

OTTAWA POLICE SERVICE

2023 ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN



Executive Summary:

This environmental scan reflects changes and new influences impacting local policing and supersedes the October 2021 Environmental Scan. The Environmental Scan 2023 examines a range of factors that impact how policing services are delivered in the nation's capital, including political, economic, social, technological, legislative, environmental, global, and operational factors. Many contemporary data sources generally applied to an environmental scan have remained unchanged for the preparation of the Environmental Scan 2023. As many of these data agencies recover from the pandemic it is expected that data will become more available and current. A list of key references reviewed in support of this assessment are listed at Annex A.

As the world experiences large-scale economic and societal changes, police services continue to face developing challenges at the global level. Challenges such as global conflicts, austerity, greater accountability demands, declining levels of public trust and confidence, increasing mental health and addiction issues, and rising technological advancement continue to impact policing. The changing way news is communicated to the public continues to evolve and challenge police services to establish new road maps for communication with their communities.

Budgetary priorities continue to be affected by the public demand for "value for money," public expectations concerning police training, response, and performance continue to grow and require police leaders to make strategic choices within a finite budget envelope. In addition, the costs of labour continue to climb.

Canadian society is looking to a policing commitment towards major social drivers such as reconciliation, equity diversity and inclusion, issues relating to unhoused, and mental health and addictions. Meaningful and effective collaboration between social services and the police offer societal solutions that are compassionate and sensitive to the needs of the community and continue to require police commitment both "downstream" through enforcement and "upstream" through prevention. The Ottawa Police Service (OPS) has a demonstrated history of collaboration and future investment towards these partnerships will assist with solutions and align with public expectations as it relates to community safety. Road safety, guns and gang violence, and gender-based violence continue to drive concern in the Ottawa community and the collaborative approach is a proven strategy in making Ottawa a safer community.

Technological innovations and developments continue to enable both policing operations, as well as the criminal element. Information management and "data analytics" continue to drive OPS investment in this area. As cyber and technology-enabled crime increases, police are expected to keep pace. Cyber protection and security are key prevention tools and require continued investment in Ottawa as police organizations, government agencies, and hospitals continue to be targeted.

Attention to jurisdictional and legislative changes is required at the federal and provincial level. The unique local situation in Ottawa concerning jurisdictional issues around the Parliamentary Precinct continues to become more complex for the OPS. The 10-year construction project on Parliament Hill and the migration of Canada Day festivities to other Ottawa venues demand additional OPS commitments at all levels. A failure to manage these changes effectively can lead to legal and regulatory breaches and contribute to a continued decline in trust and confidence in the police and government institutions. As shown through regular call for reviews, inquiries, and investigations throughout Canada, the public demands for police oversight continue to grow.

Changing climate and weather patterns have required the OPS to review and enhance the level of emergency preparedness, review staffing models, equipment, and response techniques, make

environmentally conscious decisions, and consider the impact to existing and future infrastructure.

Demographics continue to change in Ottawa. The gap between senior citizens and the youth continues to widen as the population ages, the percentage of racialized population and the Indigenous population in Ottawa continues to grow. A noted increase in these demographic factors, and their nexus to key social drivers should drive a continued commitment to the maintenance and development of programs to address crimes victimizing the racialized, the Indigenous population, and the elderly.

A commitment to developing and attracting organizational talent, expertise, and competencies are areas that have long lasting impacts on the credibility of the service and when successful they have positive effects on the building of trust. The OPS must be able to demonstrate competency and effective performance at all levels of policing. Employee wellness is a key factor to building these competencies.

Core themes identified during the Environmental Scan 2023 include opportunity, trust, innovation and technology, collaboration, compassion, and safety. These themes may warrant due consideration in developing the Strategic Plan.

Introduction:

The purpose of the Environmental Scan 2023 is to gather information regarding internal and external factors that affect the work of the OPS and by extension, to present decision-makers with information on factors that will influence how policing services are delivered in Ottawa. This process allows for identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in a changing environment that may impact the OPS. It guides the OPS and the Ottawa Police Services Board (OPSB) in its development of organizational strategies and provides information to the community. The Environmental Scan 2023 promotes alignment with the continuously evolving trends in the law enforcement operating environment and Canadian society in general.

The Environmental Scan 2023 offers a snapshot of the conditions and trends impacting the delivery of policing services in Ottawa. The report considers the following areas:

- Political
- Economic
- Social
- Technology
- Legislative
- Environmental
- Global
- Operational

Consideration	Key Influences
Political	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Police Oversight • New Mayor and Elected Officials • New Ottawa Police Services Board • Foreign Interference

Context:

Police oversight has become a focal point for communities in Canada as negative interactions between the police and the public occur within and outside of Canada. A growing mistrust of the police and police leaders as well as government institutions have highlighted the role of those agencies and boards responsible for third party police oversight. Improvement in this area has been recognized as a strategic priority by the Police Service Board Associations at the federal and

provincial level.

At the local level, Ottawa elected a new Mayor and several new municipal officials in 2022. In addition, a new independent Chairperson with extensive chairing and governance experience was selected and appointed by Council and several new board members now sit on the OPSB including 3 new Provincial appointees.

The provincial and federal associations of police service boards have indicated they will focus on several areas to provide support for future and existing board members. One specific area of emphasis is the hiring criteria for senior police leaders, highlighting the importance of leadership qualities that align with modern policing demands.

Foreign interference has become a key focal point for parliamentary discussion and media coverage in reference to alleged Russian election influence and allegations that the Chinese government is intimidating Canadian citizens and politicians in Canada.

Implications:

A continued decline in levels of trust and confidence in the police and government has resulted in a regular call for reviews, inquiries, and investigations. Police oversight remains a key differentiator from many comparative professions in other countries, namely United States, and can be celebrated in Canada.

This offers opportunities for oversight and governance boards to have additional impact and develop a strong community of practice through their associations at the provincial and federal level. The positive impact on policing will lead toward a consistent approach between jurisdictions and identifying potential synergies.

As the national capital of Canada and the seat of the Canadian Parliament, Ottawa is home to over 300 embassies, diplomatic offices, and residences. Foreign interference may impact policing through influence at the political level and possible budgetary impacts if left unchecked at the federal level.

Consideration	Key Influences
Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inflationary Pressures • Budgetary Pressures • Cost of Policing • Sustainable Funding • Grant Funding • Value for Money

Context:

As the world recovers from the pandemic, its effect on the entire economy continues to linger. Supply chain problems, inflationary pressures, and the rising costs of labour, have a direct impact on the operating costs of every organization, including those in the policing environment. Merely covering the cost of gas to operate fleet vehicles requires substantial budgeting foresight.

Budgetary pressures continue to mount in relation to the rising cost of police and professional

support staff and the demand for more complex responses and investigations. Public expectations in relation to police training, response, and outcome, continue to grow and are a substantial consideration. Striking a balance between resource allocation and service excellence remains an enduring challenge.

The public scrutiny of the police budget process has continued to grow as those that advocate for a decrease in police funding continue to speak and advocate on this issue. This fuels the demand that police agencies demonstrate a direct value for money throughout the budgeting process fostering transparency and accountability.

Sustainable funding for the costs associated to the increasing complexity of policing will require continued funding through provincial and federal grant opportunities as well as finding and using creative funding synergies that exist between similar agencies and institutions with a combined goal of outcome optimization.

Implications:

As inflationary pressures continue, the operating costs for OPS will continue to rise as gas, replacement equipment, training bullets, and other commodities increase.

Public expectations in relation to police training, response, and outcome continue to grow and require complex responses, state-of-the-art equipment, and effective and meaningful training. Each of these areas creates additional budget pressures. Budgetary priorities continue to require investment and the public demand for “value for money” will continue to drive difficult budget decisions concerning competing and complementary areas of policing.

Continued funding through provincial and federal grant opportunities will be required for sustainable funding. Efforts towards finding and using creative funding synergies and outcome optimization between similar agencies and institutions, may offer some relief but cannot be depended on for substantial budgeting solutions. Despite these efforts it is likely there will be a funding shortfall to achieving both public expectations in all areas as well as key strategic organizational priorities.

Consideration	Key Influences
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Perception, Confidence and Trust • Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion • Reconciliation • Community Growth and Demographics • Mental Health and Addictions • Community, Partners and Collaboration • Issues related to Persons Unhoused • Hate and Bias • Compassion

Context:

Public perception, declining confidence, and trust have increased the calls for transparency and openness at all levels of government, including law enforcement.

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) continue to be important to Canadian society. Within the OPS, hiring, promotion, and identifying opportunities using the EDI lens continue to drive all aspects of the organization. Potential impacts (positive and negative) of the OPS on marginalized communities continue to demand balanced attention to “Race Data Collection” and the possibility of over-policing specific communities.

Reconciliation efforts continue within Canada as organizations, agencies, and communities build a renewed relationship with Indigenous Peoples based on recognizing rights, respect, and partnership. The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, the growing list of victims of residential schools, and the resulting intergenerational trauma of indigenous communities continue to influence the role of the police interactions with Indigenous Peoples.

Community growth and demographics continue to influence the Ottawa policing environment. The total Ottawa population has continued to grow roughly one percent per year but now registers as Canada’s fourth largest city by population. According to StatsCan census and projections, the percentage of the racialized population in Ottawa has risen from 26 % in 2016 to 32 % in 2021 with projections to rise to 39 % by 2033. Federal policies regarding immigration will impact these future percentages. Seniors over 65 register as 17% of the total population, and 1 in 5 working-age adults were nearing retirement age. This percentage will likely increase as this cohort ages. The gap is widening between the number of people in this age group and that of children aged 0 to 14 years as the Canadian population ages and the percentage of those in the youth category reduces compared to the total population. The Indigenous community continues to grow in Ottawa and is estimated to have risen to 4% of the total Ottawa population.

Although statistics in Ottawa are pointing towards a reduced cohort of youth-aged demographics and a reducing youth crime rate, youth involved in violent crime continues to be a concern among educators. Pandemic and mental health struggles have been identified as contributors.

As diversity in Canada continues to grow, incidents of hate and bias crime are also rising in according to Statistics Canada. In Ottawa, a 2023 OPS report indicates a 23% increase in hate-motivated incidents.

The 2021 Stats Can reports indicate that the percentage of police to population across Canada has only risen slightly nationwide. The historical percentage of police officers compared to the population in Ottawa has been far less than in other major cities within Canada.

Mental health and addictions continue to be a key thread within the Ottawa environment. Drug use and those experiencing mental health crises continue to be an issue in Ottawa and contribute to the law enforcement environment. The opioid crisis continues nationwide. According to Ottawa public health statistics, opioid overdose incidents reduced in Ottawa during the pandemic years of 2021 and 2022 but showed a marked increase in 2023 and will likely exceed the peak numbers experienced in September 2020. Negative and sometimes tragic interactions between the police and community members experiencing mental health or substance use, have generated keen social interest throughout North America, including Ottawa. Alternate methods of police service delivery in these areas continue to be in focus and are closely reviewed by the community with each tragic encounter.

Community, partners, and collaboration are key threads appearing throughout the Ottawa policing context and implications. The OPSB and the OPS are key advisors to the City of Ottawa and the Community Safety and Well-Being plan (CSWB) development. The CSWB plan enables ongoing collaboration with all levels of government, internal and external stakeholders,

community groups, agencies, and residents to mitigate risks and challenges to the community. The Community Action Plan (CAP) through Public Health is another key avenue for collaboration and provides an important intersection with the OPS in areas of public health where the police may interact with people in crisis. Issues associated to those that are unhoused remains a reality in the City of Ottawa. The City of Ottawa's 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan 2020-2030 provides a social umbrella for those that are unhoused. These initiatives are not police-led and show alignment with an increased interest by partners to take a leadership role in addressing social issues.

Growing social inequity, crisis in both mental health and addictions, and shortages of affordable housing are contributing to a need for harm reduction strategies that address the root causes of community safety and well-being.

Compassion is a key thread that weaves throughout the issues captured within the social wedge. A compassionate approach to victims, those suffering from social or mental disorders or injuries, or those marginalized, is largely becoming an organizational or agency expectation and increasingly imperative.

Implications:

The development of trust between a community and its police service occurs at the community's pace. Trust takes years to build in the policing context but can be lost over a single event. A continued decline in trust from the community will have direct and indirect results within the OPS. It will negatively impact recruitment efforts and continue to affect the morale of OPS staff members. Declining trust of the police within marginalized communities may affect reporting rates and be reflected in lowered crime statistics relating to hate crimes. The continued commitment to a dedicated hate crime investigative section and the importance of developing trusted relationships can be key to trust-building efforts.

Continued efforts will be required to build trust through a transparent, data-centred, and organizational approach to better serving our community and providing balanced attention to Equity Diversity and Inclusion (EDI), "Race Data Collection" and reconciliation efforts.

Demographic changes show rising percentages within the Indigenous and racialized population and a growing gap between the senior citizens and the youth. There has been a 23% increase in hate motivated incidents. The population continues to age in Ottawa and should drive the development of programs poised to address resulting crime trends in this area should they be required. The rising violence among the youth of Ottawa requires continued collaboration between the OPS, school boards, and those agencies providing direct support to youths. Upstream police contact with youths remains a preferred contact nexus for youth and police interactions.

Community, partners, and collaboration have driven the exploration of alternate methods of police service delivery in many of the areas that are society driven problems. Many of these initiatives show an increased level of interest by partners to take a leadership role in addressing social issues. Continued efforts towards building relationships with diverse communities, increasing neighborhood policing, integrating service models, and maximizing synergies and optimizing shared outcomes will contribute to social change.

Consideration	Key Influences
Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Safety Technologies • Cybercrime • Technology in Crime • Information Management • Cyber Protection

Context:

As cyber and technology-enabled crime increases, police are expected to keep pace. Technical innovations and developments can be a police enabler to enhance public safety. Next Generation 911, Public Safety Broad band, 5G technology, virtual reality, artificial intelligence, LLM/ChatGPT are all capabilities that may have a positive impact on public safety and on the policing environment. Specific technological contributions towards training, communication, information management and decision-making are ongoing and offer positive impacts to policing that cannot be understated. Digital evidence management, advanced analytics, and data science continue to be researched and police applications explored. Digital-twin technology is also an area of opportunity for police organizations. Many police organizations have successfully deployed technology in operational areas, including robotics, body-worn cameras, and automatic license plate readers. Information management and data analytics continue to drive OPS investment in this area.

The protection of personal privacy and the ethics concerning the deployment of these technologies remain a concern for many members of the community and police professionals. Any deployment should be guided by policies and guidelines issued by the Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada and be supported by a comprehensive operational and legal framework.

Increased reliance on technology poses a threat to the police through increased targeting by cybercriminals and their attempts to disrupt police operations through cybercrime. Cyber protection and security are key prevention tools and require continued investment in Ottawa as police organizations, government agencies, and hospitals continue to be targeted.

The cyber protection concerns can also extend beyond the OPS to individual community members. As the value of personal data and crypto- currency increases in the criminal marketplace, criminals are also incorporating the use of technology as tools of technology-enabled crime. 3-D printing, identify theft and the exploitation of victims using artificial intelligence is increasingly possible for the commission of a crime. The threat of growth in this area is high and is problematic for law enforcement.

It must be considered that the technological literacy required of police decision-makers is not developing at the same rate as the technology itself. Many leaders are responsible for deploying technical solutions, authorizing cyber security programs and protection plans, directing technology-enabled crime investigations, and authorizing evergreening technology plans, with limited time or expertise to form an understanding of the issues.

Implications:

Technical innovations and developments can be a police enabler to enhance public safety. Investments in this area are important and must be carefully considered by leaders that have

taken the time to be technologically literate. The protection of personal privacy and the ethics concerning the deployment of these technologies remain a concern for many community members and should be supported by a comprehensive operational and legal framework.

Cyber protection and security are key prevention tools and are expected at all levels of an organization, including that of the individual user.

The continued growth in cybercrime increased the victimization of citizens, the targeting of institutions, borderless crimes, and jurisdictional challenges. Achieving successful investigation and persecution has also become more challenging. Lawful authority to collect evidence needed to detect, deter, and respond to crimes must be balanced with protecting personal privacy. Investigating these crimes results in large quantities of digital evidence being collected as well as the associated storage problems and solutions. Information management and the use of “big data analytics” continues to drive OPS investment in this area.

Consideration	Key Influences
Legislative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Police of Jurisdiction • National and Provincial Acts and Standards • Commissions and Inquiries

Context:

There is continued growth in the complexity of the emergency response to the Parliament Hill Precinct and National events hosted by the NCC throughout the City of Ottawa. The Parliament Hill construction project is expected to span the next 10 years and as a result Canada Day celebrations will be dispersed throughout the City of Ottawa. As the police of jurisdiction in Ottawa, this increasing complexity has direct implications to the OPS. As the nations capital there are numerous demonstrations and planned events that require a combined policing response and planning effort. Managing these complexities have been largely met with success in the past, however, the community expectations are that lessons learned from previous complex policing responses have been incorporated and will translate directly into performance. In addition, recommendations from the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs and the Public Order Emergency Commission (POEC) underscored that “The OPS is inadequately funded to police large-scale protests of a national dimension.”

At the federal level of the legislative framework there are several legislative efforts that are relevant to public safety and specifically the protection of information both personal and organizational. The Information Management C-27 Digital Charter Implementation Act has been introduced through Parliament but has not yet been enacted, and The Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act (PIPEDA) both are directly relevant to information management by police organizations. The recent federal / provincial bilateral agreement to end gender- based violence in Manitoba shows a federal and provincial investment towards ending gender-based violence. This commitment may extend to the Ontario province in the future as substantial federal investment funding is attractive.

At the provincial level the Community Safety and Policing Act, 2019 has been completed but is not yet proclaimed as “in force”. This act is not new to Ontario police services as it was introduced in 2019. Linked to this act is the Strengthening Safety and Modernizing Justice Act 2023. This act has received royal assent but is not yet in force. There are several areas that the police services in Ontario will have to consider when this act takes effect.

There are several key federal and provincial commissions and inquiries that can be seen to have a direct impact on the OPS environment. The Emergencies Act Inquiry 2023 provided a thorough and public review of the invocation of the Emergency Act for the Freedom Convoy occupation that occurred in 2022. The results of this inquiry generated keen interest from the community specific to the OPS response. The police response to the protests in Ottawa, as presented through the inquiry testimony, was largely viewed by the media and the community as inadequate.

The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls continues to bring relevance to the reconciliation efforts by all police organizations in Canada. Inquiries such as the Mass Casualty Commission review of the mass casualty event occurring in Nova Scotia have produced numerous recommendations that have direct relevance to police services both urban and rural. These recommendations range from domestic assault investigations, initial response and incident command, information management, and the operation of 911 and police call centers.

Implications:

Jurisdictional issues, legislative changes, commissions, and inquiries directly impact staffing, workload, training, caseload, clearance rates, and budgeting decisions. Each change requires police services to analyze and respond through training, policy, and procedural adjustments.

Addressing these implications requires a proactive stance. The OPS must stay adaptable, updating policies, enhancing training, and strengthening collaboration to align with evolving legislative frameworks. The organization must maintain an open channel for community input, ensuring public expectations are reflected in policy adjustments. Properly navigating these influences is vital for maintaining public trust and enabling effective law enforcement that upholds safety and justice.

Consideration	Key Influences
Environmental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate Change and Extreme Weather Effects • Extreme Operating Environments

Context:

Climate change and extreme weather effects continue to grow throughout the world. Tornadoes, flooding, extreme wind, ice storms, and smoke from forest fires have all been experienced in Ottawa in recent years with increasing regularity. There have been 10 notable weather events since 2021. It is anticipated that these weather extremes will continue to grow, and the City of Ottawa has committed to developing The Climate Resiliency Strategy. The purpose is to identify a series of actions focusing on minimizing Ottawa’s vulnerability to the effects of climate change. With the expected completion in 2023, the strategy is designed to strengthen the ability to respond and recover from climatic events when they occur.

As a first responding agency, OPS members operate within an extreme environment and, in many cases utilize specialized equipment. Public alerting demands continue to develop and offer opportunities for growth in the key areas of public education, response, prevention, and mitigation.

Implications:

Changing climate and weather patterns have required the OPS to review and enhance emergency preparedness, review staffing models and response techniques, make environmentally conscious decisions, and consider the impact to existing and future infrastructure.

Consideration	Key Influences
Global	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Future of Truth- Individual, Media, and Government Messaging • Global Conflict • Alliances • Global and Societal Polarization

Context:

The function of journalism has changed with the growing public dependence on social media to provide news. A fragmented media landscape has left the large established media companies struggling to sell new products and has forced layoffs, many at the local level. This has contributed to a loss of local focus and a more entertainment-focused approach. Social media has also changed the metrics of providing news. Success is measured through speed and entertainment rather than accuracy and truth. Through the nature of social media, the ability of a niche social media user or distributor to impact the spreading of news is just as likely as that of a larger social media distributor. The deliberate transmission of misinformation during emergencies is easily accomplished by those with intent and in many cases, occurs from outside Canada.

As referenced in the Nova Scotia Mass Casualty Commission findings concerning public alerting, the OPS has a duty to inform the public. As the fabric of social media continues to evolve police and government agencies are considering how they deliver accurate information to the community. The current transition from “Twitter” to “X”, the emergence of Meta’s “Threads,” and royal assent for Bill C- 18 (an act respecting online communications platforms that make news content available to persons in Canada), all stand to impact the way the police service conveys its message to the community.

The global context continues to have an impact on Ottawa. Protests stemming from many of the conflicts occurring throughout the world occur in Ottawa due to its location as the seat of the federal government. In addition to protests, the global diaspora living in Canada carry concerns and compassions from their countries of origin, and many are members of the Ottawa community. In some cases, these global conflicts translate into negative interactions and conflict at the community level.

Global and societal polarization has contributed to increased social unrest and protests at the global, federal, and local level.

A direct global trend in law enforcement that is worth noting is the recent organizational contraction of the policing response to mental health calls in the United Kingdom. There have been multiple police agencies in the UK that no longer attend to mental health calls unless there is a direct policing requirement.

Implications:

Social media is a source of vast quantities of useful and meaningful information for the service and the public. However, information shared for fake news purposes or by disingenuous individuals has been damaging. An inability to counter fake news and other forms of misinformation can do immediate and lasting damage to the efforts of the service to build public trust and confidence. Efforts towards developing a path towards truthful messaging with the community would be beneficial. Ongoing efforts to develop and nurture relationships with community groups and partners can quickly be erased by misinformation.

The global context is more applicable in today’s internet-based world. Monitoring and forecasting global issues can directly impact policing in Ottawa and offer policing solutions to issues that international partners have already addressed.

Consideration	Key Influences
Operational (Organizational)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Road Safety • Victim Centric Services • Community Safety and Well Being • Community-Based Policing • Gender-Based Violence • Guns and Gang violence • Crime trends • Employee Wellness • Organizational Talent and Competencies

Context:

Road safety includes all users of the city streets and continues to be a leading concern within the community. Research indicates that 48% of motor vehicle collisions (MVC) fatalities involved vulnerable road users such as pedestrians (26%), motorcyclists (13%), cyclists (5%) and e-bike riders (4%). Road safety continues to be a collaborative effort led by the City of Ottawa and the work of the Safer Roads Ottawa Program. The program is a community partnership focused on culture change with road users and OPS plays a major role through investigations and enforcement.

Police services across Canada are committing to a victim centred approach when responding to major incidents and disasters. This can be seen to extend to the treatment of victims within the entire law enforcement environment. Extending compassion to the victim and the victim’s family has developed into a building block for critical incident responses and has resulted in many services assigning specific resources towards developing this approach.

Community collaborative projects such as the Community Safety and Well Being Plan have shown a collective approach and commitment to ensuring all neighbourhoods receive the social supports, they require to remain safe and healthy. The OPS role at the operational level is realized through the Neighbourhood Resource Teams (NRT), and the OPS organizational commitment to a community-based policing model.

Gender- based violence remains an international concern that continues to expand worldwide. The proportion of female victims of homicide (femicide) in Ottawa in 2022 continued to grow and can be described as epidemic. The OPS works collaboratively with the Violence Against Women (VAW) workers community and is committed to helping and supporting victims and survivors of

violence and abuse. Despite those ongoing investments, violence against vulnerable populations remains one of the most common forms of police-reported crimes in Ottawa.

The OPS has coordinated and implemented proactive measures within multiple sections of the OPS, including Criminal Investigations, Frontline Operations, Ottawa Police Command Centre, Neighbourhood Resource Teams, Community Police officers, Traffic Services, and the Tactical and Canine Unit to ensure that all officers engaged in reducing street-level violence have the same protocols and mandates to counter these activities. The OPS is one of 21 partner agencies that worked to develop Ottawa's Street Violence and Gang Strategy (OSVGS). The plan is a four-pillar approach to resolving issues related to gang activity and apply a primary strategy of prevention with support through enforcement.

Crime statistics in Ottawa have shown an 18 % increase in reported crimes in Ottawa 2022. A 23 % increase in crime towards the LGBTQ+ community, and a 6 % increase in violent crimes. Gun violence remains a concern as the community returns to a pre-pandemic state. In addition, car thefts and transit related crimes in Canada have continued to climb and random violence related to public transit have become a phenomenon in major Canadian cities. This becomes relevant as Ottawa looks towards stage two of the Ottawa light rail project. Cyber and technology enabled crimes continue to increase worldwide. Continued technological advancement in artificial intelligence and its accessibility to the public and the criminal element will likely contribute to new forms of cyber- crime and online victimization.

Mental health, employee wellness and police interaction with people in crisis continue to be environmental factor that police services across Canada remain focused upon. Efforts toward employee wellness pay dividends in providing, supporting, and fielding a healthy workforce. Police interactions with persons in crisis have resulted in isolated tragedies throughout Canada. As a result, a social movement is driving an approach to these incidents that include a trained medical professional or social worker to support and perhaps lead the interaction. This approach extends to the intake of the actual call and the advent of the 988/Non-911 Mental Health and Substance Use Crisis Line coming to Ottawa soon.

Organizational talent and competencies are an environmental factor that expands and contracts with every hire, resignation, and retirement. This is demonstrated at the strategic level by the recent transition at the Executive Command level and the hiring of a new Chief and two Deputy Chiefs. The recruitment level experience is a constant competition for desirable recruits with other competing police organizations or even competing professions. This extends to the experienced officer and the continued practice of other police agencies hiring experienced officers away from the OPS. Talent attraction at the recruit level is becoming more difficult as police officers receive increasingly negative community and media feedback. An increasing number of police officers have been targeted for violence and ambush throughout Canada and the dangers of the profession are becoming a barrier for many potential recruits. Through the Ottawa lens, the erosion of public trust in the competency of the OPS was damaged heavily through its response to the Freedom Convoy protest and occupation of the downtown core. Within the OPS, trust in the OPS leadership appears to have been fractured and has had lingering effects.

Police performance measurement and evaluation are direct indicators of competency and show the value for money to meet community expectations. Externally, accurate data linked to performance, training, and experience will assist meeting public expectations and recognition of expertise. Internally, accurate data will prove to be useful for the OPS to anticipate and plan for succession, as key personnel with expertise leave the organization.

Implications:

Continued efforts towards community collaborative projects and a collective approach to problem-solving for social-based issues is the approach that community members and partner agencies are advocating. The OPS has a demonstrated history towards collaboration and future investment towards these partnerships will assist with solutions and align with public expectations. This approach could extend to road safety and expedite a required culture change around the operation of motor vehicles on the city's roads.

Compassion for victims and their families has been demonstrated through the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police (CACCP) and their endorsement of a victim-centred approach when responding to major incidents and disasters. As police operations align with social agencies for many social issues, compassion will continue to be reflected in police operations and organizational direction. This extends to employee wellness within the OPS.

Gender-based violence remains an Ottawa problem despite ongoing OPS investment. Continued attention to this issue is required and includes a collaborative approach with a commitment to helping and supporting victims and survivors of violence and abuse.

Continued collaboration and commitment toward implementing Ottawa's Street Violence and Gang Strategy (OSVGS) applies a prevention strategy through upstream community support and enforcement.

A commitment to intelligence-led policing and crime analysis addresses crime statistics and trends. Continued investment to grow this capability and organizational capacity will be a key priority for all policing agencies. The elevation in hate and bias crime garners immediate attention and a forecast for an increase in crimes victimizing the elderly can be expected in the future. Cyber and technology-enabled crime continues to increase worldwide, and with continued technological advancement in AI, it is expected to grow.

If ignored, mental health and police interaction with people in crisis will continue to erode community trust and trust within the organization. Police interactions with persons experiencing mental crisis have resulted in tragedy and a declining trust within the community. Declining trust within the OPS can increase lost time due to illness, decreased morale, and an increasingly confrontational relationship with the Ottawa Police Association.

Neglecting health and safety measures can have far-reaching consequences, ranging from compromised employee well-being to operational disruptions and reputational damage. Failing to adapt to evolving health crises could undermine operational resilience, hinder workforce productivity, and erode public confidence in the organization.

Organizational talent and competencies are areas that have long-lasting impacts on the service's credibility and should drive an organizational commitment to addressing these factors. This will have positive effects on the building of external and internal trust.

Organizational competency is a reasonable public expectation, and the OPS must demonstrate competency and effective performance at all levels of policing.

Annex A – Key References

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