

UCCO-SACC-CSN MEETS WITH THE NEW MINISTER OF PUBLIC SAFETY



On November 2, 2023, Jeff Wilkins, National President Frédéric Lebeau, National Vice-President and François Ouellette, UCCO-SACC-CSN Coordinator, met with the Honourable Dominic Leblanc, Canada's new Minister of Public Safety and Jennifer O'Connell, Parliamentary Secretary.

During this meeting, several topics were dis-

cussed, including the escalation of violence in our institutions, the lack of inmate accountability, the ineffectiveness of the Prison Needle Exchange Program (PNEP), and our need for the proper tools to mitigate the severe drug epidemic in our institutions.

While discussing the escalation of violence in our institutions, we brought up the rise

of assaults on staff with bodily fluids and reminded the Minister that the Liberal Party of Canada promised correctional officers legislation allowing the release of medical information when an inmate assaults someone with bodily fluids in order to know if they might have transmitted an infectious disease. The Minister asked us to send him everything we had on the subject, as well as the old private member's bill that had previously been tabled in a former parliament. The Minister agreed that this type of assault warrants some consideration and sees value in having legislation in place.

The PNEP warranted a broader discussion. We informed the Minister that last week, at Mountain Institution in the Pacific Region, there were two fatal overdoses and two officers injured following exposure to fentanyl. The Correctional Service hopes to implement the PNEP at Mountain Institution within the next month. We explained that the PNEP would only result in more fatal overdoses. The Minister stated that the focus should be put on keeping drugs out of institutions and further agreed with our position that the health and safety of correctional officers and other staff should be the priority.

We took this time to highlight the fact that drones continue to deliver drugs daily inside many of our institutions and to reiterate the urgent need for funding to increase security in order to mitigate this problem. Finally, we discussed several temporary measures that can be put in place quickly to help staff fight this problem, and we asked him to remove all the red tape we are currently running into to provide the tools and infrastructure we desperately need.

Although we were pleasantly surprised by the Minister's consideration for our solutions, we will remain in contact with his office to make sure this conversation will lead to concrete actions.

In solidarity,

Your National Executive