



THE BOARD OF POLICE COMMISSIONERS

SASKATOON, SASKATCHEWAN

December 1, 2023

VIA EMAIL

Honourable Everett Hindley
Minister of Health
Room 204, 2405 Legislative Drive
Regina, SK, S4S 0B3
he.minister@gov.sk.ca

Honourable Gene Makowsky
Minister of Social Services
Room 303, 2405 Legislative Drive
Regina, SK, S4S 0B3
ss.minister@gov.sk.ca

Honourable Tim McLeod
Minister of Mental Health and Addictions
Room 208, 2405 Legislative Drive
Regina, SK, S4S 0B3
ministerrhe@gov.sk.ca

Dear Honourable Hindley, Honourable Makowsky and, Honourable McLeod

Re: Need for Supportive Housing and Suggestions to Enhance Services for Complex Needs Individuals

Thank you for your correspondence received July 19, 2023, providing information on investments made and planned to address issues stemming from mental health and addictions in Saskatchewan.

At its Regular Public Meeting on November 16, 2023, the Saskatoon Board of Police Commissioners received a report from the Saskatoon Police Service entitled SPS Involvement with Complex Needs Individuals. The Board requested this report after hearing from the Service in May 2023 about the significant amount of police resources being used to try to address issues related to homelessness and lack of support services for people with complex needs in our community.

Through this report, the Board learned that of the 17,802 people arrested and brought into SPS detention between January 2022 and August 2023, over a quarter (31%) had not committed any criminal offence but were there only because they were intoxicated by drugs or alcohol in a public place and were in a vulnerable state and unable to care for themselves.

We learned that with no community support locations and limited availability at the Saskatchewan Health Authority Brief Detox Unit, officers simply have no choice but to house these individuals in detention. We also learned about the process for releasing these individuals from detention. With over half not having a home to return to or another place to get the help they need they are released back into the community with no support.

We learned most people (85%) arrested for public intoxication due to drugs and alcohol use are Indigenous. Through several case studies, we learned of the heartbreaking circumstances that are leading people to commit non-violent crime, and that drug induced psychosis is prevalent with all individuals using drugs, where only 10% of those using alcohol had visible mental health concerns.

Finally, we learned about the compassion being shown by our valued police officers as they work with these individuals, often providing clothing of their own to ensure people are dressed appropriately for the weather and/or have something they can wear to a court appearance.

We know our police service will play an active role in the recently announced plans for a new emergency shelter in Saskatoon. We also know they will continue to work on how to connect vulnerable people to proper services so they can get the help they need. When it comes to our Board's mission of creating a culture of community safety, our police service has no bounds, and we are so proud of the work they do each day in our community.

However, valuable policing resources continue to be used to address these complex needs, and traditional police enforcement in these circumstances is not effective. The cycle of police involvement, detention, release, and further involvement has laid out clearly the gaps in care continuity. Our police service has offered three suggestions to help disrupt this cycle:

1. Partner agency transportation from detention to a home, Social Services, a shelter, Friendship Centre, etc.,
2. Priority admittance to community support locations once the individual is sober, and
3. Priority (same day) appointments with the Ministry of Social Services for assistance.

Further, the Board and Service agree, that most importantly, our community immediately requires permanent supportive housing options with proper resources for persons with complex needs, including those suffering from psychosis and drug addiction.

The Police Board will continue to support the efforts of the Saskatoon Police Service in collaborating with all orders of government, service providers, and community organizations to implement these suggestions and create other long-term solutions that will help all people in our community succeed.

Please contact me at [REDACTED] if you wish to discuss this correspondence further.

Sincerely,



Jyotsna (Jo) Custead, Chair
Saskatoon Board of Police Commissioners

cc: Police Chief Cooper, Saskatoon Police Service
Mayor Clark, City of Saskatoon
Adam Tittermore, City Clerk, City of Saskatoon