

MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: 20 October 2022

Ottawa Police Services Board letter to the Ontario Civilian Police Commission regarding hiring of new Chief of Police

Ottawa— The Ottawa Police Services Board has written a letter to the Ontario Civilian Police Commission (OCPC) with respect to its ongoing recruitment process for a new Chief of the Ottawa Police Service. This correspondence is in response to a letter dated October 18, 2022, authored by two candidates for the office of Mayor in the City of Ottawa who reached out to the OCPC with their concerns.

A copy of the body of the letter is reproduced below for the benefit of the public.

Dear OCPC Registrar,

I am writing on behalf of the Ottawa Police Services Board.

The Commission and the Board are in receipt of a letter sent to the Commission on October 18, 2022. This letter was sent by two candidates for the office of Mayor of the City of Ottawa. A decision was made, seemingly by the authors, to place the letter in the public sphere.

Of course, if one of the authors of the letter were to be successful, then they would be entitled to sit on the Police Services Board. As a result, it is important that all of the readers of the letter understand the role of the Board and the recruitment and appointment of the Chief of Police.

*It is unfortunate and contrary to the best interests of the community that the candidates are politicizing an appointment that is not political in the first place. This letter is entirely contrary to the structure and intent of the Police Services Act. **Under the Act, the Board has a statutory obligation to recruit and appoint the Chief of Police and any Deputy Chiefs of Police.** Municipal Council does not have a statutory role or legislated authority in this regard. It would appear that the authors of the letter are trying to circumvent or undermine the independence the Board, as the Board is trying to carry out its statutory duty.*

Furthermore, the two candidates authoring this letter are intentionally misleading the Commission as well as members of the public. To suggest that the people of Ottawa have not had an opportunity to have their say in the recruitment process is completely false, as is the assertion that the Board's public consultation process was flawed and poorly attended.

In fact, the Board released a public consultation report regarding the recruiting process as part of its public agenda of July 25, 2022. The report states that 214 people were engaged through a series of nine targeted forums and focus groups as part of a consultation process. In addition, 35 individual interviews were conducted with community members such as faith leaders, school board trustees, business owners, councillors, youth advocates, etc. Further, a total of 23 members of the public attended an open public forum, and finally, there were 1451 responses received in response to an online survey.

Based upon the foregoing, the Board is of the view that the public consultation process was not poorly attended. The Board also wishes to point out that this process was the first one to engage a fully racialized consultation firm to design and implement the consultation strategy, as a means of reaching community members who are often marginalized and under-represented in traditional consultation results. The firm was made up of well-respected community leaders with lived experience and vast networks into the community.

To get to the nub of the matter, there is no conflict of interest, real or perceived, simply because a candidate has stated publicly that they are in agreement with a decision that the Police Services Board unanimously made at its meeting on July 25, to continue the recruitment of the next Chief of Police. A candidate running in the election has no more and no less influence on the decision of the Police Services Board than any other resident.

It is obvious that the two candidates are not thinking about the community or the Police Service when they suggest that the hiring process should be delayed and undertaken in the next term of Council. They are undermining the collective experience and expertise of the current Board and putting the stability of the Police Service further at risk.

The Service has been without a permanent Chief of Police since February of this year. The next term of Council will not begin until November 15, and the appointments to Committees and Boards likely won't be finalized until the end of the year or early 2023. The next iteration of the Board might not be in a position to appoint a new Chief of Police until next spring or later. The Board made its decision because it was (and is) of the view that it is unacceptable for the Police Service and it is unacceptable for the community, to not have a confirmed permanent Chief for over a year. It is actually in the best interests of the next Board to have this critical position filled before they begin their mandate as this will enable them to focus their attention on the budget, an updated strategic plan, and the recruitment of a permanent Deputy Chief of Police since we have had a vacancy in that role also since February of this year.

The Board trusts that our position is clear in this matter.

The Ottawa Police Services Board is the civilian body responsible for governing the Ottawa Police Service. It is responsible for ensuring the provision of adequate and effective police services to City of Ottawa residents.

- 30 -

For additional information, please contact Krista Ferraro, Executive Director, Ottawa Police Services Board, at 580-2424, ext. 21618.