

June 3, 2025

## 2024 Use of Force Report

### Reflections from Sahada Alolo

The Use of Force Report holds many statistics and numbers. I ask that you remember that behind each number lies the story of a person. An individual whose life has been directly affected by law enforcement interactions.

When I joined the Community Equity Council (CEC) in 2018 and later became the community co-chair in early 2019, I was driven by a deep commitment to the people. The tragic death of Abdirahman Abdi during an interaction with the Ottawa Police Service (OPS) reinforced my resolve. As a mother of three Black young men, I felt a profound duty to contribute to meaningful change, ensuring that interactions between OPS officers and community members prioritize safety, fairness, dignity, and respect.

Over the past few years, the CEC worked with the OPS and the York University researchers to produce the recommendations coming out of the 2020 OPS Use of Force report. With this current report, you will see progress has been made from those recommendations, including the establishment of the Use of Force Review Community Panel. The panel plays a critical role in reviewing use of force case files and makes specific recommendations on service delivery improvements to address systemic issues for OPS.

What I have learned from this work is a number of key points:

- Any use of force by OPS that exceeds the provincial legal principles of necessity, proportionality, and reasonableness represents a failure in the relationship between law enforcement and the community.
- Even when statistical improvements are observed, they do not necessarily feel like success—no one should find themselves in a use-of-force situation, and no one should experience harm.

- Continued investment in officer training is making a difference. Training in de-escalation techniques, bias-free policing, mental health crisis intervention, trauma-informed approaches, and culturally responsive policing has contributed to progress, though further organizational change is necessary within OPS.
- The report also shows a decrease in the number of Use of Force incidents. But not for two communities – the Black community and the Middle Eastern community. We have to continue to ask what else is needed to decrease those numbers and act to address this statistic.
- There is also a profound need for systems change including new investments in body - worn cameras that will not only serve as a mechanism to protect both police and community, but it also provides a more complete and transparent picture of police interactions. This ensures that assessments are based on objective evidence rather than officer notes alone. It is indeed a proactive step toward reducing unnecessary police interactions altogether. what we invest in as a community. This is not and should not be a choice between policing and community prevention and intervention services but a proactive response to supporting people so that they are not having to interact with police in certain situations.

We have a collective responsibility to public safety. All of us! The OPS has more work to do – as do all of us who want to see a safer Ottawa.

**Sahada Alolo**

**Community Equity Council, Past Co-Chair**

**Use of Force Community Review Panel, Co-Chair**