

**Chief's verbal for OPSB meeting
November 25, 2019**

Good evening,

I know we have a busy agenda this evening so I have attempted to keep my update brief.

I would like to start off by congratulating Acting Board Chair Sandy Smallwood for being selected for the Order of Ottawa, which recognizes exceptional people here in the city who have made a significant contribution to making life better for everyone who lives here.

While we have only been working together for just a few months, I have seen those qualities that have earned you this recognition.

It's a prestigious award, and well deserved.

Congratulations!

Transition

Over the past month, I have been fully immersed in operations of the Service and out meeting frontline members, both sworn and civilian, as well as the Ottawa community. The passion I have seen and experienced has confirmed for me that my decision to come to Ottawa was the right one.

I want to thank everyone for the welcome and support they have offered my family and I. The executive team and senior officers have been working hard to bring me up to speed on the issues we are facing and the contact I have had with frontline members and residents has been very illuminating in shaping our plans for the future.

There is still a lot of work to do and issues to handle but I know we have the right people and the right level of enthusiasm to take on our challenges.

EDI Action Plan

Last Wednesday, we released two independent reports that we commissioned to continue our leadership work on Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion.

The Diversity Audit was prepared by the audit team from Graybridge Malkam, and the Traffic Stop Race Data Collection Report was prepared by the Ontario Tech/York Team. These reports and presentations are also now available on our website.

There will also be a short presentation this evening about our commitment to moving forward from recommendations to action.

Both reports demonstrate progress and both conclude that we have work to do on this journey towards professional and equitable policing.

The reports contain difficult findings, but they also contain opportunities to address systemic barriers, which will help us to make policing better for everyone – the community and our members.

Bias, racial profiling, and other forms of discrimination exist in society and that means they can exist in policing. These are not easy issues to face in any profession.

I think, however, there's been an over-focus on our frontline officers and their unwillingness or inability to implement bias neutral practices.

I have spoken to many of our officers and I know they are committed to this work. They support a change in our approach that brings in more innovative thinking to address these issues. They also need to know that they have my support and the support of senior officers.

This is an organizational issue that we need to address. It's our own systems that selects these officers, trains them, evaluates them, and deploys them operationally. If there is any failure, it is at an organizational or systemic level, rather than indicative of any deficit for the individual officer.

Many institutions and sectors are doing this work to improve their systems, including policies, procedures, training, and deployment models to name a few. The OPS has been a national leader in this important work and shows much courage in Canadian policing, and I'm proud to be a part of this organization as we continue to make advancements.

In the coming days we will begin developing an action plan with the community and our members that I expect to release in January 2020.

This plan, and the change it will bring, is as much to help the community as it is to assist our members to do their jobs and serve our community in the most effective way possible.

Together we'll make more meaningful progress on EDI by removing barriers and improving our systems. It's about creating a police service that our community and members deserve.

The next opportunity to contribute is at the Annual Human Rights Learning Forum on December 4 - limited space is still available.

I would like to thank the Diversity Audit team and Ontario Tech/York Team for these comprehensive reports. I would also like to thank the community and police members who contributed to the reports through the many meetings, interviews, sessions, and surveys over the last two years.

Gun violence

I want to discuss some of the gun violence our community has been experiencing.

Our investigators have solved all 12 homicides that have occurred this year in Ottawa and our frontline officers are effectively investigating and incarcerating armed and violent offenders. This includes the work of our PIVOT officers who made a routine traffic stop that led to the discovery of illegal drugs and a loaded .45 calibre handgun earlier this month. So far this year we have seized 62 crime guns.

Just last week, we saw a targeted shooting at a west-end gym that left a man in very serious condition in hospital. It was Ottawa's 68th shooting of 2019 and it is a sobering reminder that we need to continue to work with our partners and keep the focus on street and gun violence and its root causes.

For the good of everyone in our city we must work hard to prevent these types of incidents from occurring. And that prevention can only come from a coordinated effort, and a whole-of-community, multi-sectoral solution.

In other words, we must do this together.

I have asked Deputy Chief Bell to begin working with the City and our community partners to develop a more comprehensive approach to reduce street-level violence as well as to increase community safety and well-being.

The development of that strategy is only in its early stages but I expect to have more information by the next Board meeting. It will require the support of our community, the Board, and several levels of government, but we know that it is needed.

We all want the same thing: A safe and healthy community where we can put down roots and raise our families. This type of gun violence runs counter to that goal.

Great work by officers

One of the best parts of this job is hearing about the great work being done by our members.

Having gone out on a couple of patrols already, I am continually impressed by their compassion and professionalism.

In this month's Commendations Report, a resident wrote in to tell us how one of our officers saved her daughter's life. Her daughter had been sexually assaulted and had emotionally broken down. No one had been able to reach her, but the patience and compassion of Constable Jesse Hewitt hit home with her.

The mother wrote us to say she is starting to see a difference in her daughter, because of Constable Hewitt's kindness.

That he took the time to sit and talk with her daughter, and then get to her to hospital, and even gave her his phone number if she needed to talk. Those simple acts of kindness have now made this young lady feel safe enough to go outside again.

The mother wrote "Constable Hewitt is not just another officer, he saved my daughter's life, and for that he will always be a hero to me and my family."

Another resident wrote us after witnessing our officers attending to a suicidal woman on a bridge. They remarked on how patient they were and how they consoled the woman, while one officer remained on the ground to catch her if she jumped.

“The officers truly represent the best of our police service,” the resident wrote.

And that’s only two examples of things that happen that you don’t hear about, but do leave a lasting impact on somebody’s life.

I am constantly approached by residents in this city who are eager to share exceptional experiences they have had with OPS members.

Just last week a woman pulled me aside at an awards ceremony to thank me for the care our officer gave her during a routine domestic dispute call.

Neighbours had called police after there had been a loud argument between her and her husband. The couple had just had a new baby, and both were exhausted, and not coping well.

Our officer sat down with the pair, and helped to calm them both down. The officer could have left after de-escalating the situation, but he took the time to stay and help the couple figure out why they were arguing to begin with.

The woman was grateful for the patience and kindness of our officers and his ability to help her and her husband work through some of their issues. She told me it has changed their relationship and that they are doing much better now.

It's a reminder that kindness does matter, that professionalism and compassion matter, and that everything we do as police officers has an impact, each and every day.

That is my verbal report. I am happy to take any questions.