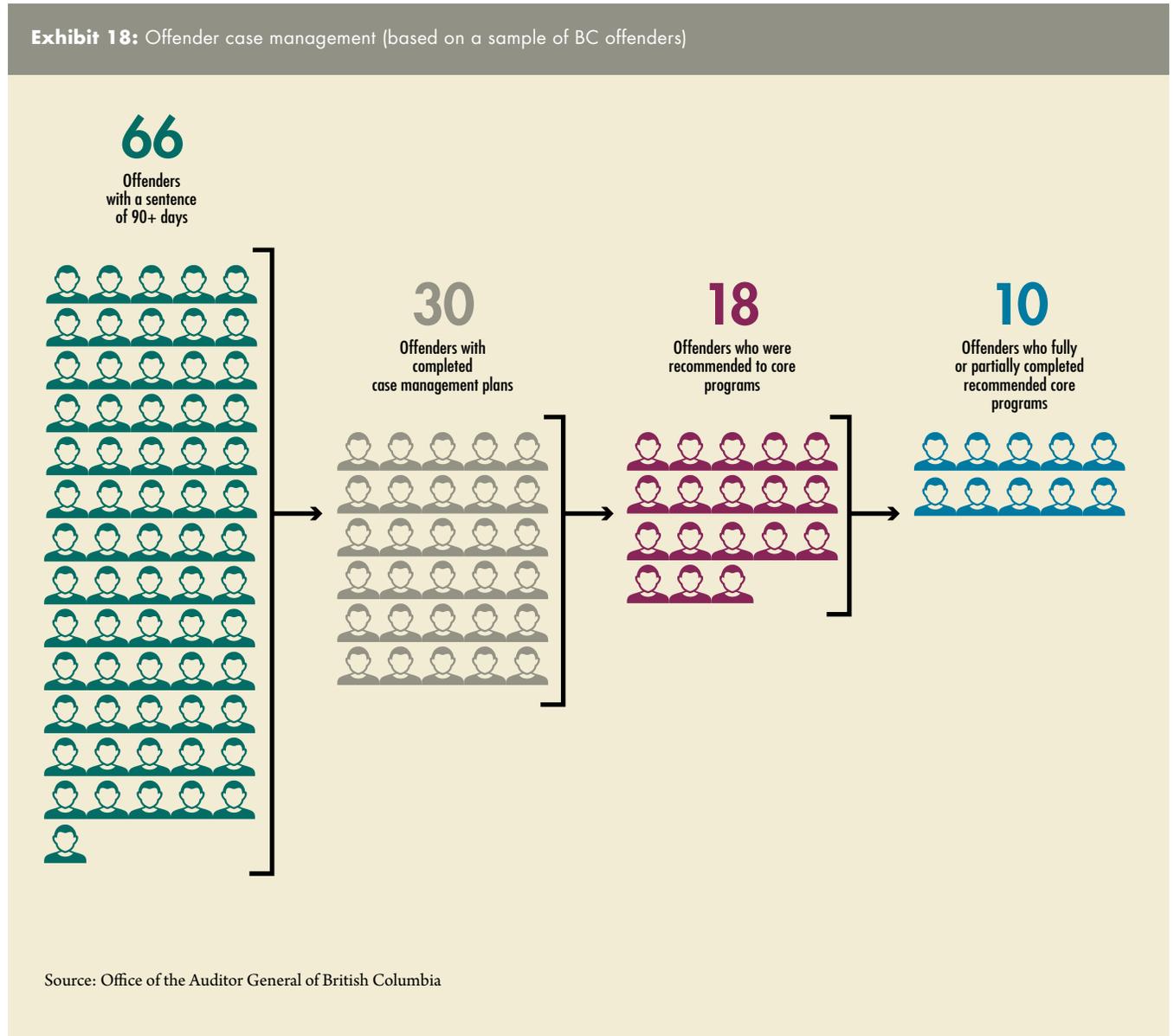


Source: BC Corrections

We found that inmates without an inmate needs assessment and/or a case management plan, as well as low-risk inmates, were referred to core programs. Referring low-risk inmates to core programs counters Division policy, and may divert resources from where they are most needed. Additionally, this could result in more harm than good for individuals. Some correctional research has found that providing cognitive-behavioural programming to low-risk offenders may actually increase their likelihood of re-offending.

Finally, we found that offenders do not consistently attend and complete the core programs identified in their case management plans. Less than half of the core programs recommended were attended and completed (see [Exhibit 18](#)).

Exhibit 18: Offender case management (based on a sample of BC offenders)



Source: Office of the Auditor General of British Columbia

We identified a number of potential causes for why case management is falling short of policy expectations, some of which fall within the Division's control and some outside of it. Those causes include:

- ◆ offender challenges (e.g., refusal to participate, transfers, behavioural challenges);
- ◆ inconsistent approaches at correctional centres;
- ◆ insufficient staff training or misinterpretation of policy;
- ◆ available core programs do not match inmates' needs;
- ◆ programs are not offered when needed;
- ◆ insufficient planning; and
- ◆ lack of quality assurance.

Failing to provide offenders with timely access to core programs may be in contravention of the *Corrections Act Regulation*, which states that “as far as practicable, the person in charge must establish programs designed to assist inmates to... reduce the risk they present to the community.” Not providing programs where appropriate also represents a lost opportunity to reduce both the risk to public safety, and future costs associated with re-offending.

RECOMMENDATION 8: *We recommend that the Adult Custody Division review the case management process to identify and address the barriers to offenders getting timely access to the programs they need to reduce criminal behaviour. This would include evaluating and improving the reliability of the risk/needs assessment used to identify programs for offenders.*

In January 2014, the Adult Custody Division established a Working Group, composed of nine staff members representing all correctional centres. The Working Group developed findings and recommendations to identify and address challenges around special populations. Special populations refers to classifications and sub-classifications of inmates that require protection from one another or other inmates. At the request of the Division, we have omitted some of the Working Group's recommendations where disclosure may compromise security.

Recommendations of the Working Group

- ◆ The Adult Custody Division should consider developing a provincially standardized intelligence gathering and record keeping mechanism that is used to track and monitor inmates who have, or are likely to, engage in activities that jeopardize the management, operation or security of the correctional centre.
- ◆ Correctional centres should consider options to safely house inmates of different classifications on the same living unit by limiting or restricting their access to one another.
- ◆ Correctional centres with open and medium inmates should consider implementing living units/areas that are integrated right into the living units and do not have a specific population designation. Targeted programming to address inmates' criminogenic needs with the goal of reducing recidivism should be a consideration in these living units/areas.
- ◆ The Adult Custody Division should consider developing more employment opportunities for inmates in correctional centres that provide increased opportunities to teach them new skills, and provide opportunities for them to earn additional earn money.
- ◆ Correctional centres should consider implementing living units/areas that house inmates whose primary focus is to address their criminogenic needs with the goal of reducing recidivism through targeted programming.
- ◆ The Adult Custody Division should consider expanding the current Inmates with Mental Health Needs training to include all correctional staff that works with Inmates with Mental Health Needs.
- ◆ In future jail designs, the Adult Custody Division should take into consideration design elements that are flexible and can be adapted to mitigate current and future challenges in housing inmates.
- ◆ As resources permit, the Adult Custody Division should consider opening the closed living units to provide additional capacity for the indicated targeted population as a strategy to assist in managing special populations.



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