

Chief's Verbal Report for the July 24, 2023 OPSB meeting

CANADA DAY

On Canada Day, the Ottawa Police Service developed and delivered a comprehensive operational plan to address Canada Day event for Lebreton Flats, Parliament Hill and the various celebrations at other locations around the city.

We had over 750 officers deployed over the weekend.

It went very well with officers managing a few issues throughout the day and night.

I want to thank all the members who worked that weekend that included numerous officers from other policing agencies throughout the Province.

They are very supportive of assisting us in Ottawa despite the local pressures in their respective areas.

Our Major Event planning team has moved on to other large events that are occurring in August that include various Pride events and the postponed Rolling Thunder ride.

HATE CRIME

A few weeks ago, we reported on our latest hate crimes stats for 2023.

We have seen a 23.5 percent increase in the number of reported incidents from this time in 2022.

This has raised concerns with impacted groups within our community.

Of the 221 reported hate-motivated incidents to date in 2023, 158 have been deemed criminal and 63 have been determined to be hate-motivated but non-criminal.

Twenty-three people have been charged with 56 counts of hate-motivated offences, with one formal charge of public incitement of hatred.

The statistics are sobering because we know that they only tell part of the story.

So often these types of incidents go unreported and we know that this data only provides a glimpse of what people are experiencing in our community.

It's why we are encouraging residents and community groups to file a report with police in person, call us, online reporting or via a third party when they encounter a suspected hate crime or hate incident.

With Ottawa Pride month in August, the OPS wants to fully support the 2SLGBTQQIA+ communities and we have met with Pride Event organizers to ensure that people who attend public events feel safe doing so.

We will continue to work towards a strong relationship with them to further build trust.

OPIOD Overdoses

We are seeing a significant rise in overdoses in recent months.

- These calls have risen 163%, from 367 at this time last year to 966 this year. This is very concerning.
- The YTD result has exceeded the total for the entire year in 2022 (668)
- OPS members have administered Narcan 88 times this year which is 30% increase from last year.
- These interventions by our members have **saved 78 lives so far this year**

And we are hearing things back from the community about our efforts to respond to these incidents.

I would like to read an excerpt from email we received from a resident in Centretown early last week:

“Thank you to the Ottawa Police Service for intervening in the open intravenous drug use on Bank Street this evening. This behaviour is proving to be an enormous public safety issue in our neighbourhood. We see open use, dealing and discarding of used paraphernalia that never existed before. I have lived in this neighbourhood for 25 years and I have never seen anything like it. The assistance of law enforcement to engage and intervene in this drug use is very much appreciated by a lot of us who live here. I hope we see a continuation of this work in the future.”

I will mention that Drug Unit Staff Sergeant James McGarry has been working with Ottawa Public Health to roll out a new Narcan initiative, that equips frontline officers with extra kits that they can give out to people they meet while out on patrol.

I'll move to stolen vehicles

At the start of this year, Project Phoenix was launched to identify organized auto-theft groups operating in this city in response to an increase in vehicle thefts.

These groups were highly organized, using shipment containers to transport the stolen cars to Montreal where they would sometimes be put on a ship for resale in other countries, while others were re-routed domestically in Canada.

Our officers recovered over 75 stolen vehicles worth over \$3 million and charged eight people with 67 criminal charges, including conspiracy to commit an indictable offence and theft over \$5,000.

Two of those arrested lived in Ottawa, two in Gatineau and the remaining of those charged lived in Montreal.

This was exceptional investigative work, which included identifying the vehicle owners as some of the stolen vehicles had their VIN numbers replaced.

In the first quarter of 2022, we received reports of 387 stolen vehicles.

In that same period in 2023, that number jumped to 504, which represents a 30 percent increase year over year.

I would like to thank Staff Sergeant Cathy Brown and her investigating team along with our Traffic Section for their work on Project Phoenix.

I would also like to thank our partners at C-I-S-O, Canada Border Services, Ontario Provincial Police, and numerous other municipal police agencies for their collaboration and hard work.

Guilty verdicts

We saw two important guilty verdicts returned in recent weeks related to homicides that was due to the exceptional hard work of our investigating officers.

On June 29, Adrian Daou was again convicted of the first-degree murder of Jennifer Stewart after the Ontario Court of Appeals ordered a new trial in 2021.

This second guilty verdict finally provides Jennifer's family with some closure for this horrific incident.

We also saw another guilty verdict issued on June 29 for the first-degree murder of Mohamed Hassan.

A jury found Jefferey Dondji guilty of shooting and killing Mohamed in July 2020 on a wooded path near a school.

I have a high level of confidence in our Homicide unit who have responded to 9 homicides this calendar year.

They deliver time and time again as noted in the two cases above.

Data and analytics

We continue to make investments into developing a robust data analysis program that will help to inform in three specific areas:

- 1) The development of the Service's strategic priorities as determined by the Board this fall.
- 2) As well as updating the public on important trends in social disorder and public safety.
- 3) Operationally – will allow the OPS to make decisions to more effectively deploy our resources.

Our team is currently developing dashboards that will provide information about things like homicides, shootings, assaults, thefts and community safety.

We hope this will provide better oversight and transparency in the important work we do to keep our city safe.

We anticipate launching some of these dashboards this fall.

I'll speak to our ongoing Public and Member Survey

Our consultation strategy continues with a goal to receive information and feedback to assist in developing our next Strategic Plan with the Ottawa Police Services Board.

So far, more than 3,000 people have filled out the public survey.

To date, 10 members of council have filled in the survey, and over 550 members from OPS have provided their feedback on the internal survey.

While this is not a scientific poll, the themes and information gathered have great value for this discussion.

We'll be providing preliminary results of the survey as part of the August 18th information package.

Misdialed 911 Calls

Last week, the Ottawa Police issued a media release for public awareness and education on the increase in misdialed calls to 911.

In the first quarter of 2023, there has been a 49% increase in “hang-up, pocket and misdialed calls” made to 911, representing 50 000 calls.

This represents 21 000 more calls received for that period compared to 2022.

Each ‘dropped’ call warrants a follow-up by the Communications Centre to determine if there was an emergency or not.

We continue to educate the public on the process to follow in case this happens to them.

We ask that if you dial 911 by mistake, please stay on the line and answer the operator’s questions who needs to confirm that there is no need for emergency services and that you are safe.

These instances are a massive drain on resources and we simply have to get these numbers down.

Shootings

I would like to update the Board on the issue of shootings in Ottawa. This month, Ottawa saw its 43rd shooting in 2023

Police are out there every day holding offenders accountable, responding quickly to gunshot calls, taking firearms out of our community, and preventing violence.

But, it is difficult and dangerous work.

In July, the Homicide Unit charged a 21 year old man with second degree murder in relation to last month’s Caldwell Avenue shooting investigation.

The Guns and Gangs Unit charged a 17 year old youth with numerous firearm and Possession for the Purpose of Trafficking charges, following a shooting on Bank Street on July 14.

We continue to work collaboratively with partners to mobilize and educate the community on the violence in their communities.

Letters from residents and partners

My wife and I live in Lowertown, I'm sure you are aware that it's a complex and often challenging neighbourhood that we have lived in for over 20 years and today was no exception as we had a shooting very close to our home.

At approximately 3pm today my wife and I were sitting out back and we heard 5 shots ring out. Two at first, a 3 to 5 second pause and then 3 more shots, they sounded loud and close, we immediately called 911.

I wanted to take a moment to say how thankful and appreciative we are for the rapid and overwhelming response we received from OPS.

The dispatch agent that took my call was efficient, professional, clear and concise. Within moments there was an immediate response from OPS officers who quickly sectioned off the area where the shooting occurred, they were cruisers and officers in place, visible and interviewing witnesses but also speaking to community members.

I went over to speak to the officers briefly and they provided me with information what they could, they were very sympathetic, understanding and thoughtful.

Please let the officers that were on scene today know their efforts and client service were greatly appreciated today by us.

In our over 20 years in this neighbourhood my wife and I have never heard gunshots, as you can imagine this was very unsettling, especially as close as they were, that being said the response from Ottawa Police made us feel safe and secure knowing that our fine police officers were in the neighbourhood, on the job and making sure that we were protected.

My wife and I have had a good fortune to have met some wonderful police officers in this neighbourhood and we have always been appreciative of the amazing and wonderful work that OPS does and today once again was no exception.

If it is appropriate we would ask that our appreciation could filter down to the men and women of Ottawa Police who responded today, and in general to your membership to let them know that they are appreciated and that their presence, dedication and hard work go a long way to helping the rest of us feel safe, secure and able to go about our daily lives even on days like today.

Best wishes to you and thank you for all that OPS does for our community.

That concludes my verbal report,
Thank you.