

ASIRT DECISION

**IN THE MATTER OF A DEATH ON APRIL 2, 2025,
AFTER LETHBRIDGE POLICE CUSTODY**

Executive Director: Matthew Block

File No.: 2025-0015(S)

Date of Release: July 8, 2026

Introduction

On April 2, 2025, pursuant to s. 46.1 of the *Police Act*, the director of law enforcement directed the Alberta Serious Incident Response Team (ASIRT) to investigate the death of the affected person (AP) earlier that day. On March 24, 2025, the AP had gone into medical distress while in Lethbridge Police Service (LPS) custody and was taken to hospital in life-threatening condition. ASIRT designated two subject officers, with notice to each. ASIRT's investigation is now complete.

ASIRT's Investigation

ASIRT's investigation was comprehensive and thorough, conducted using current investigative protocols, and in accordance with the principles of major case management.

ASIRT investigators interviewed the following civilians:

- Civilian witness #1 (CW1), the AP's roommate, who was present when police removed the AP;
- Civilian witness #2 (CW2), who observed officers and then paramedics treating the AP; and
- Civilian witness #4 (CW4), daughter of the AP, who provided background information.

LPS took a statement from civilian witness #3 (CW3), who was present in the residence with the AP and CW1, and ASIRT investigators reviewed it.

ASIRT investigators interviewed the following police officers:

- Witness officer #1 (WO1), who responded to a distress call from the subject officers and went to the scene;
- Witness officer #2 (WO2), a supervisor who responded to a distress call from the subject officers and went to the scene;
- Witness officer #3 (WO3), who responded to a distress call from the subject officers and went to the scene;
- Witness officer #4 (WO4), who responded to a distress call from the subject officers and went to the scene;
- Witness officer #5 (WO5), who responded to a distress call from the subject officers and went to the scene; and
- Witness officer #6 (WO6), who responded to a distress call from the subject officers and went to the scene.

Subject officer #1 (SO1) and subject officer #2 (SO2), as the subjects of a criminal investigation, were entitled to rely on their right to silence and did not speak to ASIRT investigators.

ASIRT investigators also:

- reviewed all police communications and 911 audio
- viewed the scene on April 2, 2025
- reviewed GPS data for all involved police vehicles

Circumstances Surrounding the Incident

Late on March 23, 2025, LPS received a call about an unwanted guest from an address on Scenic Dr. The subject officers responded, arriving at 11:57 p.m. The subject officers began to remove the AP, who was the unwanted guest, from the home. The AP resisted the subject officers, and a struggle began. The subject officers requested additional officers to assist them at 12:03 a.m.

The subject officers removed the AP, who was naked or mostly naked, from the residence and placed him in their police vehicle. The additional officers arrived, and the AP appeared to be in medical distress. Officers removed him from the vehicle and began first aid. Emergency medical services (EMS) arrived shortly after, assumed care, and transported the AP to a hospital. The AP was admitted in life-threatening condition. On April 2, the AP died.

Autopsy

A pathologist conducted an autopsy on the AP on April 5, 2025. She determined the cause of death to be the toxic effects of methamphetamine. Significant conditions contributing to the death were atherosclerotic and hypertensive cardiovascular disease and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.

Civilian Witness #1 (CW1)

ASIRT investigators interviewed CW1 on April 2, 2025.

CW1 had been looking for a roommate to help with rent, and the AP responded to the ad. On March 23, 2025, the AP went to CW1's residence in response to the ad.

Throughout that day, the AP's conduct was very troubling and CW1 became extremely concerned. CW1 told the AP to get out. The AP asked for help, said he needed a taxi, and wanted to call 911. CW1 said he was acting strangely and later learned he had called police.

Police, including SO1 and SO2, arrived and entered the bedroom. They told the AP to get dressed and leave. The AP said he needed to call police, and SO1 and SO2 told him they were police. They began to remove him from the bedroom. As they moved toward the stairs, the AP appeared to reach into his pockets and SO1 and SO2 grabbed him. One officer reached for something on his belt while the other put the AP in a headlock. CW1 said the officers started "beating on him" and "laid it on him," and she was surprised he was not badly bruised. The AP tried to fight back. CW3 told CW1 that the AP appeared to give up, dropped his body, and threw himself down the stairs. All three went down the stairs and broke a door at the bottom. CW1 heard the AP say he could not breathe and saw him strike one officer's shoulders.

One officer called for backup. Additional officers, including WO6, arrived, and CW1 heard them warn each other to watch for needles. Police asked CW1 if she wanted to make a report and she said no, noting she had taken sleeping pills and was having difficulty recalling details.

Civilian Witness #2 (CW2)

ASIRT investigators interviewed CW2 on April 2, 2025.

CW2 was in the basement of his home studying at about 12:30 a.m. when he heard car doors slamming. He looked outside and saw about five police vehicles parked nearby. CW2 then went to the upper level, where he and his partner observed from a bedroom window an officer reaching into the left

rear passenger door of a police vehicle parked near a lamp post. The officer pulled an unconscious male, identified as the AP, from the back seat and placed him on the grass beside the vehicle. CW2 believed his vantage point was about 50 feet away and noted the AP was wearing only underpants.

CW2 said that an officer performed chest compressions on the AP, and another officer retrieved an automated external defibrillator. He could see the glow from the device. He said an ambulance arrived shortly after and paramedics took over.

Witness Officers

The six witness officers arrived after the subject officers had removed the AP from the residence. Their evidence was generally consistent.

On March 24 at about 12:03 a.m., the witness officers heard a distressed radio transmission and a call for help from SO1 and SO2, who were dealing with a trespassing call. Additional units, including WO1 and WO4, responded and arrived at a home on Scenic Dr., with WO2 and other officers arriving shortly after. SO1 advised that a man, later identified as the AP, had been removed from a home after acting erratically and that a physical struggle occurred while escorting him outside. Officers observed that both SO1 and SO2 appeared exhausted. The AP was placed in the rear of a police vehicle, naked or mostly naked, with his hands cuffed behind his back and positioned prone or on his side.

Shortly after officers arrived, concern arose that the AP was not breathing. He was removed from the vehicle, and SO2 began chest compressions. WO1 took over and determined that the AP had a faint pulse and shallow breathing, at which point they stopped CPR. Officers removed the handcuffs and placed him in the recovery position. EMS arrived at about 12:16 a.m. and began life-saving measures, including administering medication at about 12:21 a.m. The AP was transported to hospital, with WO1 accompanying him, arriving at about 12:41 a.m. He was treated in the trauma bay and later admitted to ICU.

While medical care was underway, other officers managed the scene and gathered information from occupants of the residence. Officers located an orange syringe cap in the residence, and later found a small drug pipe with residue in the AP's clothing.

Analysis

Section 25 Generally

Under s. 25 of the *Criminal Code*, police officers are permitted to use as much force as is necessary for execution of their duties. For the defence provided by s. 25 to apply to the actions of an officer, the officer must be required or authorized by law to perform the action in the administration or enforcement of the law, must have acted on reasonable grounds in performing the action, and must not have used unnecessary force.

All uses of force by police must also be proportionate, necessary, and reasonable. Proportionality requires balancing a use of force with the action to which it responds.

Necessity requires that there are not reasonable alternatives to the use of force that also accomplish the same goal. These alternatives can include no action at all. Analysis of police actions must recognize the dynamic situations in which officers often find themselves, and such analysis should not expect police officers in the moment to weigh alternatives in the same way they can later be scrutinized in a stress-free environment.

Reasonableness looks at the use of force and the situation from an objective viewpoint. Police actions are not to be judged on a standard of perfection, but on a standard of reasonableness.

Section 25 Applied

The subject officers responded to a call that the AP was not wanted in CW1's home. They responded and, when the AP resisted, they physically removed him. While there was some use of force by the subject officers, there is limited evidence on this point. Based on the evidence, their actions were authorized by law, on reasonable grounds, and did not involve excessive force. The autopsy showed no connection between the AP's death and the subject officers' actions. The defence available to the subject officers under s. 25 of the *Criminal Code* will therefore apply to their actions.

Conclusion

There are not reasonable grounds to believe that the subject officers committed any criminal offence.

July 8, 2026

Matthew Block
Executive Director

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