

Monday, September 26, 2022

Ottawa Police Service Board (OPSB) Public Meeting

Police boards across the country have failed to hold police accountable and represent the best interests of communities since their introduction. Some of the key responsibilities of the Board include hiring a Chief, monitoring the Chief's performance, approving the annual police budget, and developing a three-year strategy.

In June 2022, the OPSB launched its community engagement process to help inform the search for the next Chief of the Ottawa Police Service. To find the next Chief, they have had to hire a consulting firm, allocate a budget for this process, monitor the firm's performance, and ensure community accountability. Watching the Board fail to deliver at each step of the process highlights the ways in which police boards can no longer continue to be perceived as meaningful systems of accountability and oversight.

Odgers Berndtson, the executive search firm with the mandate to recruit the next OPS Chief and Deputy Chief, recommended Hefid Solutions to the OPSB. At the public meeting in May 2022, Hefid Solutions presented their proposed consulting plan to the OPSB. From the onset, the proposed strategy raised concerns. First, Hefid Solutions planned to consult 150 individuals in only three engagement sessions. The standard size of a focus group is between eight to ten participants in order to facilitate meaningful dialogue. In addition, the proposal stated that consultations would be populated using a snowball approach. While this approach can be useful, it is best suited to communities that are considered "hard-to-reach". An open registration process would have been more appropriate for a consultation intended to engage the broader Black, Indigenous, and Middle Eastern communities in Ottawa.

In the end, a single public consultation was held, in addition to a number of targeted consultations. The public consultation was held without regard for community safety, as media and OPSB members were present at the session and participants were not made aware beforehand. There is an acknowledgment of the discomfort of participants in their final report, however, there is no meaningful discussion on how that could have impacted participants' responses. In addition, OPSB members were individually consulted, despite previous promises made that they would not be included in the process. Furthermore, 5% of the public survey respondents self-identified as OPS members.

Further ethical concerns were raised about the propriety of members of a group with close affiliation to the Ottawa Police Service competing for city contracts related to police recruitment. The possible double-dipping directly links Hefid Solution's co-founder and its primary members to the Ottawa Police's Community Equity Council, a group that is said to build and strengthen relationships between the OPS and faith-based, Indigenous, and racialized communities. A conflict of interest arises, since several members of the Hefid Solutions team are involved in the Community Equity Council, including the co-chair who leads the council alongside Interim Chief Steve Bell, a likely candidate for the chief position.

Many community members raised concerns about the discrepancies between Hefid Solutions final deliverables and the original proposal. Participants in the public engagement session believed they would be receiving an honorarium, but none were delivered. The Board failed to follow up meaningfully on community members requests to monitor payments. A poorly attended public meeting and multiple closed-door meetings formed the basis of a final report that included nonfactual statements and subjectively reported findings. **A detailed explanation of the discrepancies is listed below in Appendix A.**

Following the receipt of the final report, the Board was unable to address the deficiencies and discrepancies, nor did it provide transparency to the community regarding the engagement process. The Board failed to hire a firm with the capacity to undertake the task of engaging the community on the matter of hiring a Chief and failed to hold the firm accountable to the \$76,000 allocated for the project. Considering the Board's inability to hire, oversee and budget for a small-scale project, how can we trust that they can hire and monitor the performance of a police chief or have the skills required to oversee and approve the budgeting process?

Due to the shortcomings of the Board, we ask the following:

1. Request the list of consultation participants and *publicly post financial auditing receipts* from Hefid Solutions to prove how and when participants were compensated or/and post *redacted financial information outlining transparency of tax-paying dollars.*
2. Name the 5 OPSB members who engaged in the consultation process.
3. Demand that the OPSB dismiss the report provided by Hefid Solutions and not take their findings into account during the ongoing process to find a police chief.
4. Pause the hiring process for Chief of Police until the OPSB can meaningfully engage with community members and have the necessary expertise to fulfill their mandate.
 - a. *Allow delegations to ask questions* during their delegations and engage in discussion, as the Board has proven they are not equipped to ask critical questions and follow up on answers provided.
 - b. *Adopt a hybrid model* that accommodates virtual and in person delegations to increase public participation.

Best regards,
Mandi Pekan & Inez Hillel

Appendix A

What was promised by Hefid Solutions:	What was implemented and delivered by Hefid Solutions:	The Ottawa Police Board Response:
<p>The proposal highlights that Hefid Solutions team members include volunteers on OPS's Community Equity Council and positions that experience as an asset.</p>	<p>A major conflict of interest of the Hefid Solution team consisted of CEC members, including the CEC co-chair that leads the council with OPS CEC co-chair Interim Steve Bell, who is an applicant for the position.</p>	<p>Unanimously approved a \$76,000 contract despite community members raising concerns.</p>
<p>Hefid Solutions claimed that <i>"the proposed recruiting work wouldn't see any of his team speaking to the police, only community members and the recruiting firm. The team would ultimately have no say in the selection process and wouldn't be working with the police board"</i></p>	<p>5 of 7 OPSB members were consulted and 6% of respondents of the survey were OPS members.</p>	<p>Only member Cathy Curry has identified herself as having participated in the consultation process.</p> <p>Hefid Solutions claims they cannot release names for privacy reasons, despite having media present at the community engagement session.</p>
<p>Hefid Solutions estimates that they would pay 150 participants with honorariums at \$50.00 each, totalling \$7500.</p>	<p>Hefid Solutions have claimed that the firm spent \$11,000 on honorariums.</p>	<p>When asked to provide receipts, Hefid Solutions suggest this is impossible because honorariums were paid in cash and gift cards.</p> <p>Community members who attended the single public engagement session on July 13, 2022 confirm that they have not received any honorariums.</p>
<p>Hefid Solutions highlights having hosts and facilitators that speak multiple languages as an asset to carrying out the engagement process.</p>	<p>Survey and community consultation offered only in English and French.</p>	<p>The Board did not enquire if the survey or consultation could be made available in other languages.</p>

<p>Hefid Solutions promised to engage 150 community members in a manner that implied that 150 individuals would be allowed to participate in public engagement sessions.</p>	<p>Hefid Solutions engaged 25 community members in a public consultation, all other participants were engaged in private sessions.</p>	<p>The Board did not press this issue and seemingly considered this amendment satisfactory.</p>
<p>A bilingual English and French culturally appropriate online survey</p>	<p>An English and French survey</p>	<p>When asked to explain what features of the survey made it culturally appropriate, Hefid Solutions indicated that culturally appropriate did not mean more than two languages, but did not clarify how the survey was culturally appropriate and how the survey reached those impacted by policing and those whose first language were not English or French.</p>
<p>Three community engagement sessions, two in English and one in French.</p>	<p>One public consultation with open registration that was attended by approx. 23 community members, and media presence made participants uncomfortable and unwilling to share.</p> <p>8 consultations that were populated with individuals selected by Hefid Solutions or found using a snowball approach.</p>	<p>When asked about holding two additional public engagements or adjusting the cost of the contract, Hefid Solutions suggested that they did more engagement than anticipated.</p> <p>There was no further questioning or follow-up on how these private sessions were conducted.</p>
<p>Explicitly states that the engagement sessions and one-on-one interviews will purposefully include outreach to those who have lived experience interacting with police and communities apprehensive of police who want to see change.</p>	<p>Final results presented with no mention of intersectionality or emphasis on responses provided by these targeted individuals and communities.</p>	<p>When asked about including intersectionality, Hefid Solutions denies that the purpose was ever to include that level of nuance and did not seek out individuals with experience interacting with police. The Board did not comment further on that clear contradiction.</p>