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30th Oct 2014

The Chief of Police and Sergeant David Chow
Police Headquarters
9620-103A Ave.
Edmonton , AB T5H 0H7

Edmonton Police Commission

Suite 171
10235 - 101 Street
Edmonton AB T5J 3E9

Dear Sirs,

I am a psychiatrist practicing in Edmonton and part of my work for the last several years has involved providing psychiatric support to the mental health crisis team and to the PACT program. I do this on the basis of being "on call" to these programs and thus respond on request. During the last seven years or so my rough estimate is that I have responded to about 750 calls. While a proportion of these is with the PACT staff, a higher proportion is with patrol officers and clinicians from the Crisis program. I have been impressed by the almost universal positive and helpful attitude of the EPS officers toward both me and to those unfortunate enough to be mentally ill and requiring services. I have been present when officers have been "taken down" by little 75-year-old ladies, decked in a parking lot, where an officer was stabbed, where myself and the mental health therapist were barricaded in a room, where our subjects have tried to seize the officers weapon and in a number of instances where concealed weapons were present including guns, hammers, knives, baseball bats and so on.

Some experiences of a different type standout. One where one police officer took an angry dementing husband to view his model train set-up which allowed everybody else to carry on trying to assess his wife. On another occasion a young policewoman successfully persuaded an elderly confused and frightened demented lady to go for a ride in her police car when the patient refused to ride with family members.

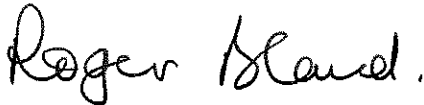
These are just some examples of the situations quite frequently encountered. It was thus with some interest that I learned that the police were doing training sessions at the Nixon Centre using PACT members, (both police and mental health); to enact scenarios and have patrol officers deal with each of these. I inquired if I might attend one of these sessions as an observer and this was arranged for October 2nd. I observed several teams of officers dealing with each of the three scenarios. In my opinion the scenarios were

realistically staged and, from a mental health perspective, all teams dealt with the situations realistically and appropriately. Obviously not all teams dealt with things in the same way, but to all showed concern for ensuring a safe environment, trying to understand the mental state of the patient, and seem to have a good awareness of the appropriate actions that they could take under the mental health act. The discussions, which took place after each group, were I think constructive and helpful rather than unnecessarily critical.

In my opinion the EPS is to be congratulated on its emphasis on training its officers on mental health issues and for its active participation in the creation and maintenance of the PACT teams. I think that over the years this has made a big difference to how the mentally ill are dealt with by law enforcement. I was interested to hear a radio program about 10 days ago in which a Mental Health Commission spokesman was congratulating Halifax and Edmonton police services on their adoption of mental health training. I'm also aware that there is a feeling among some forces that the police should not have anything to do with frontline involvement with the mentally ill, and that this should be a health services responsibility. I think that it is inevitable that police will be involved with mental health situations and their involvement is in my opinion essential, but is best done by close partnership with mental health services.

So, may I finish by congratulating you on an excellent program with a well-trained staff that is responsive to the needs of the mentally ill.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Roger Bland". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Roger Bland