

Chief's Report to the Board – 28/09/2020

Good afternoon, *bonjour à tous*.

Welcome and Thanks

I will first take this opportunity to welcome Diane Deans back as City Councillor and Chair of the Ottawa Police Services Board. On behalf of the Command Team and all OPS members, we congratulate you for your successful battle with cancer - we are looking forward to having that same fighting spirit help us to advance the police service.

It was just over a year ago that Chair Deans announced that I was the incoming Chief - thirty days from now will mark the first year anniversary of my term in office. That is why I want to start my report by specifically giving thanks to;

- Chair Deans, Vice Chair Sandy Smallwood and the entire Board
- Mayor Watson, the City Council, along with all the Senior Leadership Team and all City of Ottawa staff
- Our Provincial and Federal government partners
- The Ottawa Police Association and the Senior Officers' Association
- The Community Equity Council, the VAW community, along with all of our community partners
- All members of the OPS, the Senior Leadership Team, and the Command Team

You have my personal appreciation for all that you have done in the past year to support my family and me and for all that you have done to help make our Service and our City better.

Police Memorial

Yesterday, at the Canadian Police & Peace Officers Memorial, we continued the 43-year-old tradition of honouring those officers who made the ultimate sacrifice for their communities – an honourable tradition that was started by Ottawa Police Service members.

Because of the global pandemic, we could not gather en masse on Parliament Hill with thousands of officers, police members and Canadians from across this great country. Instead, yesterday's formal ceremony only included 25 participants, but was live-streamed to allow a wider online audience.

Last Friday, we also held a small ceremony for our own fallen heroes at 474 Elgin Street. It was heartening to see that Chair Deans was able to

attend that event where she paid homage to the memory of those Ottawa Police members who died in the line of duty.

Special recognition to my Ceremonial Sergeant Major, Steve Boucher, and his team for organizing Friday's OPS memorial event as well as Sunday's official Memorial event.

I would also like to recognize the strength and grace of Trish Kirkwood, daughter of Ottawa Police Officer David Kirkwood, who brought personal dignity to both events. It was her father's 1977 line of duty murder which inspired the National Memorial.

Year in Review

When Chair Deans was presenting me as the Chief Designate in September 2019, we did not know that would be one of her last official acts before she stepped away from her duties to courageously battle cancer.

When we rang in the New Year in January 2020, none of us could have predicted that we would be dealing with a global pandemic, the resulting global economic crisis, and the boiling over of global systemic issues relating to gender inequity, racism, etc.

Yet despite all these challenges we have accomplished many important things together....

COVID 19 Pandemic Success

We have achieved major success in dealing with the impacts of the COVID 19 pandemic. I am very proud of all of our members and the work they have delivered on a 24-7/365 basis across Canada's largest municipality since the onset of the pandemic.

We have been working under the leadership of Dr. Vera Etches and her Ottawa Public Health team – together with City By-Law and other frontline community partners.

We have focused first and foremost on education and engagement, along with the careful but effective use of enforcement to flatten the COVID curve while contributing to significant health outcomes.

The OPS has coordinated our efforts with the OPA, SOA and the Board to keep our own members informed, equipped and healthy resulting in only six of our members contracting the virus to date.

We have used compassion and innovation to provide the needed Personal Protection Equipment, de-contamination stations, and timely health information for our members and their families.

We managed to achieve these successes despite losing \$13.5 million from our 2020 operating budget due to the in-year COVID impacts.

Crime Management Success

COVID 19 has had varying impacts on local crime, traffic and social order issues that the OPS deals with in the nation's capital.

Despite that, our members are doing exceptional work and achieving previously unmatched crime management successes in 2020.

Where other big cities across Ontario and Canada have seen an increase in the number of shootings year to date, Ottawa has an almost 30% decrease - by this time in 2019 we had 54 shootings but so far this year we have had only 38 shootings.

This year our Homicide Unit has laid murder charges in all six of the homicides that occurred in Ottawa – an unheard of and unprecedented solvency rate.

The OPS Homicide Unit deserves high praise for their ability to provide compassionate victim services while also giving a significant sense of closure and justice to families who have lost loved ones in such violent and tragic circumstances.

We continue to try to build on this positive local trend by taking a whole-of-service approach to reducing gun violence in Ottawa.

Our Intelligence Unit and Crime Analysts are increasingly innovative and effective in identifying the high risk people, places and events that are major contributing factors in street-level gun violence.

Our undercover and investigative units have effectively implemented firearms interdiction strategies and gang enforcement measures, all the while supporting successful criminal prosecutions.

Our uniform frontline officers respond quickly and effectively to firearms-related calls across this city and have a remarkable record of arresting the offenders and seizing crime guns (the OPS has seized 78 crime guns in 2020).

Our Neighbourhood Resource Teams, Crime Prevention Officers and School Resource Officers are building trust with the local residents while working with the local community stakeholders to solve problems, prevent crime, and address the underlying criminogenic factors.

In fact, the Criminal Investigative Directorate specifically credits the effectiveness of the five new Neighbourhood Resource Teams as the single differentiating factor for the reduction in violent street crime in Ottawa.

That is why the OPS will continue to expand the Neighbourhood Policing strategy such that it will become the core of our operating model to build public trust while improving community safety and well-being.

Traffic Management Success

No matter where I go in the city, one of the top concerns I hear about is traffic safety - specifically in the post-COVID period where we hear increased concerns about speeding, dangerous driving and excessive noise on and around our roadways.

In response, the OPS Traffic Services team launched two major initiatives:

1. "Operation Overwatch" – since it launched officers have issued 5,000 tickets for speeding, stunt driving, and distracted driving
2. "Project Noisemaker" - since it launched officers have issued 2,500 tickets and laid 8 criminal charges

I want to congratulate the Traffic Services team and all other OPS units who have contributed to making our roadways safer and our neighbourhoods more liveable.

As our kids return to school we will continue to focus our efforts on these traffic safety issues.

Order Management Success

Every year the OPS is faced with community safety and well-being issues that have little if anything to do with core policing and/or criminal justice – the most prominent of these are mental health addictions and youth related issues.

The confluence of crises has exacerbated the overall stress our youth are facing while also causing more mental health and addiction crises in the general population.

Over the course of 2020, Ottawa Police members have achieved significant successes in managing these various forms of social disorder.

Mental Health Crisis

So far in 2020, the OPS have responded to 6,000 mental health calls for service. The vast majority of these are handled with no injuries to anyone and no use of force.

Many of these calls we believe can and should be handled by service providers other than the police once there has been sufficient planning, implementation and evaluation. Regardless, there will always be a need for some element of police intervention in mental health calls.

For instance last week the OPS were called to an address in Barrhaven for a very high risk volatile incident.

The call involved a male experiencing a mental health crisis during which he barricaded himself in a house with access to a number of firearms.

After nearly 11 hours of negotiation, OPS members eventually convinced the man to exit the residence where he was taken by officers to hospital for assessment.

There was no use of force used and no one was injured.

The OPS members involved in this call used professionalism and compassion to peacefully resolve this critical incident – they had direct support from local community members along with our on-call psychologist.

This is a great example of a “whole of service” response to high risk calls – the units involved included Communications Centre, OPSOC, Tactical, Frontline, and Victim Services. These units worked together with health care practitioners and community partners to successfully resolve volatile and potentially violent situations.

Opioid Crisis

OPS members are on the frontlines battling both the COVID and OPIOD crises.

All OPS officers are trained on how to administer Naloxone and carry it with them. We are often the first and fastest to respond in these medical emergencies, when mere minutes can mean the difference between saving and losing a life.

For example, on September 15th, 2002 OPS officers responded to an unconscious man where an officer used two doses of Naloxone and performed chest compressions to revive the person.

Four days later, on September 19th, OPS officers responded to a call for a woman who was overdosing on suspected Fentanyl. The officers used Naloxone and revived her.

So far in 2020, our OPS officers have successfully used Naloxone kits to revive 80 people who were in medical crisis – that is 80 lives saved by the direct actions of our members this year alone!

Youth in crisis

Our police officers work with different partners and support services that help to address specific needs of our youth using a wide variety of official programs along with their own volunteer off-duty efforts.

I recently received a letter from a case worker with the Ottawa's Community Youth Diversion Program about one such effort by OPS Constable Adam Collins who is a member of one of our Neighbourhood Resource Teams.

The case worker wrote that Cst. Collins “provided a very vulnerable family with information about our team, in the midst of a crisis, helping a mother and her son (who is in conflict with the law). I wanted to highlight Adam's work, and the fact that he is making these connections, as we always wanted to happen.”

NRT officers, like Cst. Collins, are more than just patrol officers. Every day they work hard with local residents and local service providers to develop and implement effective programs that improve community safety and well-being that are aligned to the unique needs of each neighbourhood.

We know that police are not able to deal with every situation that the public has historically called us for. We know we need to adapt and evolve our overall operating model.

We know we specifically need to better integrate our services with our social service, public education, public health and not-for-profit sector partners.

We are working with our community partners to find new ways to do this each and every day.

Such collaboration and integration will enhance service delivery, prevent crimes, improve trust and reduce costs.

Strategic Priority Successes

When I applied to be the Chief of the Ottawa Police, I was driven by a life-long desire to make a difference.

Right from my first day in office, I knew that I had made the right decision to join the OPS because I started to meet the many OPS members who also joined the Service to make a positive difference in this city and in society.

I have the honour of leading a growing critical mass of OPS members who are helping me to lead the changes needed to evolve this police service and its culture. They are formal and informal leaders from every background, in every unit, at every rank and in every role within the OPS.

Over the past year, these OPS members have helped me to make the following informed decisions, impactful investments and accelerated advancements to help accomplish the Board's four strategic priorities:

1. Support our members – increased funding by \$700,000 and increased the staffing of our Health, Safety & Wellness Unit by 5 fulltime members
2. Modernize the work environment – reorganized the OPS including the creation of the new Respect, Values & Inclusion Directorate and the new Neighbourhood Policing Directorate
3. Advance community policing – implemented the new Neighbourhood Policing strategy, doubled the number of Neighbourhood Resource Teams and created the Community Equity Council
4. Make meaningful progress on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion – significantly increased the diversity and quality of our new hires and new promotions while creating and implementing the EDI Action Plan

Conclusion

Over the course of 2020, the OPS established itself as a leading voice advocating for progressive inclusive policing.

We have also been receiving inquiries throughout the year from police services across Canada and around the world who want to learn more about how we have achieved our successes in the aforementioned Board priorities.

The successes achieved over the past year have been accomplished in a period of constant change, unprecedented crises, massive budget losses, and never before seen levels of public scrutiny.

These professional efforts by our OPS members rarely make the mainstream media headlines nor do they penetrate the social media streams that seem to dominate society's increasingly negative perceptions of policing in this city and across this country.

We are here to serve, protect and respect. But we can truly only be successful if we do this work together with our Board, our Collective Bargaining Units and our community partners.

There are things we can and must do to improve – to win back lost public trust and to reform policing in this city. We are fully committed to listening, learning and changing and doing all this with our community stakeholders.

We have started a meaningful, if difficult, conversation on systemic racism and gender inequity in Canadian society, and in policing in particular. This is a dialogue taking place with our Service members and our community members.

We are developing new plans, creating new capabilities and making major new investments to prevent and address all forms of workplace harassment and discrimination in the OPS.

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 no matter their background, status or circumstances.

We are overhauling our OPS operating model to deliver neighbourhood policing services that improves community safety and well-being while building relationships of trust so that every community member feels respected and accepted, no matter their background, status or circumstances.

This is a demonstration of progress not a declaration of victory.

We still need to deal with those members who bully the weak, maintain cliques and engage in leaks. We still need to put an end to the toxic elements of our culture and the corrupt practice of some members. We still need to inspire a greater critical mass of our members to become change champions.

We accomplished a lot over the past year. There is a lot more to do. But I know we will get it done because this Service and this City is filled with good decent people.

The OPS is among the best police services in Canada and Ottawa is one of the best cities in the world. This gives us an incredibly strong foundation to make the changes that we need in policing and in society.

There is no giving up and no going back – we will not be distracted or deterred – we will succeed!

Thank you. Merci beaucoup.