

**Report to / Rapport au:**

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

**24 April 2017 / 24 avril 2017**

**Submitted by / Soumis par:**

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**SUBJECT: WELLNESS STRATEGY**

**OBJET: STRATÉGIE DE MIEUX-ÊTRE**

**REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS**

**That the Ottawa Police Services Board approve the Ottawa Police Service Wellness Strategy, as attached to this report.**

**RECOMMANDATIONS DU RAPPORT**

**Que la Commission de services policiers d'Ottawa approuve la Stratégie de mieux-être du Service de police d'Ottawa ci-jointe au présent rapport.**

**BACKGROUND**

In 2012, the Provincial Ombudsman published a review of how the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) and the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services addressed Operational Stress Injuries (OSI). Following the review of the Ombudsman's report, the Ottawa Police formed a working group in 2013, to review the Ombudsman's recommendations on how to best address OSI in our organization.

In 2013, the OPS Business Plan for 2013-2015 outlined a strategic priority of Engaging and Investing in our People with a goal of having a workplace that puts a priority on the health and wellbeing of its members.

In 2015, Ottawa Police entered into working relationships with Queen's University and Carleton University to conduct member research on OPS wellness-related issues including awareness, culture and operational and personal stressors.

On January 25, 2016, the OPS 2016-2018 Business Plan was approved and supported by the Ottawa Police Service Board (OPSB) and wellness of our members was declared a top priority.

On April 5, 2016, Bill 163, Ontario's Supporting First Responders Act, was passed enforcing a presumption that PTSD diagnosed in First Responders is work-related. This act is part of the province's strategy to help keep our First Responders healthy by providing them with better access to information and treatment. Following that, employers of workers covered under the PTSD presumption were directed to provide the Ministry of Labour with a PTSD Prevention Plan by April 23, 2017.

The Ottawa Police presented its PTSD Prevention Plan to the Police Services Board, as endorsed by the HR Committee, receiving approval on March 27th, 2017.

## **DISCUSSION**

Wellness represents a whole-person, balanced approach to being in good mental and physical health. It includes occupational, emotional, social, spiritual, intellectual, mental, physical, and familial wellness; all of which impact each other. Achieving a "well" state is not only life-affirming, but it allows people to reach their full potential.

Policing is a unique profession. It is both physically and mentally demanding, highly visible, unpredictable, and requires a great deal of resilience. Given our mandate in policing and the evidence supporting the First Responders First Act, we understand that exposure to stress or trauma is inevitable as a First Responder and that this exposure threatens our members' wellbeing potential. If wellness is not properly managed, the challenging job of policing can lead to health issues that can affect an employee's overall wellbeing, impacting not only the individual employee but also the workplace, their families and the community (Arsenault, 2012).

Data from Canada's Ministers of Health underscores the need for employer's to support health promotion. When employers do more to focus on prevention, their employees' quality of life improves. This, in turn, reduces the impact of poor health as well as the costs associated with chronic disease and mental illness.

Based on absenteeism data, Long Term Disability (LTD) is growing or has remained the same over the past few years:

- The average days lost for all members (sworn and civilian) have increased from 8.3 in 2010 to 12.6 in 2016.

- The percentage of members that have been absent for 0 – 2 days/ year due to illness has remained essentially the same over the past 6 years for both sworn (about 30%) and civilians (about 20%).
- The LTD experience for OPA members has increased from 6.3 incidences in 2010 to 13.3 in 2016. From this, one can infer that the type of illness has required greater length of absence for treatment and recovery when the member requires LTD before returning to work.
- Since 2010, the majority of LTD claims (over 50%) have been mental health related.

It's important for OPS to be aware and sensitive to its changing workplace demographics. Having a diverse and multigenerational workforce with varied health and wellness needs has influenced our approach and it will remain a challenge to provide varied suitable solutions as our demographics continue to evolve.

Ottawa Police understands that it requires both an individual and a community effort to maintain First Responders' health and wellness (Newman, 2005). Engagement in organizational wellness programs has been linked to reduction in absenteeism as well as an increase in employee performance, satisfaction, retention and feelings of work-dedication (Goetzel, 2011; Hutchinson & Wilson, 2011; Williams & Day, 2011, Brown et al., 2011; and Nöhammer et al., 2011). Without engagement, a wellness strategy cannot be fully realized.

Additionally, culture around wellness remains a concern however; OPS is committed to addressing internal and external barriers, such as stigma by helping to build awareness and participate in campaigns that openly promote dialogue around health and mental health issues. This provides opportunities for OPS to be a community leader and participate in reducing stigma about these important issues that are affecting the community and our members.

## STRATEGY

Mission: Position OPS employees to optimally manage their wellness throughout their career and into their retirement.

Vision: A healthy, resilient and engaged workforce.

Values: Honour Courage Service

Purpose: The purpose of the OPS Wellness Strategy is to set out a clear, consistent and achievable strategy to create a system of health and wellness through cultural change, education, recognition, resiliency, and support **from pre-hire to post-retire**. The OPS aims

to have a well-rounded, highly capable membership that has opportunities for growth, while balancing the needs of the organization with those of individual members.

## GOALS

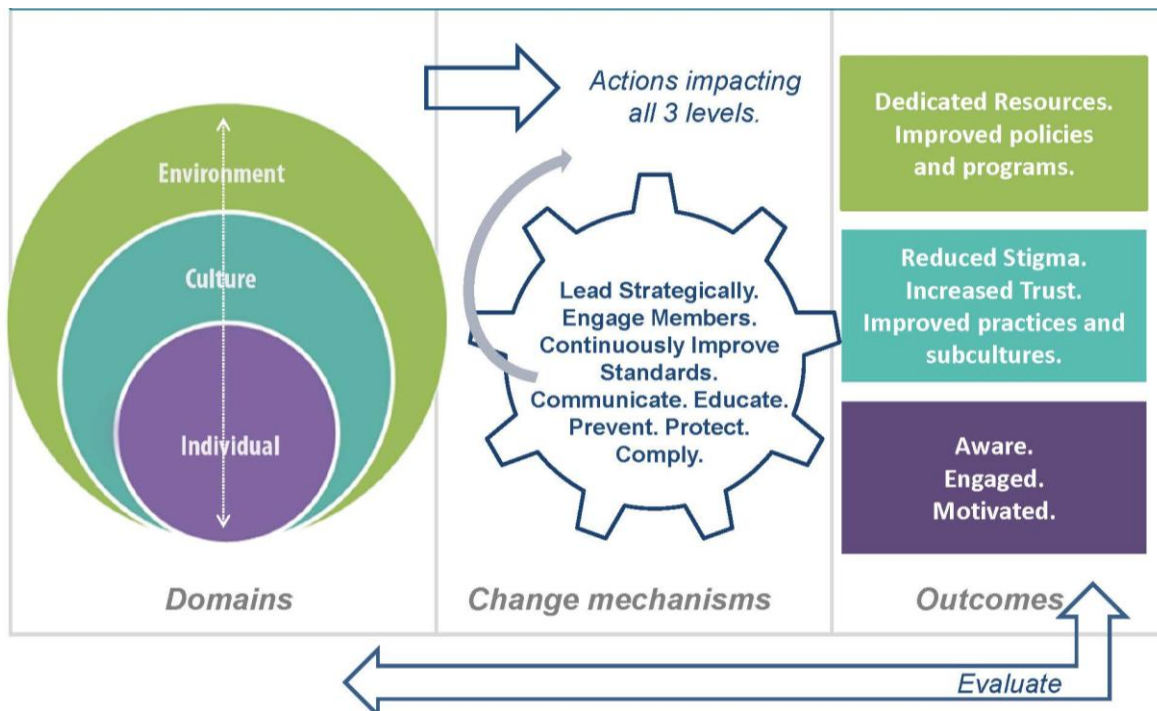
The following goals will help deliver real change to support achieving our vision:

1. Develop an environment that is strategically led and supported with dedicated resources, improved policies and programs.
2. Foster a culture with increased trust, reduced stigma, and improved practices around wellness.
3. Support individuals in their wellness journey to be more aware, engaged and motivated.

## METHOD

Three factors have been shown to have an impact on the wellness of first responders: organizational elements (the environment), social elements (culture) and personal care (or individual self-care) (Kleim & Westphal, 2011).

The goals in this strategy will be achieved through the adoption of a model called the Ecological Intervention Model which focuses on using coordinated resources and real change in these three domains; the Environment, the Culture, and the Individual.



An action plan has been developed (see attached Wellness Strategy report) to ensure outcomes over the next three years.

## **CONSULTATION**

The wellness of our members impacts the community and as such, the OPS believes our Wellness Strategy should include partnerships for collaboration.

This plan was created in consultation with the Wellness Committee, the Ottawa Police Association, and partnerships with Queen's University and Carleton University. Research through these partnerships provides us with an opportunity to better understand some of our barriers (namely fatigue and culture) and implement some of our strategy steps (collect data and engage members).

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

In 2017, a budget of \$0500,000 was established for the member Wellness Strategy. The funding is being utilized for research, resources and program development. This investment is expected to produce many positive outcomes including a reduction of workplace illnesses and injuries, a reduction of short and long term disability claims, improved productivity and improved morale.

There will be a requirement for future funding to implement the action plan and sustain the programs. This funding requirement will be identified in future budget submissions.

## **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

Document 1 - References

Document 2 – The Ottawa Police Wellness Strategy

## **CONCLUSION**

The OPS *Wellness Strategy* sets out a series of clear, specific and achievable steps we will take in order to attain our vision of a healthy, resilient and engaged workforce.

While, we have a number of strong programs already in place and attitudes about wellness within OPS are beginning to shift, there is still much work to be done to sustain a healthy culture for current and future employees. As we work to increase awareness of wellness issues and decrease the stigma in our culture, we expect to see real change which will be reflected through the collection of program data.

Ultimately, by investing in the health and wellness of all our members, the OPS is working to improve the quality of members' lives and to enhance their ability to do their job well.

Document 1

### References

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