

Document 1: Consultations led by Board Chair Dr. Gail Beck

Through the months of July and August, Chair Beck, on behalf of the Board, spent time meeting with a diverse range of stakeholders to gather feedback to inform the 2023-2026 Strategic Plan. The Chair's consultations are part of an overall, comprehensive strategy to ensure the Board and the Service are able to seek out, hear, and incorporate diverse perspectives into the development of draft strategic priorities for the Ottawa Police Service (OPS). Some stakeholders were approached for engagement, while others proactively reached out. The Chair remains open to meeting with any stakeholders looking to speak with her and provide input to the Board. The Chair and the Board aim to have an ongoing dialogue with stakeholders and citizens.

To date, the Chair has met with:

- the Ottawa Police Community Equity Council;
- the Ottawa Police Youth Advisory Committee;
- representatives from the Community Safety and Wellbeing Advisory Committee;
- representatives from the Violence Against Women Advisory Committee;
- representatives of organizations supporting various racialized and faith-based communities;
- representatives from local community health centres;
- a local legal counsel who regularly defends clients who have had interactions with the Ottawa Police Service;
- an individual who sits on the board for a local shelter;
- a representative from a local non-profit that assists vulnerable communities and community members;
- a representative of an organization that provides wellness programming for police;
- a City Councillor;
- two representatives from organizations providing services and advocacy for the 2SLGBTQI+ community;
- a representative from community housing; and,
- an advocate for elderly dementia patients.

A few themes emerged from the various meetings held by the Chair and they are summarized as follows:

- Increased need for partnerships, engagement, and dialogue between the OPS and the community, with appropriate follow-up on feedback

A number of stakeholders spoke to the need for the OPS to invest more time in engaging with the community and building partnerships. While it was noted that some organizations and groups did not necessarily have a sufficient level of trust in the OPS to

enter a formal partnership, it was felt that trust in police could only be built and/or restored through dialogue, rather than absence of the police. Given the diversity and complexity of communities that make up Ottawa, feedback was also received that OPS needs to tailor the level and type of engagement it has with community groups to the specific needs of those groups. To further illustrate, it was noted that OPS did not always need to occupy a lead role in community spaces; in some situations, it would be preferable to have OPS present in more of a supportive capacity.

Partnerships were also seen as a means of providing ongoing training and education to OPS members on issues and topics relevant to the community. Some stakeholders offered to have their organizations participate in such training jointly with the Service.

In terms of engagement, the need for follow-up and action on demands was stressed. Some stakeholders noted having several conversations with OPS on topics where no changes resulted, or the changes were not sustained in any meaningful way. This has led to consultation fatigue and a further decline in trust. Some comments were made that a culture change was needed to ensure changes at the top of the organization also translated into changes on the frontline.

Finally, increased engagement and dialogue was also seen as a means of helping to educate the public on the role of police and how to get in touch with the Service when assistance is needed, including which numbers to call.

- Increased visibility of police in the community outside of enforcement activities

A lack of trust in police by some parts of the community was cited repeatedly. Stakeholders felt that the presence of police in communities, outside of reactive, enforcement activities, would help police build relationships with the public and help restore trust by showing a more human side to policing. It was noted that members of the OPS are community members themselves and the public needs more opportunities to see officers in this light. Having opportunities for police to interact with community in more proactive and positive settings, such as community and cultural events, could also reduce fear of police. It was also noted as important to ensure the Service is representative of the community it serves so community members and OPS members can better relate to each other.

- Increased transparency

Stakeholders spoke to the need for the Service to be more transparent with the public through a variety of means, including making police data available to the public; sharing more about the inner workings of the police service through social media, and in particular certain platforms that are geared more towards youth; and being more transparent when an incident occurs that results in a break of trust between the police and the community. Stakeholders felt that increased transparency would benefit both the public and the Service.

- Increased accountability within OPS

The theme of accountability was raised in the context of ensuring the right behaviours were being rewarded within the OPS, as well as ensuring there were ongoing opportunities for members to debrief and learn from incidents and situations. Some stakeholders felt that the current reward and accountability systems at the Service were too geared towards enforcement activities and not focused enough on service excellence, engagement, and proactive trust-building activities.

- Support for those experiencing hate, intimate partner violence

With the sharp rise in hate incidents and the epidemic of intimate partner violence, several stakeholders spoke to the need for the Service to be a leader in addressing these types of crimes and better supporting victims, including the communities they come from. With respect to hate crimes in particular, stakeholders noted that while police have traditionally viewed themselves as neutral enforcers of laws, a more nuanced approach to enforcement is needed.

- Need for more upstream investments to address social issues

While not within the jurisdiction of the Board to address, some stakeholders noted a lack of funding being provided to address social issues as causing a divide within the community with police. It was noted that more investments in upstream solutions would allow frontline agencies to better address social disorder issues and reduce the occurrence of crisis points and the need for police intervention in some instances.

The Strategic Plan, even once finalized, is intended to be a living document that can be adjusted over time to respond to changing community needs related to the provision of police services in the City of Ottawa. Typically, progress on the plan is monitored by the Board through bi-annual reporting. The Chair intends on continuing her engagement with community stakeholders, on behalf of the Board, as one means of ensuring the plan remains relevant and responsive to community needs. The Chair welcomes any community members interested in speaking with the Board about its oversight and governance role and how it can better address the needs, concerns, and priorities of the community, to reach out.