

Report to / Rapport au:

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

26 June 2023 / 26 juin 2023

Submitted by / Soumis par:

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

Contact Person / Personne ressource:

**John Steinbachs, Executive Director of Strategy & Communications / directeur
exécutif stratégie & communication
SteinbachsJ@ottawapolice.ca**

SUBJECT: LETTERS OF COMMENDATION

OBJET: LETTRES DE MENTION ÉLOGIEUSE

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

Attached for the information of the Board are excerpts from letters of appreciation /
thanks received from the public since the last regular meeting for services rendered by
members of the Ottawa Police Service (OPS).

DISCUSSION

Date Received: 11 May 2023

From: Member of the public

Excerpt from Letter: I find this email very difficult to write. While watching the news
today, I heard that officers from the OPS went to Russell to help and assist during this
very heartbreaking time (for the death of OPP Sergeant Eric Mueller). I cried. I wanted
to thank each and every one of you – you have come to the aid of family members that
are hurting; with pain that seems unbearable. The police family is again in mourning and

I am very thankful that this shows people that family members are there for each other. The hurt and pain are real for so many. Many thanks again – take care and be safe.

Date Received: 12 May 2023

From: Member of the public

Excerpt from Letter: The events of this week have shaken all of us in our community with the death of OPP Sergeant Eric Mueller. I just want to send out a huge thank you to each and every one of you for your continued commitment to this community. Every day each one of you puts on that uniform; you walk out the door not knowing what you are going to face, but you keep doing it to protect us and I wanted to say thank you. As an organization, you are constantly challenged by those who would be the first to call you if they were in danger. Please know that there are far more community members that support you and recognize the work that you do. Please accept my sincere condolences to all of you and know you have the support from your community during this difficult time.

Date Received: 13 May 2023

From: Member of the public

Excerpt from Letter: Thank you OPS officers for your patient and skillful management of the annual march (for life) and for keeping protesters and marchers separated.

Date Received: 15 May 2023

From: Member of the public

Excerpt from Letter: Thank you so much for everything you are doing for us; risking your lives to protect us. May the Lord protect you all the time and bring you safely back home to your loved ones.

Date Received: 15 May 2023

From: Member of the public

Excerpt from Letter: I just passed an OPS patrol car with its lights flashing, eastbound on Highway 417. The officer was assisting a person to change a tire. What a wonderful and kind act, and thoughtful too as this car was stuck in the bus lane which is a safety hazard. Thanks for all that you do OPS!

Date Received: 18 May 2023

From: Member of the public

Excerpt from Letter: Nous vous remercions pour votre dévouement pour la protection de tous les Canadiens. Votre profession demande beaucoup de courage et de sacrifice. Nos sympathies aux familles des policiers qui ont trouvé la mort au cours de leurs interventions. Nos condoléances s'adressent également à tous les corps de police. Nous souhaitons que les responsables parviennent à développer des plans, des

stratégies, des tactiques pour éviter la mort de nos policiers qui doivent intervenir pour sauver des citoyens en danger. Salutations respectueuses.

Date Received: 19 May 2023

From: Member of the public

OPS members: Constables Shayne Doiron and Alexandra Slobodian

Excerpt from Letter: I've had many interactions with the Ottawa police. I'll be honest, 90 percent of the time they are talking me down because I'm about to hurt myself or they are trying to find my exact location and calling me to make sure I'm safe and not hurt. I deal with a wide variety of mental illnesses and emotional breakdowns aren't uncommon. Sometimes those emotions get out of control, and I find myself in crisis, unable to make decisions to keep myself safe and alive. In January I went into crisis. I had a knife, and I was literally minutes away from stabbing myself and slicing open my aorta. Someone in my life at the time became worried because of the text messages I left and called the police to do a wellness check on me. When the police arrived, I had the blade pointing toward my diaphragm. The four responding officers were not demanding or aggressive at all and took their time to talk with me man to man until I relinquished the weapon. They took me to the hospital, and I witnessed a total of eight police officers genuinely concerned about my well-being; each and every one of them saying kind compassionate words and statements, especially the two officers that were left overnight to supervise me. Every one of the officers treated me with such dignity respect and genuine care that it literally blew my mind when I reflected later the next day. I particularly remember a female officer who played a huge part in calming my PTSD. I kept disassociating back to a traumatic experience over and over and every time she noticed I was going in and out of reality she would ask me kindly what was I remembering and what about it was emotionally hard to deal with etc. The young male police officer -- and this part usually makes me tear up because of the genuine kindness and generosity shown to me -- hadn't eaten lunch yet and got a big bag of shawarma for himself and the female officer. Without me saying anything he asked me when the last time I ate. My nerves will reduce my appetite so I often forget to eat, and it had been 24 hours prior to the distress call since I last ate anything. He offered to get me something to eat. I could not believe it. This officer went out of his way and spent his hard-earned money to give me food. The Ottawa police will always have a place in my heart and mind, and I wanted to share my admiration and absolute respect for what they do. I really want everyone in uniform to know that they DO make a difference and for me, I genuinely felt loved and respected.

Date Received: 23 May 2023

From: Member of the public

OPS members: Constables Mark Leblanc and Luc Plante

Excerpt from Letter: My husband and I were at a relative's home to help with a 17-year-old in serious crisis. We ended up calling 911 for help. Constables Mark Leblanc and Luc Plante attended and we could not have been more impressed by their performance. They were helpful, calm, caring, and clearly had the training to help individuals in a mental health crisis. They spent time with both the boy's parents, explaining to them how they would address the call now that they were on site, and then spent time with the boy. They were understanding and helped to de-escalate the situation. Please pass on our sincere compliments to them. We were very impressed.

Date Received: 24 May 2023

From: Member of the public

Excerpt from Letter: I was out for a walk with my 2-year-old daughter when we saw an officer at a construction site. I talked with the officer and wanted to introduce my daughter to the police and let her know they are our friends and help us. The officer was very kind and friendly. He even let my daughter touch his shoulder flash. She is really shy, but it was a good experience. So thank you to that officer for being kind and patient with us.

Date Received: 24 May 2023

From: Member of the public

OPS members: Constables Monika Vugdalic and Emma Dukelow

Excerpt from Letter: Constables Monika Vugdalic and Emma Dukelow helped to save my mom's life. She is an elderly lady living alone and had fallen and broken her hip and had been on the floor for many days. They were so kind, caring and quick thinking, and communicated with me on the phone from Vancouver the whole time. I am so very grateful for their actions that day to save her life. The city of Ottawa is very blessed to have these two on the police force! My mom is out of surgery and on the mend in hospital. She is very grateful too for all that they did. Thank you so much.

Date Received: 27 May 2023

From: Member of the public

OPS member: Constable Kyle McLean

Excerpt from Letter: I wanted to thank Constable Kyle McLean and police dispatch for helping me. Cst. McLean has really inspired me, in my own life, to be forthright in all of my decisions.

Date Received: 29 May 2023

From: Member of the public

OPS member: Constable David McCulloch

Excerpt from Letter: I am elderly and have a severe medical condition that makes it difficult sometimes for me to communicate and get around. After a medical appointment, I was walking downtown near the Rideau Centre. I saw a police officer and I told him that I was lost and needed help. I explained to him that I had a medical condition that affected how I communicate and that I was not drunk. He was wonderful and took me home. Please thank him for me.

Date Received: 29 May 2023

From: Member of the public

OPS member: Takara O'Donoghue

Excerpt from Letter: I want to convey my appreciation and thanks to the OPS member who helped me. She knew the process well. She took the time to learn about the full incident and explained what options were available to me. Upon completing the work she needed to do on her end, she called me back to inform me what actions she undertook and the results I should expect. Her way of handling this report gave me the support I needed and provided reassurance that with help from the police, one can surely feel safe to be living in their respective Ottawa community. Kudos for a job well done, executed with balance, fairness and transparency.

Date Received: 30 May 2023

From: Member of the public

OPS members: Constables Ryan Carroll, Kevin Handsperger and Sergeant Michael Rose

Excerpt from Letter: My wife has dementia and I left her in my vehicle while I went inside the hospital to check her in. When I returned 15 minutes later, she had left the vehicle and I could not find her. I phoned 911 and within three minutes three police cars arrived, they were very polite asked many questions I had not thought of, and started to search for her. In no time there were six officers looking for her, but it took 5 hours until they found her. Constable Kevin Handsperger told me that by the time they found her, more than 50 officers had been engaged. I am very, very grateful to the OPS and so surprised with the help and courtesy I observed during my first encounter with your Service.

Date Received: 4 June 2023

From: Member of the public

OPS member: Constables Saeed Ali and Ashton Bennett

Excerpt from Letter: I would like to compliment the professional and caring actions taken by two officers last night around midnight when they brought my daughter home. She is 16 years old and suffers from extreme mental illness and a mild intellectual disability as well as a rare genetic condition that causes epilepsy, kidney tumours and a host of

other issues. Constables Saeed Ali and Ashton Bennett were calm, empathetic, and caring. They tried to suggest options for us to pursue to get her more support. The officers who brought her back did absolutely everything within their power, but they are not given the resources and support to help these situations. It is putting the officers in a difficult position, and it is unsustainable for us as a family. I want to commend the officers in this case for the way they conducted themselves in a difficult situation.

Date Received: 5 June 2023

From: Member of the public

OPS member: Constables Chad Fawcett, Jerilyn McDade and Joel Shaver

Excerpt from Letter: I would like to thank Constables Chad Fawcett, Jerilyn McDade and Joel Shaver who responded to a 911 call at my home. It was placed by my mother in response to a serious medical situation regarding my father. The officers were polite and respectful during this difficult time. They worked seamlessly with both paramedics and fire to assess the situation and provide as much support as possible. I will always remember the kindness they showed to both my mother and myself. Please pass along our gratitude.

After police responded to a lockdown at a Kanata school, we received a series of emails from educators and parents related to the event. Responding officers included: Constables Paul Anca, Terence Brannan, Lauren Stokoe, Melvin Campbell, Michael Briggs, Gary Smith, Jason Killeen, Monika Vugdalic, Corey Martin, Charlene Abella, Anthony Hagan, Jeff Shields, Daniel Patton, Sergeants Gordon Burns, John Drader, Robert Phung, Steven Catral, and Staff Sergeant Greg Swrjeski

Date Received: 7 June 2023

From: Member of the public

OPS members: Excerpt from Letter: I am so eternally grateful for the work the police and teachers did when my child's school went into lockdown. Phones are often taken and people were asked not to text because it can create confusion and rumours which I understand completely. I actually feel better now knowing the police have our kids' backs and the teachers were following lockdown rules.

Date Received: 7 June 2023

From: Member of the public

Excerpt from Letter: I freaked out when I could not text one of my boys for two hours when his school went into lockdown. He did eventually text us and told us the teacher took all the cellphones. I am proud of our police service and I am glad that everyone is safe.

Date Received: 7 June 2023

From: Member of the public

Excerpt from Letter: I'm a high school teacher and I have taught in inner-city schools (Boston was the hardest). I've seen many a lockdown and some were not as successful. I wasn't able to communicate with my child until it was almost over, but I knew he was safe.

Date Received: 7 June 2023

From: Member of the public

Excerpt from Letter: When I finally heard from my son when his school went into lockdown I asked him later if he was scared he said no, the police were there and he knew they could handle it. Having taught in the USA, I can say that this is a huge statement from a teenager! Trust in our police is a truly wonderful thing.

Date Received: 8 June 2023

From: Member of the public

Excerpt from Letter: As a teacher at the school that went into lockdown, I wanted to extend my thanks to the officers who responded to our emergency calls yesterday. As you can imagine, the staff and students were incredibly alarmed and frightened. When we knew that the police had arrived and we could hear their presence in the hallways, we felt so relieved. I can't imagine what it is like to respond to a call like that, and I am eternally grateful for your bravery and dedication. Please know that the work you do does not go unnoticed or unappreciated. You made an incredible difference in our lives yesterday.

Date Received: 8 June 2023

From: Member of the public

Excerpt from Letter: I would like to send this email to thank the officers that responded to a school lockdown yesterday. It was a high-stress day that involved many people and many students with different needs. I am the ESL teacher and felt the officers that entered my room to clear it were calm, friendly (as can be in this situation) and very helpful. Their calm demeanour helped my students feel safe. Many of my students come from countries that have a very different perspective of policing and yesterday helped them see that police in Ottawa are not the enemy. Thank-you!

Date Received: 8 June 2023

From: Member of the public

Excerpt from Letter: I am a teacher at a school that went into lockdown, and I just wanted to reach out to thank you for your response to the situation. I am certain that being called into a school for a reported threat is not what our Ottawa police officers

want to respond to, and I am sure that some of them have school-age children and this must have hit very close to home. We as a staff are incredibly grateful for your prompt and thorough response yesterday.

Date Received: 8 June 2023

From: Member of the public

Excerpt from Letter: Just wanted to express my gratitude to the responding officers for taking the lockdown situation seriously and responding to the call.

Date Received: 8 June 2023

From: Member of the public

Excerpt from Letter: I just wanted to thank all members of the Ottawa Police Service who responded to the call for a school lockdown. The professionalism that was exhibited went a long way towards reassuring the staff and students that everything was OK. Thank you to everyone involved.

Date Received: 8 June 2023

From: Member of the public

Excerpt from Letter: I am a teacher at the school that went into lockdown. I, along with my Grade 8 students, wanted to express my sincere gratitude to the Ottawa police for their response. Our staff and students felt safe and supported by the police presence in our school.

Date Received: 8 June 2023

From: Member of the public

Excerpt from Letter: I wanted to take a moment to thank the officers who took care of me and my students yesterday when our school went into lockdown. Your professionalism and care made all of us feel safe. The first thing my students said today when we discussed the situation is that they weren't panicking because they knew that there were trained people who knew what to do, and who were in charge. Thanks for taking risks for us and for keeping us safe!

Date Received: 8 June 2023

From: Member of the public

Excerpt from Letter: Please share my appreciation with the officers who attended the call for a lockdown at our school. Their thorough investigation and calm carrying out of the procedure were reassuring to staff and students alike and are greatly appreciated. Our staff heard afterwards about the special consideration given to some of our students with special needs. Thank you for balancing safety in the context of the situation with the dignity and well-being of our most vulnerable students.

Date Received: 8 June 2023

From: Member of the public

Excerpt from Letter: I just wanted to thank the police officers who responded to our lockdown yesterday. Your officers did a great job in dealing with students, teachers, administration, parents, and the vastness of our school. As a teacher, I feel safe knowing that the OPS is thorough and professional in its procedures.

Date Received: 8 June 2023

From: Member of the public

Excerpt from Letter: I am a counsellor at the school that went into lockdown. It was a very stressful event for staff, students, and parents - and for the police too, I am sure. I want to share that the students I have spoken with today felt safe and protected, and while the time was long, they all understood why it had to take that long. I have a student from Chile, who attended a school where students had to carry weapons to stay safe from attacks from peers on campus and whose school safety plan was to run from the building in any direction as fast as you could when there was a threat. The student shared that the lockdown made them feel safe, and knowing police were present provided a sense of security. This is huge. I wanted to send thanks, on behalf of my students, and from myself personally. I can't thank you enough.