



BY EMAIL

April 16, 2020

Ivan Zinger,
Correctional Investigator of Canada
zingeriv@oci-bec.gc.ca

Dear Sir:

I have recently learned of your intention to visit Port-Cartier Institution on April 16, 2020. I would like to express that your decision to do so comes at a serious cost to the health and safety of all staff working at Port-Cartier, as well as of the inmate population. In your role as the ombudsman for federally sentenced offenders, I hope that you can appreciate the measures that have been implemented to try to minimize the entry of the COVID-19 virus into the institutions of the Correctional Service of Canada. Visits, non-critical infrastructure work, and transfers continue to be suspended, and all non-critical staff are working from home. The borders, which you must cross to travel to Port-Cartier, are only open for essential workers who must report to work to keep the facility in operation. These measures have been implemented to keep Canadians, including those incarcerated, safe.

Your decision to travel to Port-Cartier is irresponsible and, in my opinion, borders on a violation of the emergency measures that have been declared in most, if not all, provincial jurisdictions. I say this because Canadians are not supposed to travel unless it is completely necessary or unless they are required to perform an essential role. Though your role as ombudsman is essential, specifically in times of crisis, there are other ways for you to do your work that would not put Canadians at risk. I have been advised that you were provided with the opportunity to hold a video conference with the inmate committee at Port-Cartier and have also been advised that the Correctional Service of Canada continues to be very transparent with your office, even during this crisis.

Port-Cartier Institution and other federal institutions are operating in a state of emergency, and all efforts are being made to mitigate the spread of the COVID-19 virus, while maintaining safe, secure, and humane control of the inmate population. I encourage you to follow the advice of the Public Health Agency of Canada and stay home, while exploring creative ways to complete your mandate that do not involve putting others at risk.

Yours sincerely,

Jeff Wilkins
National President
Union of Canadian Correctional Officers (UCCO-SACC-CSN)

JW/lt

c.c. The Honourable Bill Blair, Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness
Anne Kelly, Commissioner—Correctional Service of Canada
Alain Tousignant, Senior Deputy Commissioner—Correctional Service of Canada

UCCO-SACC-CSN

Union of Canadian Correctional Officers - Syndicat des agents correctionnels du Canada
Confédération des syndicats nationaux
1601, avenue De Lorimier, Montréal, Québec H2K 4M5
Téléphone/Phone 514 598-2263 ● Sans frais/Toll free 1 866 229-5566 ● Télécopieur/Fax 514 598-2493
www.ucco-sacc-csn.ca