

## Assaults continue at Kamloops Regional Correctional Centre

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Three guards were assaulted at KRCC in one day, a result of the pressure put on the corrections system by overcrowding, a spokesperson for the B.C. Government Employees' Union said Tuesday.

Although a new jail is being built near Osoyoos, it will be years before construction is complete and pressures will be eased at prisons like Kamloops Regional Correctional Centre, said Dean Purdy.

"We're not going to see any relief from the overcrowding or the violence for three to five years while they build the jail," said Purdy.

KRCC is built for 168 prisoners but normally houses more than 300 at any one time.

Purdy didn't have a lot of information about the latest assaults, which occurred on Friday. In one case an inmate attacked and punched a guard. He later spit on a different guard.

"It was pretty disgusting," said Purdy. In cases like this the guard will be put on medication to counter any infection.

A third assault occurred when a guard was hit in the head with a meal tray. Purdy didn't know the extent of the injuries, if any.

In an email, Justice Minister Shirley Bond said all three officers completed their shifts that day and an internal investigation is underway. The inmates could be charged.

"These types of incidents of violence against staff are not tolerated and we take them seriously," Bond said in the email.

She said 200 more guards will be hired by 2013 as part of the province's capital expansion of the corrections branch.

These incidents are just the latest in a growing list of cases that put the spotlight on tensions at the jail. People have tried breaking into the facility twice during the last three months in an effort to smuggle contraband into the prison. Guards have had containers of feces tossed at them and an inmate was blinded in one eye when bits of a pencil were lodged in his brain during an altercation with another prisoner.

And late last year, Stephen Michael Hodgins spent 11 days on the run after fleeing a KRCC work crew on Oct. 18. He was arrested without incident at Northhills Mall.