



# ESTEVAN

## COMMUNITY WELLNESS

Estevan Community Wellness

# Plan 2024

The Estevan Community Safety and Well-Being Plan is a comprehensive look at the background of our community and how that shared past, present, and future is impacting the lives of residents. This is also a commitment to the community that safety and well-being is important to us all and the work outlined here will be a focus for years to come within a framework that includes incident response, risk intervention, prevention, and social development.



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# Introduction

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## Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge that Estevan is in Treaty 4 Territory the original lands of the Cree, Saulteaux, Dakota, Nakota, Lakota, and the homeland of the Métis nation. The community of Estevan also serves many in the Treaty 2 Territory the traditional lands of Anishinaabeg, Cree, Oji-Cree, Assiniboine, Dakota, and Dene Peoples, and the homeland of the Métis Nation.

This land Acknowledgement is an act of reconciliation, honouring Indigenous heritage, and history. We are in gratitude and appreciation for those whose territory we reside on, and we recognize that we are all treaty people. These treaties provide a foundation for co-operation and partnership as we move forward together in a spirit of reconciliation.



# Introduction

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## Message from the Mayor



**Roy Ludwig**  
Mayor of Estevan

As we find our way in life, we encounter many challenges and uncertainties which help us to choose the path we end up taking. Some in our community through no fault of their own, end up with mental health challenges along with addiction issues. Instead of pointing fingers and being accusatory, we as a community, province and country must come together and work collectively toward solutions. I believe we have made a good start in Estevan by joining forces to build our Community Safety and Well-Being Plan. Through collaborating together and using the data collected to educate ourselves and our community, this plan has the ability to heal and move our community forward.

I would like to thank all the individuals and groups who have given of their time and brought their expertise forward to make this happen. I would also like to thank the province and SEDA for providing financial help as well as a tremendous facilitator who was able to bring everyone together and create a foundation for us to build upon.

## Message from the Chief of Police



**Richard Lowen**  
Chief of Police, Estevan Police Service

On behalf of the members of the Estevan Police Service, I am pleased to support our Community Safety and Well-Being Plan, a comprehensive initiative aimed at fostering safety, unity, and health within our vibrant community. As your Chief of Police, I understand the critical role law enforcement plays in enhancing the overall quality of life for our residents. This plan goes beyond traditional policing by emphasizing collaboration, outreach, and proactive measures to address the unique needs of our diverse community.

Together, we can create an environment where everyone feels secure, valued, and empowered to contribute to the flourishing of Estevan. Your involvement and support are crucial in making this vision a reality, and I look forward to working hand in hand to build a safe and healthy community where we can all live together for many generations into the future.



# Introduction

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## Message from the Chairperson and Co-Chairperson



**Shelly Veroba, Chairperson**  
Estevan City Councillor

It has been our honor and pleasure to serve on and work with the Community Safety and Well-Being Plan Advisory Committee and to enable together the creation of the City of Estevan's first Community Safety and Well-Being Plan. This plan was borne out of genuine concern and understanding that Estevan needed a strong commitment to helping the whole community become a safer and healthier place to live, work, play, and invest. Through surveys, focus groups, collaboration, conversations, research, testimonials, and reaching out to the many agencies that support our community, we have charted a path together to drive positive change in our community.



**Heidi Hesselink, Co-Chairperson**  
Executive Director, United Way Estevan

Now, as the chair and co-chair of the newly formed Estevan Community Wellness Committee, we commit to using this document to ensure that everyone in our community has access to the information and resources needed to not only meet safety and well-being needs but to grow together as a community. With committed leadership, a well-informed plan to guide us, and the support of Mayor and Council, Estevan Police Service and numerous agencies that support our community, we look forward to working together to bring this plan into action knowing that it will make a difference and steer us toward a better Estevan for all.

**"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."**

- Margaret Mead

# Introduction

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## Community Acknowledgements

The Estevan Community Wellness Committee is grateful to the citizens of Estevan for their engagement and commitment to this process. The committee thanks all the members of the Advisory Committee who have worked within their respective professional roles to make this community a better place and for their dedication to this Community Safety and Well-Being process. Thank you to those that answered the Community Safety and Well-Being Survey, attended a focus group, or provided feedback and ideas to this process. Together we are better!

### Advisory Committee Organizations:

City of Estevan  
Creighton Lodge  
Envision Counselling  
Estevan Chamber of Commerce  
Estevan Comprehensive School  
Estevan Comprehensive School SRC  
Estevan Diversified Services  
Estevan Housing Authority  
Estevan Police Service  
Estevan Public Youth Centre  
Saskatchewan Health Authority  
Settlement Workers in Schools  
Southeast Advocates for Employment  
Southeast College  
Southeast Cornerstone Public School Division  
Southeast Newcomers  
St. Joseph's Addiction Recovery Centre  
St. Joseph's Hospital  
The Salvation Army  
United Way Estevan



# Introduction

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## Pilot Project Funding Acknowledgement

The Estevan Community Safety and Well-Being Plan was possible due to the support of the Ministry of Corrections, Policing and Public Safety, Community Safety and Well-Being Branch. The branch works with communities across Saskatchewan to provide a variety of supports around community safety and well-being planning and development.

The department contracted the Saskatchewan Economic Development Alliance (SEDA) to implement a rural pilot project in 2023. In its role as the exclusive non-governmental organization dedicated to provincial community and economic development in Saskatchewan, SEDA empowers communities and organizations with the necessary skills, knowledge, resources, and programs to foster a sustainable future. SEDA actively pursues a mandate of accelerating generational prosperity and well-being. The most resilient economies are those that adopt a solutions-based approach and work to address complex issues using an inclusive lens that transcends sectors and systemic bias. Facilitation for this process was provided by Jackie Wall, Founder of Inspire Strategies for Business which creatively works to transform businesses, organizations and communities.



# Executive Summary

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**“Community safety and well-being is the ideal state of a community where everyone is safe, has a sense of belonging, opportunities to participate, and where individuals and families are able to meet their needs for education, healthcare, food, housing, income, and social and cultural expression.”**

The Estevan Community Safety and Well-Being Plan is a comprehensive look at the background of our community and how that shared past, present, and future is impacting the lives of residents. This is also a commitment to the community that safety and well-being is important to us all and the work outlined here will be a focus for years to come within a framework that includes incident response, risk intervention, prevention, and social development. To formalize the commitment to our future, the Estevan Community Wellness Committee established a clear mission, vision, and values to guide The Estevan Community Safety and Well-Being Plan.

As defined by the Community Safety and Well-Being Planning Guidebook provided by the Saskatchewan Economic Development Alliance (SEDA), “Community safety and well-being is the ideal state of a community where everyone is safe, has a sense of belonging, opportunities to participate, and where individuals and families are able to meet their needs for education, healthcare, food, housing, income, and social and cultural expression.” To work towards that goal, the Advisory Committee has been focused on gathering representative information to assess where our community is at with both statistical data and community engagement initiatives.

After several planning session, the Estevan Community Wellness Committee has identified four priority areas: Mental Wellness, Substance Abuse and Addiction, Education and Employment, and Victimization. The Committee is encouraged by the number of initiatives that are already at work in these areas within the community and has a strong foundation to build upon. New goals have been established to address each of these areas by building on what we already have and developing new initiatives to address gaps in our community.

The following document is only the start. The Estevan Community Wellness Committee is grateful to the funding that was provided to formalize what our community was already working towards. Now, this foundational document will serve as a road map that will be implemented, monitored, and adapted as we all move forward to work collaboratively across all sectors to create and enhance community safety and well-being in the community of Estevan. Together our community will sustain safety and well-being for all generations.



## Background

Estevan is a border community known as The Energy City located in the southeast corner of Saskatchewan. According to Saskatchewan Health Authority data gathered in October 2023, it has a population of 16,641. The percentage of individuals who identify as Aboriginal in Estevan (5.8%) is much lower than the rest of the province (15.9%) and the percentage of recent immigrants higher (5.5%) than the rest of Saskatchewan (4.3%). Estevan also has a lower percentage of low-income earners (7%) as compared to the rest of the province (13.1%). The full breakdown of Estevan's population and socio-demographic indicators from the Saskatchewan Health Authority is in Appendix A.

**Figure 1: Health Network Profile Information**

Saskatchewan Health Authority  
October 2023



The labour force in Estevan has historically relied upon the energy industry, specifically oil and gas, mining, power production, and agriculture. The considerable influence of oil and gas production has resulted in a boom/bust economy that fluctuates with the price of oil. Throughout the decades, this has resulted in economic challenges for the city. However, the largest challenge that the city has ever faced is still to come.

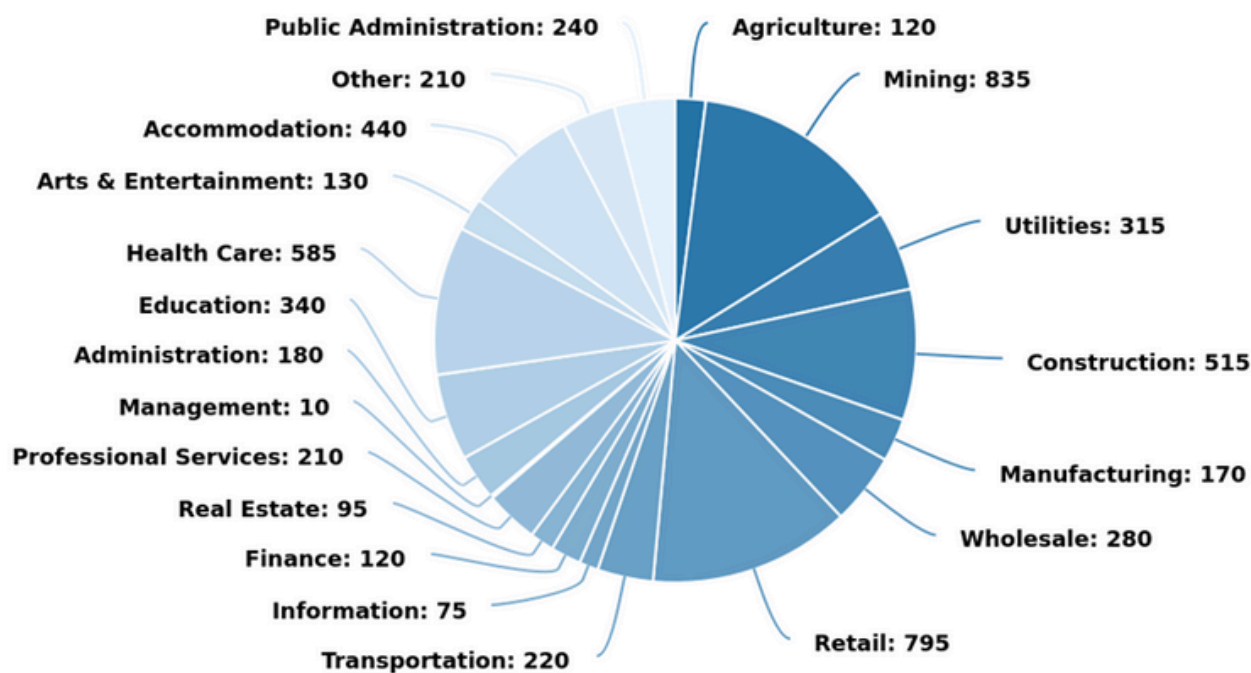
# Background

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The mainstay of the economy has always been coal mines and power production. To meet the federal government's requirements, coal plants must be retired once they reach their end of life (50 years of service) or be retrofitted with Carbon Capture and Storage technology. New federal regulation and legislation has put further pressure on eliminating coal power production. This new reality is beginning to influence the local economy and could have a severe impact over the next several years. As Figure 2: Labour Force by Industry indicates, Mining and Utilities directly employs nearly a quarter of the workforce. According to a Socio- Economic Impact Study by MDB Insight and Metro Economics published in 2019, the closure of Units 4 and 5 at Boundary Dam Power Plant will result in approximately 819 direct and indirect jobs being lost. The full Socio-Economic Impact Study is in Appendix B.

**Figure 2: Labour Force by Industry**

Statistics Canada. Census.  
December 2022



This economic impact is affecting the well-being of our community. The uncertainty of the local economy, future employment, housing values, and the search for new opportunities is a constant shadow. There is a strong movement to find economic alternatives and hope for announcements soon with new technologies for the area, however, the constant uncertainty is taking its toll.

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<sup>1</sup> Statistics Canada, City Estevan [website], <https://estevan.ca/labour/> (accessed 15 December 2023)

# What is Community Safety and Well-Being?

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## Where it Began

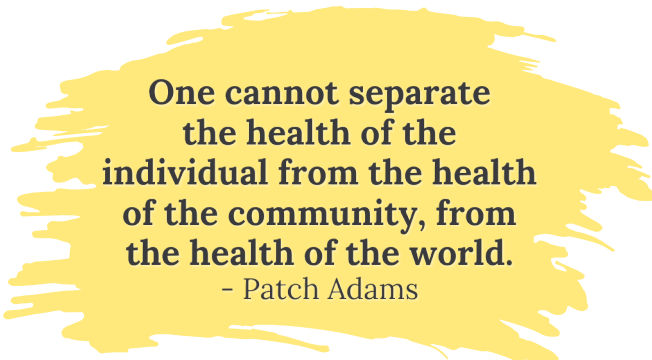
For the last few years, Estevan has been recognizing that the imminent economic challenges for our community are and will further impact on our safety and well-being. In response, local agencies have been coming together quarterly to share resources, update each other on trends happening in the community, and to discuss how we can work together to have a positive impact. As community safety and well-being projects started to be a focus in other communities across the country, local stakeholders also began seeking support to formulate a plan for Estevan. This Community Safety and Well-Being process began in September 2023 as a pilot project in Estevan and three other Saskatchewan communities.

The Estevan Community Safety and Well-Being (CSWB) planning process was supported by the Ministry of Corrections, Policing and Public Safety, Community Safety and Well-Being Branch. The branch works with communities across Saskatchewan to provide a variety of supports around community safety and well-being planning and development. Estevan is one of four rural communities being supported as part of a rural CSWB planning pilot. The other three communities are Nipawin, Humboldt, and Outlook.

The department contracted the Saskatchewan Economic Development Alliance (SEDA) to implement the rural pilot. In its role as the exclusive

non-governmental organization dedicated to provincial community and economic development in Saskatchewan, SEDA empowers communities and organizations with the necessary skills, knowledge, resources, and programs to foster a sustainable future. SEDA actively pursues a mandate of accelerating generational prosperity and well-being. The most resilient economies are those that adopt a solutions-based approach and work to address complex issues using an inclusive lens that transcends sectors and systemic bias. Facilitation for this process was provided by Jackie Wall, Founder of Inspire Strategies for Business.

As defined by the Community Safety and Well-Being Planning Guidebook provided by SEDA, **“Community safety and well-being is the ideal state of a community where everyone is safe, has a sense of belonging, opportunities to participate, and where individuals and families are able to meet their needs for education, healthcare, food, housing, income, and social and cultural expression.”**



**One cannot separate  
the health of the  
individual from the health  
of the community, from  
the health of the world.**

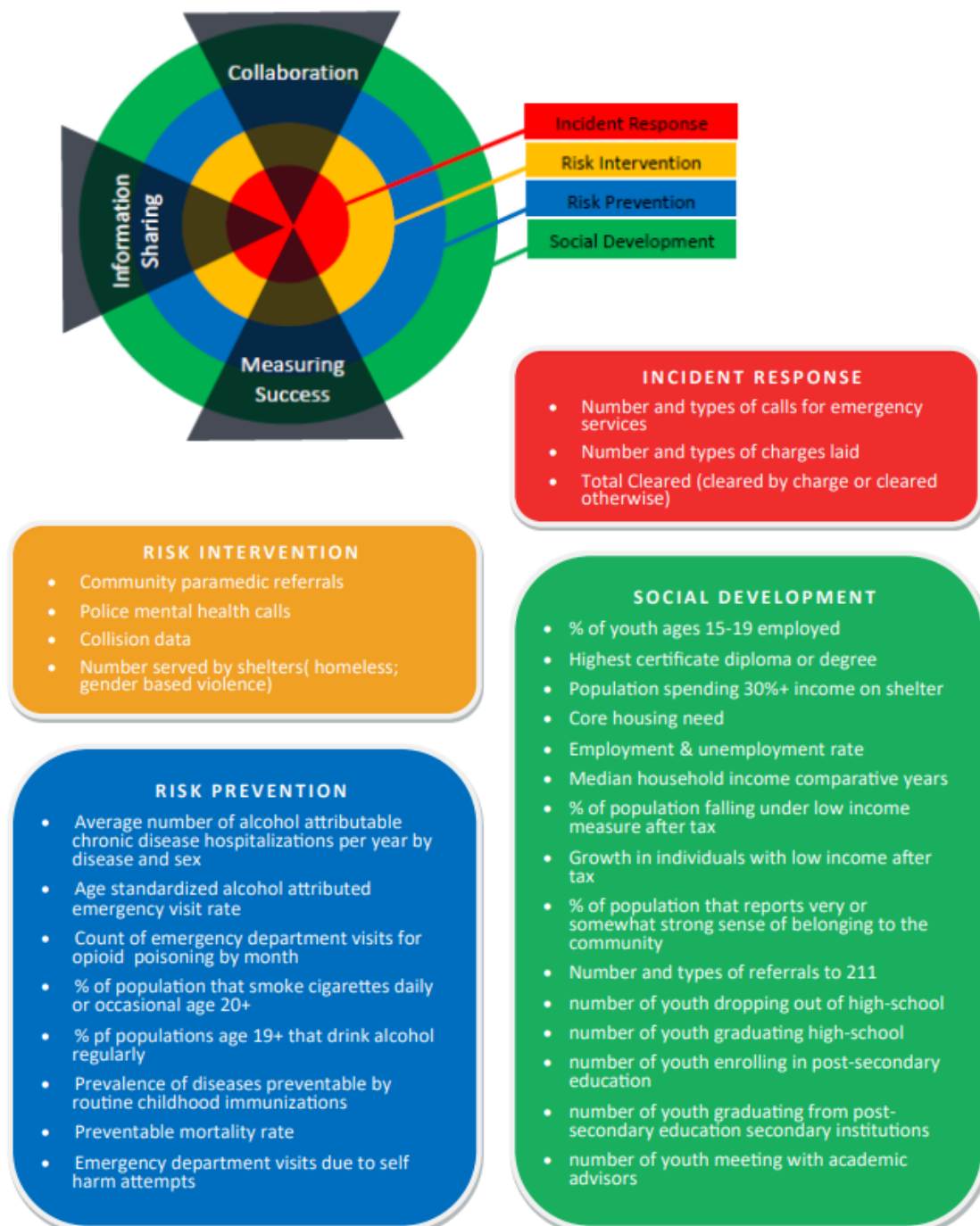
- Patch Adams

# Estevan's Commitment to Community Safety & Well-Being

## Planning Framework

The province of Saskatchewan has identified that there are four framework categories that should be focused on during the planning process: incident response, risk intervention, risk prevention, and social development. Figure 3: Saskatchewan Community Safety and Well-Being Framework below illustrates the focus of this process.

**Figure 3: Saskatchewan Community Safety and Well-Being Framework**  
SEDA Community Safety and Well-Being Guidebook for Rural Communities 2023





# Estevan's Commitment to Community Safety & Well-Being

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## Advisory Committee

The process began with establishing an Advisory Committee. A list of the stakeholders that were involved is included in the Community Acknowledgements section. The Estevan Community Wellness Pilot Project brought together stakeholders from the municipality, health/mental health, community/social services, education, children/youth services, not-for-profit organizations, seniors, and the police service.

The Advisory Committee also recognized that there are other community plans currently in place and that these plans interact with each other and will be influenced by one another. The current plans are:

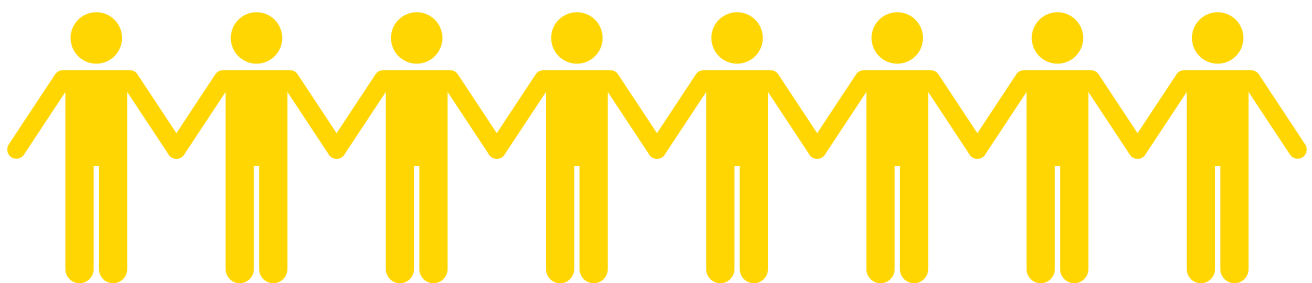
- Capital Infrastructure Plan
  - City of Estevan
- Official City Plan
  - City of Estevan
- Strategic Plan
  - City of Estevan
- Economic Development Plan
  - Economic Development Committee
- Education Plan
  - Southeast Cornerstone School Division

## Governance

From the outset, The Advisory Committee recognized that this process needs to be ongoing far beyond the parameters of the pilot project. To ensure that community safety and well-being will be an integral part of Estevan's future, a governing body was implemented that will include the following:

- Chairperson
  - A member of the Estevan City Council. At the time of this plan, Councilor Shelly Veroba was the CSWB Chairperson.
- Co-Chairperson
  - Will be the Executive Director of United Way Estevan. At the time of this plan, Heidi Hesselink was the CSWB Co-Chairperson.
- Coordinator
  - A member of the administrative staff of the City of Estevan. At the time of this plan, Melenee Mehler, Executive Assistant to the City Manager and Mayor.

To further direct this process and keep the Advisory Committee focused on what is needed to be accomplished, the group determined a mission, vision, and values.



# Estevan's Commitment to Community Safety & Well-Being

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## Mission

To work collaboratively across all sectors to create and enhance community safety and well-being in the community of Estevan.

## Vision

That our community will sustain safety and well-being for all generations.

## Values

*Inclusive* - We are committed to respectful and meaningful engagement with all residents, community-based organizations, and agencies. We will ensure persons with lived experience inform the work of the committee.

*Data Driven and Evidence Based* - We will ensure our approach is data driven and includes lived experience as a valid form of evidence. Goals and outcomes will be measurable and publicly reported.

*Working with Humility and Open-Mindedness* - We will set parameters to make safer spaces, while recognizing that conditions of safety vary from person to person. We will be open to having uncomfortable conversations and to engage with humility. This means recognizing one's advantages, disadvantages, assumptions, and biases.

*Intentional Continuous Development* - Everyone is learning, growing, and will make mistakes. We commit to fostering a plan that will develop as our community grows and changes.



# Information Gathering and Results

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This is a plan for the people of Estevan and as such, must be based on evidence, identify risks within the community, be culturally responsive, and identify the partnerships that are already established.

## Asset Mapping

There are three areas that were focused on through asset mapping to identify what we already have taking place in the community. The first step was to identify the Existing Body Inventory. This consisted of a list of the organizations that are already serving the community and what their role is. When looking at the accumulated services and organizations in the community, Estevan has a vast number of resources that citizens can access. This will be a solid foundation to build further initiatives for our community. A comprehensive list is in Appendix C.

The Advisory Committee then provided their Social Network Mapping. This is a valuable look at how each organization is working with others in the community. This information will be a resource as we move forward to see where relationships can be strengthened to support one another and the community. The established networks illustrate that Estevan has strong relationships in place that are working together through communication, cooperation, and collaboration. Moving forward, these relationships can be relied upon to tackle new initiatives and the committee will focus on developing the existing networks further and building new connections. The Social Network Map is in Appendix D.

Overall, the committee feedback during the asset mapping process was very encouraging. There is already a remarkable number of existing bodies that are engaged in community safety and well-being and this pilot project. There are also numerous social networks already established and the strategies in place will be a great foundation to develop initiatives moving forward. There must be an acknowledgement of the community's proactive approach to safety and well-being over the past several years with the interagency meetings. This community was a great fit for this pilot project due to the work that was already taking place amongst local organizations. The Strategy Inventory can be found in Appendix E.

## Quantitative Data

To understand what is happening in our community, the Advisory Committee looked at a variety of quantitative data. By looking at the Saskatchewan Health Authority and Census Data we understood what our community looked like from a demographic perspective, but what are data trends telling us when we look at various segments of our population?

According to the Southeast Cornerstone Public School Division data on attendance and school credit attainment, graduation rates have

# Information Gathering and Results

dropped by 4.9% since 2018-2019 from 90.1% in that year to 85.2% in 2022-2023. Overall, average attendance of High School Students and Elementary School Students has decreased since 2018-2019. Most notably, attendance for Grade 6 students has dramatically decreased by nearly 10% since 2018. Full statistical details can be found in Appendix F.

When it comes to police service in Estevan, the Estevan Police Service 2023 Business Plan Quarterly Report (Q3), the Police Officer to Population Ratio is the second highest in the province in Estevan at 203 Police officers per 100,000 population. The only other centre that is higher is Prince Albert (Appendix G). The Estevan Police Service Monthly Statistical Report in Appendix H shows a breakdown of offense type. When comparing the 2023 year-to-date in September to the 5-year average, criminal code traffic violations are up by 26.3% followed by crimes against property at 15.8% and crimes against persons at 6.2%.

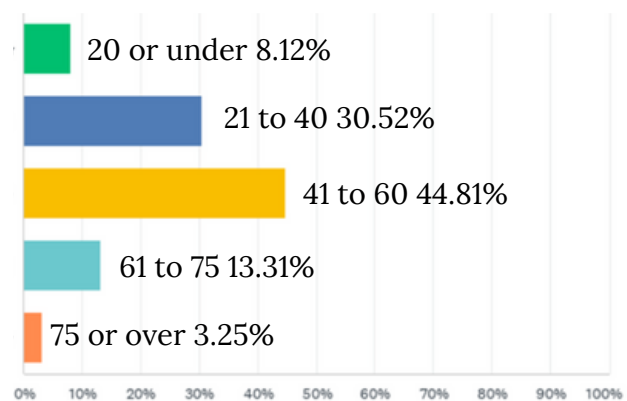
## Community Consultation

To get a sense of how Estevan residents view their safety and well-being within the community, the Advisory Committee conducted a community survey to the public, specifically targeted to diverse groups, and the questions also formed the basis of a youth focus group at the Estevan Comprehensive School. Full documentation of the focus group which consisted of ten students and one teacher can be found in Appendix I. The full survey results from the 305 respondents are in Appendix J.

The results of the survey were encouraging as there was representation from all age groups and a diverse range of lifestyle and economic backgrounds as illustrated by Figures 4 and 5.

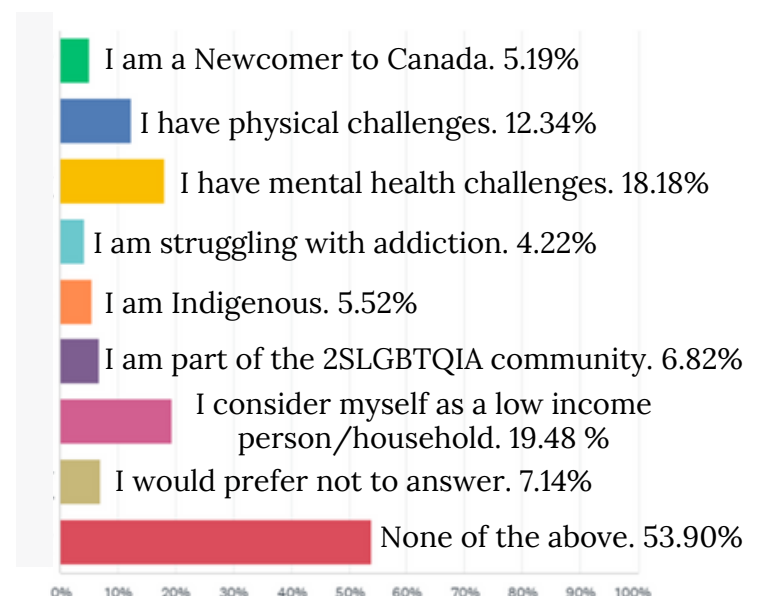
### Figure 4: Age Breakdown

Estevan Community Safety & Well-Being Survey (November 2023)



### Figure 5: Psychographic Breakdown

Estevan Community Safety & Well-Being Survey (November 2023)





## Information Gathering and Results

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When asked what their favourite things about Estevan were, respondents overwhelmingly answered with the size and small town feel of the community, the people, and that it was a good place to raise a family. There was also a high degree of satisfaction with the amenities and activities available. When asked what makes them feel safe in Estevan, once again the most common response was the small town feel of the community and the people, with a high level of satisfaction with the police and RCMP. Many indicated that there was a low crime rate in Estevan. Respondents also answered that they had family and friends within the community that made them feel safe.

The overwhelming response for what makes them feel unsafe in Estevan were drugs and crime. There were also many responses regarding mental health challenges in the community, a lack of inclusion (racism), and the continuing struggles within the health care system. There was concern over transient populations and homelessness. This question also consistently brought up responses that a lack of lighting made them feel unsafe. When asked what they would recommend making them feel safer and happier in Estevan, there was a strong reinforcement of the concerns over drugs, addiction, and health care services. The comments also reiterated the need for inclusion and racist attitudes. The other interesting area that contrasted with the answers in question one, was that although there was great satisfaction with the current facilities

and activities in the community, there were a lot of responses for more activities and events. These included events for all ages, with a strong response to family/children/youth, and requests for free activities. Interestingly, many also noted more lighting within the city, especially on the walking paths.

The final question asked what would improve the quality of life in Estevan. Many had concerns about the cost of living, were looking for public transit within Estevan and to Regina. The expansion of activities and amenities was also highlighted again, and requests included more green spaces, indoor play places, a fieldhouse, and an outdoor pool. More access to childcare was also a prime concern and answers outlined that a lack of daycare spaces prohibited parents from rejoining the workforce.


The community safety and well-being process also focused on the information that the United Way Estevan Community Impact Survey Report provided. The results of this community consultation were released in March of 2023 and there were some clear observations. First, addictions and anxiety/depression were the social issues that most urgently needed to be addressed according to respondents. The underlying causes for the social issues were identified as: economics/job availability/food insecurity, mental health, education/awareness, and access/availability. This survey also looked at gaps in services and those identified were transportation,

## Information Gathering and Results

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short-term housing/shelter, access to mental health/addictions/medical services, and youth services. An interesting finding was that awareness of 211.ca was low with 290 unaware and only 71 aware. Finally, the top 3 services that were believed to help everyone in our community reach their full potential were mental health providers, social issue education, support groups for teens, and youth after school programming (when combined). The full United Way Estevan Community Impact Survey Results are in Appendix K.

It is also important to look at the Estevan Police Service: Community Survey, 2019 (Appendix L). As this project moves forward, it will be interesting to compare the following with the upcoming Community Survey that will be taking place. When compared against similar surveys carried out by Statistics Canada and the Regina Police Service, the Estevan Police Service (EPS) ranks very highly in terms of enforcing the laws, officers being approachable and easy to talk to, ensuring the safety of the citizens in the community, and treating people fairly.



**“Being involved  
in the well-being and  
advancement of one’s own  
community is a most  
natural thing to do.”**

— Clarence Clemons

When asked about local policing, the respondents strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that the following activities should be prioritized: responding to gang offenders and drug trafficking (85.2%); reducing drinking and driving (78.4%), responding to property crimes such as break and enters (66%) and reducing aggressive and dangerous driving (65.2%). Slightly less than one half of respondents felt that a greater emphasis should be placed on enforcing municipal bylaws. Almost two-thirds of respondents (62.8%) said that the police should place a greater priority on increasing interactions with different community groups, and particularly with young people.

When asked about their overall safety, over two-thirds (68.8%) of respondents indicated that they felt safe or very safe, and about the same proportion (69.6%) said that crime in their neighbourhoods had stayed the same or decreased in the previous two years. One indicator of fear of crime is whether a person feels safe walking alone in their neighbourhood after dark, and 14% of respondents said they did not feel safe to walk alone. This is slightly more than in Regina, where 10.4% of respondents did not walk alone (Jones & Ruddell, 2017). Altogether, the results of this survey show that levels of satisfaction and support for the EPS are high. The results presented in the EPS community survey reveal that the police enjoy very positive public perceptions about their service.

## Priority Areas

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After careful assessment of the data and community consultation documents, the Advisory Committee broke into eight groups to discuss the risk factors identified during the community consultation, statistical analysis, and our session discussions. These groups will be categorized by the following: Education, United Way Estevan, City of Estevan, Saskatchewan Health Authority, Addiction Centre, Estevan Police Service, Newcomers, and Non-Government Social Services. Remarkably, all the groups identified Mental Wellness as the top risk factor followed by seven groups identifying Substance Abuse/Addiction, Education/Employment identified by four groups, followed by Victimization. To fully understand how each risk area is impacting the community, the Advisory Committee outlined what they have heard during this process and in their professional lives.

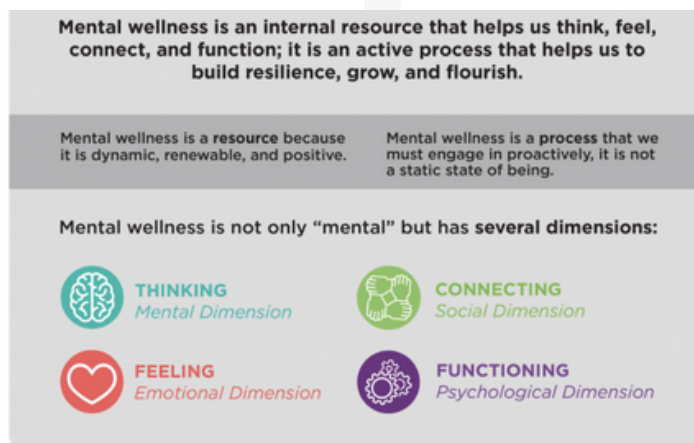
### Mental Wellness

An individual's mental wellness is impacted by numerous factors. According to the government of Saskatchewan website, biological, psychological, and environmental factors are the cause of mental health problems. Genetics, prenatal damage, infections, substance misuse or addiction, brain defects or injury, exposure to toxins, and poor nutrition are all examples of biological factors. The psychological factors could include neglect, physical or sexual abuse, and loss of a parent/spouse/child, or many emotional factors such as low self-esteem, anxiety, loneliness, and others. Environmental stressors can include divorce, poverty, unemployment, social and cultural expectations, a dysfunctional family, and substance misuse.<sup>2</sup> Figure 6 from the Global Wellness Institute illustrates the definition of mental wellness and its various dimensions.<sup>3</sup>

#### Figure 6: What is Mental Wellness?

Source: Global Wellness Institute (2022)

<https://globalwellnessinstitute.org/what-is-wellness/mental-wellness/>



<sup>2</sup> What is Mental Wellness?, Mental Wellness, Global Wellness Institute [website], <https://globalwellnessinstitute.org/what-is-wellness/mental-wellness/> (accessed 15 December 2023)

<sup>3</sup> Government of Saskatchewan, Mental Health and Illness, Saskatchewan [website], <https://www.saskatchewan.ca/residents/health/accessing-health-care-services/mental-health-and-addictions-support-services/mental-health-support/mental-health-and-illness> (accessed 15 December 2023)

## Priority Areas

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When describing the state of mental wellness in the community now, the consensus was that it is in a serious state. Current mental health services are inundated, there are long wait times, and the focus is on triage. Navigating the system is difficult, there are silos within the system, and consent can often stand in the way of accessing additional resources for someone in need. There is an increasing number of families in crisis, feelings of hopelessness, and suicide rates/ideations are observed to be increasing. Unfortunately, it is also recognized that there is stigma around seeking help.

The mental wellness of the community is impacting the people available for employment and/or education. There are impacts experienced within the health care system, by teachers, coaches, employers, and front-line staff, who have also been experiencing increased abuse from those they are trying to help. People are seeking an explanation for what they are feeling. A few of the environmental factors that have been identified include social media influences, the aftermath of Covid, economic uncertainty, employment uncertainty, inflation, and rising interest rates/cost of living.

The Advisory Committee identified that initiatives around anxiety, stress, grief, and depression are needed. There must

also be a focus on educating the public on existing resources available. More supports for coping with life adversity, being resilient while facing stress, worry, loneliness, anger, and sadness are required. There needs to be a focus on early interventions. These early interventions could include mental health education for parents to guide them on how to be emotionally available and provide family support for their children. Overall, mental education seems to be lacking and underlying trauma is often not addressed.

### Substance Abuse and Addiction

It is important that there is a distinction made between substance abuse and addiction. To clarify, substance abuse is when a person is experiencing negative consequences from substance use. Addiction is when there is a dependency – psychologically and/or physiologically. It is important to note that traditionally we have looked at abuse and addiction from a purely substance perspective. However, we need to also include other cultural abuse/addictions such as gambling, and even social media use.

Estevan is experiencing many impacts on the community's safety and well-being from substance abuse and addiction. There has been an increase in accessibility within the community and there is a growing acceptance of many

**“He who wishes to secure the good of others,  
has already secured his own.”**

Confucius



## Priority Areas

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addictive behaviours. The impacts have been identified as affecting school and workplace attendance, domestic abuse incidents, young adult and child addiction. All these areas are impacting health services. Overall, it seems that the affects are extreme and touching every family. According to the Saskatchewan Health Research Foundation, “Saskatchewan is currently in the throes of an addiction crisis. According to a recent study published in the Canadian Journal of Psychiatry, about 14 per cent of Saskatchewan residents have an addiction to drugs or alcohol – the highest per-capita rate of drug and alcohol addiction in the country.”<sup>4</sup>

### Education and Employment

The challenges in education continue to increase. Educators are serving a diverse population with needs that are more complex than in the past. There continues to be budget cuts within school divisions and government assistance for post-secondary has also been negatively affected. There are long-term social and emotional development challenges, many of which have been heightened due to the impacts of Covid regulations. Many within the school system feel they are in a state of triaging students rather than supporting them. There is a lot of underlying traumas in schools and threats are escalating. Attendance at every level has been negatively impacted and graduation rates are declining.

Supports for family can be difficult to navigate or unable to find. The system needs to adapt.

There needs to be a focus on increasing attendance from pre-K to grade 12. What are the ways that we can have meaningful engagement from students and families that work towards increasing attendance and high school completion? Can we also look at ways to increase awareness of support and opportunities in education like the Adult Basic Education Program at Southeast College? When preparing students for their future, how can we support them to prepare for employment and/or seek additional education? What can we do now for students and families to increase their mental and well-being?

Within the employment sector, both employers and employees, potential or existing, have noticed significant changes. Minimum wage has not kept up with inflation, many workers are underemployed, and some are choosing not to work. Many are trying to juggle multiple part-time jobs because they are unable to find full-time positions. Many are searching for meaningful employment but there are challenges in finding such work while you are at work, navigating support systems, and/or engaging in education opportunities. Trauma is also an underlying factor in many workplaces and engagement at work suffers when employees are suffering. Another challenge is wise financial management. Poor financial decisions have generational impacts.

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<sup>4</sup> Cunningham for SHRF, Saskatchewan Health Research Foundation, ‘Shining a light on the lived experience of addiction in Saskatchewan’, SHRF[website], 11 May, 2021, <https://www.shrf.ca/post/shining-a-light-on-the-lived-experience-of-addiction-in-saskatchewan#:~:text=a%20psychotic%20episode%3F%E2%80%9D-,Saskatchewan%20is%20currently%20in%20the%20throes%20of%20an%20addiction%20crisis,alcohol%20addiction%20in%20the%20country.> (accessed 15 December 2023)

# Priority Areas

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## Victimization

Victimization affects every generation and demographic. Within the community of Estevan people are not feeling safe. It is important to distinguish that many feelings of victimization are due to a lived experience, but we must also recognize that some are due to perceptions within our community. Victimization breeds isolation, it erodes the social fabric of our community, and it creates generational trauma.

Within Estevan, the feedback has been that there is an increasing intensity of victimization. Survey responses indicate that people are concerned about property crimes within residential and business neighbourhoods. With increased incidents of victimization, there is also the risk of being desensitized to violence, racism, abusive talk, and sometimes we are experiencing more acceptance of these in social settings. There is also a new kind of victimization that we need to recognize. Many in our community are feeling

victimized by economic factors such as rising interest rates, cost of living increases, and systemic low income. There is also a new form of victimization that has been developing through social media. Bullying has always been prevalent in society, but it has now moved to a new level with the access to large audiences of social media platforms and immediate access to a victim online.

Another challenge when looking at victimization is the stigma that victims often experience and therefore many incidents go unreported. This is seen in areas such as domestic violence, sexual assault, violence against the LGBTQIA2S+, and being taken advantage of by the increasing barrage of fraud and scams. The problem is that when these kinds of incidents go unreported, it is difficult to determine where more support is needed. Nevertheless, the Advisory Committee recognizes that within the community of Estevan prevention and intervention initiatives need to be improved.



# Priority Areas

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## Common Themes and Identified Gaps

There are several underlying common themes that have emerged during this process. Trauma seems to be an underlying factor in all four areas. There is also a clear need for more prevention and risk mitigation. There is a lack of mental health professionals and there needs to be more education spaces available to put students through the schooling they need to enter the workforce. Fortunately, the Southeast College Estevan Campus is getting additional seats for addictions training. Overall, more mental health professionals are needed. Other areas of education that would be beneficial are parenting programs, community education about the addictions to mitigate the misconceptions within the community, and mental health education. Mentorship is also lacking for community youth and newcomers that could support employment and skill development. One such area is Ukrainian youth who do not have grandparents nearby who are looking to connect with seniors. Identifying these common themes and gaps helped the Advisory Committee clarify the recommendations on which to take action.



## Recommendations and Initiatives

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### Enhance What is Already Available

The Estevan community needs to shift the narrative in the four identified areas of Mental Wellness, Substance Abuse and Addiction, Education and Employment, and Victimization. An increase in engagement from local service clubs to support this shift and more ways to deliver programming are essential. Fortunately, there are existing programs that we can look at developing within the current resources and ultimately develop new resources to expand programs that have already proved successful. A comprehensive list of current strategies for each priority area and the lead group can be found in Appendix M.

During the planning phase, the committee looked at Saskatchewan 211, how it is updated and how it is maintained. Moving forward, a comprehensive list of support groups available in our community but not listed on Saskatchewan 211 will be compiled and communicated to the public. The group has already identified that additional grief and transportation services are needed and work is being done to address those areas.

Envision Counselling and Support Centre Inc. has two programs operating that the community needs to look at maximizing. First, there is Community Outreach Program which creates awareness and educates on the issues of abuse and violence. This program used to be popular within Estevan schools but is now only available by request since

they have been restricted from delivering the program within the school system. Envision continues to do as much education as they can by working with community groups such as the Estevan Public Youth Centre, Estevan Minor Hockey, and Southeast Library. However, when it comes to education and conversation, more opportunities are needed.

Expansion of Envision Counselling and Support Centre's FIRST Program (Family Intervention Rapid Support Team) is also recommended. Envision can do the work that really needs to be done. This team can go into homes and help at a grassroots level. Currently, this program is not at capacity. With increased knowledge, we can all work to fill the capacity and support growth.

The Estevan Wellness Committee is grateful for all the service groups that were a part of this planning process, however, there are additional groups where relationships could be strengthened. It was also recognized that many community members have access to programs through their employment benefits. Communication to the local businesses and organizations to review these services with their employees on a regular basis would be very beneficial. To start this conversation, the Estevan Chamber of Commerce will host a Coffee Talk on Mental Health in the Workplace to introduce the Estevan Community Safety and Well-Being Plan and discuss the options available through benefits programs.



# Recommendations and Initiatives

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## Community Building

We need to bring back community! The Estevan Community Safety and Well-Being Survey clearly indicated that there is a desire for more ways for people to participate in social events and spaces that are low or no cost. Historically, it has been a challenge for the community to clearly communicate all that is available. There are so many stakeholders that can be engaged to develop new programming and support the communication of current initiatives. Expanding existing programs or events is possible and work can initially be done to build upon what is already available and in identifying gaps in amenities and programs.

Another area of community building to focus on is engaging volunteers. Building new events and activities that are low or no cost will have to utilize a strong network of volunteers. New volunteers could be engaged from those people who are currently accessing a program either themselves or their extended family. Part of the volunteer initiatives should also include mentorship programs. Areas for mentorship could include youth, newcomers, entrepreneurs, and support groups. There is a real need for natural supports to be developed and ensuring that community members are aware of where, when, and how to access supports.

The first step to building the community wellness was the formation of the Estevan Wellness Committee. This

formal committee will consist of the Governance Committee and additional community members. At the time of this report the full committee consisted of:

**Chairperson Shelly Veroba**, Estevan City Councillor

**Co-Chairperson Heidi Hesselink**, Executive Director United Way Estevan

**Co-ordinator Melenee Mehler**, Executive Assistant, City of Estevan

**Cathy Hiltz**, Southeast Cornerstone School Division

**James Jones**, Southeast Cornerstone School Division

**Becca Foord**, Estevan City Councillor

**Laura Melle**, Director of Operations, Envision Counselling and Support Centre Inc.

The Estevan Community Wellness Committee is thankful for all the Advisory Committee Members listed on page 6 of this report for committing to remaining in the supporting network.

Currently, the committee is looking into a community block program, creating more free/low fee events, and developing more natural supports for the region. Ensuring that Challenge Day at Estevan Comprehensive School becomes a yearly program will also be a focus. Finally, the committee will continue to look for ways to address the transportation challenge.

# Recommendations and Initiatives

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## Education

There was immediate consensus that every stakeholder that has been active in this planning process needs to be involved in educating our community in several areas. The Education component to address the gaps can really be categorized into three areas: mental health education, addictions information, and community programming to address these issues.

The first component of mental health education is to look at what is listed through the **211 Saskatchewan** database. There are over 6,000 community, social, non-clinical health, and government services across our province but is the is of those in Estevan up to date and comprehensive? Are there services within our community that are not listed. There is also a need to educate residents about **211 Saskatchewan**, how to use it and what kinds of services they can access within Estevan.

The next step is community education on what mental health is and what are the types of mental health challenges. One mental health initiative would be to develop education of natural supports within our community. The 40 Development Assets can be a useful document to derive programming initiatives. Development of Mental Health First Aid education within the community would provide leaders in our organizations, schools, businesses, and interested individuals, a better understanding of mental health and how to respond.

Another vital area of mental health education is understanding trauma, the impacts of trauma, and how to deal with trauma. This focus on mental health education will benefit our community by increasing the understanding of what mental health is, how to identify when you or those around you are struggling, and where help can be accessed. More importantly, hopefully this process will help decrease the stigma that many feel when it comes to discussing mental health or seeking help.

Addiction information begins with understanding what addiction looks like and identify the many areas of addiction. Community education on basic terminology like what an addiction is and understanding addiction can come in many forms such as gambling, gaming, shopping, or social media. Recognition education is the first step and then communication on how someone can personally address the addiction, where to seek supports, and when to seek professional help. Once again, increasing the knowledge of existing informal supports such as support group or development of additional groups would benefit community building.

There is also a lot of misinformation regarding the St. Joseph's Addictions Recovery Centre within Estevan. For many, the perceived increase in drug use and availability and the perceived increase in transient population has been linked to the opening of the Addiction Centre. Even within the

## Recommendations and Initiatives

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Advisory Committee there were many assumptions about the program that were untrue. After a discussion about the program steps, testimonials of success from committee members, and answering of questions were about the Centre's activities, it was clear that better awareness is needed about the value that this program brings to our community.

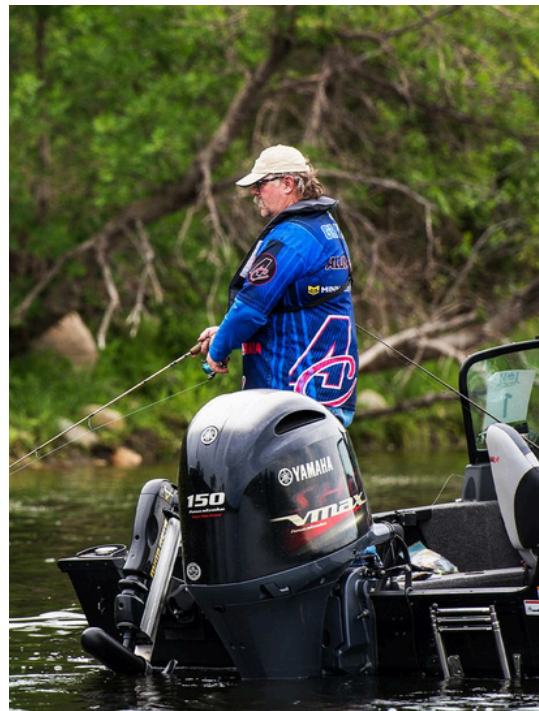
To really make an impact in educating our community, a full media campaign must be developed. Branding has already started with the official logo on the front page of this document to identify the Estevan Community Wellness Committee. Plans are to communicate through regular press releases and develop an Estevan Community Wellness page on the City of Estevan website. This will be a one-stop place to host an informational video series, infographics on how and where to get help, and a list of programs, courses, and events that are available in the area.

### Funding

The Estevan Community Wellness Committee will look at embracing fund development collectively. The Committee recognizes that funding opportunities can be accessed from various levels of government, not-for-profit organizations, community fundraising initiatives and private companies. Working collaboratively with members of the committee, our community, and our supporting network will lead to many funding opportunities. This pilot project was supported by the

Ministry of Corrections, Policing and Public Safety, Community Safety and Well-Being Branch, we will seek additional funding for initiatives that have been developed through this plan from this and other government agencies.

The Estevan Community Wellness Committee recognizes that certain initiatives will be responsibility of the committee and therefore the committee will access a variety of funding sources. However, our true strength will come from the continual communication within our support network. As a collaborative network we will search for funding sources for one another within the framework of the Estevan Community Safety and Well-Being Plan and look for ways to submit joint applications for initiatives to support our community.



## Implementation and Monitoring

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The implementation and monitoring of the Community Safety and Well-Being Plan will be the responsibility of the Estevan Wellness Committee. Initially, the committee will meet monthly to ensure progress continues and a strong framework is developed. The committee will be guided by a detailed Strategic Chart that focuses on SMART Goals (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Time-Bound). Updates will be sent to the supporting network after each meeting to ensure there is continued communication from the committee. The Estevan Community Wellness Committee will also serve as the central hub for the extended support network. This network will be able to use the Estevan Wellness Committee to communicate with the rest of the group, update the community of organizational programs and services, and work to find and apply for additional funding. As these initiatives are in the developing stages, they will be communicated to the public through the media plan that is part of the Education for all priority areas.

Success for this plan will be clearly defined and monitored. The development and launch of the initiatives outlined in this plan is the first step to success. Each of those initiatives can be monitored through community engagement. This engagement is easily defined by web page visits, social media engagement, and participation in events, program, and courses. Another measure of success that will be documented is the engagement with the supporting network and our ability to access funding.

The Estevan Community Safety and Well-Being Advisory Committee is thankful for the funding provided by the Ministry of Corrections, Policing and Public Safety, Community Safety and Well-Being Branch. Our community looks forward to continuing our relationship with government through the Estevan Wellness Committee. As a pilot project, we all recognize there is more work to be done and we are confident that working together within our community and with our provincial leaders, we can make a difference in our community and our province.

