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# CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEES

ANNUAL REPORT

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2011-2012



**NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**  
**OF CITIZEN ADVISORY**  
**ANNUAL REPORT 2011-2012**



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This report is also available on our Web site at [www.csc-scc.gc.ca/cac/index-eng.shtml](http://www.csc-scc.gc.ca/cac/index-eng.shtml)

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### **Opening Remarks from the National Chair**

I am pleased to submit the 2011-2012 Consolidated Annual Report for Citizen Advisory Committees (CAC). The report reflects the good work and best practices of CACs across Canada and identifies some of the challenges we face ahead.

CACs are autonomous, independent committees that reflect the interest of citizens in contributing to the quality of Canada's federal correctional process. We provide Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) with a community perspective on institutional and policy decisions. Our mission is to observe, advise and liaise. We do so with vigilance, to ensure and protect the integrity of CACs in the eyes of the community, CSC staff and offenders.

CACs continue to move forward on the implementation of our strategic plan, which was developed in 2009. The National Executive Committee (NEC) discusses and reviews aspects of our strategic plan at every National Executive Committee (NEC) meeting. The plan focuses on such themes as empowerment, transparency, role definition, communication, and professional development. The NEC is confident that this new approach to examine our plan and the way we do business on a continuous basis will improve accountability and provide better service to CSC and the public.

The CAC will continue to work closely with CSC staff, as the Service implements the Federal Community Corrections Strategy. The strategy calls for greater commitment and participation from communities across Canada to enhance the role of community corrections. This may well be our most opportune time to strengthen existing partnerships and explore new ones in communities across Canada. CAC will play an important role in achieving this goal.

In the last report, I identified three themes for my tenure as National Chair: renew, re-organize and re-energize. Regeneration, in the context of membership, is essential. CACs in almost every region of Canada have struggled to recruit new members. This year's annual report explains how some CACs are rebuilding our membership. Though there has been some success, further work is required.

I would like to thank the CAC's executive team and membership for volunteering their time to develop and enhance the role of CACs at all levels. Your time and effort is reflected in the organization's many achievements.



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Finally, I would like to acknowledge CSC's staff across the country who contributed to the success of citizen engagement, as well as the Commissioner and senior staff for their encouragement and continued support as we meet new challenges in the future.

Thank you,

Ron Joiner  
Chair, National Executive Committee



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**National CAC Profile**

Citizen Advisory Committees (CACs) are composed of volunteers who contribute to the protection of society by actively interacting with CSC staff, offenders and the public, and providing impartial advice and recommendations to improve the quality of Canada's federal correctional process.

There are 90 active CACs in communities across Canada, representing approximately 446 members in five regions.

Region	Number of CAC sites	Number of CAC volunteers
Atlantic	12	70
Quebec	20	85
Ontario	20	80
Prairie	21	108
Pacific	17	103

In 2011-2012, our members took part in a wide range of outreach community activities. These included: pre-release fairs; family socials; open houses and community barbeques; public awareness forums and training sessions; volunteer appreciation events; as well as Citizen Advisory Committee Awareness Week activities.

Priorities centered on recruitment, orientation and training, and building stronger relationships with CSC, external partners and stakeholders, and the offender population.

The NEC coordinated consultation with its members on proposed revisions to Commissioner's Directive Citizen Advisory Committees 023 (CD 023), the policy that defines the role and responsibilities of CACs. Once approved, conflict of interest guidelines for CAC members will also become part of CSC's policy.

Members also provided input on Commissioner's Directive 081 Offender Complaint and Grievances (CD 081). The policy includes a provision for establishment of an Outside Review Board to review an offender's grievance, should the offender request it. The CAC strongly



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recommended that its members not be involved in these boards because it falls outside of the CAC's mandate.

The NEC also focused on some of CAC's own policy matters in 2011-2012. A subcommittee examined potential amendments to the CAC National Constitution. Another subcommittee looked at the role of the CAC, as well as the structure, purpose and function of community CACs. CACs in the Quebec region initiated this idea because they wanted a clearer understanding of their role and how best to serve CSC's parole offices.

## **Annual CAC Regional Reports – 2011-2012**

### **Highlights and Best Practices**

#### **Atlantic Region**

- In Renous, the CAC has been working closely with the inmate committee, the warden and CSC staff. This collaborative approach led to the inmate committee taking over canteen responsibilities.
- In Halifax, the CAC created and promoted the Parole Officer and Offender Resource Guide.
- CAC members at the Nova institution remain active and involved in observing the Structured Living Environment (SLE), a program cited for its excellence in helping female offenders with mental and behavioral issues.
- Truro CAC is developing an information package of local organizations and resources to help parole officers reintegrate offenders into the community.
- Atlantic region CAC members participated in several community events, such as the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Atlantic Institution; the Nova Scotia Justice Conference; Black Culture Society; Annual Rev. Dr. W. P. Oliver Night; as well as a restorative justice event.

*Sharon Geldart- Atlantic Regional Chair*

#### **Quebec Region**

- In Cowansville, two CAC members were asked to observe during the negotiation and resolution of a hostage crisis.



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- CAC members in Drummondville took part in an emergency preparedness exercise organized by CSC's regional headquarters.
- As part of their outreach activities, CAC members in Quebec made three presentations to more than 20 students studying social work at a post-secondary collegiate.
- CAC members across the region also took part in various community activities, including: celebrations to mark the 50th anniversary of Leclerc Institution; a conference of the Congress of Canadian Criminal Justice Association (CCJA) and Quebec Criminology Society, and a regional ethnocultural forum.

*Bernard Tremblay- Quebec Regional Chair*

### **Ontario Region**

- CSC staff in some sites asked CAC members to be observers during exceptional searches and crises.
- In Northern Ontario, CAC established a new site at Sudbury Parole.
- Two new training courses were developed to complement CAC orientation training: an Institutional On-Site Orientation training program, and a Community On-Site training program.
- The Director of CSC's Staff College has opened up training opportunities to CAC members when space is available to support their professional development and knowledge of CSC.
- Media relations awareness training provided at the annual general meeting was well received.
- In the Greater Ontario-Nunavut District, the establishment of dedicated volunteer coordinators resulted in increased recruitment of CAC members.
- CAC and CSC staff continued to work collaboratively on joint projects, such as the Exceptional Peoples Olympiad at Collins Bay Institution.

*Sharon Mitchell- Ontario Regional Chair*

### **Prairie Region**

- The Saskatoon Area Parole CAC worked in collaboration with the Regional Psychiatric Centre to introduce a new 'open mic' session at meetings. This fostered more open, candid discussion about issues and concerns.



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- At Grande Cache institution, CAC worked with Mountainview Lifers Group, an organization that raises money to provide new clothing and school supplies to students in need. CAC raised about \$450 – enough to outfit two elementary and two high school students.
- Some of our members also participated in public awareness forums and training sessions such as Gender Responsiveness Training for Partners, the Community Corrections Excellence for Women Conference, Bridging Communication with Aboriginal Communities, and Restorative Justice Week activities.

*Lori Ebbesen – Prairies Regional Chair*

**Pacific Region**

- The Victoria Parole CAC organized a forum on mental health and public safety, in partnership with CSC and Camosun College. Approximately 150 people attended the learning event, which became part of the college's course curriculum.
- Effective liaising with the community and CSC to overcome opposition from a local advocacy group in Surrey led to the opening of a new satellite parole office.
- At the Kent Institution, the CAC worked with CSC staff to help lower tensions and improve relationships with offenders through increased mediation and communications activities.
- The Prince George Parole CAC continued to work with CSC staff on a successful "buddy system" approach. Each CAC member is assigned to work with a parole officer, observing and providing feedback on such activities as interviews with offenders, consultations and home visits.
- The New Westminster Parole Office and CAC partnered with the School of Criminology at Simon Fraser University and the Department of Criminology at Douglas College to present a series of three public community forums on topics relating to Canadian justice and the federal correctional system. The forums featured nationally and internationally recognized authorities and panelists.
- In Mission, CAC acted as a liaison with two community groups to facilitate an Escorted Temporary Absence (ETA) Work program at a local wetland rehabilitation project.
- The Fraser Valley Parole CAC continued to support the local 'Feed the Children Program'. Last year, \$25,000 was raised at a dinner and auction. Proceeds were used to provide meals to hundreds of children at schools in the Chilliwack area.





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*Bob Marshall – Pacific Regional Chair*

## **Challenges**

Recruitment remains one of our biggest challenges. While membership numbers have grown in some areas, they have fallen in others. To address the problem, some of our CACs have reached out to youth and recruited students from post-secondary institutions, colleges, and universities. However, it is clear that there is need for a national recruitment strategy to ensure that CACs have the capacity to serve CSC, offenders and the public.

One of our key roles is to provide advice to CSC on its policies, programs, and operations. We have been successful in providing feedback and advice at the local level to specific institutions and parole offices. However, we continue to face challenges in providing a coordinated, national response to CSC on policy matters due to time constraints and geography. The NEC is currently exploring how we might more effectively consult with our membership through electronic consultation.

One of the NEC's objectives is to ensure that there is clarity and consistency at all levels of the organization. This can only be achieved through the provision of comprehensive, up-to-date training and resource materials. Some materials were revised over the past year. However, there is still more work to be done. The NEC was successful in ensuring that all CAC members had access to its resource toolkit, available at [www.CSC-SCC.gc.ca/cac/](http://www.CSC-SCC.gc.ca/cac/).

## **A Look Ahead**

In the coming year, the CAC will continue to implement its strategic plan, concentrating in the areas of training and professional development, empowerment and clarification of the role of the CAC. The NEC subcommittee on amendments to the CAC National Constitution is consulting with members on its recommendations and results of a membership vote will be known next year. At the regional and local levels, CACs will continue their work in building stronger relationships with CSC staff, partners and stakeholders.

We are proud of the work we have accomplished and remain committed to contributing to the quality of the correctional process.