

Interim Chief Bell's PSB Verbal Report
April 25, 2022

Good afternoon,

I want to begin my verbal report with some information on our preparations for the Rolling Thunder event scheduled for this coming weekend.

We have heard the concerns of the community.

We know there is a great deal of hurt and sensitivity and a need for healing, especially in the downtown core.

This has been a major factor in our planning.

We will not allow for unsafe or unlawful conditions that could lead to another unlawful protest as seen in February.

Lawful Protest

The right to lawful and peaceful demonstrations will always be protected by our Service.

Just this past weekend, we saw two protests in our core. They were peaceful and lawful and we thank the organizers and participants.

Along with those rights, we all have responsibilities and there is a critical role in our society for the police to preserve the peace.

It is important that we are clear with everyone on what they can expect in the coming days.

The individuals associated with this event are expected to arrive on Friday with any of the main activities occurring on Saturday. It is too early to provide information on expected numbers.

The City of Ottawa's position, fully supported by the Ottawa Police, is that no motor vehicle protests, rallies or events will be allowed in designated downtown areas.

This includes areas near and around Parliament Hill and the National War Memorial and applies to all demonstrations, rallies and events.

Residents and businesses should expect traffic delays.

Areas may be restricted to pedestrian-only zones in the core to maintain public safety.

We are also aware of a site in the rural area of Eagleson Road where some Rolling Thunder participants are gathering this weekend. This area will see increased police presence and possible traffic delays.

We are working with our City partners to develop a complete traffic plan that will manage vehicular traffic and ensure the safe movement of pedestrians.

Controlled intersections, road closures, vehicle towing and ticketing will be part of the enforcement strategy to support public safety.

Police Resources

I have spoken to the OPP Commissioner and we will receive significant, additional resources from multiple partner agencies including the OPP and the RCMP.

The focus of these resources will be on public safety, maintaining the right to protest, and enforcing all applicable laws.

I want to be clear with both organizers and participants. You will be held accountable for your actions before, during, and after events.

We **continue to monitor** online and open source commentary related to all events. Threatening or intimidating behaviours will be addressed with all appropriate enforcement action.

Investigative teams, including our Hate Crime Unit, are in place, focused on gathering evidence and laying charges.

The displaying of symbols of hate like swastikas have and will result in charges.

The targeting of any community events will result in a police and enforcement response.

As we do with all events, we have reached out to Rolling Thunder organizers to ensure we understand their plans. We do this for every event, from football games to rallies to events like this.

This is never meant to support any specific cause but to ensure there are clear lines of communication and that public safety issues are addressed.

The role of police is to remain impartial, promote public safety, and enforce relevant legislation.

We are also reaching out to individuals and groups who plan to attend to express their opposition to this event to understand their plans.

We continue to finalize our plans to ensure this event is peaceful, lawful, and orderly.

I will continue to update the public and the Board in the days ahead.

Update

I wanted to update you on some key issues we are seeing city-wide since the start of the new year.

The number of shootings in our city has declined by nearly 40 percent, with about 10 fewer compared to last year. From the 14 shootings in 2022, seven people have been injured, with one fatality.

Our officers have seized nearly 30 crime guns to-date in 2022, compared to a total of 80 guns recovered by police in 2021.

The city continues to see a spike in opioid use, with police responding to nearly 200 calls for overdoses since the start of the year.

In 30 separate incidents, our officers have used Narcan to save the lives of people in distress.

Sadly, opioid use has claimed over 30 lives so far this year.

Hate motivated incidents

We also continue to see an increase in hate-motivated incident reports.

So far in 2022, we have received 60 such reports, which is up 10 percent from last year.

Three people have received warnings and another three people have been formally charged.

Investigations into all incidents are ongoing, including those involving the display of a swastika flag and other hate-motivated events that occurred during the illegal protest in February.

We continue to encourage you to file reports so that our officers can investigate and resolve any hate-motivated incidents by charging those responsible.

Project Exodus

Our Human Trafficking Unit continues to do exceptional work in identifying those who would target vulnerable residents in our city.

Last week, it concluded Project Exodus, which was part of a nearly year-long investigation involving female victims, three of whom were under the age of 18 at the time these incidents occurred.

Four men were charged with criminal offences relating to trafficking and sexual assault, and we are asking for any other victims to come forward.

Our Human Trafficking Unit is focused on empowering survivors and victims of sexual and/or labour exploitation to break the cycle of abuse.

The addition of a Victim Support Specialist has helped the unit connect those impacted with an extensive network of external agencies and supports.

Frontline Patrol

Last Monday, our officers responded to a call from a social worker about a client who was in crisis.

The man had armed himself with a knife and had barricaded himself in his home, refusing to go to the hospital for help.

Our frontline patrol, in coordination with our Tactical Unit and OPS negotiators talked with the man and listened to his story, finally getting him to come out of his home and relinquish the knife.

He was later taken to hospital.

These types of calls happen every day.

And it's our officer's ability to be patient and compassionate, and to hear the person's story that leaves the greatest impact.

We know that we need to develop alternative solutions for those in mental health crisis, to divert them away from the criminal justice system and get them the supports they need.

And we are actively working with our community partners to develop a plan that will meet those needs.

Public Commendations

Every day, the OPS receives emails from the public, telling us about how the police were there during challenging times for their families.

That's our role as a police service, being someone you can call when you need help the most.

Here's an example from one email:

I am severely handicapped after the removal of a brain tumour and have experienced memory and brain function loss.

After a particularly difficult day, Constables Raymond Corey and Paul Askin responded to my call for help.

They were very, very nice and stayed with me for a long time to make sure I was OK. Thank you so much for the training you give these guys. It was very good, and it helped me a lot.

That concludes my verbal report.