

Chief Charles Bordeleau

Verbal Report

March 21, 2016

I usually try to focus my verbal reports on the excellent work of our members or crime trends. This evening, I want to focus on the difficult discussion our members have been having over the last week or two.

Morale is a hard conversation in policing and we know that morale is not where it needs to be. Our members should know that their concerns are being heard, that we know they need to see more action and that they are directly engaged in the solutions.

I want to bring you back to the Members survey we initiated in 2015. The feedback in the document was taken very seriously and has been guiding our work to improve morale and ensure members feel supported. The Survey was clear that the Tenure program and staffing have been major issues.

There are also concerns about the pace of change of the Service Initiative and what the future of policing here at OPS will look like. But there is more to it. Our Service has a high confidence rating from the public. This is because of the work that happens at the front line every day. But even in the midst of that public support there is also a feeling amongst officers – from front line to senior ranks -- that they do their jobs with someone always looking over their shoulder.

The job of a front line constable has unquestionably changed from when I or any other senior officer was on patrol. There is more oversight from supervisors, senior officers, the executive, the Board, SIU and the OIPRD. Add on social media, the daily traditional media coverage and the concerns of the public.

There is merit to effective oversight and no one at the Ottawa Police wants to shy away from accountability. But there is also an impact on our members. It causes frustration. It leaves some feeling that regardless of the public confidence, the tools they need to do their jobs are being hemmed in or taken away.

I said earlier that morale is a difficult discussion. But there is also an opportunity for our Service in this discussion. By remaining united, we will solve these issues together. I want to briefly discuss some of the issues we are already taking on.

Staffing is a major issue and we added 25 new hires into this year's budget. Fifty more are called for in 2017 and 2018. This is in addition to the regular replacement of all retirees. The Tenure program has been cancelled and is

being replaced with a new sworn Transfer Policy. The work on this policy is being completed in partnership with the Ottawa Police Association.

We have begun a Wellness Strategy with major investments in this year's budget. That investment includes Peer support and resiliency coordinators as well as a major increase in the Real You program. We are also trying to get a better understanding of the increase in accommodations for some members.

We need to support those members but also understand and deal with the staffing pressure accommodations put on the front line. Extensive consultations on the Service Initiative have been underway. Deputy Chief Keeley and Supt. Mike Flanagan have initiated a Patrol Advisory committee which is composed of front line constables. This will help ensure these officers have a voice in raising important issues and play a role in addressing them. But more needs to be done and we will do it together.

The Executive Command and all Senior Officers are united in our support of our Membership and the work they do each and every day. The discussion became heated in the last few days but I want the Board to know I recognize your commitment to our police service. I know you believe in and support the membership. The work you do is integral to our mission.

I mentioned accountability in my remarks. All members of the service are accountable and that includes me. Recently, there have been two accusations raised regarding my conduct. I have never misled the Board and I have in no way influenced the outcome of a ticket issued to my family member. There are clear processes in place to investigate the conduct of a Chief of Police in Ontario and I have no concerns about them being followed.

From Constable to Chief, the members of our Service shoulder great responsibility in keeping the community safe. We need to focus inward to ensure that our members have the support they need. We have already begun that work and all members – sworn and civilian – should know that we understand there is more work to do and that we are listening.

We all joined this Service to keep our community safe. The focus of this police service remains, as it always has, on community safety by preventing crime, holding offenders accountable and reducing victimization.