



DATE: 25 May 2015

TO: Executive Director, Ottawa Police Services Board

FROM: Chief of Police, Ottawa Police Service

SUBJECT: BYWARD MARKET STREET AMBASSADOR PROGRAM – 2014 ANNUAL REPORT AND 2015 FUNDING

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## **RECOMMENDATION**

**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 2015.**

## **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 program has operated for the last nineteen 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, Ottawa Centre for Crime Prevention, Ottawa Police Service, City of Ottawa Markets Management & Chronic Disease/Injury Prevention Section, social service agencies and residents.

Each year, four bilingual university students typically studying criminology or social work are hired for the program. From May until September they walk the Market in pairs daily from 9 a.m. until 6 p.m. Sunday through Wednesday, 9 a.m. until 8 p.m. Thursday through Saturday (increased hours of coverage added in 2008), and weekends only from Labour Day until Thanksgiving weekend.

The 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 eleventh 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  
Salvation Army  
Shepherds of Good Hope  
Union Mission for Men  
Operation Come Home  
Youth Services Bureau  
Fido Mobile-it  
Casino Lac Leamy  
Lowertown Community Association  
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 2014, the Ambassadors generated **767** on-street contacts; 66% 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 marked decrease in anti-social behaviours attributed to the demographics of the Market area.

## Financial Statement

Each year since 1997, the Ottawa 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 2015 budget as well to cover this year's contribution, subject to year-end report and evaluation of the 2014 program.

In 2014, 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 2015. 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.

## 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, this 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. 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.

*(Original signed by)*

Charles Bordeleau  
Chief of Police

Attach. (1)