

LET'S TALK

APRIL 2006 VOLUME 30, NO. 4

CSC Priorities FOR 2006-2007 AND BEYOND



Correctional Service
Canada

Service correctionnel
Canada

Canada

Our Minister of Public Safety

The Let's Talk production team recently had the opportunity to interview the Correctional Service of Canada's new Minister of Public Safety, the Honourable Stockwell Day. It has been a very busy time for our Minister since he was sworn in on February 6, 2006, so on behalf of all Let's Talk readers, we thank him for speaking with us.



Q: Minister Day, in your early days as federal Minister of Public Safety, what things about your new job have impressed you?

Two things stand out. The scope and breadth of the different organizations that report to me under the Public Safety umbrella, including CSC is breathtaking. Secondly, I have been deeply impressed by the dedication of the people who work in the name of public safety for Canadians. I want to take this opportunity to tell all CSC employees from across the country — all 16,000 of you — that I know your work is challenging, and I very much appreciate what you do. Most Canadians are unaware of the serious nature of the tasks performed every day and night by the CSC employees who are on the job for our security.

I toured Bowden Institution when I was a Member of the Provincial Legislature in Alberta, but I did not have the opportunity to see other institutions. Since my appointment as Minister of Public Safety last month, I've already had the chance to visit several sites, including Kingston Penitentiary, several institutions in Abbotsford, William Head Institution in Victoria and, most recently, Nova Institution. Each one is certainly different! I am on a learning curve, but I am getting to know the

differences between our various institutions and their programs, services and results.

I also want to see and learn more about the community side of CSC's work in parole offices and community correctional centres.

I'm impressed that over 7,000 Canadians support CSC by volunteering in the community or in institutions and serving on the many citizens' advisory committees and in other organizations. That support helps shape and guide effective corrections.

Q: After touring some CSC facilities you spoke about the importance of reducing reoffending, particularly violent reoffending. Would you like to expand on this?

Well, as you know, Prime Minister Harper has set out five priorities for the new federal government. The Speech from the Throne in early April will elaborate more fully on the Government of Canada's overall direction, but we know that CSC will have a very important role to play in the priority of "protecting Canadian families and communities by strengthening the justice system."

Canadians have been clear on this. They are focused on the issue of reoffending, particularly violent reoffending, because they want to feel safe in their homes and in their communities. They want to know that when people come out of institutions, they will do no harm, so I'm particularly interested in working with CSC to achieve a reduced level of violent reoffending.

Q: Do you foresee any fundamental changes to the Mission of CSC?

I don't foresee any fundamental changes. I know that CSC employees are guided by this Mission, which remains basically sound since it was first signed in 1989.

Canadians now want more in terms of feeling secure in their communities, so I've asked to have some words included in the Mission that specifically reflect CSC's contributions to public safety and security. At the same time, I want you to know that I am comfortable with the core elements of the Mission, including the focus on "actively encouraging and assisting offenders to become law-abiding citizens, while exercising reasonable, safe, secure and humane control."

Q: CSC has been working on developing a set of strategic priorities to help achieve strong public safety results. Would you like to talk a bit about the direction you see CSC heading?

As I mentioned earlier, one of our government's top priorities is to strengthen the justice system, and CSC will be a key contributor to getting results in this area. The four areas of priority that Commissioner Coulter and I have talked about, and are still examining, seem to fit well with this goal.

The safe transition of offenders into the community is certainly an area where we can and must continue to make progress. Having a focus on safety and security for both staff and offenders is also needed as we pursue the goal to decrease violent behaviour in federal institutions and reduce illicit drugs. We also need to achieve better results for Aboriginals, and we must improve the way we are addressing the mental health needs of offenders.

So I have asked the Commissioner to ensure that CSC's business plan for the coming fiscal year is focused on achieving concrete results in terms of enhanced public safety in these key areas. And I will be working with him to determine where we have gaps, including resource gaps, so that we can continue to strengthen our approach to corrections over time.

I appreciate the personal contact I have with our front-line people. I want to see their important occupational and security issues addressed. They, and all dedicated CSC employees, are there for us. I want to be there for them. ♦

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Opinions expressed in the following articles do not necessarily reflect the views of the Commissioner.

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CSC's Public Safety Contribution



A new federal government took office on February 6, 2006 and the Honourable Stockwell Day was appointed as our Minister of Public Safety. Since then, he has been actively engaged in getting to know the Public Safety portfolio.

I joined the Minister on tours of institutions and facilities in the Kingston and Abbotsford areas, as well as at William Head Institution in Victoria and Nova Institution for Women in Truro. He appreciated these early opportunities to see our front-line personnel in action, and has expressed an interest in seeing more of CSC's operations including our centres and offices in communities.

One of the top priorities of the new government is "protecting Canadian families and communities by strengthening the justice system." The correctional system is an integral part of the broader criminal justice system, and the challenges for all of us in CSC will be to work together to strengthen our approaches in both institutions and communities so that we can make the best possible contribution to achieving the government's objectives in this area.

In this context, I have had some early discussions with our Minister on CSC's proposed key strategic priorities for fiscal year 2006-07. You may recall from the last issue of *Let's Talk* that we have been developing our strategic focus on four operational priorities that will help us make a stronger contribution to the public safety of Canadians:

- Safe transition of offenders into the community
- Safety and security for staff and offenders in our institutions
- Enhanced capacities to provide effective interventions for First Nations, Métis and Inuit offenders

- Improved capacities to address mental health needs of offenders

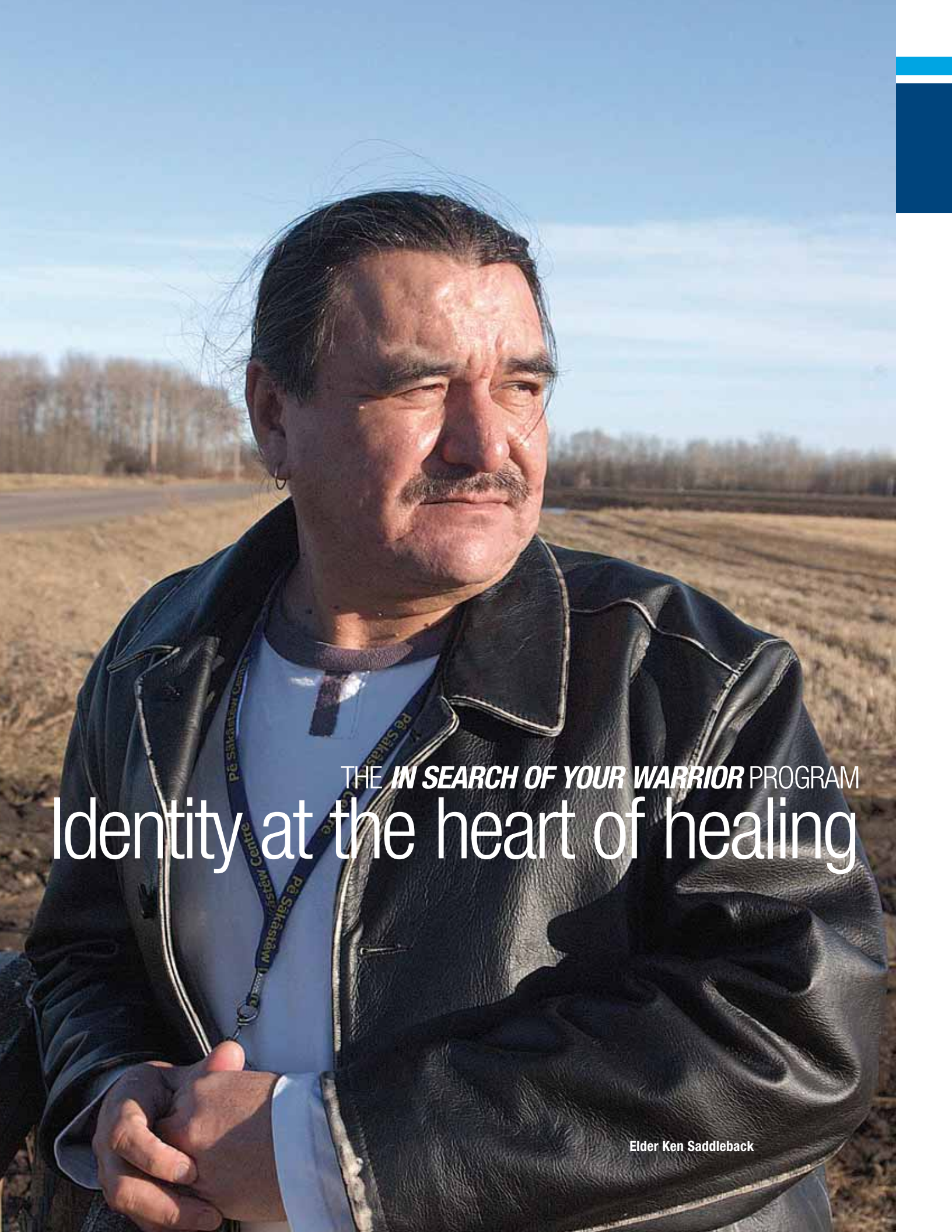
As well, we will place a high priority on strengthening our management practices to improve the way we deliver on these key strategic priorities and, more generally, on all aspects of our mandate.

I will continue to engage the Minister in the coming weeks to receive his input and direction on these strategic priorities, which he fully supports. I will share more with you in my next editorial, including my thoughts on the key challenges we will face as we move ahead. In the meantime, these priorities are all discussed to varying degrees in this edition of *Let's Talk*.

In the final analysis, the required results in these areas will be achieved only through the work of dedicated staff members in institutions, centres and offices all across Canada, supported by their colleagues in headquarters.

In this context, it is absolutely essential that our entire team understands and supports our key priorities. To this end, in the next edition of *Let's Talk*, we will include more detailed information on our implementation plans. ♦

Keith Coulter
Commissioner
Correctional Service of Canada



THE *IN SEARCH OF YOUR WARRIOR* PROGRAM

Identity at the heart of healing

Elder Ken Saddleback

Enhanced capacities to provide effective interventions for First Nations, Métis and Inuit offenders

BY **Djamila Amellal**, Communications Officer, Communications and Citizen Engagement

Photos: Bill Rankin

The Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) provides a continuum of culturally appropriate interventions that address the specific needs of First Nations, Métis and Inuit offenders in a way that contributes to safe and healthy communities. In particular, over the last decade, CSC has created eight healing lodges across Canada. Let's Talk writers recently visited one of them, the Pê Sâkâstêw Healing Lodge in Alberta, where staff and offenders spoke of the benefits of the holistic approach and the rehabilitation programs, in particular the In Search of Your Warrior Program (ISYW).

We head south, leaving behind the office towers of prosperous Edmonton. After an hour's travelling down the highway we pass through the peaceful town of Wetaskiwin and beyond that, stretching out to the horizon, is Hobbema, home of the Samson Cree First Nation. It is one of Canada's wealthiest reserves, thanks to its vast oil and gas production. Green and flat as far as the eye can see, this land is traditionally shared by four bands including the Samson Cree Band. A few kilometres further on we see giant structures standing against the horizon, their bright colours contrasting sharply with the blue sky. It is here, on the land of the Samson Cree First Nation in 1997, CSC built the Pê Sâkâstêw Healing Lodge for Aboriginal male offenders.

The Program

"The program was made possible thanks to the efforts of the Native Counselling Services of Alberta, working closely with the elders and people in charge of CSC programs in 1999," said Dan Erickson, former Director of the Pê Sâkâstêw Healing Lodge.

"For Aboriginal offenders who have lost their culture, their language and their spirituality—the essence of their life—this program is vital. Through Aboriginal values incorporated into the program, offenders learn all over again about their own culture, go back to their spiritual roots and, after their conditional release, live with a better self-image." He adds: "The program's name comes from the Aboriginal vision of the warrior. We speak of a spiritual warrior who fights for justice and strengthens values and ethics in the community."

A Choice Dictated by Faith

Offenders living at the lodge—there are currently 46—generally arrive from medium-security Drumheller Institution. In preparation for conditional release and successful reintegration into the community, parole officers often recommend the ISYW for men with a history of violence or anger management problems. However, for this particular group, the choice was personal.

"ISYW was created to treat traumatic experiences, to heal the scars of abuse, to get rid of the blinding rage and anger that inmates carry deep inside," says Sharon Bell, Program Director and former ISYW facilitator. "Some of them, for example, are suffering from the effect that

Below left: Sharon Bell with former Director Dan Erickson

Below right: One of the six living units housing inmates assigned to the lodge. They are arranged in a circle to represent the circles of influence, unity, and social interaction. Seen from above, they resemble the shape of an eagle, symbolizing life and vigilance against evil. The bright colours of the place represent the Aboriginal heritage of its residents: red for the east, yellow for the south, blue for the west and white for the north. This architectural design is the outcome of consultations between architects and Cree elders from the Samson Band. The Hobbema community's dream became reality when CSC established this unconventional model of incarceration, in which spirituality is front and centre.



residential schools have had on their lives or on their parents'— residential schools established by the Canadian government that in the past aimed to assimilate Aboriginal people into white society. The scars from abuse and the loss of identity can have a terrible impact on a human being. That is why some of them strongly feel the need to refocus on themselves, to get back in touch with their real selves, to be able to face the future with hope."

Unique Healing Methods

The ISYW consists of various activities— 75 in total—accompanied by spiritual cleansing ceremonies. The program's expert facilitators choose activities according to the offenders' individual needs. This, in turn, determines the course length, generally from six to ten weeks.

"What I really do is follow the group and their needs," said Patricia Tessier, ISYW facilitator. "Each morning we meet and form a circle. I let them run with their thoughts and feelings and keep them focused throughout the meeting. Within the circle we are all teachers. When participants understand what the others talk about, they begin to learn. ISYW is very intense. Offenders talk about things that are very personal and painful, things they have never before dared reveal to anyone else. The lodge's Elder is always involved in the activities. It is an opportunity for him to teach."

The Cleansing Ceremony

The day often begins with a spiritual ceremony in a peaceful meeting room, in dim light. Patricia Tessier and inmates burn sweet grass, each of them running their arms through the smoke and wafting it over their heads. Then, in turn, each participant holds the eagle feather (symbolizing respect for the truth) and without inhibition gives free rein to thoughts, feelings and hopes. Tessier quietly listens to them open up about their suffering. She also respects their silence if they choose not to speak.

Elder Ken Saddleback, sitting among them, speaks about the past, the present and the future, conveying wise messages and teaching many aspects of Native culture. After everyone has had their chance to speak, they leave the room and go about their daily tasks.

"Pê Sâkâstêw means a new beginning," says Elder Saddleback. "For the offenders, it means reaching the clarity in spirit that will help them find themselves. My role is to remind them of their identity, to make them aware that they have a culture they can be proud of, a heritage. I teach them the protocol of our culture, for example, how to approach elders when asking for a favour. To an elder we offer tobacco because tobacco is what the Creator appreciates. I also teach them the concept of the tepee. And I tell them personal stories which prompt them to open up."



Patricia Tessier



The Sweat Lodge and Its Liberating Effect

Elder Ken Saddleback says that by taking part in such activities as sweats, offenders manage to throw off their heavy burden, get rid of their pain. "They come out free of fear and anxiety; they find themselves. It's like they purge the evil, the anger living inside them"

"A six-week program doesn't heal participants right away, but they return to the community with the tools to survive," says Patricia Tessier. "They find the program effective because they are now able to understand why things happened to them, they have options and they can make changes; that's the strength they draw from it."

Very proud of the program, she adds: "The ISYW is an efficient tool because it can be adapted to individual needs. It'll remain efficient as long as we don't lose sight of the fact that offenders' needs can vary from one group to another. Standardizing it would be a mistake."

A Worthwhile Investment

According to former Director Dan Erickson, the correctional system wins many points by putting in place such programs. "It costs a little bit more, but it's really worthwhile," he says. "We teach these offenders to be models in the communities where they will live. We are convinced that those who have participated in the program have benefited a lot. It touches them deeply, at a personal level. Participants tell us that it changes the way they see themselves as persons and, if that's the case, it has changed the way they will live for the rest of their lives."

The Mask-making Ceremony

For other offenders, the mask-making activity is one of the most useful experiences. "Participants create their own masks," says Patricia Tessier, "that include the smallest details of their features. Then they paint the masks according to how they see themselves. The colours they choose reveal many feelings. Later, they go away with the mask to a solitary location where they go through the extraordinary experience of sitting down with themselves and thinking about who they really are. After this time of self-reflection, the offender may decide to throw away the mask because it symbolizes the bad person from the past. They want to forget that person. Or they take it to the sweat lodge and get rid of it there, or simply burn it."

Mitchell, an inmate about to go on parole. "The program has been very beneficial for me. I feel so much better. I have learned so much about my culture thanks to [Elder] Ken [Saddleback]. I have decided to go live with him after I get out so I can learn even more. This is where I learned all about making tepees, to the point that I manufacture them now and plan on making a living doing that once I am back in the community."



Inmate Drake, from Grande Cache Institution, chose the ISYW because he wants to understand himself and his own acts of violence. "The sweats help me a lot. When I'm inside the sweat lodge, in the dark where I can't see anyone else, alone before my Creator, hearing only the hiss of the water on the burning stones, I feel close to my Creator, to my grandparents, so I dare to speak, to confess. I pray from the bottom of my heart for forgiveness." ♦



*Safe transition of offenders
into the community*



Police/

Partnerships Continue to Evolve

Two Canadian cities have been chosen as the first to benefit from the new Integrated Police/Parole Initiative, announced in November 2005. The Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) will join with Regina and Hamilton police departments in this innovative partnership—hiring police officers to work as community corrections liaison officers (CCLO), monitoring the activities of higher-risk and higher-needs offenders in the community. They will act as links with police departments and other law enforcement agencies, enhance information sharing and work to reduce the number of unlawfully-at-large offenders.



BY **Bill Rankin**, Communications Officer,
Communications and Citizen Engagement

Photos: Bill Rankin

CSC Associate District Director for Eastern and Northern Ontario Gerry Minard says, “The CCLO position builds upon an excellent working relationship that we’ve had with the Hamilton Police for a long time. It will give our staff a little more insight into the problems that police face and the police will learn more about parole officers’ challenges.”

CCLOs will also participate on community assessment teams and provide an additional conduit of information between parole offices and police repeat offender squads. A total of 17 CCLOs will be hired across Canada by the summer of 2006 and paid for by CSC through the Interchange Canada Program. The new officers will report to CSC district directors.

Other cities to receive CCLOs include Saint John, NB, St. John’s, NFLD, Halifax, Montreal, Québec City, St. Jérôme, Toronto, Ottawa,

Kingston, Winnipeg, Calgary, Edmonton, Kelowna and Vancouver.

In a Rural Setting

Police/parole partnerships are certainly not a new idea and there’s no shortage of good examples in other parts of the country. Take for example Parole Officer Gerald Daigle and his one-man operation, part of the Ottawa Parole District. Daigle is responsible for 22 parolees spread out over a broad area of rural Ontario that runs east to the Quebec border, south to Akwesasne (previously known as Cornwall Island) on the St. Lawrence River and west as far as Long Sault. He says that his cellular and satellite phones, as well as dependable winter tires are what keeps him on a steady course through the winter months and gets him from farmhouse to country shack to coffee shop and all the other rendez-vous points where he meets his “clients.”

Daigle counts on a crucial working collaboration with members of numerous police forces located on this territory—Akwesasne Mohawk Police, Cornwall Community Police Service, the

Opposite page: Detective Sergeant Bob Burnie, Cornwall Community Police Service

Above: Constable Leanne O’Brien, Akwesasne Mohawk Police; CSC Parole Officer Gerald Daigle

Royal Canadian Mounted Police and the Ontario Provincial Police with its six offices spread throughout the rural communities. “These collaterals are so important,” Daigle comments. “They are the parole officer’s around-the-clock eyes and ears in the community.”

The principal centre inside his jurisdiction—a sprawl of farmland, highways and rivers—is Cornwall (population 45,000), the blue-collar town that has, over recent years, fallen on hard times thanks to factory shutdowns and massive layoffs—most recently at the Domtar pulp and paper mill.

Experienced Eyes and Ears

Perhaps nobody’s eyes and ears know more about this city and its criminal element than the police department’s Detective Sergeant

Bob Burnie, Criminal Investigations Division, a Cornwall native who worked his way up from beat constable over his 25-year career.

Burnie and his law enforcement partners face unique challenges due to Cornwall's location along the eastern inland seaway and its close proximity to the American border.

"Along with our law enforcement partners, we suffer the woes connected with criminals who can drop off or pick up contraband almost anywhere along this 60-mile stretch of open waterway," Burnie comments. "Drugs are transported by boat in the warm months and by snowmobile or even trucks over the ice during winter."

To complicate the situation even further, Akwesasne, just south of the city and home of the Akwesasne Mohawk Reserve, is the convergence point for numerous provincial, national and international boundaries. It is possible for one house on the island to be in American territory while just down the road a neighbour is on Canadian soil.

Cooperation is Essential

It's a situation that could make for a prickly interplay between forces, but fortunately this is *not* the case. Over the years, going back as far as the whiskey smuggling days of Prohibition, law enforcers have learned to work together and support each other rather than squabble over turf.

"Really good cooperation," declares Sergeant Burnie. "We are part of well established units (the Combined Forces Special Enforcement Unit and the Integrated Border Enforcement Team) that developed strong links between several agencies over the years in order to keep on top of criminal activity in our jurisdictions. Weekly meetings with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, New York State Border Patrol, Ontario Provincial Police, Akwesasne Mohawk Police Service and Canada Border Services Agency, provide updated knowledge of criminal activity in our respective areas."

This same type of mutual assistance has existed between the police and parole since long before Gerald Daigle took over from retiring Parole Officer Bernie Driscoll in February 2005. Partnerships were essential for this parole officer when he was previously located in rural areas of New Brunswick.

"Bernie Driscoll was extremely helpful, hard working and highly respected by the police," says Sergeant Burnie. "Gerald is much the same on account of his previous experience. We've developed a good working relationship. He's called upon us to help some of his parolees and we are glad to do it."

Meeting a Parolee

On one typical day, Daigle agrees to meet with one of his parolees inside a Cornwall shopping centre. Daigle enters the complex and joins a procession of shoppers huffing and puffing up the stairs of a broken-down escalator. He grabs a coffee from the *Tim Horton's* kiosk on the second level and settles himself at a small table next to a boisterous group of seniors who are busy chewing doughnuts and talking hockey, politics, and bingo.

The parolee shows up on time, a young man in his twenties who served prison time for drug trafficking. He was no big-time dealer but the cocaine sales had been easy money that provided a hefty supplement to the \$10/hour he made roofing before his conviction.

Daigle says it's tempting for young people to fall into the drug trade because it's all around them; they see friends and acquaintances driving shiny, new vehicles, buying houses, living far beyond their apparent means. And the payoff seems well worth the risk—until they get caught.

Easy Money

Daigle says it's tempting for young people to fall into the drug trade because it's all around them; they see friends and acquaintances driving shiny, new vehicles, buying houses, living far beyond their apparent means. And the payoff seems well worth the risk—until they get caught. Even after a stretch in prison, it's hard for some of them to go back to an honest job because they've tasted what they regard as a more glamorous lifestyle.

"Hopefully they will have upgraded their competencies during the process of their sentence and will be able to secure a better job in the long term," says Daigle. "Becoming law-abiding citizens and productive members of their communities will more than likely require a lot of perseverance from these individuals.

"Young guys especially, you have to see up to twice a week, depending on their risk to re-offend and their needs in the community," says Daigle. Attitude and motivation are

important factors in the parole officer's month to month assessment.

"I know through experience that some guys are *not* going to re-offend. They may have made one big mistake that got them involved with the law, usually at a young age. They might have been in the wrong place, with the wrong friends, at the wrong time. They may have been intoxicated, so naturally their judgement was impaired.

Changing Attitudes

"It takes some time to alter their thought patterns; I encourage them to consider the people they associate with, find a steady job, apply program skills learned while inside, learn how to communicate and manage anger, and deal with drug problems. Those are the things that are going to keep them from going back to prison. These individuals will likely recognize the benefit of consulting existing community resources and I can help with the access. Ultimately, they will accept full responsibility for their behaviour and actions, past, present and future.

"Then there are the few—hard-core criminals—that are very hard to reach. Often the only things that change them is time, weariness and the desire to stay out of prison."

This type may view their relationship with the parole officer as a cat-and-mouse game. Their attitude—purposely vague or evasive—quickly becomes apparent to an experienced officer. It's in these situations that the police partnership is particularly valuable. They help keep a close eye on the offender and inform the parole officer of significant events or changes in behaviour.

Solid Links

Whether this takes the form of formal liaison partnerships such as the community corrections liaison officer (CCLO) role or informal working collaborations, these solid links has proven effective for supervising offenders in the community and contributing to their reintegration. The ultimate goal is public safety in every Canadian community, large or small. This is the essence of the parole/police officers' work that they share from day to day. ♦

Thérèse Lemieux and
Danielle Berthiaume during
a consultation session



Volunteers on the Inside

Safe transition of offenders
into the community

BY **Djamila Amellal**, Communications Officer, Communications
and Citizen Engagement

On a Thursday evening, volunteers—both men and women—arrive in the activity room, as eager as the inmates to start the work that has brought them here. They quickly settle down to their tasks. Seated next to an offender named Lynda is Agathe Beaudry, a member of the Saints-Cœurs de Jésus et de Marie religious order. She is very busy explaining, step by step, how a beautiful shawl can be crocheted using an outsized Tunisian crochet hook. Her voice is soft but assured. “I have been coming here twice a week since the institution opened in 1997. I lead the singing during religious ceremonies, I teach knitting and crocheting. Volunteering is part of my life and women’s causes are particularly dear to my heart. The women who are with me here tonight have had problems in their lives; it doesn’t mean they are all bad.”

Photos: Bill Rankin

Earlier on that same day, around 5 pm, Warden Loretta Mazzocchi of Joliette Institution, Thérèse Lemieux, acting team leader in charge of volunteers, and Danielle Berthiaume, Volunteer Coordinator, Elizabeth Fry Society of Quebec, are still at the institution, making arrangements for the volunteers’ activities. Joliette Institution accommodates almost 85 women offenders in living units, the secure unit and the structured living unit for offenders with mental health problems.

“Having volunteers in the lives of the offenders is vital. It facilitates transition back to the community,” says Ms. Lemieux. “These volunteers are great support in the



Left to right: Sister Agathe, an inmate and Nicole Bourgeois during the evening knitting and crochet class

offender social reintegration process. They share their talents and their knowledge of the community support network. So they do not feel they are on their own. Volunteers help offenders serving long sentences to maintain contact with the community.”

Volunteer Recruitment

According to Ms. Berthiaume, a total of almost 120 volunteers work at various times and in various ways with the offenders at Joliette Institution. “I don’t have to advertise,” she says. “I have a good network of contacts in the community. I began volunteering myself at age eight with my parents.

“The institution maintains good relations with the community thanks to open houses and tours that often attract volunteers. The citizen

advisory committee helps us, too. And the media can play a crucial role. For example, following the broadcast of a segment on the program *Enjeux*, we received a lot of calls from people who want to offer their services.”

Volunteer Selection and Training

Ms. Lemieux and Ms. Berthiaume add that the process of finding and retaining volunteers is geared to the needs of offenders. The two women work closely together, consulting each other when interviewing, selecting and training volunteers. “When we meet prospective volunteers for the first time, we always assess them against CSC’s Mission. If we decide that they match what we are looking for, we begin the security clearance procedure and provide the necessary training.”

According to Ms. Berthiaume, volunteers at Joliette come from many walks of life. Their network includes a farmer, a teacher, a businessman and a nurse so activities available to

offenders are varied. They range from pastoral care to ceramics courses, academic tutoring, Alcoholics Anonymous meetings, animal therapy and many others. In the structured living environments, a meditation course is also available. “The volunteers have a range of experience. That is important because each volunteer has his/her own way of getting through to offenders.”

Faces of Hope

The arrival of the volunteers in the institution is eagerly anticipated by the offenders who take part in the activities. According to Sister Agathe, they manage to communicate and talk about things that are most important to them.

The volunteers are not there to judge anyone’s past lives. “I bring them something,” says Sister Agathe, “but they teach me a lot of things, too, like courage and determination to better their lot. And when they do make it, I’m happy.”

For offender Lynda, Sister Agathe’s presence is a blessing. “I like her a lot,” says Lynda. “She and I have developed trust; her help is unconditional, and she understands my concerns. I always look forward to these sessions. I’ll soon be out on parole, but I won’t forget what she has done for me.”

Martin Racette, retired after 35 years of teaching mathematics, believes it is everybody’s duty to help when they can. “We have to let other people benefit from our knowledge. I have been working for the past year now with an offender who is trying to achieve a long-term goal. She is preparing for her high school level in mathematics. We interact a lot as we work. I also enjoy talking to my own friends about my enriching experiences with CSC.”

Another volunteer, Nicole Bourgeois, is knitting and talking softly with an inmate. She says she chose to work with women because she can identify with their needs. Her initial approach is special. “I always wait for them to talk to me first. They will do so when they are ready. I do not try to force the conversation.”

Ms. Bourgeois has been involved in a number of projects at the institution, including working with children in the daycare, escorting inmates, and soon the *Maman me raconte* stories project.

So, day after day, the volunteers bring new hope to offenders. For those who have been apart from life on the outside for a long time, the volunteers act as their link with the community. Their efforts go a long way to prepare them for safe and timely transition into society. ♦



*Improved capacities to address
mental health needs of offenders*

Jane Laishes (left),
Andrea Moser

CSC's Mental Health Initiative For Safer Communities

The percentage of offenders with a diagnosed mental illness admitted into the Correctional Service of Canada's (CSC) jurisdiction has risen steadily from seven percent in 1997 to twelve percent in 2005. "This is quite a dramatic increase," says Jane Laishes, Senior Manager, Mental Health Services, CSC.

BY **G. Chartier**, Communications Officer,
Communications and Citizen Engagement

Photo: Bill Rankin

Based on a 2000 study of 202 federal inmates in British Columbia and applying the results to CSC's entire offender population, it is estimated that approximately 1500 inmates incarcerated in penitentiaries and 1000 offenders on some form of conditional release in Canadian communities are currently suffering from serious mental disorders.

Working out of CSC's National Headquarters, Ms. Laishes and Dr. Andrea Moser are leading a team from across CSC to implement the Community Mental Health Initiative (CMI). This initiative, which has received Treasury

Board funding for a 5-year period, is aimed at addressing the needs of these offenders in order to promote their safe reintegration into the community upon release.

Continuity of Support

The primary objective of the initiative is to better prepare offenders by strengthening the continuity of specialized support from the institution to the community.

"One of the key tasks," Dr. Moser says, "will be to link up with the existing service providers in various communities, to better

orient them to meet the needs and issues of this population."

To accomplish this continuity of care the key elements of the CMI are: enhanced discharge planning; transitional mental health services and support; community mental health specialists to support offenders in the community; training in mental health issues for community staff; and specialized services such as emergency psychiatric assessments.

Approximately 50 new positions will be created across the country to support the initiative, including 30 community mental health

specialists (e.g., clinical social workers and psychiatric nurses) at selected parole sites as well as clinical discharge planners to provide services at all regional treatment centres (RTC) and regular institutions. In addition, funds will be provided to each region for contracts to provide mental health services.

Implementation

A steering committee has been created made up of regional representatives as well as NHQ staff. “We’re working together with the regions to refine the implementation, making sure that we have a very sound model in place,” Ms. Laishes says.

“Throughout the planning we have had conference calls and meetings with individuals who are currently involved with discharge planning and ambulatory care services for offenders with mental disorders,” she adds.

Ensuring the Best Services

“There are specific considerations for each region,” notes Ms. Laishes. “For example, Prairie Region faces the challenge of geographic reality.” The region stretches over 1500 kilometres from northwestern Ontario across the provinces of

Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta and north to include the Northwest Territories.

“We want to ensure that with the resources we have, we provide the best services possible,” says Dr. Moser.

Role of the Discharge Planner

Whether the offender is being released from an RTC or from another institution, the clinical discharge planner will be important in making the bridge to the community health specialists.

“The role of the clinical discharge planner is to start the planning process for release early enough so that things can be set up,” Dr. Moser says. “Some limited discharge planning is already occurring at some of the RTCs across the country.”

Comprehensive Training for Staff

In order to help staff work effectively, a very practical training model is being developed that will be delivered on an annual basis at each of the 16 designated parole sites.

“It will focus very much on the kinds of skills and understandings that staff in the halfway houses and parole offices need in order to best intervene,” says Jane Laishes.

“How to make appropriate referrals, work with the family, work as part of an effective team, understand how to approach the offender when they seem to be having difficulties, understand how to de-escalate things, those kinds of really practical skills.”

Safer Communities

The Community Mental Health Initiative includes an evaluation component at approximately the three year mark. Although permanent funding has not been designated, it is hopeful that support will be provided to ensure the ongoing implementation of this important initiative.

“In a nutshell,” adds Dr. Moser, “there is an increase in need for services targeted towards this type of offenders. The Community Mental Health Initiative is what we’re trying to do to ensure that their needs are met and to promote successful reintegration.” ♦

Safety and security for staff and offenders in our institutions

A New Safety Measure for Correctional Officers

BY **Bill Rankin**, Communications Officer, Communications and Citizen Engagement

Photo: Bill Rankin

One more protective tool for correctional officers will soon be standard issue thanks to an agreement between the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) and the Union of Canadian Correctional Officers (UCCO). Stab-proof protective vests will be worn by all correctional officers who have direct contact with inmates in maximum and multi-level-security institutions and in the segregation areas of medium-security facilities.

After the tendering process is completed and the contract awarded, sample vests will be tested independently at an RCMP lab and by CSC staff to ensure that safety standards are met. Then the manufacturer will visit each institution to take employee measurements before going into full production. After the approximately 2500 vests are completed and distributed to institutions across the country (18 months), they will be issued to all staff at the same time. A reserve of 150 vests will be maintained at the CSC national distribution centre.

Composed of protective panels inside a nylon exterior, the vests weigh in at approximately 3.5 pounds—far lighter than the dual-purpose ballistic type worn by police. The vests will be worn over the correctional officer’s shirt and are designed to blend in with the rest of the uniform.

The new vest has front pockets and adjustable velcro side panels.



Bob Fisher (with microphone) discusses an issue with HRMS workshop participants



All on the same page

Public Service Modernization Act

BY **Bill Rankin**, Communications Officer,
Communications and Citizen Engagement

More than 350 CSC staff from across the country—union bargaining agents and leaders, and Human Resources Management Sector (HRMS) employees—gathered at the Canadian Management Learning Centre (CMLC) between February 14-15 to learn about implementation of the new Public Service Modernization Act and the effects it will have on hiring practices within the federal government.

“It’s an opportunity for everyone attending to gain a common level of understanding and a shared vocabulary,” said Assistant Commissioner Simon Coakeley, Human Resources Management. “There will be challenges *and* opportunities stemming from the new employment act. In particular, it will change the way government selects people for various positions.”

Coakeley cautions that it won’t make the selection of employees easier overnight. He says that new rules will challenge staff to rethink fundamental assumptions concerning hiring and HRMS will have to let go of familiar

old rules and adapt to the new way of doing business. “Short-term pain for long-term gain” is how the Assistant Commissioner characterizes the process.

Bob Fisher, Ontario Regional Analyst for HRMS, led the team that organized the conference inside a very tight, three and one half-week time frame. Funding arrived thanks to the Strategic Investment Fund, a special parcel of resources provided by Public Service Human Resources Management Agency of Canada to assist federal departments in getting the ball rolling on HR modernization.

Without that infusion the conference would not have taken place.

During the two-day event, the CMLC gymnasium was abuzz with lively discussion. “There are so many discussion issues that we had to divide the participants into 23 groups to address them all,” Fisher commented. “Senior management says they will respond to all of them and the commitments that are made at this conference will be publicized.”

Unions will have opportunities to advise HRMS as they develop policies and procedures based on the new act.

Feedback from the conference is now available on the InfoNet. ♦

Photo: Bill Rankin



Managing Offender Information in the 21st CENTURY

A parole officer working in an institution is reviewing her caseload and work plan. She notes that she has several annual security classification reports coming due. In the past, the parole officer would have used an automated tool held outside of the Offender Management System (OMS) and copy the information from this tool into the decision document within the OMS. The tool in question is the Security Reclassification Scale (SRS).

BY the Information Management Services
Communications Team

Sound cumbersome and time consuming? It was! The Security Reclassification Scale is one example of an external application that will now be part of the Offender Management System and this will assist in streamlining documentation processes.

OMS was originally created to automate case management processes. It has evolved since its inception into a comprehensive system housing offender information related to all aspects of their sentence that assists us in meeting our mandate. It is a valuable tool and deemed a mission critical system by our organization.

The vastness of information currently in the system, the vision to incorporate even more automated processes in the future, and the number of users accessing the system, necessitated a review of the ability of the technology used for this application to sustain CSC's needs. This review revealed that the platform—the very basis of the application—was teetering under the volume of information it carried and was incapable of providing some of the modern convenient time-saving solutions now available.

As of May 2006, with the migration of the system, all users of OMS will be able to navigate information quickly and easily within the application, relying on their customized menu in OMS—with all the necessary information at their fingertips. This more technologically advanced system will provide a one-stop application with all critical information available at the click of a mouse!

In May 2006, CSC will implement its migrated Offender Management System, gaining a new look and feel and access to offender information will be easier than ever before.

Ready for a Change

After more than a decade with the legacy OMS, it became apparent that it was time for a change. The result was a clear path for the renewal of OMS, an important step of which is migrating all the information in the application to a new Web-based user interface. This has taken extensive development work and the Web base will allow access to a host of stakeholders.

“Modernizing the Offender Management System ensures that CSC staff has access to the most up-to-date technology tools to play their key role of re-integrating offenders into society,” says Fraser McVie, former acting Assistant Commissioner, Corporate Operations and Programs. “Staff here make recommendations and decisions on offenders every day and it is important that those decisions be made with the most accurate information, accessed as quickly and easily as possible. Migrating the OMS is the first step in delivering that capability.”

User Interface

While enabling the information to be accessed by partners is vital, this migration also affects the almost 10,000 users that already use the application to manage offender information—sometimes on a daily basis.

Updating the user interface on the application allowed an opportunity for improvements. So the Offender Management System Renewal (OMSR) team canvassed partners and users. “What kinds of access to information could improve how you do your job?” they asked. “What features or functions would make things faster or easier to get information?” Then they delivered on the requests.

While maintaining the same business functionality, the newly migrated OMS has a user interface that allows users to navigate screens using a mouse—pretty standard stuff for modern applications but simply not possible for users of the legacy system.

It also means that up to eight modules of information that previously had to be accessed separately will now be accessed through the new OMS user interface. You need a photo from 2002? It's here. You need information on gangs? Yup. Need to complete the security level of a new woman offender assigned to your case-load? Got that tool, too. In the past, information had to be updated and accessed through a myriad of different modules, forcing CSC staff to toggle back and forth among applications.

Looking Forward

More important is the setup for the future. While the migrated environment will have many Web-based features, it will not be the final renewed OMS. It is an interim measure required to enable the technical work of the renewal process to continue.

“The migration of OMS is one of the key steps in the renewal of the application,” says Fraser McVie. “Completion of this project will improve public safety through the easy availability of more accurate information and improve the process of successful reintegration of offenders into society.”

Using the latest in database technologies means that it will be easier to introduce new functions as they become available, making the jobs of case management staff just a little easier. Keep up-to-date on the migration by speaking with your OMS representative or by visiting the OMSR InfoNet site at http://infonet-omsr/migration_e.asp. The site will be updated regularly with timelines and presentations. Check it often! ♦

New System Enhancements for OMS

Mouse Navigation Users will no longer need to remember a complex list of codes to tap the applications' functions. Now they will be able to navigate easily and select features with the click of a mouse. Along with this comes easier display of information, including the use of hyperlinks to get necessary information quickly.

Visual Photo Display The new OMS will include the ability to display offenders' photos, allowing better security and cross-referencing.

Creation of a Customized Menu There are screens in OMS that are particularly useful in completing a task. For features that are used regularly, you can create a customized menu that eliminates all the extras. They are not gone forever, though. The beauty of customization is that the menu can be re-created when needs change.

Language Toggle Working in French? Working in English? Users can toggle quickly and easily between the two languages.

Solid Waste Management Practices

How Does CSC Measure Up

A Survey on Recycling and Composting Versus Landfilling



BY **Paul Provost**, MSc, National Coordinator, Environmental Protection Programs

In the last edition of *Let's Talk*, I published an article that stressed the importance of waste weighing as the starting point for ecologically sound solid waste management. Since then, a survey of waste management practices has been carried out in all Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) institutions. The 100 percent response rate garnered by this survey indicates a clear interest in this vital and ever-timely aspect of environmental management. The numerous responses provide a clear picture of past achievements, as well as the current situation and the challenges we still face in the area of waste recovery. The following is a brief overview of the survey findings.

Fifteen Years of Progress

Around the time recycling and composting initiatives were springing up in Canadian communities, CSC undertook its first in-depth study of the waste generated at its institutions. (This was the 1991 environmental pilot project carried out at Dorchester and Westmorland institutions in New Brunswick.) The study showed that, on average, these institutions produced waste equivalent to 2 kg/occupant¹/day. Fully 50 percent of this waste consisted of compostable materials and 30-40 percent (or 0.6 to 0.8 kg/occupant/day) consisted of recyclables. The quantity of waste now being produced, according to the 2005-2006 survey data, is approximately 1.4 kg/occupant/day, which is a reduction of 30 percent. This progress is the result of institutional recycling

programs, coupled with composting and reduction at source. But, is there still room for improvement?

How to Improve our Recycling Methods

The results of our survey show that only 8 percent (0.14 kg/occupant/day) of the waste produced in our institutions is currently being recycled. The best results in this area (approximately 10 percent) are in Atlantic, Quebec and Prairie regions. Is this poor showing the result of relaxation of good practices or have recycling opportunities actually been exhausted? The majority of respondents attributed poor performance and lack of involvement to inadequate human, budgetary and infrastructural resources. To improve the situation, established recycling measures will need to be consolidated and new projects that promote the 4Rs (reduce, reuse, recycle and recover) must be supported.

The Challenges of Composting

Based on the survey responses, 11 percent of the waste produced in our institutions (or 0.19 kg/occupant/day) is currently being composted. The weighted results indicate that the regions that performed the best in this area are Atlantic (29 percent) and Prairie (17 percent) regions. A third of all CSC institutions operate their own composting systems, while another third sort and ship their compostable waste to outside composting facilities. Given that, by weight, 50 percent of the waste being generated is organic in nature, there is still room for improvement. The justifications used to explain this poor showing are the same as those mentioned above concerning recycling. Improvement in this area will require more rigorous sorting and collection methods for compostable waste and an increase in the number of institutions with access to this form of waste recovery.

Landfilling: the Antithesis of the 4Rs

Landfilling, a practice as old as humanity, remains the most popular form of waste disposal. Fully 80 percent of all waste produced by our institutions finds its way to landfill sites. In one respect at least this traditional waste management method is hard to beat: the average corporate cost of landfilling (per metric tonne) is \$73, and as little as \$34 in the Quebec region. The current consensus is that it costs more to compost waste than to bury it. Moreover, the source-sorting requirements of recycling and composting are far more difficult to implement and to maintain than

the "everything in the garbage can" approach. In the end, it is the environment that suffers the real consequences.

To conclude on a positive note, several respondents asserted that *We can do better!* I would add that *We must do better!* Our corporate experience in ecologically sound waste management has shown that *Where there's a will there's a way*. What do you think? ♦

¹ Occupant = number of inmates + 1/3 of personnel.

LEADERSHIP RENEWAL

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Effective October 12, 2005

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