

Programs Available to Inmates in NWT Correctional Facilities

Mr. Speaker, our government has committed in its mandate to pursue innovative ways to prevent and reduce crime. The dedicated employees of the Department of Justice, in particular our frontline corrections professionals, know first-hand how important it is that our programs and services focus on the root causes that lead to an individual coming into contact with the justice system.

Within our correctional facilities, programs are delivered in a way that recognize the importance of culture, and take into consideration the short time that most territorial inmates are incarcerated. Our Corrections staff work with inmates to ensure that the time they spend in custody promotes their successful reintegration back into their communities.

After hearing feedback from MLAs, past and present inmates and through the Auditor General's report regarding programming at the North Slave Correctional Centre, the Corrections Service has worked hard to develop basic life and pre-employment skills of inmates and incorporate cultural elements into our programs. Traditional healing programs will move from being offered inside the facility to being offered in the yard of the North Slave Correctional Centre now that the security upgrades are complete.

We are also offering a number of programs at many of our corrections facilities and recognize the importance of Indigenous cultures and traditions. The Substance Abuse Management, Violence Prevention, Living without Violence, and the Respectful Relationships programs, are all evidence-based programs aimed at supporting inmates to become aware of the triggers that lead them to engage in

unhealthy and unsafe behaviours. Traditional Liaison Officers or Elders also participate in these programs to help inmates reflect on their culture and learning.

Since being launched in 2016, the Substance Abuse Management program has been delivered 23 times in correctional facilities and probation offices in Yellowknife, Hay River, Fort Providence and Inuvik. The Corrections Service has also delivered two of these programs specifically for women; one at the Fort Smith Correctional Complex Women's Unit and another at the Yellowknife Probation Office.

Since its launch in 2017, the Violence Prevention and the Living without Violence programs have been delivered 20 times, including five times in probation offices in Yellowknife, Inuvik, Fort McPherson, Fort Good Hope and Hay River.

The Respectful Relationships program also launched last fall and has been delivered 10 times, five of which were delivered in probation offices in Yellowknife, Behchokò, Inuvik, and Hay River.

The South Mackenzie Correctional Centre offers a range of in-house addictions programs unique to that facility. The Addictions Counsellor and Traditional Liaison Officers deliver several programs including a two-week addictions program based on Indigenous cultures, values and beliefs. They also offer a four week pre-treatment healing program where clients learn medicine wheel teachings and about how their behaviours can impact their family and their community. This program, along with the Red Road to Freedom program, teaches inmates that the four aspects of the Medicine wheel: Emotional, Physical, Mental and Spiritual that need to be kept in balance when dealing with issues in their lives like substance abuse.

In addition to the programs that are being delivered to those individuals who are in the justice system, changes to the release planning process have made it possible for case managers to look for community programming options for inmates upon release. Where possible, clients are matched with similar programming so that they

can continue to build the skills that are needed to prevent and reduce crime and harm in their lives.

Mr. Speaker, we also recognize the importance of offering programs and opportunities that support inmates in meeting their educational goals. Through our onsite instructors who work closely with local high schools and colleges, the Corrections Service is able to offer a range of educational programming. Inmates can access programs that include adult literacy, basic education, general education development, high school and exam preparation, trades exam preparation, life skills, and assistance with pursuing or registration into post-secondary courses.

I am pleased to report that over the past year approximately 130 inmates have taken part in education programming within our adult correctional facilities.

Mr. Speaker, our goal is to prepare inmates for their eventual rehabilitation and reintegration back into their communities. The Department of Justice and the entire Corrections Service has been working hard to make sure that the programming and supports that we offer help to address the root causes of crime. This has meant committing to making sure that culturally appropriate programming is in place, and to look at new ways to help inmates continue with similar programming in their communities upon their release. Through these efforts and the continued partnerships we have with other departments and stakeholders, we are making a difference in lives of Northerners and are helping to create safer, healthier communities in the Northwest Territories.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.