

Saskatchewan



Justice

Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act

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► Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act



On any block and in any neighbourhood, it only takes one house that is harbouring illegal activities to undermine the safety of all residents of that community and affect the property values throughout that neighbourhood.

The Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act will improve community safety by targeting and, if necessary, shutting down residential and commercial buildings and land that are habitually used for illegal activities such as producing, selling or using illegal drugs, prostitution, solvent abuse or the unlawful sale and consumption of alcohol.

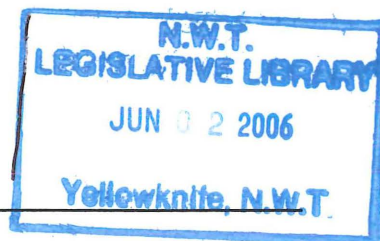


The Act also creates a process where building fortifications that cause public safety concerns can be removed by investigators. These fortifications often include bullet-proof glass or explosive-resistant materials, armour to reinforce doors, and bars on windows or doors.

This legislation empowers citizens to take back their neighbourhoods by reporting problem residences and businesses. It will also hold property owners accountable for threatening or disturbing activities regularly taking place on their property.

Overall, this Act promotes community safety by cleaning up properties that:

- Negatively effect the health, safety or security of one or more persons in a neighbourhood; and/or
 - Interfere with the peaceful enjoyment of one or more properties in a community or neighbourhood.
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Definition of Terms

Complainant – a person who has made a complaint to the Director of Community Operations.

Owner – a person who is the registered owner of title to the property; a person who is entitled to be the registered owner of title to the property; a person shown as the owner of the property in the municipal tax roll records of the property; a person who manages or receives rents from the property; a guardian; a property decision-maker; an executor; administrator or trustee; or an attorney under a power of attorney.

Respondent – the owner named as respondent.

Property – a building and the land on which it is located or land on which no building is located.

Resident – an individual who has a right to occupy residential property as his/her residence, but does not own the property.

Frequently Asked Questions - General

Q. What does the Act mean by "property"?

A. Under the Act, "property" includes a structure, business, house, apartment, suite, mobile home or land in which there is no building.

Q. How does the complaint process work?

A. The process starts when one or more residents of a neighbourhood file a complaint with the Director of Community Operations. The complaint is kept confidential and the identity of those who file it cannot be revealed at any time. Having received the complaint, the Director may launch an investigation by the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Investigation Unit if there is enough evidence to support the complaint. The Director has several options including issuing a warning letter to the property owner, resolving the problem out of court, applying for a Community Safety Order with or without a closure order against the property, or applying for an immediate closure order.

Q. Is the complaint confidential?

A. Yes. No person, including the Director, can, without written consent of the complainant, disclose the identity of the complainant or any information by which the complainant may be identified to another person, court, government institution, local authority or law enforcement agency.

Q. Who investigates the complaint?

- A. The investigation of the complaint is done by the Director of Community Operations and the Safer Communities Investigation Unit. There is an Investigation Unit in both Saskatoon and Regina. To contact the Regina office, call (306) 798-0400. To contact the Saskatoon office, call (306) 933-8373. Or call the toll free number at 1-866-51-SAFER.

Q. What happens to occupants living in a property that is shut down?

- A. All occupants of a property that is closed by a Community Safety Order will leave it immediately, even if they have not been previously served with an order. If an occupant does not comply with a request to leave, the Director can obtain the assistance of a peace officer to remove them from the property. After leaving the property, and while the property is closed, no occupant can enter or occupy the property without the Director's consent.

Removing tenants from a residence is a last resort that would only be pursued in the face of a lack of cooperation. The Act is very careful to provide due process to any owners or occupants directly affected by an order under this legislation either by the court or by the Director. This Act is not criminal legislation designed to punish offenders. Rather, this is legislation to improve public safety in our communities. Previously, these issues were often addressed in city bylaws in a less direct fashion.

Q. What happens to tenants who were not involved in the "activities"?

- A. Commercial and residential tenants who have not been involved in any illegal activities can apply to the court for a variance of the order, which allows them to return to the property. This application is to be made within 14 days of being served with an order although the court may extend this time.

Q. What is a "fortified building"?

- A. A "fortified building" is a building that is fortified in a way that exceeds reasonable security measures for such residential or commercial dwellings including: bullet proof or explosive resistant material on doors and windows; armored or specially enforced doors; metal bars on exterior windows; or any other fortifications set out by the regulations. The Act will apply to businesses as well as residences.

Q. What does the fortified buildings part of the Act do?

- A. The fortified buildings part of the Act deals with fortifications in buildings that pose a threat to public safety by preventing emergency response personnel, law enforcement officials, or occupants from gaining access to or escaping from those buildings in an emergency. The Act also recognizes that such buildings are often a threat to the general public safety in the neighbourhood.

Q. What should I look for in my neighbourhood?

- A. The following is a list of common signs of illegal activity. Alone, any of these activities or signs may not necessarily mean that drug dealing, drug producing, substance abuse, prostitution or any variety of other illegal activities are occurring on a property. However, a frequency of the following list of activities or a combination of them occurring on a property may indicate a problem:

- Frequent visitors at all times of the day and night
- Frequent late night activity
- Windows blackened or curtains always drawn
- Visitors with expensive vehicles

- Unfriendly people who appear to be secretive about their activities
- People watching cars suspiciously as they pass by
- Extensive investment in home security
- Strange odours coming from the house or garbage
- Garbage that contains numerous bottles and containers, particularly chemical containers
- Putting garbage out in another neighbours' collection area

If you are suspicious of a property in your neighbourhood, do not investigate it yourself or approach the occupants. Please call the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Investigation Unit immediately. There is an Investigation Unit in both Saskatoon and Regina. To contact the Regina office, call (306) 798-0400. To contact the Saskatoon office, call (306) 933-8373. Or call the toll free number at 1-866-51-SAFER.

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