

Report to / Rapport au:

**OTTAWA POLICE SERVICES BOARD
LA COMMISSION DE SERVICES POLICIERS D'OTTAWA**

27 February 2023 / 27 février 2023

Submitted by / Soumis par:

Chief of Police, Ottawa Police Service / Chef de police, Service de police d'Ottawa

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SUBJECT: COMMUNITY FEEDBACK- BUDGET 2023

OBJET: RÉTROACTION DE LA COLLECTIVITÉ – BUDGET 2023

REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Ottawa Police Services Board receive this report for information

RECOMMANDATIONS DU RAPPORT

**Que la Commission de services policiers d'Ottawa prenne connaissance du
présent rapport à titre d'information.**

BACKGROUND

The Ottawa Police Service (OPS) is committed to listening to and engaging with the public. The Service used multiple techniques to ensure broad consultation, including one-on-one conversations, groups dialogues, third-party surveys, questionnaires, and other studies. Input was actively sought from Indigenous, racialized, faith-based, 2SLGBTQQIA+ and underserved/ marginalized communities. This work is on-going and informs policing activities throughout the year. Additionally, to support the development of every budget, the OPS engages in targeted consultation on proposed budget direction and priorities.

This report provides a thematic summary of community feedback specific to the budget and to the OPS more broadly. As in previous years, key themes that emerge from our various consultation processes include the need to bolster public trust, divert police

away from calls that would be better served by social or medical professionals, and improve community and road safety across the City. These themes emerge from the consultation activities summarized in this report, including: the OPS 2023 Draft Budget Feedback Survey, City Councillor Budget Briefings, Finance and Audit Committee delegation input, and targeted outreach initiatives with key coalitions and city-wide committees, such as Black Agenda Noir, Council of Imams of Ottawa, the Jewish Federation, and the Ottawa Aboriginal Coalition.

In addition, the report includes an analysis of the most recent Advanis national polling survey.

DISCUSSION

The OPS employs multiple consultation techniques throughout the year, including one-on-one conversations, group dialogues, third-party surveys, questionnaires, and studies. The OPS has partnered with grassroots community members, faith-based groups, academics, and other stakeholders to ensure that we are hearing a range of perspectives and concerns. In particular, we seek out engagement with Indigenous, racialized, 2SLGBTQQIA+ and underserved and/or marginalized communities. Consultation work is continuous and informs policing activities, the strategy, and the budget.

Additionally, to support the development of every budget, we engage in targeted consultation to inform proposed budget direction and priorities. The four key consultation strategies utilized during development of the OPS Draft Budget 2023 were: the OPS Draft Budget Feedback Survey (February 1-20), City Councillor Budget Briefings (February 1-22), Finance and Audit Committee Delegations (February 15), and targeted outreach initiatives with key coalitions and city-wide committees (February 1-20).

OPS Draft Budget Feedback Questionnaire

The OPS launched a brief questionnaire, running between February 1-20, 2023, to solicit input on the proposed Budget direction and priorities. The questionnaire was promoted on our social media channels in multiple languages, and accessible through the OPS website. As in previous years, we used this consultation technique with the aim of expanding our engagement reach through an accessible forum in both English and French. Over the span of 20 days, the feedback tool received over 500 responses.¹

¹ Survey responses are non-representative of the Ottawa resident population given self-selection bias and low response numbers.

The four questions were:

- 1) What is your general feedback on the Draft 2023 Ottawa Police Service (OPS) Budget?
- 2) Are the 2023 budget priority areas reflective of the policing needs in your community?
- 3) What other policing related issues that require further investment / prioritization for the 2023 or 2024 OPS Budget?
- 4) Do you have any other comments related to the Draft 2023 budget?

In response to the first question, slightly over half of the respondents indicated approval of the budget or wrote that it should be increased. For example, one respondent described the Draft Budget as “fiscally responsible and lean while still managing to invest in much-needed improvements on service and partnerships.” The most commonly expressed reason for support was a need for more police officers. On the other hand, just under half of the respondents disapproved of the proposed budget and/or advocated for decreased funding for the police. A commonly expressed reason for disapproval was the need to invest more in social services, particularly those that help to address mental health and addictions. An example of this sentiment was captured by one respondent who expressed that “funding to the OPS should be reduced and diverted to social services and affordable housing initiatives. Increased OPS budget is a band-aid solution that does not address the actual core issues that result in increased crime”.

Poor performance by the OPS in managing the 2022 Convoy was mentioned multiple times by respondents. In the majority of cases, this was cited in conjunction with calls to decrease or freeze police budgets, while in others it was mentioned as an example of why the police need an increase in budget and staffing.

In response to the question about support for budget priorities, over a third of respondents were supportive or neutral in their response, while the majority of respondents were not. However, the reasons for the lack of support differed significantly. Responses were fairly evenly divided between those who did not support the budget priorities because they preferred to see funding directed to social services and those who wanted to see increased investment in other priority areas such as School Resource Officers (SRO) and responses to vehicle theft.

Similarly, the question about what other priorities require further investment received widely disparate responses. Dominant themes were fairly evenly split between those advocating for more officers and a return of the SRO program, those calling for

diversion of funding toward social services, and those indicating that one of the priority areas should be improvements to police accountability.

Overall, consistent with past consultations, it is clear that respondents want police to operate differently, whether that is by increasing the number of officers on patrol, addressing the rise in vehicle thefts, or returning officers to schools. Also consistent with past consultations, there were a number of respondents who would like to see a reduced scope of policing activities, particularly with regard to mental health and addictions.

City Councillor Budget Briefings

The OPS has been engaging in consultation with members of the Ottawa City Council in order to understand their needs, concerns, and priorities, as well as those of their constituents. Councillors represent over one million constituents from across the city in urban, suburban and rural neighbourhoods where policing priorities differ. These briefings were held both in person and online and took place from February 2 to February 22. To date, members of the OPS executive have consulted with 17 Councillors.

Budget briefing meetings are broad in scope, such that they address various aspects of municipal budgets including transit, housing and roads. Comments expressed at these meetings relevant to the OPS generally reflect the wish to use existing resources most efficiently and focused on core policing functions such as addressing traffic issues, speeding, and motor vehicle thefts. Overall, a majority of the Councillors have supported the 2023 Draft OPS Budget and would like to see the service increase officer hiring and continue with call referral activities.

The need for increased traffic enforcement and the high rate of vehicle thefts were prominent in every conversation.

In addition to these individual Councillor briefings, members of the OPS Communications and Strategy Directorate attended several virtual Councillor-led Budget Consultations over the past few weeks. This has supported a greater understanding of the priorities and concerns of constituents within urban, suburban and rural areas.

Within these sessions, the general topics that were discussed included:

- -Affordable housing/the affordable housing budget
- -Road and sidewalk improvements
- -Social services

- Municipal revenue sources (e.g., property tax modernization or alternative revenue sources)
- Cost of living and inflation
- Public transportation and transit
- The Vacant Unit Tax
- Bill 23
- Parks
- The Budget's climate change lens
- Emergency Services response times and first responders allocated in Wards
- New developments (e.g., developing downtown or land developments)

Policing issues did come up within these sessions, and included the following feedback pertaining to the 2023 DRAFT OPS Budget:

- De-tasking the OPS in areas like public/mental health
- Questions about the new South Facility
- Council's role in modifying the OPS Budget and last year's Budget that saw \$2 million earmarked for mental health

It's worth noting that many of the same individuals who have attended OPS-Budget meetings also attended the Councillor-led sessions. Staff are virtually attending all possible Councillor-led Budget consultations and will continue to do so.

Finance and Audit Committee Delegations

Public delegations and questions from Ottawa City Councillors were welcomed at the Finance and Audit committee meeting on February 15. At this meeting, 9 delegations presented to the OPS and OPSB. Matters addressed by the delegates varied, however the following captures the identifiable themes that were communicated:

- De-tasking police.
- Police transparency.
- Questions regarding the need for the new South Facility.
- Paying suspended officers.
- New approaches to mental health response.

- Quantifying the value of policing and Neighbourhood Resources Teams.

Targeted Outreach Initiatives

Throughout the year, the OPS engages with the public on a variety of topics through multiple processes. Consultations are carried out in line with statutory obligations, as well as through community engagement initiatives. Details of planned public consultations undertaken by the OPS can be found in the OPSB Annual CR-6 Public Consultation report.

The OPS maintains dialogues with the community at various levels, across a wide range of interests, through numerous committees, partnerships, coalitions, neighbourhood organizations and residents, service providers and other stakeholders, ensuring Ottawa's Indigenous, racialized, faith-based, 2SLGBTQQA+, and underserved communities have agency in shaping their police service and policing priorities.

The Service held numerous presentations and feedback sessions with key coalitions and city-wide committees in addition to OPSB, including: Community Equity Council (CEC), Community Development Framework (CDF) Steering Table, Equity Ottawa, National Council of Canadian Muslims (NCCM), United for All Coalition, Black Agenda Noir, Human Needs Task Force, City of Ottawa Community Safety and Well-being (CSWB) team, Council of Imams of Ottawa Gatineau, United Muslim Association of Ottawa Gatineau, Jewish Federation, Ottawa Aboriginal Coalition, City of Ottawa Community Hubs, and the Guiding Council for Mental Health and Addictions.

From these consultations and on-going engagement with Ottawa's diverse communities emerge several common concerns. These include:

- Confronting hate and right-wing extremism
- Fighting violence against gender-based, faith-based, racialized, and other marginalized communities
- Identifying and addressing bias and inequity in service delivery
- Working with partners to reduce victimization of our most vulnerable
- Working and building trust with communities most at risk of violent crime
- Supporting the protection of youth at risk
- Working with partners to increase opportunities to divert people away from offending

- Supporting the transition of mental health calls to the right health and social service providers
- Improving transparency and accountability around the use of police powers

In addition, following the 2022 Convoy occupation of downtown neighbourhoods, the Service hosted several conversations with community members and groups most impacted by the Convoy. We heard that women, racialized persons, and members of 2SLGBTQQIA+ communities felt especially vulnerable during the Convoy and did not feel adequately protected by police.

Advanis National Policing Survey Results

Advanis conducts annual national opinion polls of Canadians aged 18+ regarding perceptions of their local police service. They ask respondents a series of core survey questions, based on validated Public Safety Canada questions, using a random sampling method weighted to population demographics. The most recent Advanis poll was conducted during May and June 2022.

In addition to the core survey questions asked of all Canadians, Ottawa survey respondents were asked an additional 12 custom questions specific to OPS.

Key findings from the last Advanis survey are that:

- Perceptions of police, in general, have worsened in the past year across the country. No police service had an increase in its excellent/good rating, and virtually all experienced an increase in poor/very poor ratings in 2022.
- Ottawa residents reported a similar amount of crime but worried less about crime compared to residents in other large cities.
- Perceptions of OPS performance and service quality have worsened in the past year.
- Support for OPS has declined and is on par with or lower than support for police in other large Canadian cities.
- Trust in OPS was consistent with OPS survey results from 2021, but is lower than 2018 and historical OPS survey results.

According to respondents' verbatim comments, the top priorities for OPS/OPSB should be focused on reducing crime, strengthening service quality, improving officer treatment of residents, building trust, enhancing training/education, increasing accountability/transparency, and improving oversight/leadership.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

- Document 1: Advanis Survey Documents

CONCLUSION

In total, this community feedback process included a questionnaire with over 500 respondents, small group discussions, one-on-one conversations, delegations and emails. The OPS will continue to reach out to individuals, organizations and networks to continually further our understanding of the concerns and priorities of the communities that we serve.