

OmbudsPEI releases report on province’s mobile mental health crisis response

CHARLOTTETOWN, PEI – The Island’s Ombudsperson’s office has submitted its report on PEI’s mobile mental health crisis response following an investigation into communications between the Mobile Mental Health Unit (MMHU) and the province’s various police services.

The report, *Joining Forces*, details OmbudsPEI’s investigation into mental health crisis response following a Fall 2023 referral from the Standing Committee on Health and Social Development. That referral tasked OmbudsPEI with determining why the MMHU was not dispatched to an event that preceded the death of an Islander, and to review the overall communication with and by the unit in cases of mental health crisis calls.

The report details MMHU’s development history, how its operating model was chosen and how that choice impacted the unit’s operational capabilities.

OmbudsPEI found that the MMHU initially relied on police to respond to mental health wellness checks and other mental health crisis calls made to police because of the risk involved. The MMHU required police to obtain consent from the individual before the unit would attend.

However, the MMHU eventually began to loosen the requirement for police to obtain consent before the unit would deploy in high-risk situations. While this has resulted in more dispatches for the unit, adopting this practice has proved challenging.

“The decision to implement a standalone mental health crisis response program has resulted in the MMHU being asked to do what no other similar unit in Canada has done,” said Sandy Hermiston, PEI’s Ombudsperson and Public Interest Disclosure Commissioner.

“The MMHU attempted to adapt a low-risk operating model to both low-risk and high-risk situations. It should come as no surprise that this decision brought unprecedented challenges upon the unit.”

Over the course of the investigation, OmbudsPEI spoke with members of the MMHU, the Department of Health and Wellness, and the province’s various police services, all of which share the belief that closer collaboration is possible. OmbudsPEI looks forward to seeing how that collaboration will shape the MMHU’s operating model moving forward.

A copy of the *Joining Forces* report, as well as an executive summary of the report, can be found online at www.ombudspei.ca/joining-forces

Media Contact

Matthew Chapman
Deputy Ombudsperson – OmbudsPEI
mchapman@ombudspei.ca
902-218-7590

About OmbudsPEI

As an independent office of the Legislature, OmbudsPEI investigates complaints of unfair treatment by government agencies and provides general oversight of government's administrative processes under the *Ombudsperson Act*. The Ombudsperson has a broad mandate to investigate complaints about unfair treatment, process or decisions by public sector agencies such as government ministries, agencies boards and commissions, municipalities and Health PEI.

OmbudsPEI promotes fairness, transparency and accountability in the public sector to enhance good governance and public confidence in government. Our work improves public services for all Islanders.

If any Islander believes they have experienced an unfairness in their interactions with a provincial agency, they can contact OmbudsPEI to explore options for making a complaint. Our services are free and confidential.

Sandy Hermiston also serves as PEI's Public Interest Disclosure Commissioner pursuant to her appointment under the *Public Interest Disclosure and Whistleblower Protection Act*. Public servants can report wrongdoing by making a protected disclosure or complaint about a reprisal to the office.

For more information about OmbudsPEI, visit [OmbudsPEI – Office of The Ombudsperson PEI](http://www.ombudspei.ca).