

**Report to / Rapport au:**

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

**25 October 2021 / 25 octobre 2021**

**Submitted by / Soumis par:**

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

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**SUBJECT: REPORT ON OTTAWA'S SOCIAL SAFETY NET - HELPSEEKER**

**OBJET: RAPPORT SUR LE FILET DE SÉCURITÉ SOCIALE D'OTTAWA –  
HELPSEEKER**

**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**

Since 2019, the Ottawa Police Service (OPS) has been developing strategies and capacities to form more effective community partnerships in order to provide more integrated service delivery, refer more calls to appropriate external service partners all to improve community safety and well being. This approach ensures the OPS' compliance with the new "Comprehensive Police Service Act" that requires every Ontario municipality to develop and implement a Community Safety and Well Being (CSWB) plan. It also advances the Ottawa Police Service Board's (the Board) priority to advance community policing while also supporting the City of Ottawa's CSWB plan.

Despite the fact that Ottawa has a rich and vibrant social service sector (including emergency first responders, City of Ottawa agencies and the non-for-profit sector), Ottawa residents are often challenged to contact and receive timely appropriate services for a range of social issues that include (but is not limited to) mental health, addictions, homelessness, food scarcity, poverty, etc..

Frustrated, confused and/or under informed community members will often default to calling the police in an attempt to address these social issues. This results in the underutilization of appropriate social services agencies, the overutilization of police services and the inability of community members to receive the social services that they need and deserve.

To better understand these service delivery challenges, the OPS engaged HelpSeeker, a social innovation and technology company, to conduct a Social Impact Audit (SIA). The SIA will help the OPS, the City of Ottawa and all local social service agencies to:

1. Identify and integrate the hundreds of social service agencies for community and client impact;
2. Leverage information from across the social service ecosystem to improved navigation and optimization; and
3. Transform Ottawa's social service infrastructure while contributing to the OPS' ongoing efforts to revision the role of policing in the social safety net ecosystem

HelpSeeker's SIA builds on and contributes to the community's growing demands for a more coordinated social service ecosystem, higher financial/social return on investments to social service providers (including the OPS) and improved community safety and wellbeing for people.

## **DISCUSSION**

Ottawa's social safety net, like all cities and communities across Canada, is composed of a wide range of social service agencies who provide an even wider range of service programs and supports for a variety of individuals in need. The individual service needs are most often expressed in relatively calm and controlled ways – but when they are triaged to police, they are all too often expressed as calls for help representative of persons experiencing a mental health crisis. The ecosystem of social service providers include: local, municipal, provincial/territorial and federal governments, public and non-public charities, non-profit organizations, emergency responders (police, fire and paramedic services) and private sector entities.

HelpSeeker's SIA does not provide 100% accuracy in its attempt to provide as complete as possible a map of Ottawa's social service ecosystem. This is primarily because of the limitations of available open source data. That said, it uses a proven analysis methodology applied to a variety of municipalities and regional governments from across Canada. Even with the previously stated information limitations, the HelpSeeker SIA is a comprehensive report on the current state of Ottawa's social services ecosystem. The report includes the number of agencies, the nature of the services, the funding that supports the services and comes with needed recommendations on how to improve the relative efficacy of social services ecosystem.

The attached HelpSeeker SIA report will help the OPS and all its partners to better understand how to work together to improve social impact and social outcomes.

It is important to note that HelpSeeker's SIA was included in the Board's community consultation process for the budget and, as such, will help to inform the OPS's 2022 operating budget submission to the Board.

### **Ottawa Analysis**

According to the HelpSeeker SIA there is an estimated \$6.8 billion per year in funding within the social services ecosystem. This translates into \$6,389 per capita investment for the nation's capital.

Government direct transfers account for over 50% of all social-related investments in Ottawa, followed by funding from charities and financial investments made by the City of Ottawa. The majority of federal grant investments into Ottawa's social safety net are made through Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC).

Among the social-related investments made by the City of Ottawa (\$787 million), the majority of investments were directed towards Protection of Persons and Property (71%), followed by Social & Family Services (23%), then Social Housing (6%).

HelpSeeker has provided a set of recommendations that can be implemented in Ottawa to help coordinate and engage CSWB stakeholders. These include:

- Adopt a **trauma-informed approach** across CSWB stakeholders
- Conduct a **service and referral analysis** to identify OPS partnership opportunities, and align social support coverage to changes in community needs
- Use a **supply and demand approach** to identifying gaps in the social ecosystem and prioritize investment
- Develop an **integrated investment framework** by consolidating community funding and resources to support plan priorities

- Create a **Community Safety & Well-Being funders table** framework to inform decisions
- Champion the development of a transparent, **ecosystem-wide performance framework**
- Publish outcomes and services use data disaggregated to **enable equity analyses on gender, Indigeneity and race**
- Adopt a culture within OPS that **promotes effective, high-quality referrals**
- Prioritize the development of a **CSWB multi stakeholder roundtable** driven by an equality of voices and a common set of community values, with representation from lived experience and grassroots organizations
- Implement a **Community Crisis Support Line** by building on existing 911 processes and capabilities
- **Leverage call data** to identify residents that would benefit from 'medium acuity' wellbeing supports, to reduce incidences of victimization, crime and trauma.
- Champion collaborative OPS involvement for individuals with high-systems involvement, through **coordinated access systems for housing and the Indigenous Coordinated Access system**

## CONSULTATION

N/A

## FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

N/A

## SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Document 1 - Social Impact Audit : Ottawa Police Service

## CONCLUSION

The OPS engaged HelpSeeker to help advance the priorities of CSWB. By understanding the social safety net we can all better coordinate its activities to more positive local outcomes. Our goal is to add to the ongoing discussion in Ottawa to coordinate our activities and ensure the most appropriate social service is responding to the needs of our community. A multi-year project to enhance this work will be a cornerstone of the Draft 2022 Budget. OPS remains committed to building a fully

integrated CSWB approach with the City and our partners and the work in this study is critical to build our understanding of Ottawa's social safety net.

**Document 1**

To be added