

## **DOCUMENT 7: OPS COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENTS**

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Throughout the year, civilian and sworn members of the OPS connect with residents in the community in multiple ways. They work to foster and develop relationships and partnerships through community events, targeted outreach, and one-on-one engagements. This important work serves to build relationships and trust, as well as inform service delivery. Input from members directly engaged in this work can help to provide the Board and OPS leadership with insight into emerging trends, top community concerns, and opportunities for strengthening partnerships.

### **BACKGROUND AND METHODS**

Multiple sections within the OPS conduct consultations and outreach with diverse groups across the city. These sections include Neighbourhood Resource Team (NRT) officers within the Neighbourhood Policing Directorate (NPD), Strategic Partnerships and Engagement (SPE) within the Respect, Values and Inclusion (RVI) Directorate, as well as Diversity Relations and Resource (DRR) and Youth sections. There are ongoing one-on-one engagements, large-scale initiatives (such as the annual Human Rights Learning Forum), and various other initiatives.

Feedback from OPS staff directly engaged in these community consultations at the ground level helps to inform strategic priority development.

### **DISCUSSION**

The discussion section of this report is divided into two sections -- Neighbourhood Policing and Strategic Partnerships and Engagement -- which reflect the work being done by directorates and units within the OPS that are directly engaged in ongoing community relations.

#### **1. NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICING**

NPD staff actively engage with communities in Ottawa throughout the year, making their observations and interactions invaluable for shaping the Board's strategic plan. Their feedback is thematically grouped to align with the questions asked by the Board Chair during her community consultations, which are:

- 1) What are the most significant crime and safety concerns for the community?
- 2) From the community's perspective, what changes would most improve the quality of service provided by the Ottawa Police Service?
- 3) What do you hear in your interactions that Ottawa police can do to build the trust and confidence of the community?

- 4) What does the community consider the top strategic priorities for the OPSB and the OPS over the next three years?



### Significant Crime and Safety Concerns

Community members identify multiple significant crime and safety concerns during their engagement with NRTs. Addressing their concerns requires a collaborative effort from the OPS and the community to ensure a safer environment for everyone.

Drug usage and dealing, as well as drug-related violence, are major issues, along with property crimes committed by individuals with substance abuse disorders. Recent incidents of violent crime have also raised alarm. Human trafficking and apartment takeovers pose additional threats to safety. Post-COVID, there has been a notable impact on the mental health of young people. There are also increases in violent incidents involving youth, such as stabbings, assaults, and robberies, with some of them carrying replica handguns and knives.

Local businesses are experiencing thefts committed to support drug habits, while traffic issues add to the community's challenges. The neighbourhood of Carlington is particularly affected, with recent daylight homicides requiring already stretched NRT resources. Furthermore, the Asian community in Chinatown is dealing with storefront vandalism, necessitating increased police presence. Safety concerns surrounding religious institutions and a call for vigilance during holidays and other important days.

More specifically, community members identified the following significant crime and safety concerns:

- **Drug Dealing:** Drug dealing activities are a major concern and contribute to the overall drug-related issues in the community.
- **Drug Usage and Drug-Related Violence:** Drug abuse and drug-related violence are prevalent issues, leading to various crimes in communities.
- **Property Crimes:** Property crimes like breaking and entering, theft from vehicles, and parcel theft are common, often perpetrated by individuals with substance abuse disorders trying to support their habits.
- **Theft from Community Merchants:** Local merchants are targeted for theft to support drug habits.
- **Violent Crime:** The community has experienced recent incidents of violent crime, such as two murders within two weeks in July.
- **Human Trafficking:** Human trafficking is a serious issue that requires attention and intervention.
- **Apartment Takeovers:** Criminals engaging in apartment takeovers pose a threat to the safety and security of residents.
- **Traffic Issues:** Traffic problems in the area add to the safety challenges faced by residents.
- **Neighborhood-Specific Concerns:** Carlington, one of the original priority neighbourhoods, has been experiencing significant issues, including recent daylight homicides. The NRT is actively involved, but its capacity is stretched thin due to various operational demands from the Service. We have heard from the community that the neighbourhood greatly benefits from the presence of the NRT team; they are very connected with the community and its needs.
- **Youth-related Issues:** One major issue is the lack of police presence in schools, which has led to safety concerns for many youth, parents, and school staff. Youth homelessness is on the rise, and runaway or missing youth are increasingly getting involved in human trafficking, leading to higher rates of youth victimization. Another alarming trend is the prevalence of drug and substance use among young individuals. Furthermore, crimes related to social media use, such as threats, dissemination of intimate images, and online luring, are also significant concerns for the community's safety.
- **Vandalism in Chinatown:** The Asian community in Chinatown is facing safety issues, with storefronts being vandalized.

- **Connecting with Asian Community:** Police need to enhance their connection with the Asian community by utilizing technology such as WeChat.
- **Safety around Religious Institutions:** There is a need for increased police presence around the Ottawa Main Mosque and the JCC during holidays and other important days to address safety concerns.

Overall, these crime and safety concerns require a comprehensive and collaborative approach from law enforcement and community stakeholders to ensure the well-being and security of the community/neighbourhood.

### **Quality of Service**

The community's perspective on improving the OPS includes increasing high-visibility policing through foot, bike, and vehicle patrols. They seek proactive enforcement of nuisance crimes, particularly regarding drug and alcohol consumption in public spaces and responding to problem locations known for criminal activity.

The community also emphasizes the importance of officers being aware of current issues and engaging with residents regularly. Building trust and relationships through the Service's NRTs is seen as crucial for effective service delivery, especially when officers actively participate in community events.

Proper programs are sought to aid those struggling with mental health issues. Additionally, the idea of bringing police officers back into schools is gaining traction that will help foster positive relationships between the community and officers. For this to work effectively, officers need specialized training in handling youth matters, ensuring understanding and empathy in their interactions.

Additionally, the community appreciates the OPS' genuine engagement with faith-based communities and the respectful and supportive approach taken by the police when addressing their concerns. By implementing these changes, the OPS can better meet community needs and foster stronger relationships for a safer environment.

According to the NPD members, several changes would significantly improve the quality of service provided by the OPS:

- **Increased High Visibility Policing:** The community desires more police presence through foot patrols, bike patrols, and vehicle patrols to enhance visibility, community safety and deter criminal activities.
- **Enforcement of Nuisance Crimes:** The community wants proactive enforcement of 'nuisance' crimes, such as open drug and alcohol consumption

on the streets and in vacant lots, and addressing problem locations known for drug use, which can lead to property crimes.

- **Enhanced Awareness and Proactive Approach:** Officers need to be more aware of current issues and events in the community, taking proactive measures to address potential problems before they escalate. Frequent presence of officers in the community is also desired.
- **Building Trust Relationships with NRTs:** The NRTs play a vital role in building trust relationships with the community. It is recommended that officers handling community issues and investigations should be the same officers actively engaging with residents, attending events, and fostering positive relationships, as this builds trust and cooperation to support criminal investigations.
- **NPD Social Engagement Initiatives:** Overall, NPD members are aware from partner feedback that our commitment to community policing and police-public relations with our faith-based communities is appreciated. This is supported by the work being done by our Diversity Resource and Relations (DRR) Unit. An example is DRR hosting an annual Iftar dinner and attendance at numerous other celebrations.
- **Incident Response with Faith-Based Communities:** The OPS' commitment to community policing and positive police-public relations with faith-based communities through DRR is appreciated. Sustained engagement with faith-based leaders and members, both before and after incidents, is considered genuine and fosters positive relations. Some communities appreciate the police presence and response when needed. They value keeping problems away from the spotlight and emphasize the importance of respectful and supportive interactions with the police.
- **Youth Strategy:** There needs to be proper programs and resources to assist youth struggling with mental health issues. A majority of community members want police officers back in schools. This will enable next-generation Ottawa residents to build positive relationships between the police and the community. Moreover, we need police officers with specific training in dealing with youth matters.

By implementing these changes, the OPS can better meet the needs and expectations of the community, fostering trust and collaboration, and ensuring public safety and well-being.

## **Trust and Confidence**

To build trust and confidence in the OPS, meaningful conversations with the community are vital. Clear visibility of NRT officers in specific areas and responsiveness to community complaints will foster trust. Spending more time engaging with residents during community events allows officers to be seen as approachable individuals beyond authority figures. DRR's role in the sensitive handling of hate-motivated incidents is crucial, as demonstrated by a newcomer's gratitude for the support received. Strengthening relations with the Black and Caribbean communities involves increased representation of Black officers and educational initiatives. The Muslim community seeks police-led education to break down barriers and empower individuals to report hate crimes. Similarly, the Sikh community values better representation of Sikh officers and ongoing education on Sikh articles of faith to promote mutual understanding and respect. Implementing these measures will strengthen community relationships and enhance the OPS' ability to serve and protect.

- **Clear Visibility in Role:** Community members are aware of neighborhood policing but struggle to distinguish between Frontline and NRT officers due to similar cruisers and uniforms. Providing clear visibility of NRT officers in specific areas and addressing community complaints will foster trust as the public would like to see when NRTs are in an area so that they can feel that they can approach or that their complaints are being actioned.
- **Increased Community Presence and Engagement:** Spending more time in the community allows community members to become familiar with officers beyond emergency situations. Interacting with officers during community events creates a positive environment for engagement, helping community members see officers as individuals rather than just authority figures. Operationally, officers' presence and engagement at significant events are appreciated by community members. This personal interaction, especially with youth, gives them the chance to ask questions and get to know officers as people, bridging the gap between the community and the uniform.
- **Sensitive Handling of Hate-Motivated Incidents:** In cases of hate-motivated incidents, sensitive and supportive follow-ups by DRR are essential and appreciated. A newcomer's gratitude for the treatment they received after reporting a hate incident highlights the importance of instilling confidence in the police, especially for those coming from countries with government corruption and police brutality. They were grateful to be able to report confidently to the police.
- **Building Trust with the Black Community:** Some organizations are actively working to improve relations between the police and the Black and Caribbean

communities. Increased representation of Black officers in the police service is desired, along with educational initiatives to break down barriers and improve understanding between the police and the community.

- **Muslim Community:** The Ottawa Main Mosque and the Muslim community seeks more education from the police, aiming to break down barriers and improve understanding. They desire police-led education on how to report hate crimes/incidents to enhance community awareness and empower individuals to take action against hate-motivated acts.
- **Sikh Community:** The Sikh community emphasizes the need for better representation of Sikh officers within the police service. They express curiosity about the selection process for applicants who reach the background stage but do not succeed. The Sikh community values the presence of the police and maintains a positive ongoing relationship, with relatively fewer concerns about barriers. They welcome continued education for officers on the articles of faith for Sikhs to ensure mutual understanding and respect.
- **Reflect the Population's Diversity:** Ensuring diversity within the police service will promote a sense of inclusion and understanding among the community members, leading to an increased trust in law enforcement.
- **Communications:** Create easier access for the public to reach out to the NRT police officers and obtain answers to their concerns.
- **Expedite Reporting for Schools:** Address the issue of Police Reporting Unit staffing to reduce wait times for school staff making reports. By streamlining this process, the police can demonstrate their commitment to promptly addressing community issues and concerns.

By implementing these measures, the OPS can strengthen trust, enhance community relationships, and build confidence in its ability to serve and protect the diverse population it represents.

### **Strategic Priorities**

The community has identified several strategic priorities for the Board and the OPS in the next three years:

- **Community Police Office in the Market Area:** Establishing a community police office in the Byward Market area is seen as crucial to enhancing police presence and engagement, fostering a sense of safety and trust.
- **Increased Police and Enforcement Resources:** The community's top priority is allocating more resources to address various community issues effectively.

Currently, high-priority issues receive the most resources, leaving less urgent issues unaddressed due to the limited availability of resources.

- **Strengthening Community Policing:** Recognizing the value of NRT in the community and enhancing community policing efforts is essential. NRT teams are respected and play a vital role in crime prevention and community safety in neighborhoods, which aligns with the City's Community Safety and Well-Being (CSWB) plan.
- **Proactive Policing:** The community emphasizes the need for a proactive approach to policing rather than being solely reactive. Increased staffing levels will allow NRT teams to build trust and confidence in other neighbourhoods needing attention and relationship building.
- **Frontline Officer Participation in Community Events:** More participation from Frontline officers at community events is welcomed as it fosters positive interactions and strengthens community-police relationships.
- **Expectation of Officer Volunteering:** The community expects officers to volunteer even after being hired, creating opportunities for officers to give back to the community they serve.
- **Inuuqatigitt Centre for Inuit Children, Youth, and Families:** Building positive relationships with the Inuit community is a priority. The community and the Inuuqatigitt Centre wishes for officers working in the area to interact with children, have snacks, coffee, and play games, aiming to change the perception of officers in uniform and increase positive visits.
- **Tungasuvvingat Inuit:** The community wishes to better understand police practices and training. They seek opportunities to observe Use of Force training and visit police locations, facilitating learning about the barriers in their community.
- **Supporting Youth:** The OPS needs a robust Youth section to deal with a variety of youth-related issues in the community. The Service needs to focus on partnership development and collaboration between Ottawa area school trustees and the OPS. Also, the Service needs to proactively engage with youth in the community for early identification of issues and the implementation of intervention methods.

Addressing these strategic priorities will help the Board and the OPS to strengthen community engagement, trust and collaboration, by fostering a safer and more supportive environment for all residents.



## 2. STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS AND ENGAGEMENT

The goal of SPE is to develop, manage and lead the OPS' public consultation and engagement approaches by leveraging tools and processes for major initiatives that impact the community.

SPE is responsible for supporting the Public Consultation Policy by leading the development of various engagement approaches, tools, processes, and consultation plans. This policy and approach build trust by ensuring that stakeholders are meaningfully engaged in the development of projects, programs, and processes around current themes and issues such as rising hate, Use of Force, systemic racism, and much more. This work contributes to the Service's goal to create a safer community where every individual can contribute, and where the police service reflects, respects, and responds to the diverse communities we serve.

### Engagement Activities and Key Themes

Engagement activities and key themes that have emerged over the last year include the following:

- **Partnership in Action, Internal and External Community Engagement Platform.** An online engagement platform focusing on virtual engagement with a broad spectrum of community members. The platform involves various forms of electronic engagement, such as forums, resources, and surveys.
  - A key theme emerging from these efforts was the call to expand online engagement, including addressing accessibility and community inclusion. Community members appreciate the use of an online platform to expand accessibility and inclusion, enabling participation from those who might face barriers to traditional forms of in-person engagement.
- **The Community Peacebuilder Program.** The Community Peacebuilder Program was co-created by the RVI, the Congolese Community of Canada - Ottawa Gatineau (CCCOG), and the Canadian Institute for Conflict Resolution (CICR). The program's goal is to restore trust, build conflict resolution competencies, and define a shared peacebuilding plan following a community-police incident or relationship issue. It involves a series of community consultation sessions, healing circles, dialogues, and a three-day Community Peacebuilder Workshop to inspire connections and train key agents of change toward community safety, resilience, and peace. Three themes emerged through this process.

- **Restore Trust:** The community expressed a desire to mend relationships with the police service, with an emphasis on creating an open dialogue and fostering mutual trust.
- **Build Conflict Resolution Competencies:** Participants emphasized the need for training to improve skills in conflict resolution, peacebuilding, and violence reduction.
- **Define Shared Peacebuilding Plan:** There was a collective call for a shared vision and plan for peacebuilding efforts, highlighting the importance of collective action and community resilience.
- **Community conversations following the 2022 illegal protest.** Conversations were initiated with communities directly impacted by the illegal protest, namely Centretown, Rideau, Byward Market, Vanier, and Overbrook. The dialogues focused on understanding the community impact of the demonstration in Ottawa. The community-led discussions fostered learning on how to move forward with a more inclusive understanding of community safety impacts. Three themes were identified:
  - **Community Impacts:** Participants expressed concerns about the social, economic, and psychological consequences of the illegal protest, and advocated for understanding and potential remedial measures.
  - **Accountability and Transparency:** The community stressed the need for enhancing transparency in police operations and holding them accountable for their actions to strengthen trust.
  - **Building Trusting Relationships:** There was a clear demand for a platform to foster trust between the police and the communities they serve, which would enhance community cooperation and partnership.
- **The 7th Annual Human Rights Learning Forum.** The Human Rights Learning Forum took place on December 8, 2022, as both an in-person and virtual event. The outcomes included raising awareness about the impact and trauma of hate and bias, insight into extremism, and opportunities for youth groups to share their experiences and hopes. Three themes were identified:
  - **Impacts from the illegal protest:** An ongoing dialogue around the effects of the 2022 illegal protest on different communities, promoting a shared understanding of its impacts.
  - **Impact of Hate-motivated Incidents on Communities:** The community highlighted the trauma and social disruption caused by hate-motivated incidents, underscoring the importance of prevention, response, and resilience-building measures. There is a significant concern about rising

hate in the community, suggesting a need for collaborative approaches to address this issue. The forum reflected the community's desire for active participation and cooperation among different groups to foster solidarity and collective action against hate-motivated incidents.

- **Youth Engagement:** The inclusion of young individuals affirmed their role as crucial stakeholders in community development and peacebuilding.
- **2SLGBTQQA+ Partnership Initiative.** Dialogue sessions with representatives from organizations serving 2SLGBTQQA+ communities in Ottawa were held with the aim of listening to and learning about the needs of these communities, establishing positive relationships, and identifying action items for collaboration. As an outcome, a 2SLGBTQQA+ Liaison Officer position is being considered for 2024. Four themes emerged from this initiative:
  - **Relationship Building and Accountability:** The 2SLGBTQQA+ community voiced the importance of strengthening ties with the police while emphasizing the need for police to foster safe spaces and protect rights.
  - **Addressing Hate and Denouncing Intolerance:** The conversation saw calls for strategies to counter hate and intolerance, promoting respect and acceptance for all community members.
  - **Making Changes at the OPS (including as an employer):** There were suggestions to improve the OPS as an institution and employer, with an emphasis on encouraging diversity and inclusion.
  - **Sharing Resources and Being Inclusive:** The community highlighted the importance of resource sharing, inclusivity, and collaboration in building a robust, united community.
- **Community Meetings with Interim Chief.** Throughout 2022, the SPE organized several meetings with communities and the interim Chief. Various social issues and concerns expressed by communities led to meaningful discussions with members of the Congolese, Burundi, Asian, Muslim, and Jewish communities. Multiple themes and recommendations emerged from the various meetings.
  - **Community Meetings and Dialogues:** Regular meetings between the OPS and community leaders can help to increase understanding on both sides. These meetings should be designed to address specific issues that communities face.
  - **Officer Engagement at the Neighbourhood Level:** Officers should be encouraged and trained to engage more with the community. This could include walking around neighbourhoods, attending community events, or

visiting places of worship. The idea is to make the police more approachable and less intimidating, thus fostering a sense of trust.

- **Cultural Training:** Officers should receive training about the cultures of the communities they are serving. Understanding cultural nuances can lead to more sensitive and effective policing.
- **Increased Presence at Places of Worship:** Increase police presence, including proactive engagement, where officers can attend services and events (like Friday prayers) to build relationships that help to increase the sense of security for attendees and staff.
- **Collaborative Efforts after Incidents:** The involvement of the community and police in collaborative safety planning following incidents, such as a shooting, will help to resolve tensions, increasing a sense of security and fostering trust between the community and the police.
- **Transparent Communication and Accountability:** The OPS should maintain transparent communication with the communities they serve, especially after incidents of misconduct. This will help in building trust, as it shows the community that their concerns are being taken seriously.
- **Neighbourhood Policing:** Designating specific officers or teams to certain neighbourhoods can help build familiarity and trust. The same officers continually working in the same area can foster better relationships and understanding.
- **Officer Diversity:** Increasing diversity in the police service can help communities to feel more understood and less marginalized.
- **Rising Hate:** There is a significant concern about rising hate in the community.

Other noteworthy engagements include participation in various city-wide community committees, including: Community Development Framework (Steering Committee, 6 sub-committees), City of Ottawa, COVID 19- Human Needs Task Force, United Way East Ottawa (Collective Impact, Safe Neighbourhoods), Equity Ottawa, Ottawa Local Immigrants Partnership (OLIP), United For All, and collaboration with the Community Equity Council (CEC).

Additional themes that emerged include better integration of technology and best practices found across global policing, as well as continued collaboration with the community, partners, and the Board to address shared interests, concerns, and priorities.

## **DRIVE2 Strategy**

Built on significant feedback and outstanding recommendations, the DRIVE2 Strategy which was approved by the Board on April 24, 2023, includes the themes and projects identified above, along with other projects being led across the OPS in collaboration with community stakeholders and partners. An update report to the Board on this three-year plan will be provided in the fourth quarter of 2023. The SPE will also provide a more fulsome annual report of the organization's consultation efforts to the Board in the fourth quarter of 2023.

## **CONCLUSION**

The work we do with our partners is integral to the safety and well-being of our city. Members of SPE and NPD are deeply invested in supporting the development of programs and initiatives that reflect the needs of our communities.

Through continual collaboration and consultation with stakeholders and partners, key themes have been identified, including: addressing incidents of hate and violence in our communities; expanding our NRT model to have officers more present in neighbourhoods as a familiar point of contact; working with Ottawa's faith-based and marginalized communities to enhance education and build trust; as well as developing a youth strategy to better serve our city's young people.

We value the feedback we receive from the community; it will help to inform our strategic direction and determine where the OPS should make key investments to enhance public safety.