

Report to / Rapport au:

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

27 October 2025 / 27 octobre 2025

Submitted by / Soumis par:

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SUBJECT: 2026 BUDGET CONSULTATION REPORT

OBJET: RAPPORT DE LA CONSULTATION SUR LE BUDGET 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

In accordance with Board direction and the *Community Safety and Policing Act, 2019* (CSPA), the Ottawa Police Service (OPS) conducted a comprehensive community consultation to support the development of the 2026 Draft Budget.

This consultation builds on year-round engagement by the Chief, Command Team, and Board. It is supported by regular outreach with community groups, schools, social agencies, and City Councillors. Specialized OPS teams, including the Neighbourhood Resource Teams (NRT), Community Police Officers (CPO), Youth Unit, Diversity Resource and Relations (DRR), and Strategic Partnerships and Engagement (SPE),

played a central role in facilitating meaningful dialogue across Ottawa's diverse communities.

Findings were drawn from multiple sources:

- Chief's and Councillor consultations
- OPS community outreach and focus groups
- Advanis Citizen Perception and OPSB Budget Surveys
- Environics Analytics Ward-Based Insights
- Operational data and performance benchmarks
- Environmental Scan

Together, these inputs provide an evidence-based understanding of community expectations and operational needs.

DISCUSSION

The 2026 Budget Consultation was a collaborative effort between the Board and the Service, ensuring that the consultation design, data collection, and reporting aligned with both CSPA requirements and the Board's strategic direction. The results are grounded in real engagement, solid data, and open conversations.

Community input continues to confirm the importance of visibility, prevention, and fairness. Residents want a police service that is present in their neighbourhoods, responsive when called upon, and compassionate in its approach. These expectations align with the Service's strategic priorities, such as district policing, traffic safety, member wellness, and partnerships with the community.

While the Service continues to face resource pressures after several years of sustained demand, the data shows that progress is being made in the areas that matter most. The OPS remains focused on visibility, prevention, and equity in service delivery. The 2026 consultation findings provide a strong foundation for informed decision-making and responsible budget planning that reflects community expectations and operational needs.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

The OPS maintains regular dialogue with City Councillors, community associations, and local partners. These discussions provide insight into community safety priorities and operational challenges across Ottawa's urban, suburban, and rural areas.

Councillor Consultations

Over the summer, the Chief met one-on-one with all City Councillors to discuss local safety priorities. Key themes included:

- Police visibility and accessibility are essential to public trust.
- Road safety concerns, such as speeding, aggressive driving, and school zone enforcement.
- Social disorder, homelessness, and substance use are ongoing challenges.
- Retail theft and workplace safety concerns for businesses.

Councillors supported the District Model, citing improved communication and responsiveness. They also underscored the importance of timely, transparent updates following major incidents.

Community Feedback and Themes

Residents consistently emphasized that engagement is fundamental to trust and community safety. They called for real, collaborative solutions and stronger partnerships between police, social services, and community organizations, especially in areas related to mental health, addiction, and youth.

Community members expressed a clear expectation that police act as partners in prevention, not solely in response. They supported expanding community policing approaches and increasing OPS presence in neighbourhoods through proactive, prevention-focused engagement.

Addressing Hate, Marginalization, and Inclusion

Community members identified the need for stronger action against hate, bias, and marginalization.

Feedback from Black, Somali, Jewish, Palestinian, Muslim, Indigenous, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ communities emphasized transparency, accountability, and sustained relationship-building. Participants called for visible police presence at community and faith events, early engagement with marginalized youth, and continued investment in the Hate and Bias Crime Unit.

OPS outreach through the Diversity Resource and Relations (DRR) and Strategic Partnerships and Engagement (SPE) teams included hate crime education, interfaith partnerships, and participation in cultural and community events such as Kwanzaa, Pride, and local food drives.

Operational and Community-Based Engagement

OPS teams support Community engagement year-round by emphasizing prevention, inclusion, and local connection.

- **Neighbourhood Resource Teams (NRTs):** Strengthened presence in high-demand areas and expanded community partnerships.
- **Community Police Officers (CPOs):** Delivered safety education and hosted community events and open houses.
- **Youth Unit:** Provided programs across four school boards; participation in diversion programs rose 7%, helping 96 youth avoid criminal involvement.
- **Diversity Resource and Relations (DRR):** Partnered with racialized and faith-based communities through outreach, cultural events, and hate crime education.
- **Strategic Partnerships and Engagement (SPE):** Supported the *Partnership in Action* framework and led major public consultations.

These activities demonstrate OPS's commitment to inclusive, community-informed policing consistent with CSPA principles.

Community Safety and Prevention

OPS focused on prevention, education, and partnership to address emerging safety concerns:

- The Hate and Bias Crime Unit (HBC) provided education to faith and cultural organizations and is preparing a Hate Prevention and Reporting Campaign for 2026.
- The CORE Strategy strengthened partnerships in areas impacted by gun violence and supported downtown safety initiatives.
- Collaboration with business associations and social agencies continued to address retail theft and public disorder.

Transparency and Accountability

- OPS advanced transparency through public reporting and open data access: Release of the *10-Year Traffic Stop Race Data Collection Report*.
- Recruitment for the *Use of Force Review Panel*.
- Expanded access to performance data through the *Community Safety Data Portal*.

Celebrating Diversity and Youth Inclusion

OPS continued to participate in citywide events such as the Pride Parade, Red Dress Day, and the OPS Diversity Celebration. These activities support inclusion and strengthen relationships with residents. Youth engagement remained a priority, with ongoing programs promoting mentorship, leadership, and early intervention.

PUBLIC OPINION

Two major surveys informed this consultation: the Advanis Citizen Perception Survey and the OPSB 2026 Budget Survey.

Advanis Citizen Perception Survey

This national opinion poll has been conducted annually since 2020. It uses standardized questions developed by Public Safety Canada, offering a consistent data standard for measuring public attitudes toward police, enabling benchmarking across jurisdictions. Conducted between May and June 2025, the Advanis survey engaged more than 3,300 residents through a representative sample of Ottawa's population.

The Police Service also requested an oversampling of postal code K1N in downtown Ottawa, which includes the ByWard Market, Lowertown, and Sandy Hill. The targeted oversampling will help measure the impact of numerous strategic initiatives and investments in these neighbourhoods. This year, OPS also requested ward disaggregation to better understand citywide results.

The results show overall stability in public confidence, with notable variations across the city:

- **57%** rated OPS performance as *good or excellent*, consistent with 2023 levels.
- **82%** reported *moderate or high trust* in OPS.
- **44%** agreed that OPS provides equitable service to all residents.

- **Trust levels** were higher in suburban and rural areas, and lower in the downtown core, where visible social pressures and disorder contribute to safety concerns.

Residents continue to identify visibility, presence, and prevention-focused policing as central to building trust. The perception of rising crime, particularly related to theft and violence, mirrors the trends in operational data and underlines the importance of proactive engagement and timely response.

OPSB 2026 Budget Survey

The 2026 Budget Survey, which included more than 1,400 participants and was conducted in July and August 2025, focused on budget investments and community safety priorities. The survey included two samples: a representative survey of over 550 residents, recruited by phone and weighted to reflect Ottawa's population. A second open-link survey, with nearly 850 responses from residents who chose to participate through media and social channels, is not representative but provides useful additional perspectives.

To promote accessibility, the survey was offered online in eight languages. Among the over 1,400 responses, 98% were submitted in English. Other languages included French, Chinese, Arabic, Spanish, Somali, Farsi, and Inuktitut. The results reinforce the themes found in the Advanis survey and provide important context for Board deliberations:

- **Top priorities:** Police visibility, faster response times, and increased officer presence in neighbourhoods.
- **Key concerns:** Traffic safety, violent crime, mental health response, and the impact of social disorder on businesses and public spaces.
- **Support for prevention:** Residents strongly supported continued investment in community policing, prevention programs, and alternative response models for mental health calls.

Respondents also expressed the importance of transparent communication, data sharing, and reporting on performance metrics; expectations aligned with the CSPA's accountability framework.

When analyzed together, the surveys reveal a consistent and directional view of public sentiment:

- Residents want a visible, fair, and compassionate police service that responds promptly and treats all people with respect.

- Support remains for the District Model, which brings decision-making closer to communities and enhances local accountability.

Satisfaction with Policing Services

Public satisfaction with OPS performance declined from last year; however, it is consistent with 2023. The Advanis results show that 57% of citizens rated OPS's performance as "good" or "excellent," down from 65% in 2024 and in line with 57% in 2023. A recurring theme in the OPSB 2026 Budget Survey is the expectation for greater police visibility and community policing, especially among suburban and rural wards.

Trust in the Police

The Advanis results indicate a positive shift in the public's perception of OPS. About 82% of respondents reported a moderate or higher level of trust in the service, with 48% expressing a high or very high level of trust. This reflects a consistent level of confidence compared to 2024 and an improvement over the 2023 and 2022 results.

Response to Violent Crimes and Mental Health Needs

The 2025 findings show a decline from 2024 in how the public perceives OPS's response to violent crimes and mental health needs. Despite this decline, the perception of the OPS's response to violent crime is in line with 2023 levels, while the perception of their response to mental health needs remains above both 2022 and 2023 levels. The OPSB survey results underscore the importance of alternative mental health and addiction approaches, as well as increasing concern about guns and gangs, women, intimate partner violence, and sexual violence.

Equitable Service

Equity in service delivery remains the top area of concern. The Advanis results reveal that 44% of citizens agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that OPS provides equitable service to all residents. Although this figure declined from 2024 (51%), it represents an improvement from 2023 and 2022. The OPSB survey results similarly highlight the need to increase engagement with diverse communities and enhance sensitivity to various cultural and social needs, with racialized responses identifying police presence as a top priority.

Community-Specific Needs

Both the Advanis Citizen Perception and the OPSB survey results reinforce the importance of the OPS's move to a decentralized district policing model. Residents are asking for more localized, responsive, and community-driven policing. The district model

ensures each part of the city benefits from dedicated leadership and teams focused on local priorities. This approach strengthens problem-oriented policing and reflects community calls for strategies that address unique community requirements.

Trends in the Perception of Safety

The perception of safety in Ottawa shows a decline. However, the Advanis results indicate a consistent level in the number of citizens who feel safe walking alone after dark compared to 2024. There has been no significant change in the percentage of citizens worried about crime most of the time or always. However, focused sampling in the K1N postal area (ByWard Market, Lowertown, and Sandy Hill) reveals lower perceptions of safety compared to non-K1N areas.

GEOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

The Environics Analytics Ward-Based Analysis provides a detailed examination of all 24 wards across Ottawa. The analysis incorporates demographic, socio-economic, and psychographic data to assess public trust in police, perceptions of safety, and confidence in institutions. These insights help OPS identify where confidence in policing is strong, where community concerns are growing, and where engagement or service adjustments may be required.

Confidence in Policing Service

Most wards demonstrate moderate to high confidence in the Ottawa Police Service.

Urbanity seems to be a driver of trust and confidence, as suburban wards such as Kanata North (66%), Orleans West-Innes (65%), and Kanata South (65%) report the highest levels of confidence. In contrast, rural and central urban wards like Rideau-Jock (27%), Somerset (32%), West Carleton-March (33%), and Rideau-Vanier (40%) show significantly lower confidence in the OPS. Notably, Rideau-Jock and West Carleton-March show increases compared to 2024, suggesting progress but also underscoring the need for continued engagement. These findings suggest that while many communities maintain strong trust in the OPS, there are notable pockets where trust is eroded, and further action is required.

Demographic and Socio-Economic Insights

The analysis shows that confidence in the OPS varies significantly depending on each ward's demographic and socio-economic composition. Southern urban and suburban wards like Barrhaven East, Barrhaven West, Gloucester-Southgate, Kanata North, and Riverside South-Findlay Creek, which have a significant proportion of racialized populations, show strong confidence in policing services despite concerns about

discrimination. This highlights the importance of ensuring culturally competent policing practices, as trust in the OPS persists even amid broader concerns about equitable treatment.

There is no definitive correlation between income and confidence in police services. However, rural and central urban wards with higher household incomes and low proportions of racialized populations, such as West Carleton-March, Rideau-Jock, and Osgoode, report lower confidence in the OPS. These areas may benefit from specialized engagement strategies that address specific community concerns beyond demographic and socio-economic factors, perhaps focusing on improving local safety perceptions and addressing potential service delivery gaps.

Trust in Institutions

Trust in the police is strongly linked to confidence in other public institutions. Wards with above-average confidence in the police also tended to show higher levels of trust in the justice system, federal parliament, schools, and the media. Conversely, where confidence in the police is low, trust in these other institutions also falters. This presents a dual opportunity for the OPS. In supportive wards, strategic communication and collaboration can reinforce existing trust. In wards with low confidence, the OPS can benefit from developing tailored engagement strategies to build stronger relationships.

OPERATIONAL STATISTICS AND BENCHMARKS

Operational data provide an overview of policing demand, crime trends, and internal performance indicators over the past decade. These results are drawn from the OPS Operational Performance Report, Annual Report, and the Community Safety Data Portal.

Service Demand and Response Times

Calls from members of the public requiring an on-scene police presence have increased steadily over the past ten years. Calls have also become more complex, requiring greater time per incident.

Priority 1 response times, calls involving imminent danger to life, remain stable and within operational service standards. However, non-emergency calls (Priority 3 & 4), which represent nearly three-quarters of all service requests, have experienced significant increases in response times.

The average response time for Priority 3 calls has tripled over the past decade to approximately 56 minutes. Following a temporary decline during the pandemic, call volumes and crime levels have surpassed historical averages.

Crime Trends

The total volume of reported crime has risen 63% over the past ten years, reaching approximately 50,000 offences. This trend is consistent with the overall crime rate when adjusted for population growth.

Violent crime, including homicides, assaults, threats, sexual violations, and shootings, remains above historical levels and has increased by 4% year-to-date.

Property-related offences show mixed results. Auto theft and shoplifting have continued to increase, while mischief has decreased. Overall, property crime has declined 2% year-to-date.

With the increase in volume and complexity, the percentage of files cleared has decreased. In 2024, the clearance rate was 26%.

Member Wellness and Resource Management

Key internal benchmarks, including sick leave, overtime, and absenteeism, have increased since 2020. Much of this pressure is linked to operational demands following the 2022 convoy protest and sustained workload increases across frontline operations.

OPS analysis shows a correlation between high overtime levels and increases in sick leave, reflecting the effects of sustained workloads on member wellness.

The Service has set an overtime target of \$16.2 million for 2026 to reduce overtime use and support a healthier workforce.

Comparative Benchmarks

Data from the Statistics Canada Uniform Crime Reporting Survey and Police Administration Survey benchmark Ottawa's performance against the 12 largest municipalities in Ontario by population.

- Crime Severity Index (CSI): 4th lowest among large Ontario municipalities in 2024, improving by two positions since 2023.
- Violent Crime Severity Index: 3rd lowest, unchanged from 2023.
- Weighted Clearance Rate: 2nd lowest, indicating a relative decline in the proportion of cases cleared.
- Officers per Population (2023): 5th lowest, reflecting fewer officers per capita compared to other major municipalities.

These benchmarks provide context for service performance and resource allocation within the broader policing landscape.

Public Transparency

All data is available through the OPS Community Safety Data Portal, which provides public access to raw datasets, maps, and dashboards that track key performance indicators over time.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Document 1 - Chief's Consultation

Document 2 - Environmental Scan

Document 3 - OPS Community Outreach

Document 4 - Advanis Report 1a Police Benchmark Survey - Citywide

Document 5 - Advanis Report 1b Police Benchmark Survey results - K1N

Document 6 - Advanis Report 2 OPSB Budget Survey

Document 7 - Environics Analytics Ward-Based Insights

Document 8 - Operational Police Statistics and Benchmarks

Document 9 - Year-to-Date Safety Statistics (September 2025)

CONCLUSION

The 2026 Budget Consultation reflects a collaborative effort of the Ottawa Police Services Board and the Ottawa Police Service to engage residents, partners, and stakeholders in shaping community safety priorities. This process followed the Board's direction and the requirements of the Community Safety and Policing Act, 2019 (CSPA), ensuring that consultation was open, evidence-based, and representative of the city's diverse communities.

The results confirm that OPS priorities must be grounded in what the community values most: visibility, fairness, and care. Residents want to see officers in their neighbourhoods, responding promptly and treating people with respect. These expectations align with the Service's ongoing efforts to strengthen trust, improve communication, and focus on prevention.

Through this process, OPS and the Board worked together to gather meaningful feedback and connect it directly to planning and budgeting. The consultation findings highlight areas of progress, identify where community trust is strong, and show where further engagement and transparency will be needed.

As the Board and the Service move into 2026 budget deliberations, these results will help guide decisions that balance operational needs with community expectations. OPS remains committed to continuous improvement, responsible resource management, and the collaborative approach that has guided this work from the start.