

Report to / Rapport au:

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

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Submitted by / Soumis par:

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**SUBJECT: BYWARD MARKET STREET AMBASSADOR PROGRAM – 2015
ANNUAL REPORT AND 2016 FUNDING**

**OBJET: PROGRAMME D'AMBASSADEURS DE RUE DU MARCHÉ BY:
RAPPORT ANNUEL 2015 ET SUBVENTION DE 2016**

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 2016.

RECOMMANDATIONS DU RAPPORT

Que la Commission de services policiers d'Ottawa continue d'appuyer le Programme des ambassadeurs de rue 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 2016.

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 sixteen 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, Crime Prevention Ottawa, Ottawa Police Service, City of Ottawa Markets Management & Chronic Disease/Injury Prevention Section, social service agencies and residents.

Each year, four bilingual university students studying criminology or social work are hired for the program. From May until September, they walk the Market in pairs daily from 09:00 a.m. until 6:00 p.m. Sunday through Wednesday, 09:00 a.m. until 8:00 p.m. Thursday through Saturday (increased hours of coverage added in 2008), and weekends only from Labour Day until Thanksgiving weekend.

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 twelfth year under the management of the ByWard Market BIA and City of Ottawa Markets Management; staff assigned to the program receive consistent direction on their objectives and responsibilities.

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

- ByWard Market BIA
- City of Ottawa Markets Management
- Ottawa Police Service
- Lowertown Community Association
- Salvation Army
- Shepherds of Good Hope
- Union Mission for Men

- Operation Come Home
- Youth Services Bureau
- Fido Mobileit
- Casino Lac Leamy
- Ottawa Police Services Board.

The Ambassadors track their interactions according to behaviours associated with social issues. Some of the negative behaviours that are tracked include panhandling, drug use, alcohol consumption and loitering. In 2015, the Ambassadors generated 7,379 contacts; 94% of all contacts were positive. (See attached report prepared by the ByWard Market Ambassadors.) They have become very recognizable in the Market area.

There are no absolutes in the collection of qualitative statistics during the performance of their duties, as there are several variables which impact data collection; however, in speaking with key stakeholders and District Police personnel, there has been a marked decrease in anti-social behaviours attributed to the demographics of the Market area.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

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 2016 budget as well to cover this year's contribution, subject to year-end report and evaluation of the 2015 program.

In 2015, the Street Ambassador Program also received the following:

- ByWard Market BIA - \$15,000
- City of Ottawa Markets Management - \$10,000
- Casino du Lac Leamy - \$7,000

The same funding is in place for 2016. Salaries and benefits represent approximately 90% of the program costs. The remaining 10% covers uniforms (jacket and shirts), training and printing costs. Partners provide supervision and program management, as well as access to computers and administrative support, which is at no cost to the program. More specifically, \$45,000 is considered to be the break-even point for operations.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Document 1 – By Ward Market Street Ambassador 2015 Final Report

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 to emergencies in the Market. The Ambassadors are familiar with District Police personnel, and maintain a professional relationship. Through training by District officers, the Street Ambassadors have acquired an understanding of prioritized calls for service.

From a district 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 district personnel to collaboratively solve the problem. The problem of managing homelessness, addictions and mental health issues 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.

Document 1

Issued separately.