

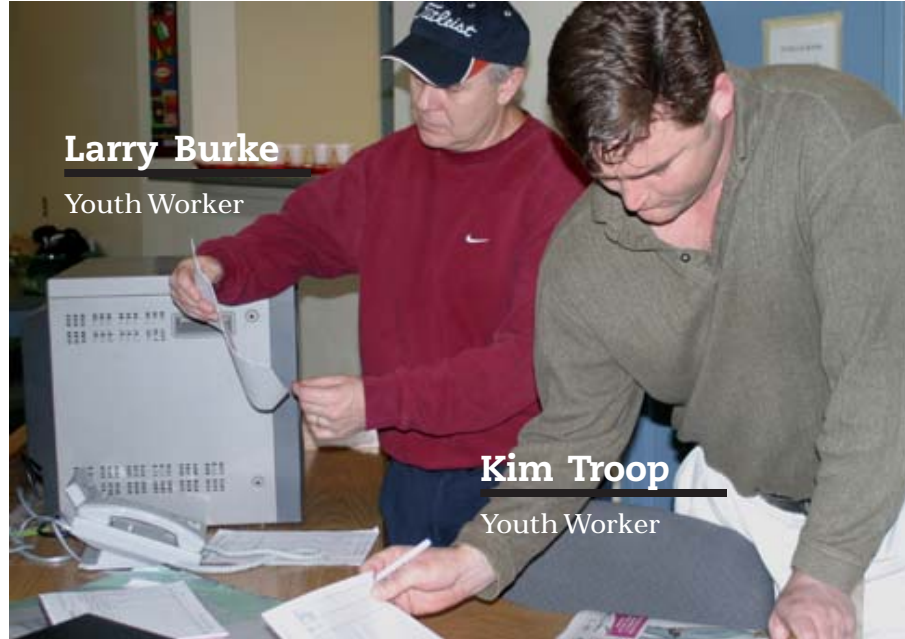
no consequence, supervision or treatment. Often they re-offend only to go through the same process again. Then, following their 18th birthday, the court imposes a strict sentence.

Some provinces have closed youth facilities and laid off the staff. Instead of using lower numbers in custody as a chance to improve and expand treatment options they have reduced the range of options available to youth in custody.

The programs in the community are not being created to deal with these youth. Youth probation workers, already understaffed and struggling with excessive workloads, are able to only offer support to the most high-risk cases.

Those youth who are incarcerated under the YCJA are more violent and more difficult to provide services to. Dangerous to themselves, staff and other inmates they have dramatically changed the character of the facilities.

There has to be a better way to deal with young offenders.



Larry Burke
Youth Worker

Kim Troop
Youth Worker

Time for change

This is a situation that must change.

The federal government must listen to the experiences of workers in the field and fix the problems with the Youth Criminal Justice Act.

Provinces need to better fund and support youth corrections facilities.

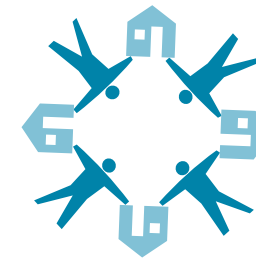
Workers need to be recognized as the professionals that

their training and experience accords them.

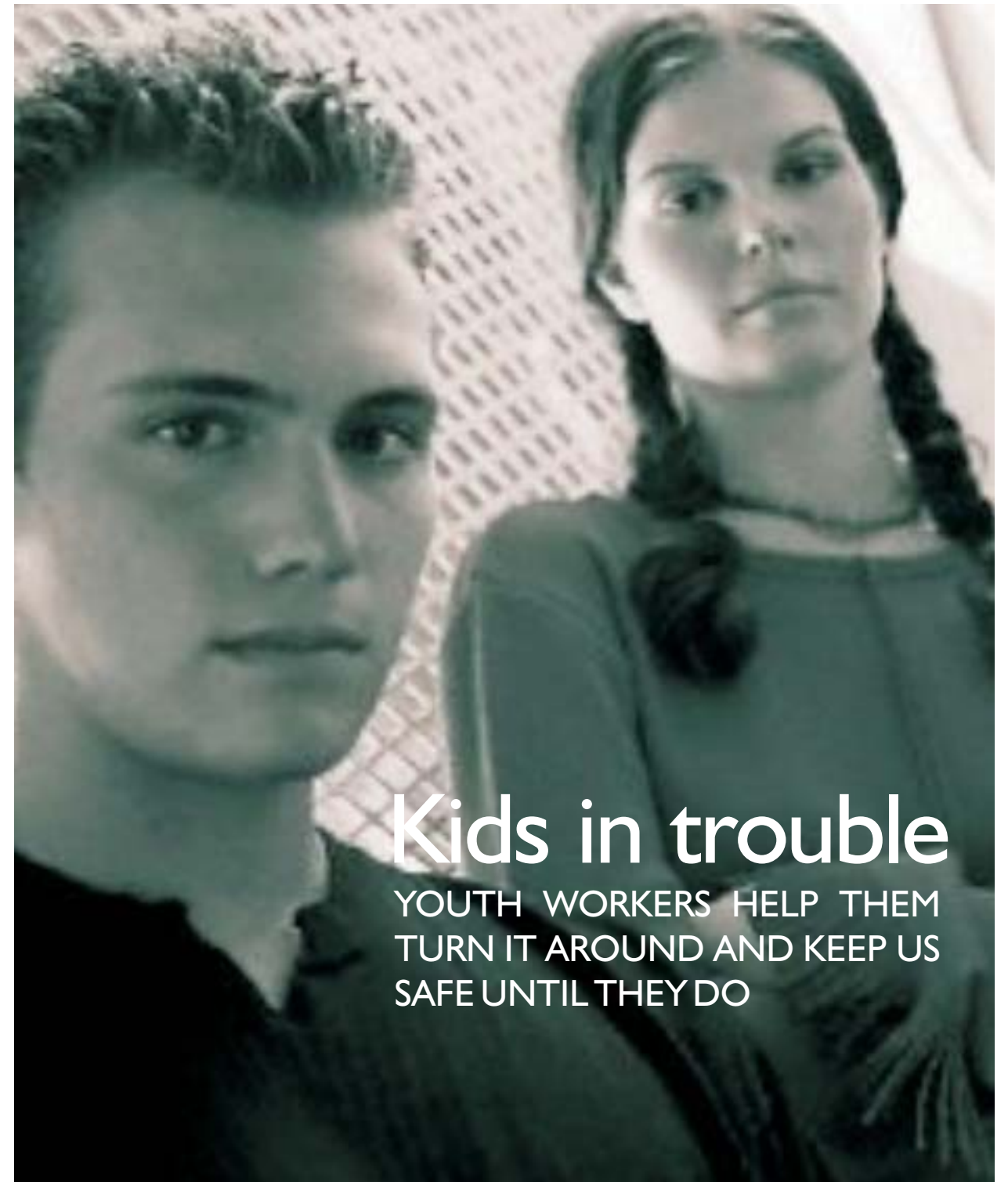
Change is needed not just for the workers in the sector—though that should be reason enough—but also for the young offenders, their families and for protecting our communities.

Stay informed. Get involved.

www.nupge.ca/corrections.htm



PROTECTING
OUR
COMMUNITIES
YOUTH WORKERS



Kids in trouble

YOUTH WORKERS HELP THEM
TURN IT AROUND AND KEEP US
SAFE UNTIL THEY DO



NATIONAL UNION OF
PUBLIC AND GENERAL
EMPLOYEES

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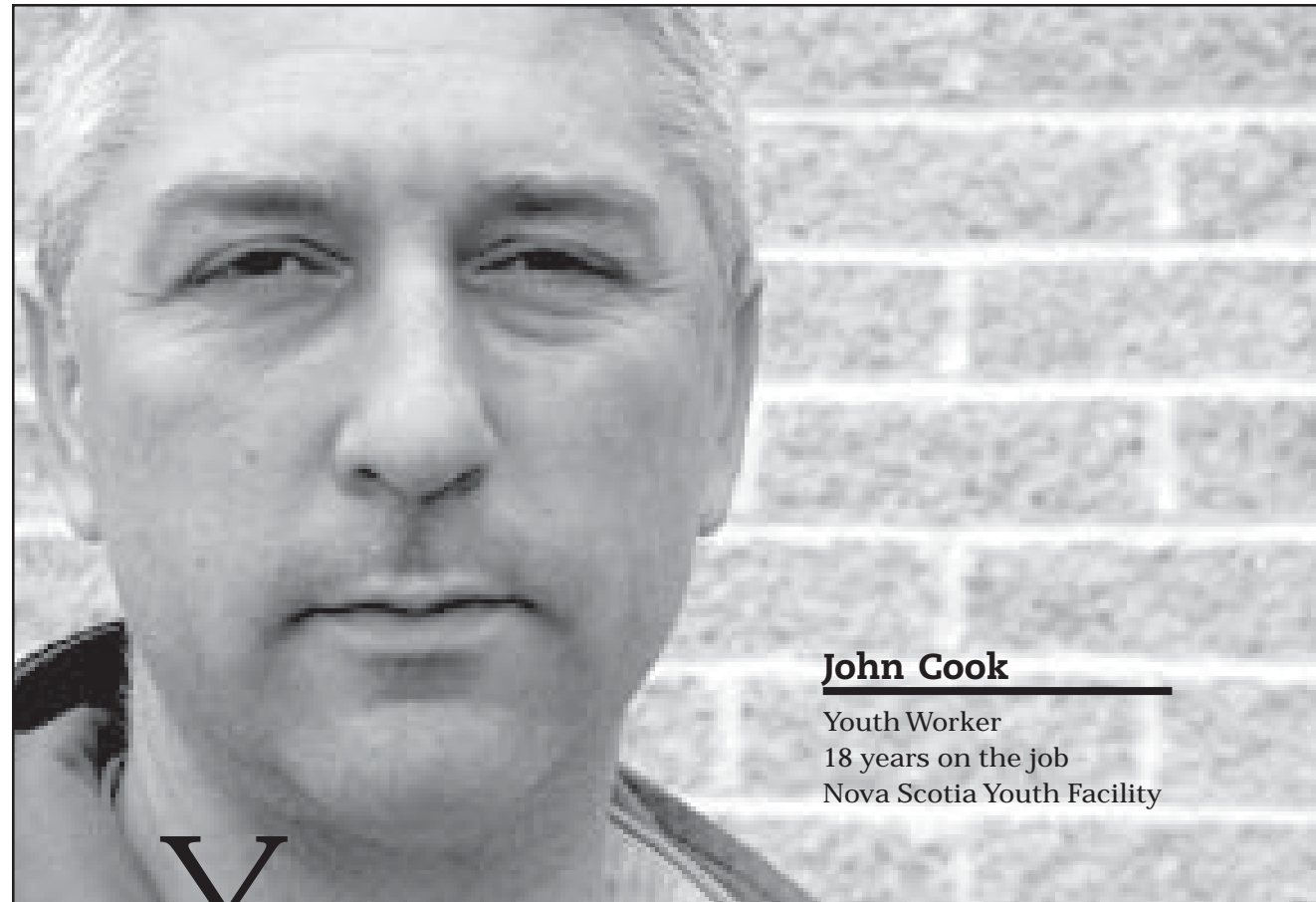
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Doing a tough job just gets tougher and tougher.



John Cook

Youth Worker
18 years on the job
Nova Scotia Youth Facility

Youth Correctional Professionals must juggle the roles of social worker, counsellor, educator, advocate, supervisor and jailer.

They know exactly how to “walk softly, but carry a big stick.”



MaryAlice Parker

Youth Worker
15 years on the job

CANADA TREATS young offenders differently than it does adults. Individuals between the ages of 12 and 18 are governed by different legislation and trial proceedings than those 18 years of age and older.

Canadians believe this is reasonable. They know many young people lack the necessary judgement to always make the most appropriate decisions or actions.

It is thought that the young person who breaks the law would be better served by more intensive treatment than by strict incarceration. And the fear of harm that could result from mixing young people with more hardened criminals is a consideration.

While this all makes sense—it also makes the job of working with young offenders more difficult. Youth Correctional Professionals must juggle the roles of social worker, counsellor, educator, advocate, jailer and supervisor. Imagine Mother Teresa with a big stick!

This all takes place with the young person knowing the system is designed to provide them with more and more chances—it creates space for them to push limits and challenge authority.

Youth Corrections Professionals are highly trained, educated and very dedicated.

The pay and working conditions are not what motivate these people to do the work—the opportunity to help young people and their families does.

It’s a tough job. One that is being made more difficult by federal and provincial governments.

Cuts to services

It is a fact of life throughout the public sector that provincial governments have cut back on funding to programs. Youth corrections is no different.

With reduced funding, facilities have been working with fewer staff. Valuable treatment, counselling and educational programs are scaled back—or terminated. Facilities are ag-

ing and badly in need of repair—the buildings become health and safety hazards in their own right.

Workers in the field find themselves making do with less and less when dealing with youth who are becoming increasingly difficult cases—violent and resistant to authority.

Privatizing youth corrections

Provincial governments across the country have been slowly turning the administration of youth correctional facilities over to private, for-profit and not-for-profit, corporations. This is done as a means to cut costs.

To reduce their operating budgets, these employers cut staffing levels, pay lower wages, have lower health and safety standards and cut programs to the youth in custody.

Workers find themselves fighting to keep what they have, while trying to provide a valuable service to the youth in their care. In some instances they have had to go on strike to win what should be basic rights and protections.

Youth Criminal Justice Act

On April 1, 2003 the federal government introduced the Youth Criminal Justice Act (YCJA). The Act was designed to steer young criminals away from jail sentences in the belief that imprisonment does little to rehabilitate them. At each stage from arrest to trial, the legislation encourages officials to divert offenders from custody into counselling, community service or some other alternative.

Recent reports have found that the Act has resulted in a dramatic decrease in the number of youth in custody, remand and probation—all within a short period of time.

As has often been the case with other well-intentioned legislation, some governments have used the opportunity to put a positive face on program cuts and facility closures.

Youth are being caught, charged and then released back in to the community with little or