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Saskatchewan Government and General Employees' Union

NEWS RELEASE

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Heightened call for changes to Saskatchewan's prison system

New report says the province's jails are the most strained in the country

The Saskatchewan Government and General Employees' Union says a new report detailing the province's strain in its prison systems validates the union's longstanding concerns over the safety and wellbeing of its corrections workers on the job every day.

The report says Saskatchewan's is one of the most highly-strained provincial prison systems in the country, housing over twice as many inmates as facilities were designed for, despite repeated government insistence to the contrary.

The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives released its report, Warehousing Prisoners in Saskatchewan, just as SGEU correction workers from across the province are increasingly expressing concerns surrounding over-crowding, lack of training for dealing with escalating gang and other inmate violence, mental health-related and other concerns.

To accommodate this crisis, the report details what SGEU corrections workers are seeing daily in their jobs - classrooms, gymnasiums, workshops, and visiting rooms being converted into dormitories, and most of the province's cells being double bunked - with triple-bunking a distinct possibility in the future. The effects of this overcrowding on the living conditions of the inmates in these institutions are alarming, says the report.

"Our members are dealing with high levels of violence, often gang-related, in their daily work with dangerous offenders who are increasingly agitated by strained conditions," says Barry Nowoselsky, Vice-President of SGEU's Public Service Sector. "We can't be amiss on using this moment in time to address this challenge properly with some real and lasting solutions. We have already raised these issues with the Ministry of Justice and we will

continue to engage in meaningful dialogue to press for changes in the prison system for our members.”

SGEU has over 3,377 members working in the province's prison system.

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