

Report to / Rapport au:

**OTTAWA POLICE SERVICES BOARD
LA COMMISSION DE SERVICES POLICIERS D'OTTAWA**

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Submitted by / Soumis par:

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

Contact Person / Personne ressource:

**John Steinbachs, Acting Executive Director, Strategy and
Communications/Dirigeant principal de la gestion stratégique
*SteinbachsJ@ottawapolice.ca***

SUBJECT: REPORT ON STRATEGIC PLANNING SURVEYS

OBJET: RAPPORT DU SONDAGES POUR ORIENTATION STRATÉGIQUE

REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Ottawa Police Services Board receive this report for information.

RECOMMANDATIONS DU RAPPORT

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

BACKGROUND

The Police Services Act, Ontario Regulation 3/99 Adequacy and Effectiveness of Police Services, s.30(1) requires that every board prepare a business plan at least once every three years to guide the delivery of policing services to the community.

The Ottawa Police Services Board's (Board) 2019-2020 Strategic Direction was approved in June 2019 and guided the Ottawa Police Service (OPS) over the subsequent 18 months, ending in December 2020.

The purpose of this report is to summarize a variety of information and evidence that the OPS has compiled over the past year in order to support the Board in the development of its next Strategic Plan.

The opportunity to refresh and update the strategic priorities for the Service for the next few years comes at a pivotal point in Canadian policing, where the traditional model of policing is being scrutinized and challenged across North America and around the world. The timing also coincides with many other challenges, including being in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, with uncertainty about its duration and future implications for societal, economic and public safety impacts.

To support the development of past strategic plans, the OPS has traditionally engaged expert professional services to conduct public opinion surveys of a representative sample of the population using a stratified random sample of City residents. As well, the OPS and the Board have hosted in-person consultation sessions to provide an opportunity for discussion about strategic priorities.

A new approach to data collection and synthesis was developed, with more emphasis on leveraging existing data and simpler survey methods. A wide variety of activities were undertaken by the OPS to gather, leverage, and synthesize input from a wide range of sources and perspectives including:

- A. Environmental Scan - Ongoing environment scanning on emerging risks, trends, and opportunities in public safety, technology, legal, municipal and other areas;
- B. Crime Trends - Review of recent crime trends and COVID-19 impacts on crime;
- C. Public Input - Leveraging public feedback gathered via:
 - Conversations, Zoom meetings, OPS' Human Rights Forum and deputations at recent Board meetings;
 - Comments in social media channels; and
 - Consultations in the development of Ottawa's Community Safety and Well-Being (CWSB) Plan.
- D. Community Leaders, Partners and Stakeholders - Gathering input from Ottawa's city leaders, the Community Equity Council (CEC), and other community partners and stakeholders via participating in conversations and Zoom meetings, and via conducting online surveys; and
- E. OPS Members - Gathering input from OPS members via conversations and an online engagement survey.
- F. Meetings with City Councillors.
- G. Meetings with leaders in public health, education, housing, social services, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

H. Meetings with neighbourhoods and residents, business improvement associations (BIAs), and NGOs.

I. Meetings with demographic committees (Somali, Muslim, Indigenous).

The OPS has learned a great deal from all of these conversations, consultations, surveys and other sources. It is clear that policing needs to evolve and change to better-meet the needs of our community and in recognition of a changing societal landscape. All of these inputs have shaped ideas for new initiatives and strategies to help the OPS to improve our organization, our culture, and our ability to serve the community over the coming years, and have helped us to identify three primary areas of focus for the OPS for 2021 and beyond:

- A. **Public Trust** - to ensure our thinking, actions and systems will improve member trust and public trust.
- B. **Duty of Care** – to demonstrate for the community and one another that we truly care for each other.
- C. **Community Safety and Well-Being** – to work in partnership with community to co-produce improved community safety and well-being.

Underlying all of these efforts will be a focus on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) and efforts to ensure that every community member, as well as every Service member, feels respected, supported and accepted, no matter their background, status or circumstances.

In November 2020, the OPS passed a “change budget” for 2021 that incorporates the feedback heard from our community, our Board, our community partners and our members to make investments in initiatives that will help us to improve public safety, and contribute to needed social changes, cultural changes, and community building and resiliency efforts.

One component of the budget is funding for the implementation of a Mental Health Strategy to be led and co-developed by mental health experts, partners, and community members including those with lived experience in order to improve coordination and access to mental health services.

The “change budget” also includes an investment in community policing through the expansion of our Neighbourhood Resource Teams (NRTs) into additional neighbourhoods, this strengthened community partnerships, worked with local residents on crime prevention and solving crimes, and improved community resilience to social disorder at a neighbourhood level.

Another key investment in the OPS' change budget relates to enhanced training for OPS officers. This will include the rollout of an EDI training toolkit that will focus on de-escalation and anti-Indigenous/anti-black racism across all of the OPS' internal systems and external services.

Within the OPS, the change budget will create five new investigators to be added to the Sexual Assault and Child Abuse (SACA) Section and the Partner Assault Section. Two of these positions will be coordinator positions to support the Violence Against Women (VAW) community and the Indigenous community to specifically help to advance the recommendations of the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls report.

The investment in the 2021 OPS budget will also allow for the addition of four positions to support the health, safety and wellness of OPS members.

This report summarizes the key insights from the various sources of information that led us to selecting these areas of focus.

DISCUSSION

The challenges and constraints posed by the COVID-19 pandemic required some adjustments from the typical planning activities undertaken by the OPS. This includes the decision to change plans to conduct a survey with a stratified random sample of city residents in favour of relying more heavily on recently collected public input from Community Safety and Well-being consultations held in 2020, as well as comments in social media channels, and other public input offered in various conversations; Zoom meetings, OPS' Human Rights Forum and deputations at all Board meetings.

Methodology

Where possible, the OPS leveraged and utilized existing recent data sources and used a variety of methods and sources in order to reach a diverse range of stakeholders and community voices. This included conducting brief surveys in the Fall of 2020 to supplement this information and provide a quick snapshot of perceptions of three other specific groups:

- Community Stakeholders: Online survey completed by 7,054 respondents;
- Mayor and City Councillors: Online survey (15 respondents, 65% response rate); and
- OPS Members: Online survey (1,089 respondents, 56% response rate).

The community partner and stakeholder survey was initially circulated to the OPS' Partnership In Action (PIA) contacts in order to hear from a broad range of community

stakeholder groups, but was subsequently shared broadly on social media (Twitter and Facebook). This survey, that was originally intended for an audience of community stakeholders, generated over 7,000 responses, the majority of whom (91%) identified as individual residents versus as a representative of a community stakeholder group.

The larger than anticipated sample and sharing of the survey link is an indication of the level of interest in the public in providing input. However, it is important to note that the method of survey distribution and lack of sampling and control features mean that the results cannot be considered to be representative of the population and cannot be directly compared to past public opinion research results. The findings of the survey must be interpreted with caution and considered along with other available evidence.

KEY RESULTS

Environmental Scanning

Policing is delivered in a dynamic and complex environment, and there is a need to continuously monitor and make adjustments accordingly. On an ongoing basis, the OPS conducts environmental scanning to identify any emerging risks, trends, and opportunities in public safety, technology, legal, municipal and other areas. A brief summary of some of the most relevant and important issues and trends impacting the OPS is provided below.

Political

Various policy changes in the policing sector and at the municipal, provincial and national level impact the OPS. This includes:

- Policing Sector: Priorities of the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police (CACCP) and Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police (OACP);
- Municipal: City's Strategic Priorities and issues such as discussion regarding gun violence, CCTV pilot, opioid crisis and supervised injection sites, systemic racism in institutions and appointment of anti-racism liaison to City Council, development of the Community Safety and Well-Being (CSWB) plan.

Economic

Budget pressures impacting both the City of Ottawa and the OPS are important considerations. This includes:

- City: tax rate increase, budget pressures and impact of COVID-19; and
- OPS: increasing cost of policing while facing increased budget pressures, including costs relating to COVID-19, and need to find efficiencies.

Social

Broad societal trends, movements and changing demographics have a big impact on the OPS, including:

- Protests/movements and calls for social justice reform relating to police use of force/authority and anti-racism (e.g. protests held in Ottawa and across North America such as George Floyd, Black Lives Matter, etc.);
- Protests/movements and calls for defunding/police reform and changes in funding as well as roles and responsibilities of various community and social service agencies;
- #MeToo movement and reporting of sexual harassment and violence;
- Increased/changing expectations of the public (e.g. increased public use of social media, digital activism, demands for accountability and transparency, etc.); and
- Changes in City of Ottawa population size, demographics, geographic distribution.

Technology

Technological trends can impact the OPS include those that impact how crimes are committed as well as policing tools that are available to address crime. These include:

- Increasing cybercrime, identity theft, 3D printed guns/ghost guns, cryptocurrency; and
- The availability of various technological tools that need to be assessed in terms of privacy impacts and efficacy, including CCTV, drones, artificial intelligence, body-worn cameras, red light cameras and photo radar, automatic licence plate readers, etc.

Legal/Legislative

Various legislative and regulatory changes have a significant impact on policing. This includes:

- Bill C-68 Comprehensive Ontario Police Services Act;
- Bill C-75 Amending Criminal Code, Youth Criminal Justice Act; and
- Decriminalization of certain drugs.

Environmental

Environmental changes and issues can also impact policing in many ways. This includes:

- Pandemics such as COVID-19, with implications for enforcement, service delivery, budget, crime patterns and volume, public and member health and wellness, IT requirements; and
- Changing environment/weather patterns (e.g. in recent years, flooding, tornadoes, extreme heat and cold, etc.).

CRIME TRENDS

Past 5 Years

When we examine crime trends over the past five years, the picture is concerning. There has been an overall increase in crime by more than 30% over the last five years, consistent with trends across Canada. The severity of crime has also increased by 23% in Ottawa over the past five years. Again similar to other cities across Canada, the prevalence of guns on our streets and the number of shootings increased by over 60% over the last five years despite all of our efforts and successes in seizing crime guns and partnership activities focused on prevention.

COVID-19 Impact on Crime/Calls for service

COVID-19 has had a significant impact on the community in many ways, including an impact on the volume, types and severity of crime. Prior to the State of Emergency in Ontario due to the COVID-19 pandemic, demand for service had been increasing starting in 2019 and continuing through the first quarter of 2020. However, with businesses and facilities closed and residents staying home to curb community transmission, demand for service declined in the second quarter, and then increased to historical norms in the third quarter when the government's reopening plan was instituted.

The pandemic also had an impact on the types of crimes reported. Though shootings and homicides declined by 40% in 2020, we saw an increase in other crimes. For instance, while many residents were complying with public health guidelines and staying home, we have seen increased speeding and dangerous driving on our roadways, and commercial break and enters also increased when businesses were closed.

Unfortunately, we heard from community partners and frontline agencies that for some residents, spending more time at home led to increased partner and child assault risks, though reports to police on these types of incidents are down.

Analysis is still being conducted to provide the full picture on 2020 crime trends and the impact of COVID-19, and it is difficult to know what the longer term trend in crime will be as we continue as a community to contend with the pandemic, with a great deal of uncertainty about the duration of the pandemic and future repercussions for public safety and wellbeing.

FEEDBACK FROM THE PUBLIC, CITY LEADERS, AND COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS/PARTNERS

Through a variety of methods, including input from conversations, meetings, social media posts, the Community Safety and Well-being (CSWB) Plan consultations, and via our own city leaders and community stakeholder surveys, we've received a great deal of feedback from residents, community stakeholders and elected officials about policing and its role in our community. There have been a variety of opinions offered. Some community members, city leaders and community stakeholders and partners have recognized and appreciated recent progress and achievements of the OPS. So we have heard both extremes – both less policing and more policing.

In some cases, residents called for more police in their neighbourhoods: expansion of our Neighbourhood Resource Teams (NRTs), Community Police Officers and Guns and Gangs officers. Others called for different policing reforms via EDI and integrated services. Some called for defunding or even abolition of the police.

Overall we heard calls for significant reform or improvement of policing – from how we currently deliver service, to how we utilize our resources, how we are trained and who we hire, how we interact with the public and other City agencies, and the need for improvement in our organizational culture and accountability mechanisms.

There are many arguments and rationales provided and many inspiring and difficult stories that have been shared. Compliments are always welcomed, criticisms (even legitimate ones) are difficult things to hear as a police service. It is vitally important that we hear all of these opinions and stories, and in order to understand and improve.

There is a recognition in policing that a large proportion of the calls police are called to respond to are non-criminal in nature, and that despite considerable training in de-escalation, police training cannot match the expertise of mental health professionals, an immediate reduction in municipal funding for policing would not achieve the desired outcomes.

In our Community and Stakeholder survey and City Leaders surveys, the vast majority of this non-representative sample, representing about nine in 10 respondents, called for reform or improvement of the OPS. These calls for reform or improvement have also

been made in discussions and meetings, and in social media posts by a great number of residents, City leaders, community partners and stakeholders.

Overarching Themes in Comments About Priorities for OPSB/OPS			
	Mayor and Councillors	Community Stakeholders	Individual Residents
Reform and improve	88%	95%	88%
Defund	9%	5%	13%
Abolish	0%	1%	2%
Positive comments	3%	1%	<1%

Note: numbers do not add to 100% as some respondents mentioned comments under more than one theme.

A wide array of suggested improvements and reforms have been suggested through these various sources of input, including:

- Crime-related – crime reduction, focus on particular types of crime, crime prevention, investigation
- Partnerships – strengthening partnerships and working more closely with partners
- Training – enhanced training for officers re. mental health, communication and de-escalation, diversity and inclusion, sexual violence
- Relationship-building – strengthening relationships with the public, particularly with vulnerable and diverse populations
- Increased presence & visibility – more police presence in particular communities (particularly on foot or bike), more interaction with community

While the input is varied, the OPS has heard loud and clear that significant change is needed to be more effective, equitable and ethical. We are listening, learning and committed to changing as an organization, and have begun implementing many changes and new strategies. However, there is much work left to do and this input will help guide these changes.

Perceptions of Safety and Crime and Disorder Concerns

The Community Stakeholder survey included questions about perceptions of safety and crime and disorder concerns. Survey respondents who participated as individual residents were slightly more satisfied with their perceived personal safety from crime

compared with community stakeholder respondents (57% versus 53% very satisfied/satisfied), though that leaves a significant proportion of both groups that were dissatisfied with their safety from crime. Other anecdotal feedback in meetings, conversations and via social media posts remain consistent.

When asked whether crime had increased at the city-level and at the community/ward/ neighbourhood-level, opinions were mixed with some perceiving crime had increased, others believing that crime had decreased or remained constant. This mixed opinion and uncertainty is understandable given that COVID-19 pandemic has influenced crime patterns so that some crimes increased while others decreased.

Survey respondents were asked to indicate which crime and disorder issues were of greatest concern at both the city-level and community/ward/ neighbourhood-level. The issues of greatest concern identified in the surveys were: speeding and aggressive driving, violence against women, gun violence, gangs and street-level crime, sexual assault, hate incidents and crimes, and distracted driving. This again is quite similar to feedback gathered from other sources such as conversations, meetings and social media posts.

Quality of Service

The surveys conducted by the OPS asked respondents to rate the quality of service from the OPS. Individual resident respondents were least satisfied with its quality of service (27% were very satisfied/satisfied) while community stakeholders and the Mayor and Councillor respondents were slightly more satisfied (40% and 43% were very satisfied/satisfied, respectively). These survey results suggest there is much room for improvement to increase perceptions of service quality, which is consistent with other sources of information.

Police Legitimacy and Trust

The OPS surveys asked respondents to rate their level of agreement with a variety of statements relating to the OPS and to rate their overall level of trust in the OPS. In terms of trust, the Mayor and City Councillor respondents expressed greater trust in the OPS (43% rated trust as very high/high) compared with community stakeholder and individual residents (31% vs 22%, respectively).

As shown in the table below, community stakeholders and the Mayor and Councillor respondents rated the OPS more positively compared with individual resident respondents. However, it is deeply concerning that there is such low agreement with statements relating to delivering quality, objective, bias-free policing in a respectful and compassionate manner, using force and authority only when necessary. The survey

itself, however, was a non-representative sample and was conducted in early September on the heels of a summer of various protests and social movements both locally and across North America that may have influenced perceptions of the OPS.

However, the relatively low level of agreement with statements in these surveys, combined with anecdotal comments in various other meetings, conversations and online comments suggest a decline in the trust and perceptions of police legitimacy in Ottawa, particularly amongst vulnerable populations.

Proportion who strongly agreed/agreed with Statements about OPS			
	Mayor and Councillors	Community Stakeholders	Individual Residents
Makes decisions based on facts	58%	39%	25%
Enforces the law consistently	33%	37%	22%
Provides the same quality of service to all residents	8%	25%	18%
Treats people with respect	25%	40%	27%
Shows care and concern for the welfare of citizens	33%	41%	28%
Deals with the things that matter to people in this city	33%	40%	25%
Uses force and authority appropriately	27%	37%	23%
Is sensitive to the needs of different cultures	33%	27%	19%
Is sensitive to the needs of people suffering from mental health issues	41%	27%	18%
Is an open and transparent organization	42%	20%	15%

Trust is an essential foundation in policing. Without the trust of our community and partners, the Service is not able to effectively work with residents on preventing or solving crimes, and ultimately contributing to community safety and well-being.

These perceptions are why the OPS is redoubling its efforts to strengthen public trust and to demonstrate in every interaction with the public that we understand and identify with the issues our community faces and will help, in conjunction with our partners and community, to resolve them. Expanding neighbourhood policing and building social networks will be part of strengthening trust. In addition, the OPS will be enhancing training to strengthen communication and de-escalation skills and ensure that members have greater cultural understanding to better-serve our diverse communities and use the lowest possible police intervention to achieve the best outcomes.

Members

The OPS has been conducting surveys with members to assess engagement and job satisfaction every two to three years since 1995, and the survey conducted in the Fall of 2020 was the ninth survey of members.

The engagement survey is divided into various dimensions. Though there were small but positive shifts in the majority of the dimensions of the engagement survey compared with the last OPS survey in 2018, the level of overall engagement was 43%, representing a 5-point decline in two years.

The top three drivers of engagement that have the biggest impact on overall engagement relate to perceptions of Professional Growth, Organizational Performance, and Executive Command. Interestingly, although overall engagement declined, there were small positive shifts in each of the key drivers of engagement compared with 2018.

The decline in overall engagement appears largely to be due to a decline in the following ratings: employee pride in telling people about being a member of OPS (-11 points versus 2018), likelihood of recommending the OPS as an employer (-6 points versus 2018), and optimism about the organization (-5 points versus 2018).

The impact of various external factors, including criticisms of police and a growing anti-law enforcement movement appear to have overshadowed the impact that internal dynamics and key drivers would normally have to result in a lower overall engagement score.

The decline in overall engagement combined with the fact that the level of engagement varied by demographics and role, indicates that the OPS has work to do to build trust internally as well as externally.

We are overhauling the OPS structure to build a safe, healthy workplace and a culture based on trust where every Service member feels respected and accepted.

CONSULTATION

Included in the range of methods undertaken to support the Board's development of a new Strategic Plan were surveys to the Mayor and City Councillors, as well as community stakeholders and partners as described above.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Costs associated with implementing the strategic action plans are built into the OPS annual operating budget in each of the planning years.

CONCLUSION

The development of the Board's next Strategic Plan requires careful collection and weighing of input from a wide range of sources and perspectives. Strategic planning during a global pandemic poses unique and unprecedented challenges and prompted an adjustment to the data sources and methods of consultation typically used to identify future strategic priorities. However, a combination of methods were used to ensure that broad changes in the operating environment as well as the voices of elected officials, residents, community stakeholders/partners, and members were considered.

Perspectives gathered from surveys of the Mayor and City Councillors, OPS members, and over 7,000 stakeholders provide insights into community sentiment and highlight various concerns. In general, the results suggest that the OPS must increase perceptions of safety, quality of service, level of trust, and police legitimacy amongst external audiences and increase the engagement of OPS members.

Independent of surveys, increased calls for change through various other channels, including conversations, meetings, delegations to the Board during Budget deliberations, and digital activism has brought community and member concerns to the forefront. It is clear from the collective voices that there is a strong desire for change from the status quo.

In 2020, the OPS undertook several new initiatives and changes in service delivery which align with the suggestions for service improvement and reform that have been made. These include, but are not limited to:

- Taking significant action to improve equity, diversity and inclusion;
- Improving frontline service delivery with expanded Neighbourhood Resource Teams;

- Working with partners on a comprehensive CSWB Plan;
- Examining options for diversifying response to persons in crisis;
- Increasing community engagement efforts; and
- Building a Change Budget to support these and future efforts.

However, the OPS recognizes that much more needs to be done. There is a strong commitment to change and improve, in order to fulfill the vision of: Delivering neighborhood policing through trust-based community partnerships that improve community safety and well-being.

In order to achieve this, the OPS will focus in 2021 and beyond on: Building a Service and delivering services where Public Trust, Duty of Care, and Community Well Being becomes the core for how we think and perform our duties.

The Board's ongoing strategic planning process which has been delayed and impacted by the global pandemic will continue, with the preceding to guide the necessary shifts in priorities, actions, and relationships. The OPS awaits direction from the Board about how we can support them in the development of this Strategic Plan and will work to ensure that all goals and objectives are achieved.