



The Corporation of the District of Saanich | Mayor's Office

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Sent via email: premier@gov.bc.ca

March 8, 2021

The Honourable John Horgan, M.L.A.
Premier of British Columbia
PO Box 9041 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, BC V8W 9E1

Dear Premier Horgan,

Re: New Solutions to Mental Health Crisis Emergency Calls

On March 1, 2021 Saanich Council considered a Report to Council and resolved as follows:

"That Council:

- *Direct the Mayor to write to the Premier of British Columbia, the Attorney General and Minister responsible for Housing, the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and the Minister of Health asking for appropriate funding and commitments to new policy, budget and legal frameworks that support creation of a separate and distinct system to address the volume and variety of mental health calls requiring rapid response without further burdening the current 911 system and which will be resourced and administered through the Provincial Ministry of Health; and*
- *The report be forwarded to the Special Committee on Reforming the Police Act."*

A copy of the report dated February 19 and excerpt of the March 1 meeting minutes are enclosed for further information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Fred Haynes", written over a horizontal line.

Fred Haynes
Mayor

Enclosures

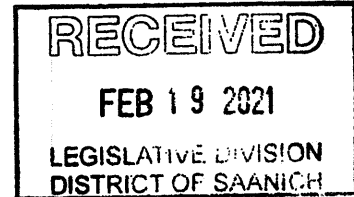
cc: Saanich Council
The Honourable Adrian Dix, Minister of Health
The Honourable David Eby, Attorney General and Minister responsible for Housing
The Honourable Sheila Malcolmson, Minister of Mental Health and Addictions

1410-04

Mar 1 / 21



The Corporation of the District of Saanich



Report

To: Mayor and Council
From: Fred Haynes, Mayor, Susan Brice, Councillor
Date: 2/19/2021
Subject: New Solutions to Mental Health Crisis Emergency Calls

RECOMMENDATION

"That Council:

1. Direct the Mayor to write to the Premier of British Columbia, the Attorney General and Minister responsible for Housing, the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and the Minister of Health asking for appropriate funding and commitments to new policy, budget and legal frameworks that support creation of a separate and distinct system to address the volume and variety of mental health calls requiring rapid response without further burdening the current 911 system and which will be resourced and administered through the Provincial Ministry of Health; and
2. This report be forwarded to the Special Committee on Reforming the Police Act."

DISCUSSION

There is a growing appreciation that greater resources and more robust health-focused solutions are required for responding to emergency calls related to individuals experiencing a mental health crisis. Currently these calls fall primarily to the 911 system and the resources available for response depend on the time of day the call arrives.

The Saanich Police Department participates in and supports two Integrated Mobile Crisis Teams (IMCRT). These are made up of Island Health nurses, counsellors, child and youth mental health clinicians and police officers from Saanich and Victoria. The IMCRT provides response in the afternoons and evenings 7 days a week for people in psychiatric or situational crisis. They are equipped to provide consultation, mobile crisis response and assessment and short-term follow-up and referral services. There is also the regional Assertive Community Treatment team (ACT). Made up of mental-health nurses, police, parole officers and social workers, this team helps connect vulnerable people with longer term support services.

These holistic models have proven their effectiveness. However, in each case limited resources, especially when there are multiple calls, means they cannot respond to all those experiencing a

These holistic models have proven their effectiveness. However, in each case limited resources, especially when there are multiple calls, means they cannot respond to all those experiencing a mental health crisis. Moreover, outside regular hours, emergency 911 calls for mental health can fall to unsupported uniformed patrol officers. Consequently, more resources to provide additional teams of mental health nurses, social workers, community support and expanded non-police centric responses are needed.

Meanwhile, separately the 811 call system operated by the HealthLink BC part of the Ministry of Health provides access to a health service navigator. These help to find health information and services but do not enable rapid assistance. Additionally, the issues of mental health, addictions and brain injury are intimately connected with the related to homelessness across our region.

These complex-care, societal problems are collectively outside the capacity and the scope of municipalities and their police departments. They need to be addressed by appropriate funding and commitments to new policy and legal frameworks from the Provincial government.



Fred Haynes
Mayor



Susan Brice
Councillor

FH/rm

1410-04

Report - Council

NEW SOLUTIONS TO MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS EMERGENCY CALLS

Notice of Motion of Mayor Haynes and Councillor Brice from the Special Council meeting of February 8, 2021 and report of Mayor Haynes and Councillor Brice dated February 19, 2021:

WHEREAS community members experiencing mental health crisis can result in calls to the 911 emergency system; and

WHEREAS the 911 dispatch addresses emergency calls for services involving police, fire, and ambulance, and includes emergency calls involving mental health where there is a risk of self-harm or harm to others; and

WHEREAS 911 calls on a mental health crisis require a health-centric approach based upon the reality of the complex care and health-based solutions required for addressing mental health crisis issues; and

WHEREAS the 811 call system operated by the HealthLink BC part of the Ministry of Health provides access to a health service navigator, who can help find health information and services but does not enable rapid assistance;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that Council asks the Mayor to write to the Premier of British Columbia and the Minister of Health to advocate for appropriate funding and commitments to new policy, budget and legal framework that fulsomely supports creation of a separate and distinct system to address the volume and variety of mental health calls requiring rapid response without further burdening the current 911 and 811 systems, and which will be resourced and administered through the Provincial Ministry of Health.

MOVED by Councillor Brice and Seconded by Councillor Harper: “That Council:

- 1. Direct the Mayor to write to the Premier of British Columbia, the Attorney General, the Minister responsible for Housing, the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and the Minister of Health asking for appropriate funding and commitments to new policy, budget and legal frameworks that support creation of a separate and distinct system to address the volume and variety of mental health calls requiring rapid response without further burdening the current 911 system and which will be resourced and administered through the Provincial Ministry of Health; and**
- 2. The report be forwarded to the Special Committee on Reforming the *Police Act*.”**

Council discussion ensued with the following comments:

- After discussion with professionals and the community, a gap in services was identified; there needs to be access to assistance for those in need and their families.
- This is a health issue and therefore the responsibility falls to the Provincial Government.

The Motion was then Put and CARRIED