



The Honourable John Williamson, M.P.
Chair, Standing Committee on Public Accounts
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6

Dear Mr. Williamson:

Pursuant to Standing Order 109 of the House of Commons, on behalf of the Government of Canada, I am pleased to respond to the Report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, "Report 30 – Systemic Barriers – Correctional Service of Canada," tabled on November 7, 2023 following its study of the 2022 Report 4 of the Auditor General of Canada.

The Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) is committed to keeping Canadians safe through the effective rehabilitation and successful reintegration of offenders. It promotes the safe reintegration of offenders through risk assessment, community supervision, appropriate accommodation, and effective programs and interventions. As most offenders will be released back into Canadian communities, the safe management of eligible offenders during their transition from the institution to the community and while on supervision is one of CSC's corporate priorities. While significant progress has been made in all areas pertaining to CSC's mandate, recommendations, such as those of the Auditor General of Canada and the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, underscore the importance of strengthening approaches to address any systemic barriers and the need for a renewed collective commitment to improving reintegration results for all offenders.

Our Government accepted all recommendations of the Auditor General in a media release issued by the former minister on May 31st, 2022, welcoming the audit report's findings. In response, CSC has developed a corresponding Management Action Plan. CSC is strengthening its delivery of correctional interventions that respond to the diversity of the offender population by revalidating the Custody Rating Scale in collaboration with external experts and monitoring its use in relation to Offender Security Classification decisions; flagging offenders serving short sentences with an identified program need in order to expedite their timely access to, and completion of, the necessary correctional programs; improving and aligning its collection of diversity information with Statistics Canada methodologies to better monitor the impact of its policies, programs, and practices on diverse groups of offenders; ensuring offenders' timely preparation to access to first release eligibility dates; ensuring representation among staff is reflective of the offender population in custody; and addressing employment equity representation gaps.

I wish to recognize the important role that the findings and recommendations of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts play in bringing to bear the recommended improvements outlined by the Auditor General of Canada, which will assist CSC in continuing to fulfill its important public safety mandate, while addressing the overincarceration of Indigenous, Black and other racialized offenders. The issues identified in the Committee's report, and the information that the Committee has requested by way of its recommendations, have allowed CSC to identify opportunities to review and strengthen its operational and data collection processes, thereby enhancing its ability to respond meaningfully to both the letter and the spirit of the recommendations by the Auditor General.

To that end, and further to the actions that CSC is undertaking, as described in its response to the Auditor General in 2022, and as outlined above, CSC will provide data and reports as per the Committee's request in a timely fashion, as data is available. I wish to note that CSC will provide all data requested by the Committee, but will only be able to provide data for recommendations 1(2) and (3) in June of 2024, as this will allow for the collection and analysis of data for the 2023-2024 fiscal year and will ensure that a comprehensive report is completed and submitted to the Committee. In response to recommendation 4(2), which is consistent with and relevant to the concerns of the Auditor General with respect to the preparation of offenders for first release, CSC will provide the Committee with data on the percentage of security level reassessments completed according to the timeframes specified in policy for Indigenous men and women in a timely fashion. CSC will also work with the Committee to provide any further information that the Committee will need to support its study of this important issue.

Finally, CSC acknowledges the importance of reflecting the diversity of the offender population in its complement of staff, particularly on the front line, and across all institutional and community facilities. This is particularly important given the overrepresentation of Indigenous, Black, and other racialized offenders. Addressing this issue continues to be a priority for CSC and is paramount to ensuring positive results for the diverse offender population.

As these plans continue to be implemented, I will be holding CSC accountable for achieving results on behalf of the Government and for reporting its results to Canadians. As such, I accept all recommendations submitted to the Government in your Report dated November 7, 2023, and will provide progress reports, where possible, within the prescribed timelines moving forward.

As the Prime Minister has said a number of times, it is our collective responsibility to ensure that we fulfill our promises and deliver real results to Canadians. Your Report is a valuable contribution to the work of ensuring that any systemic barriers are removed for the most vulnerable.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. LeBlanc', written in a cursive style.

The Honourable Dominic LeBlanc, P.C., K.C., M.P.
Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental
Affairs