

“ Vicarious trauma was described by nearly all participants in our study. They spoke of reading

criminal profiles, records, and victim impact statements, viewing images, and learning about incidents involving

those on their case-load as potentially psychologically traumatizing.”

SYNDICAT DES EMPLOYÉ-E-S DE LA SÉCURITÉ ET DE LA JUSTICE

**USJE**  **SESJ**

UNION OF SAFETY AND JUSTICE EMPLOYEES

The Union of Safety and Justice Employees (USJE) represents over 1,600 federal parole officers who serve in Canada’s federal penitentiaries, community correctional centres and community parole offices.

[usje-sesj.com](http://usje-sesj.com)

**MENTAL HEALTH  
AND WELL-BEING  
OF FEDERAL  
PAROLE OFFICERS  
IN CANADA**



**P**arole officers employed in Canada's federal prison system are struggling with untenable workloads and a lack of access to resources for offenders, compounded by an organizational "culture of fear" and ongoing harassment.

Supporting the crucial rehabilitation of offenders and their transition back to the community exposes parole officers to many potentially psychologically traumatic stressors.

All of these factors heighten the risk of significant workload pressures and mental health challenges for federal parole officers.

The Union of Safety and Justice Employees, which represents parole officers within the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC), commissioned a leading public safety academic, Dr. Rosemary Ricciardelli, to examine the mental health and well-being of federal parole officers.

Dr. Ricciardelli wrote the first report of its kind in Canada, *The Mental Health and Well-being of Canadian Federal Parole Officers – A Qualitative Investigation*. It identifies five areas of concern – Workload and Job Tasks, Job Satisfaction, Organizational Culture and Support, Mental Health, and COVID-19.

## SOME KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

**Reduced caseloads:** To provide parole officers with the time necessary to meet with offenders and tend to their needs in a comprehensive manner.

**Hire additional parole officers:** Many offenders have complex needs; reducing caseloads is urgently required so parole officers can properly support rehabilitation and public safety.

**Managerial training:** CSC should implement mandatory interpersonal and trauma informed training for managers (and all parole officers) to promote a healthier workplace.

**Mental health treatment and services:** Parole officers need improved access to trauma informed mental health supports and

services that go beyond what is offered to regular public servants.

**Backfilling:** Backfilling positions of parole officers on leave will keep caseloads manageable and ensure urgent matters with offenders are addressed to reduce public safety threats.

**Support for hypervigilance:** Access to appropriate support for parole officers so they don't bring their work home and negatively affect their families.

**Working alone in the community:** CSC must ensure parole officers are paired and never go alone when visiting high-risk clients at their homes or worksites.