

# OPS Community Outreach

Insights gathered from ongoing, year-round engagement by OPS' dedicated community policing and outreach teams.

# Community Engagement for the Ottawa Police Service (OPS)

Community engagement is crucial for the Ottawa Police Service (OPS) as it plays a central role in building trust, enhancing public safety, and improving the overall effectiveness of policing.

Community engagement is not just a "nice-to-have"—it's a cornerstone of the Ottawa Police Service approach. It is essential for creating a safer, more inclusive, and more resilient city.



## Relationship Building & Accountability

Discussion on these topics as a priority included wide spectrum of views, ranging from those voicing support for existing police services, and those hoping to see more cooperation and integration with community organizations (particularly regarding mental health and youth).

Citizens want us to move towards solutions rather than continue to express or analyze the problem; and aim for a change of heart, not just a change of mind.



## Relationship Building & Accountability

Various community groups and stakeholders articulated a desire for a more harmonious relationship between their communities and the OPS.

- Transparency and accountability through active engagement foster trust between the OPS and diverse communities, particularly those that may feel marginalized.
- When the public sees the police listening and responding to their concerns, it reinforces the perception that the police are legitimate and fair.
- Community service providers feel there are many opportunities for the OPS to rebuild trust with their communities in Ottawa, but it will require bold action. This includes being more vocal about respecting diversity in Ottawa, being more transparent about the OPS goals, benchmarks, and progress related to Diverse communities' safety.



## **Relationship Building & Accountability**

There must be a commitment on the part of the OPS to remain open and transparent even when tense situations arise.

2SLGBTQQIA+ communities voiced the importance of strengthening ties with the police while emphasizing the need for police to foster safe spaces and protect rights.



## Addressing Hate & Denouncing Intolerance

Service providers and community groups highlighted that hate speech, hate incidents, and hate crimes need to be addressed promptly and effectively by the OPS in order to build trust with the communities in Ottawa. (e.g., Middle East crisis, Black, Somali, Jewish, Palestinian, Muslim, LGBTQ+, & Indigenous)

Discussions highlighted the trauma and social disruption caused by hate-motivated incidents, underscoring the importance of prevention, response, and resilience-building measures.



## Addressing Hate & Denouncing Intolerance

Community representatives want OPS to publicly address hate speech and ensure visible displays of hate in a way that first and foremost addresses and denounces the human harm done.

Regular, non-enforcement interactions between Ottawa police and residents led to reducing conflict and tension and reduced the likelihood of confrontational encounters. This is particularly important in the wake of public concerns about police use of force or systemic discrimination.



## Addressing Hate & Denouncing Intolerance

The importance of having a point of contact to ensure timely coordination for safety?

- Strengthen the Hate Crime & Bias unit to improve response and support to impacted communities.

There is a need for consistent presence and involvement of police within faith-based and community events. This would be a significant help. It also brings comfort and security to the minds of people in the community.



## **The Impact of Violence Faced by Marginalized Youth & Communities**

Marginalized youth often develop chronic fear of law enforcement, leading to distrust and hyper-vigilance.

The community is looking to find a strategy to better engage with the youth and OPS to find a way to break the cycle of criminalization in Black, Middle Eastern, Indigenous, and Muslim communities.



## **The Impact of Violence Faced by Marginalized Youth & Communities**

Children 6–11 demonstrate early risk factors. Building positive dialogue and engagement with officers at this age is crucial to prevent negative influence and police contact.

Many Youth from marginalized Ottawa communities and recently immigrated to Canada have a need for OPS support. The community asked for additional programs that could lead the youth into discussions and engagement with Officers.



## **The Impact of Violence Faced by Marginalized Youth & Communities**

Black communities expressed great concerns regarding the impact of the loss of young men in their communities due to violence.

Some stakeholders expressed support for police engagement with youth and even their presence in schools.

The community identified imminent need to provide the education, awareness and support to the families and parents to be able to protect the safety of their youth.



## Community Policing & Diversity

Grassroots groups advocate for community safety models that reduce reliance on traditional policing.

Community called for expansion of Neighbourhood Resource Teams to Suburban and Rural communities.

Demands to partnership with the Indigenous and Inuit communities to develop customized and cultural appropriate services and improved access to police services.



## Community Policing & Diversity

**Diversify the OPS workforce.** Enhancements to recruitment to better reflect the community OPS serves.

**Increase police visibility.** People want to see more police on foot and bike patrol interacting with residents and businesses and engaging in proactive policing efforts.



## Community Policing & Diversity

**Build trust and relationships.** Related to the call for increased presence was a desire to see police foster relationships, attend events, and make themselves more available. Increasing diversity within the service could also help foster trust.

**Work closely with social services.** There was repeated recognition that a police enforcement response is not appropriate to all situations, especially those relating to addiction, mental illness, and poverty. Citizens expressed the hope that police would work more closely with social services and community-based agencies to develop holistic responses to complex issues.