

**Report to / Rapport au:**

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

**29 April 2019 / 29 avril 2019**

**Submitted by / Soumis par:**

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**SUBJECT: WELLNESS STRATEGY UPDATE**

**OBJET: STRATÉGIE DE MIEUX-ÊTRE: MISE A JOUR**

**REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS**

**That Ottawa Police Services Board receives 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**

In 2012, the Provincial Ombudsman published a review of how the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) and the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services addressed Operational Stress Injuries (OSI). Following the review of the Ombudsman's report, the Ottawa Police Service (OPS) formed a working group in 2013, to review the Ombudsman's recommendations on how to best address OSI in our organization.

In 2013, the OPS Business Plan for 2013-2015 outlined a strategic priority of Engaging and Investing in our People with a goal of having a workplace that puts a priority on the health and wellbeing of its members.

In 2015, OPS entered into working relationships with academic institutions to conduct member research on OPS wellness-related issues including awareness, culture and operational and personal stressors.

On January 25, 2016, the OPS 2016-2018 Business Plan was approved and supported by the Ottawa Police Service Board (the Board) and wellness of our members was declared a top priority.

On April 5, 2016, Bill 163, Ontario's Supporting First Responders Act, was passed enforcing a presumption that Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) diagnosed in First Responders is work-related. This act is part of the province's strategy to help keep our First Responders healthy by providing them with better access to information and treatment. Following that, employers of workers covered under the PTSD presumptive legislation were directed to provide the Ministry of Labour with a PTSD Prevention Plan by April 23, 2017.

The OPS presented its PTSD Prevention Plan to the Board, as endorsed by the HR Committee, receiving approval on March 27th, 2017.

The OPS presented its Wellness Strategy to the Board and received approval on April 24, 2017.

The strategy is based on delivering a foundation of training to reduce the stigma related to mental health issues and promote mental health and resiliency.

In 2017, two Sergeants were dedicated to Wellness—a Resiliency Coordinator and a Peer Support Coordinator—to build trust and awareness acting as wellness advocates and establish programs and initiatives to further the Wellness Strategy's mandate.

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the status of Wellness work at the OPS in the year since the Strategy was approved.

## **DISCUSSION**

Over the past year, further progress has been made in implementing our Action Plan to achieve multi-level change across environment, culture and individual domains. OPS members, both Associations and the Executive have worked together to support and build mental health programming. This continued investment in the health and wellness of all of our members has been increasingly visible and our members are starting to notice and engage positively.

We recognize that occupational and non-occupational psychological disability claims are growing. Despite the number of programs available to members, programs that address mental well-being may still be viewed as carrying a stigma that may prevent members from seeking support.

It is also important to recognize and understand that as we bring attention to the importance of self-care surrounding overall health, with a specific focus on mental health, the OPS may experience an increase in absenteeism, presenteeism, accommodation and use of various internal and external programs and services.

Although this may create a pressure point for the OPS in the short term, we also know from meta analysis of studies focused on prevention demonstrates a \$3 - \$5 return on investment for every dollar spent. We are starting to see a shift in 'forward thinking' organizations that recognize more than return on investment but rather the value on investment that reaches beyond reduction in absenteeism, to intangible values like job satisfaction, motivation, reducing turnover and improving engagement at work.

## **ROAD TO MENTAL READINESS**

OPS members continue to attend Road to Mental Readiness (R2MR) training, originally developed by the Department of National Defence (DND) with the goals of providing resources to employees and leaders to manage and support colleagues who may be experiencing a mental health challenge, as well as to promote positive mental health in workplaces.

As part of the comprehensive Wellness Strategy, R2MR training provides tools, shared language and resources to manage and support employees who may be experiencing a mental health issue. The model also assists members and supervisors with maintaining their own mental health and encourages promotion of positive mental health in all employees—reducing the stigma surrounding mental health.

In 2018, 1,402 members completed the four-hour (non-supervisory) course.

Additionally, 304 members completed the eight-hour (supervisory) course.

An updated model of the training by DND was introduced to the OPS in 2018 allowing us to convert 37 facilitators to the new DND model and as of the time of writing this report, 426 members have been provided the new one-hour refresher-training course.

## **PEER SUPPORT**

Having researched the importance of peer support, one of our first priorities was to build a Peer Support program. This program allows members to have a pool of trusted resources to access.

'Peer Support' occurs when an individual who has struggled with a challenge affecting their health (like a divorce, or a high needs family member) makes themselves available to support another who is faced with a similar challenge.

In July 2018, OPS launched the Peer Support program with 37 fully-trained Peer Supporters.

Between July and December 2018, 44 peers (active, retired or veteran members; family members) were supported by our Peer Supporters. The nature of the interactions between the peer and Peer Supporter included personal/family mental health and/or work-related challenges.

We know that our members need reliable support, by people who understand them best and can relate to their own experiences. The majority of the interactions with our Peer Supporters occur outside of work hours and we are grateful for their commitment to their peers and genuine desire to see all members, family members, retirees and veterans in better health.

## **RESILIENCY**

Resiliency is built and strengthened in many ways. Although we know that good nutrition, sleep hygiene, physical fitness and positive social supports are key to building and maintaining resiliency. The strategies that are chosen are individual and will be dependent on situational circumstances. It is because of this understanding that OPS is cognizant about offering and building upon our current program portfolio (e.g. Fitness assessments and Early Intervention).

We also are aware that our personal and professional lives often impact one another. For this reason, we are also building programs that can be accessed by our families and OPS veterans and retirees as well (e.g. Employee & Family Assistance Program, R2MR and Peer Support).

In 2018, the Wellness program was pleased to announce that psychologist Dr. Phil Ritchie, agreed to spend two days per month at 19 Fairmont in order to speak to our members about their mental health.

Dr. Ritchie has extensive experience working with First Responders and recently retired from Children's Hospital Eastern Ontario.

Members can visit Dr. Ritchie by appointment or on a drop-in basis.

In 2018, the OPS launched also looked at ways to expand training for resiliency, including the consideration of financial planning as a way to reduce stress.

## **EARLY INTERVENTION**

An Early Intervention (EI) program is one of the priorities under the Resiliency Coordinator and is currently being run as a pilot project.

EI is a system which monitors workplace data to help to identify members who may be in need of assistance to allow for a timely supervisory check-in.

Workplace criteria were chosen for monitoring, and thresholds for each of those criteria are established. Criteria identified for the pilot are in 3 types of categories: complaints, overtime and critical incidents. The complaints thresholds are defined as: two (2) OIPRD in three (3) months, one (1) Chief's complaint and/or one (1) Special Investigation Unit (SIU) event (either subject or witness officer). The overtime threshold (including paid duty) is defined as more than fifty (50) hours of overtime in thirty (30) days or a hundred and forty (140) hours in ninety (90) days. Critical incidents are three (3) identified incidents in thirty (30) days or six (6) in ninety (90) days.

When a member exceeds one or more of the thresholds an analysis is undertaken and a notice is sent to the member's first and second line supervisor (i.e.: for a Constable to his/her Sergeant and Staff Sergeant). The supervisor has a sit down meeting with the member to advise them that they have surpassed a threshold and then offers the member assistance. The member can chose to accept or decline any assistance.

EI is a completely voluntary and confidential program that is non-disciplinary and will have no impact on a member's performance evaluation.

2018 saw the formation of a working group to help shape the development of the EI pilot, specifically the determination of thresholds for each data category, methods for communicating the program to the involved sections and the development of an EI form for supervisor use.

The pilot project will follow Frontline D Platoon and E Platoon, including their Communications Centre elements, the Sexual Assault and Child Abuse Unit, as well as the Forensic Identification Section. The pilot began in February 2019 and is scheduled to last six months. Upon completion of the pilot, results will be analyzed to make adjustments to the program in anticipation of a staggered rollout to the rest of the OPS in 2020.

Successful EI programs have been shown to lower public complaints/civil suits and to increase engagement.

## **THE REAL YOU OPS WELLNESS PROGRAM**

The Real You Program was expanded recently and is now available for family members and for retired members.

The Real You also opened a wellness centre at 1272 Wellington Street West in January 2019 that will is open to the public. A number of spots are set aside specifically for OPS family members and OPS retired members which are covered by the OPS program.

In 2018, there were:

60 new registrants

22 civilians—males: 10, females: 12

38 sworn—males: 25, females: 13

31 active maintenance program participants

22 unique nutrition workshop registrations, of which, many registered for more than one workshop

Overall, our members have experienced the following results:

- 77% reported increased energy
- 69% reported improved body fat/weight
- 74% reported improved strength
- 65% reported improved mood
- 54% reported improved sleep
- 47% reported decreased pain and headaches

Prevention is key to good health. The Real You has educated and guided over 700 OPS members on how to live a healthier, happier life. Their team of experts are helping our members make healthy lifestyle choices while assessing their overall health.

### **EMPLOYEE & FAMILY ASSISTANCE PROVIDER (EFAP)**

**Our EFAP provider (Homewood Health) continues to provide programs and services to active members and their dependents. This year saw an expansion to offering services to our OPS retirees. Utilization rate has remained fairly stable throughout 2018 at about 4%.**

### **NEXT STEPS**

2019 will focus on continuing to build on the programs that we begun in 2018 (e.g. Peer Support, EI). We will also begin to focus on Fatigue Management. The purpose of this work will be to target the individual and organizational factors which contribute to member fatigue by giving members' tools to manage their fatigue and promote sleep hygiene in a holistic way; and providing the organization with tools to help change the culture to support fatigue management, manage the costs of fatigue, and promote member health and wellness.

Along with this important work, we will also continue to build relationships internally and externally which serve the health and wellness of our members, retirees and families well. One of these relationships is the partnership that has been forged with Wounded Warriors Canada.

Wounded Warriors Canada is a national mental health charity that funds the development and delivery of innovative programs to assist military members, veterans, first responders and their families.

On March 5, 2019, Chief Charles Bordeleau signed an Memorandum Of Understanding with Wounded Warriors Canada to provide OPS members and their families with an additional layer of mental health support. Everyone's journey with mental health is different and this is another tool we can now access to give our veterans, retirees, members and their families options to explore ways to improve their mental health. This partnership will enable us to steer our people towards different programs and services in addition to what we provide.

Other military and first responder organizations have developed similar partnerships with Wounded Warriors Canada and the OPS is happy to be partnered with an organization with a proven track record of helping individuals and families dealing with mental health challenges.

This is only one example of the relationships that are built external to OPS, which benefits the health and wellbeing our members, retirees and families.

## **CONSULTATION**

Not applicable

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The Wellness Strategy is supported by the approved OPS Budget.

## **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

Document 1 – Wellness Strategy

## **CONCLUSION**

Policing is a complex and demanding profession. The demands of the profession along with media and public perceptions merge to create a challenging work environment.

Although changing culture will take time, the building of programs and supports will serve in creating a culture of Wellness.

There is still much work to be done in order to sustain a healthy culture for current and future employees from hire to post-retire. However, our goals remain unchanged to develop an environment that is lead strategically with dedicated resources, as well as with improved policies and programs that support our organization's wellness vision; to foster a culture with increased trust, reduced stigma, and improved practices around wellness; and to support individuals and their families in their wellness journey to be more aware, engaged and motivated.

Our members are instrumental in demonstrating the need for Wellness programming to continue to grow at the OPS. As an example, they directly contributed to the design, development and rollout of the Peer Support program.

In October 2018, many members participated in activities and seminars related to First Responders Appreciation Week in partnership with Ottawa Fire and Ottawa Paramedics. These types of activities and events outside of work are contributing influencers that will help shift our culture to a more 'wellness aware' environment.

In 2018, we continued to reach out to other organizations that have, or are developing, various wellness-related programs to learn, share information, researching practices and creating opportunities for collaboration will maximize efficiencies for delivery of services, along with support of our City partners and community organizations.

We look forward to continuing this work to improve the quality of members' lives and to enhance their ability to do their job well.