

# Chapter 1

## Section 1.01

Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services  
and Ministry of the Attorney General

# Adult Community Corrections and Ontario Parole Board

Follow-Up on VFM Section 3.01, 2014 Annual Report

RECOMMENDATION STATUS OVERVIEW					
	# of Actions Recommended	Status of Actions Recommended			
		Fully Implemented	In Process of Being Implemented	Little or No Progress	Will Not Be Implemented
Recommendation 1	3		3		
Recommendation 2	1	1			
Recommendation 3	4	2	1	1	
Recommendation 4	1		1		
Recommendation 5	2		2		
Recommendation 6	2		1	1	
Recommendation 7	3	2	1		
Recommendation 8	1	1			
Recommendation 9	3		1	2	
Recommendation 10	1	1			
<b>Total</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>%</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>0</b>

## Background

The Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services (Ministry) supervises and provides rehabilitative programming and treatment to adult offenders serving sentences in the community. The overall goal is to help offenders not reoffend and reduce the risk to the public. During the fiscal year of April 1, 2015, to March 31, 2016, there were 32,440 newly sentenced offenders serving community-based sentences (compared to 37,490 newly

sentenced offenders from April 1, 2013, to March 31, 2014), which include probation, conditional sentences, parole and temporary absences. On an average day, the Ministry is responsible for supervising about 44,000 offenders.

The Ontario Parole Board (Board) is a quasi-judicial independent administrative tribunal that derives its authority from both federal and provincial legislation. The Board is a constituent tribunal of the Safety, Licensing Appeals and Standards Tribunal of Ontario and reports into the Ministry of the Attorney General (MAG). Ontario and Quebec are the only provinces with their own parole

boards. Other provinces have arrangements with the Parole Board of Canada.

In our *2014 Annual Report*, we concluded that overall there continues to be substantial room for improvement in the Ministry's supervision of and rehabilitative programming for offenders serving their sentences in the community. For instance, little headway had been made over the last decade in reducing the overall reoffend rate. Specifically, the overall average reoffend rate for these offenders increased slightly over 10 years from 21.2% for offenders released in 2001/02 to 23.6% for offenders released in 2010/11. We noted during this follow-up that there has been a minor improvement in the overall reoffend rates. The Ministry's latest data shows that the reoffend rate has decreased to 22.3% for offenders released in 2011/12 and 20.7% for offenders released in 2012/13. To assess the reoffend rate, the Ministry keeps track of offenders for two years after their release. The next set of data available for offenders released in 2013/14 will be available later this year.

Other significant issues reported in our *2014 Annual Report* included the following:

- Processes were not sufficient to ensure that probation and parole officers completed risk assessments for all offenders within the required six weeks of the offender's initial intake appointment with a probation and parole officer as per Ministry policy. The timely completion of this risk assessment is critical to establishing an effective offender management plan, which details supervision requirements and rehabilitation needs during the community sentence period.
- The Ministry did not have reliable and timely information on offenders who breached conditions of their release. As well, probation and parole officers did not use effective measures to ensure that more stringent conditions imposed by courts, such as curfews and house arrest, were enforced.
- We found that lower-risk offenders were often over-supervised and higher-risk offenders were under-supervised.
- Many probation and parole officers were not sufficiently trained to effectively oversee higher-risk offenders or those with mental health issues. The Ministry estimated that the number of offenders with mental health issues has grown 90% over the last 10 years to 10,000 offenders, representing at least 20% of the number of offenders supervised each day. This trend continued, and from April 1, 2015, to March 31, 2016, the Ministry supervised about 7,000 offenders with mental health issues, which represented 21.1% of the number of offenders admitted for the fiscal year.
- Rehabilitation programs intended to reduce the risk of offenders reoffending are not consistently available across the province. We found that about 40 of 100 probation and parole offices did not have core programs, such as anger management and substance abuse, available to offer to their offenders.
- The Ministry did not evaluate the quality of external rehabilitation programs to determine whether they were effective in contributing to an offender's successful reintegration into society or whether the programs were helping to reduce the reoffend rate.
- Only half the number of inmates applied to the Ontario Parole Board for a parole hearing in 2013/14 as applied in 2000/01. This continued to be the case at the time of our follow-up. Low parole participation rates can be attributed to a number of factors including shorter sentences, the lengthy and onerous process in place for inmates to apply for a parole hearing, and the low approval rate.

We made a number of recommendations for improvement and received commitments from the Ministry that it would take action to address them.

## Status of Actions Taken on Recommendations

The Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services (Ministry) and the Ontario Parole Board (Board) provided us with information in the spring and summer of 2016 on the current status of the recommendations we had made in our *2014 Annual Report*. The Ministry has made progress in implementing most of the recommendations, with a third of the recommendations fully implemented. However, there has been little or no progress on others. The Ministry informed us that the delay in implementing some of our recommendations was due to a prolonged collective bargaining process with the Ontario Public Service Employees Union that began in November 2014 and lasted for 15 months.

We noted that the Ministry has fully implemented our recommendations with respect to:

- completing risk assessments and offender management plans;
- identifying ways to better distribute the workload among probation and parole officers;
- ensuring that offender information shared with private service providers is adequately protected;
- ensuring employees have proper levels of security clearance before they receive access to the Offender Tracking Information System (OTIS); and
- ensuring that information system projects adhere to Ontario Public Service project management standards.

Also with the support of the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services (Ministry), the Ministry of the Attorney General led a review of the mandate of the Ontario Parole Board to assess cost-effectiveness, benefits and any barriers that have been or are expected to be created as a result of the decision to change the Board's reporting and accountability relationship. The report of this mandate review was released in December 2015.

The Ministry was in the process of implementing more than half of our recommendations, mainly in the areas of:

- targeting its resources, programs and services to higher-risk offenders;
- conducting a jurisdictional scan to analyze Ontario's expenditures and program outcomes;
- working with other jurisdictions to develop common measures for results reporting;
- developing an action plan to address the risks and needs of offenders with mental health issues; and
- addressing long-standing security issues regarding OTIS.

However, the Ministry has made little to no progress with respect to:

- ensuring that untrained probation and parole officers follow Ministry policy to ensure that when they supervise higher-risk cases, they are routinely consulting with trained staff members and are documenting the results of the consultations;
- formally tracking the number of offenders who attend and complete externally sourced programs and assessing the effectiveness of these programs; and
- ensuring that there is sufficient support at each correctional institution to assist inmates who want to apply for parole or temporary absence, and tracking and assessing the delays in completing the parole and temporary absence program applications and the reasons for the high denial rates.

The status of the actions taken on each recommendation is described in the following sections.

### Recommendation 1

*In order for the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services to enhance community safety through effective supervision and by reducing reoffend rates of offenders serving their sentences in the community, it should:*

- *strategically target its resources, programs and services to higher-risk offenders, with a long-term goal of reducing their high reoffend rates;*  
**Status: In the process of being implemented by September 2018.**

#### Details

During our 2014 audit, we found that, although there was a small improvement in the reoffend rate between 2002 and 2011, the rates for reoffending remained significant for medium-, high- and very-high-risk offenders. These minimal improvements indicated that the Ministry's rehabilitation programs and its approach to changing offenders' behaviour after supervision needed to be more effective.

Since our audit, in January 2015, the Ministry hired 13 new program delivery officers to conduct rehabilitative programming specifically for medium- to high-risk offenders. Programs include anger management and sexual offender relapse prevention. As part of their responsibilities, program delivery officers also conduct gap analysis of rehabilitative programs to identify and recommend any changes and additions to current programs. In April 2016, the Ministry also hired two new program managers to oversee these initiatives and to provide support to the new program delivery officers.

Because reoffend rates are measured two years after programs are completed, the Ministry was not able to provide data, as of our follow-up, on how effective these new initiatives and additional resources had been in reducing the rates.

In June 2015, the Ministry began rolling out a new training program for its probation and parole officers. Developed by Public Safety Canada, the program is designed to target the rehabilitation of medium- to high-risk offenders. Training has started in the Eastern Region, with the expected completion by September 2018. The Ministry plans to incrementally train all its officers over the next six years.

The Ministry also informed us that it is on target to complete the automation of its Low Risk Identifier (LRI) tool by December 2016. Once automated, the Ministry hopes to realize efficiencies in the form of additional resources that it plans to redirect toward working with medium- to high-risk offenders.

- *compare and analyze Ontario's expenditures and program outcomes for supervising and rehabilitating offenders with other jurisdictions to assess whether the programs are delivering services cost-effectively; and*

**Status: In the process of being implemented by December 2016.**

#### Details

During our 2014 audit, we found the Ministry lacked data for comparing its performance to other provinces (for example, comparing reoffend rates and successful completions of community-based sentences). As a result, the Ministry was not able to assess whether Ontario's lower operating cost for community supervision and rehabilitation programs meant those programs actually are cost-effective or it is not investing enough in them.

At the time of our follow-up, the Ministry was in the process of analyzing Ontario's expenditures and program outcomes for supervising and rehabilitating offenders against those of other Canadian jurisdictions. Preliminary results based on information collected from six jurisdictions (Canada nationally, Quebec, British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Yukon) show that Ontario had the third-highest 2014/15 per diem rate for community supervision, at \$6.68. Quebec reported the lowest per diem rate of \$3.69, and Alberta reported the highest at \$7.73 (as of 2011/12). The Ministry was expecting to complete its analysis by the end of 2016 once it receives program outcomes from other jurisdictions. Once it completes its analysis, the Ministry plans to discuss the results at future Heads of Corrections meetings.

- *work with other provincial and federal community correctional counterparts to develop common measures to use to publicly report on its program results and set targets for improvements, particularly for its reoffend rate.*

**Status: In the process of being implemented.**

**Timeline is not within the Ministry's control as this work is being led by the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics.**

#### Details

During our 2014 audit, we found that Canada had no common, generally accepted way to measure the reoffend rate of offenders under supervision and that some provinces do not track it at all. Ontario tracked only new offences that occur after the supervision period, and only for a limited time period.

Since our audit, in November 2015, the Ministry joined a project led by the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics. The objective of this project is for provinces to share data on recontact rates. It will also look at the proportion of people who had recontact with one or more justice sectors, which include police, courts and corrections, for a two-year follow-up period. Data from this project will then be used to develop standardized, common indicators to allow provinces to compare and publicly report statistical information related to corrections.

In April 2016, the Ministry also began publicly posting reoffend rate information, which it said it plans to do annually.

#### Recommendation 2

*In order to ensure timely assessment of risks to the public of offenders supervised in the community and to establish the appropriate level of supervision and rehabilitation programming and services needed, the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services should strengthen its systems and procedures to allow management to routinely make sure that probation and parole officers have completed and updated all required risk and needs assessments and*

*offender management plans, particularly for higher-risk offenders.*

**Status: Fully implemented.**

#### Details

During our 2014 audit, we found that probation and parole officers did not consistently complete offender risk assessments and management plans, even though Ministry policy required a probation and parole officer to complete the risk and needs assessment within six weeks of a new offender's intake appointment.

Following our audit, the Ministry prepared a report on the completion rates of all required risk and needs assessments and offender management plans. It indicated that managers reviewed about 4,000 cases in the 2014/15 fiscal year and that the overall target for compliance was substantially met (ranging between 75% to 94% among the regions). In the 2015/16 fiscal year, managers reviewed 3,865 cases and the overall target for compliance was again substantially met.

In June 2016, the Ministry developed a new quarterly report that identifies the risk and needs assessments and offender management plans that were not completed or were completed late. The Ministry said that this report is shared with regional managers, who are required to follow up on and resolve concerns directly with the responsible probation and parole officers.

In July 2016, the Ministry also began streamlining its case management policies to make them more consistent and help area managers ensure that probation and parole officers comply with policy.

#### Recommendation 3

*In order to ensure that offenders serving sentences in the community are properly supervised and that conditions of their release are adequately monitored and enforced, the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services should:*

- *conduct an assessment of the conditions imposed on offenders and whether probation and parole officers have the necessary information and monitoring tools to assure compliance;*  
**Status: In the process of being implemented by December 2016.**

#### Details

During our 2014 audit, we found the Ministry did not have reliable and timely information on offenders who breach conditions and what probation and parole officers did about these breaches. Having this information would enable the Ministry to track the percentage of offenders who successfully complete their community sentences without breaching any conditions, as well as identify the conditions that are commonly violated and improve its oversight of offenders violating the conditions.

Since our audit, in 2015, the Ministry conducted an assessment on the most common conditions imposed on offenders, as well as the most common reasons for breaches of probation orders and conditional sentences.

In February 2016, the Ministry surveyed probation and parole managers to, among other things, determine the role of police partners in monitoring and laying charges in breaches of certain probation or parole conditions. The Ministry was still analyzing the information, but early results showed that approximately 90% of area offices had relationships with local police that included police monitoring and enforcing house arrest and curfew conditions. The Ministry said it is using information from the survey to identify whether probation and parole officers have the necessary information and monitoring tools to ensure that offenders are complying with the conditions imposed on them. Once this is done by the end of 2016, the Ministry plans to develop action plans to address any gaps.

- *effectively oversee probation and parole officers' activities, including more frequent and timely reviews of officers' handling of cases, improvements to ongoing management reporting of case*

*activities, and periodic independent reviews of cases by someone other than the responsible area manager;*

**Status: Fully implemented with ongoing review.**

#### Details

During our 2014 audit, we found that the Ministry's annual and periodic case management reviews noted many occasions when probation and parole officers did not comply with policies. In some of these cases, offenders committed serious crimes. Some of the deficiencies noted were poor supervision of sex offenders, over-supervision of low-risk offenders and under-supervision of higher-risk offenders.

Since our audit, beginning in 2015, the Ministry assigned dedicated staff (other than the responsible area managers) to conduct periodic independent reviews of probation and parole officers' handling of cases, and of the timeliness of their completion of risk assessment and offender management plans. This practice of completing independent reviews will continue. To further strengthen compliance, the Ministry now monitors on a quarterly basis the case review completion rate of each region by gathering and reviewing information on the number of probation and parole officers in the region, the number of case reviews to be done, and actual number of case reviews completed.

- *ensure that its probation and parole officers have the required knowledge and skill beforehand to supervise higher-risk offenders; and*

**Status: Little or no progress.**

#### Details

In our 2014 audit, we reported that in only 4% of cases we sampled was there an indication that a probation and parole officer who was supervising an offender with a profile for which they had not received the proper training had consulted with an officer who had such training, as required by policy.

The Ministry conducted an audit of 28 untrained probation and parole officers in October 2015 that showed that compliance with this policy remains



low, as less than a quarter of these officers consulted with their managers or a trained officer. Although the Ministry told us that managers had discussions with those officers who were found to be non-compliant, the audit revealed that those 28 probation and parole officers assigned to higher-risk cases did not have the required knowledge or skill to supervise these offenders. In addition, it also revealed that in the majority of cases, the officers did not consult with their managers or other trained officers, and in some circumstances where they had, these consultations were not documented. The Ministry plans to conduct the next audit in fall of 2016; however, at the time of our follow-up, it was not planning to increase the number of untrained officers it planned to audit or the frequency of the audits.

- *identify ways to better distribute the workload among probation and parole offices, and adjust staffing levels as soon as possible.*

**Status: Fully implemented.**

#### Details

During our 2014 audit, we assessed whether high workloads at certain probation and parole offices were the reason that probation and parole officers did not always follow required supervision policies and procedures. We found that this was possibly the case in some offices but not in all.

Since our audit, the Assistant Deputy Minister of Correctional Services and regional directors have continued to meet at least twice a year to analyze the workload and caseload numbers and address high workloads. Three meetings took place in 2015, and vacant positions in offices with lower workloads were reassigned to offices needing more staff to deal with workload pressures.

To further address workload pressures, the Ministry started to hire 25 additional probation and parole officers in April 2016. Most of the new officers had been hired when we completed our follow-up.

#### Recommendation 4

*In order to effectively address the risks and needs of offenders with mental health issues, the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services should establish a Ministry-wide strategy that includes training for probation and parole officers to recognize, supervise and assist these offenders, and that provides the resources and tools to support the officers and offenders. Once the strategy is implemented, the Ministry should track and measure the effectiveness of its programs and services specifically provided to offenders with mental health issues.*

**Status: In the process of being implemented by 2021.**

#### Details

We reported in our 2014 audit that offenders with mental health issues had a significantly higher average reoffend rate than the average reoffend rate for all other offenders. The Ministry did not have a provincial strategy to address mental health and related issues for offenders under community supervision and did not know whether its programs and services in this area were effective.

Since our audit, in early 2016, the Ministry established a working group to develop a multi-year mental health action plan, which had met several times. The action plan will update and develop training, tools and resources for probation and parole officers who supervise and assist offenders with mental health issues. Once completed, the action plan will be presented to the Community Services Executive Committee for review and approval. The plan's rollout is scheduled to start in 2017, and it is to be fully implemented by 2021.

The Ministry told us it will track and measure the effectiveness of the programs and services coming out of the action plan.

#### Recommendation 5

*To ensure equitable access to effective rehabilitative programs for offenders, the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services should:*

- *regularly track the availability of and wait times for rehabilitative programs and services for offenders under its supervision across the province, identify areas where assessed offenders' rehabilitation needs are not being met, and address the lack of program availability in these areas; and*

**Status:** In the process of being implemented by March 2017.

#### Details

We noted in our 2014 audit that in December 2012, the Ministry trained area managers to conduct an analysis of whether rehabilitation programming was lacking in their areas (based on what rehabilitation needs were not being met). During our audit, we found that only 35 of more than 100 offices had completed full analyses of program availability.

Since our audit, by mid-2015, all offices had completed the analysis of program availability. The Ministry told us at the time of our follow-up that regions were addressing identified programming gaps and that this work would be an ongoing activity.

During our 2014 audit, all five offices we visited indicated that several popular programs, particularly those delivered by external service providers, had long wait times of up to several months but that they did not formally monitor these wait times.

By March 2017, the Ministry will introduce a new "Waiting List by Program" function in the Offender Tracking Information System (OTIS). OTIS is used to track and manage the case records and activities of all adult and young offenders during their time served in custody and/or in the community. The new function identifies offenders who have been referred to a core program and the duration of time they are on the wait list.

- *ensure it has sufficient and timely information for evaluating its core rehabilitative programs and that it implements changes to help improve their effectiveness in reducing reoffend rates.*

**Status:** In the process of being implemented by November 2016.

#### Details

During our 2014 audit, we found that the Ministry had an internal accreditation process to help ensure its core rehabilitation programs satisfy standards that make them effective in reducing the reoffend rate. However, the Ministry indicated that, as of April 2014, only two of its 14 core programs had achieved accreditation (based on evaluations of their outcomes in reducing the reoffend rate).

In June 2016, the Ministry updated its accreditation process for core rehabilitation programs. One improvement coming out of this update will be the matching of accreditation requirements to the level of intensity of the rehabilitation program. That is, intensive programs will have different accreditation requirements than general orientation programs. Intensive level programs are skill-based, while general orientation level programs are meant to motivate offenders to take part in more intensive level programs. This will enable the Ministry to better evaluate the programs using evidence-based practice and to conduct outcome evaluations to ensure programs are having the intended effect. Beginning in November 2016, the Ministry will use the new process to accredit the remaining programs.

#### Recommendation 6

*To help ensure that programs delivered by external service providers are effective in reducing the reoffend rate and that their funding is commensurate with the value of service provided, the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services should:*

- *more formally track the number of offenders who attend and complete externally sourced programs, and assess the effectiveness of these programs; and*

**Status:** Little or no progress.

#### Details

In our 2014 report, we noted that the Offender Tracking Information System (OTIS) did not track the number of offenders who completed core agency or community programs. As a result,



the Ministry had to manually keep track of each offender's progress; however, the tracked information was incomplete.

At the time of our follow-up, offenders' progress was still tracked manually. The current version of OTIS was implemented in June 2016. After a sufficient period of stability post-implementation of the current version of OTIS, the Ministry said that it explored the possibility of more formally tracking offenders' progress in OTIS. Progress in this area is not anticipated until March 2018 at the earliest.

In February 2016, the Ministry created a working group to develop a phased-in plan to formally evaluate a selected number of outsourced and community-based programs. The Ministry estimates such evaluation will take five to six years. The Ministry also hired four new managers to improve management of contracts with external program providers.

- *ensure that approved funding to agencies is comparable to that of programs of a similar nature and size across the province, and is based on the actual usage by offenders.*

**Status: In the process of being implemented by April 2018.**

#### Details

In 2015, the Ministry revised the program descriptions of contracts for various programs such as anger management and substance abuse. These revisions included being more specific about what was expected of external providers and making funding more comparable for programs of similar nature and size. In addition, the Ministry's quality assurance managers for each region will reconcile billing to service provided prior to payment. The Ministry told us that the revised contracts would be rolled out during the next contract cycle, which is scheduled to start in April 2017 and end in April 2018.

#### Recommendation 7

*To better secure and protect offenders' and victims' information, the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services should:*

- *address the long-standing security issues regarding its Offender Tracking Information System (OTIS);*

**Status: In the process of being implemented by March 2017.**

#### Details

As part of a major system upgrade, in June 2016, the Ministry upgraded OTIS with new security features, such as data encryption and a high-security data integrity tool. The upgrade also included transitioning generic accounts to named user accounts. The Ministry anticipates that all these new security features will become fully functional by March 2017, after a required post-implementation system stability period. Since July 2015, the Ministry also addressed issues regarding password management by adopting Ontario Public Service security requirements. OTIS users are now required to change their passwords every 60 days and all passwords must consist of a minimum of eight characters.

- *ensure that it has reliable assurances that offender information shared with private service providers is adequately protected; and*

**Status: Fully implemented.**

#### Details

During our 2014 audit, we found that the Ministry could not ensure that information on offenders who were electronically monitored by a private service provider was secure. The Ministry also did not know if criminal record checks were done for personnel employed by this service provider. We further found that the Ministry was not reviewing the monthly operational reports it received from this service provider.

The Ministry told us that it began regularly meeting with and monitoring the service provider

after the audit, and that no private-information breaches have been reported. The Ministry also told us that offender data is encrypted in accordance with its policy and that the private contractor responsible for the host server that stores this data does not have access to it.

The Ministry now also has up-to-date criminal record checks on file for all service provider personnel who have access to offender data. In addition, the Ministry assigned a contract compliance manager to review the service provider's monthly operational reports and now requires that all issues be resolved with the service provider prior to the approval of the monthly invoice.

- *ensure that proper levels of security clearance are in place for all government and contract employees before they receive access to OTIS and other offender and victim information systems.*

**Status: Fully implemented.**

#### Details

OTIS is maintained by the Justice Technology Services Division. During our audit in 2014, we found that the Division could not demonstrate that it had valid background checks for 40% of its more than 300 information technology employees. The Ministry informed us that during 2015, it worked to correct this and that all Division employees (including consultants) who use OTIS now have appropriate police background checks and security clearance. The Ministry also told us it has worked with Infrastructure Technology Services to implement new processes and forms to ensure that user accounts can be readily activated and deactivated based on Ministry requirements.

#### Recommendation 8

*To ensure that information system projects adhere to Ontario Public Service project management standards, are delivered on time and within budget, and meet user expectations, the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services should coordinate with the Justice Technology Services Division*

*to establish project baselines for scope, budget and schedule; monitor progress and costs regularly against project milestones and budgets; and document and justify any significant changes against the initial deliverables.*

**Status: Fully implemented.**

#### Details

In November 2015, the Ministry and the Justice Technology Services Division implemented a joint planning process and governance structure to establish project portfolios and budget allocation on a priority basis. Furthermore, the Division implemented monthly dashboards to report on project status, finance, scope and project milestones. The Division has also implemented a project management tool to keep track of and report on all projects. These enhancements were implemented across projects that the Division supports, which includes OTIS.

#### Recommendation 9

*In order to help more inmates reintegrate into society while protecting public safety and reducing incarceration costs and overcrowding in correctional facilities, the Ontario Parole Board should work collaboratively with the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services to:*

- *provide sufficient support at each correctional institution to assist inmates who want to apply for parole or temporary absence;*

**Status: Little or no progress.**

#### Details

During our 2014 audit, we found that staffing resources to help inmates apply for parole or temporary absence varied greatly across correctional institutions. We also found that institutions with proportionately fewer institutional liaison officers had fewer inmates applying for parole.

Since our audit, the Ministry has made little progress to ensure that there is sufficient support at each correctional institution to assist inmates who

want to apply for parole or temporary absence. The Ministry told us that the delay in responding to our recommendations was caused by the prolonged bargaining process. The Board informed us that it provided additional updated information to inmates that should help them better understand the parole and temporary absences application process.

There were discussions in 2014 between the Board and the Ministry on the possibility of a pilot project on expediting temporary absences, but this project will not be implemented. We were informed that the Transformation Secretariat is looking at a number of options related to alternatives to incarceration.

- *track and assess the delays in completing the parole and temporary absence program applications and the reasons for the high denial rates for parole, using this information to streamline the processes and improve the quality of applications from inmates; and*

**Status: Little or no progress.**

#### Details

We noted in our *2002 Annual Report* that the reintegration of offenders into the community was impacted by a significant reduction in the number of eligible inmates being considered for parole. During our 2014 audit, we found that the situation had worsened and that the Ministry did not track and assess delays in offenders completing their parole and temporary absence applications and the Board did not track the reasons for the high denial rates for parole.

Since then, the Ministry and the Board have made little progress in this area. The Ministry told us that the Institutional Liaison Officer Review Committee is planning to analyze reasons for delays in the parole and temporary absence program application process to see if efficiencies can be achieved. However, this work was put on hold due to the prolonged collective bargaining process. While the Board tracks grant and denial rates for

parole, this data alone is insufficient in identifying the reasons for the high parole denial rates.

- *consider the cost-effectiveness of reintroducing halfway housing for parolees.*

**Status: In the process of being implemented by April 2017.**

#### Details

During our 2014 audit, we found that, in some cases, parole applications were denied because the offender's release plan lacked suitable housing. Ontario discontinued the use of community-based residential facilities (also called halfway houses) in the mid-1990s. Halfway housing provided a bridge between the institution and the community through gradual, supervised release. Our 2014 discussions with the Board indicated that the use of halfway housing could increase the number of inmates granted parole, especially in the case of inmates who are denied parole because they have no confirmed residence plan and/or programming available in the community.

In the summer of 2016, the Transformation Secretariat consulted with internal stakeholders and inter-ministerial partners. It will also consult with academic experts and community agencies to explore opportunities for an integrated case management team approach that supports unique client needs. The Ministry told us that the Transformation Secretariat will continue to explore the expanded use of community residential alternatives, such as healing lodges and housing alternatives for parolees. The Transformation Secretariat will complete the consultations and develop the strategy by April 2017. However, the strategy is a long-term plan that will take 10 to 20 years to fully implement.

#### Recommendation 10

*In view of the Ontario Parole Board's concerns with the recent decision to change its reporting and accountability relationship from the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services to the*

*new Safety, Licensing Appeals and Standards Tribunals Ontario cluster of the Ministry of the Attorney General, the Board and the two ministries should collaborate to conduct a review of the cost-effectiveness, benefits and any new barriers that have been or are expected to be created by this decision, and whether this change will improve the operations of the Board.*

**Status: Fully implemented.**

#### Details

We noted in our 2014 audit that on April 1, 2013, the Safety, Licensing Appeals and Standards Tribunals Ontario (SLASTO) was created under the Ministry of the Attorney General as an adjudicative tribunal cluster under the *Adjudicative Tribunals Accountability, Governance and Appointments Act, 2009*. The Act was established to have tribunals administered under a common organization (or “cluster”) to allow them to operate more efficiently and effectively than they would on their own. The Ontario Parole Board was one of five tribunals transferred to SLASTO. As a result, the Board no longer reports to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. The Board strongly protested being included in the cluster and reporting to a different ministry, and called for a review of this

decision. The Board identified that it did not have the same administrative and training needs as the other tribunals in the cluster.

Since then, with the support of the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services (Ministry), the Ministry of the Attorney General led a review of the mandate of the Ontario Parole Board in 2015. The Attorney General ministry engaged an external reviewer to complete this mandate review and also asked the reviewer to answer specific questions regarding the recommendations we made in our 2014 audit. The external reviewer noted that, overall, it appeared that the decision to change the reporting and accountability relationship of the Board from the Ministry to the Safety, Licensing Appeals and Standards Tribunals Ontario cluster of the Attorney General ministry has been beneficial to the Board, although there were many challenges in terms of management and amalgamating the cultures of the two organizations. However, the external reviewer did not believe the challenges were significant enough to warrant a different structure because the change appeared to better support independent decision-making, operational accountability and cost-effectiveness.