

**Report to / Rapport au:**

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

**27 April 2026 / 27 avril 2026**

**Submitted by / Soumis par:**

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

**Contact Person / Personne Resource:**

**Deputy Chief Steve Bell, Chief Administrative Officer / Agent administratif  
principal**

**BellS@ottawapolice.ca**

**SUBJECT: PROJECT COMPLEMENT**

**OBJET: COMPLÉMENT DE PROJET**

**REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS**

**That the Ottawa Police Service Board receive this report for information.**

**RECOMMANDATIONS DU RAPPORT**

**Que la Commission de service police d'Ottawa prenne connaissance du présent rapport à titre d'information.**

**BACKGROUND**

Special Constables have historically played a vital support role within the Ottawa Police Service (OPS). Previously, support provided by Special Constables under the former *Police Services Act* (PSA) was limited to assisting police officers with transporting, monitoring, and receiving individuals in custody, serving Summonses and Subpoenas, and fingerprinting and photographing criminally charged persons. However, recent legislative changes made under the *Community Safety and Policing Act* (CSPA) allow for Special Constables to take on expanded roles and responsibilities beyond their traditional scope. Special Constables working under the direction of a Police officer are now able to:

- Assist with performing policing functions such as assisting with investigations into criminal offences or missing persons; includes interviewing the public and detaining, arresting or releasing individuals under the direction of an officer.
- Assist with functions under the *Highway Traffic Act* such as traffic direction and road closures.
- Assist with crime scene security.
- Seize and secure evidence.
- Collect DNA as required as part of an investigation.
- Perform electronic searches under the direction of an officer.
- Perform forensic analysis.
- Store or process evidence under the direction of an officer.
- Monitor private communications intercepted under s.184.4 of the Canadian Criminal Code or video surveillance under s.487.01 of the Canadian Criminal Code.

These expanded responsibilities enable Special Constables to provide enhanced operational support not only to frontline officers, but to officers in specialized investigative sections. This modern approach to policing offers new layers of specialized resources, and ultimately, increases the capacity for the OPS to adapt to evolving crime trends and meet growing service demands, all while improving service to the community.

To fully leverage the additional powers provided to Special Constables by the CSPA, the OPS initiated Project Complement in 2024. The three key goals of Project Complement are to:

- Enhance service delivery.
- Improve member development.
- Improve member wellness.

The project began in mid-2024 and, to date, has been successful from a budgetary, timing, and change management perspective. The project has also garnered attention from provincial and interprovincial partners, positioning the OPS as a leading example of successfully implementing a modern staffing support strategy. Key highlights of the project to date include:

- Completing internal research and the streamlining of the Special Constable appointment process.
- Creating a CSPA compliant basic and generalist Special Constable training program, along with an investigative and forensic support training program.
- Expanding the District Special Constable (DSC) initiative from four Special Constables to 18 Special Constables.
- Hiring and introducing 11 Special Constables into the Forensic Identification Section.
- Creating a pilot project whereby six Special Constables are assisting with district investigations.
- Developing updated internal OPS Special Constable policies and procedures.
- Releasing a combined total of 8,300 hours back to sworn officers.

Moving forward, the planning and development of a Warrant Writing Team is underway, with the implementation expected to be in early-2027. This section will integrate the expertise of sworn officers and Special Constables to expedite the warrant writing process and enhance investigative efficiency.

## **DISCUSSION**

Project Complement was initiated in response to declines in service delivery performance and member wellness concerns that have arisen over the past decade. These factors highlighted the urgent need for a modern and adaptive staffing support strategy. With the changes in the new CSPA, Special Constables working under the direction of a police officer are now being strategically used across the OPS to help address increased service demands.

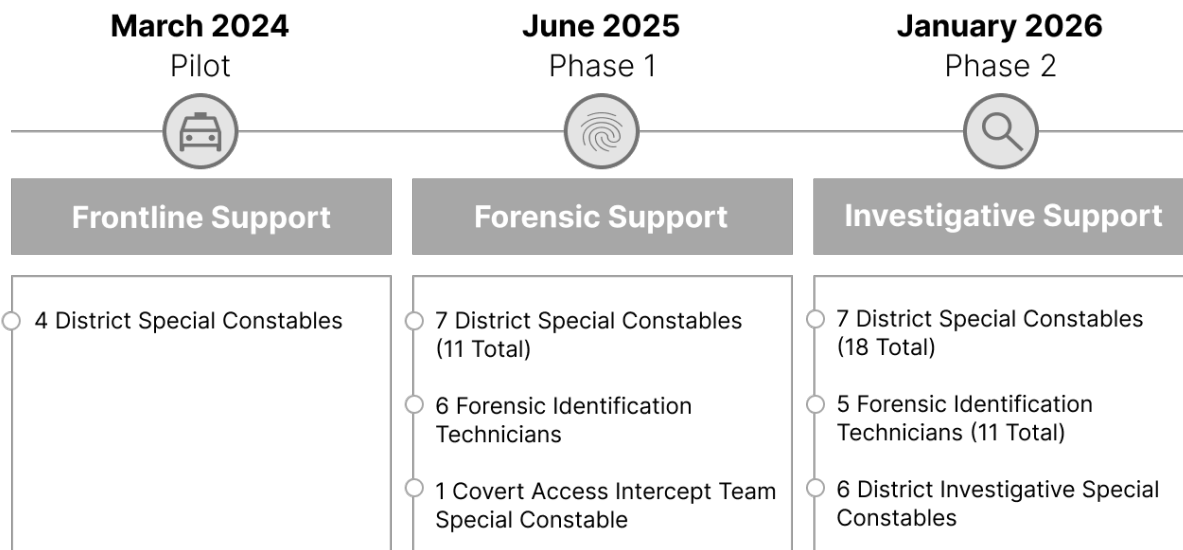
A key advantage of Special Constables is their ability to diversify the pool of human resources and skills within the OPS. The traditional approach of relying solely on sworn officers to meet various operational needs is becoming increasingly outdated and restrictive (McKenna, 2014). Enhancing desirable skills and abilities within the OPS allows for the inclusion of individuals from non-traditional backgrounds, broadening the scope of policing roles. This strategy has attracted individuals from underrepresented cultural and ethnic groups (such as Indigenous, Racialized, 2SLGBTQI+), as well as those with diverse work experiences (e.g., business or military) and specialized technical skills (e.g., computers and forensics). By incorporating specialized functions and welcoming personnel with varied expertise, the OPS is becoming more adaptable and sophisticated, enhancing its ability to address the complex and diverse challenges of modern policing.

The presence of specialized support staff also enables a more robust and sustained investigative effort. Research emphasizes the importance of leveraging specialized skills and personnel to improve investigative outcomes in complex cases, thereby enhancing the overall effectiveness of police operations (Correia et al., 2023). An enhanced staffing model helps address both lower and higher threshold offences, and, in turn, enhances service delivery and public safety in communities around the City of Ottawa.

Guided by research demonstrating the benefits of a specialized support staff, members of the Project Complement initiative have been strategically implementing Special Constables into various sections within the OPS (see Figure 1). This strategic implementation has supported the creation of District Special Constable, Forensic Identification Technician, and District Investigative Special Constable roles. The progress of each initiative, and benefits to the OPS strategic goals, will be discussed in turn.

**Figure 1**

*Project Complement Special Constable Implementation Timeline*



**District Special Constables**

District Special Constables (DSC) are part of an initiative aimed at optimizing frontline policing resources and enhancing service delivery throughout the City of Ottawa. DSCs undergo specialized training to support frontline officers with a variety of non-emergency policing functions including, but not limited to, crime scene security, traffic direction, road management (e.g., towing vehicles) and custody assistance for individuals apprehended under the *Mental Health Act (MHA)*. The success of the DSC program is exemplified by

its three consecutive staffing expansions, with the current staffing complement reaching 18 DSCs in January, and after completing time with their Coach Officers, being fully released to operational duties in March 2026.

In line with research highlighting how a specialized support staff can enhance the operational efficiency of a police service, the DSC program has been effective at supporting frontline officers (see Figure 2). Since the inception of the initiative in March 2024, the DSCs have responded to 2,800 calls and released over 7,250 hours back to frontline officers. This released time has allowed frontline officers to respond to more calls for service quicker, has allowed for more proactive policing, and has aided in improving crime solvency. Throughout the expansion of the initiative, the average monthly calls attended per DSC has also remained stable, underscoring the sustained demand for frontline staffing support within the OPS. Further expanding the initiative has the potential to proportionally increase the overall support provided to frontline officers.

Releasing time back to frontline officers has demonstrated several benefits to the OPS. A study of the calls where frontline officers were replaced at a scene by a DSC revealed that 36.2% of officers were able to respond to another call within 20 minutes. Officers replaced at a scene were also able to respond to an average of 2.5 calls for service during the relief period, with the priority status of these calls mainly being P2, P3, and P4 calls. There were also several instances where frontline officers near the end of their shift were replaced by a DSC and able to go home on time. These end-of-shift replacements not only support member wellness but also help minimize overtime costs. In the platoons where DSCs are deployed, monthly frontline overtime costs in 2025 decreased by 41.0% (or \$67K a month) after the expansion of the DSC initiative in June 2025.

The positive outcomes of the DSC initiative are expected to be further enhanced with the expansion of the initiative from 11 DSCs to 18 DSC in March 2026. Given historical performance trends, estimates suggest a DSC program of 18 members has the potential to release over 10,000 hours back to frontline officers per year. This extra time offers a unique opportunity for the implementation of strategic crime reduction initiatives around the city to further enhance public safety. However, beyond just releasing hours back to frontline officers, the DSC initiative has earned strong support from OPS members. The results from a survey of OPS members working closely with DSCs (e.g., frontline officers, dispatchers, NCOs) revealed that 92.0% of respondents were in favour of the DSC program being expanded and becoming permanent.

## Figure 2

### *DSC Initiative Summary Since March 2024*



### Forensic Identification Technicians

Special Constables within the Forensic Identification Section (FIS) are known as Forensic Identification Technicians (FIT). Six FITs were introduced to FIS in June 2025, with the current staffing complement expanding to 11 FITs in January 2026. These members have advanced scientific backgrounds and technical skills that help bolster the forensic capabilities and resource capacity of the OPS. The FIT initiative was created in response to the increased prevalence of offences over the past decade (e.g., homicides) placing a significant strain on the FIS. The FITs alleviate some of these workload demands by supporting a variety of forensic occurrences, with an emphasis placed on auto thefts, sexual assaults as well as break and enters. Alleviating workload demands is intended to have downstream benefits in terms of case solvency as well as member wellness and development.

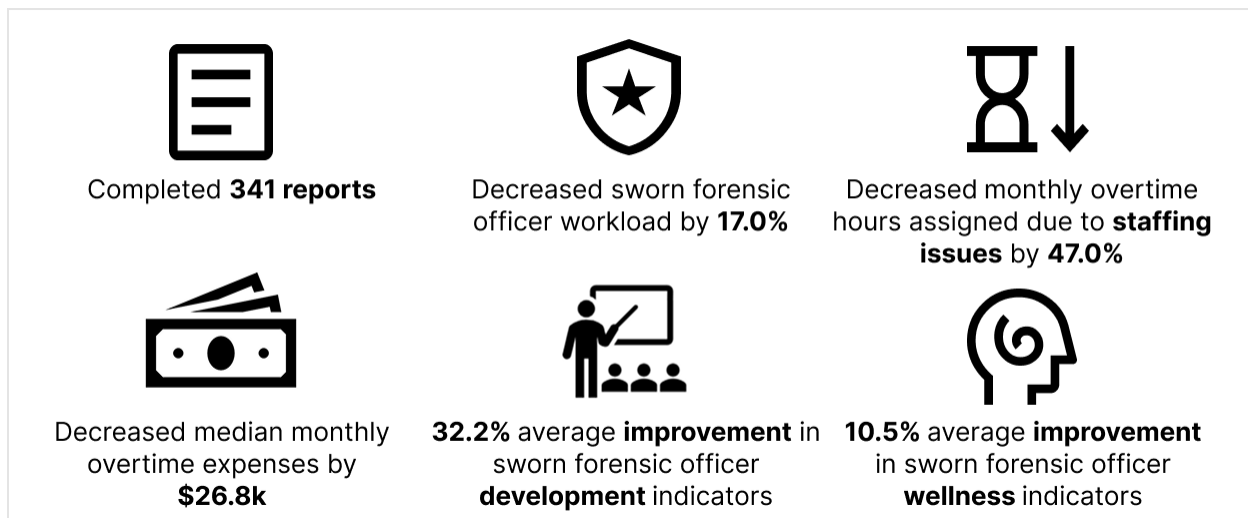
The implementation of FITs has already shown valuable benefits (see Figure 3). The 341 reports written by FITs in 2025 reduced the workload demands placed on sworn Forensic Identification Officers (FIO) by 17.0% compared to the previous year. The additional support has also decreased the demands placed on Scenes of Crime Officers (SOCO), releasing an estimated 596 hours back to frontline officers in the final six months of 2025. The SOCO program has also scaled back over the course of the initiative from 85 officers to 29 officers, saving over \$150k in training and equipment expenses to be reinvested elsewhere. The monetary benefits also extend to FIS overtime savings. Monthly overtime expenses have decreased by approximately \$26.8K

since the implementation of FITs, with the section seeing some of lowest monthly overtime levels recorded in the past five years.

The implementation of FITs also coincides with improvements in FIO wellness and development. The results from a follow-up survey completed by FIOs in March 2026 demonstrate improvements in member burnout, stress, and work-life balance since the implementation of FITs. FIOs are also now reporting having more time to provide thorough forensic support and perform professional development activities. These activities include attending courses and conferences, practicing forensic related skills, mentoring members, and participating in research. The success of the initiative is further exemplified by the overwhelming majority of FIOs (78.0%) reporting that FITs have alleviated workload demands and been a valuable addition to the section. These metrics are expected to further improve in the coming months when the five additional FITs appointed in January 2026 become fully operational and transition to independent work.

### Figure 3

*FIT Initiative Summary Between June 2025 and December 2025*



### District Investigative Special Constables

District Investigative Special Constables (DISC) are part of a pilot project aimed at enhancing the investigative throughput of the OPS and the capacity to investigate prevalent lower threshold offences. The pilot project is currently comprised of six Special Constables who have undergone investigative training, learning critical skills pertaining to collecting and reviewing video evidence, writing statement summaries, enhanced bail

packages.<sup>1</sup> The training effectively prepared the DISCs to work in an integrated team with sworn investigators to boost investigative efficiency. This layered approach is already showing promising results (see Figure 4). Since late January 2026, DISCs have supported over 162 different offences ranging from assault, theft, and sexual related offences. These efforts have released more than 460 hours back to investigators, allowing them to focus on tasks requiring policing expertise. Looking ahead, the current team of six DISCs are on pace to release approximately 4,100 hours back to investigators over the next 12 months, with expanding the initiative to nine DISCs expected to provide even greater returns. Case solvency, member wellness, and member development will all be monitored and reported as the initiative progresses.

## Figure 4

### *DISC Initiative Summary Since January 2026*



## Future Directions

Building on the success of Project Complement, the OPS will continue to implement strategic staffing solutions that enhance operational capacity, improve member wellness, and elevate service delivery. To sustain these benefits, the existing staffing complement across all Special Constable initiatives will continue to be maintained, along with the potential implementation of new strategic staffing solutions. A staffing solution currently being developed is the Warrant Writing Team. This brand-new section will combine the skills of police officers and Special Constables to expedite the warrant writing process. It will support the OPS in meeting the strict timelines imposed by the *R*.

<sup>1</sup> The DISCs currently working on the pilot project are experienced OPS members. Prior to receiving the investigative training, two members were already working as Special Constables, and four were working as civilian members within the organization.

*v. Jordan* decision by enhancing the efficiency, quality, and timeliness of judicial authorization requests, including Information to Obtain (ITOs) and production orders. The Warrant Writing Team will also serve as a developmental opportunity for junior constables to temporarily rotate in the section to gain experience and develop into future affiants.

Looking ahead, there is a pilot project currently scheduled to commence in April 2026 involving the integration of two Special Constables within the Community Outreach, Response, and Engagement (CORE) Unit. This initiative is intended to enhance the Unit's operational capacity and strengthen community policing efforts by allowing sworn officers to focus on priority enforcement and investigative responsibilities. The addition of Special Constables will support the CORE Unit's ability to respond to increasing community demands while expanding its capacity to deliver proactive and visible policing services.

Depending on research evaluations and financial approval, there may also be future opportunities to implement Special Constables in other sections of the OPS (see Appendix A). These sections may include the Mental Health Section and the Youth Crime Section. There may also be opportunities for implementing Special Constables to support sexual assault, intimate partner violence, financial crime, and digital forensic investigations which will help address increasing investigative demands in these areas. Recent trends have shown a rise in workload accompanied by a decline in case solvency, highlighting the need for additional support and stabilization within these investigative functions. In any case, expanding the project initiative will always be guided by internal research and input from OPS members.

To support sustainable growth and high training standards across all current and future initiatives, the Eastern Ontario Special Constable Training Centre (EOSCTC), located at [Collège La Cité](#), will continue to be developed. The goal moving forward is for this OPS-led Training Centre to begin opening course opportunities to Special Constables from other organizations. The EOSCTC takes pride in providing a high quality seven-week Basic Special Constable Qualification course, along with additional Generalist Special Constable and Scenes of Crime Officer (SOCO) training. The Training Centre also supports yearly use of force requalification's for OPS, OC Transpo, and Carleton University Special Constables.

## **CONSULTATION**

The initiatives outlined in Project Complement are guided by consultation with OPS membership as well as key internal partners, including Human Resources, Legal, Finance, and Facilities, along with external partners such as the Ottawa Crown's Office. These consultations will continue to help guide key performance indicator (KPI) monitoring, inform project improvements and support potential expansions. The Board will be provided regular updates on this initiative and will receive performance data (KPIs) through the regular strategy implementation reporting process.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no requested expenditures to report. The three-year pilot project is supported by a \$4,000,000 grant from the Ontario Ministry of the Solicitor General. Although continued financial support is necessary to sustain the project's growth positions and preserve current operational benefits.

## **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

**Appendix A** – Ottawa Police Special Constable Overview

## **CONCLUSION**

Project Complement not only modernizes operational delivery but is firmly guided by the priorities outlined in the Ottawa Police Service Board's 2024–2027 Strategic Action Plan. The project serves as a key mechanism through which the police service is advancing the Board's strategic direction by strengthening organizational capacity, optimizing the use of sworn and civilian resources, and enhancing service delivery to the community. In doing so, Project Complement represents a practical and deliberate step toward implementing the Board's vision of a more responsive, efficient, and sustainable policing model across the City of Ottawa.

# Appendix A – Ottawa Police Special Constable Overview

