

BC Corrections clarifies assault numbers

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BC Corrections has weighed in on a story in last Friday's Free Press regarding violence at Prince George Regional Correctional Centre

The figures showed there were 70 recorded inmate-on-staff assaults at PGRCC from 2004 to 2010, the most among the province's four regional correctional centres.

The data also showed 862 incidents of inmate-on-inmate violence at PGRCC, third highest among its peers. The numbers have been trending downward since 2006, when there were 240 inmate-on-inmate attacks recorded at PGRCC compared to 81 in 2010.

Over the same period, inmate-on-staff assaults decreased from 18 to four. An official from the union attributed the decrease simply to a new system used to track violent incidents.

But in an e-mail response received after Friday's deadline, BC Corrections spokeswoman Marnie Mayhew said the statistics can be skewed by the personalities among a jail's inmates.

"At any given time, the population of inmates at a particular centre may be more or less compatible," she said.

Mayhew noted the average stay for sentenced inmates in provincial jails over the past five years has ranged from 54 to 72 days, and that inmates move around a lot - evidenced by the 7,000 transfers BC Corrections conducted between its nine facilities in 2009-10.

"While statistics are collected through each individual centre, those individual centre's statistics aren't a meaningful representation of the overall custody environment," Mayhew said. "Some fluctuations in the numbers from year to year is not uncommon, and we take all incidents of violence seriously. Overall, incidents of violence in our centres have declined since 2004."

Further, Mayhew said, BC Corrections is in the midst of a \$185-million capital program that will add 304 new cells around the province, and 174 interim beds while work is underway. Plans are also in the works for a new Okanagan regional correctional centre to be ready for 2015.

Design capacities and inmate populations at B.C.'s four regional correctional centres:

Fraser: 304 cells, currently 498 inmates

Kamloops: 185 cells, currently 332 inmates

Prince George: 175 cells, currently 290 inmates

Vancouver Island: 207 cells, currently 326 inmates

SOURCE: BC Corrections. Please note, the design capacities differ from those provided by the BCGEU and published with Friday's story.