

DOCUMENT 5: Ottawa Mayor and Councillors Survey

Background

The Service distributed an online survey to the Mayor and City Council as part of the consultation program. The survey was open throughout July. It sought feedback regarding community safety and well-being trends, quality of service, public trust and investments. Thirteen (13/24) respondents completed the survey.

Discussion

Regarding community safety and well-being, 10 of 13 respondents suggested that crime has increased in Ottawa over the last three years. The most frequently expressed crime/public safety concern for the City of Ottawa was violence, including gang-related and gender-based violence. The next most frequently cited concerns for the City were traffic and road safety and auto thefts. At a Ward level, traffic and road safety was the most frequently mentioned concern, followed by auto thefts and social disorder such as vandalism and mischief.

Six of 13 respondents indicated they were satisfied with the quality of service provided by the OPS. Those expressing satisfaction indicated they would like to see increased visibility and staffing. Reasons for dissatisfaction include unlawful protest, traffic enforcement, visibility, and follow-up for minor crimes.

Nine of 13 Councillors reported that the quality of service delivered by OPS had improved over the last three years.

When asked how the OPS contributes to community safety and well-being in their wards, the most frequently mentioned ways were through presence and community policing, as well as law enforcement. Community engagement, strong communication, service referrals, and responses to overdoses were also mentioned.

The top five investments areas:

- 1) Road safety and traffic enforcement
- 2) Alternative response to mental health
- 3) Increased presence and visibility
- 4) Community engagement
- 5) Guns and gangs, violence, and organized crime

Police presence, particularly at community events and proactive encounters, were frequently cited examples of the types of encounters residents appreciate. Other commonly mentioned interactions were follow-ups after crimes have occurred and visible enforcement of road safety laws.

Questions relating to trust in the OPS showed that seven of 13 respondents had high trust in the police.

Finally, respondents were asked if they had any additional comments:

- Invest in the Community Police Officer program to improve relationships with the community and the suburbs especially.
- OPS has not engaged in local priority setting, objectives creation, performance management discussion, and charting a course for the subsequent year.
- It feels 'us' very much and 'you', two separate entities that should work, communicate, share, and aim towards the same goals.
- I really appreciate this survey and what you are trying to accomplish here.
- I think the community development department in your organization needs to be expanded, and better connected with front line officers. I think front line officers who are in the interest of public safety, aiming to remove 'the threat' to public safety, are not as nuanced as they could be in interpreting events. I'm concerned that removing postsecondary education for police officers gives even less real world experience for new recruits before entering the service, and less context and diversity of perspectives in interpreting those 'threats'. It's like how working in retail or fast food is the best way to learn customer service for any job, I don't know how we are training up police officers to solve problems in the real world before donning a uniform and an identity. I would be interested in learning more about that.
- I would like to see funding given to separate programs for mental health workers. It needs to be separate from police governance. I recognize this would be difficult.
- OPS is heading in the right direction to address significant issues both internal and external to the police force. I would like to see more visibility day-to-day in the community and continuity in the personnel that we see serving our community. I know very few police officers on a first-name basis. Pro-active communications with our office would be appreciated -- example: recently, a police officer shot a coyote we found out about it from resident phone calls we should have had a direct heads up from OPS. (Ottawa Fire does a good job at

notifying councillors of significant incidents in the ward - a good model to review.)
The main issue we hear from residents is a lack of follow-up. They'll submit a report by phone or online and never hear back about any action or resolution. There's a general feeling that police are not responsive or present in suburban communities. We often here that police 'don't care' about the community. Not good.

- Be more publicly accountable for when your members mess up. When Ottawa Fire Services had a member of their force charged with assaulting another member, the Chief publicly stated his disappointment. I've read numerous news stories over the past year concerning members of the OPS under investigation, and yet there's never a word of criticism from OPS. I know that the Police Association is strong, but it doesn't fill me with confidence when police leadership can't show the leadership required to hold its own members accountable. 2. The OPS is well aware that there is a movement in policing to relinquish certain tasks and operations to social services. Don't hold onto the reins so tightly. Learn to let it go, because those vital cash resources will be better used elsewhere. 3. There have been many occasions where I've asked OPS about whether they can do something in my ward, and most often the answer I'm told is that OPS lacks the resources (members) to do it. But from what I've heard, there are a disproportionately large number of OPS members on stress leave. I'm concerned about this. 4. I really hope that the OPS gets better and more open-minded when it comes to outreach and community engagement.
- Continue the work you do, on a personal level I am satisfied with the men and women of the OPS and supportive of their direction and mandate.
- Appreciate the outreach and the effective work on addressing the street racing so far!