



SASKATOON _____
POLICE SERVICE

TO: Shirley Greyeyes, Chairperson
Board of Police Commissioners

FROM: Cameron McBride
Office of the Chief

DATE: 2024 September 06

SUBJECT: Response to NSBA Reporting Concerns

FILE #: 2,001

ISSUE:

At the June 20, 2024 meeting of the Saskatoon Board of Police Commissioners, Keith Moen of the North Saskatoon Business Association (NSBA) presented and discussed a letter to the Board containing recommendations to encourage businesses to report offences and seeking enhancements by the Saskatoon Police Service (SPS) for its intake methods of crime reports from businesses, particularly for property crimes in excess of \$5,000.

This report discusses recent improvements to non-emergency report intake methods at the SPS.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Board of Police Commissioners receives this report as information.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY:

From the SPS 2020-2024 Strategic Plan, the details in this report support the Strategic Theme of Crime and Safety and its corresponding goal to maintain core policing operations and address community concerns that affect public safety by emphasizing the need for effective crime reporting to inform police operations.

The details in this report also support the Strategic Theme of Innovation and its corresponding goal to utilize technology to increase effectiveness and efficiency.

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BACKGROUND:

In addition to dispatching patrol officers to calls for service, both emergency and non-emergency, non-emergency matters can be reported using alternative methods:

- Attending in-person to the Service Center at the front entrance to the SPS Headquarters to make the report;
- Calling SPS Communications and the report being diverted to the Callback Unit who, in turn, will contact the caller at a later time during business hours to receive the complaint and collect pertinent details;
- Reporting online via the SPS website for certain specific offence types.

SPS continually encourages the community to report offences, including those for which no avenues of investigation may exist and have little or no chance of identifying a suspect or substantiating charges or other enforcement action. Capturing each report adds to the database of known offences occurring in the community which, in turn, informs police leadership of current issues and statistical trends.

At times, the volume of incoming reports can exceed the capacity of on-duty staff to receive and process them. This results in longer waits for the arrival of patrol officers (who are always dispatched to emergencies & higher priority calls first), extended waiting at the Service Center, several days' delay in successfully returning calls from the Callback Unit, and moderate delays in processing fully-submitted reports from the online portal.

Delays in responding to residents' attempts to report offences can unfortunately discourage further reporting. At the June 20th meeting of the Board of Police Commissioners, the presentation and discussion with the NSBA identified the SPS online reporting system as lacking the option for submitting reports of theft over \$5,000, thus requiring those reports to come to the SPS using the other methods more prone to delays. This further discouraged reporting of a more serious category of property offence.

DISCUSSION:

Alternative reporting methods are implemented to reduce the burden on frontline patrol officers whose primary responsibility is emergency response, and to present options to the community for convenience and accessibility.

As a direct result of the NSBA's presentation, the online reporting system was adjusted in early July 2024 to now include the option to report cases of Theft Over \$5,000. The reporting process was added to mirror the existing path for Theft Under \$5000 reports. A media release advising the public of the update was published on July 4th of this year.

The Callback Unit continues to operate under the terms which were discussed at the meeting of the Board of Police Commissioners on June 16, 2022. Delays in report completion do arise for several reasons, which can include whether the caller can be reached in the days which follow

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the initial report, but also on the availability of police officers in the unit to address the pending report queue.

To address the problem of waiting times at the Service Center, the SPS contracted Calgary-based Waitwell to implement its digital queue-management system for its public front-end operation. Waitwell’s product allows for the attending public to enter a digital queue, replacing the need to physically wait in line at the Service Center’s location. This makes the experience of entering the queue more humane, as individuals in the queue can leave the waiting area, and the premises, without abandoning their position awaiting service.

With the implementation of digital queue management in March 2023, the Visitor Assistance Commissionaire was moved to the foyer entrance to greet incoming persons and inquire as to their reason to attending. Persons requiring a criminal record check or to attend for photographing/fingerprinting are directed to the Identification area where they enter a separate digital queue for those services. Persons attending to report offences to police enter the digital queue for the Service Center by providing their name and the general reason for attending. Persons may also provide their cellular phone number to receive updates on their progress in the queue via SMS text message. If the estimated wait time is lengthy, those individuals can depart and return to the Service Center later, at a time close to their estimated appointment time, without losing their place in line. The text messaging service also facilitates communication with Service Center personnel while waiting in the digital queue.

Individuals attending the Service Center also have the option to scan the QR code posted at the entrance and enter the digital queue without the assistance of the Commissionaire.

Computer displays are mounted in the Service Center area which advise of the order of persons who will be called to the Service Center kiosk to speak with the officer on duty. The displays are anonymized; only the queue’s ticket numbers are shown, not the names of those in the queue.

Lastly, persons can remotely enter the digital queue online at the SPS website, which prompts a few brief questions including name, mobile phone number, and the general reasons for attending. The website includes a running counter with the estimated wait time, which allows for the public to minimize their anticipated wait time at the SPS.

Performance

With the digital queue, certain performance metrics can be evaluated. For the 53-week period from implementation to March 20, 2024:

Average queue ticket totals:

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Created	24	48	49	48	49	47	29
Completed	22	43	45	45	45	43	26

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The differences between average queue tickets created and completed includes tickets cancelled, no-shows and removals from the queue for other reasons.

Average daily wait times (in minutes) for the overall period are:

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
23.4	21.9	23.1	19.4	20.0	23.5	28.8

Wait times are generally the product of volume of incoming persons and the relative staffing of the Service Center positions. One constable is assigned to the Service Center at all times, with an additional Special Constable working mornings to mid-afternoons Monday through Friday. Officers on light duties are occasionally assigned when available.

Average ticket completions by hour of day:

7AM	8AM	9AM	10AM	11AM	12PM	1PM	2PM	3PM	4PM	5PM
1	4	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	3	1

On average, the heaviest workload of queue tickets processed occurs mid-day, with a slight skewness to the morning hours. Ticket completions at end-of-day may be artificially underreported due to persons attending being advised during the last hour that the queue is full for the remaining business hours and thus returning on a later date at earlier times.

CONCLUSION:

The expansion of adding Theft Over \$5,000 to the online reporting system has helped address specific concerns discussed at the June 2024 Board meeting. The introduction of digital queue management provides reporting on the overall workload at the Service Center and the wait times experienced by the public, which is normally approximately 20 minutes from entry to the queue until speaking with Service Center personnel. Qualitatively, the digital queue has improved the experience overall for the public by adding flexibility for individuals to minimize their time spent in the Service Center and to join the queue in advance via the SPS website.

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