

## Chief's Verbal Report – February 22, 2021

I want to start with my own acknowledgment that I am grateful to the Algonquin people for sharing this land with us and letting us meet on unceded territory.

I also want to give gratitude to all Indigenous persons in Canada, and around the world, for their care-taking of the lands upon which we all live.

Finally, I want to acknowledge Black History Month, as well as the United Nations International Decade for People of African Descent.

We know that Indigenous and Black people have historically suffered in our society and have been disproportionately negatively impacted by our institutions - including policing. This is the time for all of us to give recognition and respect to Indigenous and Black leaders (along with their allies from all communities) who have also courageously protested against injustices and successfully strived for needed advances in our city, our country, and our society.

That is why over my tenure as Chief, the OPS and I have been engaging in open, honest and constructive dialogue with our BIPOC community stakeholders on how to improve the OPS. Over the past year we also surveyed city residents and City Councillors, we met with academics, subject matter experts, community leaders in the human rights forum, we attended hundreds of community led forums, we listened to hundreds of Board delegations and we met with OPS members at every rank and in every role.

What we learned from all of these consultation efforts is that there are three areas where the OPS that need the most improvements:

1. Improve equity, diversity and inclusion while addressing the cultural elements of the OPS which enables workplace violence, harassment and bullying;
2. Improve service delivery to all residents but especially to the most marginalized, victimized and racialized communities; and
3. Implement neighbourhood policing strategy with a focus on community partnerships and integrated service delivery through the Community Safety and Well-Being (CSWB) plan.

## **Model of Approach to Change**

The past year was a reflection point for policing. Police services across Canada, and here in Nation's Capital, need to significantly evolve to better-meet the needs of their members and their community. All Canadian police leaders - Chiefs, Chairs and Cabinet Ministers - need to develop significant and sustainable actions to ensure Canadians have a policing institution and justice system that are trustworthy and fit for purpose in the new landscape we operate in.

That is why, over the next three years, the OPS will relentlessly focus on the following three priorities:

**Public Trust** - To develop our thinking, actions and systems lead to improved OPS member trust and improved public trust in the OPS.

**Duty of Care** – To demonstrate that we truly care for each other as members of the OPS as well as that we truly care for each member of the community.

**Community Safety and Well-Being** – To work together internally as “One Team” so we can for better community partnerships what lead to the “Co-Production” of improved community safety and well-being.

Underlying and uniting our individual and collective efforts in the aforementioned three areas will be our EDI Action Plan, co-designed by OPS members and community members.

The end state vision is to build a police service where every community member as well as every Service member feels respected, supported and accepted, no matter their background, status or circumstances.

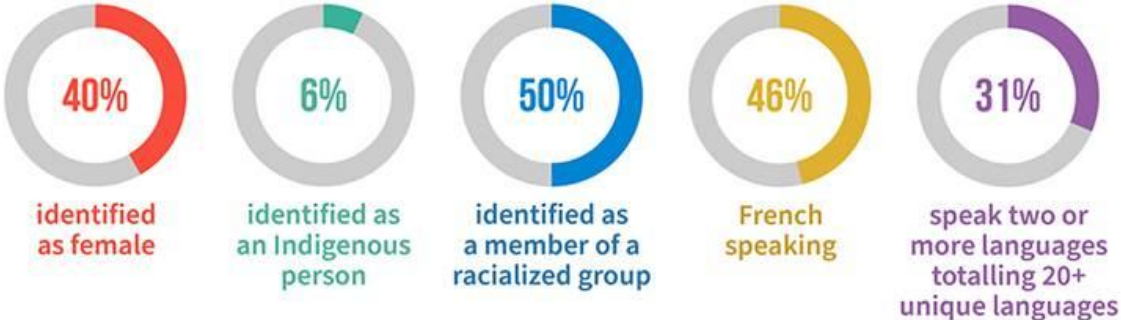
To achieve this vision, all OPS members must recognize that the change starts at the personal level — that we must individually and collectively challenge ourselves in how we think, speak and perform our duties.

In November 2020, the Board approved our “change budget” for 2021 that makes investments in initiatives that will help us to improve our organization, our culture, and our ability to demonstrate improved **duty of care, public trust, and Community Safety and Well-Being**.

We are not doing this alone. To truly acquire significant and sustainable change, we need to ensure we are implementing real and meaningful community input into all aspects of the OPS. That is why all new OPS strategies, policies and practices will be community informed, involved and co-produced.

We will be working with the community to co-produce the following budget priority items:

- 1. The community-led Mental Health Response Strategy;
- 2. The expanded Neighbourhood Resource Team strategy for suburban and rural areas;
- 3. Anti-Indigenous/Anti-Black Racism training for all members; and
- 4. New community coordinator roles in our SACA/PAU re Violence Against Women (VAW) and Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women & Girls (MMIGWG).



One of the best examples of demonstrably significant changes accomplished during my tenure as chief has been our work with the community to improve our outreach, recruitment and hiring systems which included:

- 1. A no-cost application process to remove financial barriers for applicants;

- 2. A physical testing process that ensures applicants can meet the standards from the Ontario Police College; and
- 3. Revised background check practices with a focus on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion.

These changes have had a massive impact on the quantity, quality and diversity of the police recruit applicant pool such that the December 2020 class of 48 recruits is the most diverse class in the history of the OPS:

1. 40% identify as women
  2. 50% identified as a member of a racialized group
  3. 6% identified as an Indigenous person
  4. 46% speaking French
  5. 20 different languages spoken
  6. 87.5% of the 48 recruits have one or more valuable diversity assets to support OPS service delivery in the nation's capital
- The group is also highly educated with university and/or college degrees and they bring a wealth of experience ranging from previous careers or volunteering in social work, the John Howards Society, the Ottawa Distress Centre, mental health case work and youth outreach.

We could not have done this without the support of this Board, the work of our recruiting teams, and, perhaps most importantly, the support of our community partners who encouraged us, guided us, and sent us qualified and skilled candidates for these positions.

The future looks bright as the quantity, quality and diversity of our 2021 applicant pipeline is as impressive as this last police recruit class.

This is a success formula that we will build upon in all other aspects of police service delivery.

## St. Laurent Mall Gun Call

I now need to shift to a deeper explanation of an operational matter that relates to a gun call we responded to at the St. Laurent Shopping Mall at approximately 7pm on December 27, 2020.

I do not normally provide detailed reviews of operational matters at Board meetings but, unfortunately, this incident was the subject of a massive amount of misinformation online, in mainstream media and within the community.

I want to take a moment to present the facts in this incident.

The following slides contain still images from the St. Laurent Mall security video that we received from the owners of the St. Laurent Mall.

I will also read to you the following letter that the OPS received today from the Mall owners regarding the images you are about to see.

This first image shows a man in a car, wearing a ski mask and holding a handgun



This second image is a close up of the handgun taken from the same video surveillance.



The handgun looks real - in fact it is almost a perfect replica of a .9mm Beretta. It has the exact look, weight and feel of the real model. For the average person it is almost indistinguishable except for the bore hole - which is smaller because it uses a magazine containing pellets to be fired which are capable of wounding instead of the actual Beretta which uses a magazine containing real bullets capable of killing.

These replicas are so good that they are used in the commission of criminal offences including robberies and other forms of street violence. It's an example of the high-quality replica handguns that our officers see on the streets of Ottawa.

This is the reason that the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police have tried unsuccessfully to lobby the federal government ban the sale, distribution and possession of all such replica firearms.

It's the reason why the current federal government just announced its intention to prohibit the importation, sale and transfers of all replica firearms.

On December 27 2020 a St Laurent Mall security guard in this incident saw a person in a car at the mall wearing a full ski mask and holding what appeared to a real handgun. The security guard then called 911 to request the OPS attend the mall to investigate the incident. Based on the information provided by the security guard, the OPS Communications Centre dispatched OPS officers to investigate the suspicious incident. The security guard stayed on the line with the OPS Communications Center agent and described in real time and in great detail what the security cameras were capturing as they followed the vehicle and activities of the occupants.

Police officers responded and arrived within four minutes of being dispatched to the area treating this as a real call for a crime in progress that involved a group of people

armed with a potentially deadly firearm that was taking place at a mall frequented by families and children. When the officers arrived on scene then stopped the vehicle, arrested six people involved, located the replica handgun and completed the investigation.

During the investigation, the officers were then advised that the group were making a video - that they had brought the balaclava and replica handgun as props. As a result of this information, the responding officers released the group of six people with no charges laid.

The police vehicle stop, arrest, location of the replica firearm, investigation and release of the six persons all took place within 20 minutes.

All of the six individuals spoken to by the responding officer who advised them of the appropriate steps to take when planning to make videos using props such as firearms – this was done explicitly to the group avoid any similar such incidents in the future (this included the need to contact the City of Ottawa's Event Central to obtain a permit prior to filming).

As three of the individuals were young persons, they were driven home to their parents by the officers.

In the following week, a full review of the call was conducted, including a review of the 911 audio tapes and the St. Laurent Mall security video footage. The review of the mall security video by investigators confirmed what had been relayed by the security guard to our 911 call taker.

All of our members involved in the call – including the communications centre and responding officers -- acted appropriately and professionally. I thank them all.

Despite these facts in this incident, there was a viral campaign of misinformation and disinformation against the OPS in social media and in the community that was then picked up by mainstream media.

In the days and weeks following, the OPS has repeatedly tried to reach out to the young people involved. Unfortunately, none of the six have taken us up on our offer.



## **The importance of dialogue**

There were numerous people alleging police misconduct in this incident.

Under my watch, the OPS will always cooperate with any public complaint to the Board or to the Office of Independent Police Review Directorate.

To my knowledge, to date there have been no formal public complaints from anyone regarding the incident. This despite the fact that there have been repeated explicit explanations from the OPS and the Board as to how the persons involved in the incident could make a formal public complaint!?

There have been no formal complaints. There has only been an ongoing misinformation and disinformation campaign designed to erode the public's trust in the OPS.

This is an unfortunate and unfair trend that we and other community leaders are seeing in this city. There is a seemingly organized campaign by some individuals to intimidate anyone who does not agree with their views on policing as well as to discredit any organization if they are engaging with the OPS for any positive purpose. We have recently been hearing from our not-for-profit sector partners that they are now the target of this aggressive approach – this includes one group who is targeting our community partners involved in the Mental Health Response Strategy. Our community partners are telling us they want to work with us but they are increasingly afraid of being singled out and targeted by this campaign. They are being warned by these groups to not let the OPS support their grant proposals, they are not to invite the OPS to any community forums and they are not to partner with the OPS to solve problems. These negative activities are happening online and in open community meetings – they reflect the hostility and intimidation occurring around OPS Board meetings.

It's a disturbing trend that does not serve to advance a duty of care, public trust or community safety and well being.

We know that listening to the community's constructive criticisms while engaging the community in difficult discussions must take place to improve the OPS. We are confident that most decent people will not be fooled these disingenuous disinformation campaigns to undermine important community partnerships.

I have no doubt we will work through this difficult period. The purpose of my message here is to ensure the Board and the entire community that we are listening, we are changing, and we are working with our community to improve our Service.



I now want to highlight some important police work being done by our Service in relation to overdose deaths relating to fentanyl.

The COVID 19 outbreak is worsening the already deadly and ongoing public health crisis of opioid overdoses and deaths. It is having a tragic impact on people who use substances, their families, and communities across Canada. People who use substances, such as opioids, cocaine and methamphetamine are experiencing a number of increased risks, with several jurisdictions reporting higher rates of fatal overdoses and other harms.

Last week, our Guns and Gangs Unit concluded an almost five-month investigation titled Project Avalanche, that targeted known drug dealers in the city's west end.

As a result, four people were arrested and two handguns were seized, along with fentanyl, cocaine and other narcotics.

This enforcement approach is only one part of our work to support the overall overdose prevention strategy for the City.

In the past two weeks our officers have responded to 12 calls for overdoses in our city, where two people sadly died, and one was successfully rescued when our officers administered Narcan.

Since the start of the new year, our officers have responded to 69 calls for reported overdoses, where 14 people have died.

The OPS remains committed to education and prevention, working with our partners to help reduce the number of overdoses in our city. Ongoing collaboration with City partners, includes paramedics and fire services, OPH, Safe Injection Site staff, area hospitals and Outaouais healthcare and frontline workers, to help us to create a united and measured response to this crisis.

We continue to resolve incidents of illicit drugs in our communities through tips from concerned residents. That essential information has helped to inform several investigations and has resulted in the arrest of persons who would traffic in street drugs that are at the source of these overdose incidents.

The proof that changes in terms of Duty of Care, Public Trust and CSWB are well underway is in the day to day actions of the vast majority of members. Here are some highlights of the great work being done by the men and women who work at the OPS.

Yesterday our officers attended a home after a call to our Comm Centre from a mother concerned her son may harm himself. His grandmother had just passed away and he was taking it quite hard. When officers arrived on the scene, he had barricaded himself in a portion of the home with a knife and refused to come out. Frontline officers were dispatched to assess the call, and as per protocol contacted the Duty Inspector. Upon his review, the Tactical Unit and a negotiator were called to the scene to offer supports. Structured negotiations began and continued for several hours, at times with the assistance of an on-call psychiatrist. Negotiators were able to get him to surrender his weapon, but the man refused to leave from where he was barricaded.

After nearly five hours of negotiations, the man began communicating in a way that led officers and the psychiatrist to believe he was no longer a threat to himself or others. Our officers spoke with him and helped to set up a support plan that would include our Mental Health Unit to check in on him to follow up.

Here's an overview of the many letters of commendation that we received from the community over the last month (you can read more of them in the Commendation report, item 17 in today's meeting agenda):

"Please pass on my sincere thanks to the officer in the unmarked black police car who pulled over a truck that dangerously sped passed my car while going up a hill in a clearly marked no passing zone. As it was happening, I was thinking "Where's the police when you need one?" and you were, right there, in flash, behind me! Thank you for being there to ensure safety in our community while working under these difficult circumstances due to the pandemic. Our family is grateful to you and your fellow officers for your service every day."

And

"I would like to compliment to Constable Scott Craig for his diligence after he was assigned to a police report filed about a dog stolen from a homeless man in Hintonburg. Cst. Craig was compassionate in his dealings with the man, resourceful in locating the subject, and committed to resolving the situation – which he did within 15 days....I would like to thank Cst. Craig for doing his job in a way that exemplifies both compassion and collaboration."

And

“I am writing to applaud OPS for its efforts to improve how it handles mental health crises. I have very recent experience dealing with the OPS who assisted us with our daughter during an incredibly dark time in September. And while it is true that there is room to improve - there are certainly officers who did not seem as prepared to address a mental health crisis as opposed to a policing/security issue - I must make it known that there were some officers who have come to our aid who were absolutely phenomenal. These officers displayed such empathy and kindness to us that I truly believe they are the reason my daughter was able to make it through alive. I am a public servant with significant experience in developing strategic frameworks, a mental health advocate, and a mother who is so grateful for all that OPS officers did to help us save our daughter and I would like to offer any assistance I possibly can to give back.”

Thank you, merci.