



**Opening of South Mackenzie Correctional Complex (SMCC) Therapeutic Community
December 10th, 2021 2-3:30pm
Minister R. J. Simpson**

Questions and Answers

Q. What is a correctional Therapeutic Community?

The Therapeutic Community correctional model is designed to change behavior and reduce an individual's re-contact with the criminal justice system.

Using the concept of 'community as method', Therapeutic Communities use active participation in group living and activities to drive individual change and the attainment of therapeutic goals. With an emphasis on social learning and mutual self-help, residents of the Therapeutic Community have a role in each other's recovery as providing support to others is seen as an important part of changing oneself.

Therapeutic Communities reflect evolution in the field of Corrections, with greater emphasis placed on the rehabilitation and reintegration of offenders.

Q. When did the SMCC Therapeutic Community become operational?

The SMCC Therapeutic Community became fully operational on November 5, 2021.

Q. Can any NWT inmate serve their time at the SMCC Therapeutic Community?

The Therapeutic Community is not suitable for every inmate. A screening process is used to identify sentenced inmates suitable for placement based on pre-determined criteria. High security offenders are not eligible to participate in the Therapeutic Community due to security considerations. Remanded inmates also cannot participate in the Therapeutic Community.

Q. How does the Therapeutic Community operate?

The Therapeutic Community uses a structured and meaningful daily schedule that helps to shape behaviour, create a sense of membership, teach job skills and instil attitudes that promote empowerment. This approach uses active participation in group living and activities and combines work, counseling and around-the-clock behavioural modelling to address the root causes of negative behaviours. Therapeutic Community residents have a role in each other's recovery as there is an emphasis on social learning and mutual self-help to support accountability and to reach recovery goals.



Q. What exactly are the programs and services offered under the Therapeutic Community model?

The Therapeutic Community model incorporates the “Seven Laws of Living” and the Medicine Wheel which support the cultural teachings of Indigenous peoples. Activities will include opening and closing ceremonies, sharing circles, drumming, smudging, and traditional land-based teachings by local Elders.

Correctional programs and services also provided as part of the Therapeutic Community include: The NWT Indigenous Pre-Treatment Healing Program, Substance Abuse Management, Living without Violence, Respectful Relationships, and Thinking Leads to Change. The Northern Sessions program is also offered at the SMCC to complement the above programs and address the specific background and needs of Indigenous inmates.

Q. What happens to residents after they leave the Therapeutic Community?

At the end of their custodial sentences, residents at the South Mackenzie Correctional Centre Therapeutic Community are transitioned into the community, provided with assistance to find work and housing, and supported for up to six months following their release.

Q. How are SMCC staff supported to implement this new approach?

The Nanaimo John Howard Society provided specialized training on the operation of a Therapeutic Community to SMCC staff from October 25 to November 4, 2021. The training covered motivational interviewing, behavioral interventions, group dynamics and how staff can effectively operate in a Therapeutic Community. The Nanaimo John Howard Society are experts in the field as they operate Guthrie House, the Therapeutic Community within the grounds of the Nanaimo Correctional Centre, BC.

Q. Did Corrections officers who worked at the SMCC before the Therapeutic Community keep their jobs or were all new officers hired?

The experience of the existing staff is invaluable. They are respected Corrections Officers and professionals in their field. All Corrections officers and supervisors at the SMCC were informed of the change in approach at the SMCC well in advance, and received the necessary training to shift to the Therapeutic Community model.

Q. Were there changes to the SMCC facility building or grounds?

For a Therapeutic Community to be established at the SMCC, the facility needed to be updated from an open security to an enhanced security environment. This was required to



allow for the participation of sentenced inmates whose risk levels require enhanced security.

Q. What is the size of the SMCC Therapeutic Community facility?

The Therapeutic Community building is approximately 1,554 sq. metres and can house up to 36 participants. It includes residential, recreational, ceremonial and programming areas and allows future expansion should it be necessary.

Q. How much did the construction work and retrofitting cost?

The Department of Justice received funding in the amount of \$2.8 million as part of the 2019-20 capital plan to build a fence at the SMCC in addition to an already established capital project for interior modifications at the facility.

Q. What is the Therapeutic Community Operating Budget?

The overall budget for the SMCC in 2021-22 is \$5,764,000. Contribution funds in the amount of \$179,000 have been allocated to the Therapeutic Community to enable communities to provide re-entry to offenders returning to their home communities from the Therapeutic Community.

Q. Wasn't the SMCC Therapeutic Community supposed to be open earlier than this?

Yes. There were some construction delays due to the late delivery of required materials due to the COVID pandemic.

Q. How and when will we know that the Therapeutic Community works?

A monitoring and evaluation framework has been developed in partnership with the Department of Finance. This is to help monitor and track the effectiveness of the SMCC Therapeutic Community initiative to affect gradual meaningful change for offenders and their communities.

The Therapeutic Model will be evaluated and recommendations to adjust the program will be provided by 2025.