



**SASKATOON** \_\_\_\_\_  
**POLICE SERVICE**

**TO:** Jo Custead, Chairperson  
Board of Police Commissioners

**FROM:** Troy Cooper  
Office of the Chief

**DATE:** 2022 August 03

**SUBJECT:** Saskatoon Police Service Victim Services

**FILE #:** 2,007-5

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**ISSUE:**

After a presentation from Adam Wykes at the June 16, 2022 Board meeting, the Board resolved that the Police Service provide a report regarding the Saskatoon Police Service (SPS) Victim Services Program.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

This report be received as information.

**STRATEGIC PRIORITY:**

Due to the broad scope held by our Victim Services Unit, multiple strategies are advanced through the program's engagement, including:

**Crime and Safety**

- Strategy 1.3 take action to support domestic abuse victims, ensuring that our response to domestic violence is efficient and effective.
- Strategy 1.4 provide a trauma-informed response to survivors of sexual assault.
- Strategy 1.5 provide efficient and effective investigations that target people committing fraud and lay appropriate charges in a timely manner;
  - Provide education and support to older adult victims of fraud in partnership with the victim's families and Victim Services.

**Partnerships**

- Strategy 5.1 continue to engage with the Indigenous Community in a purposeful and meaningful way;

## “PUBLIC AGENDA”

- Continue to respond to the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action and Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Calls for Justice.

### **Communication**

- Strategy 7.1 coordinated communications and awareness;
  - Identify and initiate opportunities to work with key stakeholders to ensure that communications are consistent and coordinated; including Victim Services recruiting.

### **BACKGROUND:**

Victim Services is a police-based program providing support, information and referrals to victims of crime and traumatic events.

### **Staff and Funding:**

The Saskatoon Police Service Victim Services Unit consists of a team of 6 paid employees and approximately 40 volunteer support workers.

There are four programs within SPS Victim Services that are primarily funded by Victim Services, Saskatchewan, Ministry of Justice (Victims Services Branch - Community Safety and Well-Being - Integrated Justice Services):

1. **Police-Based Victims Services Program** (approx. 230 clients a month). One coordinator is responsible for supervising, training, coaching, leading all staff/volunteers/programs, monthly reporting/stats to SPS and Ministry of Justice, direct client support, liaising, advocating, problem solving, etc. One Administrative Assistant assists all staff and programs with administrative duties and 40 volunteers who provide the majority of service and support to victims/survivors of lower impact crime.
2. **Indigenous Resource Officer** (approx. 125 clients a month). Two staff provide culturally appropriate services and support to Indigenous victims and their families.
3. **Missing Persons Liaison** (approx. 25 files *but* 70+ *clients* a month). One staff member provides direct services and support to families of missing persons, liaises with families and investigators to ensure needs are met, trains provincial program staff and much more.
4. **Victim Services Responder** (approx. 70 clients a month Child Centre). One staff member provides services and support to child victims and their families, advocates and liaises with community-based organizations in the Ministry of Social Services to ensure appropriate resources are available to clients.

Each program is funded differently with differing mandates, with budgets for training and salary. Victim Services employees are all members of CUPE59 and as such, the City of Saskatoon provides additional funding to meet the current salary guidelines in the Collective Bargaining Agreement.

**Services and Support:**

The Victim Services Unit strives to provide information, support and relevant service referrals to any victims, witnesses of crime and/or traumatic events;

- **INFORMATION:** updates on investigational status, court dates, community resources, Provincial and Federal Victim Services programs they may be eligible for, funeral arrangement information, Child and Family Services Protocols, and much more.
- **SUPPORT:** court preparation and accompaniment, a helping hand following a crisis, follow-ups with victims as needed, active listening and compassionate care.
- **REFERRAL:** we make referrals in order to surround the victim with the support they identify as a need: counseling, addictions, grief support agencies, crisis lines, the Sexual Assault Centre, Elders, traditional healing ceremonies, Provincial and Federal Victim Services Programs, Family Services Saskatoon, Domestic Violence Court, Catholic Family Services, Open Door Society, and much more.

Typically, employed staff are assigned files (clients) that are likely to require additional services/supports, including over an extended period of time. For example, 1-3 years for court matters and indefinite engagement for Missing Persons files.

Volunteers are assigned files that are less involved where home visits and court support are not required.

**Training:**

**Volunteers:**

- annual six-week recruitment and training event for *new* volunteers that includes 25hrs in the classroom followed by three-four hour shifts of shadow training with staff or experienced volunteers as well as on-going support and debrief;
- on-going training for all volunteers includes quarterly workshops and/or guest speakers as resources allow.

The current budget includes \$1,857.00/year to recruit, train and retain 40 volunteers including the six-week recruitment and training event and quarterly opportunities to maintain knowledge of current trends and best practices. In 2021, volunteers assisted approximately 2700 victims; the funding allows for \$.69 cents per victim and \$46/year per volunteer.

**Staff:**

- Provincial Victim Services Coordination Certification training provided by the Victims Services Branch of the Ministry of Justice through Saskatchewan Polytechnic;
- Ontario Domestic Assault Risk Assessment (ODARA) training provided by the Ministry of Justice;
- Missing Persons Training provided by the Missing Person Liaison Program staff;

## “PUBLIC AGENDA”

- Adult Court Orientation training provided by Victim/Witness Services;
- other training events provided by the Victims Services Branch of the Ministry of Justice;
- other training events/conferences planned/approved by the Victims Services Supervisor or Saskatoon Police Service.

### **DISCUSSION:**

The Victim Services program is a joint initiative between the Province of Saskatchewan and the Saskatoon Police Service to provide a service to the community in support of victims of crime.

Program funding is a continuous challenge, where five full-time employees are dedicated to service delivery. Consequently, caseloads are considered higher for the limited amount of employed staff. Reliance on volunteer assistance, development, and engagement is a critical ongoing pressure point to aid in victim response. The aspect of volunteer engagement and support presents its own, unique challenges as the Victim Services Program evolves to meet the needs and expectations of victims and the community in which this program intends to support.

*According to SPS Planning and Research, in 2021 SPS responded to **4108** Crimes Against the Person. According to Victim Services Ministry of Justice Statistics, the Victim Service Unit supported **3761** victims affected by the same Crimes Against the Person.*

A Victim Services Unit expansion is currently being explored in three key areas:

1. Human Trafficking support work in conjunction with the SPS VICE Unit to assist in supporting victims and provide support throughout the justice system, which can potentially project into a lengthy support duration of 1-3 years.

### **Canadian Centre for Justice and Community Safety Statistics – Report released June 9, 2022;**

- Human Trafficking is a form of gender violence; this is a crime that disproportionately impacts vulnerable persons.

“The vast majority (96%) of detected victims of human trafficking were women and girls. In all, one in four (25%) victims were under the age of 18. Meanwhile, one in five (20%) were aged 25 to 34” (<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2022001/article/00010-eng.htm>).

“Compared with the average annual rates for 2010 to 2020, several CMAs had a rate of human trafficking that was notably higher in 2020 specifically: Thunder Bay (15.9 incidents per 100,000 population), Peterborough (14.7), Halifax (8.5), St. Catharines–Niagara (6.4), Saskatoon (4.7), Barrie (4.6) and Windsor (4.2)” (<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2022001/article/00010-eng.htm>).

There is a plethora of information available that highlights the need for enhanced victim support.

## “PUBLIC AGENDA”

2. An additional Indigenous Resources Officer (IRO) expansion to meet the demand for support in this area. “Of the 60 homicide victims in Saskatchewan in 2020, **46 — more than 76 percent** — were Indigenous” (<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/85-002-x/2021001/article/00017-eng.pdf?st=wmbLP712>).

*\*each homicide file has at least 12 family member/witnesses/community members affected and needing our services.*

3. The creation of a Community Relations Victim Support Worker to provide additional support and services to vulnerable populations and victims of Hate Crime: Newcomer/Immigrant, LGBTQ2S+, seniors and elderly, chronically ill and disabled, homeless, individuals with mental health issues, addictions issues, and more. These communities are especially vulnerable. The Victim Services Unit struggles with resourcing the demand to meet the expansive need to appropriately provide assistance, while overcoming barriers.

### **CONCLUSION:**

The Victim Services Unit is an integral component of the Saskatoon Police Service and an extension of the Provincial Government in offering a program that strives to deliver a service to the community that effectively supports those impacted by criminal acts.

As such, with the expanse of programs, appropriate resourcing is a continuous evaluation with funding constraints that require engagement and support from the community for success and volunteerism.

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**Dated:**

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**August 5, 2022**