

Chief's verbal for OPSB meeting February 27, 2023

Good afternoon/Bonjour,

Today, my team is with me virtually, and we look forward to working through the agenda that includes the Draft Budget 2023. Before that, I wanted to comment on a number of important topics and issues.

First, Homicides in 2023, Ottawa has seen four murders in the past four weeks and I can certainly understand the concern from residents and the police board. I can tell you that these events are not connected and arrests have been made in all four homicides. Each of the victims was acquainted in some way with their attacker, which provided police with vital information to make those arrests.

I want to take a minute to commend the work of our Homicide Unit. Their track record in recent years is stellar. In 2021, they had an 80% charge rate for 15 homicides which is very good. In 2022 a 100% charge rate for 16 homicides and as I mentioned, all four have arrests this year.

I visited with this talented team last Friday afternoon. They are as passionate and hard working as they come. But I'm worried about them as their team is very small and needs to grow. I'll be looking to do that in the coming weeks.

BUT I'll say this, the citizens of Ottawa should be comforted and have a high level of confidence that this team is responsible for investigating our most serious of crimes.

Gun seizures

In two different traffic stops within the past few weeks, our officers discovered illegal firearms and arrested those in possession of these guns.

We continue to see an influx of illegal firearms entering our community, with about 80 percent coming across our border from the United States.

The good news is that last year the province made significant investments in establishing new Provincial Guns and Gangs teams at key hubs across the province, led by the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP).

One of those units is based out of our Elgin Street headquarters and includes multi-agency coordination between the OPP, OPS, Kingston Police, Gatineau Police, and the Sûreté du Québec.

It's an important step to have all these agencies engaged, and equally important **for the OPS and this city** to have it embedded within our community.

In addition, the province also invested in increasing staffing for its Provincial Weapons Enforcement Unit.

The OPS has an officer working out of its Cornwall police location which helps to coordinate the flow of information from other organizations like the Canada Border Services Agency.

As of February 21, our officers have seized six crime guns this year and responded to nine shootings. In 2022, our officers seized 106 crime guns and responded to 60 shootings city-wide.

Arsons

We have also had two very high-profile arsons in the past month that have deeply impacted the communities where they occurred.

The first, at the Minto development in Orleans, saw a gas main explode, shattering windows and levelling some model homes. **Thankfully** there were **no fatalities**, but 12 people were injured and several families were displaced.

Our Arson investigation unit has determined that circumstances surrounding the explosion were deemed criminal and they continue to work with the Ontario Fire Marshal's office, the Technical Standards and Safety Authority, and Minto Homes in this investigation.

While we cannot provide any further information at this time due to the nature of the investigation, we will work to keep the Board and the public updated.

The second investigation involves the arrest of one woman for starting a fire that caused significant damage to an apartment building and displaced families on Presland Road.

Despite the arrest, this investigation is also ongoing and our officers will continue to work with the Ontario Fire Marshal on this case.

Convoy Events in January and February.

On the topic of protests and Major Events, the Ottawa Police Service, under the exceptional leadership of Superintendent Rob Bernier, has developed a strategic and structured approach to all public events and demonstrations.

We saw this new approach in the last 5 weeks during the Convoy Events in January and February. These events, while challenging at times, we're handled very well by Rob and his team who worked extremely hard in the last two months. As well, the members who worked on the weekends to manage the events, did so with great discretion and professionalism.

Unfortunately, there is no break for our team as we concluded the Convoy events we'll be shifting our efforts to St. Patrick's day which I understand here in Ottawa, is quite an event. Our NRT officers will be meeting with residents and business owners to discuss public safety plans. It will also include an enhanced presence in key areas where safety issues have emerged in past years.

POEC report

So that leads me to last week's release of the Public Order Emergency Commission report from Justice Rouleau.

This followed recommendations we received from the **City's Auditor General's** office with its own report.

We welcome this opportunity to learn and improve our response to major events and protests. We are carefully reviewing the recommendations from both reports.

Acting Deputy Chief Paul Burnett will have overall responsibility for the review process and development of an action plan for the Ottawa Police Service.

It should be noted that the City AG has recommendations directed specifically to the OPS. However, many of the police related recommendations in the POEC report are directed to the Federal/Provincial governments and also would involve the RCMP and in some cases the OPP.

As such, our action plan is expected to be fluid but:

- **it will include specific actions that we'll take or have already taken,**
- **and the expected outcomes.**
- **who is responsible for each action**

As we've mentioned in recent months, we have already implemented many changes to our approach to major events. This has included:

- enhanced communication with the public, Mayor and Council and the police board.
- Information sharing and cooperation with our policing partners has been greatly enhanced in the last year.
- Monitoring of any and all information to support intelligence-led decision-making.
- Working in an integrated model with City By-Law and Traffic Services at City Hall.
- All of these strategies will be shared in real-time through the new Integrated Event Command Table, that brings all our key policing partners together, as well as our municipal, provincial and federal partners, for more effective planning and operational deployment.

Moving forward, our goal is to ensure that our plans align with best practices in policing, are responsive to the needs and concerns of our communities and meet all of our service obligations.

Budget

Our team has been working hard to deliver a budget that we feel is responsible, and accurately reflects the needs of the OPS to effectively serve and protect this city.

Given we have tabled the budget already I won't elaborate too much on it's contents.

As you know, it includes provisions to hire 25 additional positions to support the work we do in the community.

But it also looks at how we develop existing investments, like our Equity, Diversity and Inclusion program, how we can support the City's Community Safety and Well-Being Plan, modernize our Service, and invest in member wellness.

And we need a plan on how we can grow to meet the changing demographics of this city, which includes the development of our South Facility Project.

Also included in tonight's agenda is a report on the feedback we received from the community about our draft budget. John Steinbachs will speak to that later.

We worked hard to ensure that we reached as many people as possible in order to get a broad representation from our community

It included one-on-one conversations with community leaders and City Councillors, discussions with neighbourhood and community groups, as well as online questionnaires. A delegate mentioned tonight that there isn't enough time, 3 weeks from tabling to passing the budget. It's true, but we do have to follow the schedule that is allotted to all City departments. But know that we also speak with groups, agencies and individuals throughout the year and will make ourselves available if needed.

What we heard back from residents is consistent with results from other public surveys.

That we need to rebuild public trust and work to develop programs that divert people in crisis away from the criminal justice system and towards support services that can help them.

I agree.

But this is not something we can decide as police professionals.

It's something that needs to be developed by the community for the community, with police having a seat at the table. And that work is ongoing.

I want to thank those who worked on the budget and I look forward to hearing any questions or comments from the Board.