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TO: Darlene Brander, Chairperson
Board of Police Commissioners

FROM: Troy Cooper
Office of the Chief

DATE: 2019 February 07

SUBJECT: Saskatchewan Internet Child Exploitation Unit (SKICE)

FILE #: 2,006-5

ISSUE:

This report has been provided to give the Saskatoon Board of Police Commissioners information regarding the functions and duties of the Saskatchewan Internet Child Exploitation Unit (SKICE), which works within the Saskatoon Police Service.

RECOMMENDATION:

That this report be received as information.

BACKGROUND:

The Saskatoon Board of Police Commissioners is exposed to many Sections / Units within the Police Service, but this occurs primarily as an overview during budget preparations. The Police Administration wishes to provide the Board with regular, informational sessions in a non-budget setting. This allows the Board to receive a short presentation, meet the employees and discuss their role within the organization. The sessions are designed solely as an informational tool for the Board.

DISCUSSION:

History of SKICE

The SKICE Unit was formally established in 2009 through the framework of a Memorandum of Understanding between the RCMP, Saskatoon, Regina and Prince Albert Police Services to implement a collaborative, integrated approach to Internet based child exploitation investigations.

Unit Mandate

The mandate of the Saskatchewan ICE Unit is to investigate and reduce Internet / Social Media facilitated sexual exploitation of children with a nexus to Saskatchewan, identify victimized children, assist in the prosecution of sexual offenders and provide public education to reduce

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victimization, all with a focus on crime reduction and prevention of very serious crimes against children.

In addition to its own work, the Saskatchewan ICE Unit is expected to provide support service related to its mandate to all police agencies in the Province and Units within those agencies. All municipal police services and RCMP detachments must be consulted on all child exploitation investigations.

Funding and Unit Composition

The SKICE Unit is provincially funded through the targeted policing initiatives of the Saskatchewan Government, and must be renewed every year. This funding pays for eleven police officers who comprise the Unit, and is broken down into one Provincial Coordinator, eight investigators and two computer forensic analysts. The government also provides funds for operational expenses.

The Unit has three offices where the investigators work from and they are located in Regina, Saskatoon and Prince Albert. The Regina office is in the “F” Division headquarters of the RCMP, the Saskatoon office is in the Saskatoon Police Service headquarters and the Prince Albert office is in the Prince Albert Police Service headquarters.

The Regina office has four investigators in total. Two are RCMP members and two are Regina Police Service members. They are generally responsible for ICE investigations that occur from Davidson to the US border and from the Alberta to Manitoba border. They use RCMP computer forensic analysts that are assigned to the “F” Division headquarters in Regina. Colloquially, they are referred to as SKICE South.

The Saskatoon component of the SKICE Unit falls within the Criminal Investigations, Investigative Support Division, and Criminal Intelligence Section of the Saskatoon Police Service. The Saskatoon Police currently has two investigator positions and two computer forensic analyst positions. One of the investigators is a Saskatoon Police Service member and the other is an RCMP member. Both computer forensic analysts are Saskatoon Police Service members.

The Prince Albert office has two investigators. One is an RCMP member and the other is a Prince Albert Police Service member.

The Saskatoon office and the Prince Albert office work together. They are generally responsible for ICE investigations that occur from Davidson to the Northwest Territories border and from the Alberta to Manitoba border. Colloquially, they are referred to as SKICE North.

The SKICE Unit is managed by a Provincial Coordinator at the rank of Staff Sergeant and overseen by a Joint Management Team (JMT), consisting of a total of four Officers in Charge from the participants’ respective major crime or criminal investigation divisions. The Coordinator position has a three-year term, which can be extended by the JMT, and rotates through the participating agencies.

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In order to assist in the prosecution of offenders, Saskatchewan Justice has identified dedicated Crowns whose primary job is to prosecute child exploitation offences. There are two in Saskatoon and two in Regina.

File Load and Statistics

The SKICE Unit is quite busy with an extremely heavy workload. The requests for service and investigation have been steadily increasing over the last few years and are not expected to slow down. This can partially be attributed to mandatory reporting for Electronic Service Providers (i.e. Facebook, Skype, Dropbox) and an increase in smart phone usage by youth and their applications (i.e. Snapchat, Kik), which has increased luring investigations and youth self-exploitation.

There are two general types of investigations that the ICE Unit conducts: Reactive and Proactive.

Reactive files are those where a complaint is generated from an outside source, often because an offence has already occurred. The file is referred to the Unit for investigation or assistance. These files can come from people that report to the RCMP or a municipal police service in Saskatchewan or from the National Child Exploitation Coordination Center (NCECC).

The NCECC is run by the RCMP and is located in Ottawa, Ontario. They take in reports from various agencies across the world, determine which part of Canada they apply to and forward them to that Provincial Coordinator. The files are then assigned to the office that has jurisdiction over where the file applies to. Some of the agencies that the NCECC receive files from are:

- 1) National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC): this is a non-government agency in the US that takes in reports of child pornography from various social media companies (i.e. Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr);
- 2) Canadian social media companies (i.e. Kik);
- 3) Interpol;
- 4) Department of Homeland Security;
- 5) FBI;
- 6) RCMP detachments and municipal police services outside of Saskatchewan;
- 7) The Canadian Centre for Child Protection: this is a non-government agency that works at assisting victims of child pornography or child exploitation and one of their programs is CyberTip.ca, which is a way for children to report online
- 8) Canadian Border Services Agency (CBSA); and
- 9) Crime Stoppers.

The NCECC also assists members of SKICE by forwarding files that begin in Saskatchewan, but the offender or victim is somewhere else in the world. It is this assistance which has made it possible to investigate and prosecute internet offences against Saskatchewan children or by Saskatchewan offenders as the internet has no borders.

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Proactive files are those investigations that are self-generated through the investigators own on-line research. These investigations would include luring, peer to peer, online personals, social media forums, and chat rooms.

A municipal member of the Unit is required to investigate files occurring throughout the province and has authority under the Saskatchewan Police Act 1990. The Saskatoon Police members do not just investigate Saskatoon files.

Year Ending March	New Files	Persons Charged	# Charges	Search Warrants / POs	Presentations
2012	186	34	60	n/a	n/a
2013	192	46	93	59	26
2014	212	52	156	83	28
2015	204	27	115	85	45
2016	374	32	97	152	56
2017	301	26	97	154	76

All indications are that the workload for ICE Units will increase substantially. The 2017 Stats Canada report identified a 233% increase in Child Pornography cases in the last 10 years, since 2006. 2016 alone saw a 40% increase, with Saskatchewan keeping pace. The NCECC, as of October 31, 2018, had reported 39,172 complaints nationally, whereas the total for all of 2017 was 35,712. Per investigator Saskatchewan is only second to Alberta with the number of files referred for investigation from NCECC. It should be noted there has not been any additional resources assigned to Unit since 2010, although the workload has doubled, and technology has expanded.

At the time of this report, the 2018 Stats were not available. Based on early estimates, however, it is believed that the previous trends have and will continue.

Prevention, Presentations and Awareness

The SKICE Unit delivers crime awareness presentations to many different organizations and community groups. Some of these include the Ministry of Social Services, the Provincial Correctional Service, and the Saskatoon Police Service Community Police Academy. These requests have been steadily increasing year after year.

Just due to the number of requests, it was decided years ago that the SKICE Unit itself would only be responsible for Internet and Social Media Awareness presentations to parent, community and organizational groups. The grade school presentations on Social Media Safety would be done by the School Resource Officers (SRO) during class time. To facilitate this the SKICE Unit has developed a training program for the SRO's and made a presentation for them to provide to the schools.

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Training

Investigators in the Saskatchewan ICE Unit must attend mandated training courses. These are provided by the Canadian Police College in Ottawa, Ontario or the National Child Exploitation Coordination Center in Winnipeg, Manitoba. There are other courses that the investigators are also expected to take through in-service training of the RCMP and Saskatchewan Police College. Additionally, technique specific training, such as advanced Internet investigative techniques, has been arranged.

The computer forensic analysts have their own required courses to maintain their currency and expertise in technology. As technology advances, there is always new and updated forensic training available, so our forensic experts' training is ongoing.

Operational Achievements

The SKICE Unit has had many successful investigations as of late. One of the most successful was Project Roundhouse (2017 Saskatoon Police Service Project) which resulted in the identification and investigative referral on 71 Canadian targets, 844 US targets and the rescue of at least 6 children. Another was the well-publicized Phillip Chicoine investigation where 9 children were rescued in the Philippines. A SKICE investigator testified in the Philippines and helped secure a conviction of 2 hands-on offenders there. To date, Mr. Chicoine was given the longest sentence in Saskatchewan for ICE related offences.

Many SKICE investigations have an international component. Saskatchewan investigations have resulted in referrals to or from Germany, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Australia, the Philippines and Thailand. These types of cross border investigations are becoming more common-place.

Our best international relationship is with the US and the Department of Homeland Security. There are Homeland Security Agents stationed at the US Embassy in Ottawa, Ontario, that are readily accessible to SKICE investigators for assistance. They can assist with Admin Subpoenas to make the process of receiving information from major US corporations easier. We have had several sextortion investigations where Homeland Security assisted the SKICE unit. One identified a young offender in Oklahoma, one resulted in a Dallas man receiving an 80-year sentence and one resulted in a California man being charged with, not only offences against a Saskatoon victim, but against two other victims in the US as well.

CONCLUSION:

The Saskatchewan ICE Unit is extremely successful. It is regarded nationally as one of the better ICE Units in the country. Even though it is relatively small we have had many high-profile investigations that have produced remarkable results. Once charges are laid there has been a 98% conviction rate, plus many offenders have been declared long term or dangerous offenders. Since inception the unit has rescued over 100 children from an exploitive

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environment, 23 in 2017 alone. This success can only be attributed to the extreme dedication and expertise of all the members of the Unit and their desire to save children.

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