

October 31, 2022

Dear Ottawa Police Services Board,

Like many others I have spoken with, I am deeply concerned and a little shocked about the Board's decision to appoint Eric Stubbs as our new Chief of OPS.

It seems to me that the Board should have been (and hopefully was) looking for a candidate with strength in four key areas:

- Building trust and relationships with communities in Ottawa who have experienced very problematic and negative interactions with the police, including systemic racism and discrimination (notably the Indigenous community, the Black community, the Racialized community, the Muslim community and the 2SLGBTQ+ community).
- Leading institutional change to address whatever changes are needed to ensure the police serve all community members in a fair and equitable manner,
- Community policing, a major initiative of OPS in recent years,
- General competence in managing police operations in the complex environment of a large urban centre in Canada.

As far as I can determine from the information about Chief Select Stubbs released by the Board and the general media coverage, he has little or no experience in any of these four areas. Bizarrely, one of the other candidates in the selection process, Interim Chief Steve Bell, has a fairly good track record in all of these and yet was not chosen.

Stubbs certainly has experience in senior leadership roles and responsibility for large operations, but never, as far as I could determine, in a major urban environment. Managing national operations at the RCMP is totally different from managing local operations in a city of one million people. The largest city he has been responsible for appears to be Prince George (pop. 74,000). Bell has experience in Ottawa that goes back many years, and he knows this city well. He took over OPS during the crucible of the trucker convoy occupation, which he successfully brought to a rapid conclusion without loss of life or serious injury, and has been a capable Deputy Chief and Interim Chief from what I have seen.

Most shockingly, Stubbs was in the RCMP BC senior command during the time of the RCMP raids on the Wet'suwet'en resistance on the nation's unceded territory, and was directly involved. This was one of the most notorious examples of anti-Indigenous police violence in recent Canadian history. The violence was so egregious that opponents successfully obtained a court injunction against the RCMP.

What a contrast to the way Bell handled the much more sensitive and complex protest in Ottawa, with such a successful outcome.

Did the Board think we would not notice this part of Stubbs' background? Worse, did they think it was not relevant? That the rest of us would simply stand by while the Board throws the 40,000 Indigenous residents of Ottawa under the bus?

Moreover, there is no indication in the information from the Board about Stubbs that he has any experience whatsoever in working successfully with the Black, racialized, Muslim or 2SLGBTQ+ communities. I wonder if he knows the complexity of Ottawa and what is needed to establish strong relationships based on trust. One of the telling details from the Wet'suwet'en experience is that, according to media reports, Stubbs was personally involved in discussions with Wet'suwer'en leaders to resolve the situation at the same time that an RCMP special unit had been approved to deploy forces in an armed raid. Indigenous leaders saw this as acting in bad faith – pretending to negotiate while sending in what was seen as an invasion force. Relationships are built on trust and if this is the approach Stubbs is bringing to Ottawa, trust will be very hard to come by.

Once again, in contrast, Bell has spent the last few years gradually building relationships with different leaders in the communities mentioned above. He is not perfect and has a lot to learn, but he has earned the trust of at least some of them and has a foundation to build on. Given the revolving door of police chiefs in this city, how many times do community leaders have to start over again and teach a new police leader, who may or may not come with the requisite attitude and skills, let alone the humility necessary?

This has been a very questionable decision by the Ottawa Police Services Board. It will set our community back and is likely to cause harm among the very community members that the OPS is intended to serve. We all deserve better.

Sincerely,  
Lynne Tyler  
Ottawa