



UNION OF SAFETY AND JUSTICE EMPLOYEES

August 15, 2022

Dear Commanding Officers:

Earlier this year, the Union of Safety and Justice Employees – which represents the majority of public service employees within the RCMP - released a report from leading public safety academic Dr. Rosemary Ricciardelli. The report focuses on “The Mental Health and Well-being of Detachment Services Assistants in the Royal Canadian Mounted Police: A Qualitative Investigation.”

The report highlights the need for several crucial workplace improvements for hundreds of RCMP’s Detachment Services Assistants across Canada. A copy of the report in French or English is attached to this email and/or can be found at: <https://usje-sesj.com/en/usje/reports/>

As you would know, Detachment Services Assistants serve as the first point of contact in RCMP detachments across the country. They provide key operational support when it comes to responding to emergencies, conducting criminal background checks, supporting investigations, overseeing offenders check-ins (for those on release), as well as the maintenance of crucial RCMP databases.

The report’s objective was to highlight the particular challenges experienced by DSAs in detachments of all sizes, including those in remote and rural locations, and sought to better understand the risk of violence and occupational stress injury.

12 key recommendations were identified by researchers to improve the mental health and efficacy of DSAs working throughout the RCMP including the immediate implementation of the following:

- Review of any dangers related to location and design of physical workspaces used by DSAs and the installation of bullet proof glass where warranted;
- mandatory inclusion of DSAs in Critical Incident debriefs;
- the development and implementation of comprehensive training for DSAs across the country;
- access to mental health supports that better reflects the needs and experiences of DSAs.

Dr. Rose Ricciardelli, alongside David Neufeld, National President of the Union of Safety and Justice Employees (USJE) as well as Lynette Robinson, USJE National Vice President had the opportunity to meet with Commissioner Brenda Lucki prior to the release of the report in March of this year.

Since the early stages of this research, USJE has been pleased to have an open and candid dialogue with Commissioner Lucki about how to improve workplace safety and better equip DSAs to excel in their roles. As you would appreciate, DSAs work in a dynamic, high stress environment fulfilling multiple roles.

Commissioner Lucki has offered the following comment on the report:

“Detachment Services Assistants provide essential front line service to the Canadian public in communities served by the RCMP from coast to coast to coast. In the performance of their role, DSAs often see individuals on their worst days. The RCMP recognizes the challenges and difficulties experienced by our valued DSAs. We are committed to work with the Union of Safety and Justice Employees with respect to the recommendations identified in this report and we will continue to ensure the health and safety of our DSAs in the critical role they play in our organization.”

As the National Public Service Association union representing Detachment Services Assistants across the country, we are keen to work with the RCMP to ensure DSAs feel safe and supported in their workplaces. We also recognize that DSAs are vulnerable to trauma by virtue of how they interface with the public and their role in supporting Members who go out into the field.

USJE plans to continue its dialogue with the RCMP on the implementation of all 12 recommendations in the coming months/years. This report was the first of its kind in Canada to examine the specific roles of DSAs within the RCMP. While historically an exclusively female profession, DSAs positions are now filled by men and women, though women continue to comprise the vast majority of these positions.

We urge you to take the opportunity to review the report in light of the recommendations we are highlighting. Should you have any questions or comments about the report, I would encourage you to reach out to USJE’s Regional Vice President, or alternately my office.

Sincerely,

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About Dr Rose Ricciardelli

Dr. Rosemary [Rose] Ricciardelli, Ph.D., is Professor of Sociology and Criminology at Memorial University of Newfoundland. Elected to the Royal Society of Canada, she is also an inaugural member (and the Vice Chair) of the Academic, Research and Clinician Network Advisory Council (ARC NAC), and founding member, of the Canadian Institute for Public Safety Research and Treatment (CIPSRT). Her additional affiliations and appointments include: an Associate Scientist at Ontario Shores Centre for Mental Health, an Affiliate Scientist with Toronto Rehabilitation Institute, and a cross appointment with the Fisheries and Marine Institute at Memorial University. She has published over 175 journal articles, 45 chapters and given over 350 presentations and invited talks.