

SYNDICAT DES EMPLOYÉ-E-S DE LA SÉCURITÉ ET DE LA JUSTICE



UNION OF SAFETY AND JUSTICE EMPLOYEES

Draft Report:

**USJE Consultation on Parole
Officer Workload and
Resource Tools**

JULY 2021



INTRODUCTION:

In June of 2021, the Union of Safety and Justice Employees convened five roundtables with Parole Officers in Institutions and Communities across the country. The purpose of these roundtables was to canvass some of CSC's most crucial front line employees on how the pandemic and other changes within corrections had created workload challenges in managing Canada's federal offender population and their views on current resourcing tools, and solutions to improve and expand these tools where appropriate.

While workloads in many professions throughout the country have changed – sometimes dramatically during COVID- the reality is that when it comes to assuming responsibility for the thousands of federal offenders who need to re-integrate safely back into communities in Canada, ensuring that Parole officers and their teams have the time required to do the work is crucial.

In 2019, USJE released a groundbreaking report, *Protecting Public Safety: The Challenges* facing federal parole officers in Canada's highly stressed criminal justice system.

This report revealed the results of an extensive survey with Canada's parole officers – who work in federal penitentiaries and hundreds of Community Parole Officers throughout the country. It highlighted that Canada's correctional system is often stressed and nearing a breaking point – with a majority of respondents asserting that their working conditions often prevent them from properly assessing, supervising and preparing offenders for their safe return to society.

In particular, high offender caseloads, chronic understaffing, and significant changes to correctional programs and services in federal institutions and communities are cited as presenting sometimes insurmountable challenges to managing offender risk – unless the resources are in place.

More than two-thirds (69%) of parole officers expressed at the time that they worried they are not able to sufficiently protect the public given their current workloads. The vast majority (92%) agreed an increase in staffing would improve their capacity to keep Canadians safe. A further 85% agreed a decrease in the number of offenders assigned to them would improve public safety. It is in this context that USJE believed it was critical to consult CSC's Parole officers on the reality of their workloads and responsibilities in the current climate.

ROUNDTABLE FOCUS:

Specifically at play within the Correctional Service of Canada is whether or not a resourcing tool that is widely used in Community Corrections, *Community Parole Officer Resource Formula (CPORF)*, could be adapted for Institutional Parole officers.

Within Canada's federal prisons, Institutional Parole Officers and Managers of Assessment Intervention (MAI) play a key role in defining and overseeing the trajectory of federal offenders upon incarceration, as they anticipate their release back into the community. From the minute they enter the system, Institutional Parole Officers use all of the information at their disposal to guide their ongoing assessments about an offender's capacity for and progress towards rehabilitation. It is Institutional Parole Officers who are mandated to make recommendations to the Parole Board of Canada about the early release of offenders, and Community Parole Officers who make recommendations on some of the conditions that they deem necessary for the early release of these individuals.

While the core functions of Parole Officers and MAIs have not fundamentally changed, the context in which they work has clearly evolved. Given a dramatically shifting correctional environment, and notable efforts by the current federal government to pay particular attention to indigenous and other offenders from minority populations, Institutional Parole Officers have signaled for some years now a high degree of dissatisfaction with caseload numbers. High caseload numbers can clearly compromise the time available to oversee offenders with a complexity of needs, needs that persist in light of the very limited mental health and related supports that are offered in federal penitentiaries and in the community (upon release).

Further, as referenced above, significant cuts made in 2014 by the previous federal government to front line rehabilitative staff (including administrative, program and parole officers) have inextricably affected morale and intensified workload pressures. This is why the Union of Safety and Justice Employees is constantly evaluating tools like CPORF for the degree to which they provide realistic approximations of time required to accomplish specific tasks in supervising a federal offender in the community, and whether or not they could be adapted for other environments, like Institutions.

Because Community Parole Officers have had the benefit of seeing how a tool like CPORF works up close, Institutional Parole Officers have inquired about whether or not a similar tool could be valuable, or – on the contrary – if CPORF itself is no longer fulfilling its purpose given the intensity and complexity of offenders needs upon release.

Obviously, given the dynamic and complex nature of this work, there is no perfect approach - but when tools like CPORF are well conceived and implemented, they can offer important insight about where and how CSC distributes its resources within federal Corrections.

At the same time, USJE recognizes that many front-line Community Parole Officers have expressed a high degree of cynicism about CPORF because of a view that the results will change very little in terms of the allocation of appropriate staffing levels. This is because of the fact that, currently, CSC staffs Community Parole Offices 'to the minimum', i.e. there is insufficient room built into the system so that when a Community Parole Officer(s) is/are off on extended sick leave or on a short term assignment, that work can

be easily absorbed by the remaining Community Parole Officers. This model creates significant stress and instability among frontline staff who are frequently juggling workloads beyond their own. CPORF in and of itself cannot solve this problem. Therefore, for resourcing tools to remain credible, CSC must consider a better resource allocation model that goes beyond a minimum staffing commitment.

ROUNDTABLE FORMAT:

USJE used the same format over five two-hours sessions in the month of June, structuring the dialogue around five key questions – four in English and one in French. Roundtables were organized to ensure sufficient regional representation, and a diversity of voices from various federal penitentiaries, community parole offices and Community Correctional Centres.

Given many repeated calls for Institutional Parole Officers to potentially have similar access to a tool that properly quantifies their tasks, one of the key questions was whether or not a tool similar to CPORF could be adapted for use within federal Institutions. While the multiple pressures on Community Parole officers are ever-increasing, Institutional Parole Officers also work in extremely challenging environments where:

- access to offenders is often limited (due to lock downs, COVID, gang behavior),
- correctional programs have changed significantly and may not reliably identify or predict ongoing risks of re-offending;
- the Parole Board of Canada requires extensive documentation but clerical staffing support for Parole Officers is extremely limited;
- the approach for BIPOC (Black, indigenous, People of Colour) offenders is evolving requiring more case conferences and a collaborative approach within the Institutions (these are welcome changes but take more time);
- Institutional Parole Officers are treated as “catch all” employees who are charged with additional administrative tasks such as booking travel for offenders (i.e. bus tickets, ride shares) in anticipation of their release from an institution.

In this context, Parole officers from Institutions, the Community and Community Correctional Centres were asked to give consideration to the following:

- What are the workload pressures Parole Officers faced during the pandemic?
- What will these challenges look like as we transition into the post pandemic period?
- What are your thoughts on current resourcing tools and what needs to be done to improve the management of workload levels?
- What are some solutions to these workload challenges?
- How can CSC improve their resourcing tools and the distribution of workload?

KEY OUTCOMES:

1. INSTITUTIONAL PAROLE OFFICERS

a) Institutional Parole Officers are seeking an immediate reduction of caseloads

For the last seven years, many federal Parole Officers working in Canada's federal Institutions have lamented the loss of frontline staff which was implemented during the Deficit Reduction Action Plan (DRAP) in 2014. During these changes, caseloads for Canada's federal offenders were notably increased, and case management administrative assistance was significantly reduced.

With the election of a new federal Liberal government in 2015, there was a discernible shift in federal Corrections in order to: 1/better respond to the needs of indigenous offenders (long overdue) who were federally sentenced; 2/recognize the complex mental health and related challenges of those being incarcerated; 3/minimize and transform the practice of administrative segregation. These shifts in approach, however, have fundamentally changed some of the efforts required by Parole officers, and other employees working in Canada's federal penitentiaries.

However, there has been no commensurate adjustment in caseloads and resource allocation despite the increased complexity and nuance required by Parole Officers, in particular, to ensure the Correctional Service of Canada meets its commitments to offenders. The one exception is the establishment of the Structured Intervention Units (SIUs) which – as a result of a Supreme Court ruling – are intended to serve a discreet number of offenders who are unable to function in the general population, and require highly intensive interventions with dedicated staff outside of the typical workings of a federal penitentiary. However, even with dedicated staff in these units, USJE is hearing of multiple challenges in servicing these offenders who are often volatile, and for which the staffing is not always sufficient, nor the mental health supports adequate. Consequently, there is elevated risk of conflict and occupational stress injuries in these units.

Notwithstanding the policy and practical changes within the Correctional Service of Canada, as well as the onset of the global COVID-19 pandemic, Parole Officers are reporting unprecedented levels of burn out and occupational stress. Based upon feedback that USJE was hearing from Correctional Service and other public safety employees from 2015 onwards, USJE commissioned a survey in 2016-2017 on occupational stress survey with its members across 17 departments. Respondents reported pervasive levels of secondary trauma, including persistent and high levels of anxiety, stress, hypervigilance, insomnia, depression, nightmares, social withdrawal, lack of trust, increased consumption of alcohol, among other maladaptive coping skills, associated with working with traumatic material and within a traumatic penitentiary environment.

In fact, compared to RCMP employees, those who work in federal corrections, including Parole Officers, reported a significantly higher rate of personal impact. In response to questions about the personal impact of viewing traumatic material including files, images, videos and audio recordings, 82.9 percent of respondents said that they experienced at least some personal impact. A slightly lower percentage (80.5 percent) of respondents said that they had experienced at least some personal impact from directly listening to traumatic stories either in person, on the phone or by electronic means. A very high rate (87.8 percent) of respondents said that they experienced at least some personal impact from being exposed directly to traumatic or stressful situations within their jobs.

Within the ranks of CSC employees, 29.5 percent of survey respondents said that they were exposed to traumatic content in written material ‘several times a day’ while 26.9 percent said that it was ‘several times a week’. Over 90 percent of respondents who work for federal Corrections said that they listen to stories of trauma such as abuse, violence, sexual abuse, fatal accidents or suicide at least once a month. Close to one-third (29.6 percent) of respondents said that they heard these types of stories several times a day while 28.9 percent said that it was ‘several times a week’.

These results point to high degrees of occupational stress injury (OSI) – even before the onset of COVID - among those on the front lines of federal Corrections. Clearly, chronically high workloads and the constant exposure to risks for occupational stress injury are less than optimal conditions to undertake such high stakes work, particularly when it exceeds the legislated 37.5 work week.

Despite the results of this survey, and some modest efforts across the federal public service, very little mental health support is available to frontline employees beyond the Sunlife Benefits program and EAP. While many different occupations within public safety experience high levels of OSI, what is unique about federal Corrections is **the lack of access to highly specialized trauma supports which are increasingly required and available to members of other professions.**

b) Lower Ratios

Quite simply, given all of the above, and perhaps not surprisingly, in the five roundtables that were convened this past June, Canada’s federal Parole officers and MAIs overwhelmingly advocated for lower caseloads within federal penitentiaries. **A customized CPORF tool for Institutions was not regarded as particular relevant or useful without a reduction of caseload numbers first.**

CSC’s front line members repeatedly highlighted that they would like to see the immediate establishment of lower caseload numbers. This is something that USJE has, for several years now, articulated to CSC’s senior management, key Parliamentary Committee (including the House of Commons Public Safety committee), as well as in multiple federal pre-budget submissions.

Consequently, USJE is advocating for a re-adjustment of caseload numbers to the following:

- Minimum security institution: 1:20,
- Medium security institution: 1:23 and
- Maximum security institution: 1:25.

This would represent a reduction from the current 1:25, 1:28 and 1:30 ratios, which is approximately 5 less on a caseload, no matter at which security level a Parole officer works. In cases of hybrid institutions where there is more than one security level (medium/maximum, minimum/medium), the lower ratio would prevail. This is partly because these institutions are quite dynamic and some offenders can shift security levels fairly quickly, which in and of itself requires careful management.

Fundamentally, these ratios are proposed to create more capacity in the system to:

1. provide sufficient coverage for those who are absent
2. fulfill the requirements, which are ever-changing, in federal policy and procedure
3. meet the complex needs of certain offenders given social history and mental health realities

However, an adjustment in caseload numbers in and of itself is not enough. It is vitally important that these ratios are respected so as to: a) offer better workplace predictability, b) allow sufficient time to meet with offenders as required, as well as; c) diminish employees' exposure to occupational stress injuries.

When ratios cannot be respected, CSC must approve overtime for all work over the legislated 37.5 hours per week. Despite repeated dialogue with CSC regarding overtime pay, the Correctional Service of Canada has been extremely reluctant to recognize the legitimacy of overtime compensation for federal Parole Officers, citing shifting caseload numbers in both Institutions and in the Community and assertions of “sufficient capacity.”

USJE fundamentally disagrees with CSC that caseloads numbers are acceptable at all sites and in all regions of the country. Further, it takes offence to the notion that Parole Officers just need to “better manage” their time. One of the tensions within federal Institutions is that Correctional Officers, who are represented by a different bargaining unit, are reliably compensated for every hour of overtime, while their colleagues, Parole Officers, who also play a critical role in the supervision and rehabilitation of federal offenders are often highly discouraged from even asking for compensation. This has created workforce tensions in federal penitentiaries that pit one group against the other, and the Correctional Service continues to operate in a way that creates the conditions for this tension or behaves in ways that make these tensions worse.

In light of the reality that, currently, the Correctional Service of Canada rarely offers overtime to federal Parole officers, neither in Institutions or the Community, and the fact that there is no meaningful policy on backfilling which would alleviate caseload pressures, there is an immediate imperative to reduce caseloads. At a minimum, *caseload reductions would create the opportunity to better reconcile the human resourcing requirements of paroles officers with the needs of offenders.*

c) Streamlining Tasks

During the roundtables, Institutional Parole Officers also spoke of the many tasks and “add on’s” that management directs them to undertake, and which exacerbate the already significant pressures on their time.

Given the fact that Institutional Parole Officers must already navigate multiple barriers (lack of access to offenders, lockdowns, limited clerical support, COVID, etc), these “add- ons” often serve as a tipping point between what constitutes a tenable workload, and a non-tenable one.

Therefore, Institutional Parole Officers repeatedly suggested that a streamlining process should be utilized to reduce the number of “add-ons” and incorporate the “best practices” currently in place across the country for tasks that have not historically been seen as Parole Officer duties but, increasingly, are assigned to them anyhow. Examples of add-on’s that compromise the quality and quantity of work from Institutional Parole Officers include:

- undertaking the logistics for travel arrangements for offenders in anticipate of their release, including securing bus tickets, airline tickets, family supported travel etc.
- undertaking unnecessary and unjustified ‘case reviews’ based on poor policy interpretation, as directed by management
- constantly scanning and faxing often hundreds of pages of documentation without the benefit of any administrative support

Further, many policy changes that apply to indigenous offender and those requiring time in Structured Intervention Units have been implemented without real consideration of the risk management implications. Many Institutional Parole Officers believe that reporting is increasingly about quantity, not quality. Insisting that Parole Officers conduct Regular Correctional Program Updates in the absence of any meaningful change to the offender’s behaviour or program engagement is seen as excessively buraurcratic when they are not warranted, and not enhancing the quality of supervision.

Some Parole Officers suggested that the establishment of ongoing regional committees to review any potential “add ons” and “best practices” in each respective region. The purpose of the committee would be to review best practices and assess whether any add-ons can be incorporated into existing workloads or require additional resources. These

committees had initially been established around the time of DRAP but were discontinued after approximately 1 year.

d) Lack of Backfilling is Creating Untenable Workplace Pressures

Further exacerbating working conditions is the widespread phenomenon of leaving parole officer positions vacant, i.e. not backfilling them within the Correctional Service of Canada. This means that federal Parole officers in Institutions (and in the Community, including Community Correctional Centres) are frequently assuming coverage for other caseloads outside of their own when colleagues are on short term leave, annual leave and, in some cases, longer term leave.

While CPORF as a tool anticipates and builds in some amount of coverage for Community Parole Officers, reports from the frontline continuously suggest that the coverage offered is often not adequate, often woefully so.

USJE recognizes that the Correctional Service often makes some effort to backfill in the case of well-anticipated longer-term absences of an Institutional or Community Parole Officer but, unfortunately, these are rare. In a dynamic work environment where annual leaves, sudden short term sick leaves and longer term extended leaves are par for the course, the inability of CSC to close the gaps created by these absences means the remaining Parole Officers are absorbing these cases on top of their own, often at rapid speed with little to no preparation. Consequently, Managers of Assessment and Intervention and Parole Officer Supervisors are also having to overextend to provide coverage which comes with its own implications given their role in deploying Parole Officers and overseeing offender management. Consequently, there is an urgent need to establish a comprehensive backfilling strategy in federal penitentiaries.

Excerpts from USJE's 2019 report, *Protecting Public Safety*, reveal the intensity of the workload which is taking its toll. It is important to remember that it is the recommendations of Institutional Parole Officers which are heavily relied on by the Parole Board of Canada to ensure public safety and promote offender rehabilitation.

"I don't have time to do thorough file reviews because of all of the legislated reviews I need to do in addition to working with offenders to move cases along. I'm sure important things are being missed and I don't feel as confident in my recommendations."

"I don't have enough time to see my offenders on my caseload and write reports. It's important to meet regularly with offenders... so you gain a better understanding of the person you are working with. The workload doesn't allow for that."

“I'm so busy trying to keep my head above water, that the chances that I'm missing things is inevitable. I feel like my integrity is being compromised because I have had to accept that I cannot look under every rock.”

“I have taken two leaves for physiological/psychological reasons. The pressure on Parole Officers is immense.”

“I'm always stressed about my workload. I never feel as though there are enough hours in the day to complete what's expected of Parole Officers. There's always an expectation to do more with less.”

Along with the proposed reduction in caseloads, USJE has contemplated the establishment of a mechanism by which the complexity of cases can also be recognized. Offenders have different criminogenic factors and needs, not to mention educational levels, social histories, experiences of trauma and abuse, among other things which affect their behaviour and choices. The Correctional Service of Canada has been clearly directed in recent years by various Court rulings and the current Liberal government to become far more responsive to the needs of indigenous offenders, in particular, given the far-reaching effects of residential schools, land settlement and colonialism. This makes sense given the disproportionate number of First Nations, Metis and Inuit offenders that are federally incarcerated. New and improved approaches, however, require a level of attention and care that is not always available from Parole Officers when juggling high caseloads.

Consequently, improved approaches for indigenous and other offenders from marginalized groups means there should be sufficient time allocated for Parole Officers, program officers and related staff to focus on these offenders, and have the benefit of high quality training.

This may be particularly valuable given the overwhelming lack of psychological supports for offenders who are suffering from PTSD, FAS, and/or their own multi-generational histories of abuse. To expect Parole Officers to offer high quality supervision, without these investments and any adjustments to workload, is disingenuous at best on the part of the Correctional Service of Canada. This is why Parole officers should be able to flag when a case requires more time intensive supervision and support so that they are able to deliver.

Anecdotes from Institutional Parole Officers:

“Because we have shown over the past year of Covid that we can do this job with skeleton staff, skeleton resources, and broken-down laptops, management will say we can keep going, and cut more jobs. We have done more with less, but we all [REALLY] burnt out.”

“There are a lot of issues with the transfer system. Management is pushing to get offenders out of the SIU but then they go nowhere, so offenders get more and more aggressive. I have got some telling me they are going to kill me, they’re going to kill everyone because they have been stuck in SIU for five or six months as there are no flights.”

“We are getting guys from Ontario with no connections in Saskatchewan and then three months from arrival we have to do release planning for them. I had to do one for a guy from Quebec but I don’t speak French. They are moving problem inmates moving from place to place. SIU staff assaults are common.”

“We are having to send people to the other side of the country with no planning and no assessments as some decisions are made hours prior to release. We have to be extremely creative to get somebody from point A to point B within one working day. We are travel planners. That work has consumed much time and resources for Institutional Parole Officers (PO). This situation is also affecting Community, which has had to scramble to try to assist. Halfway houses don't want anyone. They have a shortage of bed space and there are restrictions. Therefore, release planning starts weeks in advance of a decision because we can't afford to wait. It's going to get worse. Options to move offenders might get better but the population isn't getting better. The restrictions on accommodation and residents aren't getting better.”

“We are still reeling from the effects of the Ontario institution closures. Many offenders are shipped out to the Pacific region from Ontario. Ontario is where their families are and where the release destination is, but Ontario won’t take them back. If they do take them back, we try to encourage the offender to request for an institutional transfer to avoid travel costs.”

“There are many unrealistic expectations from Parole Board of Canada (PBC) around releases. I have an offender who can be deported to the Philippines and PBC wants a release plan for the Philippines. I had to remind them that they do not have jurisdiction in the Philippines. I am not a mental health worker, real estate agent, travel agent. I’m a PO. My job is to assess risk to public safety.”

2. COMMUNITY PAROLE OFFICERS

The consultations with Community Parole Officers regarding the efficacy of CPORF as a tool revealed a number of insights, including the high degree of frustration among Community Parole Officers that while the tool has merit, the overall approach to resourcing the work within Community Corrections is fundamentally flawed.

a) Staffing beyond the minimum

Community Parole Officers play a crucial role in supporting the safe re-integration of federal offenders back into communities across the country. CPORF is a workload

distribution tool that assists CSC in the deployment of Parole Officers so that, theoretically, there is always an adequate number in every region.

Fundamentally, Community Parole Officers would like to ensure that there is enough time available to complete the various assessment and supervision tasks required of them, regardless of what CPORF approximates as necessary to do the work. They also strongly recommend that the area of ‘other related duties’ be updated and better reflect the time required to meet the competing demands on Parole Officers time (ie. reading of emails not related to case management).

Within the Community, CSC management’s approach to finding efficiencies among front line staff have been equated, by some, with the LEAN model. This model can be characterized by a relentless “optimization” of time expended on various tasks so as to continuously save dollars on human resources.

While this approach is not unique to parts of the federal public service, or private sector, its effects can be far reaching. In a judgment rendered on April 21, 2017, the Superior Court of Québec found that the conclusion of a grievance arbitrator was reasonable in confirming that a long term care facility had caused a moral injury to its employees by carrying out a workload reorganization that was essentially inspired by the Lean method.

BLG’s Senior Associate, Maude Galarneau, characterized the Quebec’s Supreme Court decision this way:

“In the light of the arbitrator Jobin's arbitral award, prudent employers, when introducing optimization and performance assessment programs inspired by the Lean method, should ensure that the working conditions of the employees involved will not be affected so as to cause them undue or harmful pressure, or in any way whereby the effects of the measures imposed could jeopardize their ethical obligations.

More specifically, prudent employers should ensure that performance assessment programs do not impose any excessive workloads on employees, which could prevent them from performing their essential duties. Furthermore, employers should ensure that both occupational and psychological support is available to all workers affected by reorganizations and optimization and performance assessment programs, and keep them informed about the process and its expected, desired or potential consequences.”

Several participants noted that assigning car maintenance duties to Parole Officers, often a time-consuming and administrative task to say the least, was completely outside the scope of their legal obligations to manage risk among federal offenders, and took them away from key duties. **The fact that the Correctional Service of Canada believes that it is appropriate to assign Parole Officers responsible for vehicle fleet management within the community highlights a severe gap in understanding.**

On top of this, Community Parole Officers are often told that not only do they have enough time to complete their own work, but that they can absorb other cases from absent

colleagues, despite the realities on the ground. **When dealing with such a high stakes federal offender population, for Parole Officers to not be able to take the necessary time to complete mandated supervision tasks regardless of what the CPORF formula stipulates, not to mention email and other related duties (currently unaccounted for) - combined with a lack of backfilling- create real vulnerabilities in public safety, and is simply not necessary. This is particularly true when budget allocations for the community are frequently not fully spent and returned for Institutional overspends.**

Throughout the Roundtables, USJE heard repeatedly from Community Parole Officers that in staffing Community Parole Offices to the minimum, there is **insufficient room** built into the system so that when a Community Parole Officer(s) is/are off on extended annual leave, sick leave or on a short term secondment, that work can be easily absorbed by the remaining Community Parole Officers.

It bears repeating that this approach creates significant stress and instability among frontline staff who are frequently juggling workloads beyond their own. CPORF in and of itself cannot solve this problem. Therefore, for resourcing tools like CPORF to remain credible, CSC must consider a better resource allocation model that goes beyond a minimum staffing commitment.

Further, as per a separate communication with the Correctional Service of Canada, USJE wishes to highlight that regional budget allocations to Community Corrections are often not fully spent and, in fact, returned in order to support a balanced budget and make up for deficits within other parts of the organization (i.e. Overtime pay for Correctional officers in all federal penitentiaries, in particular).

This de facto model creates the conditions for what ends up as chronically understaffed Community parole offices which is neither tenable or in the best interests of dedicated front-line staff, and the offenders they supervise. CPORF as a tool will never be able to resolve this issue unless there is a commitment by CSC to go beyond the "minimum staffing requirements" so that the extra workload can be better absorbed by existing staff.

Given the context described above, USJE is urging CSC to make an explicit commitment to back fill (or, if nothing else, pay overtime) to CPOs who often take on extra cases for often weeks or months at a time given the extremely lean model within which Community corrections operates.

b) Create a workload distribution tool

In the roundtables, Community Parole officers **did not believe** that caseload ratios would be a viable replacement for CPORF (nor were they calling for it) due to the complexity of the cases and the legal imperatives to manage risk in the context of public safety. The obligations to initiate and sustain communication with collateral contacts, and track the location and activity of offenders varies considerable and no two caseloads are alike.

Some cases take far more time than others to manage and this cannot be easily captured when it comes to assigning work.

However, Community Parole Officers did agree **that a workload distribution tool** is required which would account for the complexity of the offender based upon his/her functionality, social history, capacity to adhere to all conditions, access to family supports, mental health status and related. This workload distribution tool is distinct from a resourcing formula which anticipates the collective number of federal parole offices required in the community, vs an analysis of individual cases that Community Parole officers are overseeing at any one time.

Caseload complexity, whether or not offenders are in the community or in a federal penitentiary is increasingly a significant element of how POs must adjust their responses, their supervision strategies and their time allocation – and it can no longer be ignored by CCC as not warranting consideration. Further, by virtue of the fact that the Correctional Service of Canada is increasingly imposing ‘checklist imperatives’ for Community Parole Officers, a culture is emerging where Parole Officers must choose between spending more time on supervision activities that would benefit the offenders and public safety, or completing all items on a checklist, when certain items may have limited value or relevance to the offer in question. USJE recognizes that increased Parliamentary and public scrutiny is likely influencing CSC’s focus on ‘covering all bases’, but it sometimes flies in the face of the professional judgement, experience and expertise Parole Officers are able to offer when interacting with individual offenders.

Anecdotes from CPOs

“Terribly inadequate tool [CPORF]... doesn’t take into account everything they do. POs being dumped on with things like vehicle maintenance. It punishes people for doing anything above reports or encouraging people not to do the [extras], designed to fund the minimum and making managers figure things out. They use it as an assigning tool or a funding tool - whatever is convenient for the employer. It discourages specializations such as working with Indigenous offenders. When we engaged in discussions about OT recently, the employer did not even consider the fact that they should be paying the PAROLE OFFICER Supervisor Overtime to review (lock?) OT reports.”

“Numbers aren’t reflected, always extra tasks, we work with humans and there should be a cushion... we shouldn’t be staffing for bare minimum. Sometimes end up with whole caseload in a day if a PO goes down. We don’t have resources to pull from. It’s a negative work place to begin with and we don’t feel valued, dealing with offenders who are high risk and suicidal, so much missing from CPORF and shouldn’t be the only resource.”

“Whether its staff or offenders the pandemic has broken people 25 percent ... so having to deal with offenders and co-workers who are functioning differently... we get littered with emails that having nothing to do with current workload. Definite disconnect between upper and lower management (used to get explanations.. without it, everyone ends up on

different pages as people are interpreting things differently), technology is terrible (having to get up at 3am to do reports), lack of resources, unable to get a hold of people such as police and others in community.”

3. COMMUNITY CORRECTIONAL CENTRES

Community Correctional Centres are not well understood by the Canadian public. They house the highest need, highest risk federal offenders who have served their time but are deemed as requiring extensive supervision while on parole. These are federal offenders that not-for-profit half-way houses will not take owing to the security and related risks, and these offenders are typically under parole for longer and present with more complexity than the average offender being released in the community.

Prior to the Deficit Reduction Plan, CCCs operated at a 1 to 8 ratio (CONFIRM). In the course of the deep cuts to the front line made by the Correctional Service of Canada in 2014, this ratio was changes to 1 to 13 and the increase in workload has been a major issue of contention for the Parole Officers who work in them ever since. Owing to a significant backlash in the community, modifications have subsequently been made to reduce ratios to that of approximately 1 to 10.

Nonetheless, Community Parole Officers who work in CCCs and who participated in the roundtable are not necessarily requesting a CPORF tool for their work. By virtue of the fact that they serve offenders who are attached to a residential living environment, they believe that the re-establishment of a ratio of 1 to 8 would be an important first step. Clearly, a reduction in ratios will reduce chronically high workloads and allow for some flexibility to help cover those colleagues who are away on Annual Leave. At the same time, some CPOs working in CCCs did see merit in a Workload Formula, as there are many duties that were not identified in the CSC 2018 draft report that looked specifically at the role and pressures on CCCs.

Regardless of their position on this, however, CPOs did clearly indicate that additional resources are required for the offenders residing in CCCs including full time Reintegration Workers, access to psychological supports and social workers. When federal offenders are released to a CCC on parole, they are assigned to these facilities because of the risk these offenders pose to society in terms of creating more harm and committing more crime. But these facilities do not lock the doors at night. Offenders are free to come and go, and it is Commissioners, not Correctional officers, who staff them from a security perspective.

At the same time, these offenders are often poorly equipped to do well in these quasi-independent living environments. Basic skills are often not well established, including cooking, cleaning, self care, and family supports which can be enormously helpful in transitioning back into the community. This is why additional resources would ensure Parole Officers stay focused on their primary responsibility which is to assess the

ongoing risk of those offenders who are assigned to these facilities and determine the best path forward.

Roundtable Anecdotes:

“A meaningful analysis of the duties of a parole officer and CCC manager is required. Someone needs to come in and watch what we do to get an accurate perception. They need to see how often we deal with day-to-day challenges outside of our to-do lists. They need to sit and observe.”

“In terms of resources, agree with what many people said. 1:8 is the way to go. We can hire whatever support staff we want, but at the end of the day, when the rubber hits the pavement, it falls to POs.”

“We have a high work ethic because we are very much aware of how important our jobs are. This causes a lot of the burnout. You’re taking a lot of other people’s work on top of your own.”