

Interim Chief Bell's Verbal for
PSB Meeting March 28, 2022

Good afternoon et bonjour,

It is great to be back here in person and seeing so many new and familiar faces. I appreciate the work the Executive Director has done to get us back here.

I want to congratulate to our new Board members on their appointments:
Councillor Cathy Curry and members Salim Fakirani, Michel Doucet and Peter Henschel.

I look forward to working with you all.

I am confident that together, with the community, we will build public trust, continue to address systemic racism and violence against women, promote equity, diversity and inclusion, increase diversity-focused hiring and contribute to our communities through neighbourhood policing.

Keeping Commitments

As the Interim Chief, I want to make our commitments to you and the community clear.

We are, and will remain, an organization focused on cultural and systemic change.

We will not abandon plans and strategies jointly made with the community through consultations and conversations.

This includes the implementation of call referral and call diversion processes for mental health and addictions calls.

Outreach Recruitment continues to be a key focus. This Spring, we are sending another class of recruits to the Ontario Police College. It is an excellent and diverse class, with strong education and work experience and multiple languages spoken.

As well, the class has 50% racialized men and a large percentage of women.

And we have built an experienced and diverse leadership team to help deliver this change.

I want to introduce them... We have Deputy Chief Trish Ferguson, Chief Administrative Officer Blair Dunker, Deputy Chief Paul Burnett and my Executive Officer Francois D'Aoust.

We are here to support you in moving forward on initiatives that will better serve our residents city-wide.

Unlawful Protests

I have spoken a lot about the unlawful protests in February. We are holding people accountable. In the past few days, you have seen multiple new charges laid against organizers or key organizing voices.

A police task force continues to comb over social media, video and other evidence gathered. So far 118 people have been charged with 446 offences.

Those cases are now moving through the courts and our task force is ensuring that each charge is supported.

Weekend Protest

We are a welcoming city. Since the unlawful protest in February, we have seen more than 80 protests held in our city relating to issues in Canada and around the world.

It is important that we remain an open city and follow the guarantees laid out in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Last week Ottawa Police was advised of another vehicle-based demonstration intending on returning to the capital. We immediately began planning and preparing for the protest.

We contacted the demonstration organizers and told them that there would be clear ground rules.

Using existing truck routes we established a safe route for the vehicles, set up barriers, and utilized heavy vehicles to restrict vehicle access and block traffic. This included a strong presence of police.

We have no intention to allow another occupation of city streets to occur again.

On Saturday, we worked with our partners to implement a traffic control plan with a strong police presence throughout the downtown core.

This was done to balance managing the convoy's passage through the city while still making all efforts to limit restrictions on our community members.

Convoy vehicles were directed away from any non-designated routes in the downtown area to minimize disruption to the flow of traffic or impact on public safety.

The route avoided access to the ByWard Market, Lowertown, north of Laurier Avenue and other residential areas.

The initial strategy involved early, very clear and direct communication with the organizers. There was strong follow-through with a robust traffic control strategy supported by various intervention strategies and contingency plans.

All options were considered and implemented including: the use of barriers, heavy vehicles, tow capabilities, support from various enforcement partners, and bringing in the appropriate staffing.

That protest passed with very few disruptions thanks to the planning and hard work of our members and partners.

We need to be realistic about and prepare to respond to events like the one we witnessed in February.

Our expectation is that this type of thing will be ongoing throughout the year, particularly into the summer months.

St. Patrick's Day

The unlawful protests and other events like the Panda Game have caused us to rethink our approach to all events. A good example of this was our police response to the first non-pandemic St. Patrick's Day.

In past years, neighbourhoods like Sandy Hill, were met with loud and crowded parties, and sadly violence.

This year, we put in a plan that ensured everyone celebrated safely, particularly on the first major event after the Province loosened its pandemic regulations.

Supported by a direct communications plan, officers were on foot and in vehicles ensuring that unlawful and disruptive behaviours were addressed and mitigated.

Our Neighbourhood Police Teams met early and often with both businesses and residents to discuss concerns and troubleshoot any potential problems.

The day itself went smoothly.

However, we saw some incidents that resulted in 100 Provincial Offence Tickets being issued, three \$1,000 tickets for various By-Law infractions and the towing of six vehicles.

Officers de-escalated 12 locations in the Sandy Hill/Carleton University neighbourhoods that had the potential of street takeover parties.

Given the large crowds, alcohol and need for direct police intervention, it was clear that the measures in place were necessary to ensure no repeats of last year's post-Panda celebrations occurred.

Budget 2022

The 2022 Ottawa Police Budget, amended, reduced and approved by the Board did not take into account nor plan for a need to increase police resources.

As you can see in the 4th quarter financial report, we continue to work to achieve the \$7 million in savings directed by the Board.

We are now experiencing a call volume at or above pre-pandemic levels.

As interim Chief, I am advising you that we have new staffing challenges related to major events that will cause a re-evaluation of our hiring plan.

I have spoken with CAO Dunker and Supt. Granger and asked them to develop an accelerated hiring plan to begin bringing on more staff.

We are also exploring the ability to bring in extra resources from other police agencies.

Recognizing good work

Finally, I want to thank the women and men – sworn and civilian -- of the Ottawa Police Service.

This has been a challenging time in policing. Throughout it all, our members have continued to serve this community every day. It's not always easy.

They work hard every day to keep this community safe and they often work under difficult circumstance. Every success we have is because of their professionalism and hard work.

We are all here to support you as a Board. Thank you and, once again, congratulations.

Thank you.