

Press Release
For Immediate Release
To All Media

Source: Union of Canadian Correctional Officers–CSN (UCCO-SACC-CSN)

Bowden Institution Inmates Will Be Provided With Needles at the Expense of Prison Staff

(Winnipeg, January 31, 2020) — The Union of Canadian Correctional Officers (UCCO-SACC-CSN) is denouncing Correctional Service Canada’s decision to implement the Prison Needle Exchange Program (PNEP) at Bowden Institution, as of March 1st. Through the program, federal inmates will be allowed to have their own needle in their cell to inject intravenous drugs.

UCCO-SACC-CSN is convinced that the PNEP puts correctional officers and front-line staff at greater risk. “The Prison Needle Exchange Program is allowing inmates to inject illegal drugs alone in a dark corner of their cell,” said James Bloomfield, Prairies regional president, UCCO-SACC-CSN. “The overall risk to the inmate is dramatically increased in comparison to the harm reduction methods being employed in overdose prevention sites (OPS), an alternative that CSC has gone with before. The risk to all staff and inmates is only increased when needles intended for injecting illegal drugs are in the cells.”

Correctional Service Canada (CSC) has chosen to implement a Prison Needle Exchange Program when there is a more effective, safer option available. “Overdose prevention sites are overseen by health care professionals who are properly trained for assessing individuals who inject illegal drugs,” continued Bloomfield. “An overdose prevention site is being run safely at Drumheller Institution, and there have been no missing needles or problems regarding an increase to staff risk. The Correctional Service of Canada has refused to listen to all front-line staff regarding their safety and has chosen to put a dollar value on the safety of first responders.”

“We are asking Albertans to call their local MPs to demand that safety be at the forefront for first responders at Bowden Institution,” concluded Bloomfield. “Remove the unsafe and problematic Prison Needle Exchange Program and replace it with overdose prevention sites overseen by health care professionals.”

First responders deserve to have their safety put ahead of a corporate decision.

About the Union

The Union of Canadian Correctional Officers (UCCO-SACC-CSN) represents over 7400 members in the five major regions of Canada: the Pacific, the Prairies, Ontario, Quebec, and the Atlantic. UCCO-SACC-CSN represents correctional officers in 49 federal institutions.

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