

Millhaven staff sent to hospital after being assaulted by inmate



By Ian MacAlpine, Kingston Whig-Standard
Friday, April 8, 2016 5:00:09 EDT PM



Four staff members from Millhaven Institution were taken to hospital Thursday morning with undetermined injuries after being assaulted by a lone inmate.

The incident occurred at approximately 8:25 a.m. at the institution and, after being treated at hospital, the staff members were released.

The Whig-Standard has learned that some of the injuries ranged from a bitten finger to an officer being spat upon to another being headbutted.

Correctional Service Canada said in a news release that the assailant has been identified and appropriate actions have been taken. Vicki Willis, assistant warden management services at Millhaven Institution, said Friday afternoon that when staff are assaulted, the inmate is sent to segregation or shipped to another institution.

“They would assess him, and if we could keep him here at this institution, then that would be fine. If not, we’d assess him for higher security.”

The OPP Joint Forces Penitentiary Squad and the institution are currently investigating the incident.

Millhaven warden Scott Edwards ordered a lockdown of the entire institution after the assault in order to assess the situation and circumstances.

Normal operations resumed in the afternoon once Edwards determined it was safe to do so.

The assault comes just two days after the Ontario government recognized federal correctional officers working in Ontario as first responders so they can receive post-traumatic stress disorder treatment in a more expedited manner, should they require it.

Jason Godin, national vice-president of the Union of Canadian Correctional Officers, said the incident is something his union members have come to expect with the job they’re in.

“There are some significant injuries there,” he said Friday, while refusing to confirm the type of injuries. “It’s just a proven illustration of

the unpredictable, proven behaviour that we're dealing with on a daily basis."

Such an assault, Godin said, brings to the forefront the union's lobbying efforts for the federal government to allow correctional officers access to the blood records of inmates.

"The extent of the one officer's injuries brings the whole thing up in my mind about the blood samples act," Godin said. "Although it's early in the investigation, my understanding is that one of these officers suffered a significant exposure."

Godin said assaults such as these expose officers to any blood-borne diseases an inmate may have.

"We don't know or have the right to know whether the inmate can pass along something to our members," he said.

Godin said seven out of 10 provinces have similar legislation for police officers and other first responders, but it doesn't cover federal correctional officers.

Nurses who work in federal institutions have the right to know an inmate's medical records as well.

"All we're seeking is a law that would help protect officers from the violent situation that took place [Thursday] where, in the event that an inmate attacks, the inmate would have no choice but to provide a blood sample so we can determine whether or not there's a possibility that the officer could contract a blood-borne disease of some kind," Godin said.

"It's a privacy issue and it's really frustrating because it's not a privacy issue in the other provinces. We're calling upon this government, as we did with the last government, to enact a blood samples act."

Godin said Prime Minister Justin Trudeau committed to the legislation in writing before last fall's federal election was called. If the act is adopted, Godin said, it will save a lot of emotion and undue stress for correctional officers.

"It [an assault] is an unfortunate incident, obviously, and very scary for all those officers, but at the same time it's another example of why we need this type of legislation, because some of those officers are going to be enduring some very stressful and emotional days and certainly weeks or the coming months."

Godin said he hopes to have a meeting with Public Safety Minister Ralph Goodale to discuss the issue.

He added that the union has asked for the legislation since 2005.

Since the start of last year, Godin said, 50 CSC employees across the country have been exposed to a potential blood-borne disease, with 30 of those being correctional officers.

Godin said that as soon as they're exposed, they have to drink a "cocktail" to possibly alleviate the effects of the exposure and any side effects.

"I know officers who have been on these things and they said it feels like they're on chemotherapy. It's very nasty stuff," Godin said. "At the very least, we need this act so that the officer can make a conscious decision. If we can prove that there's very little or no risk that the inmate can pass along this blood-borne disease, the officer can make a decision [not to take the cocktail]."

"When someone suffers a significant exposure, it affects their whole life, it affects their personal life, it affects their home life. It just doesn't stay inside the walls of the institution."

imacalpine@postmedia.com

[Twitter.com/IanMacAlpine](https://twitter.com/IanMacAlpine)