



# OTTAWA GANG STRATEGY

Seeking Solutions to Street-Level Violence

---

Our First Three Years



Targeting street-level violence in Ottawa .....	1
Evaluation results .....	1
Gangs in Ottawa .....	2
Four pillars focused on real outcomes .....	3
Community-based for collective impact .....	3
Neighbourhood Cohesion .....	4
Community Leadership Network for Families .....	4
Framework for Post-Incident Neighbourhood Support Networks .....	4
United Neighbours, Levers of Change .....	5
Prevention .....	6
Supporting Families: Siblings at Risk .....	6
YOU-Decide .....	6
Youth Outreach Worker (YOW) Program .....	7
Shared Training Events .....	8
Enhanced Risk Identification Tool .....	8
Intervention .....	8
Time for Change .....	8
Ottawa Community Youth Diversion Program .....	10
Provincial Gang Asset Mapping Initiative .....	10
Enforcement and Suppression .....	11
Overall results .....	12
Next steps .....	12

## Targeting street-level violence in Ottawa

*It has been exciting to watch the Ottawa Gang Strategy unfold and achieve results by addressing the problem of street-level violence from every angle. We have worked collectively as a community, each bringing our expertise and resources to the table. In addition to our community partners, we have had incredible support from the Mayor and Council. Together, we're bringing positive change to individuals, families, neighbourhoods and our entire community.*

**Shad Qadri, Chair, Crime Prevention Ottawa**

From 2013–16, the Ottawa Gang Strategy offered a roadmap to help the city address gangs and street-level violence. This vast partnership—made up of social service agencies, community organizations, police, schools and others—developed and implemented 12 initiatives that addressed the problem from every angle.

Together, they formed the Ottawa Gang Strategy Steering Committee, each drawing on their expertise, knowledge of the issues, networks, resources and determination to work collectively to address the problem.

This report details the strategy's outcomes and results measured through an independent evaluation in 2016. While it summarizes what we achieved in three years, our work on gangs and street-level violence continues. The strategy will evolve and change based on our understanding of the issues and the shifting realities in our city.

### Evaluation results

The full technical evaluation report, *Ottawa Gang Strategy: Seeking Solutions to Street-Level Violence*, is available on the Crime Prevention Ottawa website at [crimepreventionottawa.ca](http://crimepreventionottawa.ca). This document summarizes its main findings. The evaluation demonstrated that the Ottawa Gang Strategy's initiatives have contributed to tangible progress, with progress achieved on all short and medium-term outcomes identified at the strategy's outset.

SHORT-TERM PROGRESS	MEDIUM-TERM PROGRESS
<div style="display: flex; align-items: center; margin-bottom: 10px;">  <div> <p><b>INCREASED AWARENESS</b> of services</p> </div> </div> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center; margin-bottom: 10px;">  <div> <p><b>IMPROVED SERVICE DELIVERY</b> to children, youth and families</p> </div> </div> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center; margin-bottom: 10px;">  <div> <p><b>BETTER AWARENESS AND INTEGRATION</b> of community services</p> </div> </div> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center; margin-bottom: 10px;">  <div> <p><b>NEW AND IMPROVED PARTNERSHIPS</b> between community and organizations</p> </div> </div> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center;">  <div> <p><b>POSITIVELY ENGAGED</b> young people, families, schools and communities</p> </div> </div>	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center; margin-bottom: 10px;">  <div> <p><b>INCREASED ACCESS</b> to services</p> </div> </div> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center; margin-bottom: 10px;">  <div> <p><b>ENHANCED CROSS-AGENCY COLLABORATION AND SERVICE COORDINATION</b></p> </div> </div> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center; margin-bottom: 10px;">  <div> <p><b>IMPROVED SERVICE DELIVERY</b> to children, youth and families</p> </div> </div> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center; margin-bottom: 10px;">  <div> <p><b>SUSTAINED COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS</b></p> </div> </div> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center; margin-bottom: 10px;">  <div> <p><b>PREVENTED INDIVIDUALS FROM ENTERING GANG LIFE</b> by addressing risk factors</p> </div> </div> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center;">  <div> <p><b>PROSECUTED AND CONVICTED</b> gang members</p> </div> </div>

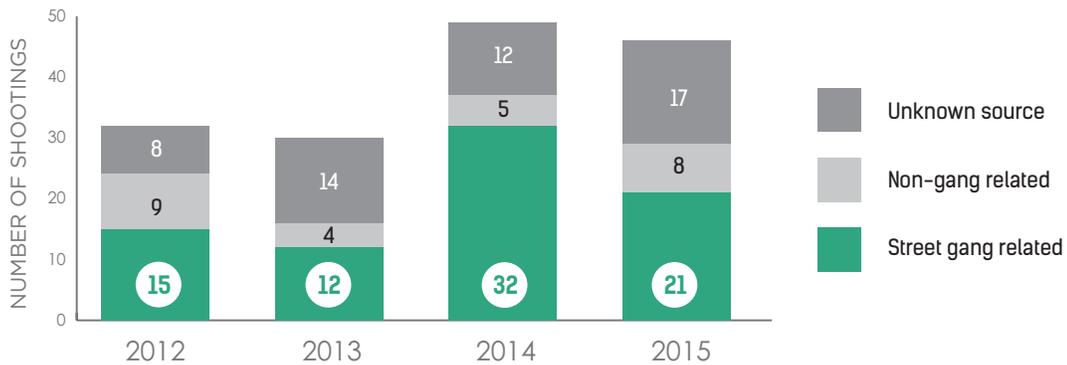
## Gangs in Ottawa

With eight active gangs in the city, the Ottawa Police Service estimated the city's gang members, including known associates, at 435 in 2015. More recently, however, talk of gangs has shifted. The city's drug trade, weapons offences, violence and sex trade are not the work of tightly organized street gangs. Instead, loosely connected individuals cause today's street-level violence. Most of them are young men between the ages of 20 and 30.

Times and tactics are changing too. The violence can escalate quickly when conflicts over drug deals or money happen. More young men are carrying weapons, and they are not afraid to use them.

Ottawa experienced a record year for gang-related gun violence in 2014, which is in line with statistics reported from other major Canadian cities. The numbers reduced in 2015, with the Ottawa Police Service investigating 46 shootings. Of those, 21 were gang related, down from 32 the previous year. Unfortunately, 2016 is trending upward again and final numbers are not yet available.

### Gun violence in Ottawa, 2012–2015



As for how Ottawa compares with Ontario's other large city? Since 2012, Ottawa has experienced an increase of 1.25 shootings per 100,000 residents. During that same period, Toronto has seen shootings increase by 3.4 per 100,000 residents. In 2015, Toronto had 68% more shootings overall than Ottawa.



### Four pillars focused on real outcomes

Street-level violence has a traumatic impact on neighbourhoods and the people living in them. From shootings and stabbings to drug dealing, the results can be far-reaching: fear, intimidation, physical injury, emotional distress and isolation.

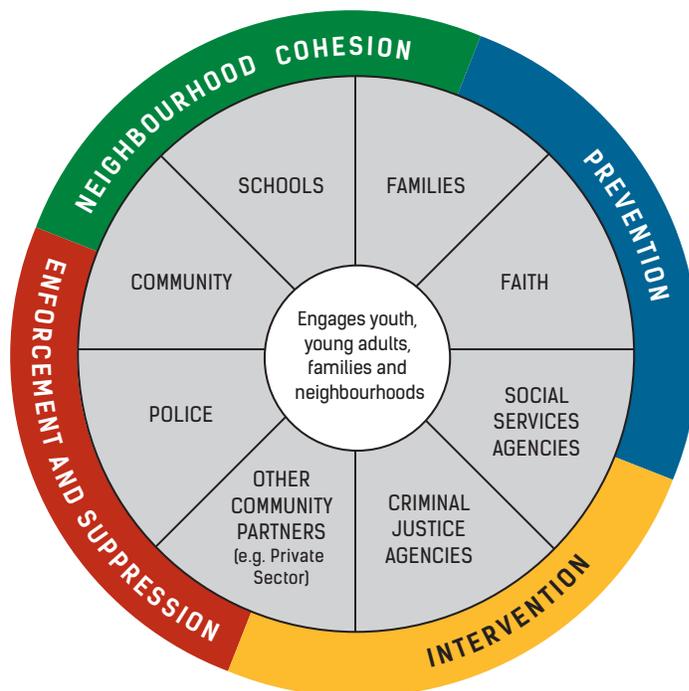
This is why the Ottawa Gang Strategy took a collective and holistic approach to the problem, focusing on four pillars of activity:

#### The Ottawa Gang Strategy’s four pillars

NEIGHBOURHOOD COHESION	PREVENTION	INTERVENTION	ENFORCEMENT AND SUPPRESSION
Build resilient children, families and communities through positive relationships in gang-affected neighbourhoods.	Take inclusive and preventative approaches through social development, situational measures, education, awareness and community policing.	Identify intervention opportunities for children, youth and adults, including those at-risk, on the edge of joining a gang or looking to leave gang life.	Conduct targeted, sustained and effective enforcement.

### Community-based for collective impact

Using an evidence-based approach steeped in best practices and strengthened through collaborative partnerships, the strategy continues to yield results. This successful approach has contributed to collective outcomes. Read on to learn more about our successes—and the impact of our work in neighbourhoods across Ottawa.



NEIGHBOURHOOD COHESION

Community Leadership Network for Families

**HOW IT WORKS:** The Somali Centre for Family Services and the coalition Local Agencies Serving Immigrants deliver outreach, information sessions and site visits to help parents and leaders in immigrant communities better understand the justice system.

RESULTS



In addition, the program has trained 129 facilitators to lead workshops, representing 20 languages. Next step? The Ontario Justice Education Network is implementing a project in 2016 to improve the relationship between youth and the police in priority Ottawa neighbourhoods.

NEIGHBOURHOOD COHESION

Framework for Post-Incident Neighbourhood Support Networks

**HOW IT WORKS:** This guide is designed to help Ottawa communities overcome the trauma of violent incidents. Based on research conducted in Ottawa communities, it offers concrete guidance to help coordinate support and resources to neighbourhoods after a murder, shooting or other violent incident. Ultimately, the approach reduces fear, helps people recover and builds community resiliency.

RESULTS

The framework was applied to two traumatic events in 2016. Participating agencies reported that it

- significantly improved timeliness and quality of communications between the community and police
- ensured strong coordination to assess the community's needs and mobilize resources
- established concise, timely messaging to the affected community
- received positive media attention and support from Councillors' offices, neighbourhood associations and the Ottawa Police Service

The framework is being rolled out in Lowertown, Orleans-Cumberland, Eastern Ottawa, Pinecrest-Queensway and Carlington through the Community Health and Resource Centres.

“ People need to feel supported and safe. When a murder or violence happens, this approach ensures that there will be a more timely and trauma-friendly response. We provide training to residents and community partners to help them respond. After one shooting, we held a community barbecue to bring people together and to listen to their concerns. People felt they could not send their kids to the gym, so we helped them find a solution. They said their park was not safe, so we did a safety audit to plan major changes that will improve safety in the park. ”

**Mehdi Louzouaz, Project lead, Rideau-Rockcliffe Community Resource Centre**

“ The Post-Incident Neighbourhood Response Protocol has been highly successful in galvanizing all service providers and community members into a cohesive force for positive support in the immediate aftermath of serious incidents such as shootings. While traditionally police have worked alone on the follow-up to these incidents, by formalizing the protocol and coordinating all service providing experts in the longer term community response, we have proven it extremely effective in calming and supporting the community as needed. ”

**Staff Sergeant Brad Hampson, Ottawa Police Service**

**NEIGHBOURHOOD COHESION** **United Neighbours, Levers of Change**

**HOW IT WORKS:** Delivered by the Pinecrest-Queensway Community Health Centre, this program is an intensive violence prevention and community engagement project. It includes the Multi-Stakeholder Approach to Problem Addresses that targets the people and places responsible for causing problems and creating intimidation in the neighbourhood.

**RESULTS:** The project achieved results with two problem households, moving a vulnerable resident to safety and connecting others to supports and services. Neighbours have reported a reduction in incidents and intimidation.

OTHER PROGRAM RESULTS INCLUDE



**59**

residents received leadership training



**180**

youth were engaged in walkabouts and coffee houses



**80**

high-risk youth attended drop-ins hosted by youth leaders

Overall, these activities have helped residents in seven west-end neighbourhoods engage in improving their communities, stay safe and understand how to report crime. Drug-related charges have dropped 10% in three years, and the Ottawa Police Service has reported that more residents are sharing information about open market drug dealing.

PREVENTION

Supporting Families: Siblings at Risk

**HOW IT WORKS:** This partnership of youturn, the John Howard Society, Ottawa Police Service and the Children's Aid Society of Ottawa targets the at-risk younger siblings of known gang members with a comprehensive approach that supports families.

**RESULTS:** The pilot served 14 families, working with 18 parents, 45 younger siblings and 14 identified gang members. It helped improve the siblings' school lives, reduce negative behaviours and offer pro-social activities, such as sports, that can help keep young people on a positive path. It connected parents with the services their families needed (employment, recreation and education) and reduced their sense of isolation. They also were given skills to advocate for the services they need, and to bridge the generation and culture gap with their children.

On the service delivery side, front-line workers developed knowledge and capacity to serve this population. Given its success, the Siblings at Risk program is now being expanded through support from the provincial and federal governments.

*“Our goal is to respond to parents who are worried about the safety of younger siblings and want to keep them out of gangs. We use collaborative problem solving and run parent support groups to teach life skills and anger management, or help them address issues they are dealing with at home. It is a very positive approach. We look at the child's strengths and identify the skills they are lacking. We find ways to help them gain those skills, and work with parents to help them understand that it does not get fixed overnight. You pick your battles and celebrate your successes.”*

**Kathy Neff, Executive Director, youturn**

*“The siblings often come from large families. When we start working with them, we assess their risk factors. For younger kids, we want to make sure they stay in school and participate in pro-social activities. We had competitive soccer players who were at risk of not being able to continue in the sport. We found ways to support them and to encourage their parents to keep them involved. Sports can be a strong protective factor, ensuring that they don't get involved in gangs.”*

**Leigh Couture, Associate Executive Director, youturn**

PREVENTION

YOU-Decide

**HOW IT WORKS:** YOU-Decide is a pilot project that aims to connect youth with a career or school pathway goal to reduce poverty and prevent gang involvement through employment, education, mentorship and leadership. The City of Ottawa's Community and Social Services Department is leading the initiative, and providing case management and employment supports to 10 low-income youth annually. Their objective is to serve 30 youth over a three-year period.

**RESULTS:**



**OTHER RESULTS**



**PREVENTION Youth Outreach Worker (YOW) Program**

**HOW IT WORKS:** This street outreach program operated by the Boys and Girls Club targets marginalized youth, aged 12–21, and their families in underserved neighbourhoods and special populations in Ottawa. YOW empowers them to better connect with services and supports in their communities, and works with other groups to offer youth activities.

**RESULTS:** In the one year period from April 2015 to March 2016, YOW served 565 youth. The program also worked with 139 families, who are now equipped to help their children thrive.



**REFERRALS INCLUDED**



**PREVENTION**

**Shared Training Events**

**HOW IT WORKS:** Crime Prevention Ottawa provides support for targeted training initiatives that will equip communities and social service agencies with skills and knowledge to address violence, gangs and drug trade issues.

**RESULTS:**

- Gangs, Trauma and Community Conference (2015), with 225 participants who attended to learn more about working with gang members, youth at risk and communities affected by gang activity
- Trauma and Neighbourhoods Conference (2016), which attracted 180 community leaders and service providers
- Connecting Transitions, a project which hosts events such as the Amazing Youth Workers' Race
- Connecting Transitions Workshop for front-line workers, which focused on working with youth from high-risk environments, from outreach to diversion to reintegration
- Sessions with 75 youth justice staff and community partners

**PREVENTION**

**Enhanced Risk Identification Tool**

**HOW IT WORKS:** The Ottawa Police and Carleton University's Professor Bob Hogue developed a gang specific risk identification tool to identify the early indicators of a young person at risk of gang involvement.

**RESULTS:** This project has increased police and service provider awareness of gang indicators and youth strengths. It has also helped families at risk feel supported, while providing information to assess the needs of youth and refer them to resources. The tool was piloted within the Supporting Families Initiative. Youturn continues to use it in their newly funded gang intervention programming.

**INTERVENTION**

**Time for Change**

**HOW IT WORKS:** Launched in mid-2015, Time for Change (T4C) is a partnership between John Howard Society of Ottawa (JHS) and Ottawa Community Immigrant Services Organization (OCISO). Together, they are helping people transition away from gang-related crime through individual and family support. This means equipping them with the tools they need to find meaningful work or go back to school. It also means helping people with health, mental health and access to safe housing. Above all, T4C provides access to support and services to help participants reduce their ongoing involvement in the justice system.

**TIME FOR CHANGE SERVICES**

<b>Education and training</b>	<b>Counselling and health</b>
<b>Employment</b>	<b>Family reunification</b>
<b>Safety and stability</b>	<b>Community engagement</b>
<b>Housing</b>	<b>Mentorship</b>

T4C caseworkers help participants develop goals, create the action steps they need to achieve their goals, and monitor progress along the way. The project connects clients to culturally relevant support and resources, including links to religious and spiritual advisors.

**RESULTS:** In the year following the program's launch, T4C has offered services to 69 adults and their families. At the end of August 2016, T4C had supported 19 active participants. Two have completed the program and achieved their goals in housing, education and employment.

T4C has conducted extensive outreach through the prison and criminal justice system, local community groups, organizations and agencies. In July 2016, the Ottawa Police Service and John Howard Society of Ottawa signed an agency agreement that allows them to work together in times of crisis when young men are most likely to seek to change their lives.

A mentorship program will connect clients with trained mentors who can help them develop life skills, strengthen community engagement and foster pro-social behaviour. T4C will continue to host community forums to engage the public in supporting positive outcomes.

*This young man was very discouraged. He discussed his negative outlook on life, his future and his confidence to make changes. Eventually, he came to trust that T4C would give him the support he needed. His motivation shifted significantly. He said he did not want to waste any more years of his life. He is now developing a plan for successful community reintegration.*

**Time for Change caseworker**

*T4C supports individuals and families in breaking the cycle of violence, trauma and justice system involvement. We know this is a complex and long-term task that requires collaborative and long-term solutions. This initiative hopes to contribute to making Ottawa safer by helping individuals involved in gang-related activities choose a different path, increase community awareness about justice-related issues and encourage everyone to play a role in combatting these issues.*

**Haleigh Rigby, T4C Project Lead, John Howard Society of Ottawa**

*One client who could not afford healthy food had difficulty sleeping and being productive. It had a negative impact on his involvement in the program. The food bank could only supply food for three days each month. We offered him short-term support. Today, he is gainfully employed, and can buy his own food. He now dedicates his energy to working on issues that will prevent his return to a criminal life.*

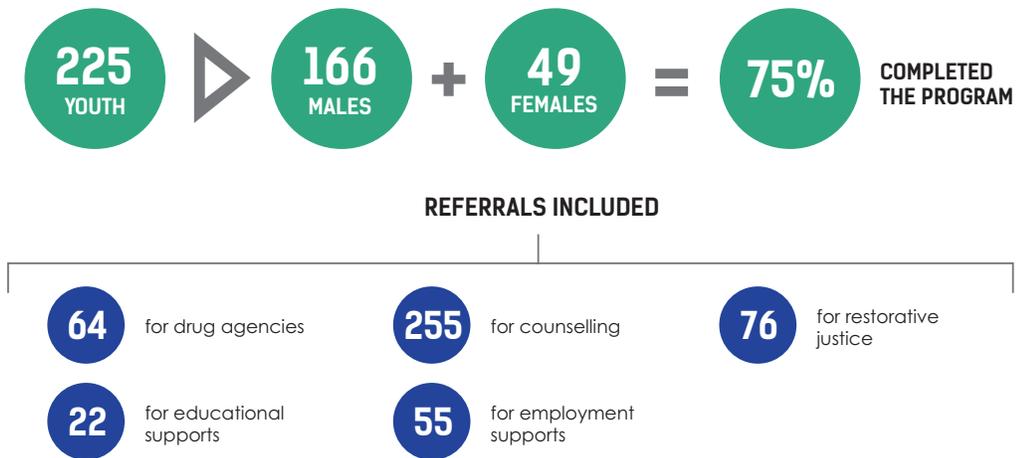
**Sulaimon Giwa, T4C Case Manager and Community Connections Lead,  
Ottawa Community Immigrant Services Organization**

**INTERVENTION** **Ottawa Community Youth Diversion Program**

**HOW IT WORKS:** This program aims to improve how our communities deal with youth, aged 12 to 17, who are in conflict with the law by diverting them from the formal justice system whenever possible. The Boys and Girls Club manages the program with support from the provincial government.

The program aims to hold the young person accountable for their actions by providing timely and meaningful consequences. Success means that participants can avoid having a youth criminal record or getting further involved with the justice system.

**RESULTS:**



**INTERVENTION** **Provincial Gang Asset Mapping Initiative**

**HOW IT WORKS:** This project identified opportunities to improve outreach to gang-affected communities by creating an inventory of 250 local services and supports.

**RESULTS:** A project of the Youth Services Bureau of Ottawa, it identified the best timeframes to engage with gang members: after a traumatic incident such as a shooting or stabbing, after leaving detention or upon becoming new parents. It is now planning in-service training for emergency and trauma staff at the Ottawa Hospital to help them support youth who may be ready to change their lives following a critical gang-related injury.

ENFORCEMENT AND SUPPRESSION

Enforcement and Suppression

**HOW IT WORKS:** The Ottawa Police Service Guns and Gangs unit

- mobilizes community and partner agencies to help prevent gang formation and reduce gang activity
- deters violence and criminal behaviours associated with gangs
- conducts targeted enforcement of gang members and their illicit activities
- contributes to successful prosecution and criminal conviction of gang members

**RESULTS:** The Ottawa Police Service temporarily reassigned 21 police officers to the Guns and Gangs unit in response to 2014's gang-related violence. They strategically deployed resources to address the street gang problem, which resulted in the following successes:

**SUPPRESSED CRIMINAL GANG BEHAVIOUR, ALLOWING INVESTIGATORS TO CONCENTRATE THEIR EFFORTS ON INDIVIDUALS WHO WERE BELIEVED TO BE CONNECTED TO THE GUN VIOLENCE.**

LAI D OVER **800+** CRIMINAL CHARGES AGAINST **600** INDIVIDUALS INCLUDING GANG MEMBERS ASSOCIATES AND DRUG OFFENDERS

**2014** SEIZED **50+** CRIME GUNS INCLUDING **29** HAND GUNS + **24** LONG GUNS

**2015** SEIZED **80+** CRIME GUNS INCLUDING **39** HAND GUNS + **41** LONG GUNS

“ Overall, crime is down, but there is reason to be concerned about firearm offences. Our message is clear: we believe in prevention and intervention, but if you choose to arm yourself to further your criminal activity, you can expect our fullest investigative attention with the express aim of removing you and your crime guns from our communities. The Ottawa Police and the Ottawa community will not tolerate gun violence. ”

**Inspector Chris Renwick, Ottawa Police Service**

## Lessons learned and next steps

Real progress takes time, and is measured in years, but we are on the right path. The technical evaluation found that our four pillar approach is working well to address a complex problem that touches cities across Canada.

When surveyed in 2016, 89% of Ottawa Gang Strategy Steering Committee members felt that the group had accomplished more together than they would have achieved through traditional work structures. Fully 100% of those surveyed agreed that the initiatives enhanced cross-agency collaboration and service coordination. Finally, 100% felt the strategy and the Steering Committee's work had added value to community-wide and individual organizations' efforts to address gang-related issues in Ottawa.

The lessons we have learned through our work and this independent evaluation will inform our next steps in addressing street-level violence in Ottawa. Our approach will continue to draw from the best evidence-based practices.

As a group, we will examine our governance model to find better ways to work together for greater impact. We will evolve our strategy to meet the shifting realities on our streets and in our communities. We will continue to focus on creating safer neighbourhoods and environments for everyone in Ottawa.

## **Ottawa Gang Strategy Steering Committee**

Boys and Girls Club of Ottawa

Children's Aid Society of Ottawa

City of Ottawa

Conseil Économique et Social d'Ottawa Carleton

Crime Prevention Ottawa

Coalition of Community Health and Resource Centres

John Howard Society of Ottawa

LASI World Skills

Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth Services

Ottawa Aboriginal Coalition

Ottawa Community Housing

Ottawa Community Immigrant Services Organization

Ottawa Police Service

Pinecrest-Queensway Community Health Centre

Rideau-Rockcliffe Community Resource Centre

School boards

Somali Centre for Family Services

University of Ottawa

Wabano Centre for Aboriginal Health

Youth Services Bureau

youturn Youth Support Service



**CRIME PREVENTION OTTAWA**  
**Partners for a safer community**

110 Laurier Avenue West, Ottawa, ON K1P 1J1  
Tel: 613 580 2424, ext. 22454  
Fax: 613 580 2593  
Email: [cpo@ottawa.ca](mailto:cpo@ottawa.ca)  
[crimepreventionottawa.ca](http://crimepreventionottawa.ca)