

Record overdoses in B.C.: Proof the prison needle exchange program is not the solution

Jan 17, 2024, the Coroner's Service of British Columbia released the 2023 report regarding the opioid and overdose crisis in British Columbia. Following this release the Union of Canadian Correctional Officers is once again raising the Public Safety alarm with regard to the Correctional Service of Canada's continued implementation of the Prison Needle Exchange Program (PNEP) at Mountain Institution in Agassiz B.C.

Despite the alarming figures released by the BC Coroner Service stating there were 2,511 overdose deaths in British Columbia, only one death occurred at an overdose prevention site.

"The Correctional Service of Canada's plan to give inmates unsupervised needles to use illegal drugs alone in their cell only contributes to the B.C. overdose crisis," says Union of Canadian Correctional Officer Pacific Regional President John Randle. "Federal Correctional facilities are supposed to help inmates deal with their addiction issues and not provide them the means to continue their addiction," he says.

"Instead of giving inmates needles in cells, the Correctional Service of Canada should follow the provincial health direction with Overdose Prevention Sites (OPS). OPS provide proper medical supervision, counselling and services, and resources to help inmates struggling with addiction. The CSC has chosen not to utilize fully this program because of costs, ultimately letting communities pay the price of such programs and face increased insecurity and crime. Keeping drugs out of federal prisons should be the top priority for the CSC. We encourage members of the public who are ultimately affected by this to contact their Member of Parliament and voice their concern" says Randle.

About UCCO-SACC-CSN

The Union of Canadian Correctional Officers (UCCO-SACC-CSN) represents over 7,300 members, working in Federal institutions across Canada.

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