

Report to / Rapport au:

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

28 July 2025 / 28 juillet 2025

Submitted by / Soumis par:

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

Contact Person:

**Deputy Chief Paul Burnett, Community Police Command
BurnettP@ottawapolice.ca**

**SUBJECT: UPDATE ON MOUNTED UNIT – JUNE 2025 PROGRESS UPDATE
(YEAR 2: APRIL 1, 2025 – APRIL 1, 2026)**

**OBJET: MISE A JOUR DE L'UNITE MONTEE - JUIN 2025 MISE A JOUR DE
L'ETAT D'AVANCEMENT (ANNEE 2 : 1ER AVRIL 2025 - 1ER AVRIL
2026)**

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) launched the Mounted Patrol Unit in 2024 to enhance public safety, community engagement, and operational support. Year 1 of the unit focused on foundational development. Year 2 marks the beginning of operational deployment.

DISCUSSION

This report provides an update to the Ottawa Police Services Board on the progress and development of the Ottawa Police Service Mounted Unit. Fully funded by the Province of

Ontario, the Mounted Unit represents a significant addition to the Service's operational and community engagement capacity.

The Ottawa Police Mounted Unit is a visible, approachable, and highly trained resource dedicated to enhancing public safety and strengthening connections with the community. Mounted officers and their Clydesdale horses play an active role across the city—whether patrolling busy downtown streets, managing large crowds at events, or engaging with residents in parks and public spaces.

Selected for their strength, intelligence, and calm temperament, the horses are well-suited for urban policing. Together with their riders, they undergo rigorous training to operate effectively in dynamic and high-pressure environments. This includes navigating crowded areas, responding to unpredictable situations, and supporting crisis response operations.

The launch of the Mounted Unit reflects the Service's continued commitment to innovation, operational excellence, and meaningful community engagement. It enhances the Ottawa Police Service's ability to respond to a wide range of needs, while providing a unique and trusted presence that fosters public confidence across the city. As the OPS continues the phased implementation of its Mounted Unit, we are pleased to report that the team is progressing well in its operational development. At this time, the Mounted Unit is primarily engaged in proactive patrols within select neighborhoods to build positive community engagement and increase police visibility.

However, the unit is not yet fully deployed for major events or demonstrations in the downtown core. There are several reasons for the staged deployment approach:

The horses assigned to the unit have diverse levels of exposure and training. While some have participated in mounted operations with the Montreal Police Service and have experience in high-density environments, others are newer to urban operational settings. This variability requires a tailored development approach to ensure all horses and riders are equally prepared for high-stress environments typical of major demonstrations. Further, the horses are not yet equipped with the specialized protective gear typically worn during public order operations, such as visors, leg guards, and flank protection. Until this equipment is acquired and integrated into training, deployment into dynamic crowd management scenarios is limited.

Although the Mounted Unit has successfully trained with our Public Order Unit during joint exercises in the spring—with positive results—the team requires further structured exposure to noise, vehicular movement, and congested areas.

We currently assess the unit's readiness for public order deployment at approximately 70%. Barring unforeseen delays, we anticipate the Mounted Unit will be fully operational for major events by the end of September 2025.

1. Operational Deployment

Since April 2025, the Mounted Unit has begun limited operational deployment, attending several high-profile and community events, including:

- The Royal Visit
- Special Olympics Ontario Opening Ceremonies
- Heroes for Heroes at CHEO
- Hard Rock Ottawa Grand Opening
- Canada Day suburban festivities in West and East Divisions

The unit has also initiated regular patrols across various city areas / neighbourhoods, with a focus on gradually increasing exposure to high-density environments. Currently, the team deploys 2–3 times per week in progressively busier areas, supporting horse desensitization and rider readiness.

2. Community Engagement

Each deployment has resulted in over 40 positive, random public engagements (answering questions from the public, discussing the horses and their training), reinforcing the unit's role in building trust and enhancing the OPS's community presence. The Mounted Unit continues to be a visible and approachable symbol of the OPS's commitment to public safety and well-being.

3. Strategic Integration

The unit has engaged with external mounted policing partners to understand their Key Performance Indicator (KPI) strategies, the OPS's data analytics team, and internal stakeholders across several strategic initiatives to ensure alignment with, among others:

- Event Management
- CORE (Community Outreach and Engagement)
- NRT (Neighbourhood Resource Teams)
- Patrol Operations
- Youth Services
- Recruiting

This collaboration is helping to shape the development of baseline KPIs that reflect both provincial funding requirements and OPS's strategic direction.

4. Training and Readiness

Ongoing training continues to ensure both horses and officers are prepared for dynamic operational environments. The unit is progressing toward full operational readiness, including support to Crowd Management and Public Order events with a focus on safety, confidence, and public interaction.

CURRENT STATE

- 5 trained officers and 7 horses currently active.
- 1 more horse still to be purchased.
- The unit attended a week of Public Order training with the Emergency Services Unit in May.
- Recruitment underway for 3 additional constables, expected to be completed before the end of Year 2 (which includes 16 weeks of Equitation training).
- An average of 3 deployments per week ranging from 2-4 hours each, in urban and suburban areas, with increasing exposure to high-density environments.
- Tracking more than 40 positive public engagements each deployment.
- Stable procurement process has been completed, and the unit has confirmed a centrally located residence in the City's south end.
- Facilities retro-fit project is underway at the stables to ensure consistency with existing OPS facilities policies and standards.
- Driver training for unit members to acquire A restricted class Ontario drivers licensing (required for the operation of a motor vehicle or combination motor vehicle and trailer with a gross weight of 4600 kilograms or more).
- Strong inter-agency partnerships and internal collaboration with operational units, for example Community Officers, NRT, Parliamentary Precinct, CORE, Patrol, Youth.

NEXT STEPS

- Complete fleet acquisition (2nd unit pickup and two 4-horse trailers).
- Completion of driver testing with Ministry of Transportation.
- Expand deployment footprint and increase frequency.
- Establish and report on baseline KPIs.
- Continue strategic direction goals and alignment with internal OPS units and provincial funding goals.

CONSULTATION

Ongoing consultation with:

- OPS internal units (Fleet, HR, Strategic Projects, Finance, Data Analytics & Crime Analysis).
- External Partners (RCMP, Service de Police de la Ville de Montréal, Toronto Police Service).
- Community stakeholders through event participation and feedback.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The project remains within budget to date; however, anticipated pressures related to fleet procurement costs & delays and facility upgrades are expected to impact future financials. Procurement delays are being closely monitored for potential downstream effects.

- Year 1 expenditures were submitted under Provincial funding and remain subject to audit and follow-up.
- Year 2 expenditures will be reported through mid-year and final reporting cycles. Reallocation proposals are being prepared for Provincial review to reflect adjustments in the spending structure—specifically, delays in Year 1 (e.g., horse trailers) and unforeseen costs in Year 2 (e.g., facility upfits).
- Once OPS Finance receives updated cost estimates for years 2 and 3, they will assess whether unspent funds from other initiatives under the Ottawa-Ontario agreement (e.g., Market Safe, which is projected to underspend) can be reallocated to offset these pressures.
- Any remaining shortfalls that cannot be covered through reallocation will be presented as operating and/or capital pressures during the 2026 budget process.

CONCLUSION

The Mounted Unit has made significant progress moving from foundational development to active operational deployment. The unit has become a highly visible and well-received element of the OPS's public safety and community engagement strategy. Through consistent deployments, positive public interactions, and integration with key operational areas, the unit is already reinforcing trust and presence across Ottawa.

Strategic partnerships, ongoing training, and robust planning continue to ensure the unit's readiness to support major events, demonstrations, and public order operations. While minor procurement and facility-related challenges persist, these are being actively managed within existing budget frameworks.

With recruitment, fleet expansion, and performance measurement initiatives underway, the Mounted Unit remains on track to meet its long-term objectives. Continued investment

and support will ensure that the unit evolves into a sustainable, high-impact asset aligned with OPS priorities and community expectations.