

3.08—Community Services Program

BACKGROUND

The Ministry's Community Services Program (Program) is responsible for supervising all adult offenders (18 years of age and older) and young offenders (16 to 17 years of age) who are under some form of conditional release—that is, who are on probation, serving a conditional sentence, or on parole.

Types of Conditional Release and Relative Percentages

| Type of Conditional Release | Description | Percentage of Total Offenders Being Supervised in the Community |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| Probation order | <p>Probation is a sentence imposed by the courts that allows offenders to serve their sentence under supervision in the community.</p> <p>Probation is generally focused on rehabilitation.</p> | 95 |
| Conditional sentence | <p>A conditional sentence is imposed by the courts and allows offenders to serve their sentences under supervision in the community. The option of conditional sentences was introduced in 1996.</p> <p>Conditional sentences are generally intended to be both punitive (through conditions like house arrest and curfews) and rehabilitative.</p> | 4 |
| Parole certificate | <p>Parole is the early release of an offender from a correctional institution under supervision in the community. Paroles can only be authorized by the Ontario Parole and Earned Release Board to eligible inmates after they have served one-third of their sentences in correctional institutions.</p> | <1 |

*Prepared by the Office of the Provincial Auditor of Ontario
Source of data: Ministry of Public Safety and Security*

The objectives of the Program are to protect the public by monitoring offenders in the community and to rehabilitate offenders through training, treatment, and services that afford them the opportunities for successful personal and social adjustment in the

community. The Ministry's mandate in this respect and provisions for probation and parole are defined in the *Ministry of Correctional Services Act*.

On any given day, there is an average of 65,000 offenders being supervised by the Ministry in the community. This represents almost 90% of Ontario's total correctional population. The other 10% consists of offenders who are in institutions serving sentences or on remand awaiting trial.

At the time of our audit, the Ministry employed approximately 770 probation and parole officers working in 41 area offices and 86 sub-offices throughout the province. In addition, as part of its Community Services Program, the Ministry also contracts with selected community agencies to provide a variety of non-residential services, such as substance abuse treatment, psychological therapy, and other counselling/treatment programs.

In 2001/02, total program expenditures amounted to \$82 million—\$63 million of which was spent on salaries and benefits.

AUDIT OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE

The objectives of our audit were to assess whether adequate procedures were in place to ensure that:

- offenders serving sentences in the community comply with the conditions of probation, conditional sentences, and parole;
- the Ministry measures and reports on the effectiveness of its services and programs; and
- the Ministry manages its human and financial resources with due regard for economy and efficiency.

Prior to the commencement of our audit, we identified the criteria that would be used to conclude on our audit objectives. These were reviewed and accepted by senior ministry management. Our audit was conducted in accordance with standards for assurance engagements, encompassing value for money and compliance, established by the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants, and accordingly included such tests and other procedures as we considered necessary in the circumstances.

The scope of our audit, which was substantially completed in March 2002, included visits to five area offices, interviews with ministry officials, examinations of contracts with community service agencies, and reviews of offender files. We did not rely on the Ministry's internal auditors to reduce the extent of our work because they had not recently conducted work within the scope of our audit.

OVERALL AUDIT CONCLUSIONS

While acknowledging that the Ministry is in the process of implementing a new risk-based offender management model, we concluded that there were still a number of deficiencies in its procedures that hindered the effective supervision of offenders in the community. Specifically:

- The Ministry had not completed the required risk and needs assessments for many offenders under its supervision to reduce the risk that these individuals would reoffend while in the community and to ensure rehabilitation needs were identified. At the offices we visited, over 40% of offenders who had committed additional “level I” offences while under ministry supervision lacked a risk and needs assessment and/or a management plan. (Level I offences include sexual assault, assault causing bodily harm, uttering death threats, and other violent crimes.)
- When offenders did not comply with supervision conditions, the Ministry often did not take corrective action on a timely basis. At the five offices we visited, of the cases involving level I offenders who later committed additional offences while under ministry supervision, we noted that over 30% had not been followed up on a timely basis after the offender failed to comply with the conditions of their supervision.
- We estimated there were approximately 10,000 arrest warrants outstanding for offenders in the community, and warrants for some of these offenders had been issued as far back as 10 years. (Arrest warrants are issued when offenders fail to report to their probation and parole officer and cannot be located.) Many of these offenders were assessed as high risk and had committed level I offences. The Ministry did not know how many of the offenders against whom there were arrest warrants outstanding were still at large.

While we recognize that once a warrant is issued, the police—not ministry staff—are responsible for apprehending the offenders, the Ministry and the police need to work more closely together to capture these high-risk offenders so as not to expose the community to significant risk.

- The Ministry had not adequately addressed the correctional needs of offenders in the community. According to internal ministry reports, correctional programs for offenders with addiction problems, anti-social behaviour, personality disorder, and sexual deviance were often not available in their local communities. For example, of the over 3,000 sex offenders being supervised by the Ministry in the community, less than 600 received appropriate rehabilitation programs.
- Probation and parole officers indicated to us that current caseload levels impaired their ability to effectively supervise and provide services to offenders in the community. In spring 2001, the Ministry was authorized to hire 165 more probation and parole officers (it then had 690) to address identified workload concerns. Although the Ministry had previously advised us that workload standards to determine the optimal

number of officers needed for efficient and effective delivery of services would be in place by 1996, these standards have still not been developed.

DETAILED AUDIT OBSERVATIONS

NEW OFFENDER MANAGEMENT MODEL

For many years, the Ministry has had in place an empirically based risk-assessment process that its probation and parole officers use to assess the risk that an offender will reoffend while under ministry supervision in the community. However, there was no process in place to deploy staff resources based on the results of these assessments.

We were pleased to note that since our 1995 audit of the Program, the Ministry, in 1999, initiated a new offender management model known as the Probation and Parole Service Delivery Model, which highlights offenders' correctional needs that should be addressed to effectively reduce the risk of offenders reoffending. Though not yet fully implemented, the new model is expected to concentrate resources on those offenders at a high risk of reoffending. Under the model, empirically based approaches in offender assessment and supervision, as well as rehabilitation programs, which have been shown to have positive impacts on reducing reoffending rates, are being incorporated into the day-to-day practices of probation and parole officers.

Based on assessed risk and needs, the new model places offenders in one of four intervention service streams to meet their correctional needs. The most intensive level of supervision is reserved for offenders assessed as being at greatest risk of reoffending. According to the Ministry, over 20% of offenders in Ontario are considered to be in this high-risk category, and another 30% are considered to be at medium risk. Effective implementation of the new model is expected to result in more efficient deployment of limited resources and a reduction in reoffending rates.

At the time of our audit, we noted that about 110 (over 80%) of the 127 probation and parole offices were in the process of implementing the new model. Of the 110, 39 had achieved full implementation. Ministry management has indicated that such major change in service delivery would take three to five years to fully implement.

We noted that the Ministry has already begun an evaluation process to assess whether offices where the model has been implemented are complying with the new model. We will follow up in two years on the progress of the implementation of the model.

SUPERVISING OFFENDERS IN THE COMMUNITY

Risk and Needs Assessments and Management Plans

Regardless of the offender management model being used, effective supervision of offenders is crucial to the prevention of further reoffending. In this respect, probation and parole officers are required to complete a thorough risk and needs assessment and an individualized management plan to address the risks and needs for all offenders who report to them. According to ministry policy, probation and parole officers must complete each offender's risk and needs assessment and management plan within six weeks of the date of initial contact with the offender.

In the majority of offender files that we examined, we found that these key requirements of supervision—assessing risk and correctional needs and completing management plans—were not being met. These deficiencies existed even in the files of offenders who had committed level I offences, including sexual assault, assault with a weapon, and other violent crimes. At the offices we visited, over 40% of the offenders who had committed additional level I offences while under ministry supervision lacked a risk and needs assessment and/or a management plan.

Given the importance of risk assessments and management plans to the effective supervision and rehabilitation of offenders, not meeting these key requirements places the safety of the community at undue risk and does not assist offenders in adjusting successfully in the community.

Recommendation

To reduce the risk that offenders under ministry supervision will reoffend and to enhance the rehabilitation of these offenders, the Ministry should complete the required risk and needs assessments and management plans for these offenders on a timely basis.

Ministry Response

The Ministry is committed in policy and practice to timely completion of assessments and case plans for offenders under its jurisdiction.

The Ministry is addressing compliance with this policy in a number of ways. The hiring of the additional 165 probation and parole officers will facilitate workload distribution to improve more timely completion of offender assessments and management plans. In addition, the Ministry is reviewing current policy in an attempt to streamline the assessment requirements to ensure prioritizing and focusing of resources on higher-risk offenders. The Ministry is also finalizing revisions to probation and parole caseload audit

procedures to improve accountability, quality assurance, and performance management.

The initial impact of learning a new technology—that is, the Offender Tracking Information System (OTIS)—has affected the timelines of assessment and management plans input into the electronic system. It is expected that full implementation of this new business process will ultimately contribute to more accurate and timely access to information about offenders.

Through the collaborative evaluation process of the Probation and Parole Service Delivery Model, congruence with service delivery policy and practices is being evaluated. Based on evaluation findings, parole offices are required to put plans in place to improve in areas of deficiency.

Monitoring and Enforcing Compliance with Conditions of Supervision

A primary role of probation and parole officers in protecting public safety is to ensure offenders comply with the conditions outlined in supervision documents (probation orders, conditional sentences, and parole certificates). The type of conditions that offenders must comply with include: reporting to a probation and parole officer, performing community work, refraining from associating with any person engaged in criminal activity, attending treatment or counselling programs. With respect to probation and parole officers ensuring compliance with conditions, we found weaknesses in following up when offenders failed to comply with supervision conditions, even in cases of high-risk offenders. For instance, at the five offices we visited, of the cases involving level I offenders who later committed additional offences while under supervision, we noted that over 30% had not been followed up on a timely basis after the offender failed to comply with the conditions of their supervision.

In each instance of non-compliance, a probation and parole officer is required to make an enforcement decision and take appropriate action. Enforcement decisions can range from taking no action, to verbal or written cautions, to increased supervision, to seeking from the court an amendment to the supervision conditions, to charging the offender with a breach of conditions. In cases of probation and conditional sentences, the decision to initiate a charge of breach is at the discretion of the officer. In the case of parole, all violations must be reported to the Ontario Parole and Earned Release Board. In all cases, probation and parole officers are required to document the nature of the violation, the enforcement decision made, and the rationale for the decision.

Our audit revealed that in cases where offenders did not comply with supervision orders and enforcement action was not taken to address this non-compliance, almost two-thirds of the files we reviewed did not provide explanations as to why action was not taken.

In addition, with respect to conditional sentences involving house arrest or curfews as required by the courts, probation and parole officers informed us that they were unable to

ensure that these offenders were adhering to the conditions of their sentences because they have no means of monitoring compliance with such conditions. The Ministry indicated it was in the process of issuing a request for proposals under its electronic surveillance program to identify the best available technology and devices that it can utilize to ensure conditions for house arrests and curfews can be monitored.

Recommendation

To better ensure public safety, the Ministry should:

- take timely and appropriate corrective action when offenders under ministry supervision fail to meet the conditions of their supervision, especially in cases of high-risk offenders; and
- ensure probation and parole officers properly document their decisions, including the rationale for not taking enforcement action in cases of non-compliance.

Ministry Response

The Ministry is committed to ensuring that its mandate of monitoring and enforcing conditions is met.

Ministry policy emphasizes the need for timely enforcement decisions and documentation in cases of non-compliance. In all cases where non-compliance occurs and enforcement action is not taken, the rationale for not doing so is to be thoroughly documented as an enforcement decision. Probation and parole officers will be reminded of the requirement to document all enforcement decisions.

Workload issues have been noted as affecting probation and parole officers' ability to complete all duties in a timely manner. The Ministry is continuing to review ways of reducing workload for probation and parole officers. As well, the Ministry has hired an additional 165 probation and parole officers in order to provide more intensive supervision and monitoring of higher-risk offenders, thus ensuring public safety.

Outstanding Arrest Warrants

Arrest warrants are issued by courts at the request of probation and parole officers when offenders have failed to report to their probation and parole officers and cannot be located. Such offenders pose a risk to the community because the Ministry is unable to supervise them, and they may reoffend while at large in the community.

In the five area offices we visited, we noted there were over 1,500 offenders against whom there were arrest warrants outstanding, and some of the related warrants dated as far back as 10 years. Our review found that over 30% of these arrest warrants were for offenders who

were assessed to be high risk and had committed level I offences (including sexual assault, assault causing bodily harm, uttering death threats, and other violent crimes). We estimated that province-wide there could be over 10,000 outstanding arrest warrants. The Ministry did not have records indicating how many offenders against whom there were arrest warrants outstanding have not been apprehended.

We recognize that once a warrant is issued, the police—not ministry staff—are responsible for apprehending the offenders. However, the Ministry and the police need to work more closely together to capture these high-risk offenders so as not to expose the community to significant risk.

Recommendation

To better protect the safety of the community and enhance the credibility of the justice system, the Ministry should work more closely with the police to ensure that high-risk offenders against whom there are arrest warrants outstanding are apprehended in a timely manner.

Ministry Response

As noted by the Provincial Auditor, the police are responsible for apprehending offenders with outstanding arrest warrants. The Ministry recognizes the importance of apprehending high-risk offenders against whom there are arrest warrants outstanding, and Correctional Services is working with the Policing Services Division of the Ministry of Public Safety and Security to address this issue.

In addition, the Ministry has already demonstrated its commitment to working closely with the police and will build on the following initiatives to ensure that high-risk offenders against whom there are arrest warrants outstanding are apprehended in a timely manner:

- ***As a component of the Probation and Parole Service Delivery Model, to improve intensive supervision for offenders who are at a higher risk to reoffend, strong linkages between probation and policing services have been developed. Each probation and parole office is directed to work with local police agencies to develop protocols for the enhanced management of offenders who are assessed as posing a higher risk of reoffending. These protocols will be reviewed in the context of this recommendation.***
- ***In August 2001, the government approved the implementation of a provincial enforcement unit, the Repeat Offender Parole Enforcement Unit, which focuses on the apprehension of parole violators/fugitives as well as persons identified as being unlawfully at large throughout the province. Correctional Services will work with this unit and other regional and municipal police forces to explore solutions to ensure the apprehension of high-risk offenders against whom there are arrest warrants outstanding.***

As well, the Integrated Justice Project, when fully implemented, will permit offender and offence information to be shared across the justice sectors, including the Canadian Police Information Centre. Integration of the different sources of information will lead to greater and more timely access to information and a justice system that is more accessible, efficient, and effective.

REHABILITATION PROGRAMS

While risk assessments determine the likelihood of reoffending, rehabilitation programs are aimed at addressing the correctional needs of offenders in the community and thereby reducing the risk of reoffending. Research done by the Ministry shows that punishment and surveillance are not effective in reducing reoffending rates. Instead, what is effective in reducing reoffending rates is addressing the correctional needs of offenders through rehabilitation programs, such as anger management and substance abuse treatment.

On average, offenders spend over one year under supervision in the community, and 70% of offenders spend more than six months under supervision. Such lengthy supervision periods give the Ministry an opportunity to provide rehabilitation programming that is geared to reducing the risk to the community by addressing the correctional needs of these offenders.

The Ministry has recognized the need to provide rehabilitation treatment and programs to offenders in the community. In fact, we noted at the time of our audit that the Ministry had developed three core rehabilitation programs designed to address the correctional factors that have been empirically determined to be the most common within the offender population and had implemented these programs in 39 of its 127 probation and parole offices. These programs are aimed at anger management, substance abuse treatment, and anti-criminal thinking.

Nevertheless, the Ministry's current Community Services Program focuses more on supervisory conditions than on rehabilitation services. Supervisory conditions include measures like community service orders, which are court-ordered sanctions that require offenders to perform a specified amount of unpaid work in the community under the supervision of a probation and parole officer or contracted agency. In 2000/01, of the \$8 million the Ministry spent on community contracts, about \$2 million was spent on rehabilitation programs while about \$6 million was spent on supervisory conditions.

According to an internal ministry report, correctional programs to meet the needs of offenders with addiction problems, anti-social behaviour, personality disorder, and sexual deviance were generally not available. For example, the report indicated that of the over 3,000 sex offenders being supervised by the Ministry in the community, fewer than 600 received appropriate programs. This lack of rehabilitation programs to meet the correctional needs of offenders diminishes the effectiveness of community supervision.

Recommendation

To provide offenders under the Ministry's supervision with better opportunities for successful personal and social adjustment in the community, the Ministry should ensure the availability of rehabilitation programs that offenders need.

Ministry Response

The Ministry is committed to promoting the increased availability of core programs throughout the correctional system through the combined efforts of the Core Program Consultant (a newly dedicated position), the Program Effectiveness Unit, and staff working under the Probation and Parole Service Delivery Model.

Under the Probation and Parole Service Delivery Model, core programs address substance abuse, anger management, and anti-criminal thinking. As well, specialized programs for partner abuse and sexual offenders are offered. There are two levels of core rehabilitative programs: a general orientation rehabilitative group and an intensive rehabilitative group. Important components of the core rehabilitative programs are the achievement of consistency in approach across the Ministry and the continuity of programming between the institutional part of the Ministry and Probation and Parole. Assessment and evaluation are key components to determine the effectiveness of the intervention in reducing offender recidivism.

A concerted effort is underway to expand the availability of core programs to all Probation and Parole offices.

PROBATION AND PAROLE OFFICERS

Caseloads and Workloads

The number of cases that probation and parole officers supervise has increased almost 8% in five years—from 60,000 offenders under supervision in 1995/96 to 65,000 offenders in 2000/01. This increase in the caseload is due mainly to the introduction of conditional sentences as a sentencing option in 1996.

Prior to spring 2001, the Ministry had 690 probation and parole officers. Recognizing the need for more resources to handle the increase in caseload, the Ministry was authorized to hire, in two phases, an additional 165 officers. This would represent about a 20% increase in staff. The Ministry estimated that this will eventually lower the average caseload per officer to about 85. At the time of our audit, the average caseload per officer was 95. The average caseload per officer for other Canadian provinces was about 70, but according to the Ministry it would not be fair to make a comparison with other jurisdictions because of differences that may exist in the responsibilities of officers, including administrative responsibilities.

Probation and parole officers' work involves supervision, enforcement, and providing counselling and referral services to offenders in accordance with the offender's assessed risks and needs. Probation and parole officers are also required to prepare court reports, attend court for trials, confirm collateral information (such as an offender's address and employment), and liaise with community service agencies. In addition to their caseloads, with the ongoing implementation of the new Probation and Parole Service Delivery Model, many probation and parole officers are also delivering rehabilitation programs such as anti-criminal thinking, substance abuse treatment, and anger management.

Moreover, with the introduction of conditional sentencing in 1996, the profile of offenders being supervised in the community has changed. Many offenders who would have previously been incarcerated are now serving their sentences in the community. These offenders include those with mental health, substance abuse, and other problems. This change in profile has resulted in the need for officers to increase their counselling and rehabilitative efforts to contribute to the safety of the community.

Our discussions with probation and parole officers indicated that a greater number of cases and increased responsibilities have impaired the ability of officers to do their jobs effectively. While the current supervision model expects probation and parole officers to be actively involved with community agencies and with offenders in the community, officers describe their jobs as being "office bound" and indicate that larger caseloads impair their ability to conduct home visits and to liaise with community partners engaged in prevention or collaborative initiatives designed to meet offenders' identified needs.

In our previous audit of this program in 1995, we noted that the Ministry recognized that workload was a concern to probation and parole officers and area office management and had been since 1989. In 1995, we recommended that the Ministry establish workload standards and use them to analyze staffing so that staffing could be deployed in a more efficient manner. At that time, the Ministry indicated that a probation/parole workload index would be implemented by February 1996. When we followed up in 1997, the implementation of the index had been delayed for later in 1997. During this audit, there was still no workload index in place.

Ministry management indicated that, because of the implementation of the new Probation and Parole Service Delivery Model and the introduction of a new Offender Tracking and Information System (OTIS), the workload index that was being developed in 1997 was no longer applicable. For instance, under the new service delivery model, officers are now leading rehabilitation groups and are engaged in other activities that were not reflected in the range of assignable activities when the workload index was developed.

In the absence of a workload index, managers lack the appropriate tools to balance officer caseloads and workloads within their area offices. Similarly, without appropriate workload standards, the Ministry cannot determine the optimal number of officers needed and cannot effectively allocate work and deploy staff among area offices throughout the province.

Recommendation

The Ministry should develop workload standards and use them to analyze staffing requirements so that staff can be deployed in a more efficient and effective manner.

Ministry Response

In 1997, the Ministry developed and tested a workload index to assist in the measurement of probation and parole workload. As a result of the difficulties associated with the weighting of various workload factors (including geographical disparities), this tool was not widely used. It should be noted that the complexities of developing a workload index have also been experienced in other jurisdictions. Furthermore, the 1997 workload index is outdated as it does not account for the changes resulting from the Probation and Parole Service Delivery Model or the Offender Tracking Information System.

Although some workload factors will continue to be very difficult to measure (for example, delivering programs in a group setting), the Ministry is committed to developing a framework for workload measurement within the context of its new service delivery model in order to effectively allocate staff and distribute workload.

OFFENDER TRACKING AND INFORMATION SYSTEM

As part of a larger modernization project of the justice information system—the Integrated Justice Project—the Ministry has implemented a new electronic Offender Tracking and Information System (OTIS) to replace the former Offender Management System. OTIS is an Internet-based system that allows for the sharing of offenders' information among partners in the justice system, including police, Crown attorneys, and the courts. Our review and discussion with ministry staff indicated that while OTIS supports the sharing of information with other partners, it does not facilitate probation and parole officers' case management. Specifically:

- The design of the new system does not allow officers to easily and readily assess an offender's history and the types of offences committed (because the information is not captured and displayed on one screen but is instead stored and arranged among several different screens). As a result, there is an increased risk that critical information is missed when officers are reviewing information concerning offenders under their supervision.
- The Internet-based system is vulnerable to frequent crashes. As a result, case management notes can be lost without warning.

In addition, in all the offices we visited, probation and parole officers complained that excessive time was being spent on the case management component of the system.

Previously, case management notes were captured using a simple word-processing application, which enabled probation and parole officers to easily record and exchange offender case notes internally. Officers also indicated that case management notes contain confidential information not to be shared with other partners, and it was therefore not necessary to have such notes included in the Internet-based system.

In our 2001 Annual Report, we also noted that there were inadequate controls to prevent unauthorized access to offender records. Ministry senior management indicated that it is in the process of making improvements to the system. As an interim measure, offices have been given the option to use the previous word-processing application for their case management.

We recognize that the system is new and that the Ministry is taking measures to address the problems identified. We will follow up in two years on the Ministry's progress towards correcting the problems with its information system.

FUNDING AND MONITORING COMMUNITY SERVICE AGENCIES

The Ministry contracts with selected community agencies to provide a variety of non-residential programs and services, including substance abuse programs, psychological therapy, counseling/treatment programs, and the supervision of community service orders (court ordered sanctions that require offenders to perform unpaid work in the community). In some cases, these programs are prescribed on an individual basis by the court or the Ontario Parole and Earned Release Board. In other cases, the probation and parole officer makes the appropriate referral after completing a comprehensive assessment of the corrective needs of the offender.

In 2001/02, funding to these community service agencies amounted to \$8 million. This funding is based on annual budgets that agencies submit.

While the Ministry is not involved in the day-to-day operations of these agencies, ministry policy requires that contracted agencies comply with ministry standards and guidelines for supervision, security, and services. At the time the contract is negotiated, clear expectations of performance and documentation are to be established with each agency—including a ministry review of caseload statistics, offender progress reports, and financial records—to ensure that expenditures are properly recorded and disbursed in accordance with ministry policies.

Our review of arrangements with community service agencies with the five area offices we visited revealed the following:

- Instead of funding agency programs based on a proper assessment of the service levels required to meet the needs of offenders, the Ministry was funding the programs based on historical costs. Management indicated that the historically based funding approach was a function of a lack of resources allocated to the programs.

- Contracts were generally not signed on a timely basis. In some cases, contracts were signed almost 11 months after the agency began providing services. In fact, for six of the 12 contracts we examined, approximately \$220,000 was paid to agencies before the required contracts were in place. Furthermore, under two of these six contracts, agencies received their full funding before their contract was in place.
- Monitoring and feedback mechanisms established by the Ministry to ensure agency accountability—such as offender case statistics, progress reports, and financial statements—were not received in the majority of the cases we reviewed.

Because the Ministry did not properly assess service-level requirements and did not adequately monitor the services being delivered by agencies, it could not assess whether funding levels were appropriate and whether agency programs were meeting the needs of the offenders.

Recommendation

To ensure both due regard for economy and efficiency and accountability for service performance, the Ministry should ensure that:

- **funding to community service agencies that provide programs to offenders is based on a proper assessment of service-level requirements;**
- **payments made to these community service agencies are properly supported by signed contracts; and,**
- **services provided by such agencies are monitored to confirm that they adhere to ministry standards and meet the needs of offenders and that funds are used prudently.**

Ministry Response

The Ministry is committed to ensuring that services provided by community agencies are funded appropriately, are monitored to meet ministry standards, and meet offender needs. A template for a “letter of intent” was developed for use with contracted agencies to allow for the continuation of annualized funding until contract negotiations are complete.

Draft performance outcomes—a measurement of various related indicators that define the performance expectations of the standards of operations—have been developed in the management of open-custody facilities. Following the completion of a consultation process with open-custody operators, the new performance-measurement framework will be implemented in the 2002/03 fiscal year.

The Program Effectiveness Unit has submitted a proposal to Management Board Secretariat for funding to conduct a systematic evaluation of contracts, and a decision is pending.

MEASURING AND REPORTING ON PROGRAM EFFECTIVENESS

The rate of recidivism is the most commonly used measure of the performance of the correctional system. While there is strong public and government interest in using recidivism rates to judge the performance of the correctional system—both in terms of effectiveness and efficiency—there is no generally accepted definition of recidivism in Canada or internationally.

To its credit, the Ministry has defined recidivism and intends to measure its performance based on this definition. It defines recidivism as a return to correctional supervision following conviction for a criminal offence committed either during or after correctional supervision.

However, we noted that the Ministry had not yet measured and reported on the effectiveness of community supervision and rehabilitation programs in contributing to public safety and the re-integration of offenders into the community. At the time of our audit, the Ministry was still in the process of establishing baselines and standards to measure and report on recidivism.

Recommendation

The Ministry should implement performance measures to assess the effectiveness of the Community Services Program in contributing to public safety and the rehabilitation of offenders.

Ministry Response

The Ministry introduced a new performance framework as part of its transformation strategy to apply to all adult correctional institutions and will apply a similar performance framework across community correctional supervision. The reduction of reoffending rates is a key focus of the performance framework. Work that has commenced regarding performance measures and indicators for community corrections includes measures relating to recidivism, enforcement activity, intensive supervision, training for probation and parole officers, and the per diem cost per offender for community supervision.

The Ministry developed a recidivism definition—which then led to the establishment of baseline rates—using representative release samples from 1992, 1993, and 1997. Since the implementation of the Offender Tracking Information System, work is underway to gather the necessary data in order to measure the effectiveness of correctional policies and programs related to the rehabilitation of offenders. The Ministry expects to implement data collection processes in 2002/03.