



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Report to the Minister of Social Services pursuant to s 50 of the N.W.T. Corrections Act.

Yellowknife Correctional Centre - January 1, 1991

On January 7, 1991, the Minister of Social Services appointed a two person panel to investigate the circumstances of a disturbance that occurred at the Yellowknife Correctional Centre (YCC) on January 1, 1991, which resulted in serious damages to four dormitories of the east wing of the institution.

The Panel reviewed a number of documents, reports and records of the Corrections Division, and conducted a number of interviews with the staff, senior management of the department, inmates, and outside agencies.

TERMS OF REFERENCE I

Establish what conditions and/or events contributed to the inmate actions which resulted in the destruction of property.

General Conclusions

There was no evidence of a planned riot or escape from YCC. The primary causes for the disturbance could be summarized as a combination of overcrowding of inmates in the four dormitories in the east wing of the institution, an unsuitable building design that does not meet the needs of today's inmate population mix, the ease by which the dormitory walls collapsed because of faulty construction, access to all areas of the institution by inmates entering through the ceiling, and frustration by the inmates in being incarcerated at YCC during the Christmas/New Year's holiday period.

TERMS OF REFERENCE II

Examine the action taken by all staff of Yellowknife Correctional Centre before and after the events in question.

General Conclusions

On the basis of the limited training of most of the correctional

officers, the disturbance was handled in a professional and effective manner. Co-ordination between senior management in the command post, and other agencies such as the R.C.M. Police and the Yellowknife Fire Department, was for the most part, handled well.

TERMS OF REFERENCE III

Review the procedures associated with the assistance requested and given by members of the R.C.M.P., Fire Department, and Bylaw Officers.

General Conclusions

The various agencies had reviewed the emergency contingency plans within the past year. The YCC staff were responsible for the interior of the building in a disturbance, while the R.C.M.P. and the Fire Department remained on the perimeter of the grounds, unless called upon by the warden or his staff. There appeared to be no evidence of any major command and control problems between either the control room, the command post or external outside agencies. Emergency training could be enhanced at YCC and the RCMP/Fire Department if simulated emergency exercises were planned on a regular basis each year.

TERMS OF REFERENCE IV

Make recommendations which would assist in preventing a similar occurrence from happening.

Major Recommendations

I. Structural

1. In the short term, the east wing dormitory area of YCC should be redesigned so that the dormitories will not exceed 14 inmates, the sleeping and open living spaces will be distinctly separated, and both of these areas will be subject to visual observation and access at all times.

2. In the longer term, the department should develop a Master Development Plan for all of its correctional facilities. This plan should likely consider such factors as the demographics of the jurisdiction, security level of each correctional facility, program levels, and diversion and community rehabilitation initiatives.

II Staffing Levels

1. The department should develop a human resource strategy which should identify recruitment, screening, and selection procedures for staff in Corrections Division.
2. The department should carry out a comprehensive review and analysis of all PY's at YCC to ascertain whether all these positions are required and are being utilized to their full potential.
3. Establish a career planning process for correctional officers in the Division.
4. In consultation with the Department of Education, reinstate the "Correction Officer Trainee Program."

III Staff Training

1. A comprehensive mandatory training program must be developed for all staff working in correctional institutions in the NWT.
2. All training courses must be developed to include lesson plans, a course syllabus, hand-outs, and yearly course schedules.
3. The Director must ensure that all corrections staff receive on-going familiarization and refresher courses in emergency drills and procedures.
4. All casual employees assigned to shift teams at correctional institutions, must receive adequate and mandatory training before they commence their duties.

IV Inmate Programs

1. The mission statement for Corrections Division should be clearly identified and made known to all Division employees.
2. In an effort to counter boredom at YCC, the department should review whether to expand the facilities at South Mackenzie Correctional Centre or establish work camps north of Great Slave Lake such as in Rae Edzo or Fort Providence.
3. Educational programs should be enhanced at YCC with the addition of new classrooms, or conducting such training at facilities such as Arctic College. Vocational training courses should also be made available in the institutions or at other educational centres.
4. Consideration should be given to expanding the role of NWT communities in inmate diversion and temporary absence programs. A Community Justice Committee (CJC) could oversee and monitor the rehabilitation of inmates returning to their communities. It is proposed that this co-ordinating agency would also provide services to young offenders, the fine-option program, and probation and parole services. The Youth Justice Committees and community corrections officers would be discontinued since their mandates would be incorporated into those of the CJC.

V Corrections Division Organization

1. The Director should establish a Senior Planning Committee to identify strategic issues, priorities and initiatives for the Division to ensure that the roles and responsibilities are clearly understood by all correctional staff and managers.
2. In other provincial jurisdictions, the Corrections Division falls within the mandate of the Solicitor General's department or the Department of Justice. The department may wish to undertake a review to determine the merits of a similar reorganization for Corrections Division in this jurisdiction.