



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

People imprisoned at Joyceville Institution issue statement seeking access to information about CSC's outbreak plan and supplies to get through the crisis

19 December 2020 – Since the lockdown began, there's been no information coming from Correctional Service Canada (CSC). We've requested meetings with the warden and are not getting them. Whether it's good or bad, we just want information to get to us. Right now, there's no message going. All we hear is what's on the six o'clock news and what's constantly repeated over and over on the news loop. This is why we're speaking out.

Here's what we do know. The guards told us they believe COVID came in through a quarantine range with guys that came here on a 'bad bus'. They said that they requested to management to have all the guys exiting the quarantine range tested before they were moved elsewhere. They got told "no", so people weren't being tested before they left the quarantine range. Those guys from the 'bad bus' ended-up going to other units in Joyceville, as well as Collins Bay, Warkworth and Beaver Creek. Even as late as Tuesday when word started getting out within the institution that COVID was here, CSC was still allowing legal visits and parole hearings. There were COVID cases in the institution at the time and business carried on anyways.

For months, they've been telling us to postpone our parole hearings and do more programs, including guys that have been around for a long time, because they claimed it's safer inside here than it is out in the community. We're consistently being told we're safer in prison, yet now it's clear that this isn't actually the case and there appears to be no plan. We're in prison right now. We're in a prison with COVID. It can't get much worse for us. We've had to come to terms with this. They're not moving us. People who've been granted parole aren't being released. No one's going to be accepting guys from Joyceville. We're stuck here and visits have now stopped right before the holidays. We need more access to free phone calls and video visiting until we can see our loved ones and community volunteers again.

The hot water in the institution is failing. Right now, we have a hot water tank with 1,000 litres when we need a supply of 3,000 litres of hot water across the institution, which means we run out of hot water every single day. That means we often can't wash our hands with hot water or take showers, and we've been in the middle of a pandemic for almost a year and now we're in the middle of a COVID outbreak. We don't have access to sanitizer. We don't have access to gloves. We've asked for cleaning supplies, but haven't been given any. There's bleach in the prison, but we're not getting it. Does CSC think we're going to take Donald Trump's musings seriously and administer it to our bodies to somehow to rid ourselves of the virus? The situation is beyond absurd. There's currently one prisoner per unit assigned to clean-up their unit that has anywhere between 30 to 40 guys in them. Cleaners are putting their lives on the line right now.

The only thing that's changed for some of us is our masks. Some of us now have N95 masks, others don't. For those of us who don't, all we have is one mask sown out of old bedsheets with elastics on the side that CORCAN made that we can wash in the laundry. Media reports say that CSC has issued everyone face shields. The guards have them, but we don't. Some of us have been making makeshift curtains to cover the bars of our cells to mitigate the risk of spreading COVID, but some CO's have torn them down and given us warnings for putting them up.

In terms of health care right now, they have non-medical professionals coming onto to some of the units doing wellness checks. They wanted to have a steward bring the food carts onto the ranges to make sure everyone gets fed and we actually had to tell them to let us do it because we don't want anyone else on our respective ranges right now in order to protect folks who haven't tested positive and who aren't sick. We've been on around the

clock lockdown and are only out for 15 minutes a day, which doesn't give us time for things like laundry. We understand the need for some kind of lockdown at this point, but we need more food and supplies to get through this.

Everyone has been offered a COVID test. If someone refuses to take a test, they're considered to be positive. That's the standard they're going by here. 15 out of 16 ranges have at least one prisoner with COVID. One guy has gone to the hospital. Others have shortness of breath and there are guys in here with pretty serious medical conditions that put them at significant risk of dying if they get this. CSC has publicly stated that those who've tested positive have been isolated, but that's not true. Whether prisoners have COVID or not, they're all mixed in the same units. Yesterday, we were told that there weren't more positive tests, but that's hard to believe. How do we hear of 80 positive tests one day and none the next? The CO's also have a hard time believing it too based on how these things trend.

CSC's probably going to keep everyone locked-down until there aren't any positive tests and then there will likely be a 14-day quarantine period after that. At this rate, we could be on lockdown for months. Guards have been told that they need to isolate from their families for 14 days. We hear comments like "we have to be around you guys, but we can't be around our families", and we get it – it sucks. Everyone's frustrated.

CSC is absolutely bamboozled right now. They really don't appear to know what they're doing.

- 30 -

For Media Interviews Contact:

Jessica Evans

Member, Toronto Prisoners' Right Project
647-821-7505 | torontoprisonersrights@gmail.com

Justin Piché

Member, Criminalization and Punishment Education Project
613-793-1093 | justin.piche@uottawa.ca