

*Ottawa Police Services Board*

*Agenda 46- Monday November 22, 2021*

*COMMUNICATION: Email dated November 22, 2021 from The Ottawa Police Association*

From: Bill Cole

Sent: November 22, 2021 12:54 PM

Subject: Ottawa Police Association Comments on 2022 OPS Budget Process

## Ottawa Police Services Board 2022 Budget Deliberations



Submission of the Ottawa Police Association

Monday November 22, 2021

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The following information is provided to the Members of the Ottawa Police Services Board and those seeking relevant information on the delivery of policing in the City of Ottawa. This submission will address three primary questions:

- i. Comments made by the Chair of the Ottawa Police Services Board in response to finding “efficiencies” – a euphemism for the reduction of service levels through attrition and/or layoff.
- ii. Identifying the chronic understaffing of the Ottawa Police Service, and in particular the significant deterioration of policing levels following the election of Jim Watson as Mayor in 2010, and the appointment of Charles Bordeleau as Chief of Police in 2012.
- iii. The Association’s comments regarding the public debate around policing and mental health incidents.

Unless otherwise noted in this submission, all data contained is sourced from annual reports or datasets produced by Statistics Canada.

Matt Skof  
President

November 22, 2021

### *Finding Efficiencies*

In the autumn of 2019, when Peter Sloly took the helm as Chief of Police in Ottawa, his first stated objectives were to increase the staffing levels of the Ottawa Police Service, bringing them more in-line with the comparator police services across Ontario. He also expressed concerns about the low levels of morale within the service; this only three years after the mayor told police personnel to “shut up or quit”.

Earlier this year Councillor Diane Deans, Chair of the Ottawa Police Services Board, received a budget proposal from Chief Peter Sloly recommending a 3.4% increase. Ottawa City Council would follow with general instructions to all City departments, including police, that budgets were expected to remain at or below an increase level of 3%. Chair Diane Deans then directed the police service to set out the impact of a budget that included no increase. In the end the Chief tabled a budget that required a 2.86% increase. The Chief of Police made it clear that a 0% budget increase would require downsizing by approximately 140 officers.

The Chair has stated that the budget would proceed through further review and that the 2.86% would not likely be where the budget adjustment ends up.

The Police Services Board has positioned itself to reject the Service’s reduced budget proposal, creating the likely scenario where staffing numbers, and therefore service to the public, will be reduced. What has been missing from the public discussion has been an awareness of the chronic understaffing of police in the Ottawa community.

### *Ottawa’s Chronic Understaffing in the Police Service*

In the public sector the measurement of adequate levels of service is grounded in comparisons with similar services in comparable cities. In fact, so important is the measurement of comparator information in the public sector, voluminous information is produced annually that sets out benchmarks for everything from tax policies, development charges, water/sewer rates and economic development programs. This data is relied on by city managers, mayors, and councils, to determine their own levels of service – determining priorities based on what others do. The compensation rates for city managers, executive staff, chiefs of police and the negotiation of collective agreements for city workers are all a function of comparison. This has been one of the primary public policy tools in place in municipal management for decades.

Statistics Canada conducts an annual review of, among other things, the levels of sworn police officers relative to population. The “cop-to-pop” ratio informs the elected officials, and the community more broadly, of the adequacy of service levels. This is particularly so where, in policing, there is no regulatory or other standards for performance (unlike say, the fire sector where there are response time benchmarks that assist in determining adequacy of service).

A comparison of cop-to-pop data, collected by Statistics Canada is quite revealing for the Ottawa community. Ottawa’s staffing level is seriously low relative to other major police services in

Ontario and Canada. Staffing levels took a precipitous fall following the election of Jim Watson as Mayor, and his limiting of budget growth. The mayor’s budget limitations were facilitated by his appointment as Chief of Police, Charles Bordeleau.

The following table sets out Statistics Canada’s most recent (2018) data on cop-to-pop ratios for major police services. Ottawa trails all others with only 121 sworn members per 100 thousand population.

Police Officers per 100 thousand Population (2018)				
Municipality	2018 Population	Sworn Officers	Sworn officers per 100 thousand population	Percentage Change from 2017
Toronto	2,956,024	4,790	162	-3
Montreal	2,929,374	4,295	212	-5
Peel	1,404,628	2,022	144	1
Calgary	1,311,833	2,123	162	6
York	1,150,672	1,543	134	3
Edmonton	1,004,947	1,885	188	0
Winnipeg	753,674	1,405	186	2
Durham	683,604	904	132	3
Vancouver	678,308	1,330	196	-1
Ottawa	1,007,501	1,223	121	-1

Table 1: Police Officers per 100 thousand population (2018); Statistics Canada.

At 121 officers per 100 thousand population, the current staffing levels in Ottawa are at the lowest point since amalgamation in 1995. Indeed, policing levels in rural Ottawa pale in comparison to levels of service provided prior to amalgamation.

The following figure sets out the historic levels of staffing in Ottawa, making clear that staffing levels approached normative levels between 2006 and 2010, relative to major police services across Ontario.

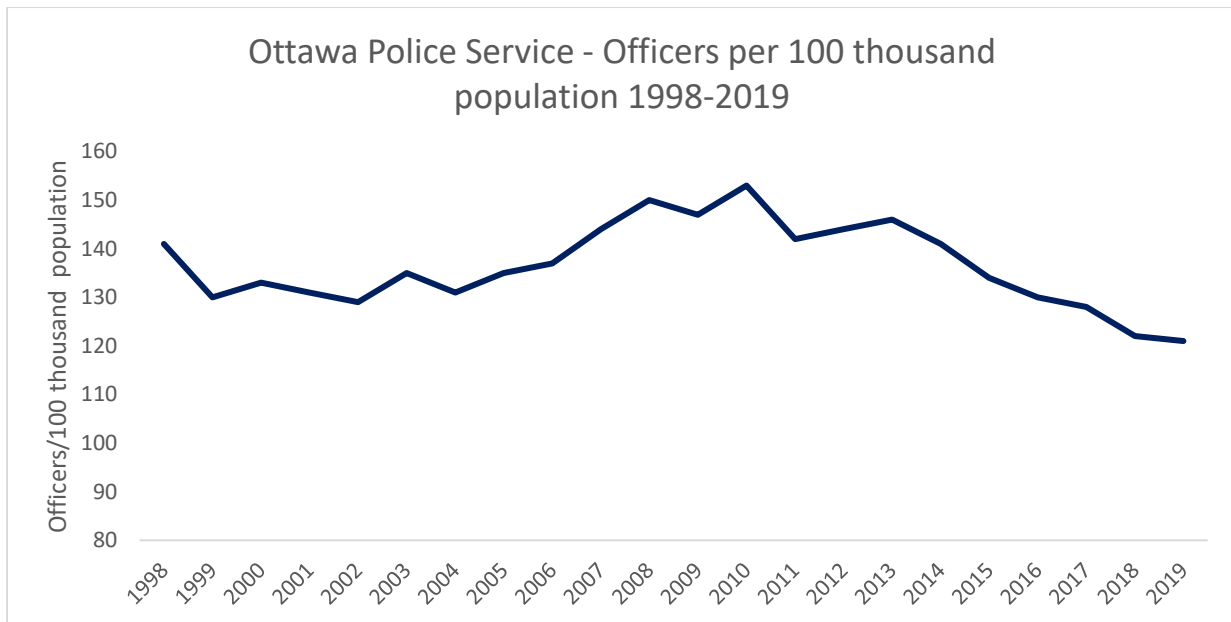


Figure 1: Historic Ottawa Police Service Levels – Officer per 100 thousand population, 1998 to 2019.

Subject to basic adequacy requirements (which don't address staffing levels) the level of service to the public is a decision of the Police Services Board. The Board, of course, is significantly influenced by the mayor and city council, who set broad levels of service expectations through the budget process.

Figure 1 shows how Ottawa's staffing levels grew to more normative levels between 2006 and 2010. Since then, Ottawa's police staffing levels have fallen to an unprecedented low of 121, where they remain today.

Recently the Ottawa Police Services Board responded to the OPA's assertion (based on Statistics Canada's data) that the staffing levels were at 121. The Board claimed that staffing levels were closer to 140, based on the number of members employed. The Board is incorrect in this assertion, unaware or unwilling to admit that the 121 figure is not based on *complement* but on *strength*.

The Ottawa Police Services Board recently claimed the cop-to-pop ratio is closer to 140 based on the current number of officers. This is incorrect – the Statistics Canada data does not measure *complement*, but *strength*. The Board is either misinformed or politicizing the staffing level discussion.

The difference between complement and strength numbers is the numbers of employees on the payroll, vs. the number of employees who are able to (or available to) work. They exclude recruit members (who are in police college or under the direct supervision of a coach officer), or those on disability or other leave. For example, the Toronto Police Service employs approximately 5,300 sworn members overall, but the Statistics Canada data shows a strength level of 4,790. Durham employs 926 sworn officers but has 881 on strength (these numbers are current state, so vary from the 2018 data above). Likewise, Winnipeg employs 1,421 sworn members but has 1,355 on strength today. The following figure sets out the drop in policing staffing levels from 2010 to present.

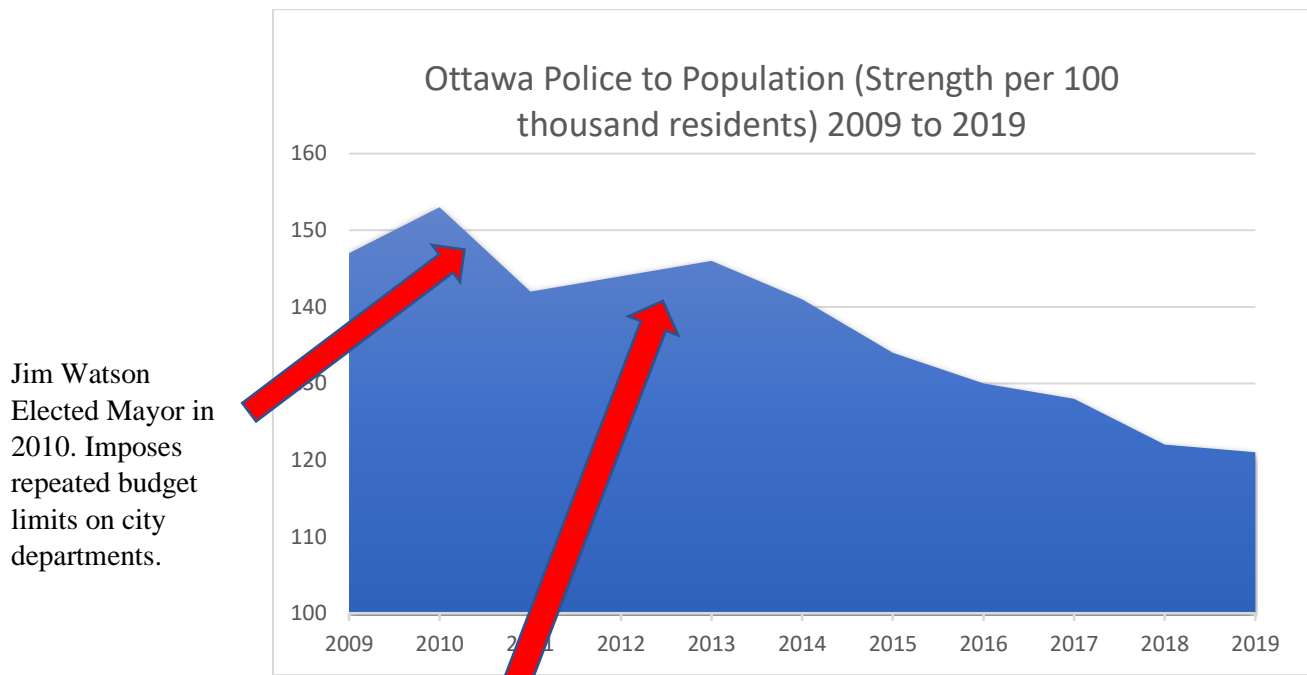


Figure 2: Ottawa Police to Population (strength per 100 Thousand residents) 2009-2019

How do staffing levels in Ottawa compare with major police services across Ontario? The following figure sets out a comparison of Ottawa police staffing levels to six other major police services in Ontario – Toronto, Peel, Durham, York, Hamilton, and Niagara.

While it is important to consider relative staffing levels, it is also helpful to understand the historic evolution of the police service in comparator municipalities. For example, both Durham and York were largely rural communities in the early years set out in Figure 3.

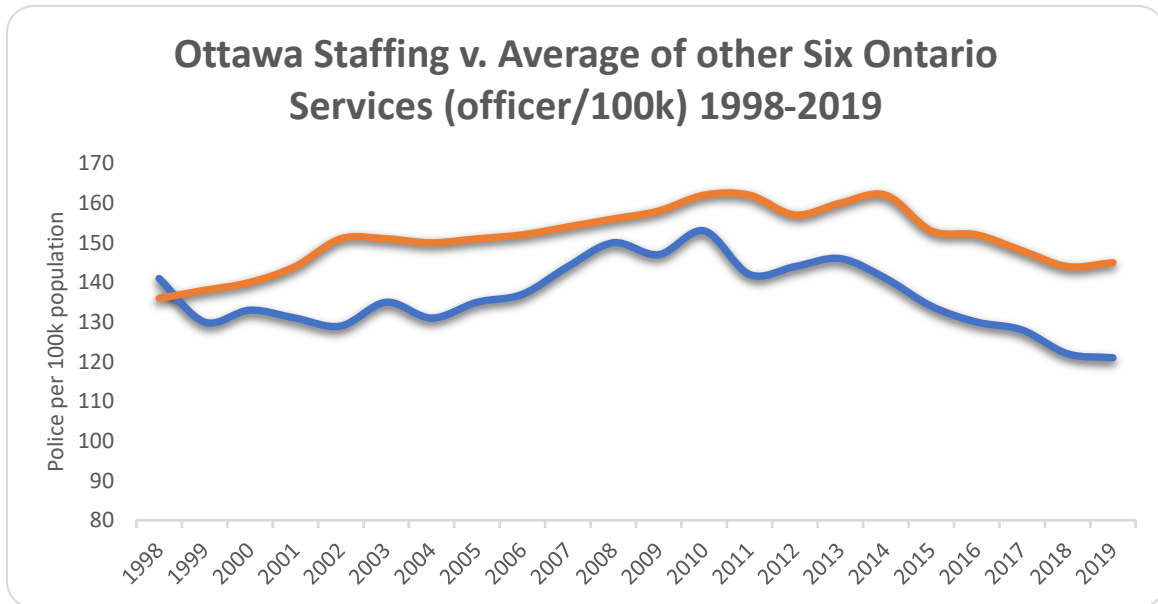


Figure 3: Blue – Ottawa Police Service; Orange – Average of 6 Major Police Services in Ontario (1998-2019)

Figure 3 shows how Ottawa has historically trailed the average of policing levels of major services in Ontario. The staffing gap between Ottawa and the average of Ontario services was closing between 2006 and 2010 but has fallen to unprecedented low levels today.

The following figure shows the gap that exists between Ottawa’s staffing levels and the average of six large police services. To understand this figure, anything below the horizontal axis indicates the number of officers per one hundred thousand population that Ottawa trails the average services. For example, in the year 2014 Ottawa’s cop-to-pop ratio was 141 while the average of six large police services in Ontario was 167 cops-per-pop. This figure shows the delta between Ottawa’s ratio, and the average of six other police services.

It is interesting to note that in 1998, the only time when Ottawa had a higher cop-to-pop ratio than the average, it had 141 cops-per-pop while the average of the other six large services was 136.

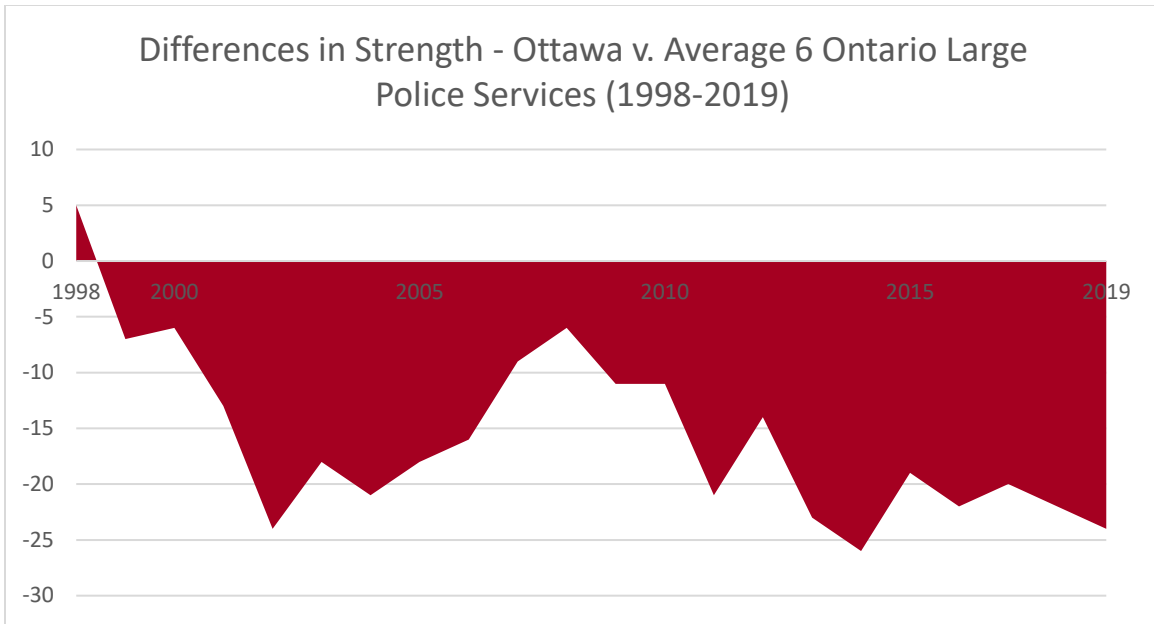


Figure 4: Differences in Strength – Ottawa v. Average 6 Ontario Large Police Services

Figure 4 shows that in some years Ottawa’s police staffing levels trailed large Ontario services average by as many as 26 sworn officers per hundred thousand. To put this in better context – with approximately one million population, today’s gap of 24 officers per population relative to the average, reveals that Ottawa Police Service is 240 sworn officers below the average staffing levels of major police services in Ontario.

Ottawa has 121 sworn per 100 thousand while the average in Ontario is 145 (the average when including other major Canadian police services is 163).

For the Ottawa Police Service to just match the average staffing levels of six major police services in Ontario, it must add 240 additional sworn members.

*What Impacts Staffing Levels*

Apart from the political decisions of elected officials, there are many influences on the determination of adequate staffing levels. For Ottawa Police there are two unique influencers, geography, and population growth.

The following figure, available on the City of Ottawa website, sets out the growth in Ottawa’s population over the last two decades.



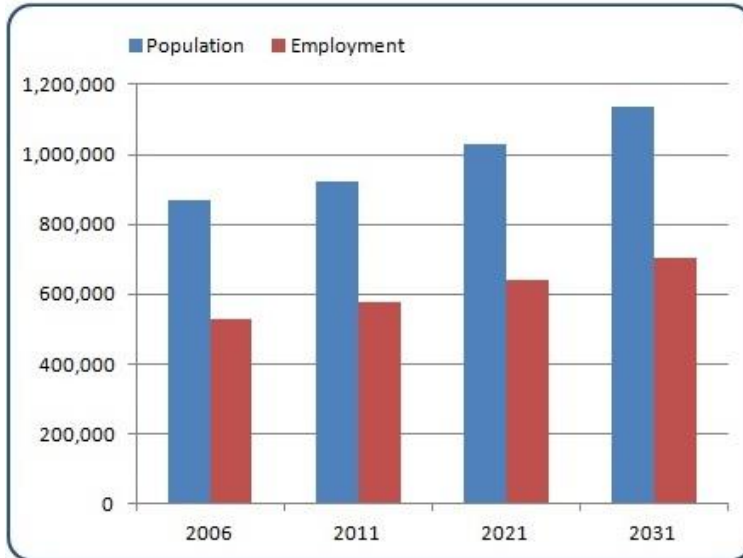


Figure 5: Ottawa Population Growth and Projection; City of Ottawa

Ottawa's population has grown steadily over the last two decades, but its number of sworn and civilian police employees has not kept pace. Stagnant growth lowers police service levels.

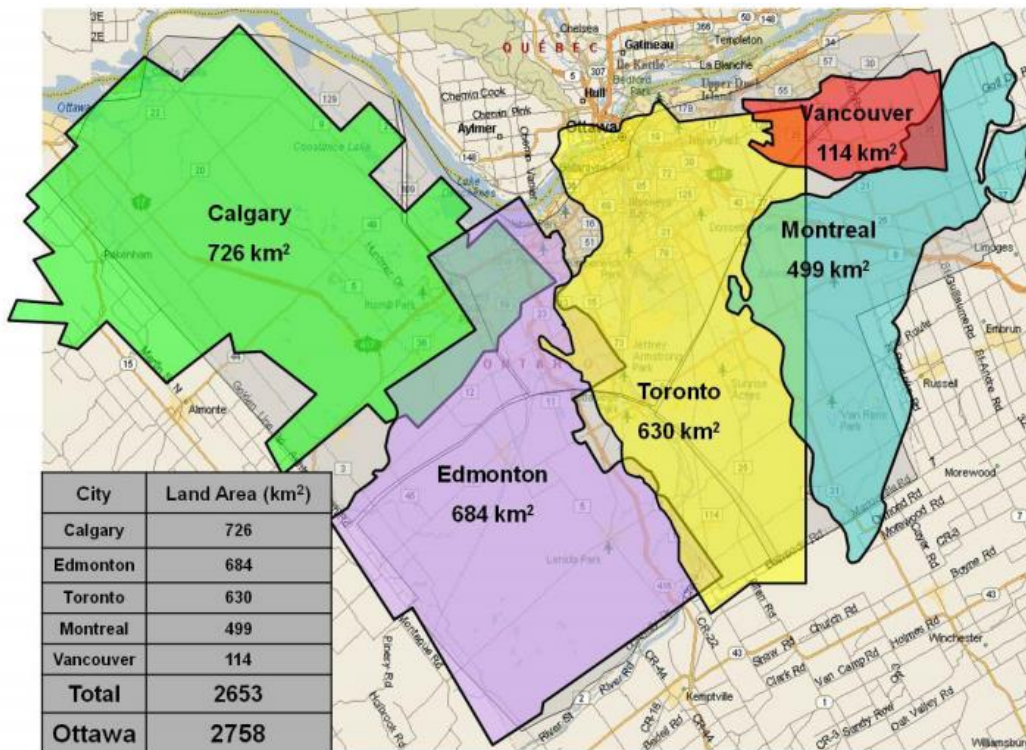


Figure 6: Land Area Comparison of Municipal Boundaries

Growth in the City has not been isolated but has created new communities all through Ottawa’s vast geographic area. The figure above, a frequently used image by Ottawa’s elected officials, also represents unprecedented pressures on the delivery of policing. Ottawa’s historically low levels of police must patrol areas that are vastly larger than other major police services in Canada. Responsible leadership must resolve significant gaps in the delivery of police services – no part of the Ottawa community should be content with diluted service levels.

The following table presents staffing shortages by considering the ratio of police to geography.

Municipality	Population (2017)	Land Area (sq. kms)	Police Officers Per Km
Montreal	2,029,374	432	10.5
Edmonton	1,004,947	684	2.7
Winnipeg	753,674	464	3
Vancouver	687,308	115	11.7
Toronto	2,956,024	630	7.8
Calgary	1,311,833	825	2.4
Peel	1,404,628	1247	1.6
Ottawa	1,007,501	2790	0.4

Table 2: Land Area Comparison and Police Per Km (2017)

The data in Table 2 above shows that when police resources are considered as a function of land area Ottawa Police has 0.4 officers per square kilometer.

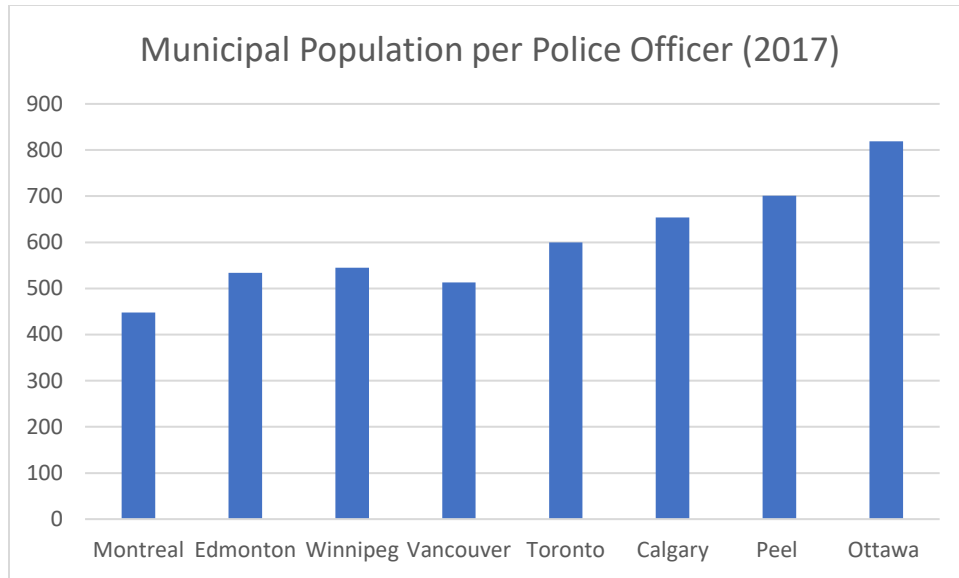


Figure 7: Municipal Population per Police Officer – Pop-to-Cop (2017)

To this point we have considered the ratio between police officer to population – cop-to-pop. If we reverse this lens and consider population to police officer – pop-to-cop, Ottawa’s police resource deficiencies are further reinforced. Figure 7 shows that if municipal population were a function of single police officer, Ottawa has 819 residents for every police officer. Peel has 701, Toronto has 600 and so on.

### *Crime in the City of Ottawa*

Some might suggest that such an analysis is unrealistic given the concentration of residential communities in or towards the core. This would be an incomplete analysis given crime patterns in the City, as set out below. While Ottawa has a considerable green space, unprecedented growth in the city over the last ten years has created communities broadly spread out across the municipal boundary. Their communities require policing, and typically when municipalities grow, their essential services grow in proportion. This hasn’t been the case for the police in the City of Ottawa since at least 2010.

Using data available from 2006, the following statistical analysis was conducted in 2018. It shows the estimates of residential break and enters in the Ottawa-Nepean area. In this image the colour blue represents low estimates of break and enters, which is hardly surprising given the geography of the green belt, and large areas which remain agricultural or forest. The colour orange represents heightened areas of estimates for residential break and enter.

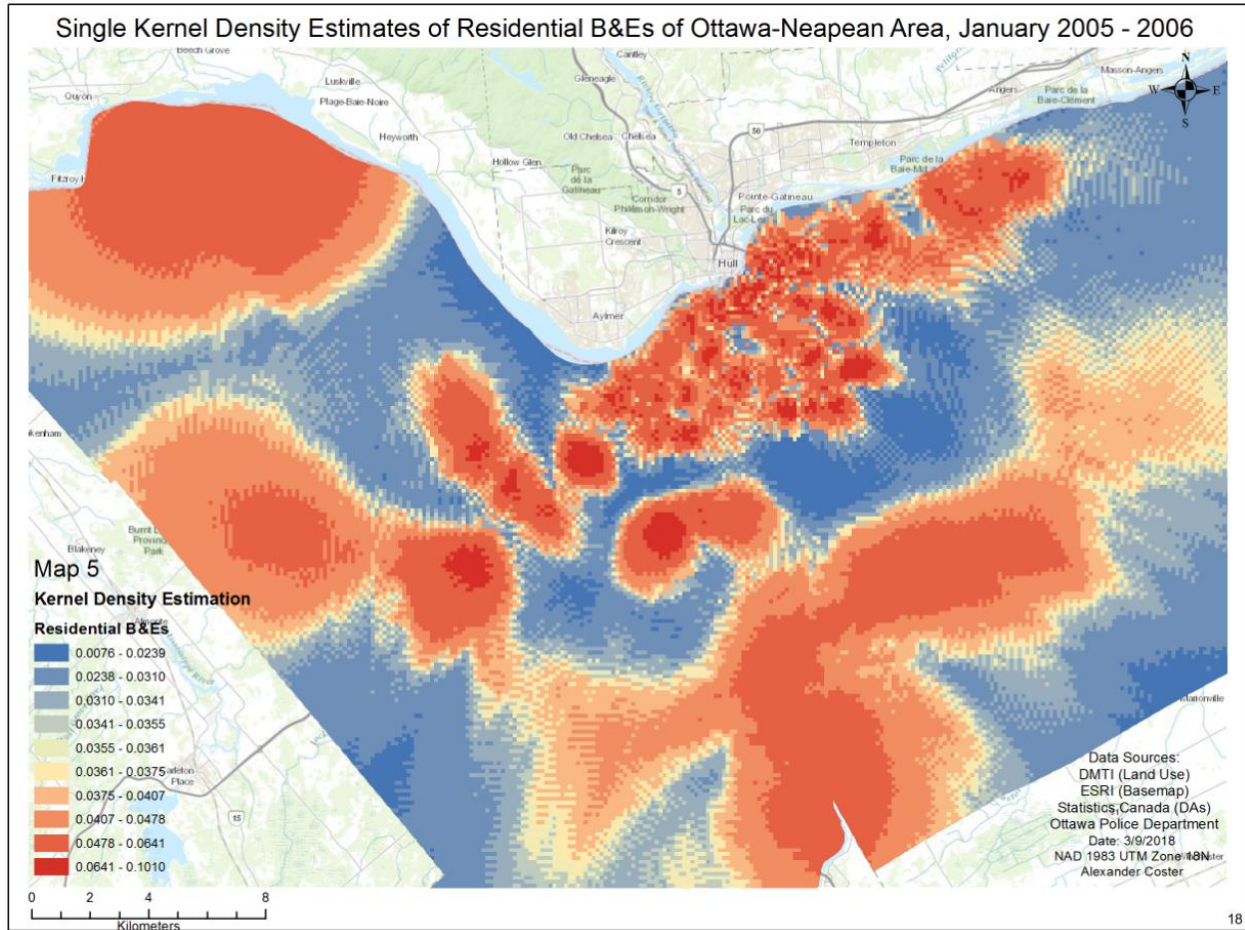


Figure 8: Single Kernel Density Estimates of Residential Break and Enters – Ottawa-Nepean 2005-2006.

When considering this figure, it is important to note several key facts.

1. Ottawa’s population increase of 8% between 2016 and 2020 is one of the highest in large municipalities in Canada. Only Whitehorse (9%), Charlottetown (11%), Kitchener (9%) and Saskatoon (9%) grew at a faster pace over this period.
2. According to Statistics Canada’s data, in 2016 the cop-to-pop ratio for the Ottawa police was 130. In 2019 the cop-to-pop ratio is 121. Ottawa’s population has grown faster than nearly every other municipality in Canada, and its number of sworn police officers has decreased.

### *Policing and Mental Health Incidents*

Much of the current debate on the 2022 police budget is based on mental health incidents and the desire to have alternative methods of response. The Ottawa Police Association is supportive of strategies that assist persons who require assistance for mental health conditions. The OPA supports all preventative measures, and strongly urges provincial and municipal governments to invest in needed support for mental health patients.

There is no politician, provincial or municipal (and most particularly career politicians) who is not aware of the lack of budget support for mental health care – no Mayor or Councillor can be surprised that mental health support in our community has deteriorated.

No mayor or councillor, or career politician, can pretend to be surprised that mental health budget support has deteriorated, and that mental health issues are what they are today as a result.

In any discussion on policing today, it is necessary to understand the role of police more fully in any emergency incident. In relation to mental health incidents, police respond to calls for assistance from the public – persons who are interacting with people in crisis in a particular moment. Police respond and, in virtually every incident, de-escalation resolves the situation. The incident is brought under control and the person experiencing the mental health incident is brought, most often, to the hospital where they then receive care.

Police have training in resolving these issues and are quite exceptional in their performance around de-escalation. As professionals our members are always receptive to more training.

Contrary to the often-heated debate, issues relating to mental health are resolved peacefully. It must be understood, however, that the information received by the Police Service when in receipt of emergency calls is that someone is in crisis and a danger to themselves or others.

Police are often responding to calls for service where there is no knowledge of mental health status of the individual involved. The overwhelming number of incidents are de-escalated and resolved without incident.

### *Invest in Prevention*

The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) is the largest mental health teaching hospital in Canada and a world leader in research. In an October 2020 report, CAMH observed:

A historical lack of investment in prevention strategies means that interactions between police and people with mental illness are a common occurrence. In fact, police are often described as informal first responders of the mental health system due to the frequency



with which they interact with people with mental health illness in the community. Across Canada, 5% of police encounters involve people with mental illness.<sup>1</sup>

CAMH notes that in Ontario mental health illness accounts for 10% of disease in the province but receives only 7% of health care dollars. It concludes that mental health is underfunded by \$1.5 billion in Ontario alone. In advocating for change CAMH urges the proportion of health care spending devoted to mental health be 9%.<sup>2</sup>

With approximately 5% of calls for service for mental health incidents, according to CAMH research, redirecting funding from police to any form of mental health support will be ineffective.

Since s.17 of the *Mental Health Act* empowers only police to intervene and take custody of a person in crisis for the purpose of examination by a physician, the desire to refer mental health calls to someone other than police is concerning. Since nearly all these calls are received during what is considered, by the caller, as a person in crisis, a police presence is necessary.

Funding for mental health in Ontario has deteriorated since the late 1990's and the closing of numerous mental health facilities. The OPA urges civic and provincial leaders to take prevention seriously and fund mental health support – reducing the frequency of interaction between police and those experiencing a mental health crisis. This is particularly so in a chronically understaffed police service, where calls for service stack in the queue.

Defunding or diverting police budgets is a political response to assuage a small number of activists who seek change that the PSB know is not supported by the broader public. We need to strive for adequate police staffing levels in the City of Ottawa and discontinue the current Mayor's trend of reducing these levels – a trend that would leave the citizens of Ottawa in an increasingly vulnerable state.

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<sup>1</sup> Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, (2020). *Mental Health and Criminal Justice Police Framework*. University of Toronto. P. 5.

<sup>22</sup> Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, website accessed on November 20, 2021 - [Mental Illness and Addiction: Facts and Statistics | CAMH](#)