



**IN THE MATTER OF THE DEATH OF A MAN
ON NOVEMBER 11, 2024,
AFTER BEING IN THE CUSTODY OF THE RCMP
IN PRINCE GEORGE, BRITISH COLUMBIA**

**DECISION OF THE CHIEF CIVILIAN DIRECTOR
OF THE INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATIONS OFFICE**

Chief Civilian Director:

Jessica Berglund

IIO File Number:

2024-259

Date of Release:

October 3, 2025

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INTRODUCTION

On the afternoon of November 6, 2024, the Affected Person (“AP”) was arrested in Prince George for being intoxicated in public. He subsequently became unresponsive while in police cells and was taken to the hospital. He passed away in hospital several days later.

The Independent Investigations Office (“IIO”) was notified and commenced an investigation. The narrative that follows is based on evidence collected and analyzed during the investigation, including the following:

- statements of five civilian witnesses, one paramedic and four witness police officers;
- police Computer-Aided Dispatch (“CAD”) and Police Records Information Management Environment (“PRIME”) records;
- video recordings from the RCMP detachment;
- RCMP cells documentation;
- medical records; and
- autopsy and toxicology reports.

The IIO does not require officers whose actions are the subject of an investigation to provide evidence. In this case, neither of the two subject officers has given any account to the IIO.

NARRATIVE

Civilian Witness 1 (“CW1”) told the IIO that on November 4, 2024, the AP suddenly left the family residence and did not return. CW1 said that she looked for the AP but could not find him, and on the afternoon of November 6 she reported him missing to the police.

A police PRIME report dated November 5, 2024, stated that at 12:29 p.m. that day, the AP came into the RCMP detachment asking to be taken into custody. He was described as exhibiting symptoms of paranoia, saying that he was in danger from people chasing him. The AP was escorted by police to the hospital, where a doctor certified him under the *Mental Health Act* (“MHA”). It appears, however, that the AP was not admitted to a ward and was left without supervision. At some point, he left the hospital of his own accord.

A second PRIME report indicated that on the same afternoon, the AP called the RCMP from a pizza restaurant, saying again that people were “after him and trying to get him.” An officer drove the AP to a shelter where the AP said he would feel safe sleeping.

A third PRIME report the same day stated that staff at a seniors’ care home had called police about the AP, who they said was in the facility refusing to leave because “a group of people were following him.” The AP was arrested for mischief and taken to police cells to prevent a continuation of the offence.

The AP was released from RCMP custody at approximately 8:00 a.m. on November 6, 2024. Civilian Witness 2 (“CW2”), a civilian detention guard, told the IIO that the AP was given a cup of coffee and a jacket before he left the detachment.

The AP next came to the attention of police at 2:29 p.m. the same day. Civilian Witness 3 (“CW3”), a mental health nurse, told IIO investigators that at that time, she was partnered with Subject Officer 1 (“SO1”) on patrol. CW3 said that they encountered the AP staggering along in the middle of a busy street. She said SO1 stopped the police vehicle and approached the AP. She said that the officer asked the AP where he lived and if he needed a ride home, but that the AP was not able to provide any information to them. CW3 said that SO1 had to hold onto the AP’s arm to steady him as he was escorted off the roadway, and that there was a very strong odour of liquor coming from him. She said that SO1 apprehended the AP for public intoxication and transported him to police cells.

As they were leaving the scene, CW3 said, they were flagged down by a taxi driver, who told them that the AP had taken a long ride around town in the cab, and had left some of his belongings in the back seat. The belongings were turned over to SO1.

Interviewed later by the IIO, Civilian Witness 4 (“CW4”), the cab driver, recalled that the AP had asked him for a \$200 ride around Prince George. CW4 said that he drove the AP around for “a couple of hours,” during which time he observed that the AP was drinking liquor and taking “little yellow pills,” and was becoming progressively more intoxicated. At one point, CW4 said, the AP obtained more money from an ATM and bought more liquor. Finally, he said, the AP got out of the cab and was just wandering around in the road. CW4 said he called his dispatcher to see what he should do, as the AP was extremely intoxicated and apparently unable to care for himself, but CW4 then noticed SO1’s police vehicle arriving. He said he collected the AP’s possessions, including prescription pill bottles, and gave them to SO1.

CW3 said that she had experience working with an adult detox unit and said that the AP was intoxicated but did not appear to be in medical distress. She said she did not see anything suggesting the AP needed to go to a hospital.

CW3 said that the AP's behaviour during transport had been "uppity," and said he was kicking in the rear of the police vehicle. Shortly after they arrived at the detachment, she said, she saw several officers rushing into the cells area and followed them. She described seeing SO1 and Subject Officer 2 ("SO2") holding the AP by his arms, apparently picking him up.

Detention guard CW2 gave IIO investigators an account of what had happened. She said that she saw the AP sitting on a bench in the cells booking area, and said he was not cooperating with police. She said she saw him "take a swing" at SO1 and then saw SO1 and SO2 controlling him on the floor.

Detachment video shows the interaction between the AP and SO1. The two subject officers can be seen attempting to search the AP as he sits on a bench, slumping forward repeatedly. At one point, the AP turns and pushes SO1 forcefully with both arms. The two officers pull the AP off the bench onto the floor, and SO2 delivers four blows to the AP's back before the officers are able to control the AP and handcuff him.

CW2 told the IIO that the AP was taken to a cell, and she saw SO2 conduct a cell check shortly afterwards. About twelve minutes after this, she said, she conducted a physical check herself and said the AP was moving and snoring. She observed a small amount of blood on the cell floor and observed that the AP's toe had been bleeding.

In her IIO interview, CW2 described how, if detainees were not obviously moving around or making noise, she would carefully observe them for signs of breathing, such as a clothing wrinkle moving slightly. On her next check, she said, she could not see any movement from the AP, even after she banged on the cell door, so she fetched SO2, who went into the cell and tended to the AP. Officers provided first aid and summoned paramedics, who arrived within a short time. The AP was transported to the hospital. He was found to have suffered a cardiac arrest that had led to massive brain injury through oxygen deprivation. He did not regain consciousness and passed away in hospital on November 11, 2024.

The autopsy report states cause of death as:

...best ascribed to hypoxic ischemic encephalopathy (low oxygen induced brain damage), secondary to a mixed substance toxicity (ethanol and gabapentin). These substances likely resulted in considerable respiratory depression and subsequent hypoxemia. The seizure disorder and cardiac disease (cardiomegaly and concentric left ventricular hypertrophy) can be considered contributing factors, as both of these would have increased the risk of sudden death, especially in the setting of a mixed substance toxicity.

No injury was noted from any use of force. The toxicology report noted a very high blood alcohol concentration and the presence of Gabapentin at a concentration exceeding a typical therapeutic range.

ANALYSIS

The Independent Investigations Office of British Columbia is mandated to investigate any incident that occurs in the province in which an Affected Person has died or suffered serious physical harm and there appears to be a connection to the actions (or sometimes inaction) of police. The aim is to provide assurance to the public that when the investigation is complete, they can trust the IIO's conclusions, because the investigation was conducted by an independent, unbiased, civilian-led agency.

In most cases, those conclusions are presented in a public report such as this one, which completes the IIO's mandate by explaining to the public what happened in the incident and how the Affected Person came to suffer harm. Such reports are generally intended to enhance public confidence in the police and in the justice system as a whole through a transparent and impartial evaluation of the incident and the police role in it.

In a smaller number of cases, the evidence gathered may give the Chief Civilian Director ("CCD") reasonable grounds to believe that an officer has committed an offence in connection with the incident. In such a case, the *Police Act* gives the CCD authority to refer the file to Crown counsel for consideration of charges.

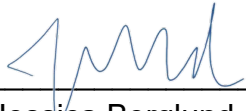
In this case, I must consider whether an officer may have committed an offence through an unjustified use of force against the AP, or through negligence in any respect in providing care to him while in police custody.

As set out above, both subject officers used force in taking the AP to the floor of the booking area, and SO2 delivered strikes to the AP's back. A review of objective video evidence, however, shows that the AP was acting in a resistant and assaultive manner at the time. The low level of force used in response was necessary to control him and was not excessive in the circumstances. As noted above, there is no evidence to connect any use of force to the AP's death.

With respect to the officers' duty of care towards the AP during his brief time in cells, there is no evidence that any officer failed in that duty.

Accordingly, as Chief Civilian Director of the IIO, I do not consider that there are reasonable grounds to believe that an officer may have committed an offence under any

enactment and the matter will not be referred to Crown counsel for consideration of charges.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'J. Berglund', is positioned above a horizontal line.

Jessica Berglund
Chief Civilian Director

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