

Press release

## **Call for recognition of the work of Correctional Officers in the pandemic context**

Abbotsford, British Columbia, February 01, 2022 – UCCO-SACC-CSN calls for recognition of the work of Correctional Officers in light of unprecedented outbreaks in BC federal prisons. Since the emergence of the Omicron variant, Matsqui Institution (medium-security facility in Abbotsford), Pacific Institution (multi-level facility in Abbotsford), Kwikwèxwelph Healing Village (minimum security facility in Harrison Mills) and Kent Institution (maximum security facility in Agassiz) have been declared outbreak sites.

While Kwikwèxwelph Healing Village (minimum-security facility) just came out of an outbreak and Kent, a maximum-security institution, is in the process of doing so, the pressure on correctional officers continue to grow. On January 27, 135 correctional officers in the Pacific Region were on leave due to Covid. As Derek Chin, President of UCCO-SACC-CSN for the Pacific Region, explains: “since the beginning of this pandemic, more than half of the penitentiaries have been declared an outbreak site. Numerous correctional officers have been infected at work. It sadly resulted in a work-related fatality of an officer. They have worked, as the rest of the first responders and other essential workers in extremely hard conditions. It is about time that the government recognizes our work.” The situation is getting worse as correctional officers have been asking for a Covid premium for two years now. A hazard pay would provide concrete recognition of the difficulties they have faced since the beginning of the pandemic.

### **Rapid tests vs. PCR tests**

The number of active cases currently disclosed for the region may change as further testing is conducted. Correctional officers are impacted by the unavailability of PCR tests and need to stay home on sick leave when they test positive with a rapid test. “Correctional Service of Canada is able to offer inmates PCR tests, but not to its officers. That logic is hard to understand,” further adds Derek Chin. Access to PCR tests to officers could alleviate reduced staffing levels by eliminating false positive rapid tests.

### **Security concerns**

The health and safety of our members, who follow all measures in place to minimize the spread of the virus within the institutions, remains our utmost concern. According to UCCO-SACC-CSN representative, “It is too bad that the government’s agency that is supposed to ensure our health and safety does nothing to protect us. There have been 4 work refusals related to Covid-19 that required an investigation of Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC), and every time, they ruled that Covid-19 was not a danger to correctional officers. Of course, they made their decision without coming in person in the prison because of their fear of Covid. If there are risks to the ESDC investigators, why would that not be risky to us as well?” This is a confirmation, not only of the lack of recognition from CSC, but also of the lack of protection by ESDC.” said Derek Chin.

### **Claims**

UCCO-SACC-CSN is asking the Correctional Service of Canada to obtain for wide access to PCR testing in British Columbia, to assist correctional officers in obtaining other types of leave that may meet their needs and to recognize the efforts made by correctional officers with a Covid premium.

Informations: Éric Prince  
Media Relations, UCCO-SACC-CSN  
438 882-5872, [eric.prince@csn.qc.ca](mailto:eric.prince@csn.qc.ca)