

Ministry of the Solicitor General

Ministère du Solliciteur général



Office of the Deputy Solicitor General
Correctional Services

Bureau du sous-solliciteur général
Services correctionnels

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By email

March 23, 2020

Dear valued partner and stakeholder:

As Ontario continues to take action to slow the spread of COVID-19, we are making further changes to protect our frontline corrections workers, inmates and our health care system from the burden an outbreak in our correctional system could cause.

Building on changes we made to grant intermittent inmates temporary absences from custody and temporarily halting personal visits, we have amended Regulation 778 under the *Ministry of Correctional Services Act* to further expand the use of temporary absences and to allow the Ontario Parole Board to use alternatives to in-person meetings.

Going forward, senior corrections officials will have the option to issue temporary absences beyond the current 72-hour maximum. This means inmates serving intermittent sentences who have been granted a temporary absence will not have to report to a correctional facility every weekend, which will avoid cycling individuals between the community and a correctional facility.

In addition, the longer-term temporary absences will allow for early release of those inmates who are near to the end of their sentence. To ensure public safety, inmates would be carefully assessed to ensure they are a low risk to reoffend. Those inmates who have been convicted of serious crimes, such as violent crimes or crimes involving guns, would not be considered for early release.

The amendment will also allow the Ontario Parole Board to conduct hearings by electronic or written means, rather than solely in-person, providing alternative options for hearings.

We continue to evaluate all options to limit the possible spread of COVID-19 within our correctional system. These regulatory amendments will help us preserve the integrity of our health care system, protect our frontline workers and those in our custody, and help keep our communities safe.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Deborah Richardson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Deborah Richardson
Deputy Solicitor General, Correctional Services