

Inmate altercation sends one to hospital

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Incidents of violence continue to plague the Kamloops Regional Correctional Centre, with the latest-reported incident on Wednesday evening.

A Ministry of Justice spokesperson confirmed one of two inmates was injured in an altercation at 10:30 p.m. The inmate was taken to hospital for treatment and returned to KRCC.

Corrections is investigating and, if appropriate, the ministry indicated that formal disciplinary charges will be applied. The previous confirmed violence was March 21, when an inmate went to hospital by ambulance, but the ministry would not elaborate on whether that incident involved other inmates or guards. Although maintaining a safe and secure facility is the ministry's "No. 1 priority," violent eruptions will occur, said the spokesperson.

"It's important to remember that correctional centres hold a significant number of individuals with histories of violence, and therefore the risk of violence is always present and can never be completely eliminated."

The reported incidents are only a fraction of those actually occurring at KRCC, according to Dean Purdy, B.C. Government and Service Employees Union corrections spokesman.

"Inmate-on-inmate violence happens routinely in the Kamloops Regional Correctional Centre. Almost every shift and sometimes on multiple occasions," he said. He added KRCC is comparable to B.C.'s other five maximum-security facilities and it's because of inadequate staffing.

Ten years ago, KRCC had a one guard to 20 prisoner ratio. Now it's one for every 40 inmates, and it's only going to get worse, said Purdy.

"You add in the federal crime legislation, the omnibus crime bill and it's said that's going to increase counts by as much as 15 per cent," he said. "And also, the corrections branch has said counts will continue to rise until the year 2020 even without the crime bill."

Lobbying efforts continue, but the ministry says lack of funding is impeding any staff increases.