
STATEMENT

For Immediate Release
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Ministry of Children and Family Development

Incident at the Burnaby Youth Secure Custody Centre

BURNABY – Andrew Cronkhite, director of programs for the Burnaby Youth Secure Custody Centre, released this statement in response to the incident that occurred last night at the centre:

“There was a serious incident at the Burnaby Youth Secure Custody Centre involving seven male youths, aged 15-17, who caused extensive damage to furniture and electronic equipment, and started a small fire by putting paper into a toaster – a fire they later put out themselves. Staff followed safety protocols, and called the RCMP and fire officials as soon as the youths began to cause the damage.

“The safety of staff and residents at the centre is our top priority. Fortunately, there were no injuries to residents, staff or police. All of the youths are safe and accounted for, and the youths involved in the incident were contained within the centre at all times.

“While a union spokesperson has linked this incident to rising tensions at the site, it’s important to note that the Burnaby centre holds monthly occupational health and safety meetings with staff, and there have been no grievances about safety in the workplace, nor has the union brought these concerns directly to the ministry.

“Further suggestion that the closure of the Victoria Youth Custody Centre is somehow linked to this incident is misleading, given the fact that the youths who were involved in this incident are from the Lower Mainland and the Interior and would not have been housed on Vancouver Island.

“The Burnaby centre is fully staffed and is currently at only 51% capacity, with a total of 43 residents.

“The primary motivating factor behind the incident appears to have been a room search earlier in the day, which resulted in a loss of privileges. Based on interviews with those involved, there is no indication that rival gang tensions were a root cause of the dissention, as some have suggested publicly.

“WorkSafe BC, RCMP and the ministry are all conducting investigations, including reviewing surveillance video and interviewing staff and residents. This process will take time. In the meantime, it’s business as usual at the centre. The seven youths involved in the incident are being housed separately and the remaining youths at the centre are attending school and other programs. Counselling is available for staff and youths as well.

“The RCMP will determine whether to lay charges once their investigation is complete. The only other previous serious incident of this nature in Burnaby was in 2010.”

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Incident:

- An incident occurred at Burnaby Youth Custody Services (BYCS) July 19, 2016 at approximately 2030h
- A youth rushed the staff office on the secure custody Fairweather unit. This unit is separated from the Fernie unit by a staff occupied office.
- The staff member was able to remove the youth and call a code red. The rest of the residents began to damage the unit by breaking windows, florescent lights, a TV, a microwave oven, etc
- Our staff safely removed the adjoining 7 youth in the secure custody Fernie unit to another unit. (Harrison)
- The Fairweather boys broke through the office door and proceeded to damage Fernie in the same manner. One youth remained locked in his room until staff had to open his door.
- The youth set a small paper fire in the unit. This set off smoke alarms but no sprinklers.
- The Burnaby RCMP were contacted at 2151 and attended at 2142
- Once the boys realized Police were near, they armed themselves with debris in the unit. They also covered their faces for most of this for the cameras.
- Police attended and once the seriousness of the situation was assessed, the Emergency Response team came in. The incident lasted a total of 6 hours, when the boys finally complied with the direction of the ERT team, surrendered one by one to the police, and were removed to Venture and Separate Confinement by our staff at 0225 a.m.
- There is approximately 6 hours of video recording that has yet to be viewed.
- Burnaby fire also attended, and aired out the "F" units which were thick with smoke. This smoke drifted through the building causing some discomfort for some people.
- There were no physical injuries to residents, staff or police
- 7 males were involved in this incident.
- Of the 7 males involved, one youth is on a Continuing Care Order.
- RCMP attended again today to conduct a criminal investigation.
- 3 of the 7 youth are at court today.
- Extensive damage to the physical facility and will remain closed for some time.

BYCS:

- BYCS has capacity for 84 youth. Current occupancy is 43 youth (36 males and 6 females).
- There has been one previous significant incident (riot) at BYCS (2010)

Speaking Notes:

- There was a significant incident at Burnaby Youth Custody centre last night
- A small number of youth in one unit caused a disturbance and did significant damage.
- The youth were contained within the centre at all times.
- There were no injuries to youth, staff or police.
- Quick thinking by staff removed youth from an adjoining unit which prevented them from becoming involved in the incident.

- The incident is in the preliminary stages of investigation and we are waiting more specific details