

What we heard on Budget 2026:

- I'll turn now to sharing "what we heard" in response to the Board's request for feedback on the draft 2026 police budget.
- After the draft budget tabling on November 12th to the Board and City Council, I reached out for feedback to a wide range of individuals and community groups.
- In addition to delegates who presented to the Board this year, we sent a letter to business and community associations, youth-focused organizations, immigrant and social service agencies, faith groups, and a broad spectrum of diverse communities.
- This reflects our commitment to inclusive and representative outreach and to hearing a wide range of perspectives. And we did.
- We received letters from residents mostly from urban neighborhoods – specifically Sandy Hill, Byward Market, West Centretown and Hintonburg as well as from the Hintonburg Community Association and the Chinatown Business Improvement Association.
- And we've heard from the 10 delegates today and those at the November 21st Finance and Audit committee meeting.
- I'll read excerpts the letters we received, including from a few delegates who were not able to appear in person today.
- For privacy and confidentiality reasons I will not include any names or details that could be used to identify the individuals, except for the Hintonburg Community Association.
- I'm doing this to give everyone listening a chance to hear from residents in their own words, rather than a generic summary.
- And before I do so, I want to sincerely thank everyone who took the time to write, and to appear here today. A lot of time and thought went into each submission.

- Some deeply personal experiences around personal and community safety have been shared, and we don't take that lightly.
- I'll start with some letters of opposition to the budget increase specifically, and for specific aspects of it, like hiring more officers.
- These positions have been laid out today in various ways, so I'll focus on a letter that was sent by several individuals that was organized by a local advocacy organization. These came from opposition to the Budget from residents in Wards 10, 12 and 15 – so those are from urban neighborhoods within the Gloucester-Southgate, Rideau-Vanier and Kitchissippi wards.
- Here's it is:

“I want to express my concerns about the proposed 5% increase to the Ottawa Police budget. The OPS should not be getting a budget increase that is disproportionately higher than other departments for several reasons.

First of all, this has not been sufficiently justified. This money is intended to allow the OPS to hire more officers. Mayor Sutcliffe, Chief Stubbs, and some members of Council are citing anecdotes from residents who want more officer presence so they “feel more safe”, rather than using empirical evidence. This logic assumes that more officers will automatically improve safety, which is dubious, and that all residents share the same perspective on seeing police officers.

We know this is not true. Many residents, especially those in racialized and marginalized groups, do not feel safer with police around. They are justified in these feelings; the OPS still has a racial bias in their use of force that has not been addressed.

Another issue with this budget increase is the disconnect between the results from the ANCHOR pilot program. and the proportion of the police budget that supports it. The Mayor has been describing as a huge success, this program is only getting an additional \$700 thousand out of the \$415 million police budget. This should be much higher to allow the program to expand to multiple new areas.

Policing is not a catch-all answer to any problem the city is facing. If budget increases are proposed, the public deserves a detailed explanation of exactly what problems are being solved, exactly how police plan to do so, and provide transparent updates based on real data and research. The Police Services Board and Council need to apply much more scrutiny over the OPS budget, if not a line-by-line audit of police spending.

I urge you to advocate for reallocating funding from the proposed increase in the 2026 budget to ANCHOR and other non-police alternatives, and for greater transparency in regards to how and why these decisions are made.

Police do not prevent crimes. They show up after the crime has been committed. We need more social programs and social supports to prevent crime. Ottawa needs to look at the reason people are in crisis which would lead to more crime and address the root cause. It's so disappointing to see Ottawa heading this way.”

Centretown

- Here's part of a written submission from a resident from Centretown who could not appear in person:

“Given the success of ANCHOR, police efforts such as the Mobile Crisis Response Teams (MCRT) are redundant. Why do we need the police involved in these mental health calls, when we have an effective community-led solution. Instead, push the 2.7 million dollars in funding for 4 sworn officers to ANCHOR, and expand it beyond its current geographic coverage. With this context in mind, I am asking the Board to take two clear actions. 1. Do not approve the OPS as proposed 2. Redirect proposed increases to community-led safety initiatives, such as ANCHOR.”

Sandy Hill and Lowertown

“I am a 27-year resident of Sandy Hill and I am writing in support of additional funding for the Ottawa Police Service and to ask that the current two days per week of enhanced resources allocated to the Nelson & Besserer area as part of the OPS' Community Outreach, Response, and Engagement (CORE) Strategy be expanded to seven days a week. The increased presence on Tuesdays and Thursdays has produced noticeable improvements on those days. My hope is that extending it throughout the week will help reverse the trend of increasing crime and disorder that

began here in April 2018 with the opening of the supervised drug consumption site (SCS) at the Sandy Hill Community Health Centre.

OPS data shows a dramatic increase in criminal activity around Nelson & Besserer since the consumption site opened. I believe the actual increase is even greater as most of the crime goes unreported. I know from conversations with neighbours that many think reporting crime is a waste of time because there's no apparent response. Sometimes we can't even enter or exit our building because people smoking toxic illegal drugs and behaving in a threatening manner are blocking the entrance to our building.

Some may argue that what is needed is more outreach rather than more policing. I disagree. When we had an intoxicated man climbing balconies one Sunday morning it was not outreach workers who climbed up on an unstable looking roof to help him down to safety, it was Ottawa Police officers.”

Also from Sandy Hill, here are some excerpts from a person who was not able to delegate in person, who conveyed similar concerns to the one I've just read:

“I am a resident of Ward 12. I strongly support increased funding for the Ottawa Police Service. I live in an area of Sandy Hill where crime is extremely high. My home is sandwiched between three OPS hot spots. Within a short walk are all the city's crime hot spots. Break-ins, trespass, mischief, vandalism, violence, drug and sex trafficking, gun violence, and stabbings are incidents I have personally witnessed. Meanwhile, drug consumption is impossible to avoid. With drug consumption comes dealers, violence, guns, thefts, threats.

What does this mean? It means entire storefronts and lots, including residential properties, are empty and boarded up. We have lost businesses, low-income housing, families who have moved from their homes into other neighbourhoods. We have even lost a daycare — something unprecedented in Ottawa — all due to persistent crime and social disorder.

I have a lot of examples of conditions outside of my doorstep. On one occasion, I had to call the police because people were consuming drugs in my driveway, blocking my ability to safely leave my home to pick up my small children from school. I felt vulnerable and unsafe.

I also want to point out that I check off several minority boxes. I live in one of the most heavily impacted by crime neighbourhoods in Ottawa. And unlike many of the police critics, my perspective isn't built on ideology — it's built on surviving daily crime. I have never experienced police violence and racism, but I have experienced significant delays in response times.

Service requests are increasing throughout Ottawa and yet the OPS clearance rate is around 26%. This is unacceptable. Research and surveys consistently show that communities with socio-economic indicators similar to Ward 12 support more police presence, not less. Contrary to what is presented by those privileged voices from their idyllic homes in the suburbs, racialized and low-income people want more policing. The loudest anti-police voices come from the safest neighbourhoods.

After all, the concentration of social services for the mentally ill, those recently released from prison and those battling addiction are not in the suburbs but in communities where people are racialized, low-income and often also newcomers. These are facts.

These facts also point to another phenomenon. Underreporting. These groups, which include small business owners, single parents, immigrants, shift workers, are not ones to call the police. In other words, crime is much higher here than your data reveals. Those opposed to increasing the police budget offer ideological slogans that have no connection to what residents in high-crime neighbourhoods actually live through.

Defunding police individuals almost always live in low-crime neighbourhoods where they do not face the violence that my community faces every day.

If we are serious about listening to marginalized communities, then listen to us: we want more police, not less. Police support is high here. We want the police. We want visible police. We want faster police responses. We want more frequent police patrolling. And indeed, we want enforcement. In short, those of us who live here no longer feel safe doing so. We don't even feel safe behind the locked doors of our own homes. Calling for fewer police in the neighbourhoods with the highest crime isn't progressive — it's abandonment. It is irresponsible. I urge the Board to approve the proposed budget increase, ensuring that the Ottawa Police Service is properly staffed, trained, and equipped to respond quickly to emergencies, prevent

crime, and maintain public safety. This is not simply about funding a service — it is an investment in the safety and well-being of our families, businesses, and neighbourhoods.”

From Hintonburg:

- I have a letter from the President of the Hintonburg Community Association, Brian Innes, which reads:

“The Hintonburg Community Association supports the re-establishment of the District Policing Model. The HCA has worked very closely with the Ottawa Police Service since the early 1990s.

We experienced how efficient and effective the District model was at reducing issues in our community at that time. Calls for service were reduced, and because the officers knew the area they were able to intervene early and prevent mental health issues, vandalism, drug related crime and other issues from escalating.

The HCA worked with the local officers and also built relationships with all levels in the District, from the Community Police Officer to the Chief of Police and all levels in between.

Once the OPS centralized the entire structure, that multi-level relationship disappeared. We have also noticed a reduction in police presence and support at a time of rising crime in our community.

We trust that the implementation of the changes proposed in the 2026 Budget will strengthen our relationship with the OPS and help address our community's crime and safety concerns.”

I have a similar letter from Hintonburg resident who said:

“I very much support the Police Services budget. We need more police officers on the street, so the additional 25 officers and a return to District Policing are very welcome changes.

District Policing is a model that work so well for us in the past and we are looking forward to a return to that model.

In July Hintonburg saw an upsurge in open drug activity and after that it

changed into more aggressive agitated behaviour. Some of this seemed to be a migration of some of the chaotic issues from the New Dawn clinic in Chinatown. Now that the colder weather has arrived it is quieter here.”

ByWard Market

- We had several letters from the Byward Market Watch members and other residents who recounted numerous troubling violent incidents that required police response in front of their homes.
- They said they generally don't feel safe, and neither do their teens, who won't walk to school alone, and that family and friends won't visit them at home.
- In the words of one: “We live near the Shepherd's of Good Hope. The police monitoring of our neighbourhood is imperative, and what works the best is police that are on foot. Please ensure the police budget is maintained, to allow resolving case files that are still open for our family, that will in turn protect many others from the same violence and crime.”
- **The last excerpt I will mention comes from a business owner in Chinatown**, who has been criticized for advocating for more neighborhood policing there. In his words:

“These are working-class immigrant families, many of whom already face structural disadvantages, trying to earn a living and keep their doors open. It is important to recognize that they, too, are a vulnerable population.

Calling any request for enhanced police presence or safety infrastructure as “hyper-policing” or intensified surveillance is not grounded in evidence from my neighbourhood. We are not calling for punitive approaches, aggressive enforcement, or the criminalization of poverty. What we have consistently requested is basic safety infrastructure: lighting, timely police response, community policing presence, and tools that help deter property crime and protect vulnerable workers. These measures are standard in commercial districts across Ottawa and do not conflict with long-term investments in housing, mental health care, addiction treatment, or social

supports. Framing these practical, short-term measures as inherently harmful risks overlooking the concrete experiences and needs of those living and working in our community. Short-term safety measures and long-term structural reforms are not mutually exclusive. Our community needs both.

- Some people say that increased police visibility or safety cameras necessarily harm marginalized groups. This may be true in some contexts but without local data is a broad generalization. In my neighborhood the individuals most frequently requesting faster police response and more visible safety support are not wealthy property owners, they are shift workers, elderly residents, low-income tenants, and immigrant business operators who feel unsafe walking home at night or opening their businesses in the morning. It is important that conversations about policing consider the full spectrum of vulnerability, including those who are disproportionately targeted by crime rather than by law enforcement.

Conclusion

- In conclusion, I want to say that we recognize and respect of all these concerns. Individual lived experiences and perspectives matter - they are not just 'anecdotes.'
- To have a full picture of community priorities, we consider them alongside research on community priorities, including a representative survey of residents' policing priorities for the 2026 police Budget, as well as crime data, operational realities and other factors.

Alternate response and diverting resources to community services

- As we've heard today, and in some written submissions there are calls for increased funding for social services, including the need for programs like the Alternate Neighbourhood Crisis Response (ANCHOR) which provides an alternative to police for mental health crisis response.
- Both the Ottawa Police Service Board and the Ottawa Police Service recognize that policing is part of a broader ecosystem of community

safety and well-being that depends on strong social supports, housing, mental health care, and economic opportunity. Effective policing is strengthened when those systems work well together.

- That is why the Board supports continued collaboration and innovation – through diversion programs, alternate response models (like ANCHOR), and partnerships with community agencies, schools, businesses, and social services – to build a safer, more resilient Ottawa.
- Programs like ANCHOR free up police resources that were previously focused on non-police matters, which can be re-directed to more proactive policing. Alternate response helps ensure an appropriate non-police response. But people who provide these social services should not and do not want to be first responders to crime. Their valued service is not a substitute for a police response to criminal especially when the safety of first responders is at risk.
- I want to clarify to members of the public who may not be aware that the Board does not have the authority to redirect funding from the Ottawa Police Service budget to community and social services. Our mandate is limited to reviewing and approving a police budget that meets the legal requirements for adequate and effective policing under the Community Safety and Policing Act.
- At the same time, as I noted when tabling the draft budget at City Council, the Board fully respects the complex decisions Council must make for the 2026 municipal budget. Council is responsible for balancing many priorities and responding to urgent community needs across the city.
- Within our mandate, our focus is on ensuring the police budget meets the legislated standards for core policing functions – crime prevention, law enforcement, victim assistance, emergency response, and public order management – and that our budget is responsive to the diverse policing needs of our community.
- The budget tabled by the Service to the Board is intended to meet these standards.

- Policing in Ottawa must be effective, fair and responsive overall, and at the neighbourhood and individual levels. This dual commitment forms the foundation of the Board's approach and its Strategic Plan.
- In my view, the budget that is now before the Board for approval is a responsible budget that meets the public safety needs of the community.
- I'll hold any other comments until that Agenda item.
- I will now turn to the Chief for more detail and additional context.