

Report to / Rapport au:

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

24 January 2022 / 24 janvier 2022

Submitted by / Soumis par:

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

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SUBJECT: RESPONSE TO INQUIRY I-21-17: GUNS AND GANGS UNIT

**OBJET: RÉPONSE À LA DEMANDE DE RENSEIGNEMENTS I-21-17 : SECTION
DES BANDES ET ARMES À FEU**

REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

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

RECOMMANDATIONS DU RAPPORT

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

INQUIRY

1. Is there any link between the significant restructuring of the OPS' Guns and Gangs Unit and the surge in shooting incidents Ottawa has been experiencing? Please describe this in terms of the Units' overall performance and solvency.
2. Please indicate how both the operational and staffing budgets for the Guns and Gangs Unit' have changed over the last five years.
3. Being mindful of the fact that a number of the Guns and Gangs Unit positions are provincially funded, how many positions constitute the Unit, and are they all presently filled?
4. How many cases does the Guns and Gangs Unit handle annually? Please provide statistics for the past three years.
5. Strategies used to address gun violence and violent crime need to be community-

specific, given that the actions of police have been cited to, at times, cause community members to feel less safe. How does the OPS address and reconcile this increasing sentiment?

6. To what degree has the Community Equity Council been engaged to review the work of the Guns and Gangs Unit? Have they been involved in directing enforcement activities with community impacts? How has the CEC and the larger community been leveraged to inform enforcement practices of the Guns and Gangs Unit, as well as the OPS as whole?

RESPONSE

The Ottawa Police Service (OPS) has been diligently working with City partners to address incidents of gun violence in Ottawa. Part of that work included the development of an Ottawa Street Violence and Gang Strategy (OSVGS) plan, co-produced with Crime Prevention Ottawa, the City of Ottawa, and 20 other community partners city-wide. It is reviewed and updated regularly to ensure we are meeting changing trends for the city, with the help and input from our partners. This work predated the formation of the Community Equity Council (CEC) but going forward, it will be included as part of ongoing discussions and strategy planning; the council is a natural partner for future iterations of the OSVGS.

Within the OSVGS four pillars were identified: Neighbourhood Cohesion, Prevention, Intervention, and Enforcement and Suppression. The focus, scope, investment and experience of City agencies and partners, was to develop a strategy that reduced the need for enforcement and suppression by working collaboratively with community partners to determine best outcomes by bolstering things like neighbourhood cohesion, and leveraging prevention or intervention methods. These same four pillars were implemented as the foundation of the OPS' internal strategy plan. It is recognized that these efforts alone have not been sufficient to meet the needs in our communities and we will continue to work with City agencies and partners to meet the changing landscape of street and gang violence in Ottawa.

Other OPS initiatives that directly support the work of the Guns and Gangs Unit on gang and firearm suppression include the expansion of the Neighbourhood Response Teams (NRT). Through hard work and investment into the community they serve, each NRT constable helps to build neighbourhood resiliency, reducing the impact of gang activity and violence within the community. In coordination with the Guns and Gangs Unit, we are seeing clear signs of progress.

Our investment into investigating unsolved homicides in 2021 was another initiative aimed at engaging the families of homicide victims, who were predominantly racialized

young men, and included direct conversations with racialized communities in Ottawa impacted by the violence. We also renewed public investment into this campaign by placing rewards for information leading to the arrest of those responsible. These initiatives will play a significant role in our way forward.

In 2020, during the height of the COVID 19 pandemic, Ottawa was one of the few cities that saw a decline in shooting incidents by more than 40% from previous years.

Additionally, due to a new framework developed by the Guns and Gangs Unit on how information is shared Service-wide, our officers seized a record number of crime guns (111) in 2020. In 2021, despite reduced pedestrian traffic due to provincial quarantines as part of the ongoing COVID 19 pandemic, the OPS seized 74 crime guns. Many of these guns were discovered during routine traffic stops, but strategies implemented by the Guns and Gangs Unit helped to educate and inform officers Service-wide to ensure we were working in tandem; effectively and efficiently.

Prior to 2018, before the development of the new intelligence-led policing measures introduced by the Guns and Gangs Unit, tracking of shooting incidents was disparate, as most shooting investigations were completed in silos by District Investigations sections. The OPS now has a centralized method of tracking shooting statistics and clearance rates, which help the Service to identify trends and allocate resources. Since that change, there has been a steady increase in the number of crime guns recovered, as well as solvency.

Between 2018 to 2020, the Guns and Gangs Unit cleared 33% of all cases by charges; of those not cleared 26% were deemed non-criminal, 19% had insufficient evidence to proceed, and 10% remain active and under investigation. Our team additionally has encountered about 3% of these cases where the victim or complainant declined to proceed. In 2021, the Guns and Gangs Unit cleared 25% of all cases by charges; of those not cleared 22% were deemed non-criminal, and 24% had insufficient evidence to proceed, with 28% of cases still under investigation. In 2021, no cases were impacted where the victim or complainant declined to proceed.

The Guns and Gangs Unit's operational budget has grown from \$1,683,000 in 2017 to \$3,629,200 in 2021. This is due, in part, to provincial and federal grants, which has allowed for much needed staffing to expand the section from 12 to 24 members. This has ensured that we can provide both a reactive response to incidents of shootings while maintain our concentrated proactive investigations into persons know to be engaged in criminal activity and/or prone to resorting to gun violence. Of the 24 positions, eight are provincially funded. However, due to redeployment requirements that emerged due to the ongoing pandemic and accommodation requests, the unit

currently has only 13 active investigators, plus three supervising officers. Four members are currently on developmental opportunities in other areas, two are off of work long term, and the other two positions remain currently vacant.

On the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) front, significant efforts have been made since 2018 to increase the cultural and linguistic diversity of the unit. This remains an important focus as Guns and Gangs Unit members routinely transition to other opportunities within the OPS. The Service and the Guns and Gangs Unit recognizes the importance of community trust as it relates to solvency rates and overall community safety and well-being.

Street violence and gang activity is a complex social problem. It has roots in poverty, trauma, marginalization, racism and is often linked to the global drug trade. The work we are doing with our partners seeks to reduce or limit the use of the fourth pillar; Enforcement and Suppression, in order to develop more meaningful and lasting solutions that focus on reducing and resolving the root causes of this problem. It is not something that will be easily resolved overnight, but by working collaboratively with the City, our partners, frontline experts, the CEC, and engaged residents, we can begin to develop a solution that will ensure the best outcomes for the residents of this city.