

Report to / Rapport au:

**OTTAWA POLICE SERVICES BOARD
LA COMMISSION DE SERVICES POLICIERS D'OTTAWA**

25 September 2023 / 25 septembre 2023

Submitted by / Soumis par:

Chief of Police, Ottawa Police Service / Chef de police, Service de police d'Ottawa

Contact Person / Personne ressource:

**Superintendent Heather Lachine, Investigations / Enquetes
LachineH@ottawapolice.ca**

**SUBJECT: RESPONSE TO CITY COUNCIL MOTION 2023 – 05/09: PROJECT
SAFE TRADE**

**OBJET: RÉPONSE À LA MOTION 2023 – 05/09 DU CONSEIL MUNICIPAL :
PROJET DE LIEUX D'ÉCHANGES PLUS SÉCURITAIRES**

REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Ottawa Police Services Board receive this report for information.

RECOMMANDATIONS DU RAPPORT

**Que la Commission de services policiers d'Ottawa prenne connaissance du
présent rapport à titre d'information.**

BACKGROUND

On December 14, 2022, City Councillor Catherine Kitts presented a motion to Council requesting information from the Ottawa Police Service (OPS) on ways to improve residents' safety when it comes to buying and selling items online. The motion was seconded by Councillor Cathy Curry.

**WHEREAS Ottawa has seen encouraging growth in numerous retail
categories this past year and continues to see a trend of online sales and
exchanges; and**

**WHEREAS an increasing number of police agencies in eastern Ontario and
western Quebec including municipalities such as Pembroke and Gatineau
are providing safer places for people to complete online exchanges or
transactions with strangers; and**

WHEREAS these safe and neutral spaces are intended to prevent fraudulent transactions and increase resident safety that may occur in the context of purchases or exchanges from online sales; and

WHEREAS while residents can carry out transactions in the public lobby of any Ottawa police station, there is not a dedicated space that is actively monitored or specific signage designating a safe space for this type of activity; and,

WHEREAS it has been suggested that there are police stations within Ottawa that may have the capacity to have designated safe exchange spaces;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT Ottawa City Council requests that the Ottawa Police Services Board explore the feasibility of piloting safe exchange areas or community safety zones at Ottawa Police Stations that would include 24/7 surveillance and dedicated signage for the residents of Ottawa.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Ottawa Police Services Board report back with their findings to Ottawa City Council by Q3 of 2023.

In response to this request, the OPS will launch Project Safe Trade in designated parking spots at three police facilities at the end of September.

The OPS Robbery Unit started the process of examining new ways to safely conduct online sales and transactions due to an increase in the number of reports it was receiving about criminal incidents involving these types of transactions. This coincided with the request brought forward by the motion.

DISCUSSION

The Safe Trade parking spots will be located at three police stations are intended to support safety when completing trades stemming from online marketplaces and websites or any other type of personal sales. These parking spaces will be clearly marked by signage and a blue logo to help you identify where to conduct a safe exchange.

This service will be officially opened no later than October 1. A sustained media and social media campaign has been developed to ensure the public is aware of this new service and how to access it.

Websites are often used as tools to sell property and can present a personal safety risk that can occur due to the high volume of thefts and robberies during these transactions.

To increase public safety and reduce crime, the OPS is inviting members of the public to use their designated Safe Trade locations to facilitate these person-to-person exchanges. Creating Safe Trade parking spaces at OPS stations is about moving transactions away from secluded parking lots or private residences and bringing them into public places.

Safe Trade locations at OPS facilities are:

- 466 Metcalfe Street (visitors' parking lot behind 474 Elgin Street police station)
- 211 Huntmar Drive (Kanata police station)
- 3343 St-Joseph Boulevard (Orleans police station)

The OPS reminds everyone to keep their safety at the forefront when meeting for an exchange with a stranger.

It should be noted that Safe Trade Zones are not monitored 24/7. Persons using the premises for Project Safe Trade are advised that the OPS does not assume any responsibility for any transactions or mediate the use of its premises for this purpose.

Contractors were engaged to manufacture and install signage and complete parking stall identifiers (painting), with a total cost of \$3,196.50 to complete all work.

CONCLUSION

The Safe Trade Project is an important new service designed to respond to community demand for locations to conduct exchanges and sales.