



BY EMAIL

April 2, 2020

Honourable Bill Blair,
Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness
Bill.Blair@parl.gc.ca

Dear Minister:

On behalf of all members of UCCO-SACC-CSN, I would like to bring a very important issue to your attention, as it relates to our continued ability to protect Canadians from Canada's federally sentenced inmate populations in the context of this global pandemic.

I would like to assure you that Canadian correctional officers continue to proudly work in the interest of public safety, even in the face of this invisible threat. However, we need your help. You need not look any further than Port-Cartier Institution, and the staffing issues that have resulted there, to realize what kind of an impact COVID-19 has in an institutional setting. The key to keeping the front line strong is testing for this virus.

While respecting all of the important work public health authorities are doing in the midst of this crisis and recognizing that the message to remain at home is certainly working to flatten the curve, Canadian correctional officers cannot simply stay home. Just as our medical professionals have been given priority to be tested for COVID-19, so too must all front-line workers in correctional institutions.

Currently, testing priority and approval is handled differently in each provincial jurisdiction. For many provincial public health authorities, a person must, at least, be symptomatic to be tested. For the most part, the provincial public health authorities simply suggest staying home and monitoring for symptoms. In this crisis, this is simply not practical for us and will result in significant staff shortages.

I am therefore requesting that the federal government act now to provide each federal institution with an adequate supply of test kits for the purpose of testing critical staff members who have been determined to be at risk through the contact tracing process. On-site nurses, who are currently trained to administer the test to the inmate population, could perform this task for staff members. Negative test results are a very important tool to keep the front line properly staffed, strong, and healthy.

Yours sincerely,

Jeff Wilkins
National President
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