



Council Member Motion
Committee of the Whole Meeting of March 11, 2021

Date: March 8, 2021

From: Councillor Andrew and Councillor Thornton-Joe

Subject: Mental Health and Addiction Services

Background

Island Health is charged with the care of British Columbians living on Vancouver Island, including Greater Victoria.

Emergency services for those experiencing severe mental or addiction crisis are provided at Royal Jubilee Hospital situated within the City of Victoria.

In 2020 Victoria Police apprehended 676 people under the Mental Health Act and delivered them to the evaluation and care of physicians at Royal Jubilee Hospital resulting in officers spending more than 1,000 hours waiting at the hospital.

That same year, Island Health requested Victoria Police attend the hospital to find and return 111 people who were at risk but allowed to leave the hospital unescorted for various reasons. Victoria Police spent more than 32 hours in waiting time at the hospital, not including resources and time searching for the individuals.

Island Health also requires Victoria Police to search and deliver individuals who fail to attend to the hospital for scheduled of mental health treatment, including the taking of anti-psychotic drugs. In 2020, Police attended the hospital 73 times, often requested by Island Health staff to drive the patient home following treatment.

The above incidents show gaps within the treatment and care of mental health and addicted patients where Victoria Police inappropriately becomes the default standard of care.

These procedures also place undue funding pressures on the budget of the City of Victoria.

Recommendation

Council writes to Island Health, the BC Ministry of Health and the BC Solicitor General to request:

1. Island Health Security be given "Special Constable Status" to take custody of patients apprehended under the Mental Health Act on arrival at hospital.
2. Island Health no longer allows unescorted visits for those patients at risk and being treated for mental health and/or addiction.

3. Island Health finds alternative ways to return patients home following mandated mental health and/or addiction treatment.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "S. Andrew".

Councillor S. Andrew

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Charlayne Thornton-Joe".

Councillor C Thornton-Joe