

Chapter 49

Justice – Managing Labour Costs Related to Absenteeism

1.0 MAIN POINTS

This chapter describes our second follow-up of the actions of the Ministry of Justice¹ (Ministry) on two recommendations we initially made in our 2010 audit of the Ministry's processes to manage absenteeism and associated labour costs at provincial adult correctional centres. We report that the Ministry has implemented the two remaining recommendations. It implemented a policy for approving and handling corrections workers' trading of shifts, and, by July 31, 2015, it better controls and monitors changes to the work schedules of corrections workers.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

The Ministry is responsible for managing provincial correctional centres and labour costs under *The Correctional Services Act*. The Ministry employs over 1,400 corrections workers who work in four adult correctional centres located in Regina, Saskatoon, and two located in Prince Albert.

Correctional centres require 24-hour staff coverage to keep inmates, corrections workers, and the public safe. As a result, when corrections workers are absent from work, another worker must be called in to cover their shift. Overtime costs may occur when the replacement workers have already worked their required regular hours, or where corrections workers are called in on their regular day off. By not effectively managing absenteeism and the related labour costs, the Ministry faces the risk of excessive costs and undetected abuse of absenteeism.

Our *2010 Report – Volume 1*, Chapter 4 concluded that the Ministry did not have adequate processes to manage provincial adult correctional centres' labour costs related to absenteeism and included eight recommendations. By December 2012, as reported in our *2013 Report – Volume 1*, Chapter 27, the Ministry had implemented six of those eight recommendations. This chapter reports the results of our second follow-up on the remaining two recommendations.

To conduct this review engagement, we followed the standards for assurance engagements published in the *CPA Canada Handbook – Assurance*. To evaluate the Ministry's progress towards meeting our recommendations, we used the relevant criteria from the original audit. The Ministry agreed with the criteria in the original audit. We based our findings on review of Ministry policies and an examination of corrections workers' timesheets.

¹ Effective May 25, 2012, the responsibilities of corrections and policing in Saskatchewan became a part of the Ministry of Justice.



3.0 STATUS OF RECOMMENDATIONS

This section sets out each recommendation including the date on which the Standing Committee on Public Accounts agreed to the recommendation, the status of the recommendation at July 31, 2015, and the Ministry's actions up to that date. We found the Ministry has implemented our two remaining recommendations.

3.1 Employees Recording and Being Paid for Hours Worked

We recommended that the Ministry of Justice (formerly the Ministry of Corrections, Public Safety and Policing) monitor and control changes to work schedules to minimize labour costs in correctional centres (e.g., approval of shift trades, pay out of overtime). (2010 Report – Volume 1; Public Accounts Committee agreement June 7, 2011)

Status – Implemented

We recommended that the Ministry of Justice (formerly the Ministry of Corrections, Public Safety and Policing) pay correction workers for actual hours worked. (2010 Report – Volume 1; Public Accounts Committee agreement June 7, 2011)

Status – Implemented

In 2013,² we reported that management at correctional centres had increased their monitoring of overtime usage and that out-of-scope supervisors were controlling changes to employee work schedules to assist in minimizing labour costs where possible. At December 2012, the Ministry was investigating the use of scheduling software to generate further efficiencies. As of July 31, 2015, the Ministry has piloted the scheduling software at the Regina Correctional Centre and plans to complete further analysis in fall 2015 to determine whether to implement this software at the other correctional centres.

During our original audit and first follow-up, we found that shift trades made between corrections workers were impacting the correct completion of timecards, and the correct payment to corrections workers. Certain correctional centres were operating under Letters of Understanding³ that allowed corrections workers to engage in shift trades with one another without management's involvement or knowledge. As of July 31, 2015, the Ministry has renegotiated these Letters of Understanding and has implemented a policy addressing shift trades in adult correctional centres. The policy stipulates that:

² Chapter 27 of our 2013 Report – Volume 1.

³ The Letters of Understanding were negotiated between the government and the union representing corrections workers.

- › Corrections workers must sign shift trade forms to document their agreement to the shift trade, and the director of the correctional centre (or designate) must authorize these forms
- › Overtime shifts cannot be traded and a shift trade cannot result in any additional costs (e.g., overtime) to the Ministry
- › Corrections workers will be paid for the actual shift worked. Under the Ministry's previous process, corrections workers were paid for their originally scheduled shift that was traded (i.e., paid for hours not really worked)

For the corrections workers' timesheets at the four adult correctional centres we tested, we found that overtime incurred was reasonable and subject to appropriate prior approval by an out-of-scope supervisor, and that corrections workers were paid for actual hours worked.

