



Third Session – Forty-Third Legislature  
of the  
**Legislative Assembly of Manitoba**  
**Standing Committee**  
**on**  
**Public Accounts**

*Chairperson  
Mr. Kelvin Goertzen  
Constituency of Steinbach*



**MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
**Forty-Third Legislature**

<b>Member</b>	<b>Constituency</b>	<b>Political Affiliation</b>
ASAGWARA, Uzoma, Hon.	Union Station	NDP
BALCAEN, Wayne	Brandon West	PC
BEREZA, Jeff	Portage la Prairie	PC
BLASHKO, Tyler	Lagimodière	NDP
BRAR, Diljeet	Burrows	NDP
BUSHIE, Ian, Hon.	Keewatinook	NDP
BYRAM, Jodie	Agassiz	PC
CABLE, Renée, Hon.	Southdale	NDP
CHEN, Jennifer	Fort Richmond	NDP
COMPTON, Carla	Tuxedo	NDP
COOK, Kathleen	Roblin	PC
CORBETT, Shannon	Transcona	NDP
CROSS, Billie	Seine River	NDP
DELA CRUZ, Jelynn	Radisson	NDP
DEVGAN, JD	McPhillips	NDP
EWASKO, Wayne	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FONTAINE, Nahanni, Hon.	St. Johns	NDP
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	PC
GUENTER, Josh	Borderland	PC
HIEBERT, Carrie	Morden-Winkler	PC
JOHNSON, Derek	Interlake-Gimli	PC
KENNEDY, Nellie, Hon.	Assiniboia	NDP
KHAN, Obby	Fort Whyte	PC
KINEW, Wab, Hon.	Fort Rouge	NDP
KING, Trevor	Lakeside	PC
KOSTYSHYN, Ron, Hon.	Dauphin	NDP
LAGASSÉ, Bob	Dawson Trail	PC
LAMOUREUX, Cindy	Tyndall Park	Lib.
LATHLIN, Amanda	The Pas-Kameesak	NDP
LINDSEY, Tom, Hon.	Flin Flon	NDP
LOISELLE, Robert	St. Boniface	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Malaya, Hon.	Notre Dame	NDP
MOROZ, Mike, Hon.	River Heights	NDP
MOSES, Jamie, Hon.	St. Vital	NDP
MOYES, Mike, Hon.	Riel	NDP
NARTH, Konrad	La Vérendrye	PC
NAYLOR, Lisa, Hon.	Wolseley	NDP
NESBITT, Greg	Riding Mountain	PC
OXENHAM, Logan	Kirkfield Park	NDP
PANKRATZ, David	Waverley	NDP
PERCHOTTE, Richard	Selkirk	PC
PIWNIUK, Doyle	Turtle Mountain	PC
REDEAD, Eric	Thompson	NDP
ROBBINS, Colleen	Spruce Woods	PC
SALA, Adrien, Hon.	St. James	NDP
SANDHU, Mintu, Hon.	The Maples	NDP
SCHMIDT, Tracy, Hon.	Rossmere	NDP
SCHOTT, Rachelle	Kildonan-River East	NDP
SCHULER, Ron	Springfield-Ritchot	PC
SIMARD, Glen, Hon.	Brandon East	NDP
SMITH, Bernadette, Hon.	Point Douglas	NDP
STONE, Lauren	Midland	PC
WASYLIW, Mark	Fort Garry	Ind.
WHARTON, Jeff	Red River North	PC
WIEBE, Matt, Hon.	Concordia	NDP
WOWCHUK, Rick	Swan River	PC

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA**  
**THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS**

**Tuesday, January 13, 2026**

**TIME – 3:30 p.m.**

**LOCATION – Winnipeg, Manitoba**

**CHAIRPERSON – Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach)**

**VICE-CHAIRPERSON – MLA Jim Maloway (Elmwood)**

**ATTENDANCE – 8 QUORUM – 6**

*Members of the committee present:*

*Mr. Brar, MLAs Compton, Dela Cruz, Messrs. Ewasko, Goertzen, MLAs Maloway, Pankratz, Mrs. Stone*

*Substitutions:*

*MLA Pankratz for MLA Chen*

**APPEARING:**

*Tyson Shtykalo, Auditor General*

**WITNESSES:**

*Jeremy Akerstream, Deputy Minister of Justice and Deputy Attorney General*

*Todd Clarke, Assistant Deputy Minister, Correctional Services Division*

**MATTERS UNDER CONSIDERATION:**

*Auditor General's Report – Preparing Incarcerated Individuals for Transition from Custody, dated March 2025*

\* \* \*

**The Chairperson:** Good afternoon and welcome back, everybody. Will the Standing Committee on Public Accounts please come to order.

**Committee Substitution**

**The Chairperson:** Before we begin with our business this afternoon in our second meeting, I'd like to inform the committee that we have received the following membership substitution for this meeting only, although I think we said that the last meeting: MLA Pankratz for MLA Chen.

\* \* \*

**The Chairperson:** This meeting has been called to consider the following report: the Auditor General's Report–Preparing Incarcerated Individuals for Transition from Custody, dated March 2025.

Are there any suggestions from the committee as to how long we should sit this afternoon?

**MLA Jim Maloway (Elmwood):** Suggest we sit for an hour and revisit.

**The Chairperson:** MLA Maloway has suggested we sit for one hour and then revisit at that time.

Is that agreed? *[Agreed]*

At this time I would also ask the committee if there is leave for all witnesses in attendance to speak and answer questions on the record if desired.

Is that agreed? *[Agreed]*

I'd also like to remind everyone that questions and comments must be put through the Chair using the third person as opposed to directly to members and witnesses, and the appearing deputy minister did a great job of leading the example in the last meeting.

Before we proceed further, I'd like to inform all in attendance of the process that is undertaken with regard to outstanding questions. At the end of every meeting, the research clerk reviews the Hansard for any outstanding questions that the witness commits to provide an answer to and will draft a questions-pending-response document to send to the deputy minister or other witnesses. Upon receipt of the answers to those questions, the research clerk then forwards the responses to every PAC member and to every other member recorded as attending that meeting.

Does the Auditor General wish to make an opening statement on the report that is before us this afternoon?

**Mr. Tyler Shtykalo (Auditor General):** First, I'd like to introduce the staff members I have with me today. This afternoon, I'm joined by Deputy Auditor General Natalie Bessette-Asamadu, audit principal Jon Stoesz and audit manager Graham Hickman.

Mr. Chair, the Correctional Services Division of the Department of Justice has a dual role. It is responsible for the safety and security of adults in custody and for preparing incarcerated individuals for their transition back into the community upon release.

Fulfilling these responsibilities is challenging. The factors that lead to incarceration are complex.

Addressing these issues is essential for successful reintegration. Doing this well promotes public safety and gives individuals the best opportunity to lead productive lives.

In this audit, we examined whether the division was preparing incarcerated individuals to relocate from custody to the community. Mr. Chair, we concluded that the division needs to do more to prepare incarcerated individuals for release from custody. Overall, we found inmate case management needed improvement and custody release planning was not done efficiently, impacting the success of reintegration efforts.

More specifically, we found gaps in case management which primarily focused on sentenced inmates, limiting help for remanded individuals, the large majority of those in provincial custody.

In addition, group programming opportunities were limited and often not tied to assess needs. As a result, people in custody may not get the help they need to address the issues that brought them into conflict with the law.

In addition, we found release plans often did not meaningfully identify long-term needs or list actions required to meet those needs. As a result, these plans did not effectively prepare inmates for release or provide the support needed to help them transition into the community.

Finally, we found little evidence of inmates being connected to outside resources while in custody. These resources, such as housing or addiction treatment, are critical for successful reintegration. Having supports in place before release increases the chances that individuals will successfully transition back to the community, ultimately reducing the likelihood of recidivism.

This report includes 10 recommendations to help the Correctional Services Division better prepare incarcerated individuals to transition into the community. Our first follow-up on these recommendations will take place in the fall of 2027.

I'd like to thank the management and staff of the Correctional Services Division for their co-operation and assistance throughout this audit, and I'd also like to thank my audit team for all of their hard work and professionalism in completing this report. And I look forward to the discussion today.

**The Chairperson:** Thank the Auditor General and his staff for the opening comment and for the work on this report.

Does the deputy minister wish to make an opening statement, and if he does, can you please introduce the esteemed staff that you have with you?

**Mr. Jeremy Akerstream (Deputy Minister of Justice and Deputy Attorney General):** We would like to make an opening remark, but of course, as a protocol, I would like to introduce the esteemed staff that sits to my right.

Some of you may know Assistant Deputy Minister Todd Clarke. He's been responsible for corrections for a number of years and has worked very hard with the Auditor General to help to compile some of the recommendations in this report.

Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today to provide an update on the department's efforts and actions to implement the recommendations following the OAG audit on preparing incarcerated individuals for transition from custody.

Our purpose today is to provide clarity and outline the steps that we have taken and plan to take in future to address the recommendations of that report. And I'll preface my comments simply by indicating that, of course, this is a much newer report than the last report we dealt with, and so many of the steps that we're taking are still in progress and are future actions. So I apologize for not being able to bring fully completed responses at this time.

However, as you can hear, the audit examined the work done in five adult correctional centres in Manitoba—and specifically the cases, as you've heard, of 35 inmates sentenced to custody within the 12 months between December 31, 2023.

The department's Correctional Services Division is responsible for both community and custody corrections. This means the administration of justice in the community throughout—through probation officers and managing the care and control of inmates within correctional centres by corrections officers. Just by way of background, Manitoba has six adult correctional centres and one youth correctional centre.

In 2025, adult custody counts have regularly exceeded 2,700 inmates, which is an all-time high. Youth custody counts have also regularly exceeded 140 with an ever-increasing number of serious violent offences from the youth population, including homicide.

The proper functioning of the justice system requires close collaboration with all social service departments of government. The department remains engaged with these departments in an effort to provide as many wrap-around supports as possible for inmates transitioning back to the community.

The Auditor General has identified areas for improvement with 10 recommendations. We take those observations seriously. Action is under way on all recommendations, and we are currently on track for progress as expected.

Today, I will be updating this committee on the Auditor General's recommendations directed to the department and how the department has taken steps to implement the recommendations. I should note that several recommendations are related to updated data systems, one of which the department is targeted to procure early this year with the assistance of government partners.

Recommendation 1: that the Correctional Services Division's policy and standing orders are reviewed periodically to ensure that they remain up to date and time standards and other universal requirements are consistent.

The department has implemented this recommendation. The Correctional Services Division has created a program and policy branch from within existing resources. One focus of the branch is to review and update policies and procedures on a regular basis. To that end, the division has committed to reviewing all policies every three years to ensure alignment with current priorities. That process is already well under way and is monitored by the program manager through Excel trackers and regular communication with staff policies.

So just as an example: 53 of 79 policies related to in-custody matters have been fully reviewed; 29 of 55 community policies have been reviewed; and 6 of 30 overall divisional policies have been completed.

Recommendation 2: that the Correctional Services Division review and adjust their case management policy as necessary to consider the significant number of inmates who spend time in custody while not sentenced.

Again, the division is currently reviewing the Correctional Services divisional case management policy and plans to explore potential options to provide some form of brief assessment where the incarceration timeline allows.

The department planned to complete a jurisdictional scan and literature review by the end of the 2025-2026 fiscal year. However, timelines may be extended as a result of the increased population numbers and operational management to those challenges.

Recommendation 3: that the Correctional Services Division tracks data on the use of workbooks and life skills modules provided.

The Correctional Services Division will continue with the process of scoping the replacement of existing legacy database, but is committed to transitioning to a more refined and operationally updated database. The current estimated timeline for our RFP of those new databases is early 2026. Not as early as today, I'll just mind the Chair, but certainly sometime early this year.

\* (15:40)

Recommendation 4: that the Correctional Services Division assess how the education-excuse me-and employment criminogenic need can be best addressed, in particular any gaps related to employment opportunities.

The division is currently in the process of scoping replacement of an existing legacy database. That more sophisticated database and analysis framework is contemplated as part of this work. Further assessment will be completed once there is more data available in the go-forward basis.

Recommendation 5: that, in implementing the planned healing lodges, Correctional Services Division ensures (a) objectives are set for the program, (b) connections are put in place for continuing supports in the community and (c) data is collected and monitored to assess the effectiveness of programming and the support changes as needed.

The division is in the process of implementing the planned healing lodges in both The Pas and Brandon. These plans are aligned with the long-term approach of dealing with trauma and is committed to setting objectives of the program and prioritizing the importance of community supports and connections, along with program evaluation metrics, to effectively monitor program effectiveness.

For the information of this committee, target dates for infrastructure completion are December of 2027 for Brandon and December of 2029 for The Pas.

Recommendation 6: that the department collect appropriate data and use it to quantify the needs for resources and intervention; inform and guide updates

to interventions provided; assess the effectiveness of interventions provided, including impacts on inmate outcomes such as reinvolvement with the justice and other systems.

The Correctional Services Division will continue with the process of scoping the replacement of the legacy database and, of course, has currently estimated that timeline for early 2026. However, we are also working with the female offenders in the approved outcome program and utilizing questionnaires currently with inmates and staff members to ensure more timely delivery of these services.

Recommendation 7: that the department ensure that where needs, criminogenic or non-criminogenic, are identified that would contribute to successful reintegration, that they be included in an inmate's custody release plan; and (b) that actions are taken to address these identified needs and document it.

The department is committed to examining the current custody release plan document to investigate opportunities that could assist inmates with successful reintegration. The department planned to complete a jurisdictional scan and literature review by the end of the 2025-26 fiscal year—and, again, those timelines may change.

Recommendation 8: that the Correctional Services Division support individuals as they transition from custody to community by providing continuous points of contact, either through corrections staff or using outside agencies in the correctional centre and the community release.

The department is committed to continuous—continuing to work with existing community programs to liaise inmates upon release and aims to seek additional opportunities to enhance Manitoba Justice. Existing Responsible Reintegration Initiative, RRI, will continue to be enhanced by the end of the '25-26 year. There are new similar realities and community corrections where there are in-custody corrections in relation to increased offender management requirements.

Probation Services has seen a steady increase in cases, a result of national bail reform measures. That, coupled with historic highs in court reports, means sharp focus on mandated functions like offender supervision and court reports as required by the Criminal Code of Canada and the Youth Criminal Justice Act.

While the restorative reintegration initiative remains a priority, progress may be delayed again based on

these needs and the higher than expected volumes. I sound like a call centre—apologize, the Chair.

Recommendation 9: that medical staff and correctional centres obtain access to and use electronic charting by the—used by the regional health authorities.

The department plans for, again, open communication, and continues the ongoing communication between the Correctional Services Division and the Department of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care to ensure interdepartmental collaboration and consultation regarding the potential of Correctional Services Division and medical staff.

I'm pleased to advise that progress with the—with Health is on schedule and we continue to make progress in this important area.

And lastly, recommendation 10: that the Correctional Services Division make connection to outside agencies a priority while inmates are in custody by engaging in co-ordinating with outside agencies, increasing outside agencies' participation in the custody release process and documenting these interactions.

Just to be clear, the department is committed to open communication between the Correctional Services Division and community agencies to ensure systemic community engagement is prioritized for inmates and any interaction is documented going forward. As previously indicated, implementation is under way and ongoing, and I'm happy to point to a number of successful examples, including relationships with the John Howard, Elizabeth Fry Society and Spirit Horse, among many of the service providers that we're currently utilizing.

So, Mr. Chair, that would conclude our remarks. We recognize that this is a work in progress, but we're certainly happy to take any questions from yourself or members of this committee.

Thank you.

**The Chairperson:** Thank the Deputy Minister for his comments and the Assistant Deputy Minister for their attendance.

To the committee members, the floor is now open for questions.

**MLA Carla Compton (Tuxedo):** All right, I think I'm in the right committee for my question this time.

So recognizing there's a lot of familiar faces from when I asked it the last time but there's some new faces, I will do my best to remind everyone around my

question. And it might have evolved a little bit from the last time.

But custody release plan, that is something I'm curious to learn a little bit more about and particularly around the conversation around setting people up for success, both while they're in facility or in incarceration and then into that probationary space once they're released, in terms of who are—I know you mentioned the John Howard and a few other organizations, but is it consistent across facility and province of availability of these kinds of services to support folks or is there a real notable discrepancy that, you know, if you're from the Brandon area you're going to be okay or more likely to be okay versus, say, a northern community that's more isolated or might not have the same kind of services around that?

Like, how are we in our confidence that the custody release plans are becoming more effective as opposed to just saying, you know, this person needs to work on their addictions and maybe not be involved with these—I'm not sure what all gets into these custody release plans, but are—how fulsome are they in truly creating support for that transition?

**The Chairperson:** Assistant Deputy Minister.

**Floor Comment:** Yes, perhaps, Mr. Chair, I'll begin—

**The Chairperson:** Deputy Minister.

**Mr. Akerstream:** Perhaps I'll begin and pass it over, with the Chair's permission and the committee's permission, to Assistant Deputy Minister Clarke, who is very well versed in these areas.

Let me begin by thanking you for the question. This is an important area. And although there's some debate with respect to how recidivism is measured, I should say that from the preface and start from the outset by saying our job is always to put ourselves out of work. We want to make sure that we are reducing people coming back into contact with the justice system and ensuring that we're meeting long-term needs.

One of the issues with the justice system traditionally has been what I call, sort of, latitudinal points of contact, which is: Somebody is arrested, they're sentenced and then we let go and we wait for them to come back into the system.

And so we recognize that longer term care, longer term connection to community, whether it's through Justice or through other agencies, to your point, to the—with respect to the Chair, to the point of the question, is much more effective, whether that's

measured by way of recidivism, quality of life or any other measurement that we can undertake.

So from the Chair's perspective, I simply want to address a few important pieces. Within corrections itself, there's a few pieces on the provincial side that are circumscribed with respect to the overall issue of treatment, the first of which is there's a series of complex needs, which comes as no surprise to anybody in this room. We are seeing more individuals who are suffering from addictions, mental health issues and underlying health concerns, generally. And so we've worked very hard with both Health as well as addictions, housing and homelessness to be able to start to address some of those needs.

As you heard as well, we've had long-term and long-standing community partnerships in which we continue to invest in and work upon. Two of the challenges—three of the challenges, I'm going to be clear—that come from a provincial institution are as follows: No. 1 the duration of time; No. 2 is the fact that many of the individuals are on remand custody, and I'll talk about that momentarily; and No. 3 is the low percentage of individuals that are leaving our facilities that are on probation and gives us the opportunity to work with Community Corrections.

So, on the first point—the issue of time—as you can see from the Auditor General's report, the average stay on remand is 69 days, and the average sentenced is 44 days—it's 44 or 45, depending on the numbers right now.

So it's a very short period of time to be working with an individual. When an individual's coming into custody, our first focus, as you've seen from the report, is to focus on stabilizing individuals, whether that's by way of addiction or overall health concerns.

Beyond that, then we'd look towards longer term goals and planning. Because of the short length of time, that can present a challenge, as one can appreciate. When you have an individual that's in custody for just a short period of time—30, 60, 90 days—what we used to call in criminal law a short shot, that becomes a very challenging period of time when you're starting to stabilize somebody and then to move to those types of cognitive functioning assessments.

\* (15:50)

The second piece—and this is an important piece because so many of our clients are on remand—and I say that about 80 per cent right now—and I think it's documented in the report—approximately 80 per cent, Mr. Chair, of individuals are on remand. Part of the

difficulty in delivering services and programming is this: in many cases—and this isn't exclusive so I'm not trying to make a blanket statement; I'll turn it over to assistant deputy Clarke to correct me momentarily—but in many cases, you're dealing with situations where individuals have to admit some level of responsibility.

And, of course, that can be very challenging when an individual who is presumed innocent in our system is being asked by way of—to sit in front of a group of peers and admit some level of guilt or responsibility. So that can be a challenge in terms of ongoing program delivery.

I'm not saying for a moment that that is exclusive. Clearly, it wouldn't be with respect to addictions or otherwise. But in some of the behavioural pieces, you can understand how that may be a challenge.

And the third, and I think it's very well-documented with respect to the report from the—that we're dealing with, only 16 per cent of individuals that are leaving are ending up on probation. And so we absolutely recognize and agree with the idea that the—a better integration of community corrections with corrections is going to be a needed element for success moving forward.

The difficulty becomes assessing how do we—how we utilize resources. And I say that because, if 84 per cent of individuals aren't going to end up on community corrections, then how we allocate resources in a manner that's effective and efficient for Manitobans and for taxpayers has to be a consideration for us. But so too does the fact that we're looking at longer term care.

And so with that regard, we're connecting it both to longer term community care by way of the community corrections workers, but as well through the partnerships with some of our not-for-profits.

So I don't know if assistant deputy Clarke wants to add anything to that or—

**The Chairperson:** Assistant Deputy Minister.

**Mr. Todd Clarke (Assistant Deputy Minister, Correctional Services Division):** Yes, so just to clarify on the—you know, in terms of how the custody release plans work, they start essentially immediately upon a person entering the facility.

And so, as you can imagine, to the deputy minister's point, sometimes people are there for very short periods of time. The initial ones are fairly basic

because we don't have a lot of information yet and we're trying to stabilize folks.

And so—and—but they evolve over time, so the longer people stay, the more conversations they're having with the inmates, with their collateral contacts. So maybe that'd be family or a spouse perhaps, or that kind of—or other professionals that are involved with them.

And so they continue to evolve over time. The longer somebody stays with us, the more likely, you know, the better the plans get, of course, and I think that's not to a surprise of anyone.

As well, the deputy minister also noted, you know, the piece about the remand versus sentenced. And so, as you can imagine, it's difficult to set up appropriate housing for people when you don't know exactly when they're being released. There's limited housing stock for those, especially supportive types of housing. And so it's really, it's a difficult thing; not impossible, but it's very difficult to do. And so the more we get to know the people, the better off we can kind of assess where might be more successful for them, and we continue to work at that with the inmates.

Of course, we're also trying to work with inmates based on what it is that they believe that their wants and needs are, and so those sometimes become challenges when our staff probably know some things that need to be addressed, but the person isn't quite ready to do that yet, and so that becomes somewhat of a challenge as well.

All that to say, though, is that based on some—the recommendations from the Auditor General and his team, we have added a few resources for our staff, inclusive of access to—or better access, at least, to Manitoba 211. So they have better access to different programs that community staff can actually search out in different areas of the province, and so what appropriate resources might be available for inmates and those types of things.

So those continue to evolve, of course, over time, but we have made some shifts on that, and that is accessible by all staff across—in every one of the seven facilities, and so we have—we now have access for some of those pieces.

And so it isn't a perfect scenario just yet, and we continue to work on it, but we have made some progress in that way.

Thanks, Mr. Chair.

**The Chairperson:** Thank you, deputy-Assistant Deputy Minister.

Follow-up question, MLA Compton.

**MLA Compton:** To the 16 per cent that you're speaking to that end up on probation, and my understanding, then qualify, are part of the—more of the community program, is there measurement of success, or is there a grading system or some sort of evaluation of success of the supports that they're able to access for, you know, improvement, making things better, to identify if a certain way that one community partner works is really, really successful, that then that could be shared with others?

Like, if the ADM or DM could share insights on that, I'm curious to learn.

**Mr. Clarke:** Yes, so I would—yes, we do track recidivism rates specifically for probation-based clients. I don't have the exact number and it obviously evolves over time, but it is—I think it's twice as—somewhere around two times as more successful if there's probation to follow, and I think that's because there are supportive people working with the clients in the community.

Oftentimes, what we will hear from inmates—and I've spoken to many, as you can imagine, over the course of time—many say that the programs in the custody centre are really good. They struggle a little bit making the transition when they don't have somebody to help them. And so when we do have probation officers attached, the success rate is much, much higher for sure.

**Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet):** Thanks, Deputy and the Assistant Deputy, for your—for you being here and also answering to some of the questions that AG has put forward and then us as well.

So I guess part of my question is: some of the programs and services that are offered in the correctional institutions, facilities—what is the vacancy rate in regards to those individuals who are placed in there to actually deliver the programs?

**Mr. Clarke:** I don't have the specific number.

So what you're speaking about are program facilitation staff, I think is the question that's being asked. And so those are separate and apart from correctional officers. And so they're specifically in the facility to deliver programs. I don't have the number of that in front of me, but I—anecdotally, I would suggest that it's a fairly low rate.

It tends to be that we utilize—people move from a correctional officer position into those types of program facilities based on experience in time. So our program staff are generally—the vacancy rate's generally pretty low with the program staff.

**The Chairperson:** MLA Ewasko, are you asking that a number be provided to the committee at a future time?

**Mr. Ewasko:** Yes, thanks, Mr. Chair, and thanks to the assistant deputy. If—yes, in the future, if we can sometime between now and the future, if we can get those numbers to the PAC committee, that'd be greatly appreciated.

**The Chairperson:** Is that agreed by the Assistant Deputy Minister?

**Mr. Clarke:** Yes, that's not a problem.

**The Chairperson:** Thank you for the undertaking.

**Mr. Ewasko:** Knowing the various different programs and definitely commend the department and Justice for coming up with the programs to try to—you know, basically, as MLA Compton had sort of asked earlier, trying to make sure that that connection is happening within the facilities on the transition out. And we do know that that's difficult at times because of different situations with different inmates and responsibilities that they have to do once they're in there.

So when we're talking about the release plan, I do understand that that starts initially as soon as the person is placed into custody. How detailed and how much training goes into making sure that those plans are sort of as encompassing as possible?

And I do understand that there's—on that—the attachments that get attached to those plans, you know, are probation orders or next steps and those types of things. So I know that the department is working hard to continue to improve those.

But how extensive are those plans and the training that those individuals that are supposed to be writing them up? How often does that happen and gets revisited?

**Mr. Clarke:** He made me laugh, I apologize. Now I have to compose myself before I answer the question. But thanks for the question.

So in terms of our process, we have—and in our structure, there are senior unit officers and unit managers that are attached to every staff person. And so I would say that is one of the things that we do very, very well, is feedback for staff. And so the senior staff are pretty

consistently, probably on a monthly or at least quarterly basis, having meetings with staff on their progress on terms of their casework, which includes the custody release plans.

\* (16:00)

And they do talk about custody release plans; like, that type of casework is part of the initial core training that correctional officers take. And so—and each correctional officer is responsible to do—that's part of their roles, is they do have inmates that are assigned to them. So they are—all of them do do it. So sometimes that may be a problem if you don't do that very often. And so you kind of get rusty at doing that, but this is something that they do pretty regularly and there is pretty consistent feedback from senior staff in the facilities.

And so—and there's lots of coaching that happens, because it can happen. And for some facilities, especially, it could be more difficult if they're not—the ones that are further away from the city, for example, might not have as much knowledge about some programs or those types of things.

And so there's more coaching involved in some of that, but by and large staff are pretty well versed in that and know kind of where to look, dependent on where people are being released to.

**MLA Jelynn Dela Cruz (Radisson):** My questions, or the set of questions may diverge a little bit from the report. My first question would be to the Auditor General's office, actually.

So seeing that the report reports 91 per cent of inmates struggling with drug and alcohol use and significant mental health struggles as well, is there a number that reflects what that looks like for youth?

**Mr. Shtykalo:** Could I just ask you to repeat the question one more time. I didn't catch the last part.

**MLA Dela Cruz:** I'm happy to.

When it comes to drug and alcohol use as well as mental health struggles for youth in particular that are incarcerated, I noticed that there—or, rather, youth who are at the youth centre—I noticed that all of the correctional facilities listed are for adult facilities under this report. I'm wondering if you have access to what that percentage looks like for young people who are in the system.

**Mr. Shtykalo:** Yes, we—looking at youth data was not part of the scope of this particular report. I mean, certainly that type of thing is—forms part of our audit

universe and we would have access to that if that was an area that we selected to look at. But as far as at the present time and the current report, I don't have any data related to that.

**MLA Dela Cruz:** Another question on a similar subject, I suppose this time for the deputy minister.

Of course, youth of all walks of life are our future, regardless of whether or not they've had a run-in with the law. Youth who've been in conflict with the law deserve every chance to put themselves on a better path, avoid recidivism and mitigate their criminogenic needs upon the return to the community. Yes, the safety and health of our communities, of course, depend on it.

I'm wondering, then, since my initial question is outside the scope of this report, if the findings of this report will have a positive influence for youth who do find themselves incarcerated and in need of reintegration.

**Mr. Akerstream:** Thank you for the question, a very important question.

Let me just begin by saying that we absolutely agree that, from a justice perspective, we often talk about sort of two different scopes, that community safety is predicated on the sort of sense of law and order, which is sometimes just this idea of punishment and ensuring that we're separating individuals for fairly egregious behaviour, or very egregious behaviour in some cases, and healthy communities. And healthy communities, we recognize, involves our responsibility, which is a successful reintegration and rehabilitation.

Though youth are somewhat different, a lot—we see a lot of the same patterns of behaviour between youth and adults and, in fact, we've seen far too many children transition from the youth centre to the adult centre, and, frankly, that's a trend that we would like to see change.

And so I would say this, and the short answer to your question is, yes, the recommendations of this report absolutely have value for a youth system, and they do in a number of ways: No. 1 is the focus on healing; No. 2 is the idea of a better integration of community supports and working with community to be able to better facilitate outcomes for individuals that are transitioning out of custody.

But also for youth, because of the Youth Criminal Justice Act and the onus for custody or non-custody—generally speaking, the idea that we would have, from a community corrections perspective, those connections with community, that focus on healing and, again, that

long-term reintegration piece, be it by way of an individual released from corrections or an individual who's only sentenced to a community corrections facility, we think that these recommendations can be valuable and certainly endorse them with respect to the idea of ensuring wrap-around services, holistic supports and greater community involvement for these individuals.

And I'll just emphasize that even though we're creating a distinction between youth and adults, there's two pieces I think that should become important for this committee to consider.

The first is that there are many court decisions that consider the idea that a youth can be an individual up to 25 years of age. And, of course, there's a lot of developmental pieces that go behind that.

And the second is simply this: when we talk about the integration, what we also want to see is this; we don't want to see youth that are simply leaving the youth system and entering into the adult system.

And so, from our perspective, it's a matter of whether we want to call it recidivism or other pieces, really giving those youth the opportunity to be able to exit that system, put behind the many criminal previous dealings under the age of 18, seal that record, and be able to have—move forward and have a successful future.

And so with that regard, we have very specialized training in the community corrections workers. We have a youth probation unit, but we are focusing on that young adult population to ensure that that transition to adulthood is one that's going to be successful and ensuring that, as well, for an individual who is 17 and accessing services as a 17-year-old, they will continue to access those same services as an 18-year-old, even if they're provided by different service providers.

So the answer to your question is yes, and we are committed to that, both in terms of the healing for a youth population, but also for preventing that youth population from entering the adult system and ensuring that successful transition.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland):** Part of the report had mentioned that there was insufficient communication between staff at correctional facilities and staff—and probation. So I'm just wondering what steps have been taken to improve communication. What does that communication entail?

Communication's a very loaded word. You know, what exactly does that mean? Does it include additional training of the staff at correctional facilities so they know types of information to pass on to probation? Is it follow-up? If you could just dive into that a little bit deeper, it'd be appreciated.

**Mr. Clarke:** For sure, thanks for the question.

Yes, so you're right. The communication is loaded, and so we've done a few things, one of which is better access to Internet pieces, so it can be by email or telephone. As you can imagine, correctional officers work a bit of a shift pattern that's different from a probation officer. Probation officers in the community are more of a Monday to Friday. It's not exactly 8:30 to 4:30, but you get my point, and more of an office type of work. And whereas a correctional officer is working eight-, 10-, 12-hour shifts in different rotations, and so telephone calls can become difficult for people to connect. And so we've kind of created more access to do those things.

But you're also correct in that some of that is, we have a lot of newer staff, which is good news in terms of the staffing front, but it also requires a lot of teaching and coaching and mentorship, and some of those things take time.

And so I mentioned it earlier in an earlier answer, but there's a lot of feedback that happens, feedback loops that happen, and so our senior staff are actually going through, like, they'll randomly pick a case and go through it from start to finish and pick out pieces where somebody needs to, kind of, enhance their work.

And so one of those pieces is about communication with probation officers. In—as the deputy mentioned, that number is reasonably small in terms of the number of people that have probation officers to follow, but that makes it all the more important that we have that communication link there, and so that is for sure a part of the feedback loop and that has been communicated with our leadership groups in the facilities to make sure that that happens in a better way in the future.

**Mrs. Stone:** Just to follow up on that, so is there a tracking mechanism to see where those improvements are taking place?

**Mr. Clarke:** So one of the—so tracking is a theme, as you would notice, in the recommendations. Our database is from the mid-'90s, and so the ability to track things is not particularly great, for lack of a better term.

And so, yes, we are hopeful that our new database, which is going to be procured sometime very shortly actually, will give us the ability to track a whole bunch of things better, inclusive of that.

That said, it is tracked—like, it'll be—it won't be tracked in a database right now, but managers will be managing their staff, and they'll be tracking that individually on employee files, but that's really the extent of the tracking at this point.

**The Chairperson:** Speaking of tracking, years ago when I was a younger MLA, I visited a correctional centre outside of Chicago in Sheraton, Illinois, and they had a therapeutic drug community, and then we started talking, as I did and others did, about a therapeutic drug community in Manitoba.

\* (16:10)

And the success in Sheraton, according to them, was partly because they were there longer—it was a longer term facility, but also when those who were involved in the therapeutic drug centre—which was the entire prison—when they left the prison, there was—not exactly the same, obviously, because they weren't incarcerated—but there was a community that they went into that was similar.

So we have therapeutic drug communities in Manitoba now; that's a positive step. When those who leave, whether it's Headingly or others, when they leave the facility and they were in the therapeutic drug community, what do they go into when they're leaving the community?

**Mr. Clarke:** So, yes, continued service afterwards is a really huge factor in terms of recidivism rates. And so our staff are really trying to ensure that individuals that have gone through the therapeutic community—so I think you're referring to Winding River at Headingly specifically—and so trying to make sure that they have access to whatever outpatient programs make sense for them and whatever community that they're returning to.

To one of the MLA's points earlier, those programs are different in every community and the access to them is different, and so the staff do the best that they possibly can to do that, although we are looking at other, kind of, step-down type of models because we have talked to a lot of inmates, both male—at male facilities and female facilities—and they pretty much all say that there's just a little bit of stuff missing in the middle.

And so we are looking at different program options for that in future in terms of us taking some more ownership over the first next step afterwards and then kind of doing the—facilitating the next one after that.

And so those are the things we continue to work on, finding professionals outside of corrections, because we're not necessarily addictions specialists either, so trying to find professionals in space for all those things is a challenging piece but we are working towards that. The first step, I think, was to—it was good to see the report and kind of talk about those next steps, and so that was one of the priorities that we are trying to push forward is that.

**The Chairperson:** Yes, and I recognize that it's a challenge, right, because it's a challenge for anybody trying to get drug treatment outside of a facility, and it's difficult then to stream them in. But there's a theme in this report about when people leave correctional centres but being connected into the community, and one of the things I know Justice has done, whether it's with healing lodges or otherwise, is to bring people into facility to connect inmates up with, hopefully, individuals that they can then connect with outside of facility.

So healing lodges is one example. I know there's faith-based communities that would like to be involved in these things as well. Can you speak a little bit about the priority that the Justice might be renewing in bringing folks into the facilities so that they can stay connected when those inmates are leaving the facility?

**Mr. Akerstream:** Yes, a very good observation, and I think you've highlighted that both with the Winding River program and the Walking Bear program we've had a lot of success.

It's interesting because we talked a little bit earlier about the drug treatment court. We used to have a connection between those programs and drug treatment court, so an individual would come from those facilities into the drug treatment court and then gradually into the community. There's no doubt this remains a challenge for us, and let's be clear on this point. We know that the programs, both Winding River and Walking Bear, are incredibly successful, Mr. Chair. The difficulty is, you go from a highly structured program to sometimes very little support in the community.

I do want to take a moment to say this: I want to commend our corrections workers because even in those cases—and I'll say this—many individuals who are in Winding River will end up on probation order,

and sometimes it's by choice because they want those supports.

For those who don't, though, we have seen our corrections workers work incredibly hard, often in an informal basis, to connect people to programming. And I think there's a large enough alumni now outside that we are seeing mentorship; we are seeing connection, whether it's even through AA programs, to your point, church-based programs and others. There has been success in these communities because of the tight-knit addictions recovery community in Manitoba.

That said, without question, one of the challenges is outside the Perimeter and in rural areas and especially in northern areas, for individuals returning to those communities. Those can be even more challenging because although we see that transition gap in Winnipeg, we have seen it informally at least, and we've seen much lower recidivism rates. And I know the Auditor General is cringing every time I use the word recidivism, but even in an unagreed-upon recidivism rate, we tend to see much better rates through these types of programs than we do in the general population.

However, we recognize that that is often informal and based on the fact that we have individuals that are—either those individuals who suffer from addictions who are taking those very courageous steps for their own lives or through the help of corrections staff or peer support.

That said, we do recognize those continue to be gaps and we continue to work on that. It is a priority for us to look at step-down housing programming. I won't get into the details, but it's something that we're actively exploring.

Candidly, some of the programming that we've been working on with John Howard and E. Fry, including in Brandon, Manitoba, for example, has been focused on some of those conversations, and we continue to explore that.

The concern—and I think this has been pointed out in the previous question, Mr. Chair—is the level of addiction is very high and, especially when we're dealing with something like a methamphetamine, a very pernicious drug with long-term consequences for addicts, the need for supports grows; and it grows not only in the correction centres and in the justice context, but those contexts outside of justice too. And oftentimes, there is a competition for those resources.

So from our perspective, it is utilizing probation services where possible. It is utilizing those types of

informal resources and community connections that we have and building on those.

And, candidly, I will say that we've also worked very closely with homelessness—Housing, Addictions and Homelessness with respect to trying to create programming options there as well.

And, on top of that, although it's something that we are really just getting into now, our partnerships—and I think I mentioned this earlier with some of the work that we've done in the steering committees with Manitoba Métis Federation, Southern Chiefs Organization, and Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak—have helped us to be able to access some of those programs as well. And so although we haven't really gotten into that, those are newer relationships that we're forming, but the type of work that we're doing with those organizations has created more resourcing for us, especially culturally appropriate resourcing, and has been very beneficial for both our staff and for inmates.

I should point out, as well, that one of the things we talked here a little bit about that's been mentioned in the report is court reports, and specifically Gladue reports as they're often referred to, based on the Supreme Court decision. We now have a partnership with SCO and then are looking to expand that to MKO, as well, where we have these reports and elements of these reports being written by community-based organizations, which is giving us not only a better sense of some of the trauma and some of the impacts of colonialism, but I should note, as well, that it starts to create those relationships with those organizations and connects those to those programs on a longer term basis.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Chairperson:** Yes, thank you for that response, and I echo the comment about the great work the correctional services officers do in our facilities.

And members, some of who are newer members, will know or should know that every MLA has the right to visit a correctional centre. Of course, you have to make arrangements; don't just show up at the door. But I would say it's a valuable experience for everyone to do it at least once to see the difficult work that our correctional officers have to do.

Other questions?

**MLA Compton:** Question I had around, you said policy review is currently under way, and I think if I recall, there's 73, or something like that, policies, and about 59 have been reviewed.

What I'm curious about is who is all involved in the review process. Is it just a very small, very specific committee, or who are the—are there stakeholder involvement?

**Mr. Clarke:** It's actually a fairly thorough process, so it's not external stakeholders necessarily, but a lot of ones internally and so depending on the specifics of the policy.

So, for example, if it's a health-care policy in a facility, we'll be talking to health-care professionals in all of the facilities, the health-care managers, you know, the superintendents of programs and, of course, the leadership kind of groups as well.

I see most of them also, just so you know, just to make sure that things are—so it's a lot of policies to review, but I do see many of the policies as well, especially all the divisional ones, of course, because there's overlap with them. But it's a pretty thorough process, which is why we didn't want to kind of overpromise and underdeliver on some of those, so—and there's a lot of them.

And so, yes, the 79 policies, that just is the policies. There's also standing orders in every facility for all of the things, so there's a lot of those pieces, so this is specifically the overarching policies.

We want to ensure, and we've had—and this is one of the reasons why we did this, is that we want to ensure that we—that they're consistent, because we have—we—what we don't want is inconsistency throughout the system. It causes pretty significant problems when that happens because we have to—inmates move from centre to centre for lots of different reasons, and so if something's being implemented in a different way, it can cause a pretty big problem pretty fast for us.

We want to make sure that there's consistency, but it's not just a single policy, people kind of in the background. It's—they kind of do that, and things kind of move around throughout the system. It takes a bit of time to do that, but it's the right way to do that, and you'd be—maybe you wouldn't be surprised, but we do—you do catch some things in there, especially, you know, things change over three, five years, and so we want to make sure that we're being as accurate and as efficient as possible.

\* (16:20)

**Floor Comment:** I wonder, Mr. Chair—sorry to interject—I wonder if I—

**The Chairperson:** Deputy Minister.

**Mr. Akerstream:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, for recognizing me.

I wonder if I might prod the assistant deputy minister with respect to reconciliation and some of the steps that we've taken there. And I will preface my comments by saying that we've talked a little bit about—at the previous meeting—the steering committees, but there's also some internal piece—some internal groups I'd like the deputy—assistant deputy to speak about.

And not just on the focus of reconciliation, as well, but perhaps—and I'll just maybe mention this part. We have in Justice right now what we call Pride in Justice, which is a committee that is focused on reviewing policies and overcoming barriers for members of the 2SLGBTQ+ community.

And so we're working through that process, and I can tell you that we also have some initiatives that we're working on with respect to—from a custodial situation. And a custodial—a custody situation, looking at policies and different procedures to ensure that those individuals are equitably treated within our situation.

But I—perhaps I'll turn it over to the assistant deputy with respect to the lens on reconciliation, which I stated before and I don't want to restate, although I will now; that reconciliation continues to be a pillar for Justice and it's a lens that we apply to everything. So I wonder if you might just maybe expand on that a little bit.

**The Chairperson:** Follow-up, MLA Compton?

**MLA Compton:** That—my follow-up was specifically through that lens. So if the ADM is able to speak a little bit more to that, I would really appreciate that.

**The Chairperson:** I will offer the assistant deputy minister the opportunity if he would like to speak further.

**Mr. Clarke:** Thank you, Deputy, for the prompt also.

So, yes, we do—by externally, I meant, like, external agencies. We do have a number of different units and groups of folks that we do have look through these types of pieces. We have our Indigenous Services Branch, which is a corporate kind of branch within our corporate area that is relatively new and we're building out, but we do have them work through those pieces in terms of from Indigenous lenses.

We also have spiritual care providers in every facility and a director of spiritual care, and so—Indigenous spiritual care specifically. And so they, of

course, do review all those policies as well. And they are—have been instrumental, of course, in—the Chair's point about healing lodges—they've been instrumental in us building the capacity of those so that we could kind of hit the ground running when we have the actual infrastructure to do that. But—so we do actually have a number of those.

In certain circumstances, depending on what the policy is, we do—we have worked with SCO and MKO and MMF and others on—in—on those types of pieces, especially when the staff from those organizations are coming into the facility to provide programs or to link to youth or other folks on the—on their way to transition out of custody.

So we do do a number of that, but just by general nature, though; it's not a massive kind of fanning out to different groups, but we do have a number of those from that lens within the department itself.

**The Chairperson:** Before we go on to MLA Ewasko, I'll just ask if there is a willingness to extend the time for 15 minutes past the previously agreed to time. So that would take us to about 4:45 or so. We may not need all of that time.

But is there a willingness to extend the time? *[Agreed]*

**Mr. Ewasko:** So thank you, Deputy and Assistant Deputy, for some of your answers earlier on.

And this is—this question's to the deputy minister because he covered this fairly well in his opening statement, so I'd like to just ask for a little bit of clarification.

So on recommendation No. 9, it's we recommend—the recommendation is that we recommend the medical staff in correctional centres obtain access to and use electronic charting used by the regional health authorities.

Now, the deputy said that those conversations with the Department of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care have been ongoing and they're working towards that. I'm—just like to know, do you have a current status and a potential timeline when that might be put into place?

**Mr. Akerstream:** I did, in fact, address this, and happy to say that we have shown a great deal of progress with respect to this issue. I'll say as well, we're also working with the Department of Health with respect to some initiatives on very specific treatment including HIV treatment.

To answer the honourable member's question, though, Mr. Chair, I wonder if I might pass it to the

assistant deputy minister who's working quite directly on those and would be able to speak operationally to the exact level of progress that I think the question demands.

**Mr. Clarke:** So, staff—our medical staff have—there's kind of two components to what they need. They have one component now, and so we're working on the secondary piece.

To the deputy's point, we're working very closely with the Department of Health on a number of kind of transition issues. And so it's—the eCharting is a really important piece of that; it kind of gets things to the current status where they need to be.

And so I don't have the exact timeline for sure, but I do have a monthly meeting, like a—there's a monthly—a committee meeting with Health and my staff and some of their staff on progress on those pieces. And so we're moving that one forward, just waiting for a bit more information on what that will entail.

Some of our facilities, the infrastructure is a bit old and so you have to make sure you have the appropriate kind of infrastructure there to make sure Internet access in all the areas that we need it and those kinds of things. Once we have that kind of settled, I don't anticipate a big delay in getting that. It's not particularly onerous to get that there; it's just a matter of logistics, realistically. And so—but we do have a regular meeting, and so I would suspect that'll be sometime this calendar year for sure, but earlier than later, I would guess.

**The Chairperson:** Maybe to MLA Ewasko's question, so tell us what happens now. So an inmate shows up, is transported to Headingly, pick an institution. What medical records do they show up with at this point?

Because I know, when talking to corrections officers, I often ask them about the challenges of dealing with folks who are dealing with mental health challenges, and they say it's actually okay because they take their medication in a controlled environment.

So it's not as difficult as one might assume because there's a controlled environment to give that medication. But what information are they showing up with? Is just a paper form that's been printed off by Manitoba Health, or what are they—what information do they have when they arrive at the door?

**Mr. Clarke:** So it would depend where they're coming from specifically. And so if they're coming from hospital, obviously there's a bit more information. The deputy made this point earlier: there is a fair bit of

return, kind of, client groups, and so we do have a lot of information on folks. All—and we keep all of our medical records. There are paper medical records though. In some circumstances, there are some eCharting pieces, but by and large a lot of it currently, until we get that new system in place, is on paper. That will make it even easier because there'll be direct access.

We have a really good nursing staff, and then we're fairly well staffed in terms of over the course of a day, and not all of our centres are intake centres and those kinds of things. And so, when somebody comes in, people are reaching out to doctors. You could—it's not that difficult for them to figure out community practitioners and those kinds of things so they can make linkages, and that happens now.

And, of course, we—this question will probably come out if I don't answer it now, so I might as well just answer it, which is that we do link people back to community agencies on their way back out in terms of—and provide medication for a period of time. The doctor will prescribe a certain amount—not forever, of course, because doctors aren't particularly comfortable with that, and I don't blame them for that—but we do give them a supply of medication, set up appointments so that they can get—go and get their prescriptions renewed and those kinds of things.

The deputy mentioned it, and that is really important in terms of HIV medications, hepatitis medications, those kinds of things, because we're working very closely with Health and Dr. Roussin and others to try to reduce the amount of transmission for those specific medical pieces.

And so that work happening in corrections is very important, and I have regular meetings with them on that also, just to make sure that we're as aligned as we possibly can be and working as closely with Public Health as we can, because that is one of the places we can make a difference is in terms of those health pieces.

**The Chairperson:** Sorry. MLA Compton.

**MLA Compton:** I don't think this one will be too long.

When the deputy minister gave his opening remarks, there was something around restorative justice that just kind of tweaked to me. And please correct me if I'm wrong, but my understanding, or what I heard, was that restorative justice programs, or what has existed of it, has been quite successful, but it's needing to be rolled back a little bit or put a little bit on hold.

\* (16:30)

Is that due to resources because it requires more resources; due to—be it time, number of people? I'm not fully familiar with what is all involved in restorative justice, but I'm just curious if it is a more effective, impactful way of people going through these processes. Is it ultimately actually a better choice to roll it back, is my question.

**Mr. Clarke:** I think the deputy did refer to restorative justice in his opening comments. What you may have been asking about was the Responsible Reintegration Initiative, which is essentially probation officers that work with people being released from custody that don't have the probation aspect. So because of the recidivism rate that I talked about earlier, it was much better, doubly as better for people that have probation.

We created the RRI program to help facilitate that and so that's what we're referring to. And so—but that is an additional, kind of, layer of work for probation officers.

And so what the deputy was saying is that because of the high number of—the increased number of cases, because that's what we're seeing in terms of that; that's the reality—and also the number of court reports. And those are the two things that, through the Criminal Code and the Youth Criminal Justice Act, those are the two mandated things that probation officers are to do by those codes.

And so that's the mandated work, and then this is kind of the additional work. And so we're trying to do as much of this as we can while, you know, meeting the requirements that we have to administer justice in Manitoba. So it's a bit of a balancing act, but that is, I think, what you were referring to there.

**The Chairperson:** This is the final question, unless there's others who come up with questions in between, but I understand from—if I understood the auditor correctly, that the follow-up report to this report will be in the fall of next year, fall of 2027.

Are there any recommendations that the department feels it won't be able to meet by the time we get to the follow-up report by the Auditor General in the fall of next year, and if there are, what are those obstacles that you foresee?

**Mr. Akerstream:** I feel like I'm being—I feel like my assistant deputy is leading me to slaughter. We're hopeful that we're going to be able to meet all the recommendations.

I would say that the precondition of that is as follows; many of these recommendations in terms of tracking the implementation are going to be based on

two pieces. Number one, as we've talked about, is the successful balancing with respect to resourcing, and that includes that connection to community. We are optimistic that we are finding that balance. We are working to create the better connection between community corrections workers and corrections workers.

And I should point out one of the things that we didn't raise here, although it was raised with respect to the issue of restorative justice, is building partnerships with our Indigenous communities, specifically First Nations who have talked to us about being part of that reintegration process. So we are working towards those and feel that that will be something that will only be heightened in the next year, the year and a half.

The real obstacle from our perspective is going to be technology. As you've heard, we have a legacy system that comes from the mid-'90s. It still enjoys the music of Oasis and other bands, but we will—we are doing the scoping this year—the RFP shortly—so we're hoping that that will be on track this year.

That technology piece, as you've identified—as has been identified—is going to be a crucial piece in terms of: No. 1, being able to capture and record data; No. 2, being able to compare that data, including on the criminogenic side and with respect to case management; and No. 3, and more importantly, I think, is to be able to update all of our case management systems in a way that's going to be more consistent with the recommendations.

So we fully appreciate the recommendations. We are not coming out in any way disagreeing with the Auditor General. I think there's some further conversations about the how, but we are absolutely happy to have this additional set of eyes to help us and formulate better policies and better procedures to ensure that Manitobans are safer on a long-term basis and that those individuals we have in our custody are going to be safer and better treated.

I should say as well, and I just want to echo the Chair's comments if I might, that we also want to take a moment at this time of high numbers and the numbers that we're seeing in our correctional centres, to recognize the incredible work of our correctional staff. And I know it goes without saying that the Auditor General's office would also join me in this, but it's very clear that, given all of the demands that we've been talking about today, whether it be the high numbers, whether it be the incredibly complex needs of the individuals that we're serving, whether it be the focus on restorative justice, on culturally appropriate release plans, and the list goes on, we can see the level

of complexity that our corrections officers deal with in the day-to-day basis.

And so though I'm not confident ever on the issue of technology—we know that that may be a barrier—I have absolutely every confidence in our correctional workers and the work that they do day in, day out to ensure a safer Manitoba. So I'd like to take an opportunity to thank both the committee and the Chair for the chance to respond to this, to the Auditor General for being able to make the recommendations; and, candidly, commit further to being able to continue to improve our services.

So thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Chairperson:** All right, thank you for that response. I'm sure that the Auditor General and the department will work closely on the follow-up recommendations. If they're in the fall of 2027, it's highly unlikely that I'll be here to query on them, but I look forward to reading them, at some point.

I want to thank the deputy minister and the assistant deputy minister for being here and also for your fine work. Please pass that along to correctional staff and others who are in the system.

Are there any other questions?

Seeing no other questions, I'll put the question on the report to the committee.

Shall the Auditor General's report, preparing increased individuals for transition from custody, dated March 2025, pass?

**Some Honourable Members:** Pass.

**The Chairperson:** I will reread it because apparently I said something wrong.

Auditor General's report—Preparing Incarcerated Individuals for Transition from Custody, dated 2025—pass.

Before the committee rises, I'd like to ask that all members please leave behind their copies of the report so they can be used at future meetings or appropriately recycled.

The hour now being 4:36, what is the 'commill' of—

**An Honourable Member:** Committee rise.

**The Chairperson:** —the will of the committee?

We had a premature rising there.

**An Honourable Member:** Rise.

**The Chairperson:** Committee rise.

**COMMITTEE ROSE AT:** 4:36 p.m.

The Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Debates and Proceedings

are also available on the Internet at the following address:

**<http://www.manitoba.ca/legislature/hansard/hansard.html>**