

Manitoba Ombudsman

July 11, 2023

The Honourable Margaret Wiebe
Chief Judge
Provincial Court of Manitoba
5th Floor – 408 York Avenue
Winnipeg, MB R3C 0P9

RE: Inquest into the death of Jean Paul Beaumont

Dear Chief Judge Wiebe:

I am writing to advise you of the results of my office's inquiries into implementation of the recommendations made by Judge John Combs in his Inquest into the death of Jean Paul Beaumont, issued on November 4, 2019. As you know, Manitoba Ombudsman reports to you on our follow-up with provincial public bodies on implementation of recommendations made under the Fatality Inquiries Act.

BACKGROUND

Much of the media and other reporting surrounding the death of Jean Paul Beaumont included a focus on him being a high-ranking member of a motorcycle gang and a drug-user at the time of his death. Beyond this, though, he was a brother and family member to people who loved him. We hope our report helps bring more closure to Jean Paul Beaumont's family and loved ones. At the time of his death, Jean Paul Beaumont was serving a sentence in the Brandon Correctional Institution. In the morning hours of October 14, 2012, he was discovered unresponsive in his bunk by another inmate. The inmates in his unit alerted corrections staff. However, attempts to revive Mr. Beaumont were unsuccessful and he was declared deceased. A homicide investigation was commenced, ultimately finding the cause of death to be a morphine overdose. The source of the drugs and the circumstances surrounding the ingestion of the drugs was undetermined after the homicide investigation.

RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS

In the inquest report, Judge John Combs made nine recommendations, two of which were reported to have already been completed at the time the inquest report was issued. In his report,

Judge Combs also acknowledged that as a result of an internal review by Corrections, many existing policies were re-confirmed and others implemented to reduce the chance of an incident involving a drug overdose from re-occurring.

We received an initial response to the recommendations from Manitoba Justice in April 2020, and had a final discussion with the department on the recommendations in June 2022.

Recommendation #1

The existing policy of conducting rounds of inmate units in a proper manner needs to continue to be reinforced. Officers should at least go to the window of each cell and ensure that each inmate is accounted for and there is no sign of anything untoward. The evening count should include some engagement between the corrections officer conducting the count and each inmate to ensure the inmate is alive and well.

We assess this recommendation as implemented.

Manitoba Justice advised our office in April 2020 that existing Standing Orders address this recommendation and continue to be reinforced through ongoing compliance audits and through reminder emails to staff.

The department advised us that existing policies and procedures require staff doing rounds to look for signs of life. The department noted that there are practical reasons why staff would not wake up an inmate who may be sleeping during a round to ensure they are alive and well (e.g. during overnight rounds). In these instances, staff look for signs of life such as movement or breathing.

Recommendation #2

Inmates should not be given the envelopes and packaging from any parcels or courier deliveries. I am told this policy has been implemented.

We assess this recommendation as implemented.

Manitoba Justice advised our office in April 2020 that this practice was first changed on October 26, 2012 through an email directive. On August 2, 2018, it was included in Standing Orders. The Standing Order gives effect to the recommendation.

Recommendation #3

A standing order should be issued directing staff and nurses not to advise inmates in advance of the time or location of any medical or community visits.

We assess this recommendation as implemented with an alternate solution.

Manitoba Justice advised our office in April 2020 that is a standard best practise in all Correctional Centres, and that staff have been trained in this practice for a number of years. We

note that a Standing Order was not issued as recommended, but staff receiving ongoing training that gives effect to the recommendation.

Recommendation #4

A directive has been sent to escort officers that, when escorting inmates on medical or community visits, the inmate should not, when possible, be permitted to use washroom facilities which would be typically utilized. A washroom on a different floor or part of the building should be used. If a washroom has more than one stall, the inmate should not choose the stall to be used.

We assess this recommendation as implemented.

Manitoba Justice confirmed to us in April 2020 that the practice related to inmate use of washrooms while being escorted was first changed on October 26, 2012 through an email directive. On August 2, 2018, it was included in Standing Orders.¹

Recommendation #5

Escort officers should have enhanced training in conducting searches of premises outside of the institution.

We assess this recommendation as implemented.

Manitoba Justice advised us in April 2020 that basic searching techniques, including outside principles, are provided to all staff during initial basic training, and escort staff receive additional specialized training which includes conducting searches of premises outside of the institutions.

Recommendation #6

Escort officers need to be reminded about strip searches of all inmates returning to the institution from medical or community visits. This has apparently been done.

We assess this recommendation as implemented.

Manitoba Justice confirmed this was standard correctional practice at the time the recommendation was made. On July 24, 2018, it was included in Standing Orders.

Recommendations #7

Body scanners are being installed in some institutions, which eliminates the need for strip searches. These scanners should be installed in any institution housing sentenced prisoners.

We assess this recommendation as declined.

¹ Internal note: for security reasons, more detail on what the practice is should not be reported publicly.

The department advised us that it would be cost prohibitive to have a Body Scanner in any institution housing sentenced inmates as suggested in the recommendation, because all correctional centres have sentenced inmates. The department also noted that sentenced inmates account for only about 30% of the inmate population, and are less risk than remanded prisoners who are transported more frequently for court appearances.

The department also advised us that body scanners are used as a supplement to, and not a replacement for, unclothed searches. As such, the presence of body scanners does not eliminate the need for strip searches.

Manitoba Justice advised us that at the time this recommendation was made, Body Scanners were installed at the Winnipeg Remand Centre, Brandon Correctional Centre and The Pas Correctional Centre. The department noted these three centres are used as admissions centres, and their placement covers each geographic region. If other correctional centres wish to have an inmate scanned, they can arrange for a scan at one of the three noted facilities.

Recommendations #8

Corrections should explore the option of installing panic alarms in all individual cells.

We assess this recommendation as implemented with an alternate solution.

Manitoba Justice advised us that they explored the option of installing panic alarms or intercom systems in individual cells. The department does not believe evidence was presented at the inquest that that panic alarms would have prevented this death. However, as of April 2020 Manitoba Corrections does install intercoms in individual cells on all new construction.

Recommendation #9

A policy or standing order should be implemented mandating Corrections to report all incidents where weapons or illegal drugs are found within the institution.

We assess this recommendation as implemented.

Manitoba Justice advised our office in April 2020 that a new Standing Order on contact with local police specific to reporting criminal activity within Brandon Correctional Centre was under development. In June 2022, the department advised our office that this new Standing Order was implemented shortly after the April 2020 update, and has therefore been in place for approximately two years.

CONCLUSION

The information in this report highlights important changes that happened as a result of the inquest into the death of Jean Paul Beaumont. The safety and security protocols described above contribute to maintaining a safe environment for correctional centre residents and staff, and will help reduce instances of illegal drugs entering the Brandon Correctional Centre.

With this report to you, we conclude our follow up on this matter.

Please note, an electronic copy of this report will be posted on the Manitoba Ombudsman website: www.ombudsman.mb.ca.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Jill Perron', followed by a period.

Jill Perron
Manitoba Ombudsman

cc: Jeremy Akerstream, Deputy Minister, Manitoba Justice