



Anonymous Reporting for Vulnerable Residents Report

National Capital Area Crime Stoppers
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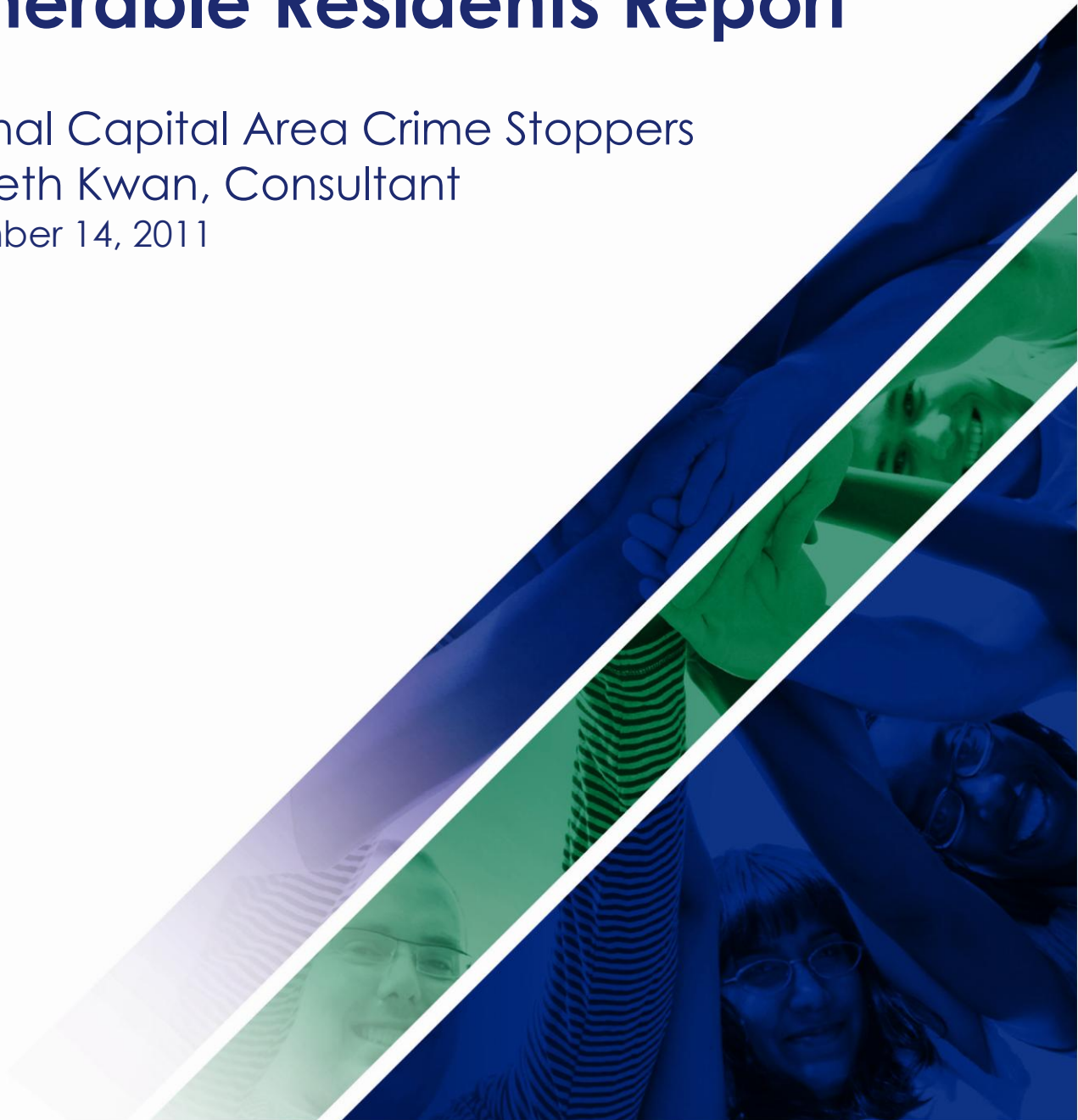


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Background

Residents' reporting and utilization of services to address criminal and public disorder activities to appropriate agencies and institutions is key to the community safety and crime prevention in their neighbourhoods and communities.

In some situations, residents, including those in some Ottawa Community Housing (OCH) neighbourhoods, are not reporting serious criminal and public disorder activities that negatively impact their community safety and thus, their own quality of life. In these cases residents do not act because they are afraid of reprisal or intimidation by the instigators of criminal and, public disorder activities. Consequently, the criminal and public disorder issues are not being addressed because the police or the landlord are not informed and made aware of them in the first place.

Introduction

The partners of this project are National Capital Area Crime Stoppers, Ottawa Community Housing (OCH) and Crime Prevention Ottawa (CPO). Crime Stoppers is the lead for this project.

Crime Stoppers is a locally run program serving Canada's National Capital and Area including municipalities in both Eastern Ontario and Western Quebec. It was formed in 1985 by a group of local businesspeople who had heard about this community-run program being successful elsewhere in helping the police solve crimes through cash rewards given to those who have confidential and anonymous information that will help the police solve crimes. The program also raises money to fund the cash rewards and arranges payouts to those whose tips are successful.

Ottawa Community Housing is the largest social housing provider in Ottawa, and the second largest in Ontario. OCH provides 14,783 homes for about 32,000 seniors, parents, children, singles and persons with special needs. The housing portfolio is scattered throughout the city and includes apartments in low-rise and high-rise buildings, townhouses, row houses, detached houses and rooming houses. Over 50% of tenants have employment or pension income and the remainder receive Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP), Ontario Works, Employment Insurance, student loans or other income. In 2009, 34% of tenant households were families with children under the age of 18 and 31% were seniors.

Crime Prevention Ottawa is dedicated to “crime reduction and enhanced community safety in Ottawa through collaborative, evidence-based crime prevention.” It brings together city government, police services, school boards, child protection, the United Way as well as community, business and academic partners. It was established in 2005 by city council as a quasi-independent body.

Anonymous Reporting Project

This project looked at creative solutions to address the lack of reporting by vulnerable residents of serious criminal and public disorder activities. According to the three project partners, Crime Stoppers has an anonymous reporting system that appears to be underutilized by OCH residents who may benefit from using it.

Focus Groups with Vulnerable Residents

Altogether, six focus groups of vulnerable residents were conducted. These focus groups were organized by OCH Community Development, Carlington Community Health Centre and the Hunt Club Riverside Community Centre. The focus groups of youth, tenants and seniors were comprised of both males and females, many from multicultural communities in the Ottawa south and west areas.

Findings from Youth Focus Groups

Three focus groups were conducted with 2 groups of youth – one in the Ottawa west and the other in Ottawa south. Each focus group had between 10 to 12 youth.

The Ottawa west males-only youth group participated in two focus groups. The youth, who live in active criminal and public disorder areas, were very forthcoming about the crime and disorder activities in their neighbourhoods. These youth reported that they did not feel safe - in fact, they felt angry, nervous and scared in the areas where they reside. They recalled witnessing and/or knowing of fighting, robberies, weapons, gangs, drugs, shootings, Facebook threats, abuse of drugs/alcohol, racism, rape and attacks (being jumped, attacked with an axe, or being beaten up).

The Ottawa south youth group had male and female participants. The male participants were very evasive in their responses. The Youth Worker suggested that part of the reason was their protectiveness of their community and a sense of shame if they admitted that they lived in an environment that was rife with crime and public disorder. The female participants were more engaged in the focus group. Some of the activities that the youth witnessed or knew of included fights, drug dealing, men harassing girls/women, graffiti, vandalism, destruction of park property (e.g. basketball net), people lurking along the wooded path/area behind the supermarket, littering, and neighbours not controlling their dogs.

Comparing the focus groups, the degree of severity of the crime and public disorder activities seemed more harsh and rigorous for the Ottawa west than the Ottawa south youth group. The Consultant hypothesizes that this may in part be due to the mix of well-off neighbourhoods adjacent to the neighbourhoods with vulnerable residents in this Ottawa south area.

Most of the youth were not aware of Crime Stoppers and those who did identified it as the "snitch line". The youth group in Ottawa west and the girls from the Ottawa south youth groups were open to receiving information about Crime Stoppers. In fact, the retention and recall of Crime Stoppers information by the Ottawa west youth group was impressively accurate in their second focus group session.

Only about 30% of youth said they use would use anonymous reporting offered by Crime Stoppers.

The youth groups were asked about using social media to find out more about Crime Stoppers or to report a crime. Youth, in general, were surprisingly reluctant to use social media – many felt that it was too risky, as the history of their activity could be tracked and/or social media did not offer adequate anonymity.

When asked how they would obtain information to contact Crime Stoppers, youth stated that they would use the internet, telephone book or information from stickers and community events.

In terms of their means of contacting Crime Stoppers to report anonymously, youth stated that their greatest preference was to use the telephone (mostly male youth), followed by texting (mostly female youth) and last, by email. Only 1-in-5 youth in the focus groups said they would use texting to report a crime to Crime Stoppers.

The tools/resources identified by the youth groups as most effective were:

- Visual tools such as posters, pamphlets in different languages and stickers
- Presentations by Crime Stoppers.

The strategies identified by the youth groups to increase the awareness of Crime Stoppers were:

- To provide parents with the information on Crime Stoppers in different languages
- To engage recent immigrants to increase their comfort level in reporting crime and public disorder activities
- To put information on Crime Stoppers in schools
- To make presentations on Crime Stoppers in schools.

Other suggestions from youth to increase community safety were an increased presence of police and security cameras in the community.

Findings from Tenants Focus Group

The tenants from one of the OCH communities participated in the focus group. It was a very culturally and linguistically diverse group of participants. They input at the focus group were primarily about nuisance behaviours and criminal activities.

The park adjacent to but not part of this OCH community has been a problem for the tenants of this community. There have been nuisance behaviours including loitering, drinking, drugs, throwing beer bottles, and lighting fireworks.

The tenants also spoke about the situation at the bus stop which is just outside their community. People have been hiding behind the trees in the immediate vicinity of this bus stop and pouncing on tenants making their way home after disembarking the bus. In one case a backpack was stolen and in another case a young woman was harassed.

It was notable that tenants stated that the public disorder issues at the park and the bus stop were perpetrated by people outside of their community.

Tenants also suspected certain addresses as locations of criminal activities such as drug dealing and prostitution. Cars would consistently enter into and drive out of the community in the early hours of the morning. Tenants suspect that the school parking lot was also used for drug-related activities. According to the focus group participants, the poor lighting in their community only encouraged such activities.

In conveying this information at the focus group, tenants described the complexity of managing risks to achieve the optimum community safety. For example, they spoke of “night time activities” of the people involved with the drug-related activities versus “day time activities” as these same people were protective of the children in the community during the day time.

Tenants want to report criminal and public disorder activities but they do not want the negative repercussions. When asked why they do not report criminal and public disorder activities, tenants stated that:

- Reporting was futile because by the time OCH Safety Officers or the Police arrived, the reported incident was over or the people involved have dissipated
- Some of the reporting requirements were too difficult to fulfill (such as noting the license plate numbers)
- Everyone in the community could identify the person who contacted the authorities because the Police or the OCH Safety Officer appears at the address of the person who made the report
- It was not clear whom tenants should call to make the report e.g. Police, 911, By-Law Services, OCH Safety Officer.

Tenants who had experience reporting criminal and public disorder activities preferred to call the OCH Safety Officer as they were timely in their response compared to the By-Law Services authorities who they described as being “really slow”. However, tenants were told that the OCH Safety Officers will only deal with public disorder activities related to the OCH community such as trespassing but not criminal activities. With regard to addresses of criminal and public disorder instigators, tenants suggested setting-up a Neighbourhood Watch or using eviction as a course of action. However, tenants felt that currently, eviction was ineffective as it takes too long.

On the issue of increasing the rate of reporting crime and public disorder, Tenants wanted:

- A pamphlet with detailed information on whom to call to report these activities and how confidentiality would be protected that would be dropped off to every household in the community.
- The Tenant Community Worker to follow-up with support to the people who contacted the authorities
- Presentations to the Tenants Association regarding the role and responsibilities of the different enforcement service providers
- Increased presence of enforcement service providers at community events such as summer barbeques.

Findings from Seniors Groups

Altogether, 12 seniors participated in two separate focus groups in Ottawa south. The groups included men and women with a strong multicultural presence in an area that encompasses middle and low income households.

The criminal and public disorder activities reported by seniors in the focus groups included:

- People trying to enter seniors' buildings and checking the mail boxes
- Vehicular theft and damage
- Vandalism and graffiti
- People lurking along the pathway in the wooded area behind the supermarket
- People loitering at the train tracks and tunnel connecting 2 streets
- Young people loitering in the park
- Seniors with walkers being jumped and robbed
- Cars picking up and dropping off young people on a regular basis
- Theft
- Prostitution
- Drug-related activities.

Seniors stated that they did not feel unsafe but they did not leave their homes at night. However, when news spreads of crimes such as weapons hoarding, seniors are more scared.

In their estimation, some practices that improved community safety were:

- Cutting back foliage in the park to deter drug-related activities
- A night security patrol that checks windows and doors in the seniors' building
- An alarm system in the seniors building that is checked annually.

Seniors from the seniors' building and the middle-class areas did not feel they needed to know about Crime Stoppers. The seniors in the middle-income areas have a very strong and effective Neighbourhood Watch.

Seniors suggested the following ways to improve community safety:

- Youth should be taught at school and especially at home about "right and wrong"
- More surveillance cameras
- More lights, especially behind buildings and along wooded areas
- More people to be concerned about their neighbours

- More surveillance and presence of police in the community
- Increased patrolling of bus stops and transit stations
- Outreach by Crime Stoppers and other enforcement service providers to schools, church, associations, Neighbourhood Watch
- Flyers delivered to each household identifying whom to contact for different criminal and public disorder activities.

Strategies to Increase Anonymous Reporting

From the focus groups, it was clear that vulnerable residents viewed intervening and addressing criminal and public disorder activities was the responsibility of enforcement service providers such as Crime Stoppers, Police, OCH Safety Services and By-Law Services and Regulations Services. Tenants did not view the enforcement service providers as separate entities with specific responsibilities for different criminal and public disorder activities. The overall recommendation from the Consultant is for the enforcement service providers to work together to provide vulnerable residents in communities an integrated suite of enforcement services.

The enforcement service providers, along with the other relevant community safety groups such as Neighbourhood Watch, Tenant Associations, Community Associations and Community Health and Resource Centres can form a Community Safety Partnership - a network of groups that work in local community hubs and with local champions/ambassadors. This model of localized community safety enhancement by service providers and tenants will address specific criminal and public disorder issues in each community in partnership with local tenants.

Another overarching recommendation is for Crime Stoppers to have a presence in the communities, especially face-to-face interactions with vulnerable residents, such as attendance of community events, co-sponsoring special celebrations and presentations at schools and community centres. Such a tactic makes Crime Stoppers more approachable and familiar to residents.

The last overarching recommendation is for Crime Stoppers to take a visible role in developing safe community places. All the focus groups mentioned drug-related activities, sexual harassment/exploitation and nuisance behaviour in community spaces where people can hide and their activities are obscured from public view. For example, Crime Stoppers can co-host public events with other community partners in creating or improving landscape designs that provide natural surveillance in parks or paths along wooded areas to increase the perception that people can be easily seen, thus, discouraging public disorder, nuisance behaviours and criminal activities. This would visibly promote Crime Stoppers to the community, and may help increase anonymous reporting.

The Consultant has proposed a number of strategies based, on the common findings across the focus groups, in a strategic Action Plan Framework, below.

Action Plan Framework

Common Findings	Objectives	Actions	Tools	Partners
Short-Term Recommendations				
1. There was low awareness of Crime Stoppers.	Increase public awareness or “brand building” of Crime Stoppers through marketing.	Market Crime Stoppers more in visible spaces that are accessible to vulnerable residents e.g. schools, community centres, community halls.	Crime Stoppers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pamphlets • Posters • Local TV 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OCH • Schools • Community Health and Resource Centre (CHRCs)
2. People who were aware of Crime Stoppers viewed it negatively (“snitch-line”) or in a distanced or removed way (“I see them on TV”).	Crime Stoppers to increase community outreach to vulnerable residents in neighbourhoods/ communities to improve their image and community presence.	<p>Crime Stoppers to train more volunteers to do community outreach.</p> <p>Crime Stoppers to do more outreach to vulnerable residents in communities to provide them with information on anonymous reporting.</p>	Crime Stoppers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pamphlets • Posters • Presentations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OCH • CHRCs
3. People did not know how anonymous reporting in Crime Stoppers worked.	Provide continuous and more community education on Crime Stoppers.	Crime Stoppers to train more service providers on anonymous reporting and how Crime Stoppers works	Crime Stoppers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pamphlets • Presentations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OCH • Police • CPO • CHRCs • Tenant Associations

Common Findings	Objectives	Actions	Tools	Partners
		Crime Stoppers and trained service providers to actively promote and explain anonymous reporting in Crime Stoppers to strategically targeted groups such as Tenant Associations, Neighbourhood Watch, Community Associations, local Businesses, etc.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neighbourhood Watch • Community Associations • Local Businesses
Medium-Term Recommendations				
4. Reporting is not effective ("not worth it")	Provide added-value to on-going OCH safety and community development initiatives.	Crime Stoppers to partner with OCH to integrate Crime Stoppers into their community safety and community development planning initiatives.	OCH <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Safety Plans • Community Development Plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OCH
	Share the local success stories of residents reporting crime and public disorder.	Crime Stoppers, Police and OCH to collaborate on collecting and using local statistics on crime and public disorder.	Community communiqué e.g. newsletters, web sites, updates, e-letters, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OCH • Police • CPO

Common Findings	Objectives	Actions	Tools	Partners
5. People did not know whom to call to report crime and public disorder activities	Provide accessible and clear information about reporting different crime and public disorder activities.	Crime Stoppers, in conjunction with other partners, provide clear information presented in a succinct way on how to report crime and public disorder, delivered to each household in targeted communities with vulnerable residents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pamphlets • Fridge magnets <p>See Appendix A: <i>Making the Right Call</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OCH Safety • OCH Community Development • Police • By-Law Services • CPO
Long -Term Recommendations				
6. Reporting is not effective ("not worth it")	Develop a strong and effective community safety partnership between community leaders, community service providers and enforcement service providers.	To explore the development of a Community Safety Partnership	Community Safety Partnership Agreement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OCH • Police • CPO • CHRCs • Tenant Associations • Neighbourhood Watch
	Demonstrate to vulnerable residents that reporting crime and public disorder activities is effective in improving	Crime Stoppers, as part of the Community Safety Partnership, contribute to demonstrating the effective response to reporting.	Collaboration and increased coordination among enforcement service providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OCH • Police • By-Law Services

Common Findings	Objectives	Actions	Tools	Partners
	community safety.	Crime Stoppers, as part of the Community Safety Partnership, to develop targeted campaigns to strategically focus on priority communities.	of the Community Safety Partnership Prioritize specific communities for targeted campaigns	
7. People rely on their own and immediate resources for risk management to ensure the overall safety in their community.	Provide effective communication and networking opportunities with vulnerable residents via the Community Safety Partnership.	Crime Stoppers, as part of the Community Safety Partnership, engage and involve vulnerable residents in community safety events.	Community events <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety Day • BBQ • End-of-the-Year event • Spring Event 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OCH • Police • CPO • Community Health and Resource Centre • Tenants Association
8. Although Crime Stoppers information was well received, it was not a clear option for people due to the complexity of crime and public disorder situations.	Provide avenues for vulnerable residents to be engaged and empowered to make decisions concerning safety in their community.	Crime Stoppers, as part of the Community Safety Partnership, engage vulnerable residents in dialogues and use their recommendations to increase their sense of community safety.	Community Safety Workshops/ Audits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OCH • Police • CPO

Conclusion

Anonymous reporting is another avenue for vulnerable residents to report criminal and public disorder activities. Their underutilization of Crime Stoppers can be attributed to three key reasons:

- Residents were not familiar with Crime Stoppers and how anonymous reporting worked
- Residents may not use Crime Stoppers or report to any other enforcement service providers as a way to manage the complexity of risks and maintaining overall safety in the community
- Residents already have established and effective community safety programs.

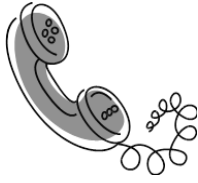
For focus group participants who were interested in using Crime Stoppers, the most appealing feature was anonymity of reporting. Many highlighted the lack of anonymity when they reported crime and public disorder to the Police or OCH Community Safety Services. They were equally surprised by the range of crimes and public disorder activities that could be reported to Crime Stoppers.

It takes a lot of motivation and courage for residents who are vulnerable to make a report as they may face retribution or intimidation from the perpetrators of crime or instigators of public disorder. Enforcement service providers need to find ways to make it easier to report and to demonstrate effective response to the reports. To this end, it is in the best interest of Crime Stoppers to work in an integrated partnership with other enforcement service providers to increase anonymous reporting by vulnerable residents.

In conclusion, Crime Stoppers can increase anonymous reporting by vulnerable residents and report on successful results of anonymous reporting by launching a vigorous community outreach and education program that is integrated with other community and enforcement service providers.

Appendix – Making the Right Call

CALL 911 FOR LIFE-THREATENING EMERGENCIES OR CRIMES IN PROGRESS



Ottawa Community Housing (OCH)	(613) 745-9277
Community Safety Services	
Police (General)	(613) 236-1222 / TTY (613) 232-1123
Crime Stoppers	(613) 233-TIPS (8477)
By-Law Services & Regulatory Services	311
Children`s Aid Society (CAS)	(613) 747-7800

Who to Call	Examples of Crime & Public Disorder
Crime Stoppers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (613) 233 – TIPS (8477) • Toll free 1-(800)-222-8477 • Text: CRIMES (274637) keyword “tip252” • www.facebook.com/CrimeStoppersCA?v=app_4949752878&ref=ts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Abuse and violence ✓ Crime and public transport ✓ Cyber bullying ✓ Fraud and scams ✓ Gang activities ✓ Homicides ✓ Illegal drugs ✓ Missing person ✓ Property damage ✓ Sexual assault ✓ Stolen vehicle & vehicle damage ✓ Teen violence ✓ Theft and robberies
OCH Community Safety Services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (613) 745-9277 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Safety and security needs ✓ Suspicious persons on OCH property ✓ Noise complaints ✓ Parking on OCH property ✓ Tenant neighbour disputes ✓ Illegal activity
Police <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (613) 236-1222 ext. 7300 • TTY (613) 760-8100 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Theft and robberies ✓ Property damage ✓ Missing person ✓ Stolen vehicle & vehicle damage
By-Law Services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 311 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Animal Care and Control ✓ Business Licensing ✓ Care of streets

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Discharge of firearms ✓ Fence height ✓ Minimum temperature (rental units) ✓ Noise ✓ Parks ✓ Parking ✓ Pool enclosures ✓ Portable and temporary signs ✓ Smoking - Public Places ✓ Taxis ✓ Inadequate Yard Maintenance/ Weeds
<p>Children's Aid Society (CAS)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (613) 747-7800 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Child abuse and neglect



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