

## **Chief's Verbal Report 2024-03-25**

### **BERRIGAN DRIVE HOMICIDE**

I too want to take a moment to address the tragic event that occurred in Ottawa on March 6<sup>th</sup>. It's a day that that our community will never forget. To Chair Fakarani and Mayor Sutcliffe thank you for your kind and genuine words.

Six people lost their lives – four of them children -- in this tragic and senseless act of violence perpetrated on innocent people. The details we uncovered are disturbing, and our focus remains on seeking justice for the victims and their families.

Our condolences go to Mr. Wickramasinghe for his loss as well as the family of Mr. Gamini Amarakoon.

I had the privilege of attending the vigil and funeral, where we witnessed firsthand how our community comes together in times of tragedy. It is heartening to see the support and solidarity.

We continue to work to support those affected.

I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to all the members who have been tirelessly working on this homicide case to ensure the best evidence is put forward at trial. Their professionalism and dedication are something we count on in moments like this.

### **WELLNESS**

While we mourn the loss of this young family, this tragedy serves as a stark reminder of the toll policing can take on our mental and emotional well-being.

We know that our members' wellbeing is important to the Board and community and we thank you for your outpouring of support for their health

and wellbeing. I can't tell you the number of people in the community that expressed concern for their well being. Including those from the Sri Lanken community. I was touched that, despite their great loss, they were thinking of our team. I'm truly grateful for their thoughts.

We have facilitated group debriefs and individualized support for members affected by this incident. I want to thank the Wellness Team, the Associations, and the Chains of Command for their steadfast support of our members. To the OPS members, there is no right way to heal from an event such as this, please know that the organization is rallying around all of you, not just now but for the months and years that follow.

## **BURUNDI INCIDENT**

- I'd like to make a few comments on the Arrest of a community member from Burundi that was reported in the media last week.
- The OPS was investigating a murder that occurred on January 29<sup>th</sup> in Little Italy where a firearm was used in the homicide.
- A suspect was identified and we asked for the public's assistance in finding him.
- Police Officers were in the Innes neighborhood for a number of days, showing pictures of the suspect to the public and those that worked in the area and following that effort received a few calls from the public with possible sightings.
- On February 16<sup>th</sup> , we received a another call from a member of the public that we had spoken to and shown the picture of the suspect.
- She stated that she had just seen him and directed our officers to an area where he was located.
- The actions that occurred upon our arrival resulted in the arrest of Mr. Niyondagra Once positively identified by the officers, it was learned that he in fact was not the homicide suspect. He was released, offered medical assistance and driven home.

- First, this was a very unfortunate set of circumstances where an innocent man was arrested.
- Our members thought they were confronting a person that was a homicide suspect and presumed to be armed and dangerous.
- We deeply regret that this occurred to Mr. . Niyondagra
- We have made efforts to reach out to him in the past week and now are shifting our focus to connecting with his legal representative.
- I very much want to speak with him and have a meaningful discussion to gain his understanding and perspective so we can learn as much as we can from this incident.
- In regards to the Burundi Community, we realize that we have work to do in order develop a more positive relationship with them.
- We have our team contacting them with a goal of setting a meeting date where we can start building more trust in the community.
- I understand the frustration and angst this has caused for Mr. Niyondagra and the Burundi community. I look forward to meeting with those involved.

## **MEMBER INVOLVED SHOOTING**

I also want to make a comment in regards to the member involved shooting that occurred last Friday afternoon in the Avondale area.

Our officers were confronted with a very challenging set of circumstances and responded to the situation that was presented.

The Ontario SIU is in charge of this investigation and is responsible for any public comments about the events of that day.

It is important that we allow the SIU to do its work and not prejudice the investigative and oversight process.

We are supporting all those that were involved and we hope for the best for the woman that was injured.

This was a rare event for this particular neighborhood and if they need any assistance, please make sure to contact our Victim Services Unit.

## **INTERNATIONAL WOMENS DAY**

Earlier this month we celebrated International Women's Day, a time for us to come together and recognize the amazing women who are such an important part of the Ottawa Police Service.

This year's theme was "Inspiring Inclusion." It's all about making sure everyone feels welcome and valued, no matter who they are. And it's a perfect fit for us because we're committed to having a workplace where everyone feels included and respected.

The women at OPS do incredible things. To all the amazing women in our organization, thank you for everything you do. Let's keep working together to make OPS a great place for everyone.

## **NEW RECRUITS:**

Last month we held a badge ceremony to welcome 21 exceptional individuals into the Ottawa Police Service family. Our new recruits bring with them a diverse range of experiences including previous careers as Special Constables, military combat engineers, advanced care paramedics and public service professionals.

Among the 14 men and 7 women, many have advanced education and degrees in fields ranging from criminology to social sciences. It is also worth noting that in addition to English and French, **thirteen other languages are spoken by this recruit class.** I have no doubt that they will be a great addition to our Service.

We have 28 officers that will graduate on May 10<sup>th</sup> and just hired another 32 officers for the next class at the Ontario Police College.

## **CSPA**

Starting April 1st, the new Community Safety and Policing Act (CSPA) will come into effect and replace the Police Services Act. This is a big step forward for our community and the Service.

The CSPA is designed to enhance community safety and strengthen our relationships with the people we serve.

One of the key aspects of the CSPA is its focus on community engagement. This means that we will be working closely with members of the community to identify priorities, address concerns, and develop strategies to keep our neighborhoods safe. As I've mentioned, we are already restructuring our model for engagement with our community and will be launching that new model in 2024.

Additionally, the CSPA will provide us with new tools and resources to improve our policing practices. This includes training programs, technology upgrades, and increased support for officers on the front lines.

There are also some structural changes to our conduct processes that will be implemented and make us more accountable.

I'm excited about the positive impact that the CSPA will have on our community, and I'm confident that it will help us build safer, stronger neighborhoods for everyone.

## **SPECIAL CONSTABLE PROGRAM**

The District Special Constables Pilot Project is now underway. This project is aimed at helping our frontline police officers do their job even better.

We're deploying Special Constables to assist our frontline officers in their day-to-day operations. These Special Constables will handle various non-emergency calls, giving our regular officers more time to focus on urgent matters.

For the next six months, we'll have four experienced Special Constables on duty, with four more trained and ready to step in if needed. These Special Constables are well-trained in important areas like de-escalation, use of force, and traffic control.

One of their primary roles is ensuring the safety and custody of individuals apprehended under the Mental Health Act and brought to hospital. This frees up our frontline officers to respond to other emergencies instead of staying at the hospital waiting for a patient to be admitted.

They will also assist with traffic control duties including directing traffic and managing road closures at accident scenes, crime scenes, events and demonstrations.

The initial feedback from both the Special Constables and the Sworn members is very positive.

## **NEW VEHICLES:**

I am very pleased to have announced the roll out of our brand-new cruisers.

On March 15<sup>th</sup>, Constable Gatti was the first officer to hit the road with our new cruisers from the 10<sup>th</sup> line station. The journey to this point has been a team effort through and through. The collaboration with Fleet and Frontline has been outstanding, and it's what's made this project possible. Their dedication and hard work has truly paid off.

These new cruisers will make us better. Not only do they look better with a two-toned blue and white design, but they also come equipped with modern improvements aimed at making the jobs of officers safer.

One thing I'm particularly excited about is the enhanced visibility these cruisers offer. It's now easier than ever to spot us out on the road, distinguishing us from other city services vehicles. This means better recognition and safety for everyone involved.

## **RECENT AWARDS & NOMINATIONS**

Thank you Chair Fakarani for acknowledging Deputy Chief Steve Bell, Sergeant Maria Keen and retired constable Dave Stewart who were the recent recipients of the *Order of Merit of the Police Forces*. This award is special because it recognizes the outstanding leadership and exceptional service of members of Canadian police services. The Order of Merit highlights the hard work and dedication these individuals have shown to our country.

I would also like to congratulate Sergeant Lila Shibley, Sergeant Avery Flanagan and Sergeant Ali Toghrol for their nominations for the Police Association of Ontario [OPA] Hero of the Year Award. This recognition is well-deserved, and I am incredibly proud of their accomplishments. Wishing them the best of luck in the award process!

## **GALA**

The 12<sup>th</sup> annual Ottawa Police Gala **that was held** on November 4, 2023, at the Shaw Centr was another huge success.

I'm happy to report that the 2023 Gala raised just shy of \$60K and a few weeks ago, we presented cheques to three deserving organizations in our community.

Funds were distributed to the Roberts Smart Centre and The Door Youth Centre. Both organizations support youth in mental health and life skills development.

A portion of Gala proceeds were also donated to The Beechwood Cemetery for the Ottawa Police Service Memorial Cemetery.

None of this would be possible without the ongoing support of our sponsors and our community. We appreciate every sponsor, donor, and volunteer. We could not have accomplished this without them.

The 13<sup>th</sup> Annual OPS Gala will take place on Saturday, November 2, 2024, at the Shaw Centre. The application process will open on March 1<sup>st</sup> for new charities to pitch their ideas that create assistance, support, or opportunities for residents in our community.

We hope everyone will be there with us again to make the 2024 Gala another wonderful success.

### **March Board Meeting**

Lastly, I would like to welcome the Board's newest member Mr. David Donaldson. Congratulations on your appointment. We look forward to working with you in the coming years as we navigate through a very challenging time with a lot of change management initiatives underway. We also look forward to hosting you at our Elgin Headquarters so you can meet some of the team that are dedicated to safety in the City of Ottawa.