

# OTTAWA POLICE SERVICE

## 2025 ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN

<p><b>⚙️ Operational</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community-Based Policing</li> <li>• Service Delivery Revitalization</li> <li>• Victim-Centric Services</li> <li>• Public Order &amp; Event Management</li> </ul>	<p><b>👤 Social</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public Trust &amp; Confidence</li> <li>• Equity &amp; Inclusion Priorities</li> <li>• Mental Health &amp; Addiction Challenges</li> <li>• Housing &amp; Homelessness</li> </ul>	<p><b>💰 Economic</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Budgetary Restraints</li> <li>• Rising Cost of Policing</li> <li>• Need for Sustainable Funding Models</li> <li>• Emphasis on Value for Money</li> </ul>
<p><b>🌐 Global</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conflict in Middle East &amp; Ukraine</li> <li>• Unstable Global Economic Outlook</li> <li>• Ideologically Motivated Violent Extremism</li> <li>• Transnational Organized Crime</li> </ul>		<p><b>🏛️ Political</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Growing Police Oversight &amp; Accountability</li> <li>• Municipal Election 2026</li> <li>• Shifting Federal Priorities</li> <li>• Foreign Interference Risks</li> </ul>
<p><b>📜 Legislative</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AI Legislation &amp; Regulation</li> <li>• Governance &amp; Policing Standards</li> <li>• Digital Economy &amp; Drug Law Gaps</li> <li>• Impaired Driving &amp; Equipment Laws</li> </ul>	<p><b>🌿 Environmental</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extreme Weather Effects</li> <li>• Extreme Operating Environments</li> <li>• Impacts of Climate Change</li> </ul>	<p><b>🔧 Technology</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Officer Safety Innovations</li> <li>• Public Safety Technologies</li> <li>• Cybercrime &amp; Digital Security</li> <li>• Artificial Intelligence Applications</li> </ul>

**Executive Summary:**

Doing a good job at the Ottawa Police Service (OPS) involves taking stock of the 'key influences' believed to be shaping policing in an effort to respond earlier and more effectively to external and internal trends. This OPS Environmental Scan identifies key local and broader influences that affect the delivery of policing services in Ottawa. It introduces myriad political, global, economic, social, technological, legislative, environmental, and operational *considerations* intended to help frame upcoming engagement with stakeholders, resource allocation deliberations, and subsequent decision-making. While the Ottawa Police Service has worked with partners and the community to address key *influences* identified in previous scanning exercises and community engagement, this Scan provides an overview of those factors thought to be pressing in 2025. Accordingly, key references reviewed and listed in **Annex A** may be new or previous citations may remain relevant in 2025.

The citizens of Ottawa expect that policing services will operate in keeping with high professional, ethical, and performance standards, while responding to calls for service within an increasingly complex and demanding operating environment. Recent public outreach and research demonstrate improvements in public trust and confidence in the police in Canada and OPS, yet vigilance is indicated in being attentive to dynamic community needs, trust and expectations. The Service will be called upon to provide different characterizations of their objectives and subsequent performance in keeping with significant changes to provincial policing and public safety legislation and regimes.

There is a pronounced need to reconcile economic and budgetary pressures with increasing public safety demands. Costs to cover sufficient officer complements, civilian staff, equipment and operational supports, are rising. Sustainability and uncertainty of providing selected OPS services can be amplified by influences such as variation in funding streams like discretionary grant funding and variation in income sources derived from traffic safety devices and other revenue.

Police officers in Canada are under increased pressure and scrutiny, and communities have high expectations. This has manifested in higher levels of personnel absences – at all ranks - due to mental health stresses and other factors. In addition to current programming intended to treat affected members and mitigate the negative effects on families, work teams, and at the organizational level, new ways of fortifying the resiliency and wellness of our people seem indicated.

The re-organization of the OPS Districts (2026) will coincide with ongoing '*staffing stabilization*' efforts intended to address critical gaps and modernize its workforce in 2025. Delivering the best service to residents will be grounded in having sworn and civilian members that are: properly selected and trained; developed and supported throughout their careers; committed to acting ethically; and having an orientation towards service each day they come to work. This means taking care of members, so they can take care of Ottawa.

Almost all the observations listed in the Scan intersect with some aspects of a changing technological environment. In addition to our increased reliance on wireless broadband communications, artificial intelligence (AI) provides the footing for many of our personal and professional activities. The entire process of receiving and managing 911 calls (the call path) and other workflows will change as additional sources of data, location-based services, information with questionable validity, and video are added to police core processes. There will be a notable tension between, or uncertainty associated with, new (technology) '*tools*' and the '*rules*' everyone operates within.

**Introduction:**

The OPS 2025 *Environmental Scan 2025* is intended to provide a snapshot of external and internal factors likely to influence how policing services are delivered in Ottawa. As part of longer-term planning and decision-making processes, the Environmental Scan quickly ‘describes’ contemporary and emerging challenges with a view to better positioning the OPS, the Board, the membership, and community, to ‘prescribe’ what adjustments are indicated in the future. These adjustments to service delivery can include budget deliberations; strategic planning and priority setting; taking stock of organizational performance and lines of accountability; and operational policy. From the perspective of OPS clients, this document can help community stakeholders better understand the local and broader public safety environment in order to better articulate their perspectives, needs and partnership opportunities. The Scan sketches out observations – including statistics that can vary during the life cycles of these scanning exercises and the vantage point of the data collector (OPS/City of Ottawa/Statistics Canada). These points and any associated inferences can be thought of as a catalyst for further thinking, discussions, and decisions.

The Environmental Scan 2025 offers an overview of the context and influences impacting the delivery of policing services in Ottawa along the following lines:

- Political
- Global
- Economic
- Social
- Technology
- Legislative
- Environmental
- Operational

Consideration	Key Influences
<b>Political</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New federal direction</li> <li>• Growing police oversight and accountability</li> <li>• Border integrity and transnational crime mitigation</li> <li>• Populism versus traditional government and tolerance</li> <li>• Foreign interference</li> <li>• Municipal election 2026</li> </ul>

**Context:**

The new federal government (spring 2025) direction brings legislative adjustments and other change to society, national security, and public safety. The federal government has - through the *Stronger Borders Act* - articulated its intent to, among other things: fortify border policy; combat transnational crime; amend immigration policy; enhance information sharing among agencies; and strengthen maritime security. This federal tempo has also been reflected in *Bill C-5*, also known as the *Building Canada Act*, and demonstrates the government’s intent to fast-track infrastructure and major projects deemed to be in the national interest. Recent messaging from federal and provincial governments suggest increased oversight and fortified lines of accountability governing police service delivery is indicated. A notable federal focus on international trade, economic policy, defence and security considerations at the outset of their mandate in spring 2025 may take away from previous attention to Indigenous community interests and government obligations.

Police governance regimes – except for the RCMP - are largely the purview of provincial governments. At the local level current OPS Board members draw upon their legal, public service, political and educational backgrounds to inform their role in overseeing and guiding police services

in Ottawa. In addition to other legislative lines of accountability, the Board works with the Service to 1) establish priorities and objectives; 2) develop policy; 3) monitor OPS performance; 4) appoint and oversee the OPS leadership cadre; 5) conduct and frame community engagement; and 6) undertake strategic planning for policing services. A major modernization of how policing is overseen and delivered across Ontario comes with the full implementation of the *Community Safety and Policing Act (CSPA)*, which replaced the legacy *Police Services Act*. At the local level, the mayor's post will be up for election in 2026 and possible changes in municipal leadership and governance authority tenure will shape the setting of the strategic direction and governance for the OPS. As well, the 2026 municipal elections in Ontario will likely shape the strategic direction of the police services serving under the auspices of police services boards.

While appearing to sit uncomfortably with more familiar Canadian values and majority views, populist rhetoric and distrust of government remain a significant political force in Canada. Police and Canadians in general are trying to make sense of how some aspects of populism are fostering xenophobic, anti-science (vaccines), and unsympathetic views towards equity, diversity and inclusion issues. Public safety service providers have been operating in an environment where there is increasing sentiment towards advancing individual *interests* rather than a sense of shared *obligation* to look out for one another.

Foreign interference remains a threat to Canadian democracy and by extension a consideration for police at all levels. In addition to undermining our sovereignty, trust in our institutions can be compromised and national security jeopardized by malicious actions by foreign actors.

### **Implications:**

We can expect initial reactions from Canadian police to federal initiatives such as the *Stronger Borders Act* to be favourable, while recent articulation by the previous government "*there is a need to transform how policing is delivered in Canada*" (Public Safety Canada, 2025) appears to be somewhat aspirational as it speaks mostly of RCMP roles while the provinces are largely responsible for policing in Canada. With the more recent legislation, strengthened information sharing provisions among agencies at local, provincial, national and international levels, as well as enhanced law enforcement tools are promising. Nevertheless, the *Stronger Borders Act* legislation is being scrutinized by some in society along fairness and transparency lines. Critics view the discretionary powers of government related to asylum, immigration, and federal direction on civil liberties as a concern. If the federal government frees up former federal properties for development, significant additional building could necessitate adjustments to the new 2026 Policing Districts. The most recent posture to reach a 5% / GDP defence spending target may be unpopular with some sectors of society perceiving that environmental considerations, immigration policy, civil liberties, Indigenous consultations, and Canada's role in advocating for peace, may be set aside or threatened.

Scrutiny of police operations and policies are expected to continue as the complex relationships between police, their governance authorities (polices services boards in Ontario) and community stakeholders evolve. Key changes of the *CSPA* implementation include: 1) creation of the Inspector General of Policing (IG) to ensure police services deliver "*adequate and effective policing*"; 2) expansion of IG oversight powers to inspect, monitor and investigate police organizations and leadership; 3) more consistent governance expectations across municipalities, including mandatory diversity plans for police boards and clearer definitions of board responsibilities; 4) a redefinition of oversight bodies like the Special Investigations Unit (SIU) and the Ontario Civilian Police Commission; and 5) a pronounced focus on public order and community needs. In Ontario, the policing community can expect to participate in reviews, inquiries, and oversight investigations, related to everyday performance and more notable events. Services will be expected to bring strong evidence and rationale to support their public safety postures and

actions of the day. There is some uncertainty associated with how governance authorities – as articulated through their representative organization, the Canadian Association of Police Governance – will interpret their respective roles as changes move forward. Local Police Services Boards will need additional capacity and support to provide optimal oversight and governance.

Police officers and their organizations will have to resist allowing populist sentiment to interfere with their neutrality as prescribed by law and convention. The 2025 turmoil in Los Angeles between local police, the military and people in California demonstrate a need to preserve a professional and neutral posture. Our Canadian propensity to maintain impartiality and using force sparingly, will be more important than ever. As larger, emotive public events become more frequent, the need to harmonize and normalize operations between local, federal and provincial agencies will be important.

Foreign interference will continue to intrude upon Canadian life at local and national levels as public safety and intelligence agencies work to maintain the integrity of our democratic institutions. As the first point of contact for many affected racialized communities, local police will need specialized expertise in countering foreign interference, continuous training on tactics and associated technologies, strengthened interagency cooperation and information sharing, engagement with the broader private and public sectors, and help advocating for any legislative changes intended to mitigate foreign interference threats and harm.

Consideration	Key Influences
Global	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uncertain international economic posture</li> <li>• Global conflict</li> </ul>

**Context:**

Every Canadian is more uncertain about Canada’s place in the world with respect to factors such as international trade, sovereignty, and trending isolationism. American tariffs on key Canadian exports like steel, lumber, aluminum, and auto parts – with measures being paused then re-applied - leaves policymakers, businesses, and citizens continually anxious about our economic future.

The conflict in Gaza, as well as the beginning of stepped-up Iran-Israel hostilities have elevated tensions between associated diaspora and other interests in Canada. Local Canadians and families are strained to deal with personal safety concerns for people overseas, difficulties in egress from conflict zones, and the anticipated impact of heightened discord on social cohesion and tolerance. It will be increasingly difficult for some to differentiate between the affected *people at large* and the *policymakers* associated with global conflicts. An example of this is the recent rise in Antisemitism, which seems to be directly coupled with opposition to decisions made by the Israeli government. While opposition to some decisions made overseas is not new, what might be interpreted as tacit permission to articulate hate during associated protests is disconcerting.

**Implications:**

Tariffs and trade uncertainty can slow economic growth, reduce local, provincial and federal tax revenues, and reanimate inflation. At the local level, variation in revenue streams caused by unsure global circumstances could: jeopardize planned staffing stabilization activities, shift the focus away from some more proactive community work towards a 'bare bones' complaint driven focus, and set aside other initiatives intended to support our people and improve service delivery.

In addition, this broader uncertainty could amplify tension between parts of our city and increase anxiety in those pre-disposed to mental health and substance abuse crisis. In addition, trade and tariff issues related to vehicles, equipment, or technology could further strain police budgets and disrupt procurement of some public safety materials and devices.

Stepped up conflicts in the Middle East and the enduring Ukraine war can magnify the local role in responding to national security and intelligence vulnerabilities including extremism, cyber-attacks and foreign interference. In addition to the overall well-being of OPS members, potential resource re-allocation to respond to emerging priorities arising from global conflicts will present an operational strain as attention to some local issues may be displaced. The stress associated with conflict-driven migration into cities in America points to a similar vulnerability in Canadian urban centres, especially in light of stepped enforcement in the United States. As the diplomatic nexus of Canada, Ottawa’s embassies and the Parliamentary Precinct are likely to require more attention as large demonstrations and public order events can be expected to increase. Finally, as with other Scan influences, this external conflict increasingly pushes Canadians towards a position of ‘us-versus-them’ and erodes a more desirable sense of collective belonging and mutual trust in our neighbours. All of this could threaten recent progress made by the OPS and partners in combatting hate crime and bias motivated incidents.

Consideration	Key Influences
Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inflationary pressures</li> <li>• Budgetary pressures</li> <li>• Cost of policing</li> <li>• Sustainable funding</li> <li>• Grant funding</li> <li>• Value for money</li> </ul>

**Context**

Achieving a posture of sustainable funding – per se - for some parts of police business sits uncomfortably with an increasing dependency on well-intentioned ‘grant funding’ from other orders of government. Discretionary grant funding programs that may have a pre-determined shelf life, introduce a shift from core, stable (municipal) funding to accruing financial obligations for selected subsets of OPS work after a particular grant program sunsets or becomes over-subscribed.

The interplay between key economic influences elicits questions and concerns about what citizens get for their police spending in terms of value. There is not a widely recognized, standard taxonomy or national framework to measure police ‘value for money’, nor is there comparable data across jurisdictions to populate such a framework or repository. The observation that ‘*paying more for policing doesn’t stop or reduce crime*’ (Bradley and Waller, 2024) resonates and is situated within broader concerns about being able to reconcile rising (mostly non-criminal) calls for service, increasing public expectations about the responsiveness of police to community needs of the day, and within some semblance of fiscal responsibility for taxpayers.

**Implications:**

There are no strong signals from communities that they are willing to settle for leaner, less responsive service from the police in Canada. Both reactive and proactive police response approaches – and experimentation with alternate delivery models - are being delivered in a more difficult, scrutinized environment. Moreover, many of the community-oriented alternatives, as

opposed to more traditional (reactive) policing models - as depicted in part herein - are resource intensive. In a tight police labour market, and with no sign of a reduction in the workload and complexity of Canadian policing on the horizon, no big cities have succeeded in stopping police budget increases.

Police services like the OPS will need to properly consider and situate discretionary funding allocations such as the *Community Safety and Policing (CSP) Grant (Ontario)* – for things like gun and gang violence, human trafficking, hate-motivated crimes, and mental health and addiction – within regular budget allocations processes and planning. Alignment of these grants with more stable funding over time may prove difficult as variation in crime trends, unanticipated service obligations and other workload changes influence planning. In addition, the Service is mindful that there is variability in the revenue streams generated from vulnerable persons checks, paid duties, and traffic safety enforcement devices.

As the expectations of various communities and workload obligations of police vary across Canada, it remains difficult to benchmark the service one receives in a particular city against another. Some measures of public trust and confidence in police are captured at different levels of government, but there is no national performance or satisfaction regime. Inferences made about ‘value for money’ appear to be local conversations in most cases as police services, their governance bodies, and community partners try to reconcile rising public safety demands with calls for greater accountability, transparency, and an orientation towards scarce resources being aimed at addressing underlying social considerations.

Consideration	Key Influences
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Social</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public satisfaction, confidence and trust</li> <li>• Equity, diversity, and inclusion</li> <li>• Culturally responsive and compassionate service delivery</li> <li>• Population growth and housing</li> <li>• Mental health and addictions</li> <li>• Hate and bias</li> <li>• Social division and intolerance</li> <li>• At risk populations</li> </ul>

**Context:**

Trust and confidence in the police among Canadians have shown some variability over recent years, yet year-end 2023 data demonstrate that close to two-thirds (65%) of Canadians reported high confidence in the police, a higher proportion than any other institution measured by a Statistics Canada survey. The fact that Indigenous and visible minorities tend to have comparably lower levels of confidence and trust in police points to a need to continue to make culturally responsive and compassionate service delivery a top priority.

Data from Statistics Canada (released 2024) show how community growth and changes continue to strain the ability of police to deliver optimal services in Canada. The number of police officers has not kept pace with population increases. In addition, many police services struggle to be representative of their community make-up by recruiting and keeping members from racialized groups in a very tight police labour market. Most municipalities and Canada at large are becoming more diverse, and the increasing proportion of older adults will influence the Ottawa policing environment and community requirements. There is uncertainty associated with having a new

federal government having cut back on immigration levels in the coming years. This may be disquieting for members of affected identifiable groups at a time when social division and intolerance are more prominent.

Despite a strong history of multiculturalism and inclusivity in Ottawa and while hate crime went down 9% in Ottawa in 2024, Statistics Canada reports broader upward trends in hate crime since the 2023 Scan. In addition, eroding social cohesion – sometimes referred to as ‘social siloing’ - has police services operating in communities demonstrating more fragmentation and less of a shared sense of belonging, trust, and mutual responsibility with their neighbours.

The OPS continue to adjust how officers handle calls for service involving mental health and addictions (MHA). The most recent efforts combine better training, forward deployed crisis teams leveraging community partnerships, and alternative response models wherein police are not always the primary agency of the day for MHA response.

**Implications:**

Organizational change initiatives outlined in the *DRIVE2 Strategy (2023-2025)* commit the OPS to focus on four areas, namely: community / service delivery; members work environment; leadership and accountability; and connecting and learning. This articulation of OPS change direction is aligned with requirements for both culturally responsive service delivery and special attention to those with unique requirements and risk postures. For instance, the *Strategy* identifies the need to improve service to local Indigenous communities through education of members; an Indigenous Women’s Safety Table; a dedicated OPS Indigenous liaison position; and Indigenous awareness resources. The *Strategy* and future adjustments to OPS approaches make explicit the link between responding to persistent and emergent social issues - such as femicide and partner violence – and the fortification of trust between a community and its police service. Delivering on these commitments will likely strain resource allocation during large events and workload surges.

With increased hate crime in Canada overall, more overt acts of intolerance, and social division incubated by rising international conflict, police services increasingly become the de facto interlocutors between many opposing interests and groups. This extends to OPS obligations to managing more large public order events, and investigating and mitigating the harms associated with individual incidents with bias motivations and sentiments. Special attention is required for recently affected communities including black Canadians, Indigenous peoples, different groups from the Indian sub-continent, Muslim Canadians, those of Asian ancestry, and Jewish communities. In addition to this intolerance and hate, at risk populations including: 1) those without stable housing, 2) people suffering from mental health and addiction problems 3) youth at risk 4) the elderly 5) racialized and Indigenous communities 6) 2SLGBTQI+ individuals 7) and victims of domestic abuse and trafficking, will be needing additional OPS assistance. People at elevated risk – often contending with more than one key influence - frequently call on the police to protect and support them as they deal with trauma and uncertainty related to their well-being.

As depicted in the *Operational* section of this Scan, and considering the complex interplay between multiple social key influences and public safety, OPS adjustments to its approaches, in keeping with the *Community Safety and Well-Being (CSWB)* framework prescribed in Ontario’s *Community Safety and Policing Act*, will be likely be iterative and ongoing.

Consideration	Key Influences
Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Officer safety</li> <li>• Artificial Intelligence</li> <li>• Public safety technologies</li> </ul>

- International technology collaboration
- Internet of things and policing
- Cybercrime and security

**Context:**

In the aftermath of officer involved critical events, the question - '*are the officers ok*' – can be missed. In an increasingly complex and dynamic operating environment involving many police specialties – uniform / plain clothes – and agencies operating together, officer safety considerations are important. To help mitigate risk to members, services like the RCMP are introducing improved situational awareness technology supports – smart watches. -to allow members to monitor their wellness and readiness. These devices and technology solutions can leverage mobile applications installed on smartphones, wearble devices and tablets that allow police and other responder agencies to: track officer locations in real time, share incident information on smart phones, and coordinate operations.

In addition to being ubiquitous today, artificial intelligence (AI) is positioned to influence and support - among other things - police investigations; predictions about crime and workload; and the analysis of large and disparate sources of information for policy and operational decisions. Police services increasingly use mature algorithmic (policing) technologies to identify and characterize patters of criminal activity and identify individuals for further consideration. Similarly, criminals are using AI and other technologies to characterize the behaviour and vulnerabilities of potential victims of crime.

Canadian police services are expected to be agile in adopting advanced technologies to respond to emerging threats to communities and to improve enterprise level operations in the public safety agencies themselves. Advances in wireless broadband communications and the promise of the next generation of 911 services are positioned to improve how the public reaches out to and engages with public safety agencies during emergencies and everyday calls for service. Synthetic environments such as immersive technologies and digital-twin depictions of police and municipal environments – suitable for selected training applications - are maturing rapidly. As time and resources for training, personnel development and real time decision support are scarce, virtual or distributed training environments may be helpful in reaching more police and civilian members. In contrast to military technology development, procurement, and deployment, first responders including police, operate within a rather fragmented market for technology supports. This fragmentation means public safety customers come to technology suppliers with very different equipment and doctrine requirements across jurisdictions. Police services in Canada often rely on proprietary technologies such as computer-aided-dispatch, records entry systems, and other equipment that may not be easily integrated with promising emergent technologies and legacy systems. Internet-of-things (I o T) devices and sensors – such as wearable technologies, body-worn video, traffic cameras, environmental sensors - will be part of: crime detection and prevention; digital evidence collection; and improving operational efficiency.

**Implications:**

Despite being 'over-sold' by AI solution providers, the maturity of AI with respect to law enforcement application in Canada remains somewhat nascent and can be characterized as being in a developmental or experimental phase. AI adoption by police is 'patchy' with no apparent cogent or nationally adopted framework shaping it use. As the adoption of technology increases, the need to reconcile privacy, ethical and legal considerations with the promise of new public safety-oriented technology supports will be important. In addition, standards associated with the application of selected technologies vary across provinces and federal jurisdictional lines. The

ethical use of these technologies is paramount yet the doctrine for their use is derived from an amalgam of privacy agencies, judicial interpretation, and ‘guidance’ generated within services and at different levels of government. Canadians expect their public safety agencies to use tools like artificial intelligence – including applications often referred to as ‘*algorithmic policing*’ - within the confines of the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. There is a lag in associated legislative and regulatory regimes such that the potential for introducing bias or inaccurate information for investigative purposes is concerning to many.

As trade uncertainty and policing technology costs become more pressing, police services – like other sectors of the economy - are vulnerable to single sources of technology and equipment. There may be opportunities to expand procurement, technology solution development and other insights from non-traditional partners in Europe and elsewhere. In addition, technologies and approaches used by industry, other first responders, and the military – such as uncrewed aerial systems, new robotics, protective equipment, and sensor platforms - may have application to selected municipal policing roles. The recent Canada-European Union (EU) security and defence partnership (June 23, 2025) signals a shift in transatlantic cooperation and may open doors to increased public safety technology collaboration with the EU. In first responder agencies across North America – and potentially Ottawa – the promise of leveraging emerging technology becomes a moot point as fiscal pressures for them to contend with legacy systems and equipment.

As Canadians increase their reliance on online platforms and the digital economy, data and information security approaches and capacity to address cybercrime will need to be adjusted continually in both police service delivery and community behaviour. Accordingly, requirements for dealing with cybercrime change quickly. As suggested in Canada's new *National Cyber Security Strategy (2025)* and the *National Cyber Threat Assessment (2025-2026)*, partnerships and collaboration among public safety agencies and other stakeholders should be encouraged. The Strategy also speaks to developing new mitigation strategies, fine-tuning educational approaches, and making investments to combat emergent and persistent threats such as: AI-enabled phishing attacks; deep fakes; cyber-enabled foreign interference; supply chain attacks; compromised internet-of-things (I o T) devices and infrastructure; data breaches; and identity theft. To support the successful mitigation of these cyber threats, a favourable and up to date legislative and regulatory regime is thought to be a key component of protecting Canadians and enabling public safety and national agencies to respond.

Virtually all technological supports, considerations and applications are being used within a legislative and regulatory environment that appears to lag behind the fast pace and manner of their adoption by police, criminals and the public at large. The integrity and management of copious digital evidence, the validity of information presented in the public domain, and being mindful of privacy and security of information, are evolving concerns to police, the courts, legislatures, and other stakeholders. This means that attention to the lawful and ethical access to, and use of data and information about citizens – as depicted in federal provincial law - becomes almost everyone’s job in Ottawa.

Consideration	Key Influences
Legislative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Border integrity</li> <li>• New policing tools</li> <li>• Artificial Intelligence legislation</li> <li>• Digital economy and drug law gaps</li> <li>• Strengthened governance and standards</li> <li>• Impaired driving and equipment law</li> </ul>

**Context:**

In Ontario, in addition to notable federal legislative trends introduced earlier in this Scan, police agencies and governance authorities are paying close attention to legislative and policy changes including those listed in Table 1. Initial thoughts on how these changes will likely affect police service delivery are captured in the ‘*Implications*’ section that follows.

**Table 1**

Legislation / Policy	Key Focus
<i>Safer Municipalities Act (Bill 6)</i>	Public drug use, trespass
<i>Protect Ontario Act (Bill 10)</i>	Bail reform, sex offender registry, drug premises
<i>Highway Traffic Act Amendments</i>	Auto theft prevention
<i>Anti-Human Trafficking Strategy (2025–2030)</i>	Victim protection, law enforcement
<i>Red-Light Camera Expansion</i>	Traffic enforcement
<i>Community Safety and Policing Act (CSPA)</i>	Governance & oversight
<i>CSPA Regulation Updates (O. Reg. 392/23)</i>	Operational standards
<i>Municipal Accountability Act (Bill 9)</i>	Governance standards
<i>Special Economic Zones Act (Bill 5)</i>	Fast tracking development projects

**Implications:**

From an Ontario policing perspective - except for the *Special Economic Zones Act* - two broad characterizations of recent legislation and policies emerge. There are **tools or enablers** for public safety; and those intended to adjust or fortify various **lines of accountability** between the police, their governance authorities, and communities served. The tools or enablers characterization includes the *Safer Municipalities Act (Bill 6 – new enforcement powers)*, the *Protect Ontario Act (Bill 10 - tighter bail conditions, expanded disclosure, support for drug-related enforcement)*, *Highway Traffic Act Amendments (search and seizure regarding auto theft devices and enforcement funding)* federal *Anti-Human Trafficking Strategy (coordination, funding, and specialized trafficking units)*, and automatic speed enforcement / red-light camera expansion (*enforcement and public awareness*). These devices are helpful but they do create a funding dependency. Most of these initiatives require training for officers and staff, an ability to capture and interpret data related to the legislation or program under consideration, and adjustments to OPS policy and procedures.

From the strengthened lines of accountability perspective, pronounced adjustments arise from the full implementation of the *Community Safety and Policing Act (CSPA)*. As captured previously in the ‘*political*’ key influence, the CSPA has myriad provisions that will have implications for training, development, staffing levels, operational doctrine, and somewhat uncertain obligations arising from the CSPA requirement that police service ‘*provide adequate and effective service*’.

Ontario introduced and passed legislation similar to recent federal law - the *Special Economic Zones Act* - enabling the province to override local laws for development projects. This is raising concerns among Indigenous communities and reanimating police concerns regarding possible associated protests and public order preparedness.

Consideration	Key Influences
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<b>Environmental</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Climate Change and Extreme Weather Effects</li> <li>Extreme Operating Environments</li> </ul>
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**Context:**

Climate change and extreme weather are changing the operational landscape for Canadian police and other first responders by introducing new risks; stretching scarce resources; and demanding new forms of preparedness at individual, organizational and societal levels. In addition to dealing with climate change, other extreme operating environments such as critical infrastructure vulnerabilities, and hazardous or malicious materials calls for service, wildfire smoke, terrorist threats, and the sustainability of operating for extended periods during mass protest and public order events, are likely to strain first responder services and communities.

**Implications:**

Police will have to contend with both the real time *operational* and more *strategic* aspects of climate change and extreme weather. As Ottawa endures extreme weather events, OPS members may find themselves involved with partners to: support evacuations or the displacement of persons from within or outside the city; respond to interoperability challenges associated with working with other responders and the military; fortify officer safety and mental wellness measures; and plan for logistical support while operating for extended periods. From a more strategic perspective, we can expect that our most at risk and vulnerable community members – for instance unhoused, new Canadians with finite resources, and those with mental health or addiction difficulties - will endure greater hardship. With every day calls for service already stretching frontline OPS resources, the compounding effects of weather, energy and water interruptions, may jeopardize optimal service delivery and community well-being. In addition, interagency collaboration and information sharing when traditional wireless communications channels are compromised, will prove more difficult. Recent critical events and extreme weather have pointed towards some urgency in building out dedicated public safety broadband infrastructure.

As for extreme operating environments, the OPS will need to *prepare* for; *respond* to; and assist in the *recovery* from lower frequency / high impact emergencies as well as emerging threats and hazards. For the extreme operating circumstances mentioned previously, this will likely entail even more emphasis on preparedness by acquiring special equipment and protective gear; being able to push timely warnings to everyone; adopting enhanced predictive analytics tools; and making sure the interplay between command and the frontline is effective. Promising technologies intended to keep first responders safe and situationally aware include wearable devices that monitor vital signs and receive real time information about threats and hazards such as air quality changes, rising water levels, and the locations of people in need.

Consideration	Key Influences
<b>Operational (Organizational)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Road safety</li> <li>Community based policing</li> <li>Integrated community safety and well-being</li> <li>Parliamentary District</li> <li>Complex public order and events</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Crime trends</li> <li>• Service delivery revitalization</li> <li>• Our People (<i>organizational talent, readiness, and resilience</i>)</li> <li>• Succession planning and leadership</li> <li>• Victim centric services</li> <li>• Gender based violence</li> </ul>
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**Context:**

As expected, road safety remains a top concern in Ottawa as stunt driving complaints and officer-initiated enforcement demonstrate the OPS commitment to traffic related calls for service. Automated speed enforcement and red-light cameras are proving to be an effective tool in making Ottawa’s roads safer - especially in school zones and locations thought to be used by vulnerable persons.

The OPS continues to refine community-based policing approaches to respond to nodes of crime, disorder, and areas requiring special attention. For instance, the CORE Strategy (*Community Outreach, Response and Engagement*) launched in 2024, encourages a proactive, evidence-based service approach that focuses on: increased foot patrols in high-priority areas; a shift towards more officer-initiated calls for service (versus reacting to complaints); and more proactive Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) work. As per guidance from the Government of Ontario, and in keeping with the OPS orientation towards community-based policing, the *Community Safety and Well Being Plan* (CSWBP) serves as the footing for problem characterization and working to craft the best methods of tangible collaboration between municipal service providers and the police. The CSWB planning process is an iterative one. It calls for a special emphasis on mental health and addictions, housing stability and homelessness, youth engagement and violence prevention, improving access to services, and strengthening trust and inclusivity. For instance, OPS has committed to ‘upstream crime prevention strategies’ that focus on interceding as early as possible with at risk youth at individual, school and community level to reduce harm and the potential for criminal involvement.

As the public safety leads in the national capital, the OPS has its role formalized as the police service of jurisdiction with the deployment of the OPS Parliamentary District teams and accompanying operating doctrine. This commitment is intended to improve collective readiness of public safety partners and the OPS ability to work effectively with the RCMP and the Parliamentary Protective Services.

Notable crime and workload trends – as depicted in the 2024 Annual Report - include a spike in homicides (26 victims), a 17 % decrease in overdose calls, mental health calls slightly up, a stable violent crime severity index, a 27 % reduction in shootings, an 18 % reduction in traffic fatalities, and mobile police response took a little longer. 7-The need to focus on victims will be particularly important in dealing with crimes against persons offences as the city continues to suffer individual and community harm associated with gender-based violence and femicide. It should be noted that while OPS overdose calls for service may have decreased, the actual overdose deaths are up locally and trending down nationally in recent years.

Service delivery revitalization efforts by the OPS – as depicted in the approved 2025 budget – include *service enhancements* – 50 new positions, expansion of neighbourhood resource teams, youth, traffic and community policing, a new mounted unit as well as *strategic investments* intended to fortify criminal investigations, alternative mental health support, and expanded special constable roles in fraud, cybercrime and hospitals. In January 2026, OPS will shift to a four-district

model to better reflect Ottawa's urban, suburban, and rural needs.

Arguably the most important key influence on getting quality policing is the OPS people serving Ottawa in sworn, civilian and the leadership roles. In Canada and elsewhere, law enforcement succession planning and leadership in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is increasingly difficult as incumbent police leaders, and their governance authorities are working towards developing and selecting the best members for senior positions.

The considerations and key influences depicted thus far speak to the need to have members that have high operational *readiness* and possess and preserve the requisite *resilience* to enable them to serve for years in an increasingly difficult operating environment. This is compounded by the recent trend of having rather intense competition for a finite supply of interested and capable policing candidates.

### **Implications:**

For a city on the move, the revenue generation and favourable driving behaviour changes from automated speed enforcement (ASE) and red-light cameras are promising. However, there is no readily available data on the impact, if any, of these measures may have on traditional traffic safety responses and outcomes such mobile traffic stops by the police. Moreover, the associated ASE and red-light infractions do not, however, definitively serve to identify the driver for the purposes of enforcing provincial offences and criminal law such as suspended driving and impaired driving respectively.

Recent expansion of light rail in the city has improved overall mobility options, but comes with increased vulnerability to crime, disorder and other demands for service. The OPS will be obliged to respond to the increased coverage area associated with the new stations opening in the east, west, and south, and work proactively on emergency preparedness by holding multi-agency exercises to test and improve operational readiness.

Year-over-year variations in criminal incidents, traffic occurrences, and non-criminal workload compel police members to continually improve and diversify their knowledge, skills and abilities related to roles that may change in short order. Officers may be investigators, civilians may be analysts or patrol officers one day and find that they have been tasked with supporting adjustments to priorities; participating in upcoming refinements to the OPS structure; and supporting service delivery approaches in a more proactive or off-line role. This may include being part of the growing trend towards adopting '*integrated support models*' wherein services are delivered through multi-agency response teams that may be combinations of police, social workers, and victim advocates. As articulated in the *Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan*, and the OPS posture related to community-based policing, properly trained and resourced cross-functional teams – of police members, partners and schools – will be better positioned to succeed by intervening earlier and tackling the root causes of public safety problems.

Additional responsibilities in the Parliamentary District and in relation to large events such as public order management, will press the limits of OPS capacity. This will extend to the ability of OPS to provide mutual aid to their policing partners and their ability to train, activate and recover from large deployments. With competing demands from other OPS business lines, this means continued attention to fortifying intelligence-sharing; improved incident command structures and police liaison capabilities; normalizing policy and procedures across agency lines in advance where possible; and strengthened real time inter-agency collaboration during major events will be invaluable to a safe and secure Parliamentary District. Like other '*considerations*' listed, provisions in the new *CSPA* legislation will shape how the OPS prepares for and responds to large events that have public order management requirements. "As the Police of jurisdiction within the Parliamentary Precinct, the OPS needs to ensure the response and investigation within the

Precinct is consistent with the rules of Parliamentary Privilege and is coordinated with the Parliamentary Protective Services.

Continued attention to providing victim centric services comes with requirements to go beyond responding to and investigating the crimes themselves. This may include building additional trust with vulnerable groups; helping to secure continued support for victims and affected persons; and drawing upon approaches depicted in the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police 'Canadian Framework for Trauma Informed Response in Policing'. Implementing the 'Framework' would logically entail sustained attention to police member wellness and secondary traumatization (the emotional and psychological impact experienced by individuals who are repeatedly exposed to the trauma of others), policy adjustments, and trauma informed interviewing and report writing.

The pressing need to address gender-based violence (GBV) in Ottawa calls for sustained vigilance and investment in, among other things, expertise in reducing GBV harm, prevention, survivor support, and sharing information with the public. This will likely entail a sustained commitment to working with partner agencies; hiring specialized expertise in keeping with the recommendations by related public inquiries; and supporting OPS members and city partners who are working to protect women and gender-diverse people from violence and harm.

Organizational change is a complex undertaking. The OPS 'service delivery revitalization' initiatives, tabled during the 2025 budget deliberations, will require a sustained commitment to getting the right people in approved positions; making some adjustments to the structure of the OPS; fostering a cultural shift in the Service intended to reinforce trust; and improving responsiveness to the needs of the community in 2025 and beyond. All of this is likely to happen within a changing regulatory landscape – as per the latest provisions in the *Community Safety and Policing Act* - intended to ensure communities receive 'adequate and effective service'. With community input and information supplied from the OPS the contours of what constitutes 'adequate and effective service' will be led by the OPS Board.

Recent research (Murphy, 2022) suggests that a more deliberate and structured approach – including earlier engagement of governance authorities - to succession planning and police leadership development is indicated. This could include additional evidence-based approaches for identifying, developing, and staffing an executive cadre that has the confidence of the community. It may be helpful to consider that 'confidence in police' flows in different directions – frontline-in-leadership, leadership-in-frontline, and ultimately confidence of the community in their police service.

From the perspective of those members answering calls, doing the investigations, and working collaboratively with partners and the community, OPS will have to recruit and develop its complement from fewer employment applications. This means using the best assessment tools and processes available to ensure an optimal fit between 'the (police) job' in 2025 and interested applicants. Similarly, retirements are trending up - seemingly earlier than previous cohorts - so it will be important to work towards transferring the tacit knowledge and skills of seasoned officers before they retire. The OPS – like other services - will continue to operate within the context of Ontario's presumptive post-traumatic stress injury legislation. As mental health and other police absences are on the rise despite significant local, provincial, and national mitigation efforts and investments, continued effort and investments will be necessary to rebuild and preserve the resiliency of members to provide the best service during challenging times.

### **Final Thoughts: Key Themes at a Glance**

Many of the individual *influences* identified apply to or cross over from one high level *consideration* to another. For instance, aspects of artificial intelligence apply to – at minimum - technological, legislative, and operational considerations. Some cross-cutting themes and messages that emerge

in more than one 'consideration' include:

- a need to more precisely characterize and define what '*adequate and effective*' and '*responsive*' service means;
- greater political and legislative impact from provincial, national, and international influences;
- a need to build on promising efforts to codify and document OPS and partner intent to collaborate; and
- the fiscal strain of responding to workload fluctuation driven by influences such as population growth, crime trends, large events, funding variability, and rapid technological change

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