

Out of the Silos: Implementing Solutions Together

JUSTICE SUMMIT – MARYSTOWN

SUMMARY REPORT

Prior to the event, participants were asked to come prepared to discuss:

- What issues are causing challenges for the criminal justice system to work effectively and efficiently on the Burin Peninsula?
- Why are these issues occurring?
- What are the solutions to addressing these issues and who would be part of implementing these solutions?

The Department of Justice and Public Safety held a Justice Summit on the criminal justice system in Marystown on September 18, 2018. The theme for the Summit was “Out of the Silos: Implementing Solutions Together”. The forum provided a space where various stakeholders could participate in an open dialogue about how the criminal justice system is working on the Burin Peninsula and how challenges can be overcome through collaboration. This summit was the last of five organized events across the province, which will help to inform strategies to improve the criminal justice system in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Approximately 30 invited stakeholders attended the event. Participants included, but were not limited to, judiciary and administrators from the Supreme Court of Newfoundland and Labrador, the Court of Appeal of Newfoundland and Labrador, and Provincial Court, as well as representatives from Corrections and Community Safety, Victims Services, RNC, RCMP, Adult Probation, Provincial Crown, Office of the High Sheriff, Legal Aid, members of the legal community, government departments, community organizations, and others.

The day-long event began as follows:

- The Honourable Andrew Parsons, QC, Minister of Justice and Public Safety and Attorney General, welcomed participants and discussed the purpose of the event;
- Kendra Wright, Assistant Deputy Minister, Courts and Corporate Services, Department of Justice and Public Safety provided a brief overview of the criminal justice system on the Burin Peninsula.

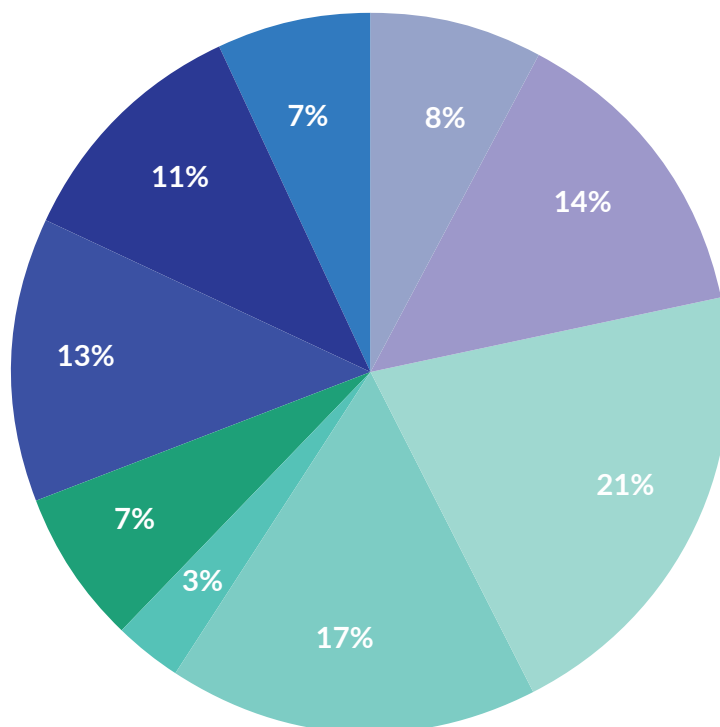
Participants engaged in facilitated small-table discussions to identify the top issues they each felt needed to be addressed in the criminal justice system on the Burin Peninsula. The top issues identified by participants were:

1. Lack of diversion and restorative justice resources and programs;
2. Transportation and geography issues in relation to courts and justice system supports;
3. Lack of staffing for core justice related organizations (police, courts, Sheriff's Office, Crown, lawyers) ;
4. Lack of appropriate services for people with mental health and addiction issues;
5. Capacity and overcrowding issues with respect to housing offenders;
6. Delays in processing and receiving disclosure packages;
7. Lack of specialty courts, including Family Violence Intervention Court;
8. Challenges in conflicting organizational mandates and priorities for policing organizations responsible for transporting offenders; and,
9. Restrictions on information sharing between agencies due to privacy concerns.

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Participants then voted on the top three issues they wanted to discuss for the remainder of the day. The results are shown below:

- 8% Lack of diversion and restorative justice
- 14% Transportation and geography issues
- 21% Lack of staffing
- 17% Lack of mental health and addiction services
- 3% Building capacity and overcrowding
- 7% Disclosure delays
- 13% Lack of specialty courts
- 11% Conflicting organizational mandates
- 7% Information sharing restrictions



Based on the results of the polling above, the three issues selected for discussion for the remainder of the day were:

1. Lack of staffing for core justice related organizations
2. Lack of appropriate services for people with mental health and addiction issues
3. Transportation and geography issues in relation to courts and justice system supports

Participants discussed each issue and were asked to focus on what challenges need to be addressed in relation to those issues and what solutions exist. All comments and ideas expressed were compiled, with the following common themes emerging.

Issue 1: Lack of staffing for core justice related organizations

Challenges identified by participants

- Financial and budget constraints for hiring
- Vacant positions:
 - Lack of Sheriff's Officers and Court Clerks
 - No casual/on-call list to fill vacancies
- Greater workload leads to:
 - Staff burnout
 - Disconnect with clients/victims
- No minimum staffing requirements
- Lack of staffing impacts disclosure
 - Police are tasked with completing disclosure
 - Longer wait times for disclosure

Possible solutions identified by participants

- Technology can be used for video conferencing for court appearances to assist with staff shortages at the courts
- Greater staff support:
 - Greater opportunities for training, job security for civilian staff, and accountability for staff
 - Increased and accessible mental health support for staff
- Creation of a relief team to help backfill positions
- Engage in mentorship and succession planning
- Adopt creative scheduling and strategies for resolving conflicts

Issue 2: Lack of appropriate services for people with mental health and addiction issues

Challenges identified by participants

- Lack of access to:
 - Addictions services
 - Treatment programs and facilities
 - Psychiatrist
 - Mental health services
- Limited after hours mental health or crisis services (after 5 p.m.)
- Difficulty in accessing prescription medication
- Issues with privacy and sharing of information in relation to medical needs

Possible solutions identified by participants

- Establish a Mental Health Mobile Crisis Response Team with plain clothes officers
- Create a Mental Health Treatment centre
- Expand specialty and mental health courts across the province
- School based interventions for addictions and mental health support
- Develop a family-based mental health and addiction program
- Resources should be pooled to address growing issues
- Utilize technology to provide mental health and addiction services

Issue 3: Transportation and geography issues, in relation to courts and justice system supports

Challenges identified by participants

- Isolation impacts staffing retention
- Services for individuals are spread out
- Difficulty for staff to meet with clients who are not local
- Use of technology to alleviate geographical issues is costly
- Issues with offender transportation:
 - Staffing shortages
 - Costly
 - Inefficient use of RCMP resources
- Jury duty travel costs are expensive and only cover individuals selected
- Witness and victim transportation:
 - Costly
 - Limited means of transportation

Possible solutions identified by participants

- Video calls and conferencing:
 - Utilize and increase access for court appearances for both victims and accused
 - Explore cheaper and more cost effective options for video conferencing
 - Establish conference calling for RCMP and court
- Assist witnesses in going to court, including financial compensation and transportation opportunities
- Increase number of Sheriff's Officers to assist with inmate transport and court security
- Establish provincewide uniform practices with respect to courts
- Provide education and awareness about subpoenas

WHAT'S NEXT?

The Department of Justice and Public Safety is reviewing opportunities to address challenges and implement solutions identified by participants at the Justice Summit. Further details related to progress will be made available throughout 2019.

For more information:

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