



Thursday May 31, 2012

Ron Bain,
Executive Director
Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police
40 College Street, Suite 605
Toronto, Ontario
M5G 2J3

Re: Threats / Assaults on Correctional Services Staff Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services

Mr. Bain,

I am writing on behalf of the OPSEU members working at the twenty nine Provincial Correctional Facilities in Ontario. We are Correctional Officers, Nurses, Food Service Personnel, Probation and Parole Officers, Provincial Bailiffs, and Support Staff. We work daily, to ensure that the wheels of justice in this province turn as smoothly and efficiently as possible. Many of us face daily harassment and abuse including assault. We risk our own lives and security to keep our communities safe.

It has been reported to me that Ontario Police Services have not pursued charges against offenders for threatening, intimidating, or assaulting staff working in Provincial Correctional Facilities as a general practice. That threats and assaults “are inherent in our work”. If this is the policy of the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police I find it completely inappropriate, and demonstrates a lack of understanding of our work.

Our correctional faculties are overcrowded with intermittent sentenced offenders, female and mental health offenders. The proportion of inmates with mental health problems has dramatically increased. To add to this the chronic level of understaffing and increased levels of lockdowns in our facilities has made our work even more challenging.

With the heightened level of scrutiny we are under for use of force occurrences we have found the inmate population has become less compliant and more disruptive in general. Last year in Ontario Correctional facilities 485 correctional officers were assaulted by inmates. Since February of this year we have had four riots in our Correctional Facilities.

Without the legal protection for our members the working conditions in provincial jails is spiraling out of control. Our members are afforded the same protection as every citizen in Ontario with additional protection found in section 423.1 of the Criminal Code of Canada, Intimidation of a justice system participant.

Our members are looking for the support of the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police and our Justice Partners in pursuing charges against offenders to the fullest extent of the law in these circumstances when appropriate.

I look forward to your response,

Regards,

Dan Sidsworth
OPSEU
MERC Chair
MCSCS
w 905-878-8141 ex.2415
c 905-691-7955
dansidsworth@cogeco.ca
twitter @DanSidsworth

C.C. Warren (Smokey) Thomas, President OPSEU
Steven Rhodes D.M. Correctional Services; MCSCS
Steve Small, ADM Institutional Services; MCSCS