

John Howard Society of Saskatchewan
Submission on MN 19-21: Community Safety and Wellbeing

Your Worship, Councillors, Members of the Administration,

My name is Pierre Hawkins. I am Public Legal Counsel with the John Howard Society of Saskatchewan, on whose behalf I appear tonight. The John Howard Society of Saskatchewan serves and advocates for those most at risk of interaction with the justice system.

The motion before you is an important one. It acknowledges that crime, community safety, and community wellness are problems that extend beyond the reach of the police. The motion seeks to place the City in the larger community safety discussion. It stresses the need to address the root causes of crime, along with the need to reduce the harm caused to individuals and communities when crime happens.

An effective response to crime considers every aspect of the problem, from addressing root causes, to policing, to victim supports, to harm reduction, to rehabilitation, to reintegration. The current approach is not enough. We in Saskatchewan continue to imprison large numbers of poor, young, and indigenous people. This is ineffective, expensive, and fundamentally inhumane. Root causes are not tackled head-on. Our penal system does not have the resources to effectively rehabilitate perpetrators. There is significant work still to be done.

Crime is a problem that can only be addressed by engaging entire communities. It is a fundamentally personal transgression from the perspectives of perpetrators, victims, and surrounding community members alike. It requires a personal and empathetic response. As the level of government closest to communities, the City of Regina has a role to play, as do community organizations like the John Howard Society of Saskatchewan.

The John Howard Society of Saskatchewan currently partners with the Province to help house those at risk and to help reintegrate people who have served their sentence, among other social and justice partnerships. These partnerships have meant the delivery of effective and personalized service to those who need assistance. These are the sorts of partnerships that this motion encourages. We are keen to partner with other community organizations and with all levels of government. We are particularly keen to engage the municipal level of government, which is so close to the communities you serve.

Finally, this motion is important because it recognizes the impact that City decisions can have on poverty, addiction, isolation, and other root causes of crime. I thank Council for focusing on its role in the fight to make our communities safer and for acknowledging that community safety means more than police action. We all have a role to play.

Thank you for your time.