

P3s SUPERJAIL GOES PUBLIC AFTER A REVIEW FINDS IT SUBSTANDARD

In 1996 the then Conservative Government announced they would build two new super jails. Each jail would be an identically designed 1,200 bed maximum security facility, the Central North Correctional Centre (CNCC) was built in Penetanguishene and opened in 2001, the Central East Correctional Centre (CECC) was built in Lindsay and opened in 2003.

The government decided to run the CNCC as a Private-Public Partnerships (P3s) and signed a five-year contract with an American firm which operates private jails in the USA. The province would retain ownership of the jail but would pay the private company to operate the jail. The government essentially conducted a privatization experiment. (The CNCC facility would be run privately while the province operated the CECC). Both jails were required to operate according to the same standards, policies and operational procedures. A comparative review of both jails would be done over the term of the contract with the firm operating the CNCC. At the time the government felt that this review would be an incentive for both operators to establish best practices.

Although the private firm knew this comparative review was being conducted, the Penetanguishene jail was plagued with chronic understaffing and a lack of proper supervision. It operated the jail with approximately 90 fewer staff than the public jail. In August of 2002 nearly 100 prisoners almost escaped using a battering ram.

The consulting firm of Price Waterhouse Coopers was hired to conduct the comparison review. The report concluded that the contract to run the jail privately was “economically advantageous”. The contract to run the jail privately was saving the province money. Over the five year contract the province saved \$23 million but these cost savings came at the expense of:

- poor health care for the inmates,
- unacceptably lower security, and
- a higher repeat offender rate than the publicly run jail.

The contract for operating the CNCC expires in November and will not be renewed.

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Corrections Minister Monte Kwinter was quoted in a local paper, the Midland Free Press, "*the evidence clearly indicates that the public facility produced better results.*"

The Minister also acknowledged that the understaffing resulted in lower-quality services and two-tier correctional delivery. On April 27, 2006 the Minister announced that the province will be taking over the operation of the CNCC over a six-month transition period and that it will then hire an additional 91 full time staff for the facility.