



## OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

City of North Battleford  
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December 8, 2023

Your Worship Mayor Yu  
City of Prince George  
1100 Patricia Blvd.  
Prince George, B.C.  
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Dear Mayor Yu,

### **RE: Crime Severity Index Conference – A Challenge to the Status Quo**

## You Are Invited

The City of North Battleford is proposing a conference, to be held February 28-29, 2024, in Saskatoon, comprised of attendees representing the 20 highest ranked communities with populations of more than 10,000 residents to discuss common struggles faced by this ranking system. The goal is to begin working on a public request to the Federal Government to change the way Statistics Canada reports communities' Crime Severity Index rankings. Due to lower populations, smaller communities, like ours and yours, are significantly impacted by one single "major" crime and it skews a community's publicly announced ranking in a very real and consequential way. The City of North Battleford would like to invite your leadership (Mayor or Deputy Mayor and CAO/City Manager) to attend this conference.

## Background

Much like other municipalities, the City of North Battleford prepares for the annual onslaught of negative attention drawn by the release of the Statistics Canada Crime Severity Index ranking. Our communities receive negative media attention simply from the release of this list. As you are likely aware, the factors involved with the Crime Severity Index weighting are complex and not well-understood and/or properly interpreted by the public or the media. This causes significant damage to these smaller communities.

In evaluating the ranking of communities which are consistently atop the Statistics Canada listing of communities with populations of 10,000 or greater, one factor stands out: each of these communities has a significant Indigenous population.

According to data from Statistics Canada's 2021 Census, the top five highest-ranking communities on the Crime Severity Index have the following percentages of residents who identify as Indigenous:

- North Battleford – 26.61%



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- Thompson – 45.52%
- Wetaskiwin – 18%
- Yellowknife (Rural) – 24.16%
- Portage la Prairie – 29.1%

This is in no way intended to attribute high crime rates to a specific population; these numbers are merely to suggest that by singling out communities which have a significant number of residents who identify as Indigenous, it creates a stigma which, as a Welcoming and Inclusive Community, North Battleford strives to eliminate by celebrating and embracing all regional cultures.

Take, for instance, the F Division analysis for all RCMP detachments in Saskatchewan. If Statistics Canada removed the population of 10,000 threshold for public reporting, the City of North Battleford (Municipal RCMP Detachment statistics) would rank 16<sup>th</sup> overall in Saskatchewan for highest Crime Severity Index. Each community from #1-15 in Saskatchewan is a small Indigenous community. These statistics are public and available on the Statistics Canada website, but attention is not drawn to communities of all sizes, arguably because it would inherently infer that crime rates are astronomically high due to a higher prevalence of Indigenous peoples. Because of the 10,000-population threshold, we believe our communities, along with smaller Indigenous communities, are facing systemic discrimination as a direct result of this Statistics Canada ranking release.

In a recent conference call with Statistics Canada, they were unable to identify why the population of 10,000 threshold was identified and how the list they curate is distributed to Canadian media. Statistics Canada maintains this ranking list is only requested by and distributed to police services across the country; our local RCMP detachment has confirmed they do not receive a copy of this list, nor do they utilize it when determining placement of detachment resources.

### The North Battleford Experience

North Battleford has spent a significant amount of money in enhanced enforcement efforts, with the largest RCMP detachment in the province, along with Saskatchewan's largest per capita complement of Community Safety Officers. The City has publicly called upon provincial and federal counterparts to add significant resources to assist with the social and public health crises that correlate to occurrences of crime.

The City and our local business community find it harder and harder to attract qualified jobseekers to our community due to the public misconception that North Battleford is "unsafe" due to its high ranking on the Crime Severity Index. This negatively impacts the City's tax base, has caused stagnation in our population growth, and creates significant economic challenges for the region.

Our community also indicated to Statistics Canada that their public listing of populations of 10,000 or more further creates a racial divide in our community. With a large Indigenous population, there is a wrongful assumption that our community's high ranking on the Crime Severity Index correlates to a large Indigenous population in our community.



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### The Issue

While data is vital, provision of this data to public and the media without appropriate context and understanding leaves these federally-issued statistics widely open for interpretation and thus, people are drawing conclusions about our communities that are overtly negative and untrue – overshadowing any positive efforts to rehabilitate a community's image or build pride and spirit within a municipality.

### The Conference – February 28<sup>th</sup> & 29<sup>th</sup>, 2024

The conference is set for February 28<sup>th</sup> & 29<sup>th</sup>, 2024, in Saskatoon. It will begin with a meet and greet on the evening of the 28<sup>th</sup>, with a full day of sessions on February 29<sup>th</sup>. Meals will be included. We propose that at the end of our sessions, the Mayors hold a media opportunity to, using a collective front, publicly discuss these issues and challenge this negative narrative and, to an extent, Statistics Canada. While the agenda and speakers are still being determined, experts in sociology, policing, and in First Nations governance have been approached to date. Senior representatives from Statistics Canada have also been invited to attend.

As the host for this event, we ask that you consider contributing \$175 per conference attendee to share in the costs of this conference.

Please confirm your attendance by January 12, 2024, with my Executive Assistant Shirley Stynsky at 306-445-1725 or by email at [sstynsky@cityofnb.ca](mailto:sstynsky@cityofnb.ca). A block of rooms has been reserved at our host venue, the *Holiday Inn: Saskatoon Downtown*. We encourage early booking to guarantee a preferred rate. [Click this link to secure your reservation today.](#)

I hope you will consider joining us in Saskatoon for this event as we strive to improve the overall public-facing view of our communities in a way that will be mutually beneficial. It would be my pleasure to work collectively with each of you for the betterment of our communities. I look forward to seeing you at this conference.

Sincerely,

David Gillan,  
Mayor  
City of North Battleford

c.c. Walter Babicz, City Manager