

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Friday, July 24, 2026 12:30 p.m.**

(Ottawa)—On July 25, 2016, Mr. Abdirahman Abdi died following an interaction with members of the Ottawa Police Service.

Ten years later, we continue to remember Mr. Abdi and recognize the enduring grief experienced by his family, friends, and community. His death had a profound impact on Ottawa, particularly on Somali, Black, and Muslim communities, and raised important questions about policing, mental health, race, and the use of force.

We recognize that the passage of time does not lessen that loss or the pain associated with it. We also recognize our responsibility to learn from Mr. Abdi's death and to make meaningful, lasting changes to how we serve people experiencing mental health and substance-use crises.

We have undertaken significant partnership work since 2016, and we are sincerely committed to continuing to do more. We have also been working on implementing the recommendations following the December 2024 coroner's inquest into the death of Mr. Abdi, when the jury issued 57 recommendations aimed at preventing similar deaths—including 28 recommendations directed specifically to the Ottawa Police Service (OPS). We regularly report on this work through the Police Service's DRIVE<sup>2</sup> Strategy, a comprehensive human rights organizational change strategy, and the Mental Health C.H.A.N.G.E. Initiative.

- Established in 2020, the community-led Guiding Council helped shape a new approach to mental health crisis response and laid the groundwork for ANCHOR, which provides a non-police, community-based response for eligible calls where there is no immediate risk of violence or public safety concern.
- The Mental Health C.H.A.N.G.E. initiative was created in response to the 28 recommendations from the inquest. Its goal is to improve how we respond to people experiencing mental health crises. Working closely with community partners, mental health professionals, and people with lived experience, the MHCI team ensures the initiative is shaped by the voices and needs of the city's diverse communities.
- One of those recommendations was to establish a Mental Health Advisory Council which was done with support from the Community Equity Council and community partners. The MHAC has been meeting regularly since September 2025 to focus on providing advice and recommendations that improve police interactions with individuals experiencing a mental health crisis. MHAC actively offers informed perspectives, best practices, and feedback to OPS leadership, including

suggestions related to training, education, community engagement, policy development, and other areas.

- We have also expanded the capacity of the Mental Health Crisis Unit through increased staffing and operational restructuring. The unit has stabilized its staffing complement and is currently staffed by two sergeants and nine constables, for a total of 11 members. Some members support the unit's core duties, while others are assigned to Mobile Crisis Response Team initiatives.
- The Mental Health Crisis Unit's core mandate continues to include its longstanding partnership with The Ottawa Hospital's Mobile Crisis Response Team, providing joint mobile responses and community follow-up for individuals experiencing mental health crises. As a result of the increased staffing and operational restructuring, joint responses have increased from an average of approximately 250 annually to approximately 450 annually, allowing officers and healthcare partners to support more individuals and families in the community.
- The increased capacity has also allowed OPS to support additional health-informed crisis-response initiatives. Three Mobile Crisis Response Teams are currently in place:
  - A Mobile Crisis Response Team in partnership with The Ottawa Hospital;
  - A second Mobile Crisis Response Team involving The Royal's Urgent Care Clinic; and
  - A Youth Crisis Response Team in partnership with the Youth Services Bureau, CHEO, and Kids Come First.

These teams pair a member of the Mental Health Crisis Unit with a community specialist to respond to individuals experiencing a crisis in the community, helping to ensure their needs are addressed where they live, work, attend school, and engage in daily activities. Together, these initiatives have expanded community-based crisis-response capacity and help connect individuals and families with appropriate resources and supports before a crisis escalates.

- Training is another essential part of this work. The Mental Health Crisis Unit has delivered two Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training courses, resulting in the training of 50 officers. OPS is exploring opportunities to offer additional CIT training in the future and to make it a more regular part of officer development. Discussions are also ongoing to make CIT training a regular offering throughout the year, further strengthening OPS's commitment to equipping officers with specialized crisis-

response skills. CIT training equips officers with the knowledge and skills to recognize the signs and symptoms associated with a range of mental health and substance-use concerns and to employ effective communication and de-escalation strategies that support safer outcomes. These officers serve in frontline roles, providing regular policing services to the community on a 24/7 basis. CIT-trained officers are also able to support the Mental Health Crisis Unit during staffing shortages or as part of developmental opportunities. This approach was successfully used during the summer, with officers from both the first and second CIT cohorts providing support within the unit.

- Training also includes strengthened education in de-escalation, active bystandership, trauma-informed and anti-racist approaches, cultural awareness, and the effects of trauma and brain development on mental health and substance use. Recent training delivered with national health and research partners is intended to help members reduce stigma, better understand the circumstances behind substance use, and connect people with appropriate supports.
- We are also making investments in new programs as well as data and technology enhancements, including the recent decision to expand Body Worn Cameras following a successful pilot project. In partnership with the Community Equity Council, a new Community Use of Force Review Panel has also been launched to review Use of Force incidents and annual reporting.

To support this work, we continue to apply an equity lens to our initiatives, programs, projects, policies, and processes. Additionally, over the past 10 years, we have built a dedicated Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Unit, developed the DRIVE<sup>2</sup> Strategy, and incorporated EDI principles into our member competencies framework.

While these initiatives represent progress, we know that trust is not rebuilt through mere statements or individual programs. It must be earned through sustained change efforts, transparency, accountability, and better outcomes for the people we serve.

We remain committed to implementing the recommendations, listening to affected communities, and improving how we respond to people in crisis.

In memory of Mr. Abdi, and in an effort toward meaningful change, we continue the work needed to build a more compassionate, equitable, and accountable police service.

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“The death of Mr. Abdirahman Abdi deeply affected his family, friends and community, and changed how the Ottawa Police Service approaches interactions with people experiencing

a mental health crisis. We know that meaningful change must be demonstrated through action. By strengthening our Mental Health Crisis Unit, expanding partnerships with health and community organizations, investing in specialized training, and continuing to implement the inquest recommendations, we are working to provide more compassionate, effective and accountable responses to people experiencing a crisis. We remain committed to listening, learning and earning the trust of the communities we serve.”

— *Chief Eric Stubbs, Ottawa Police Service*

"Ten years after the death of Abdirahman Abdi, the Ottawa Police Service Board recognizes the lasting impact this event has had on many members of our community. This anniversary is a reminder of the importance of learning from the past, addressing the factors that affect trust and confidence in policing, and ensuring that progress is measurable, transparent, and sustained over time. While important work has been undertaken by the Ottawa Police Service, the Board recognizes there is more to do and remains committed to continued accountability, oversight, and meaningful change."

— *Salim Fakirani, Chair, Ottawa Police Service Board*

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Through the Community Safety Data portal [data.ottawapolice.ca](https://data.ottawapolice.ca), members of the public can view, download, and interact with data released by the Ottawa Police Service.

Help make your community safer: register your information and security camera location at [CAMSafe.ca](https://CAMSafe.ca) to support investigations.

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