April 25, 2016

Chair Eli-El-Chantiry

Members of Police Services Board

Nine years ago, the Hintonburg Community Association came before the Ottawa Police Services Board, to fight to keep the Community Police Centre in this area. The Police were paying $90,000/year in rent for a storefront further down Wellington. We spent months working very closely with the Inspector and suggested a room in the Hintonburg Community Centre. The Police Centre was moved in 2007 and the rent is now $8,000/year. A savings of over $80,000/year for the last 9 years and the rent paid goes to pay for free youth programming – a proven crime prevention action. A win for everyone.

We all believed that a stronger presence in our community could potentially turn things around and make our streets safer. And we were right. Having a dedicated, specialized community police presence has worked tremendously well, with our residents having an officer available who is known and trusted to help. Our community is safer, crime is down and this area has become a destination rather than one to be avoided. The number of calls for service in Hintonburg and Mechanicsville has significantly decreased over the past few years and this is thanks to proactive, preventative and informed Community Police Officers and Neighbourhood Officers. We went from the highest calls for service to one of the lowest in the City – a clear cost savings. This was due to the strong partnership between community and police – neither could have accomplished this alone.

With all of this success, you can understand why rumours about the proposed changes to the policing model that are a part of the Service Initiative have us worried. We have been unable to receive clear information and to this point, cannot reassure residents of what may or may not be happening. Are the Community Police Officers, Neighbourhood Officers, School Resource Officers, Beat Officers gone? When will this happen- Jan 1,2017?

The Multi-Stakeholder Approach to Problem Addresses – this started in Hintonburg in 1995 under a different name. The present model shows the Community Police Officer is the lead. How will this happen if that position is gone or a patrol officer does this in their spare time?

We understand that the Police need to review their operations to ensure that resources – people and dollars – are being used most effectively. We have helped the Police realize savings in the past and we will work to help find savings in the future. What we cannot support though, is for this to be a purely cost-saving exercise that could blindly cause Ottawa to revert to solely reactive policing and lose specialized resources in communities where they are needed and effective.

We are told that no one knows what this new model will look like – what positions stay and what are gone. Realistically this is only 5 months before implementation – it is hard to believe that the decision has not already been made.

The community associations represented in this letter are your partners and our volunteers have invested a great deal in improving our neighbourhoods and also, specifically, supporting these specialized officers as trusted members of our community.

In a letter from the Police dated April 20th, it states that “…community policing will always be the cornerstone of our strategy to serve residents.” We certainly hope so. But more so, we want to state that we unequivocally support our Community Police Centres and dedicated officers. They have made a tremendous difference for our community and we want them to stay. This system works.

Trust takes a long time to build but can be lost very quickly. We ask, respectfully, that you direct the Police to proceed by considering both dollars and sense in the Service Initiative and that they do indeed keep communities first. We also request that as a part of this or any significant service review, that you ensure that communities like ours are consulted in a meaningful way before final decisions are made. Changes in how policing is delivered can have a huge impact on us.

Please direct OPS to bring back the results of the community consultation to PSB for consideration.

Cheryl Parrott

Co-chair Security Committee

Hintonburg Community Association

On behalf of

Civic Hospital Neighbourhood Association

Hintonburg Community Association

Mechanicsville Community Association