

Attacks inside jail increasing, guards say; Serious injuries

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Vicious attacks at a B.C. jail in November -- including one in which boiling butter was thrown in an inmate's face--have prison guards alarmed at the escalating violence at the Port Coquitlam facility.

Guards at North Fraser Pretrial are demanding a meeting with B.C. Solicitor-General Rich Coleman to discuss their concerns.

Two of the incidents involved inmates attacking B.C. Corrections staff, in one case seriously injuring the worker.

In the two other attacks, inmates targeted other inmates --one using a toothbrush with a razor blade on it and the other throwing boiling butter on a gangster recently arrested on gun charges.

"These incidents show how violence levels are continuing to rise inside our prisons," said Dean Purdy, a corrections officer and a representative for B.C. Government and Service Employees' Union.

Earlier this week, convicted killer Dillan Butler appeared in B.C. Supreme Court for his sentencing with a visible wound on his face after he was attacked with the modified toothbrush by another North Fraser inmate.

On Nov. 27, a guard was "going about his business, outside of a cell. An inmate snuck up behind him with a broom handle

and hit him in the back," Mr. Purdy said.

Another correctional officer was seriously wounded in a Nov. 10 assault after being sucker-punched several times by an inmate, knocked to the ground, then kicked and stomped. He remains off work with a concussion and other injuries.

And on Nov. 1, long-time criminal Joshua King Straker was charged with aggravated assault for allegedly throwing microwaved butter in the face of gangster Pedram(Mike) Shirazi.

Shirazi was arrested Oct. 27 in Vancouver's Kensington Park after police interrupted a meeting of seven gangsters, some with loaded assault rifles.

Straker is due back in court on the charge on Dec. 8.

Mr. Purdy said rising inmate populations, including an increasing number of gangsters, has led to added tension and violence.

"With the addition of the Harper government's get-tough-on-crime legislation, we are expecting the count to rise in the ballpark of another 1,000 inmates," he said.

The union wrote to Mr. Coleman on Nov. 16, requesting a meeting about the volatile situation, but has not yet heard back.

Ministry spokesman Ian Indridson said Thursday that a meeting would be set up between Mr. Coleman and Mr. Purdy.

Mr. Purdy said last Saturday's attack on a correctional officer was the 30th on staff in two years at North Fraser, which was built in 2000 to house 300 inmates but on average has 650 prisoners.