

UBCM backs call for province-wide Car 40 program

(Penticton, BC – September 15, 2022) – Municipalities from across British Columbia have backed Penticton City Council’s call for a province-wide Car 40 program that pairs police with mental health workers.

“This is a program that has been shown to work, that can make an impact and allows people to be treated with a greater level of care and concern,” says Mayor John Vassilaki. “We need partnerships to deal with the health and safety issues we’re facing and we need to replace the scattered approach we have right now. It’s time for the province to implement a predictable and sustainably funded program.”

Car Programs pair a mental-health practitioner with an RCMP officer as they respond to calls involving mental-health issues and have been in place since 1978. In Vancouver, the programs have been shown to reduce the need for patrol response and unnecessary hospital admissions, while connecting people in crisis to the appropriate services in the community.

Across the province, requests for the introduction of new programs or expansion of established programs have been met with inconsistent responses from local health authorities. The resolution from Penticton City Council underscores the need for such programs to be implemented and funded provincially not as ‘one-off’ local programs.

City Council met yesterday with Mental Health and Addictions Minister Sheila Malcolmson about the need for immediate action and, while the minister expressed the appropriate sentiments, there was no commitment to translating them into action.

Meeting requests to Health Minister Adrian Dix and Municipal Affairs Minister Nathan Cullen were declined and referred to Minister Malcolmson.

The City has a meeting scheduled today with Public Safety Minister Mike Farnworth, who has been tasked by the Premier to work with the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions to invest in community-based mental health and social services so there are more trained front-line workers to help people in crisis and free up police resources to focus on more serious crimes.

Following UBCMs endorsement of the resolution, it will be sent to the Province for consideration and response. The City has requested immediate action and will continue to pursue with all Ministries involved.

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