

September 8, 2017

IIU concludes investigation into in-custody death at Main Street Project

The Independent Investigation Unit of Manitoba (IIU) has concluded its investigation into the death of a 28-year-old man that occurred after his arrest and lodging at Winnipeg's Main Street Project. It has determined there are no grounds for any charges against the two cadets who carried out the arrest.

On the evening of February 22, 2017, two members of the Winnipeg Police Service Cadets responded to a call for service concerning an intoxicated male who was causing a disturbance and accosting members of the public in downtown Winnipeg. The male was located outside an apartment block on Carlton Street, arrested under the provisions of *The Intoxicated Persons Detention Act* and transported to the Main Street Project for lodging until sober. During a routine check later that evening, the man was found unconscious. He was transported by ambulance to St. Boniface Hospital where he remained unresponsive and died on February 24.

As this incident involved both an in-patient hospitalization and subsequent death of a person following an interaction with police, IIU assumed responsibility for the investigation in accordance with section 65(1) of *The Police Services Act* (PSA).

The issue in this investigation was whether members of the WPS Cadets did, or failed to do, anything during their contact with the man that may have contributed to his death.

The investigation included interviews with 13 civilian witnesses—none of whom observed any struggle between the man and the arresting cadets—and video from the Main Street Project that showed the man placed into a holding cell without incidence or struggle.

The pathologist's report revealed the main cause of death was the combined sedating effects of ethyl alcohol and alprazolam, as well as a sub therapeutic level of zopiclone. Cardiomegaly (an enlarged heart) was also determined to be a contributing factor. Video from the Main Street Project showed the man entering the cell and then lying on the floor with his neck against the wall and his chin depressed into his chest. The autopsy report concluded this position also may have played a role in causing death due to positional asphyxia.

IIU Civilian Director Zane Tessler concluded that an unfortunate series of events led to the man's death, which was completely unrelated and unconnected to anything done or not done by either cadet.

The civilian director's complete report is available online at www.iiumanitoba.ca



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