

**Report to / Rapport au:**

**OTTAWA POLICE SERVICE BOARD  
LA COMMISSION DE SERVICE DE POLICE D'OTTAWA**

**28 April 2025 / 28 avril 2025**

**Submitted by / Soumis par:**

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**SUBJECT: PROJECT COMPLEMENT**

**OBJET: COMPLÉMENT DE PROJET**

**REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS**

**That the Ottawa Police Service Board receive this report for information.**

**RECOMMANDATIONS DU RAPPORT**

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

**BACKGROUND**

The Ottawa Police Service (OPS), like many police services, faces significant staffing challenges. Sworn officers are overburdened with administrative and investigative tasks leading to burnout and reduced efficiency. There is a pressing need to reconfigure the staffing structure to modernize and improve case management. Made possible under the new Community Safety and Policing Act (CSPA), Special Constables and civilian members can now take on expanded roles and responsibilities to alleviate some of the workload demands placed on sworn officers, bring professionalized skills in many specialized areas, and provide an enhanced level of specialization to investigative procedures.

Implementing an alternative staffing strategy built based on process flow can strategically redistribute responsibilities, allowing sworn officers to focus on core policing tasks while leveraging the specialized skills of civilian members and the operational support of Special Constables. This model not only enhances efficiency and resource

optimization but also aligns with the OPS strategic direction of increasing community safety and investing in OPS member wellness.

Under the former Police Services Act (PSA), the roles and duties of Special Constables were limited. The core of their responsibilities was to assist police officers by transporting, monitoring, controlling and receiving custody of prisoners, serving Summonses and Subpoenas, and fingerprinting and photographing criminally charged persons. The CSPA, however, provides an expansion of the authorities for those with Special Constable designation offering the OPS an opportunity to leverage these new capacities to address its investigative challenges. While they maintain many of the same capacities as before, in situations where the employer of Special Constables is a police service, Special Constables may now also:

- Assist with performing policing functions such as assisting with investigations into criminal offences or missing persons; includes interviewing the public and detaining, arresting or releasing individuals under the direction of an officer;
- Secure and preserve evidence;
- Seize and store evidence;
- Collect DNA as required as part of an investigation;
- Perform electronic searches under the direction of an officer;
- Perform forensic analysis;
- Store or process evidence under the direction of an officer;
- Monitor private communications intercepted under s.184.4 of the *Canadian Criminal Code* or video surveillance under s.487.01 of the *Canadian Criminal Code*.

In an effort to fully leverage the additional powers provided to Special Constables as in the CSPA, the OPS initiated Project Complement. Three key goals of Project Complement are to enhance service delivery performance, improve member wellness and professional development.

The project began in mid-2024 and, to date, has been successful from a budgetary, timing, scope, and change management perspective. Highlights to date include:

- Completion of internal research, the streamlining of the Special Constable appointment process as well as the development of a training protocol.
- Strong interest has been shown in the hiring process for Forensic Identification Technician and Generalist Special Constable positions, with over 700

applications received. Candidates have gone through the hiring process and successful candidates have been hired.

- Onboarding has begun and will include a seven-week training program that aligns with CSPA requirements. Training will focus on equipping new hires with the necessary skills for their designated roles. Operational deployment is expected by early June 2025.
- To ensure sustainable training delivery, stakeholder discussions with the Canadian Police College are ongoing to secure long-term training logistics for the next three years.

## DISCUSSION

Project Complement was initiated in response to recent declines in service delivery performance and member wellness with the OPS, highlighting the urgent need for a modern and adaptive staffing support strategy. Under the changes of the new CSPA, Special Constables and civilians working under the direction of a police officer can now be strategically used within the OPS to help address increased service demands.

A key advantage of Special Constables and civilian support staff is their ability to diversify the pool of human resources and skills within the OPS. The traditional approach of relying solely on sworn officers to meet various management and operational needs is becoming increasingly outdated and restrictive (McKenna, 2014). Enhancing desirable skills and abilities within the OPS allows for the inclusion of individuals from non-traditional backgrounds, broadening the scope of policing roles. This strategy can attract individuals from underrepresented cultural and ethnic groups (such as Indigenous, Black, LGBTQ2+), as well as those with diverse work experiences (e.g., business or military), specialized technical skills (e.g., computers and forensics), or academic qualifications in social sciences (e.g., research and statistics). It can also appeal to those with specific educational backgrounds in fields like law, criminology, political science, or business. By incorporating specialized functions and welcoming personnel with varied expertise, the OPS can become more adaptable and sophisticated, enhancing its ability to address the complex and diverse challenges of modern policing.

The presence of specialized support staff also enables a more robust and sustained investigative effort, which is crucial for dismantling organized crime networks and addressing serious criminal activities. Research published in *Policing: An International Journal of Police Strategies & Management* emphasizes the importance of leveraging specialized skills and personnel to improve investigative outcomes in complex cases, thereby enhancing the overall effectiveness of police operations (Correia et al., 2023).

The ability of an enhanced staffing model to address both lower and higher threshold offences comprehensively enhances overall service delivery performance and public safety.

Given the research demonstrating the benefits of a specialized support staff, the aim of Project Complement will be to strategically implement Special Constables and civilians into various sections within the OPS. The starting point of this initiative will be to implement Special Constables within the Forensic Identification Section (FIS) and expand the current District Special Constable (DSC) pilot project. Details of these roles will be outlined in the discussion below, along with the future directions of the project.

### **Forensic Identification Technicians**

Special Constables within FIS will be known as Forensic Identification Technicians (FIT) and will bring advanced educational backgrounds and specialized skillsets to help meet the growing demands placed on the section. These members will assist with a variety of forensic tasks, but an emphasis will be placed on crimes that have recently increased in prevalence, such as auto thefts, sexual assaults as well as break and enters. Increasing forensic support on these incidents will provide more actionable evidence to investigators, which in turn, may have downstream benefits in terms of case solvency. Furthermore, the forensic support provided by FITs will help alleviate some of the workload demands placed on sworn members, potentially improving their wellbeing and professional development.

### **District Special Constables**

The current DSC pilot program will also be expanded as part of the Project Complement initiative. The DSC pilot project was launched in March of 2024 with the aim of assisting frontline officers with lower priority calls for service to allow them to focus on higher priority calls. The program is currently comprised of four DSCs who assist frontline officers with mental health act apprehensions, road closures, crime scene security, hospital custody transfers and non-suspicious vital sign absent calls.

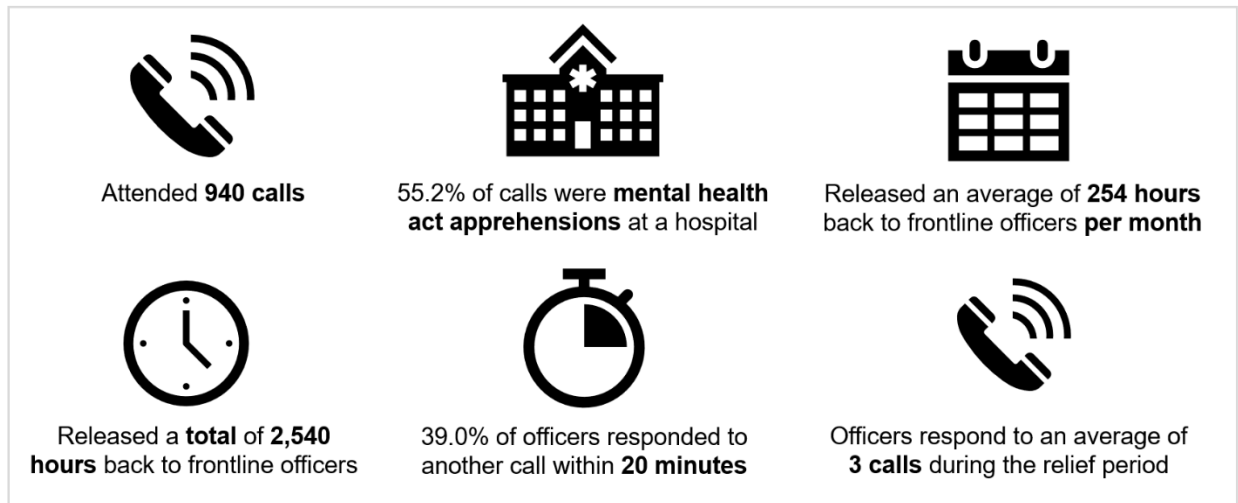
In line with research by Correia et al. (2023) highlighting how a specialized support staff can enhance the operational efficiency of a police service, the DSC program has shown promising results in supporting frontline officers. Over a ten-month period, the DSCs responded to a total of 940 calls for service and released over 2,540 hours back to frontline officers to focus on higher priority calls (see Figure 1). Further findings also demonstrate that 39% of frontline officers relieved by a DSC were able to respond to another call for service within 20 minutes and they attended an average of 3 calls for service during the relief period. The success of the pilot project is further exemplified by

the enhanced benefits of proactive policing it provided, with the amount of monthly proactive policing hours per officer increasing by 76.5% (or 47 minutes) since the start of the pilot project.

The positive outcomes of the DSC pilot project are expected to be further enhanced with its expansion. Given the current performance of the pilot project, estimates suggest increasing the DSC program to 18 members has the potential to release over 10,000 hours back to frontline officers per year. This extra time offers a unique opportunity for the implementation of strategic crime reduction initiatives around the city to further increase public safety. However, beyond just releasing hours back to frontline officers, the pilot project has earned strong support from OPS members, reinforcing its value as beneficial initiative. This widespread support was demonstrated in a survey administered to frontline officers, non-commissioned officers and dispatches who work closely with the DSCs. The findings revealed that 92% of respondents were in favour of the DSC program being expanded and permanent.

### Figure 1

*Accomplishments of the DSC Pilot Project Between March 2024 and December 2024*



### Future Directions

Building on the early success of Project Complement, the Ottawa Police Service will continue to implement strategic staffing solutions that enhance operational capacity, improve member wellness, and elevate service delivery. By June 2025, eight FITs and ten additional DSCs will be fully trained and deployed. These additions are expected to significantly reduce frontline response times, increase investigative efficiency, and support member retention by relieving pressure on sworn officers. Strategic staffing solutions may also be implemented in additional sections within the OPS. Potential

sections—pending further research evaluation—may include the Criminal Investigations Directorate (CID), Mental Health Section (MHS), Intelligence Section, and Youth Crime Section (see Appendix A). In any case, expanding the project initiative will always be guided by internal research as well as input from OPS members and key stakeholders.

Another ongoing aim of the Project Complement initiative is to ensure the successful integration of current and future Special Constables within the existing sworn complement. A change of this magnitude within the service will undoubtedly bring about resistance amongst some members. This resistance has already been identified in a survey administered to FIS members showing how some members are apprehensive of expanding the roles and responsibilities of Special Constables due to fears of their jobs becoming civilianized. While the civilianization of their jobs is not possible given the legislation outlined in the CSPA, these concerns are still actively being addressed. Methods for addressing these concerns and other resistance are being guided by a change management specialist and include educating members about the parameters Special Constables must legally work within.

To support sustainable growth and maintain high training standards, the Eastern Ontario Special Constable Training Centre (EOSCTC) has been established. This Centre will not only support the implementation of Special Constables within the OPS but also serve as a cost recovery method by providing training to Special Constables from other organizations. The Centre will focus on providing an expanded seven-week Basic Special Constable Qualification course to all incoming Special Constables. The Centre will also offer additional District Special Constable training and Scenes of Crime Officer (SOCO) training to eligible Special Constables. The final focus of the Centre will be to support yearly use of force requalifications for OPS, OC Transpo and Carleton University Special Constables.

## **CONSULTATION**

The initiatives outlined in Project Complement are guided by consultation with OPS membership as well as key internal and external stakeholders. These consultations will continue throughout the multi-year project to help guide key performance indicator (KPI) monitoring, inform project improvements and support potential expansions. The Board will be provided regular updates on this initiative, and will receive performance data (KPIs) through the regular strategy implementation reporting process.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no requested expenditures to report. The three-year pilot project is currently being funded by a \$4,000,000 grant from the Ontario Ministry of the Solicitor General.

However, given the current and foreseeable success of the project, there is a strong case for a potential future increase in funding to further enhance the project's growth and positive impact within the OPS.

## **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

Appendix A – Ottawa Police Special Constable Overview

## **CONCLUSION**

Project Complement aims to implement a model where non-sworn police members, including civilians and Special Constables, can actively participate in frontline roles to enhance community safety. It will utilize the new authorities available in the CSPA to focus on hiring and training individuals to support the Forensic Identification Section, frontline officers, and investigators. Ultimately, this model seeks to expand police presence and community engagement by integrating trained civilians and Special Constables into critical police operations and increasing capacity for sworn members to perform critical policing functions. Sworn officers will, in turn, be able to focus on higher priority investigative and crime reduction tasks. The intended outcomes of this project align with the OPS strategic direction of staffing stabilization as well as enhancing community safety and OPS member wellness. The project remains on budget, on schedule, and within scope; regular updates will continue to be provided to the Board as the initiative progresses.

## Appendix A – Ottawa Police Special Constable Overview

