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# *News Release / Communiqué*

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## **Correctional Investigator Reports on Overcoming Barriers to Community Reintegration**

### For Immediate Release

Ottawa, October 8, 2014 – The 41<sup>st</sup> Annual Report of the Office of the Correctional Investigator was tabled in Parliament today. The report contains a special focus on safe and timely community reintegration of federally sentenced offenders.

In his report, the Correctional Investigator, Mr. Howard Sapers notes that most inmates will be released from prison and that it is up to the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) to ensure they are properly prepared for their return. “Time spent in prison should be about constructively addressing needs, risks and behaviours that lead to crime,” said Sapers. “Prison programs that upgrade the educational, employability and vocational skills of inmates significantly enhance the prospects of living crime-free when returned to the community.”

The report details a number of factors that run contrary to safe and timely reintegration. For example, more offenders are staying longer in higher security penitentiaries where access to programs is most restricted. The majority of offenders are now returned to the community by way of statutory release at two-thirds point of the sentence versus conditional release (parole). Use of force interventions, inmate assaults, segregation placements, involuntary transfers and self-injurious incidents are trending upward leading to conditions of detention that are less conducive to safe reintegration. “Returning offenders to the community who are embittered by their incarceration experience instead of provided opportunities for positive change is not in anyone’s interest. We know that timely interventions followed by graduated and structured release is less costly and more successful than releasing an offender directly from prison with limited or no period of supervision,” stated Sapers.

An investigation of federal community correctional centres (CCCs), which are community-based residential facilities operated exclusively by CSC, was released at the same time as the Annual Report. These facilities accommodate high need, high risk federal offenders released to the community with a residency condition imposed by the Parole Board of Canada. While the investigation found some

concerns with respect to consistency and access to pre-release services, healthcare and program delivery, including employment assistance, community correctional facilities were found to deliver significant impact in terms of value for money and contribution to public safety. Mr. Sapers noted, “Community corrections operations continue to be the poor cousin of institutional corrections. Less than 5% of CSC’s total budget is allocated to correctional reintegration programs.” To begin to address the imbalance, the Correctional Investigator called upon the Correctional Service to conduct an audit of resources allocated to community supervision.

Other sections of the 2013-14 Annual Report address ongoing priorities of the Office – mental health care, prevention of deaths in custody, conditions of confinement, and issues affecting Aboriginal and women offenders.

As the ombudsman for federally sentenced offenders, the Office of the Correctional Investigator serves Canadians and contributes to safe, lawful and humane corrections through independent oversight of the Correctional Service of Canada by providing accessible, impartial and timely investigation of individual and systemic concerns. The report cited in this release is available at: [www.oci-bec.gc.ca](http://www.oci-bec.gc.ca).

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