

Report to / Rapport au:

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

27 April 2020 / 27 avril 2020

Submitted by / Soumis par:

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SUBJECT: RESPONSE TO MOTION ON MEASURES TO CURB GUN VIOLENCE

**OBJET: RÉPONSE DU SERVICE DE POLICE D'OTTAWA À LA REQUÊTE SUR
LES MESURES POUR FREINER LA VIOLENCE LIÉE AUX ARMES À FEU**

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

On June 26, 2019, Ottawa City Councillor Rawlson King of Rideau-Rockliffe Ward tabled a motion at Ottawa City Council that asked Council to approve a series of measures designed to curb gun violence in the capital as a complement to the current Street and Gang Violence Strategy. Specifically, the motion asked City Council to:

1. Request that the Ottawa Police Service (OPS) put a larger focus on proactive, community policing, along with a greater emphasis on sustained partnerships with social service organization that work with vulnerable youth to help prevent them from getting involved in violent crime;
2. Request that the OPS examines the implementation of a voluntary gun buy-back program, similar to that implemented by the Toronto Police Service;

3. Request that the Mayor write to the Federal Government on behalf of City Council requesting that:
 - the sale and possession of handguns in the City of Ottawa be banned; and
 - firearms regulations and penalties for illegal gun possession and trafficking be strengthened; and
 - the Federal Government review rules related to bail for people charged with gun crimes; and
 - the Federal Government provide additional funding for community resources to help get to the root of gun violence in Ottawa.
4. Request that the Mayor write a letter to the Provincial Government to ban the sale and possession of handguns and handgun ammunition in the City of Ottawa; and
5. Forward certified copies of this resolution upon its potential approval to both Federal and Provincial elected officials throughout the Ottawa region.

The motion cited the 78 total shooting incidents that took place in 2018 in Ottawa, resulting in six deaths, as well as gun bans that were adopted in 2018 by both Toronto City Council (which banned the sale of handguns and ammunition) and Montreal City Council (which banned the sale, possession, and use of handguns and assault rifles, with exceptions for police, military and other authorized entities).

Councillor King's motion was referred to the Ottawa Police Services Board (Board) for debate. On July 22, 2019, the Board directed the OPS to examine ways to reduce gun violence by studying the use of guns and gun crimes and looking best-practices across Canada. The results of that work—which also assessed the efficacy of gun bans and CCTV cameras in crime prevention—are contained in this report.

DISCUSSION

There is one central lesson that gun violence and other complex public safety issues (including events like the COVID-19 pandemic) has taught all of us, it is the critical importance of working together towards a common goal.

The purpose of this report is to discuss our overall community policing response strategy, which is built around neighbourhood policing, crime prevention, gun violence suppression and collaboration with our partners.

We are continuing to work with City services and agencies across the city to identify ways to work together for the benefit of all Ottawa residents – but especially those who live in some of Ottawa's most at-risk areas. There is a well-established connection between the

underlying socio-economic challenges in a particular neighbourhood to community safety and well-being.

The more cohesive, resilient, and economically self-sufficient a community is the less likely it will be at high risk for violent street crime – including gun violence. The OPS is committed to working with the City of Ottawa, along with other committed community stakeholders, to build stronger, healthier and safer communities.

We continue to move forward with an aggressive comprehensive strategy to address both the root causes and the symptoms of violent street crimes. The cornerstone of this new approach, of course, is collaboration. We continue to work in a more coordinated way across the board, both within our organization, and with our city partners and local not-for-profit partners and community stakeholders.

Current State

The social fabrics and networks within any community, as well as the safety and well-being of those communities, involve complex, dynamic relationships. A single, traumatic incident can shake the image of a neighbourhood and the perception of safety in that community. At other times, it is a combination of factors—disorder, neglect, negative circumstances—that, if left unchecked, can lead to a decline in neighbourhood cohesion and sense of belonging, which, in turn, affects perceptions of safety, optimism, and social and cultural freedoms.

Overlaying this are concerns about over-policing, de-policing, surveillance in public spaces, trust, confidence, resiliency, and reassurance.

Gang activity is continually evolving. It is no longer geographically or neighbourhood-based; it is now about networks of people buying and selling commodities like drugs and guns. In other words, it is driven by profit. This is a trend in many other cities and regions across the country (i.e. – Surrey, B.C., which is very similar in population and geography to Ottawa).

The majority of Ottawa residents who have firearms acquired and possess them legally - they are decent, law-abiding people. The vast majority of firearms involved in local street violence are crime guns that were illegally acquired (often smuggled across the U.S./Canada border) and used in the commission of a criminal act.

Street and gun violence remains at an unacceptably high level in Ottawa - in both our urban and rural communities. It affects all residents of the nation's capital but it is disproportionately impacting our most marginalized communities

Fear is increasing within our geographic communities that are suffering most from shootings and street violence, as well as demographic communities that have long-standing trust and confidence issues with the police. Currently in Ottawa there are roughly 400 people involved in gun and gang activity that the OPS is monitoring, managing and/or interdicting.

The OPS remains committed to the four-pillar approach to reducing and/or eliminating gun violence in partnership that was established in partnership with Crime Prevention Ottawa (CPO). This strategy is comprised of:

- **Neighbourhood Cohesion:** Building resilient children and families in affected areas through positive relationships.
- **Prevention:** Leveraging inclusive and preventative approaches through social development, education and community policing.
- **Intervention:** Identifying intervention opportunities for children, youth and adults, including those most at risk.
- **Enforcement and Suppression:** Traditional targeted, sustained enforcement initiatives.

CPO includes the following community partners; United Neighbours, Time For Change, Post-Incident Support Networks, the Ontario Justice Education network, the Youth Outreach Workers program, the Ottawa Community Youth Diversion program, the Ottawa Child & Youth Initiative, the OPS's Youth in Policing program, Youturn, and On Point: Supporting Families.

The CPO strategy was advanced in October 2019, when the OPS launched the first iteration of the Neighbourhood Resource Teams (NRTs) in three high-priority areas—Vanier/Overbrook, Heron Gate/South End, and Carlington/Caldwell. These NRTs significantly increased police presence in their assigned neighbourhoods, while improving the ability of the OPS to assess and address community concerns about crime and social disorder.

Community Safety and Well-Being Plan (CSWB)

We continue to work with the City-led Community Safety and Well-Being (CSWB) planning team, which is identifying cross-sectoral approaches to community-based safety issues, including crime and social disorder problems. This planning is based around a collaborative approach between City, social services, community agencies and police partners and is designed to develop cooperative solutions to the challenges our communities face. This comprehensive, system-level approach to creating safer

communities in Ottawa is vital to the success of our overall public safety efforts and is the basis for the platform the OPS is taking on these issues.

The OPS and the City of Ottawa also launched the “Integrated Neighbourhood Service Teams” (INST) in the fall of 2019. The mandate of the INSTs is to maximize the impact of community development efforts for neighbourhoods and individuals facing the most complex needs. INSTs are designed to identify and address service gaps, break down navigational barriers, and improve the coordination and delivery of City services and infrastructures.

Over the course of 2019 and into the first quarter of 2020, the OPS has significantly stepped up its efforts in community policing, crime prevention, gang suppression, high risk offender management and crime gun interdictions – all supported by stronger more integrated community partnerships.

There are some early signs that these 2019 efforts are having a positive effect on street violence and firearm related incidents:

- In 2019, shootings were down 6% over 2018, and homicides decreased by 18%
- Proactive calls increased by 161% in 2019 (up 1,946 from 745 in 2018)
- The number of people being charged by the Guns & Gangs unit increased 116%, to 156 in 2019 from 72 in 2018
- Charges laid grew by 38% to 679 in 2019 from 490 in 2018
- The number of guns seized so far in 2020 has increased by 66%
- As of April 14, shootings are down 55% from same period in 2019
- Overall shootings and homicides involving firearms have been driven down to 2016 levels while crime gun seizures have been going up to 2016 levels

Future State

Frontline officers in Ottawa have worked courageously and hard every day with their community partners. While we can note some success in the police and community efforts to prevent and suppress street violence there is more we need to do to protect our communities - more and different methods to prevent street violence as well as to investigate, charge, prosecute, incarcerate and, hopefully, rehabilitate the violent offenders.

The following are all elements of the OPS’ strategy to reduce violent street crimes.

These initiatives are currently underway:

- Support the City of Ottawa in completing and fully implementing the new *Police Services Act* requirement that every regional and municipal government in Ontario implement a CSWB plan
- Implement accelerated hiring strategy to increase the diversity, quality and capacity of our uniform patrol officers, NRTs, crime prevention/School Resource Officers (SROs), gun & gangs investigators, drug investigators, intelligence operators and crime analysts.
- Double the number of NRT deployments to three additional neighbourhoods (ByWard Market/Lowertown in May 2020, and in Centretown and Bayshore by Fall 2020), using existing resources approved in the 2020 OPS budget.
- Improve intelligence-led crime, traffic and social disorder operations to better coordinate all police crime prevention, community safety and well-being related operations – specifically those that impact the people, places and firearms products that are directly involved in gun crime.
- Improve joint forces operations that target gun smugglers trafficking illegal firearms across the U.S./Canada border into eastern Ontario, then supplying these illegal guns to criminals in Ottawa and the across the province

We will highlight two of the initiatives that most directly align with the core of Councilor King's motion; 'Neighbourhood Resource Teams (NRTs)' and Neighbourhood Engagement Safety Tables.

2020 - Neighbourhood Resource Teams

The OPS has committed to doubling the number of NRTs, as well as making improvements to the current model of NRT deployments based on the recommendations from Dr. Linda Duxbury and her team at Carleton University who are conducting an independent evaluation of the program. The information collected from this assessment will inform the evolution of the program. This will ensure that key activities are defined and that goals are set and met to improve overall community safety.

The NRTs are dedicated exclusively to their assigned neighbourhoods for a minimum of two years in order to build and strengthen relationships within the community. These

experienced officers, who have been given specialized training (including specific cultural training), will be visible and accessible while on foot and bike patrol.

The NRTs will also work in an integrated way with community partners, leaders and stakeholders—including residents, not-for-profit organizations, business associations, and city staff—to enhance safety initiatives using an approach tailored to each community’s needs. Each NRT will also be allotted a dedicated complement SROs, Community Police Officers (CPOs) and Traffic officers.

2021 – Neighbourhood Engagement Safety Tables (NEST)

The OPS is developing a new integrated service-delivery model to support the City of Ottawa’s CSWB as well as the OPS NRT program. The Neighbourhood Engagement and Safety Tables (NEST) model is based on research that promotes such integrated “hub” systems as a best-practice for police and community to improve crime prevention, community safety and well-being.

The OPS NEST strategy would be embedded within the City of Ottawa’s overall CSWB plan to ensure full alignment with City agencies as well as the vast network of community based organizations across Ottawa. NEST integrates city services and other partners and service providers. Further, OPS NESTs would be implemented in each of our six NRT neighbourhoods to allow our NRTs to work in a more coordinated and collaborative way with local community stakeholders to reassure, revitalize, and build resiliency at the individual/family, neighbourhood and community levels.

NEST would also help strengthen the role of, and expand relationships with, Ottawa Community Housing, agencies that provide social and health services (i.e., Boys & Girls Club, Youth Services Bureau, Community Health Centres), Education, and OPS advisory groups such as the Community Equity Council.

The NEST program would be evidence-based and be evaluated against measured outcomes. It would run in collaboration with each community, leverage existing community assets, and be managed by integrated, multi-disciplinary and sector teams made up of well trained and culturally competent staff. See Document 1.

Other Options Considered – Not Implemented

The following are some additional street violence reduction options that have been considered but are not recommended for implementation:

Gun Buy Back Programs

In the past, the OPS has tried programs like Pixels for Pistols, which offered digital cameras in exchange for guns in 2012, but this is not considered a best-practice for

crime prevention. Evidence suggests they do not lead to a reduction in gun violence because the guns collected are generally not the type used in committing crimes, and Ottawa residents who want to turn in legal firearms can already do so. It is important to note that buy-back/amnesty programs also take considerable resources to operate, including officer time and the cost of the monetary rewards.

CCTV Cameras

There are a wide variety of publicly and privately owned CCTV cameras in the city. While the OPS is not opposed to CCTV cameras, they have not been proven to be an evidence-based best-practice for crime prevention (especially prevention of violent crimes). While they have some greater benefit for post-crime investigations, the OPS would rather invest financial resources for CCTV into CSWB, NRT, INST and/or NEST initiatives.

Councillor King's Motion

Here are the specific OPS's responses to Councilor Rawlson King's motion:

1. Request that the OPS puts a larger focus on proactive, community policing along with a greater emphasis on sustained partnerships with social service organizations that work with vulnerable youth to help prevent them from getting involved in violent crime; **(NOTE: Reference above re "CSWB, NRT, INST and NEST")**
2. Request that the OPS examine the implementation of a voluntary gun buy-back program similar to one implemented by the Toronto Police Service; **(NOTE: Reference above re "Gun Buy Back Programs")**
3. Request that the Mayor write to the Federal Government on behalf of City Council requesting that:
 - a) the sale and possession of handguns in the City of Ottawa be banned; and
 - b) firearms regulations and penalties for illegal gun possession and trafficking be strengthened; and
 - c) the Federal Government review rules related to bail for people charged with gun crimes; and,
 - d) the Federal Government provide additional funding for community resources to help get to the root of gun violence in Ottawa.

(NOTE: These are all options that the City of Ottawa can approve and pursue on its own authority. The OPS is aware that items a, b and c are all being considered in the creation and implementation of new federal legislation. The OPS would be

pleased to support the development and submission of both provincial and federal grant applications for funds to address the root causes and symptoms of violent street crime in Ottawa)

4. Request that the Mayor write a letter to the Provincial Government to ban the sale and possession of handguns and handgun ammunition in the City of Ottawa. (**NOTE:** This is a decision for the Mayor of Ottawa)
5. Forward certified copies of this resolution upon its potential approval to both Federal and Provincial elected officials throughout the Ottawa region. (**NOTE:** This is a decision for the OPSB)

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Document 1: Neighbourhood Engagement and Safety Tables

CONCLUSION

Violent street crimes (especially those involving firearms) continue to be a top priority for the Ottawa Police Service. While the OPS and its partners have seen signs of success, we need to do more and do different things to achieve significant and sustainable success. This is a complex and multi-faceted problem with a variety of interrelated underlying factors that cannot be addressed by any one agency or organization working on its own. That is why the OPS is making significant investments in community policing – with focused investments in CSWB, NRT, INST and NEST.

Research shows that a fully integrated systems approach to this type of violence works well—one that involves the joint and sustained efforts of multiple stakeholders, from healthcare specialists and community housing organizations, to youth outreach workers, employment services and police.