



Auditor general finds unacceptable lack of addiction and mental health services in adult correctional institutions

June 12, 2018

FREDERICTON (GNB) – In her latest report tabled today in the legislative assembly, Auditor General Kim MacPherson identified an unacceptable lack of addiction and mental health services for inmates in provincial adult correctional institutions. New Brunswick has five adult correctional institutions holding an average of 500 inmates at any given time, at an average cost of \$66,000 per inmate per year.

The report found that systems, practices and resources to promote inmate mental health improvement and assist with reintegration into society are lacking. In addition, New Brunswick has no integrated addiction and mental health service delivery model for services in correctional institutions for adults.

“When released into the community without adequate treatment of addiction and mental health issues, inmates can pose a risk to themselves and to the public,” said MacPherson. “This can also increase the vulnerability of inmates to negative outcomes including re-offending.”

MacPherson concluded that the Department of Health and the Department of Justice and Public Safety do not deliver addiction and mental health services to inmates in provincial adult correctional institutions, to improve health outcomes and contribute to safer communities.

The report also found New Brunswick legislation and regulations are silent on which entity is responsible for providing addiction and mental health services in provincial adult correctional institutions.

“Our interviews revealed confusion and misunderstanding among the entities involved, regarding their respective roles and responsibilities,” said MacPherson in her report.

“This is a prime example of a vulnerable segment of our society whose needs have fallen between the cracks of government services,” said MacPherson. “Responsibility for providing addiction and mental health services in adult provincial correctional institutions must be clearly stated in legislation. Only then proper accountability can be established for providing necessary services.”

The report also found where treatment services were provided they were reactionary and focused merely on stabilizing and easing the symptoms of some addiction and mental health issues. As a result, inmates are often released in a state worse than when they were admitted.

MacPherson made 16 recommendations to the departments of Health and Justice and Public Safety to address the findings identified in the report.

The Addiction and Mental Health Services in Provincial Adult Correctional Institutions chapter can be found in Volume I of the 2018 Auditor General Report. This volume and the one-page summary for this chapter are available online.

12-06-18

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