

I am serving a life sentence. I have been incarcerated for 14 years. From my perspective, the Harper government made reforms to the federal penitentiary system that will manufacture criminals.

Correctional Service Canada (CSC) removed many opportunities for prisoners when they reduced the workshop programs and opportunities to gain tickets for things like welding or carpentry. There are no apprenticeship hours or trades to be earned. When a person such as myself learns a trade, it provides me with options and the confidence to know I can learn and work, making me feel prepared to seek employment. CSC programming is crucial and it also works. It is good to look within yourself and have insight into why you do what you do no matter what walk of life you are from. However, despite the need or desire for change, a person needs confidence and education in regard to employment. This requires community support, in addition to employment skills, they can fall back on. It is with this in mind that I make the recommendations below.

BRING BACK TRADES

The demographics of prisoners are changing. Many of the prisoners receiving sentences are younger and the crimes committed are changing. There needs to be more programming geared towards street oriented crimes similar to a brand-new group/program named *BREAK AWAY* introduced by Life Line in-reach counsellor Rick Sauvé.

GIVE GREATER ACCESS TO COMPUTERS

The technology available to prisoners is obsolete in comparison to what is in the outside world. Windows 2007 and floppy disk is what I am currently working from and it was recently updated to this. For prisoners to be able to reintegrate into society they need greater access to computers.

REPLACE THE NEW AND FAILING MODEL INTRODUCED AT JOYCEVILLE ASSESSMENT UNIT

Prisoners sentenced to terms of four years or less have the opportunity to complete their core programming in accordance to their correctional plan

while housed in the assessment unit. This is supposed to speed up the opportunities for such prisoners to apply for different forms of release by their scheduled eligibility dates. However, despite finishing their programing and being transferred to lower-security institutions, they are being warehoused and restricted due to lack of support from their new institutional parole officer (IPO). No matter what, prisoners are held back due to the caseloads the IPOs have. There should also be more program facilitators for other prisoners. Positive gains with respect to your correctional plan often comes down to how busy your IPO is and the current approach is failing many prisoners who are kept behind bars longer than necessary.

BETTER SUPPORT FOR PRISONERS WHO USE DRUGS

Several months back, a prisoner known to us here at Beaver Creek was released to a residence. He had previously been denied day parole at a halfway house. He wanted to be released to a place and have the support of being monitored. This young man lacked community support and family. He was an addict, yet you would not be able to tell he had such struggles. He played sports, was charming and funny, polite, respectful, stayed away from the subcultures and he presented as social. Following his eventual release without adequate supports he himself sought, he overdosed just ten days later and passed away. He should have been released to a halfway house or a treatment centre. This is a tragedy! This was on CSC's watch. R.I.P.