

Coming apart at the seams

Inadequately funded, short-staffed and overloaded, the current system of community-based corrections, probation and parole is facing a crunch—and the workers and their clients are the ones paying for it.

Workload makes dealing with all but the highest risk offenders virtually impossible. Unfortunately, unsupervised low and medium risk clients often re-offend to become high risk cases.

Probation and Parole Officers meet with their clients individually and unaccompanied—in an office or an individual's home. Every day there is the potential for a violent episode.

Home visits may involve a worker dealing with volatile persons in situations where they may be armed or have access to items that can be used as a weapon. Or the visit occurs in a "bad" neighbourhood or in a rural location with the nearest law enforcement assistance quite a distance away.

Many of their clients have problems with drugs and / or alcohol and could be under the influence during an interview.

Officers deal with disturbing events: threats to persons and / or property, intimidation, coercion, and even assault. These workers are responsible for dealing with the perpetrators and victims of crime—often crimes of a violent and traumatic nature. The emotional strain of addressing these events on a daily basis can be enormous.

And Probation and Parole Officers work under the magnifying glass of government and media scrutiny. The rare times that things go wrong they

are the first to be blamed.

And yet they are rarely ever credited for all the times they make a real difference.

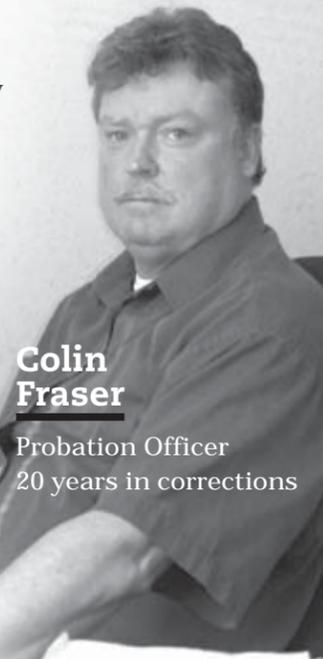
Stress and burnout have become a chronic problem for the country's Probation and Parole Officers.

Time for change

It is time that Probation and Parole Officers receive the support and consideration they deserve. As politicians push to hire more police, or build more prisons, there also needs to be resources dedicated to hiring, training and assisting those women and men who deal with the aftermath of crime and punishment.

These changes are not just for the workers in the sector—though that should be justification in itself—but for the victims, the offenders and their families and for the protection of our communities.

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Colin Fraser
Probation Officer
20 years in corrections



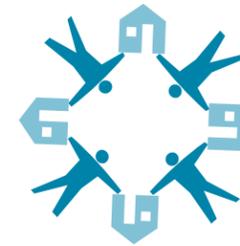
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PROTECTING
OUR
COMMUNITIES

PROBATION AND PAROLE OFFICERS



For the good of us all

Probation and Parole Officers work to protect the public and to prevent an offender from returning to crime

What happens when they're not in jail?



Michelle Reid

Probation Officer
30 years on the job

More than 125,000 people are serving out their sentences in our communities.

Many will work hard to rebuild their lives. Some won't even try.

We count on Parole and Probation Officers to help those who will and protect us from those who won't.

ON ANY GIVEN DAY in Canada there are more than 125,000 people (youth and adult) serving out their sentence in the community.

In fact, there are more than four times more people in community correctional services than there are in custody in this country.

Most offenders serving time in the community eventually succeed—get jobs, set up homes, start families and stay out of trouble. Others won't and will end up in trouble with the police and before the courts.

If an offender is successfully rehabilitated it is often as a result of a dedicated Probation or Parole Officer's assistance. Those who re-offend eventually must go through the process again—and a worker will be there.

These workers are mandated with protecting the public, rehabilitating the offender and ensuring that their sentence is served. They are integral parts of the entire process an offender passes through—from pre-trial to post-sentencing.

Probation and Parole Officers work with the courts to ensure that a Judge has the best pos-

sible information available with which to render a decision on a case.

They work with offenders who are on probation, parole, conditional sentences, or other community based correctional programs.

Their clients run the gamut of people who have been in trouble with the law. These can include low to high risk sexual offenders, violent offenders, mentally disordered offenders and those who experience stress in their lives.

But these workers also work with the victims of crime, the families of offenders, the courts, social and health agencies, the police and a wide array of other professionals involved in the correctional system.

As highly trained professionals they strive to serve the public in both the adult and youth justice systems to the best of their abilities. Navigating a mountain of legislation, they try to mobilize all the possible resources available to help prevent an offender returning to crime.

All of this would be a tall order under the best circumstances. Unfortunately, the system in Canada is not operating as well as it should.



Allister Graham

Probation Officer
20 years in corrections