



SAUGEEN SHORES POLICE SERVICES BOARD

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Public Statement on the state of the Saugeen Shores Police Building

On the 15th of January 2016, Saugeen Shores Police Chief Dan Rivett advised Council and the Police Services Board of multiple outstanding deficiencies with the Saugeen Shores Police Building at 620 Tomlinson Drive in Port Elgin.

The 6000 square foot police building has been undersized for the Saugeen Shores Police Services' needs since it was constructed in the year 2000. Following a 2009 inspection, the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services advised that the police building lacks adequate space to accommodate police operations for our community.

Over the intervening years, this problem has been exacerbated by notable increases in the incidence of complex crime in Saugeen Shores. In particular, growing investigations relating to organized crime, prostitution and sexual abuse have added considerable strain to already overburdened resources within the police building. Over the same period, several minor additions and improvements have been made within the building in an attempt to create some short-term relief from the worsening operational constraints created by the space limitations. It is now apparent, however, that the benefit derived from these efforts has not counterbalanced the evolving operating deficiencies created by the facility's inadequate, overall footprint.

The Board anticipates that this situation will only continue to deteriorate as the population of our community increases in parallel with the complexity of police work and related criminal prosecutions.

In this report, the Police Services Board will describe, in greater detail, some of the police building's deficiencies and advise the public of the ways in which these deficiencies detract from the police service's ability to effectively and efficiently manage and control the criminal activity that occurs in our community.

Security of Evidence

The Saugeen Shores police building houses and stores confidential information and evidence from ongoing and closed police investigations.

Limited space within the police building inhibits the secure storage of these sensitive materials. The lack of proper storage means that some evidence must now be stored in such a way that it risks damage or contamination which may jeopardize its usefulness in criminal proceedings. What's more, due to lack of available space, certain evidence is now stored in an offsite location. The Ministry has advised that our offsite storage is insufficiently secure.

A police building should provide for secure, on-site storage of evidence and other confidential material. This is in the interest of enforcing the law and, ultimately, protecting the public. Securely stored evidence guarantees the fulsome prosecution of people who commit crimes in our community and protects the rights of the accused.

In short, our ability to provide the community with a high standard of law enforcement is compromised by the police building's failings when it comes to secure storage of evidence.

Safety of Persons

The Saugeen Shores police building has significant limitations when it comes to providing for the safety of persons within the facility.

Lack of secure space for conducting prisoner interviews results in interactions between prisoners and civilians that may put civilians at risk.

The reduced number of garage ports (of the two existing ports, one is now being used for essential, on-site storage) limits the ability to efficiently and, therefore, safely process multiple prisoners. The Ministry has advised that the lack of a clear and dedicated prisoner garage area is putting the safety of our officers in jeopardy.

The front office reception area is insufficiently secure to adequately provide for the security of our civilian staff.

Inadequacies in temperature control and HVAC systems as well as air quality issues are creating health and safety concerns for officers, civilian members, volunteers and prisoners.

Further, in specific circumstances, the confidentiality that should be afforded to those held in custody and to those interacting with police while on parole cannot be provided because certain spaces within the facility are insufficiently private and because the layout of the facility requires frequent interaction between these individuals and volunteers working within the building.

A police building should limit the potential for violent exchanges between officers and prisoners through proactive design; It should protect the dignity and rights of those taken into custody; and it should securely separate necessary civilian activities within the facility from the confidential or dangerous elements of police operations. Our police building has significant failings in each of these areas.

Equipment and Technology

The Saugeen Shores police building lacks appropriate facilities for storing and providing access to the necessary equipment and technology used in modern policing.

Electronic fingerprint scanning allows for critical interconnectivity that greatly aids police investigations in Saugeen Shores. Our police service owns a \$40,000 scanning device that allows for access to this service. This expensive device is currently housed in the prisoner reception area where it is constantly at risk of being damaged in a scuffle. Citizens who need to be fingerprinted for security background checks using the scanning device must now be brought to the cell block for that purpose. This creates an unwarranted and unworkable interaction between prisoner and civilian uses. We have no suitable space in which to better store and use this important equipment.

The lack of local access to court facilities increasingly necessitates the use of modern video conferencing technology to provide efficient, timely and cost effective access to bail hearings for prisoners. Our police building does not have appropriate space to provide access to this service.

Recently it has become the practice in Ontario to begin to issue Conductive Energy Weapons to front line officers. We currently have inadequate space for officers to safely store this new equipment.

There is also no appropriate location for officers to clean their weapons. Cleaning firearms requires the use of corrosive chemicals. Health and safety considerations dictate that this should not be done in an area or on surfaces used for other purposes as is currently the practice.

The police building's inability to accommodate necessary equipment and technology degrades the efficiency, quality and safety of the services provided by our police service.

Operational Efficiency and Access to Funding

The space constraints in the police building result in reduced efficiency and reduced access to certain funding opportunities for the police service.

At present no activity can take place within the police building without the presence of a police officer. For example, critical support services like Victim Services and Community Watch cannot use meeting rooms independently because those rooms cannot be isolated from the secure part of the building. Stationing police officers in the building to cover these necessary uses is costly and limits flexibility when allocating police resources in the community.

Rental of offsite storage for material like evidence, recovered bicycles and seized vehicles adds an additional operating expense for the service and reduces efficiency in managing those materials.

The police services' ability to achieve qualifications and designations that may create opportunities for increased funding support is limited by inadequate facilities and resultant inefficiency. For example, lack of a secure room for major crime investigation work prevents us from receiving increased support for training and equipment through the Criminal Intelligence Service of Ontario. This increases cost to the tax payer and restrains the ability of police to investigate major crimes in our community at a time when we are experiencing an increase in complex crime and resultant investigations.

Money spent accommodating inefficiency within the police building is a cost to the tax payers of Saugeen Shores. This expense is exacerbated by the fact that it comes with limitations on the service provided to the public that are created by the building's inefficiencies.

Conclusion

The information presented above is a high level outline of some of the deficiencies currently being experienced within the Saugeen Shores police building. The Board is of the opinion that these deficiencies must be addressed in short order. Without dealing with these outstanding issues, the Board cannot continue to ensure that the community is receiving adequate policing.

The Board is reaching out to the community with this information with the intent to seek the public's input on the concerns that are raised in this report and on possible solutions. The Board has struck a committee to undertake this consultation and will look for two members of the public to join that committee.

This report will be made available through the press, on police and municipal websites and through distribution to Council. Comments will be solicited on the content of this report via the Police Service's website and through public information sessions.

It is the Board's intention to consider public feedback on the content of this report as it formulates recommendations for Council on how to approach dealing with the need to address the deficiencies with the police building. These recommendations will be made to Council in the fall of 2016.

As always, this effort is being made in the broader interest of fulfilling our mission to make Saugeen Shores the safest place in which to live, work and raise a family.

