

BC jail guards work in deplorable conditions: Expert Likely to face violence on the job

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Working conditions for BC's jail guards have become deplorable, according to a report out today by a local expert. It finds they're more likely to face violence on the job than any other worker.

SFU Criminologist Neil Boyd says the prison population has changed in the last decade. He explains there are more violent criminals, gangsters, and people with mental illnesses.

"Forty per cent, in fact, of correctional officers, in the last year, were hit with urine or feces thrown by inmates. They're dealing with a very difficult population."

The biggest change, though, is the doubling of the inmate to staff ratio since 2002. Boyd says it's typically 40:1 and in one Fraser Valley facility it's 60:1.

"We don't have to double the population of correctional officers. Something like a 15 to 20 per cent increase, a further 150 to 200 officers, would be able to return us to the pre-2002 levels of 20 inmates to one correctional officer."

It should serve as a wake-up call, according to the BCGEU.

"This report exposes the violence and dangers our members face each and every day they report to work," says Dean Purdy with the union in a release. "It should be troubling for all British Columbians and a wake up call for our government to stop ignoring the deteriorating conditions inside our prisons."

While his report did not look at the impact of the Tories' federal crime bill, Boyd says if it's passed it would likely mean a lot more money needed to bolster BC's corrections system.