

# *Let's* Talk

Special Edition

March 1998



**CSC Ready to Help the Community**



Correctional Service  
Canada

Service correctionnel  
Canada

Canada

# Let's Talk

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*Cover photo:  
Ice storm damage in Kingston, Ontario*

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# Commissioner's Editorial

This is a special issue of *Let's Talk/Entre Nous*. It is an issue about staff and inmates of Correctional Service Canada (CSC) helping the community and it is an issue that – once again – inspires me to thank employees of the Service and offenders alike for helping out in the community when help is needed. It is an issue that makes one feel proud of being a member of CSC and I hope that outside readers of this issue will find one more reason to understand and respect CSC and the work we do in the interest of community safety.

It is good to see that CSC, through the stories told in this issue – and the thousands of untold stories – is the good citizen that we want to be. It is even better to see that CSC, through community services, lives up to the com-

mitment in our Mission, “To provide opportunities for offenders to contribute to the well-being of the community” (Strategic Objective 1.6).

Contributing to the well-being of the community is closely related to our correctional agenda insofar as it seems difficult to talk about reintegration into the community without making a contribution to that community. It is therefore a good element in preparing the offender to make the transition back to society that the offender is provided with an opportunity to demonstrate that he or she is willing and capable to become a full member of society. Full membership is associated with a contribution.

Our strategic objective talks about “providing opportunities...” but I real-

ly think that we should do our best to actively encourage the offenders to make a positive contribution to society, to seek ways of making a contribution to the quality of life of others. There are many areas in which a helping hand would be welcome and I am sure that those of us who are employees of the Service are able to identify potential projects that would benefit both our communities, the offenders and the Service.

Once again: Many thanks!



Ole Ingstrup  
Commissioner  
Correctional Service Canada

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# The Correctional Service Of Canada – Ready To Help The Community

Canada has had its share of natural disasters in the past several years. The flooding of Quebec's Saguenay River and Manitoba's Red River, and the downpour in eastern Canada's "Ice Storm of the Century" affected hundreds of thousands of residents and caused millions of dollars of damage. While government assistance and funds are needed, it is the help of local residents working right in their own communities that is vital to the survival and rebuilding of an area after disaster strikes.

The Correctional Service of Canada's staff – most of which live in communities surrounding federal institutions and is directly

affected by area disasters – is highly trained to deal with emergency situations. CSC offers education in disaster management to refresh correctional officers' response to emergencies and to teach them new methods to deal with problems. The Service also has at its disposal a large workforce – the inmates – who are frequently ready to help and provide whatever assistance is needed.

CSC's correctional institutions are also well equipped to help the community. Many have on-site medical facilities, warehouses, vehicles and large kitchen facilities that can support communities immobilized by a capricious Mother Nature

The Correctional Service of Canada's Pacific Region forest fires and winter blizzards, the Prairie Region flood of 1997 and the Ontario and Quebec Regions' Ice Storm of 1998 have challenged CSC's resources and made it aware that it has the capacity to provide many services when disaster strikes. The following stories describe CSC's response to emergency situations – in all of its Regions excluding the Atlantic, where no assistance from CSC has been needed for recent disasters – and show how staff, inmates and facilities have willingly lent a hand and made a difference to communities in need.

# The Ice Storm of the Century Hits Quebec

In the Quebec Region, some 100 millimetres of freezing rain fell during the Great Ice Storm of 1998. The rain hit Quebec Tuesday, January 6 and continued to pound the “Triangle of Darkness”, an area south of Montreal, until Saturday, January 10. When the storm had passed, almost three million Quebecers were without power, most of them in the Montreal area and some for over four weeks. Hydro towers crumbled under the weight of days of freezing rain and telephone wires lay in heaps along roads. Branches covered streets and pathways, sometimes smashing roofs and parked cars as they fell. Trees and bushes were coated in thick ice that gleamed and shone in the January sun.

Premier Bouchard made a plea to all levels of government to offer help to households, businesses, farms and the thousands of people stranded without heat or electricity. Federal departments worked together to provide a co-ordinated response to the situation, deploying personnel, providing health care and supplies and converting office facilities to temporary emergency housing and shelters.

## **Quebec Region's Focus – A Shelter from the Storm at Staff College**

The Quebec Region's Staff College, designed to train correctional officers and personnel employed in penitentiaries, is located in Laval, just north of Montreal. Across the street are three federal correctional facilities: the Federal Training Centre and Leclerc



*Quebec Region's Staff College, Laval*



*CSC staff at work in Staff College kitchen*



*Staff College dormitory*



and Montée Saint-François Institutions. The CSC offered the College as a shelter to serve residents from the town of St-Jean d'Iberville – south of Montreal – where some 75,000 residents lost power.

When the Staff College offered its services as a shelter, its 23 trainers and employees quickly switched roles and became full-time caregivers to ice storm refugees. College classes were cancelled until further notice and the four-storey structure was re-organized to accommodate the anticipated visitors. Upstairs, the gymnasium served as a large dormitory filled with beds, and a few single rooms housed other residents. The second floor cafeteria became the site for daily meals prepared by staff and volunteers. (Many of the homeless said the delicious food was a source of comfort during the weeks they were there.) The lounge was used for socializing and religious services, and lower level rooms were converted to accommodate children's play, a supply centre, games and twice-daily staff meetings.

Next door to the College, seven small houses were put to use for storm victims. The small buildings – normally residences for staff in training – were converted to lodgings for 38 people, mostly families.

B-12, a former minimum security penitentiary across the street from the College, which was closed in 1995, was re-opened January 11 to offer additional shelter space. CSC staff from the College and surrounding facilities together with inmates worked around the clock cleaning, getting supplies and re-equipping the building for use. The dozens of former cells were set up with beds, chairs and tables brought in from the regional distribution centre; telephone lines were installed, two washers and dryers were hooked up and the large

kitchen was equipped with a fridge and stove so communal meals could be shared.

### **How Storm Victims Arrived**

As the College was being prepared for its new temporary residents, staff travelled to St-Jean on Sunday, January 11 in the CSC bus. There they met people who had been temporarily housed at the local high school and encouraged them to move to Laval where they would be looked after. "We explained what our building was like and how we were equipped to care for them, but many people, especially seniors, were reluctant to leave their homes," said Mr. Mario Paré, a staff trainer whose role would be to care for residents of the seven houses. Some heard about CSC's offer on the radio. Others heard about it through word of mouth.

That night, two full buses chauffeured by staff members Claude Bédard and Henri Paul Beaulieu, arrived at the Staff College. By Wednesday, January 14, the College and its surrounding buildings were filled to capacity with 148 displaced persons. Little did staff or residents know that for some the visit would last almost three weeks.

### **CSC Staff Offer their Help**

Volunteer staff came from CSC facilities in the area, often working a full day at their own facility before arriving at the College to donate their time.

Staff College Director Ms. Lucie Vallière, assisted by Ms. Marie Goyette, oversaw operations, planning and organizing the assignment of specific tasks for staff. Jobs included chief of operations, volunteer coordinator, community liaison, night patrols, drivers and at least 12 in charge of planning, coordinating and preparing meals for the group.



*Staff College supply room*



*Staff College dining room*



*Staff College dining room*

“CSC staff feel that after working in case management it has been a pleasure to help people who really appreciate it,” said Ms. Vallière.

During the day, volunteers drove guests to College meals, to town for errands, to museums – the outer-space museum “Cosmodôme” was a big hit – and even to sports events to break the boredom.

“We feel like we’ve landed in a first class hotel,” said one elderly couple who had initially resisted the move to the college. “We don’t really want to go home! This has been like a holiday!”

CSC staff, used to caring for offenders and working in a structured environment, quickly



*Montée Saint-François Institution, Laval*

adapted to the unusual circumstances. With some 148 strangers housed together under the same roof, tempers were bound to flare. Childrens' squabbles, TV watchers arguing over when the set should be shut off and family disputes were increasingly common in the third week. One morning, staff tried to resolve the issue of bedtime hours. "We have to remember we are here to provide a safe shelter and protection from the storm, not to police these people," they reminded each other. Meetings became a source of humour and sharing of vital information about the latest news of the storm.

### **No Limit to Those in Need**

The range of people who came to stay at the College was diverse. Some came from provincially-run homes in St-Jean such as wheelchair confined persons, seniors, those with Alzheimer's disease, and those suffering from schizophrenia, diabetes or asthma.

One man in a wheelchair said, "The staff is wonderful. We eat very well, we are taken out to do our errands, really, the government has been treating us beautifully. Yesterday, they drove in to Montreal just to pick up a new tire for my wheelchair. We are spoiled."

Another added, "We are never bored, they offer us so many things to do. We'd like to stay here all year!"

### **Other Volunteers**

College staff organized a host of other volunteers to come in on a daily basis to provide services to residents. These included escorted federal inmates who helped with cleaning and odd jobs, staff from the provincially-run Local Community Service Centre (CLSC), special education workers for the mentally handicapped, citizens from the City of Laval and nuns from religious orders. The Quebec pharmacy chain, Jean Coutu, donated diapers, baby formula, first aid and other needed goods. The

City of Laval donated hockey tickets, the use of its nature centre for tobogganing, access to its recreation centre, and free transportation.

Health Services personnel were also brought to the College by CSC staff and offered to residents. Two nurses, brought in to deliver regular medication and coordinate a system of care, worked long hours and drew up plans for evening and weekend personnel.

Nurse H el ene Racine, on loan from the CLSC, admitted the pace was frantic. "There were seniors who arrived sick and got worse because they were away from home," she said, adding that CSC had been extremely supportive of her every need.

Director Ms. Valli ere arranged for a psychologist to visit, when she noticed the stress level was rising among visitors. A young man said he was fed up with the boredom; a mother admitted she couldn't wait to go home. The psychologist encouraged them to "grab what it is that makes you feel normal – take a walk, read a book, talk to others."

Nuns from l'Institut de formation humaine int egrale de Montr eal – a mental health centre dedicated to youth in need – offered daily help, as nurses or counsellors, to seniors and shelter residents. "We encourage people and try to help them find the positive in what is happening," said one Sister. "We've seen a lot of courage and generosity," said another member of the eight-person team.

Inmates from the Federal Training Centre, already assigned to the Staff College, doubled their workload when the visitors arrived. "It made me happy to be involved, it gave me a sense of value," said one inmate. "I was working here already and getting a little tired of it, but since the storm victims arrived it's been very rewarding; I feel privileged to help," said the other, adding that he has had to go to

bed at 9 p.m. each night to have enough energy for the next day.

Staff person Mr. Yvon-Paul Charette, who filmed the dynamics of staff and volunteers working together at the shelter, said that by the second day the roles of workers had been defined, which then allowed them to respond extraordinarily well to victims' needs. The film records group dynamics – both in terms of productivity and interpersonal relations – and will be shown to staff to be used as a learning tool for a future crisis.

### **Here are a few comments and letters sent by the community to CSC's correctional workers after the ice storm.**

#### **Senior couple in Staff College House**

"We didn't want to go, to leave our town. But we were staying with my son in his basement when a friend called us from here and said the College was really nice, we had to come, and our daughter said, 'Go'. So we did, and now we feel it's been our winter holiday! We can't say enough about how wonderful staff has been. We were rather demoralized when we got here but staff have raised our spirits and given us hot meals and a nice place to sleep, so we feel great."

**Mrs. J.**

A mother of five, Mrs. J. arrived at B-12 with her husband and adult daughter. She praised staff for their attention to her family's every need and said how lucky she felt in comparison to some. "When I started working in the kitchen and helping others, I forgot my own crises," she said.

**Retired School Teacher**

"I have been here since January 11. I stayed at home for two days without power. I wore five sweaters and cooked using my camping equipment; my two cats and I survived. But I had to move into the local high school because we were 13 people at my sister-in-law's house, and now I am here. And I am on holiday! There is no word to express the warmth, the welcome here. You just say what you want (to staff) and it's done! I sent staff flowers because I didn't have the words to say thank you, but flowers speak, don't they?"

**Margo, mother in extended family of 12,  
with daughter plus birds and  
"Nort" the mouse**

"We stayed in a high school for several nights at first, it was awful. There were 1,500 people sleeping there, sharing just a few washrooms, with no water or showers. We were given one apple and one orange for breakfast. The first night I arrived here they served me boeuf bourgignon! Imagine how good that felt! We are happy here, we're doing well. Staff help us so much, they even pick us up for lunch although it's only a five-minute walk. They encourage us and keep our spirits up."

**Dear Staff College,**

To all those involved in the planning and running of the Laval Shelter, a sincere thank you for making our stay so comfortable and leaving us with such good memories!

Good food, warmth and kindness, what more could one ask for in a time of crisis!

Merci beaucoup à tous!

**H.G.**

**My dear friends,**

All is well here now and our life seems to have returned to normal. It feels as if the past few weeks were just a dream because so much happened and what started out as a bad week turned into a good one.

We want to thank you from the bottom of our hearts for all that you did for us. You were really wonderful and very generous. It is comforting to know that people like you still exist and I know we will remember you all our lives. We have told all our friends and family that the two weeks (at the Staff College) were spent as if on a five-star holiday. Again, thanks a million.

**L.D.**

**Hello to you all,**

My husband and I in turn wanted to thank you for all you did for us.

Due to your team's help we got through this test with a lot of encouragement, with care and with good health.

Thank you for the excellent organization you showed and for making everything go so well.

**J.C.**

## CSC's Involvement

After Premier Bouchard's public announcement, the Quebec Region offered the Correctional Service of Canada's help:

- The Service donated 3,000 blankets to the Red Cross in Montérégie and St-Jean and towels, blankets, soap and pocket lamps to the emergency shelter set up in a Granby high school.
- Staff from Cowansville Institution, many hard hit by the storm, provided security services to empty houses and to banks issuing provincial cheques to the homeless. They disseminated information to residents about shelters and assistance, delivered needed goods, supported police and fire departments and worked in hospitals and social service centres. Cowansville Institution donated a large generator to the nearby town of Lac Brôme. Together with CORCAN staff, the facility organized the delivery of 25 generators from the Halifax Fire Department to the Quebec Region, while inmates raised \$3,000 for an area shelter.
- Twenty escorted inmates from the minimum security Montée Saint-François Institution and the Federal Training Centre in Laval joined work crews to help clear the masses of broken branches from Laval.
- Staff at Drummond Institution visited area houses to check on residents and CORCAN staff worked as volunteers at the Local Community Service Centre (CLSC), often spending 16-hour shifts monitoring the generator and offering to transport those in need of hospital or other care.
- Sainte-Anne-des-Plaines Institution offered its delivery truck and two employees for use by a local social services agency. Nine offenders helped clear and cut up wood.
- Donnacona Institution employees collected non-perishable goods for local shelters and prepared meals for the nearby shelter.
- CSC staff volunteered time and effort at the College shelter and Archambault inmates raised \$500 to buy milk for storm victims.
- Leclerc Institution cleaned laundry from local CSC institutions and the nearby hospital, and its bakery provided fresh products daily to the College shelter.
- La Macaza Institution staff collected \$200 for a storm relief fund.
- Quebec Staff College operated a shelter over 18 days.

# Ontario's Great Ice Storm of 1998

The Great Ice Storm of January 1998 – also known as the ice storm of the century – had a devastating effect on Ontario and Quebec and left millions of residents without electricity and, in some cases, drinking water and telephone service. The storm, which began east of Napanee, Ontario and swept along the St. Lawrence and into New Brunswick, knocked out power in some areas for as long as five weeks.

The Correctional Service of Canada, whose Mission Statement includes the protection of society, volunteered its services to the Ontario community – by donating staff and inmate labour and providing needed supplies – during the storm and in the ensuing months. Although the freezing rain caused momentary power loss at several penitentiaries, strong backup generators switched on immediately and allowed staff to reach out to a community in crisis.

Staff in Kingston's 10 federal correctional facilities – all residents of the local community – donated their expertise in emergency situations, vital equipment such as trucks, chain saws and warm linen, and hours and hours of their own time to help with the devastation caused by the storm. National Headquarters' staff drove to areas around Ottawa and made door-to-door checks on farmers and residents to make sure they were safe.

Pittsburgh Institution's Acting Deputy Warden, Mr. Ron Fairley, who was at a meeting at Ontario Regional Headquarters the morning the storm hit, stayed all week to keep in touch with area institutions and offer his support to the Ontario



*Ice storm damage, Kingston*



*Ontario Regional Staff College groundsman Michael Clair surveys damage*

Region's new Deputy Commissioner, Mr. Brendan Reynolds.

Mr. Reynolds expressed his gratitude to staff for their tireless efforts. "There are so many areas of concern when

something like this happens. I was very pleased with the exceptional response by staff to this most difficult situation."



*Ice-damaged fruit trees outside Prison for Women, Kingston*



*Tree damage at Pittsburgh Institution, Kingston*

**Dear Mr. Reynolds,**

Please convey my sincere thanks for the excellent work accomplished by staff and inmates involved in providing assistance to local communities in the aftermath of the storm.

Yours sincerely,

**Lucie McClung**  
**Senior Deputy Commissioner**  
**Correctional Service Canada**

### **Ice Storm Hits Kingston Hard**

In Kingston, the freezing rain began in earnest on Monday, January 6 and by Thursday morning the City's downtown was almost completely blacked out. Municipal authorities declared a state of emergency. Trees, laden with ice, crashed into hydro wires, roofs and cars. Broken branches piled up in streets and yards and smaller trees bent over, ready to snap under the ice's weight. Roads were closed and marked with bright yellow police ribbons. School boards cancelled classes and the City ran media ads requesting residents to stay home.

### **Pittsburgh Institution Copes with Storm**

To correctional staff in the Kingston area, the storm seemed to be concentrated in the urban core and would spare rural areas.

On Thursday, January 8, employees arrived as usual for their day shift at Pittsburgh Institution, situated just north of Kingston. But at 3 p.m. the facility, including its 650-hectare COR-CAN farm – which houses beef cattle and operates a composting operation – lost power. The only electricity available to the 186 inmates and 80 staff members was automatic emergency lighting which illuminates common

areas such as hallways and stairwells, and lasts for about five hours.

"I had five staff on and I need a minimum of three. All five willingly agreed to work a 16-hour shift," said Warden Gerry Minard.

To ensure that inmates – especially senior ones – were safe and secure, staff immediately set about in pairs to tour the inmates' 25 independent living houses and the perimeter of Pittsburgh Institution. Security was not a worry for administration – there have been no escapes since October 1996 – but heat and electricity for inmates and staff were a concern.

On Friday morning, neighbouring medium-security Joyceville Institution – which switched to a backup generator when power was lost – sent over hot coffee for the offenders. Later that morning Pittsburgh's Food Services personnel prepared food baskets for the housing units and came in on Saturday to ensure inmates had hot meals and could do their weekly grocery shopping at the institution's food store.

"Our Food Services staff went beyond the call of duty to make sure offenders were comfortable – I realized how important they are to the smooth running of our operations," said Warden Minard.

On Friday afternoon, Millhaven Institution sent over the powerful 850 megawatt regional generator and power returned to Pittsburgh Institution, although it would take a week for regular electricity and heat to come back.

### **CSC Staff Help with an Emergency Command Post**

Kingston had established an emergency measures centre at City Hall and now turned its attention to its northern boundaries (the municipality was recently enlarged to include several rural areas). On January 13, Pittsburgh Institution opened its doors



*Warden Gerry Minard surveys Pittsburgh Institution's grounds*



*Tree damage at Pittsburgh Institution*

to some 30 to 50 police, fire and military relief personnel who moved in and occupied the main building's boardroom and conference facility area.

Pittsburgh Institution staff threw themselves into helping with the five-day emergency post operation. They provided vital administrative support such as typing public information fly-

ers, faxing and photocopying. Four telephone lines and a fax line were installed, and staff prepared a daily hot meal and food for the evening and night shift workers.

"We were glad to be able to help out when we could. This area was a community in crisis and staff and relief workers pulled together as a team," said Warden Minard.



*Ontario Regional Staff College, Kingston*



*Pittsburgh Inmates and citizen escort clean up grounds of Holy Name Church, Kingston*

### **Giving Back in Spades to the Community**

True to its motto, “One Step from the Community”, Pittsburgh Institution also organized inmates to help the surrounding community. Escorted offenders who were already approved for community service travelled to nearby Gananoque – which has an agreement to use inmate volunteer

labour throughout the year – and worked 12 to 14 hour days for four consecutive weeks after the storm. Offenders helped prune trees and clear branches from roads and yards, worked overtime at the local soup kitchen in unheated conditions and volunteered to feed the large influx of stranded animals at the Humane Society. To date, the men are still donating long hours to help out at

the 3,000 hectare Frontenac Provincial Park, which reported damage to over 35 per cent of its trees.

Community Service Officer Peter Harper, who sets up employment opportunities for offenders in the community, said the men were eager to help. “They were worried about their own families and felt a real desire to offer their services to the community,” he said.

Despite the fact that correctional workers’ own homes were hard hit by the storm and roads were almost impossible to drive, CSC staff managed to arrive at their work sites and run facilities as usual. Not one incident occurred to put public safety at risk. As well as fulfilling essential service obligations, staff often volunteered time in the community to help with crisis situations.

### **What Has Been Learned**

The CSC realized it has many resources to offer a community in need. “We have a full kitchen, several powerful vehicles, chain saws, linen, blankets and laundry facilities,” said Pittsburgh Institution’s Warden Minard, who added the facility could also provide 40 security-cleared inmates for community service. Frontenac Institution’s food products can feed large numbers of people and its transport vehicles can deliver and service those in need. Other institutions’ staff has inventoried supplies and concluded it has a large supply of goods and expertise to offer in a future disaster.

### **Prison for Women Gives Shelter to Storm Victim Inmates**

When power went out at the Prison for Women in Kingston – a 60-year old federal institution that houses 19 offenders – its generator switched on in a matter of minutes and kept heating and electricity running smoothly.

**Letter to**

**Mr. McNair**  
**Community Services, Pittsburgh Institution**

Dear Mr. McNair,

As you know, our town was devastated by the ice storm and we are left to pick up the pieces.

Without extra manpower, the staff at the Works and Recreation Department have an empossible task in performing the clean-up.

We desperately need some people to help us out and we are hoping that the inmates at Pittsburgh Institution can come to our aid.

We trust that you understand the seriousness of our situation and the time frame that we have to prepare our Town for the tourist season.

**Thank You**  
**Gananoque Parks and Recreation**

**Mr. Peter Harper,**

I have received the letter from the Acting Commissioner expressing her pleasure with the positive tone and comments in the transcript of your interview with the CBCK-FM reporter.

I extend my personal thanks and sincere appreciation as well, to you and to the inmates who were interviewed, both for your community efforts and for your informative and encouraging comments concerning our reintegration strategies.

Sincerely yours,

**Brendan Reynolds**  
**Deputy Commissioner, Ontario Region**

Such was not the case for the small minimum security Isabel McNeill women's facility a block away. When phone lines there died, staff from Prison for Women hurried down the street to check on their colleagues and inmates. They found the 11 offenders and staff stranded without heat or lights. There was concern about the possibility of fire, thanks to a downed wire, and a maintenance worker recommended they leave.

The decision to transfer the women to Prison for Women was made Friday, January 9 at 9:30 a.m. and by 10:25 a.m. the entire group – with the cooperation of staff members from both

facilities – had been safely reinstalled in the 1930s building.

“Some of the women were not very happy at the thought of returning here,” said Prison for Women's Deputy Warden, Barrie Friel, “but, by and large, after a day of hearing news of the severe storm, they were appreciative of the opportunity to get out of harm's way.”

The women were given the empty segregation ward – chosen for its safety and comfort – to house them for five days. Two other locations within the building had been considered for temporary lodgings but were rejected due to the proximity of ice-laden trees outside or cramped conditions inside.

Prison for Women staff treated the segregation ward as a minimum security facility for the visitors. The sleeping quarters, lounge, kitchen and laundry facilities were clean and airy, and cell doors were left unlocked so women could socialize as they had done at their own residence. Accompanied by Isabel McNeill staff for continuity and familiarity, the women were also kept separate from the regular offenders housed at Prison for Women. All work was interrupted – each offender has a work placement, either at Staff College or Regional Headquarters – and the group stayed safe and secure. All in all, the temporary transfer provoked little stress.

“I came in both weekend days and spoke to each woman and, by and large, they were happy,” added Deputy Warden Friel.

Mr. Friel said staff of both facilities did an exemplary job at managing the move. Since caring for offenders is an essential service within the federal government, many employees at Prison for Women and Isabel McNeill House drove through treacherous conditions in order to arrive at work and care for inmates.

“Our job is to provide reasonable, safe, secure and humane control of offenders, and there is no better illustration of staff having done this than during this ice storm emergency. It really made the operation a success,” he said.

Prison for Women's trusty 1971, 600-volt generator added its own help during the storm. It switched on Thursday, January 8 and ran for a full six and a half days. “You don't expect these things to run that long, we were amazed!” said Mr. Friel. For its fantastic efforts, the energy-packed motor was presented with a shiny gold plaque that said, “Old Faithful ran for a week in the '98 Ice Storm” at a staff meeting.

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Prison for Women has since raised money through bake sales, auctions and bingos to donate to the storm relief fund set up in Kingston. The province has committed itself to matching every dollar raised with an additional four dollars. Inmates, for their part, have worked cleaning up branches and fallen debris on Staff College grounds.

The Great Ice Storm of 1998 called upon CSC staff to help out their community. Staff's expertise and training – learned in the correctional setting – enabled them to make a significant contribution to their fellow residents at a time of great need.

### **Frontenac Institution Serves the Community**

Minimum security Frontenac Institution, located on the western outskirts of Kingston, has 85 staff members and 214 offenders. Its CORCAN farm – with 300 head of dairy cattle and 15,000 chickens – produces milk, eggs and juice which it sells to all federal institutions in Ontario and to eight in Quebec.

At Frontenac Institution, much of the normal inmate work routine was halted as staff coped with an almost complete area blackout. Many staff members found it impossible to navigate the icy roads or leave houses and farms unattended. The Institution lost regular power from 10:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. on Wednesday, January 7, though its generator power switched on two minutes later.

"From my perspective the biggest impact was Day Two of the storm. Staff who managed to get to the institution helped out on the farm or gave support to those on duty. Very few people were doing what they normally do that day!" said Acting Warden of Management Services Larry Hefford.

### **Frontenac Institution Staff Show Initiative and Caring**

Frontenac Institution employees showed tremendous initiative during and after the storm.

A simple drop-off to a Gananoque shelter early in the week by Mr. Joe Rochefort, the farm's Assistant Operations Manager, prompted a request for more help from a local church. Staff immediately threw themselves into preparing food packages and searching for additional shelters. Over a two-week period, CORCAN staff boxed juice and eggs and dropped them off to communities along the St. Lawrence River, such as Brockville and Prescott and east to Granby and Cowansville in Quebec. One entrepreneurial driver asked a Quebec Provincial Police officer for addresses of shelters he could add to the list.

"We were happy to help and there was a real need," said Mr. Rochefort, adding that the extra supplies were a result of being unable to deliver to Quebec institutions during the first week of freezing rain. "But considering the terrible storm, we knew we had the support of the Service to donate this produce to the community even if it did cost us something," he said.

### **Staff and Inmates – A Winning Combination**

Frontenac staff and inmates donated time and labour to the City of Kingston after the rainstorm ended. The Salvation Army, which hires inmates to help with distribution of food to about 30 families each week, was desperate for help when that number jumped to 250 families each day and to 400 families one day during the storm. Eight inmates worked at its food distribution area each day for two weeks with exceptional results, according to staff. "They

walked in and organized the food stocking and bagging system so well that the Salvation Army requested the same men return for the rest of the week," said Social Development Officer Bernie Aucoin. "They also traipsed up two flights of stairs for hours on end carrying the food from truck to kitchen," added Acting Warden of Correctional Programs Susan Sutherland.

For their help, the Salvation Army's Food Bank officer Doug van der Horden sent a letter of thanks saying the agency could never have done what it did without the help of Frontenac inmates. "It was obvious they were becoming the backbone (of the whole operation). Never once did I hear a complaint or see any lack of effort," he wrote.

Inmates also volunteered to help with fallen trees on Frontenac Institution's grounds and to clear debris surrounding Bridge House, a residence that provides lodgings to families when they are visiting offenders. "Inmates volunteered to do strenuous work for the same pay as their regular jobs," said Ms. Sutherland, adding that only inmates with superior work habits were sent into the community.

As life returned to normal at Frontenac Institution, letters of thanks arrived for CSC employees for their commitment to the community and generosity during the storm crisis. Staff such as CORCAN operations manager Randy Grooms, who opened his home to storm victims as well as helped manage the farm and volunteer in the community, received a letter thanking him and his family for their help, which was published in the Kingston Whig Standard newspaper.

The efforts of staff and inmates from all Kingston area institutions were felt strongly by residents in the immediate and nearby areas.

Here are a few letters sent by the community to CSC's correctional workers after the ice storm.

**Open letter to  
Correctional Services Canada workers**

The ice storm that hit parts of Ontario, Quebec and New Brunswick in early January may have crippled many a correctional facility and the homes of many correctional workers, but it did nothing to dampen our professional resolve, compassion and sensitivity.

Despite the fact that many correctional facilities were affected by the storm, we ensured that the facilities operated at near maximum potential and that not one incident occurred that put the safety of the public at risk.

Notwithstanding the fact that the personal and working lives of many correctional workers were disrupted by the ice storm, many took the time and initiative to help their communities as well. In instances too numerous to mention, our members worked as volunteers, providing service to shelters and firefighting and security where and when needed.

On behalf of the Union of Solicitor General Employees I should like to thank correctional workers who not only survived the ice storm but helped to make sure that the initial damage and the aftermath were as painless as possible.

**Lynn Ray  
National President  
USGE**

**To the Editor  
(Kingston Whig Standard newspaper)**

I would like to take this opportunity to say thank you to Pittsburgh Institution (Peter Harper) for sending inmates on short notice and Frontenac Institution (Joe Rochefort) for sending us a large truck to haul brush with. (They) were a big help to the Public Works Department in our efforts to clean up during and after the ice storm.

**Gary Clark  
Kingston Works Superintendent**

**Dear Frontenac Institution Staff,**

On behalf of the Council and residents of the Township of Front on Yonge, I would like to express deep appreciation for your generous donation of food during the recent ice storm.

This natural disaster will long be remembered as one of the most devastating storms ever to hit this area. When you think back on it in years to come, you can be proud of the important role you played in assisting this community in making it through without loss of life or serious injury.

In the end, we found the one thing we could truly count on during those difficult and dangerous days was the kindness, support and open-hearted generosity of neighbours and friends like you.

Sincerely,

**Mark Pergunas  
Reeve, Township of Front on Yonge**

**Dear Staff,**

Just wanted to say thank you for your generous contribution towards the Kinsmen Shelter. Your kindness was very much appreciated.

**The Kinsmen and Kinette Club of Gananoque**

Certificate of Appreciation presented to CORCAN Industries, Frontenac Institution for your generosity to and support of Resurrection Community Church. February 10, 1998.

**Signed by the Reverend Ronald R. Dube.**

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### **CSC'S Help to a Community in Crisis**

While federal penitentiaries were all but spared from the effects of the ice storm, the staff who run these facilities volunteered many needed services and goods to the Kingston area.

- Warkworth Institution offered plant maintenance workers to supply a truck, wood chipper and generator in case their services were needed.
- Collins Bay Institution provided mattresses, blankets, sheets and pillows to local shelters, and its kitchen gave food to employees at the Public Utilities Commission. The institution provided laundry services to the Red Cross to clean 300 blankets used at shelters.
- Beaver Creek Institution's staff took generators – which the facility bought during a power outage during the summer of 1995 – to Howe Island for use by the local fire department. They also donated

blankets and a van to deliver supplies on the island.

- Kingston Penitentiary gave mattresses to a shelter at the Kingston General Hospital and several correctional officers, trained as volunteer firefighters, helped with door-to-door checks of houses.
- Joyceville Institution distributed energy-efficient styrofoam coffee cups and other utensils to the Kingston Public Utilities Commission cafeteria to help feed 500 linemen.
- Pittsburgh Institution provided the use of its boardroom and conference facilities to allow for setup of the Kingston North emergency command post from January 12 to 18. Inmates helped clear brush and debris in the town of Gananoque and some 227 kilos of ground beef were donated to help feed hydro workers on Wolf Island. The farm's CORCAN compost accepted brush with no tipping fee. Some 35 military, police and fire personnel maintained the post.

- Frontenac Institution sent out juice and eggs daily to 28 shelters stretching from Brockville to Granby. Two correctional officers helped the army doing door-to-door checks of houses without power in the Kingston area. The Institution loaned the community two trucks – one sent to Gananoque to clear brush and the other to Kingston to haul water to Wolf Island. Staff helped area farmers milk cows and with inmates cleared brush from the grounds of Collins Bay Institution and cleaned up debris from the Kingston Non-Profit Housing Authority. Up to 14 escorted inmates volunteered at the Salvation Army Food bank, often doubling their regular efforts and supplying intensive labour for more than 250 families a day requiring emergency food supplies.
  - Staff College was offered by CSC as lodgings for out-of-town hydro staff there to rebuild Kingston's hydro system.
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## **The Prairie Region's Manitoba Flood**

A natural disaster such as Manitoba's Red River flood in the spring of 1997 can unite a diverse range of people and create deep bonds while citizens work together toward a common goal. From mid-April to early May when the flood was at its peak, residents from all walks of life thronged together to try to contain the muddy waters of the rising river. Manitobans were forced to flee their homes, farms and communities as the flooding river moved north towards Winnipeg, carrying debris, livestock and sheds past

submerged cars, farmsteads and homes throughout the Red River Valley.

The extensive material devastation to communities caused by the flood could have been much worse had it not been for the concerted effort of volunteers. Correctional Service of Canada staff and inmates, as well as soldiers, school children and residents, worked side by side to try to contain the swelling waters. Whether they prepared food, filled sandbags or

transported materials to vulnerable sites where others were building dykes, their contribution was significant in preventing further damage to property.

### **Rockwood Institution Helps a Community in Need**

Mr. Blaine Hadaller, a Social and Cultural Development Officer at Rockwood Institution, relates how he and a team of offenders saved a house from the flood. The men went out



*Rockwood Institution Warden Gord Holloway, left, and Mr. Ronald Blatz*

every day for a week to offer their assistance to area homeowners, including teaching them how to construct dykes around their houses' foundations. One site was particularly memorable. "(They) didn't know how to build a dyke around the house," said Mr. Hadaller. "He had stacked a few sandbags against his basement windows. If our guys hadn't gone out, that house would have been swamped."

Mr. Hadaller and the inmates completely rebuilt the house's dyke. "We were the work crew that got everyone motivated and going," he said. The roles were quickly defined and an inmate with substantial experience in sandbagging supervised the crew. "We had four guys and two trucks that were getting the sandbags the entire time. "We were working on four sides of the house. Each corner was supervised by one of our guys and another oversaw the entire

operation. We sandbagged an entire house."

He believes staff and inmates benefited from working together during the spring disaster. "It changed the entire Institution – everybody worked towards the flood." At the facility, inmates without permission to leave filled thousands of sandbags. It gave the offenders an opportunity to give something to the community, to feel accepted and to be thanked for what

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they had to offer. "Homeowners appreciated the helping hand they received from the Institution," said Mr. Hadaller, adding that work crews also volunteered to help repair homes in the community when the flood was over.

"A lot of good came out of the flood effort, and I'm sure we will continue to participate in those types of programs. This represents not only what Rockwood Institution can do, but what other institutions can do." Mr. Hadaller knows first-hand the importance of community activities for the well-being of offenders and for their eventual reintegration into society. Those who participated and have since left the Institution said the cooperation and camaraderie they experienced during the sandbagging operation had a positive and lasting impact on their self-esteem.

Mr. Blair Coggan, Farm Manager at Rockwood Institution, recalls the facility's sandbagging operation where inmates bagged sand at the rate of one bag every 10 seconds. For days a team of eight inmates worked into the evening putting out 7,000 to 10,000 bags a day. "The City of Winnipeg supplied the sand – they stockpiled the sand here and we used our loaders to load the sandbagging truck they had provided us to do the actual bagging," said Mr. Coggan.

### **Rebuilding After the Flood**

Mark, an inmate who helped out with the sandbagging operation at Rockwood Institution, recently participated in the rebuilding effort coordinated by the Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS). The MDS has an ongoing need for volunteers to help with the flood clean-up in southern Manitoba. After the flood waters receded, volunteers helped with sandbag removal, pumping out basements and moving furniture back into homes. Although the flood occurred a year ago, many Manitobans still need

help repairing and rebuilding their homes, farms and communities.

During the cleanup phase, Mark and his colleagues traveled an hour and a half every Monday to Friday morning during the months of December and January to a farmstead south of Winnipeg. During that time they worked hard – at no cost to the farmstead – cementing, flooring, insulating, wiring, plumbing, welding, framing and painting. "While we were there, we got three barns in operation and built one barn from the ground up." Mark said the rebuilding effort also benefited the "younger guys" who acquired work experience and learned from the more skilled labourers.

"They wrote us a letter and called us their angels," said Mark. "That was only the one farm that we were helping – there are still hundreds of farms that need help," he said. "I felt really good being able to offer my services and to be given a chance to help these people. I feel it's good for the inmates of the institutions and for the community. I think it should be an ongoing thing, not only for the flood. There is always someone who needs help."

Although he would like to finish the work on the farmstead, Mark will have finished his prison sentence before the next rebuilding project begins.

In an article published in the Winnipeg Free Press on April 20, 1997, Mr. Tyson, chairman of the flood preparation committee for Kingston Row and Kingston Crescent, wrote, "The guys from Rockwood have done a hell of a job." In thanking those who participated in flood clean-up efforts, the Winnipeg Free Press published the following statement: "It is impossible to name all those involved, but you know who you are and what you have done. This spring you shared an idea, an idea that together we can

accomplish the impossible under the worst conditions."

### **Stony Mountain Institution Lends a Hand to Flood Relief**

Staff and inmates from Stony Mountain Institution made a significant contribution to the flood effort. Mr. Lorne Jacobson, a Building Service Technician, drove his truck through roads covered in mud to carry food and sandbags from his facility to volunteers along the banks of the Red River. Armed with good will and a cellular phone, Mr. Jacobson was an indispensable link in the long line that delivered sandwiches and sandbags from staff and inmates at Stony Mountain Institution to volunteers. For 10 days he waited at the facility while inmates filled sandbags and then loaded them into his truck. He then drove to St. Andrew's Fire Hall on Main Street in Winnipeg and from there to the river bank.

"In the mornings, I would go to the (facility) kitchen to pick up soup, sandwiches and coffee and take it to St. Andrew's Fire Hall. From there I would take sandbags down to the river to two new developments. There was about half a mile of vehicles waiting to pick up sandbags from St. Andrew's," he said. The vehicles waited about 15 minutes in line and soldiers and students could load a half-ton truck in five minutes.

"Later in the afternoon, I would pick up the food containers and take them back to the (facility's) kitchen where they would be filled the next day," said Mr. Jacobson. Stony Mountain Institution's kitchen staff, with the help of inmates, prepared enough food to feed about 300 volunteers a day during the height of the operation. "I used to carry warming trays that were about three feet by four feet, two big stainless steel pots full of food, two or three containers of

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soup and two containers of coffee," he said.

The volunteers spent long days passing sandbags down a human chain to the river. "One of the roads along the river bank had been built up with gravel," recalled Mr. Jacobson. "As the flood waters rose, the waves started to erode the gravel. To stop the erosion, we put sandbags down on plastic sheets that the soldiers were holding from their positions in the boats."

The sandbagging and river damming operations were well co-ordinated, according to CSC volunteers. Mr. Jacobson kept in contact with St. Andrew's Fire Hall by cellular phone and was able to respond to requirements as they arose. As a volunteer Fire Chief at the Institution's Fire Hall, he has had formal training in emergency planning. "You plan for the worst and hopefully it never gets that bad." Having things worked out ahead of time makes all the difference, but the main thing in any emergency is to remain calm, he said. "Plan ahead – if you stick to the plan as closely as possible, chances are that it will work out that way."

### **The Correctional Service of Canada's Security Division**

Mr. Richard Christy, Manager of the Correctional Services' Security Division, emphasized the importance of having a plan for disasters such as the Manitoba flood or the Ice Storm. "Each institution develops its own site-specific plan," he said. For example, areas that are vulnerable to earthquakes will have an earthquake response plan. Correctional facilities develop their own plans based on a crisis management model.

"There is a policy requirement for each institution to have an annual exercise if they haven't managed a real correctional emergency in a

given year," said Mr. Christy. These exercises serve as a model for responding to any emergency. "I think that the culture of the organization is such that you can translate your approach to managing correctional emergencies into managing natural disasters. The structure is there and staff and inmates can contribute to recovery efforts in a natural disaster."

"The staff and inmates are the real heroes – the culture of the organization has simply provided the policy infrastructure, the training and the work environment that enables them to respond to natural disasters such as the Winnipeg flood. The credit should go to them," said Mr. Christy, who was personally affected by the ice storm. "Years ago, we didn't think of ourselves as contributors, but our perception is changing," he said. Rather than being an organization in need, prisons are becoming part of a larger community to which they can contribute. "We are not just part of a problem, but also part of the solution," he said.

### **Rockwood Institution's Warden Saves a Life on Christmas Day**

Mr. Gord Holloway, Rockwood Institution's Warden, gave the gift of life on Christmas Day in Winnipeg. Early in the afternoon on December 25, 1997, he went jogging along the Red River. "I happened to be running along when I heard somebody call out for help," he said. Realizing a woman had fallen through the ice he ran down to the river's edge. "I got down in a prone position and extended one of the branches to the lady." He tried to pull her out but she had difficulty holding onto the branch. At one point the Warden worried she would let go since she kept saying how cold she was and that she couldn't hang on much longer. "All I wanted her to do was to hold onto the branch because I felt that eventually

somebody would come along," he recalled.

Someone did. A woman across the river responded to his call for help by telephoning 9-1-1. And another passerby, Ronald Blatz, who was walking along the path, ran down to the river and joined Mr. Holloway on the ice. While the Warden held on to his leg, Mr. Blatz reached out and grabbed the woman's jacket. The men pulled her out and covered her with their own clothes.

At that moment the Winnipeg police, fire department and 9-1-1's rescue unit arrived on the scene. "We walked her up to the ambulance," said Mr. Holloway. It wasn't until a police officer told them that they were heroes that they realized that they had saved someone's life. "We're taught when we are kids that if somebody falls through the ice that you never stand up in trying to get them out, you lie down and extend something to them," said Mr. Holloway, who had responded to the cry for help without hesitation.

When the police officer offered to take him home, Holloway told him that he had to finish his run. "As I was running along the path, it was very emotional," he recalled.

Mr. Holloway's act of heroism is a source of inspiration. When Rockwood Institution staff read about his heroic gesture they organized a luncheon and presented him with a plaque that read, "Our Warden Walks on Water". A few weeks later, Winnipeg's Chief of Police presented Warden Holloway and Mr. Ronald Blatz with commendations for their heroic deed. On Christmas Eve one of the Warden's children mentioned how it was nice to give gifts at Christmas, "but what Dad did was really what it's all about".

# CSC Battles Snow Storms and Forest Fires in the Pacific Region

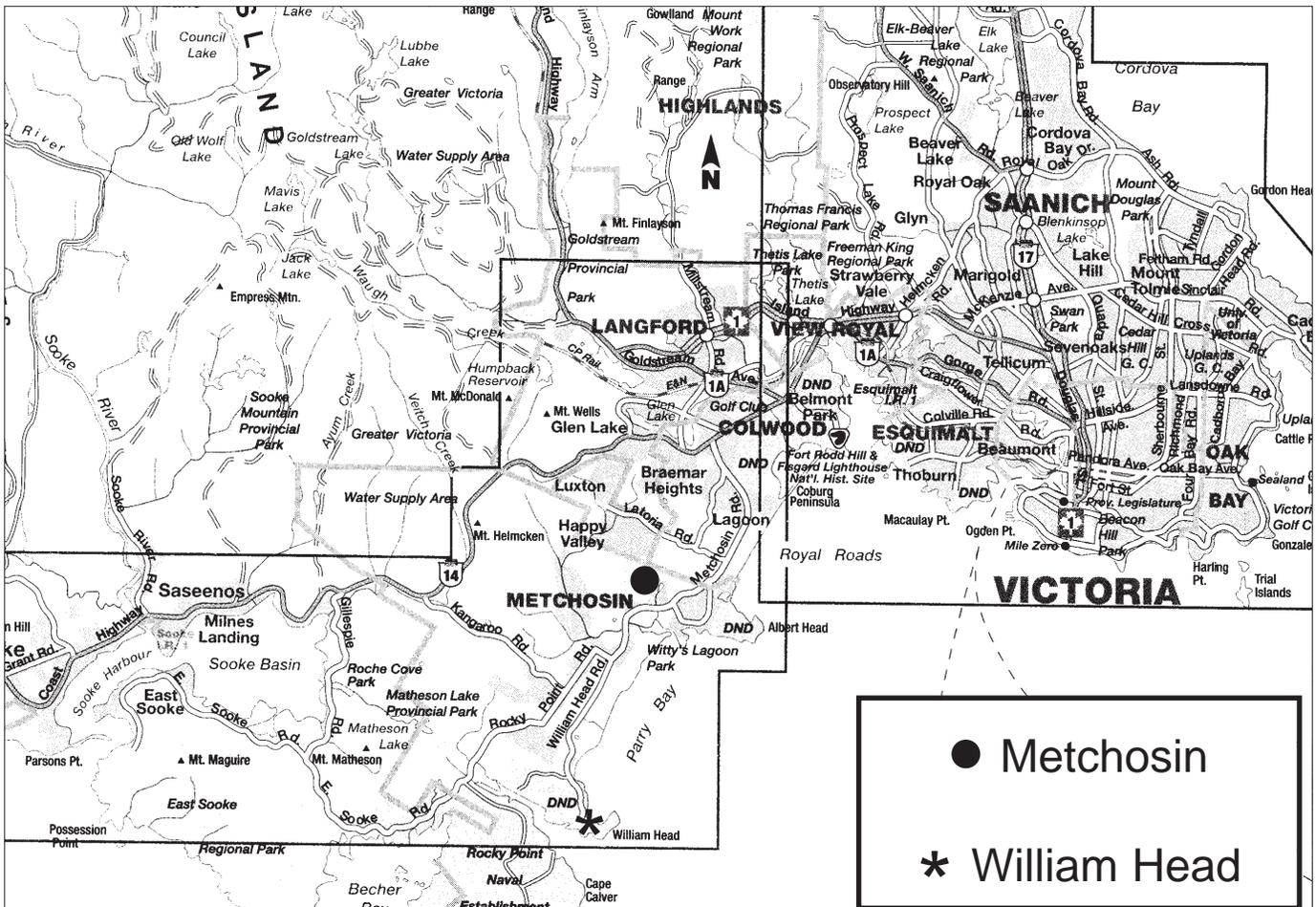
The Pacific Region's wide range of geographic features – including the Rocky Mountains, the fertile Fraser Valley, interior deserts, a coastal mountain range and Vancouver Island's diverse terrain – have created a variety of weather systems that pose unique challenges to local residents. The Correctional Service of Canada has helped local communities in its Pacific Region by providing staff specially trained in emergency relief and by deploying institutional vehicles and

heavy duty equipment designed especially for extreme conditions. In the past few years, our most western region has helped communities battle snow storms and forest fires and has been sincerely thanked for its help when help was direly needed.

## The Great Pacific Blizzard of 1996

Four days before the end of 1996, southern Vancouver Island and the mainland's Fraser Valley were paral-

ysed by one of the strongest blizzards of the century – surpassed only by a 1916 storm that left drifts of 2.5 meters in downtown Victoria. William Head Institution (WHI), located at the end of a remote, rural road 26 kilometers west of the provincial capital, usually experiences a mild winter that seldom sees snow or ice for more than a day. Conditions at the 34 hectare site changed dramatically one blustery morning.



Map of west coast of Vancouver Island showing Metchosin and William Head Institution

Early Saturday, December 28, blinding snow and gale-force winds whipped south Vancouver Island, continuing for four days. The limited road clearing equipment in the District of Metchosin – a rural community west of Victoria where William Head Institution is located – faltered and failed before the end of the afternoon and civic officials gave up snow removal efforts. CSC staff got to work repairing equipment and waited for the weather to improve. Most Metchosin residents were snowbound and unable to leave their homes.

Being housebound can cause panic to those who are trapped. In this case, residents faced collapsing buildings – such as farms and commercial greenhouses – caved in roofs, a lack of food and heat, medical emergencies and just plain cabin fever.

### **William Head Institution Helps Out**

At medium security William Head Institution the snow hit at a bad time. Staff were away on annual Christmas and New Year's holidays so shift relief was a problem. The snow piled up in huge drifts around the Institution and administration decided to put the facility on "emergency footing". This meant only limited correctional staff and food services personnel stayed at the facility to maintain operations and supervise the 240 inmates. A system of shift rostering – where staff rotates jobs to give each person a chance to sleep – and an emergency Food Service Plan – since no fresh food was arriving were set up.

The blizzard stopped all means of travel on the five-kilometer road into William Head Institution. The situation worsened over the next days with drifts reaching over three meters. On-site staff organized small groups of inmates to try to open paths on the site's grounds, but even these efforts had to be given up by Sunday evening. All inmates were safely restricted to

their living areas and security was maintained.

### **Work a Priority for CSC's Essential Staff**

On Sunday afternoon, William Head Institution Warden Michael Gallagher

asked off-duty Unit Manager John Costello to hike from his home in Metchosin to check on the facility about three kilometers away. Mr. Costello plodded through deep snow for three hours and found staff and inmates needed the services of a nurse as well as a building maintenance



*Snowbound houses in Metchosin*



person to make sure roofs would not collapse. After walking back later that night he contacted the Institution's nurse and they travelled on foot to the facility the next afternoon. A maintenance plumber walked in to check the roofs and a broken gas main.

"It took quite a while to get there but we were motivated by the need to assist staff and inmates as soon as possible," said Mr. Costello.

At the facility, Work Release Officer Greg Dickinson began making calls to

the Canadian Coast Auxiliary. CSC had donated considerable staff and inmate support to the federal agency in the past, repairing wharfs and constructing sheds and storage buildings. That Monday, WHI staff and the Coast Guard made arrangements for a handful of CSC staff living in the Sooke – a community to the northwest of the Institution – to hike from their homes to the community's government wharf located at Sooke Harbour. Once there, staff donned survival suits and climbed aboard a large Zodiac – an air-filled, rigid-hulled boat used for rescue operations – to brave the turbulent seas for the 10-kilometre trip, scrutinizing tides, winds and reefs along the way. Once at William Head, they scrambled ashore to relieve their exhausted colleagues who had by now been in the facility for six eight-hour shifts. Other fit employees chose to walk in and some others used a convoy of snowmobiles organized by local area residents.

#### **A Snowbound Community in Need**

Many CSC staff are qualified to operate various types of equipment so they can teach inmates in different programs. Staff member Mr. Dickinson, a trained heavy equipment operator, and Mr. Costello had surveyed the area earlier that day and noticed a large bulldozer – used for private land clearing – buried in the snow two kilometers away. By nightfall, arrangements had been made with the machine's owner to use the machine. The local hardware store even fabricated a replacement key for them. The two men set off at night, one driving and the other walking ahead with a flashlight since the bulldozer had no lights.

When local authorities learned what CSC's correctional officers were doing they requested that local side roads and emergency workers' houses be added to the plowing. By Tuesday morning, the main route from WHI to Metchosin had been cleared as well



*Snowbound houses in Metchosin*



*The road to William Head Institution*

as some side roads, and many trapped residents were able to leave their homes. A plowed doctor's driveway turned out to be a life-saving measure when, later that day, his neighbour suffered a cardiac emergency and an ambulance attendant was able to lift him over the fence using the cleared lane – something that would have been impossible even hours earlier.

The snow and fierce winds finally abated Monday evening and many residents were able to leave their homes, although some were stuck for several more days.

On Tuesday, roads in the Metchosin and William Head Institution area were navigable and operations were back to normal at the facility, due to the actions of William Head Institution's dedicated and innovative staff.

### **Warden Praises Staff and Inmates**

During a general staff meeting after the storm, Warden Michael Gallagher recognized the efforts of the staff trapped on site during the ordeal, and those who made the extraordinary effort to get in to work. Each staff member was presented with a letter of recognition and a t-shirt printed with "I Survived the Blizzard of '96" displaying the banner headline and photograph from the Victoria Times-Colonist newspaper's "Special Storm Edition".

CSC makes a point of mentioning good work to inmates, and maintaining good relations with surrounding communities. To industrious offenders who worked long hours, the Warden wrote, "You fought a valiant battle to keep up with the snow. I would like you to know that your hard work, cooperation and endurance are appreciated. Thank you."

A letter to staff members John Costello and Greg Dickinson commends the



*Snowbound houses in Metchosin*

men on their "... apparently boundless energy and initiative (which) were once again generously expended on behalf of the institution. Your organizational skills were clearly shown and your willingness to help to implement your plans by your own physical participation was an extra bonus. I am thankful that we have such valuable resources."

WHI Warden Gallagher is quick to point out that no one staff person or inmate or organization did more work than others, but that the Service's team-approach and willingness to help meant that this disaster wreaked less damage than it could have.

### **The Community Thanks CSC**

Through private and local government communications as well as media tributes, William Head Institution was subsequently recognized for its outstanding effort and contribution to the community.

Metchosin's Goldstream News Gazette wrote that CSC staff were part of the hundreds of volunteers that stepped

forward in the blizzard to help out friends, neighbours and their community. "It's amazing how people can pull together in times of need," Assistant Warden Randie Scott was quoted as saying.

### **The Work Release Program – Forest Fire Help in the Pacific Region**

North of Victoria, dramatic and sudden forest fires lit up areas near camping and residential sites this past summer. Correctional Service of Canada staff were on hand to help, thanks to the CSC's Work Release Program.

Established about seven years ago, CSC's Work Release Program was set up to train inmates in skilled areas – such as forestry maintenance including planting, pruning, spacing and thinning trees, construction and fire fighting – and supervise them while they undertake paid work in the community using those skills.

"The offenders gain skills, experience and income for their work, and the hard physical labour and need for commitment to each project allows



*William Head Institution*

them to regain a sense of purpose and community,” said William Head Institution Work Release coordinator Bernie Dovell.

Although the last two summers have seen fewer fires than usual on southern Vancouver Island, four serious ones threatened communities. Inmates in the firefighting section of the Program, which includes specialized training in fire cleanup and helicopter safety, were called in to help. The offenders are trained to support expert front-line Ministry of Forests’ crews who extinguish the fires but often have to leave soon after to attend to other sites.

Offenders in the Work Release Program are given firefighting training since they are prepared to be released to the community and able to work in the public eye. Each day they report to work sites carrying firefighting gear with them so they can report directly to a fire site without returning to retrieve items at William Head Institution.

Last August a fire – believed to be set by an arsonist – broke out half a kilometre from a trailer park at Shawnigan Lake on southern Vancouver Island. The fire was in a populated area with houses abutting the forest. When the Ministry of Forests – whose primary responsibility is to look after wildlands during a fire – got notice it called the volunteer fire department to help attend to any structures, such as houses, which may have also been affected.

Mr. Tim Neale, a Forest Protection Officer with the Ministry of Forests who also actively recruits community resources to help with his Ministry’s needs, contacted inmates from William Head Institution for their help. He knew two crews of 10 trained inmate firefighters would be available for Ministry emergencies and could be put on standby if staff suspected a fire. On

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standby, they cease all other work activities, are paid a reduced wage as they wait, and move to the scene as soon as they are alerted. If Ministry staff notify offenders in the evening, they are required to arrive at the scene at first light the next morning.

“This is highly skilled work and we really rely on CSC to help us out,” said Mr. Neale, adding that although offenders aren’t expected to be as fit as regular firefighters, Ministry of Forests’ staff encourage them to reach 70 per cent of firefighters’ level.

High winds threatened to spread the Shawnigan Lake fire quickly, prompting the deployment of an air tanker plane filled with fire retardant – called “slurry” or “wet water”, a mixture of water, soil and biodegradable soap that smothers and cools the fire instead of vapourizing on contact as water alone would do – to be dropped from the sky. “The fire was near fresh logging and a park, so we had no time to lose,” said Mr. Neale.

At 4 p.m. that August afternoon, CSC Work Release staff and 12 inmates arrived at the site and the fire was contained after burning about half a hectare. The inmates’ job in this case was to ensure the area was completely “mopped up” and doused with water so the fire would not flare up again.

“This is where these guys shine,” said Mr. Neale. “They come in and make sure every last ember is out. There is a real role for them to play.”

The “mop up” – clearing away equipment when the Ministry departs – and doing a “cold trail” – checking to make sure the ground is cool and no burning branches, twigs and embers remain – are vital to extinguishing fires. Inmates are also given training at WHI in helicopter evacuation in the event that they must be transported from a site by air. (Ministry staff carry out sophisticated operations from the

helicopters such as infrared scanning which detects heat coming up from the ground.)

“This is usually the elite job in the Work Release program,” admits Mr. Neale. “It is a chance for the guys to get out of the institution and do something worthwhile.” Inmates, supervised by staff, work well because they are self-policing and if one member of the team acts up, the whole team is sent home. After their sentence has expired, many offenders from the Work Release Program have the pleasure of being able to find good jobs – a goal CSC never has far from mind.

“We feel satisfying work gives these offenders a chance to turn their lives around and that is one of CSC’s goals,” said William Head Institution Unit Manager Mr. John Costello.

That summer, another fire was set in a “working forest” – a forest loaned by the Ministry to the logging industry for timber harvesting. Pickers of salal – a plant used in floral displays – had built a campfire during a forest closure and its sparks ignited the fire. “Unfortunately, illegal fires such as this are common”, said Mr. Neale. The Ministry warns the public not to enter forests when it believes conditions are dry. “We measure the moisture content of branches and the ground and we watch the weather. We can tell if it’s easy ignition and if a fire would spread quickly,” he said.

Inmates are often able to respond to such fires faster than volunteer firefighters because they are always in one place and available for duty. It is a real help, according to the Ministry of Forests, to know it has backup staff if faced with a really big fire.

“This fire was eventually 20 hectares big and we had to use Martin bombers – planes used during World War II – to release 27,000 litres of water per drop on the fire,” said Mr. Neale.

Without CSC staff and inmates’ speedy and efficient help, the fire might have taken longer than the three days it took to put out.

The provincial government declared April 1 to October 15 as legislated “fire season”. But fires can take place earlier or later than that. While seasonal firefighters are hired to help during peak months, many return to school in the fall. “That is one of the reasons CSC is so important to our operations.” Inmates are readily accessible, willing to work hard, and realize the program’s ability to help them reintegrate into society,” said Mr. Neale.

“It is a win-win situation: the community is assisted during crisis times and the offender gains practical work experience and gets ready for release into society. The program has offered labour to community-based programs and in return offenders can see the results of their efforts, individually and collectively,” said Mr. Dovell.

CSC has helped in the Pacific Region with life-threatening situations provoked by geography that is more extreme than other parts of Canada. During the snow blizzard of 1996 and the fires of 1997, staff and inmates gave time and expertise and were of great help to their communities.

### **Thanks from the Community**

The community gains, too. After the fires of 1997, letters arrived at William Head Institution thanking staff and inmates for their invaluable help.

A Metchosin District Council meeting later that year, Council formally thanked William Head Institution for its help during the snow storm and acknowledged its contribution to the community.

















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# UNDERSTANDING CORRECTIONS

## #2 The Correctional Strategy

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