

## Chief's PSB Verbal - March 22, 2021

Good afternoon, bon après midi.

Over the past year, the country, the city and the Service have been dealing with the COVID pandemic and its economic fallout, the urgent need to address historic systemic racism and other acts of discrimination, and growing social inequality, the expanding opioid and mental health crises and an alarming level of polarization in our society.

Despite these unprecedented crises, the OPS remains committed to reforming, restructuring and realigning the Service - to be better individually and collectively, to better-meet the needs of all of the Ottawa residents we serve and protect, and to better meet the needs of all of the OPS members who serve and protect the community.

The OPS has been relentlessly pursuing cultural and organizational change with a hyper focus on improving:

- Public Trust – To ensure our thoughts, decisions, actions and systems improve OPS member and public trust in our Service.
- Duty of Care – To demonstrate every day and in every way a greater duty of care for all of our OPS members and all of our community members.
- Community Safety and Well-Being – To work together internally as “One Team” so that we can form better community partnerships to co-produce integrated services and joint solutions that will improve safety and well-being in all neighbourhoods.

In addition to our overall organizational change efforts, the OPS multi-year Change Budget identified the following priority projects to be delivered in 2021;

- New measures to improve our response to people in mental health crises
- New anti-black and anti-Indigenous training
- Addition of five members to SACA/PAU including VAW and MMIG Coordinators
- Expansion of NRTs to suburban and rural communities
- Additional financial and human resources for OPS member health and wellness

We will keep the Board and the public informed with regular updates on the status of these projects.

We know that we must rid our organization and our institution of people, practices and systems that undermine our efforts to build trust, improve our duty of care and advance community safety and well-being. This difficult work continues with a growing critical mass of OPS members stepping up, speaking out, and standing up to do the right things.

Words matter but deeds speak! I am seeing significantly positive changes in the way that our members speak and act – this is increasingly reflected in the feedback that I receive from many of the most marginalized, victimized and racialized community members.

The members of the OPS continue to deliver needed and invaluable police services on a 24-7/365 basis to the one million residents of the City of Ottawa where they demonstrate incredible acts of professionalism, compassion and operational excellence.

## **HATE CRIME**

I now want to make a statement of support to our Asian Community and our VAW community after the terrible, tragic hate-fueled deaths of eight people in Atlanta last week – six of the murdered were Asian women – seven of the eight people murdered were women.

From my perspective as Chief here in the Nation's Capital, what took place in Atlanta is a hate crime that victimized those directly murdered or injured, their families, the Asian community and women (locally and internationally).

I have been tracking intelligence reports as well as media reports and find remarkable that there is even any real debate about the intentions of this murderer's actions – there is NO debate about the impact of his criminal action.

Regardless, the OPS has acted as if this was a U.S.-based hate crime with local implications here in Ottawa.

That is, we immediately deployed our Equity Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) unit to reach out to our Asian and female members as well as our Asian and VAW community leaders. We had our Intelligence/Hate Crime units monitoring for online and physical threats locally. Finally, we advised all of our patrols to be vigilant on these issues and to be proactive patrolling to prevent any related threats.

In 2020, the number of reported incidents targeting people of Asian descent increased to 14 from 2 in 2019.

Members of our service continue to reach out to the Asian community to express our support and our commitment to everyone's safety. Neighbourhood Resource Team members have been engaged to work with community contacts and uniformed police presence has been increased.

We continue to make contacts with key leaders in the community to strengthen ties and extend our messages in multiple languages.

We also are aware of how this tragedy intersects with violence against women. We are working to strengthen our working relationship with local groups. The report on this month's agenda outlines that work.

Over the weekend, I was saddened to hear that even our Mayor was victimized in a hate incident, with graffiti outside his home. Our Hate Crime Unit is investigating this hate incident.

There is no room for homophobia or any other form of discriminatory, hate fueled acts in our Service, our city or our society. All hate incidents should be reported and will be fully investigated. We ask that anyone who has been a victim of a hate-motivated incident to contact us so we can help. You can do that either by calling 613-236-1222 or you can file a report online at [ottawapolice.ca/onlinereporting](http://ottawapolice.ca/onlinereporting).

## **INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY**

Earlier this month, we celebrated International Women's Day. Women – sworn and civilian – have made and continue to make incredibly strong and growing contributions to our Service, our city and our society. It's our collective responsibility to ensure that this organization recruits and supports women, while creating a safe workplace conducive to achieving their career aspirations.

This year's IWD theme is #ChooseToChallenge. We can all "choose to challenge" by calling out gender-bias and inequality in support of an inclusive workforce that values the unique contributions and skills of every member.

## **REPLICA GUNS**

We continue to see a high number of authentic looking replica firearms being used out in the public or in the commission of crimes. It has resulted in a number 911 calls from the community to the OPS over the past three months.

Since the start of this month 30 fake replica handguns have been recovered by the Ottawa Police Service; last year we recovered over 260.

This trend presents a safety issue for both the community and our officers because each call MUST be initially responded to presuming it is a real firearm until it can be otherwise determined.

The use fake or replica firearms to commit a crime results in the same penalties as using a real firearm.

## **OPIOD & MENTAL HEALTH CRISES**

Health experts acknowledge that issues related to mental health and addictions have been exacerbated by the pandemic. There is a lot of suffering and pain and our members are seeing it on the street every day.

Almost daily, OPS officers are responding to community calls for people in mental health and/or addictions related crises – in many cases these persons are threatening self-harm or are at risk of harming others.

In 2020, Ottawa Police responded to 542 calls for service related to overdoses. Last year OPS officers used Naloxone 115 times, saving 103 lives. This year, we have responded to 91 calls for service involving drug overdoses.

Our officer's ability to administer Naloxone along with our teamwork with the paramedics and the fire department has led to successful interventions in the majority of these cases. Tragically though, we are seeing far too many members of our community dying as result of drug overdose.

We are continuing our hard work with our partners, like Ottawa Public Health, to continue to advise and warn residents about the risks of illegal drugs, but this recent upward trend is alarming, and we need to reinforce preventative educational measures and ensure multiple life-saving supports are available to reduce incidents of overdose in our city.

## **24 Hours**

In a 24-hour period last week, I experienced some of the most inspirational and some of the most troubling moments in my 30-year police career.

First let me describe what inspired me. It started with a drive up to the Leitrim Station where I had the honour and privilege to present Chief's Commendations to two Neighbourhood Resource Team officers, Constables Eric Douglas and Wayne Clayton. The Commendations were for an event which occurred last year when Eric and Wayne were on patrol and came across a serious motor vehicle accident where three people were trapped inside a burning vehicle. Eric and Wayne, were able to successfully rescue two people. Despite the heroic efforts of the two officers, the third person unfortunately later succumbed to their injuries.

Eric and Wayne then told me about another situation they were dealing with that related to an event that occurred in November 2019 which indirectly involved me during my first week as chief.

At the time, I was on patrol with Wayne, Eric and the rest of their Carlington NRT when we investigated a male who was involved in a criminal code driving offence. During the investigation, I met the suspect's spouse and some of her young kids. It was clear to me that the parents and children were struggling with a number of socio-economic issues at the time.

The NRT officers continued the investigation but, ultimately, used their discretion to not lay any charges because they believed the male was trying to turn his life around and raise his young family. NRT Officers Eric Douglas and Wayne Clayton remained in contact with the family in an effort to try to help them.

Just over a year later, Eric and Wayne learned that the mother had tragically passed away from a drug overdose leaving the father alone to look after the young kids. Eric

and Wayne could see that this was a potentially critical situation so they took immediate action to assist the family.

First, they arranged with the local food bank to get the family some food. Then they raised funds to buy Christmas gifts for the kids.

The officers are currently working with social service agencies and the father to try to get him stable employment so he can look after his family.

For me this second event involving Wayne and Eric was even more impactful than their life-saving efforts during the car accident.

The rescue incident was an example of bravery and courage at the highest levels of the profession of policing – it is a deed that demonstrates that every day we have police officers who run towards and into danger to rescue others.

The second event spoke to their professional use of discretion in a criminal investigation and their personal compassion to help this young man and his family...this is the heart and soul of community policing!

Shortly after, I was made aware of an emergency response police operation that had just concluded a short distance from the station where I had met with Eric and Wayne.

A 911 call had come in regarding a car-jacking incident involving a suspect who was armed with a handgun. The responding frontline officers intercepted the car and safely arrested the suspect who was found in possession of a fully loaded semi-automatic firearm.

Our frontline officers did a textbook high-risk takedown and seized yet another crime gun from a dangerous offender. Our investigators conducted a professional thorough investigation and laid a total of 12 charges against the offender including, kidnapping, possession of a firearm, and using a weapon in committing a criminal offence.

I learned of all of these acts of police bravery, courage, discretion, compassion and operational/investigative excellence literally within the space of an hour. As I said, this was one of the most inspirational sequence of events that I have experienced in my police career.

The next 12 hours, however, would prove to be some of the most troubling in my career.

That evening, I took part in a community meeting as part of the OPS' International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

The event included the community members sharing stories about their interactions with our OPS officers, some of them quite devastating. If the stories were true, they would be considered acts of misconduct, and if they were not true, they clearly demonstrated the low level of trust and faith that they had in our Service.

But the highlight of the event was when a community member asked a question of a panel member, Sergeant White of the Minneapolis Police Department. The question was “What she felt like on May 25, 2020, when George Floyd was murdered by another MPD police officer?”

Sergeant White is a highly decorated and respected 17-year police veteran. She is also Black. She was at work on that tragic day – she advises that she was sitting at her desk watching the live feed and she broke down sobbing in tears.

She was crying for the loss of life, she was crying as Black woman who had herself faced racism, and she was crying for what she knew would be a devastating impact to the reputation of the Minneapolis Police Department and the policing institution globally.

It was a very difficult discussion but an important conversation for the OPS and the community to have. The meeting ended on a positive note with commitments from community members and Service members alike to keep the dialogue going and to continue to work together, to rebuild trust, and to prevent any more tragedies from happening.

Later at home, I got myself caught up on the news of the abduction, rape and murder of a 30-year-old woman, Sara Everard, in London England.

The news reports advised that the police had made an arrest in the case – the person accused of committing this murder was a serving London Met Police officer.

Over the 24 hours I had seen the very best of the policing institution; courage, compassion and crime fighting. I had then been confronted with the very worst of the police profession.

We have our own long and terrible history of OPS members who have been found guilty of major misconduct and criminal code offences.

We have far too many OPS members who, by acts of omission, fail to speak up or stand up for those being victimized or bullied, in the Service or in the community.

As an organization, we must do more to admit, own and do something to address these cultural and organizational issues. To be clear, this is about BOTH individual and systemic failures in the OPS.

So our Service’s commitment to duty of care, public trust and community safety and well-being are far more than philosophical discussions, priority projects or strategic plans.

Every person who considers themselves a leader in this organization is going to have to put their body, hearts, minds and souls into the effort of addressing these issues.

## **CONCLUSION**

As I stated at the start of my speech, we have made a lot of progress in the past 18 months to address these issues...BUT...there is much more work to be done.

I believe we have the leadership within the OPS and the leadership within the community to get this done!

Thank you – merci beaucoup.