



News Release

For Immediate Release

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Adult Correctional Institutions Not Equipped for Rising Numbers of Inmates on Remand and Those with Mental-Health Issues: Auditor General

(TORONTO) Two categories of people account for a rising proportion of inmates in Ontario adult correctional institutions—but the institutions are not properly equipped to deal with them, Auditor General Bonnie Lysyk says in her *2019 Annual Report*, released today.

“Remanded inmates—those awaiting court appearances who have been charged but not convicted—and people suspected of or diagnosed with mental-health illness, form a greater proportion of the incarcerated population than at any time in the last 15 years,” Lysyk said.

“This impacts the institutions’ ability to deliver programming and treatment that could otherwise help inmates reintegrate positively into the community and further reduce the risk of recidivism.”

The Report also found that correctional officers were not getting sufficient training to help effectively de-escalate situations involving inmates with mental-health and behavioural issues.

The number of individuals admitted into correctional institutions over the last 15 years has decreased, the Report noted, but the proportion of remanded inmates in the daily inmate population has risen to 71% from 60% in 2004/05. On average, three-quarters of remanded inmates admitted into custody in 2018/19 had 13 previous charges and half had six previous convictions. The Report found the high percentage of remanded inmates can in large part be attributed to delays in the criminal court system (discussed in **Volume 3, Chapter 3** of the Report).

On average during 2018/19, more than 7,400 people aged 18 years or older were in custody every day in the province’s 25 adult correctional institutions. The Ministry of the Solicitor General (Ministry) spent \$817 million in that fiscal year to run the institutions. (The Report uses the term “correctional institutions” to encompass jails, detention centres, correctional centres and treatment centres.)

The Report specifically found the following:

- In 2018/19, 33% of all people admitted to a correctional institution across the province had a mental-health alert on their file, indicating possible mental-health issues, up from just 7% of inmates in 1998/99. However, many institutions had insufficient resources to deal with mental-health concerns.
- Segregation, which keeps inmates isolated up to 24 hours a day, was being used to confine inmates with mental-health issues due to a lack of specialized-care beds.
- The Ministry dealt with overcrowding by increasing the capacity of 16 institutions by an average of 81% more than the original capacity when they were built. In most cases, the Ministry did so by adding beds in cells designed to have only one. In 2018/19, 14 of the 25 correctional institutions were operating beyond the Ministry’s optimal rate of 85% occupancy.

- The Ministry does not analyze the root causes of violent incidents in correctional institutes to prevent future reoccurrence. From January 2014 to October 2018, there were about 21,000 recorded incidents across the province, including altercations between inmates and inmates threatening or directly assaulting staff.
- Permanent correctional officers took an average of 31 sick days each in 2018, or 27% more than in 2014. The overtime costs to replace them reached about \$42 million across the province in 2018/19, a 280% increase in overtime costs since the Auditor General's last audit of correctional institutions in 2008. Over that time, the number of correctional officers increased by only 30%.
- The rising contraband problem, both in weapons and drugs in correctional institutions, is not fully understood or mitigated. In fact, between July 2017 and August 2019, there were 101 overdoses in 25 correctional institutions.

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Read the report at www.auditor.on.ca

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