

Report to / Rapport au:

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

28 September 2020 / 28 septembre 2020

Submitted by / Soumis par:

Chief of Police, Ottawa Police Service / Chef de police, Service de police d'Ottawa

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**SUBJECT: RESPONSE TO INQUIRY I-20-15: ONGOING MONITORING OF OPS
MEMBERS' MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS**

**OBJET: RÉPONSE À LA DEMANDE DE RENSEIGNEMENTS I-20-15 :
SURVEILLANCE CONTINUE DE LA SANTÉ MENTALE ET DU MIEUX-
ÊTRE DU PERSONNEL DU SPO**

REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

That the 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.**

INQUIRY

OPS members have been at the frontlines of the COVID-19 pandemic for about five months now. During this same time there has been extensive discussion in mainstream media and social media around defunding police services. Both of the factors may have a significant impact on the health and wellbeing of OPS members. Have any measures been taken to date to monitor and/or evaluate the mental health and wellbeing of members during this period, and is there any need for additional health and wellness interventions.

RESPONSE

The Ottawa Police Service (OPS) takes the well-being of its members very seriously. The challenges that were presented with the COVID 19 pandemic required a unique response, not only for physical health and safety, but mental-health as well.

When the first COVID 19 case appeared in Ottawa, the Service initiated personal protective equipment (PPE) protocols for all members, specifically with a focus on public-facing positions. Members were either issued N-95 masks, or asked to deploy issued respirators when out in public. A centralized internal message centre was established to keep members up to date on isolation practices, cleaning processes, as well as enforcement and court updates. The Health, Safety and Wellness (HSW) team was a key contributor to the information that was shared Service-wide.

Additionally, three members were reassigned to the OPS Wellness team to help triage any incoming issues. These additional resources (both sworn and civilian) were part of the overall staffing response in support of our members. This team would be instrumental in doing wellness checks for those in isolation or off-site and providing them with resources for themselves and their families.

HSW, in collaboration with the Pandemic Team, also set up a rapid response team for any member that tested positive for the virus. The team would assist Ottawa Public Health (OPH) on contact tracing.

But it went beyond just referrals and medical supports. Our HSW team delivered meals and groceries to house-bound members, delivered PPE to support members when someone in the family tested positive, and connected them with mental-health supports like Peer Support or the Employee Family Assistance Program (EFAP). And those who needed accommodations due to compromised immune systems or other medical issues were provided the tools to work from home.

Additional help was given when WSIB forms needed to be completed, and supervisors and managers were encouraged to check in often with their staff whether in the office, on the road, or working from home.

There have been concerns that our officers have had to deal with a number of distressing events related to the pandemic and the defunding the police movement. The health and safety of our community members and our Service members is our priority. We have two separate HSW led reviews who are continuing to watch for trends carefully in the areas of COVID-19 and defund the police related incidents. We are focused on implementing mitigation strategies by engaging with our community partners to find ways that we can reduce these tensions and incidents.

In April 2020, the OPS made a further commitment to member wellness, by permanently increasing staffing of one new sergeant and four new civilians (Wellness Analyst, Wellness Resource Liaison, WSIB Coordinator and Director of HSW) in the Wellness Directorate. These additional resources are critical to ensure we have capacity to reach out to our membership and react to their needs but more so to identify behaviours that may be indicating that a member is struggling.

And later this year, we will be rolling out our Early Intervention program that 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.