



SPEAKING NOTES

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MCSCS PROVINCIAL PROBATION AND PAROLE
HEALTH AND SAFETY WORKER REPRESENTATIVE
ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE EMPLOYEES UNION

**DEPUTATION TO THE
STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL POLICY**

**BILL 163, Supporting Ontario's First Responders Act
(Posttraumatic Stress Disorder), 2016**

Monday, March 7, 2016
3 p.m.

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen.

My name is Scott McIntyre.

I'm a probation and parole officer with the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

I'm also the MCSCS Provincial Probation and Parole Health and Safety Worker Representative.

As such, I represent 865 dedicated and professional adult probation and parole officers in Ontario.

I've been a correctional services officer for over 25 years.

For the first five years, I was a correctional officer at the former Mimico Correctional Centre, now the Toronto South Detention Centre.

For the following 21 years, I've been working as a probation and parole officer.

I live in North Bay and work at the North Bay Probation and Parole Office.

I'd like to thank you for allowing me to speak on amendments to Bill 163.

As currently written, the bill is inclusive of first responders, such as police officers, firefighters and paramedics.

It also covers correctional workers who supervise inmates in correctional institutions.

Unfortunately, Bill 163 excludes probation and parole officers.

In Manitoba, Bill 35, the *Workers Compensation Amendment Act*, identifies post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) as an occupational disease for presumptive workers' compensation coverage for a number of front-line workers, including probation and parole officers.

Probation and parole officers are subjected to both primary and secondary trauma, as well as vicarious trauma – all of which can, and do, result in symptoms associated with PTSD.

Probation and parole officers are designated as peace officers.

As such, they are responsible for protecting the public by managing offenders sentenced to serve their criminal sentence in the community.

Probation and parole officers monitor offenders bound by probation orders, conditional sentence orders, and parole certificates.

A PPO may supervise any one offender for several years.

Probation and parole officers establish very close professional relationships with the offenders they supervise. They do their best to influence positive changes in their offenders' attitudes in order to bring about more positive, productive and pro-social behaviours.

Probation & Parole Officers are exposed to crisis situations and traumatic events during the course of their work.

Examples of such include:

- assaults and threats on PPOs from offenders, their family members and friends;
- suicides by offenders whom PPOs have been closely supervising and working to rehabilitate (including the receiving of phone calls from suicidal offenders);
- traumatic criminal events such as sexual assaults, child sexual abuse and domestic violence.

As an example, in the Fall of 2013, a Probation & Parole Officer at the Newmarket office was interviewing an offender. Suddenly, the offender brandished a large knife in her office and began to cut himself with it while threatening to kill himself.

Obviously a very traumatic event.

“JOPIS” is the “Justice Officials Protection & Investigations Section,” which is a small 16-person unit of the Ontario Provincial Police whose mandate is to ensure the safety and security of justice officials.

If you look in the handout of my notes, you can see are the total number of Correctional Services incidents reported to JOPIS during the six-year period from 2009 to 2014.

In 2009, there were four. That number rose every year after, hitting 114 in 2014.

Referred incidents are comprised of Assaults, Threats, Harassment and Intimidation of Corrections Employees.

2009 – 4
2010 – 7
2011 – 26
2012 – 44
2013 – 62

2014 – 114
Total = 257

That is a 2,750 per cent increase in the number of incidences involving assaults, threats, harassment and intimidation against corrections employees in the six-year period from 2009 to 2014.

In my written submission, I've referenced a large number of studies, reports and documents – some of which I've provided in your copies.

The studies are clear that Probation and Parole Officers are subjected to trauma that can result in a diagnosis of PTSD.

For that reason, and on behalf of hundreds of hardworking, dedicated and professional Probation & Parole Officers, I respectfully request that Bill 163 be amended to include Probation and Parole Officers.

Further, I would ask that the committee also consider amending Bill 163 to permit a PTSD diagnosis by a medical practitioner, a psychologist or a psychiatrist.

This would take into account officers who live in remote areas, particularly in northern Ontario, where access to a family doctor can be difficult.

Getting access to a psychiatrist would be even more difficult and prove to be a barrier for many.

Further, as OPS employees, our benefits do NOT cover the services of a psychologist. Obviously, they should.

Thank you, ladies and gentlemen, for your time. I'd be happy to take questions.

More information on PTSD related to probation and parole officers

1. PTSD In Corrections Employees In Saskatchewan

<http://www.rpnas.com/wp-content/uploads/PTSDInCorrections.pdf>

Page 1 - The study was conducted in 2003.

Page 1 – 271 Corrections Employees were surveyed

Page 3 – of the 271 Corrections Employees surveyed, 20 were Probation and parole officers.

Page 6 – Tab IV – of the 20 Probation and parole officers surveyed 9 of the 20 reported having experienced a traumatic event over a specified 6 month period, 6 of the 20 reported witnessing a traumatic event over the 6 month period and 10 of the 20 Probation and parole officers reported hearing about a traumatic event over the 6 month period.

Study concludes that probation and parole officers are subjected to trauma resulting in PTSD.

2. Kirsten R. Lewis –Surviving The Trenches: “The Personal Impact of the Job on Probation Officers.”

Kirsten R. Lewis M.Ed., Co-owner and Lead Trainer, KSL Research, Training, and Consultation, LLC and a Probation Officer with the Maricopa County Adult Probation Department and an adjunct instructor of psychology at Glendale Community College. She received her M.Ed. in 2003 from Northern Arizona University. Her primary interests involve the emotional welfare of probation officers. She has conducted numerous workshops and trainings with probation agencies on the topic of officer welfare and presented her work at various conferences around the United States.

Included is a survey conducted by Kirsten R. Lewis who was a guest speaker at the 2013 Symposium of the “Probation Officers Association of Ontario.” The survey participants were 156 MCSCS Probation and Parole Officers and is compared to the U.S. PPO National Survey Results.

- The researcher attended POAO in 2013. MCSCS PPOs in attendance = 156 and completed surveys for the purpose of identifying their frequency of exposure to direct and indirect trauma
- 30 per cent reported 4 or more primary traumatic events
- 59 per cent reported 4 or more secondary traumatic events
- 28 per cent reported 5-6 symptoms of secondary trauma over the past 2 months, 23per cent reported 9 or 10 over the last 2 months
- 30 per cent reported 5 or 6 symptoms of vicarious trauma
- 10 per cent reported having been assaulted
- 69 per cent reported having been threatened
- 19 per cent reported having received death threats
- 27 per cent reported supervising an offender who killed someone

- 61 per cent reported supervising an offender who recidivated against a child
- 69 per cent reported supervising an offender who sexually recidivated
- 61 per cent reported having supervised an offender who committed suicide

3. **American Probation Association ‘Trauma Informed Care’ – Kirsten R. Lewis**

- 2,000 employees in community corrections at various trainings and conferences, 84 percent of audience members reported experiencing a primary traumatic event on the job
- 75 percent of probation/parole staff described their exposure to traumatic material as “often”, “frequently”, or “almost always.”
- 93 per cent of training attendees reported experiencing a secondary traumatic event at work and 97 per cent reported one or more symptoms of secondary trauma
- The prevalence of vicarious trauma in community corrections is almost universal among employees; 97 per cent of training attendees reported having one or more symptoms

4. **National Institute of Corrections – “Occupational Stressors In Corrections Work” Denhof, M.D., Spinaris, C.G., & Morton, G.R. (2014).**

<https://s3.amazonaws.com/static.nicic.gov/Library/029743.pdf>

“This paper presents an evidence-supported model and framework for the comprehensive understanding of occupational threats to corrections workplace health and functioning as well as a data-driven and evidence-based strategy for addressing them” (p. 1). Sections of this paper include: types of stressors in corrections environments; direct and indirect traumatic exposure; use of varying terminology in the literature regarding traumatic exposure; types of corrections fatigue components; interacting components; a six-stage model for addressing corrections fatigue; and summary.

5. **Posttraumatic Stress Disorder in United States Corrections Professionals: Prevalence and Impact on Health and Functioning - Spinaris, C.G., Denhof, M.D., & Kellaway, J.A. (2012).**

http://desertwaters.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/PTSD_Prev_in_Corrections_09-03-131.pdf.