

Report to / Rapport au:

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

22 March 2021 / 22 mars 2021

Submitted by / Soumis par:

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

**A/Deputy Chief Mark Ford / I/Chef adjoint Mark Ford
Intelligence, Information & Investigations Command / Commandement du
renseignement, de l'information et des enquêtes
*FordM@ottawapolice.ca***

SUBJECT: 2021 VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN UPDATE AND NEW HIRES

**OBJET: VIOLENCE FAITE AUX FEMMES – MISE À JOUR ET EMBAUCHES DE
2021**

REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Ottawa Police Services Board Receive this report for information.

RECOMMANDATIONS DU RAPPORT

**Que la Commission de services policiers d'Ottawa prenne connaissance du
présent rapport à titre d'information.**

BACKGROUND

The purpose of this report is to update the Ottawa Police Services Board (Board) on how the Ottawa Police Service (OPS) is working with the Violence Against Women (VAW) community in the staffing and hiring of the five positions outlined in the 2021 OPS Budget.

The OPS has made it a priority to work with a number of community stakeholders and advocates to develop a better response to women who are victims and survivors of sexual assault and violence. This is an ongoing process, and we have benefitted from the expertise and advice of frontline workers, academics, advocates and those with lived experiences.

As part of the OPS 2021 Change Budget, we identified three key priorities: a duty of care, building public trust, and working on implementing the Community Safety and Well-Being (CWSB) plan, where gender-based violence / violence against women has been identified as one of the pillars to the plan. To meet that mandate we are going to hire five additional Violence Against Women (VAW) resources that includes: one VAW coordinator, a Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) coordinator, and three additional resources that, with the help of our community partners, will help us better-serve victims and survivors of gender-based or sexual violence.

We have been working hard over the years to constantly improve how we respond to this vulnerable group.

In 2014, the OPS hosted a community consultation with VAW advocates and workers to identify gaps in service to women who experienced violent crimes. Multiple sessions were hosted with these experts, which resulted in a number of recommendations. At the top of that recommendation list was a request for consistency in both response to and reporting of these types of crimes.

The OPS co-chairs a VAW Advisory Committee, led by Inspector Heather Lachine, and community representative Melanie Winwood from the Western Ottawa Community Resource Centre. A/Deputy Chief Mark Ford is the executive sponsor of this initiative. Many of our best-practices have been developed through collaborative initiatives that connect us with other Ottawa-area agencies to ensure that we are responding, not only appropriately to victims or survivors of abuse, but also consistently. We also rely on the great work being done by our Victim Support Unit (VSU) and collaboration with our Indigenous partner agencies to help provide foundational support to those impacted by this violence.

The OPS has worked with our Indigenous partners to develop best-practices to resolving VAW and MMIWG incidents for those living here in the Nation's Capital. After the federal government issued its MMIWG report in 2019, the OPS has taken the recommendations from the report to align its response and outreach in order to effect change and reduce the frequency and impact of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls in our community. But it is clear that there is still more work that needs to be done. Part of that process involves collaboration with the Community Equity Council (CEC), which has its own subcommittee on Indigenous relations, as well as connecting with our Indigenous partners to develop a tailored approach that recognizes cultural sensitivities and fears. There are currently two members of our task force, helping to develop the job description that will guide our new VAW/MMIWG hires, one who works with Alluriaruiq Program and represents Tungasuvvingat Inuit, and the

second who works with the Metis Nation; we are actively looking for more representatives to help us steer the course of our VAW/MMIWG response.

Other initiatives include ongoing working groups comprised of both OPS members and external partners. By reaching out to the broader community to continually provide input we can continue to develop solutions on how we can better-serve this vulnerable population.

For example, during the COVID 19 pandemic we were acutely aware of the needs of women and children now trapped in volatile homes due to quarantine. We provided support to our partners at the Ottawa Coalition To End Violence Against Women (OCTEVAW), Crime Prevention Ottawa, Interval House and the Eastern Resource Centre to develop Unsafe At Home; a secure text and online chat service that gives women living with domestic violence and abuse the support they need during the pandemic.

DISCUSSION

To continue in our commitment to better-serve victims and survivors of gender-based and sexual violence, the OPS has made a series of investments going into 2021.

This includes:

- Development and hiring of two new civilian coordinator positions (VAW Coordinator and a MMIWG Coordinator);
 - The identification and development of the roles and responsibilities and hiring of these two positions is currently underway and will continue to be a collaborative exercise with community VAW and Indigenous partners; and
- Hiring of three additional staff to support work in our Sexual Assault and Child Abuse (SACA) and Partner Assault units, including investigations, support and prevention for those impacted by VAW and gender-based violence.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT PEOPLE

Part of the work we will be doing with our Task Force and the broader VAW and Indigenous communities will be to develop job descriptions for the new civilian positions to be filled. This includes both additional VAW and MMIWG coordinators and other resources. We are collaborating with a smaller VAW group to develop the job descriptions for these new positions and will later coordinate with the VAW Task Force and our Advisory Council to establish a broader plan moving forward. With the help of

our partners, we will be able to co-produce hiring criteria that fully outlines roles and expectations of the job.

The roles themselves have yet to be defined by our community partners, there is an emphasis on co-producing the types of hiring criteria to find people who can best meet the needs of this vulnerable population. However, all positions will support the collaborative work between the OPS and the VAW and Indigenous communities in all aspects relating to programming, training, support of victims in gender-based violence, as well as the implementation of recommendations derived from this effort. Additional initiatives specific to prevention and investigation will further support VAW and MMIWG work. Based on preliminary discussion with partners, an additional civilian position may be required to work specifically with victims and survivors of VAW and MMIWG.

The committee has met several times in March and will continue its work throughout the year. An update will be presented once the work is completed.

OTHER INITIATIVES

Other significant achievements to-date include:

- Creation of a VAW Task Force that will include external partner agencies:
 - Melanie Winwood (co-chair): Western Ottawa Resource Centre;
 - Bailey Reid: Senior Advisory, Gender and Sexual Violence Prevention and Support, Carleton University;
 - Keri Lewis: Executive Director, Interval House;
 - Jennisha Wilson: Manager, Alluriaruiq Program, Tungasuvvingat Inuit (TI);
 - Mercy Lawluvi: Immigrant Women's Services;
 - Melissa Heimerl: Ottawa Victim Services; and
 - Leighann Burns: Legal (family law/advocate);
 - We are actively looking for an available francophone partner, willing to participate.
- Adjustment of the Advisory Committee to ensure that all voices are represented, and there is effective governance to receive community input and implement recommendations;
- Leveraging an OPS internal working group to implement recommendations of VAW Advisory Committee;

- Continuing to align our efforts with the City of Ottawa's CSWB plan and our collective duty of care as an OPS priority;
- Establishment of an OPS liaison role who will work closely with our university and college campuses;
- An increase/improvement to our French language services to francophone victims or survivors, through changes in policy and practice to support an active offer of services to residents in their first language whether French or English;
- Continuation of enhancements to our translation services to victims and survivors of gender-based violence, through the use of appropriately trained resources such as IWSO (Immigrant Women Services Ottawa);
- Working with community partners to establish best-practices for capturing and sharing domestic and sexual violence statistics for greater accountability and transparency;
- Continuation of the work on our review tables, including conducting Violence Advocate Case Reviews (VACR) and ensuring two-way communication for continuous improvement in our response;
- Development of a more fulsome training course that specifically addresses best-responses needed for domestic and sexual violence to women and children and gender-based violence, along with those impacted by human trafficking.

With the help of a VAW Task Force, we will be establishing a VAW Action Plan to build on the initiatives and priorities that have been identified by community partners and police over the past decade. This plan will be brought as a draft to the larger VAW Sector / Advisory Committee for review and approval.

BETTER STATISTICS AND ACCOUNTABILITY

In 2018 Statistics Canada changed the way police clear domestic violence and sexual violence cases. It resulted in an uptick in reported case in Ottawa, due to technical coding requirements that were implemented. Part of what we will be doing in 2021, will be examining those reporting measures to ensure they adequately reflect what is going on in Ottawa. We will amend internal processes to provide a more transparent and accountable reporting of incidents that impact women and children.

Our first priority is always to ensure that supports are in place to help anyone impacted by sexual or domestic violence.

Additionally, last year we began posting our quarterly VAW statistics on the OPS website; you can review them on our Crime Statistics page. It is through these measures that we hope to encourage a greater transparency and understanding to this real issue and what the OPS is doing to address it.

CONSULTATION

The OPS will be meeting with the larger VAW sector and the Advisory Committee in the next two months to begin the process of evaluation. More external stakeholder groups, partners, frontline agencies and advocates will be included as the evaluation continues.

There will be opportunities for public consultation as the project develops, including a survey to help solicit feedback and inform the process.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

All of the new positions being filled fall within the 30 growth positions identified in the 2021 OPS budget.

CONCLUSION

A month into his tenure, Chief Peter Sloly met with VAW frontline agencies, advocates and academics and reinforced his commitment to developing an action plan that would better serve women and children in Ottawa.

By investing in five additional resources to better-serve those impacted by gender-based violence or violence against women, developed through community input and selection, we can build a robust, timely and sensitive response to this vulnerable sector.

Our work continues with the city's frontline agencies, our partners, academics, advocates and survivors, to address community concerns related to gender-based violence. Our success is directly linked to the collaboration from our diverse community stakeholders.

The issue of sexual assault and violence against women is a complex one; but with ongoing collaboration with partner agencies and the community, the OPS believes it can collectively find solutions that meet the needs of some of the most vulnerable residents in our city.