

Report to / Rapport au:

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

27 May 2019 / 27 mai 2019

Submitted by / Soumis par:

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**SUBJECT: 2019 GRANT TO BYWARD MARKET STREET AMBASSADOR
PROGRAM**

**OBJET: SUBVENTION 2019 DU PROGRAMME DE RUE AMBASSADEUR AU
MARCHÉ BY**

REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Ottawa Police Services Board continue to endorse the Street Ambassador program and approve the release of a \$10,000.00 contribution to the ByWard Market Business Improvement Area for operation of the program in 2019.

RECOMMANDATIONS DU RAPPORT

Que la Commission des services policiers d'Ottawa continue d'appuyer le programme de rue des ambassadeurs et approuve le versement d'une contribution de 10 000 \$ à la zone d'amélioration commerciale du marché By pour le fonctionnement du programme en 2019.

BACKGROUND

The Street Ambassador program was launched in 1997 to assist the Police and community in dealing with aggressive panhandlers and public drunkenness on Ottawa's downtown streets. This was in response to many calls from concerned citizens and business operators that panhandlers were becoming increasingly more aggressive. The ByWard Market Street Ambassador program has operated for the last nineteen

years in various forms of community partnerships. In the past, responsibilities for recruiting, hiring, training, supervising and administering the program have been shared between the ByWard Market Business Improvement Area, Ottawa Centre for Crime Prevention, Ottawa Police Service, City of Ottawa Markets Management & Chronic Disease/Injury Prevention Section, social service agencies and residents. Since 2004 these responsibilities have been managed by the ByWard Market BIA with the support of City of Ottawa Markets Management. Beginning in 2018, with the dissolution of City of Ottawa Markets Management (Dec. 31 2017), responsibilities for the program fall exclusively to the ByWard Market BIA.

In 2019, six bilingual university students (up from four from 2004-2017) studying criminology, social work or other relatable fields are hired for the program. From May until September, they walk the Market in pairs daily from 10:00 a.m. until 6:00 p.m. Sunday to Wednesday and 10:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Thursday to Saturday. Where possible, weekends only from Labour Day until Thanksgiving weekend (10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.).

Core functions of the Street Ambassador Program include:

- Increase the perception of the Market as a safe environment.
- Monitor the activities of street persons and maintain positive relationships.
- Provide tourists and the public with an on-street resource for questions about the City.
- Provide front-line response and first aid in case of accident or injury.
- Utilize intervention techniques to respond to low risk situations reducing calls for service to the Police; i.e., aggressive panhandlers.
- Direct panhandlers and the like to appropriate social service agencies.

DISCUSSION

Now in its sixteenth year under the management of the ByWard Market BIA; staff assigned to the program receive consistent direction on their objectives and responsibilities. In 2019, an existing BIA employee has been promoted to supervisor to help coordinate the program and provide supervision on evenings and weekends.

The program is supported by a community partnership representing business, residents, government and social agencies. Partners include:

ByWard Market BIA

Ottawa Police Service

Salvation Army

Shepherds of Good Hope.

Union Mission for Men

Operation Come Home

Youth Services Bureau

Centre 454

Casino Lac Leamy

Ottawa Police Services Board

Lowertown Community Association

The Ambassadors track their interactions according to behaviours associated with social issues. Some of the negative behaviours that are tracked include aggressive panhandling, drug use, alcohol consumption and loitering. In 2018, the Ambassadors generated **8,047** contacts; 92% of all contacts were positive and **644** or 8% of all contacts were negative. (See attached report prepared by the ByWard Market Ambassadors.) They have become very recognizable in the Market area.

Financial Statement

Each year since 1997, the Police Services Board has included \$10,000 in its discretionary fund budget to cover a contribution to the Street AMBASSADOR Program. The amount of \$10,000 has been included in the 2019 budget as well to cover this year's contribution, subject to year-end report and evaluation of the 2018 program.

In 2018, the Street Ambassador Program also received the following:

- ByWard Market BIA - \$51,000
- Canada Summer Jobs - \$9,000
- Casino du Lac Leamy - \$7,000

An increase of \$35,000 in funding was provided by the BIA in 2018 to cover additional staff and supervisor as well as the increased wages with the new minimum wage standards. Salaries and benefits represent approximately 90% of the program costs. The remaining 10% covers: uniforms (jacket, shirts and hats), training, equipment (radios, computer, first aid supplies) and printing costs. The BIA provides program management, as well as administrative support, which is at no cost to the program. More specifically, \$77,000 is considered to be the break-even point for operations in 2018.

CONSULTATION

Not applicable.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

As outlined in the report.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Document 1 - Final Report 2018

CONCLUSION

Although not a part of Ottawa Police Service programming, the Street Ambassador Program is a supplemental approach that assists in reducing calls for service in the Market. The Ambassadors are familiar with Frontline Operations Police personnel, and maintain a professional relationship. Through training by the dedicated community police officer and other front-line staff, the Street Ambassadors have acquired an understanding of prioritized calls for service.

From a policing perspective, the community-driven ByWard Market Street Ambassador Program focuses on the issues and specific needs of the ByWard Market. It plays an important role in identifying solutions to anti-social behaviours rather than simply directing the problem to the police. This program has taken ownership of the issues inherent to homelessness and substance abuse and it has assisted the frontline personnel to collaboratively solve the problem. The problem of managing homelessness is difficult and must involve integral partners. This program is one of those components, which not only assists in creating a safe environment but also enhances the feeling of safety in Ottawa's most popular destination.