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CHLOE

Good evening. Thank you for all being here.

My name is Chloe Craig, and I am a resident of Cobourg and I'm also a member of the Community Safety Advisory Committee with the Cobourg Police Department.

We have six of us of the eight here tonight, so please find us if you need anything I will open today's meeting with a land acknowledgement.

We acknowledge that we currently standing on the traditional and treaty territory of the Michi Saagiig (Mississauga) and Chippewa Nations, collectively known as the Williams Treaties First Nations.

These stolen lands are marked with a grave history.

We must work to gain more foundational knowledge and cultural awareness about, with, and from Indigenous Peoples so we may understand the truth and move to reconciliation in a positive way.

We respectfully acknowledge that the Williams Treaties First Nations have been stewards and caretakers of these lands and water and that today remain vigilant over the health and integrity for generations to come.

We are all Treaty people. Miigwech.

I will now turn it over to the Co-Chair of the Cobourg Police Service Community Safety Advisory Committee, Cindy Beman

CINDY

Thank you Chloe. Welcome everyone. My name is Cindy Beman. I am the Co-Chair of the Community Safety Advisory Committee. I know you are all scratching your heads saying 'what the heck is CSAC?' Well, CSAC is a Committee that has a mission that says it is to create a mutual partnership between the community, yourself, and the Cobourg Police Service. We will work collectively to create an environment of trust and openness to stimulate dialogue that results in a safer community. CSAC believes that the only way that we can work together as a community to create a safer community is through strong communication. Your voices matter to us and are important to the mission in order for it to be met. Part of this is hearing from you tonight. We have members here and you will see us all with our little tags. Please feel free to address any questions that you have to us tonight. You are welcome to chat with us tonight or through social media which will be set up soon and you will all be advised of how to reach us though that. Finally, as we strive to create and maintain avenues of open conversations, we are recruiting more

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members to CSAC to ensure that our whole community is represented. Thank you so much for coming out tonight. And now I would like to invite the Chair of the Cobourg Police Service, Dr. Ron Kerr, up to the podium to provide greetings on behalf of the Board.

CHAIR RON KERR

Good evening everyone. As the Chair of the Cobourg Police Service Board, it is my honour to welcome you to this town hall meeting tonight. Your presence here today reflects our shared commitment to the safety and well-being of our community. To begin, I would like to share with you the mandate and responsibilities of the Board. The Police Service Board plays a crucial role in ensuring that our community receives adequate and efficient policing services. The Board is the governing body of the police service. We represent you. Under the Community Safety and Policing Act, which came into effect on April the first of this year, the Board is responsible for: Determining Objectives and Priorities for our police service to ensure they align with the needs and expectations of our community. Through strategic planning, we outline our goals and the steps needed to achieve them. Our five key priorities are collaboration, innovation, operational excellence, our people, and public trust and commitment. These priorities support our mission and values, to remain engaged and responsive to the community. The Board provides governance to the Police Service by establishing policies for the administration and effective management of the police service, promoting transparency and accountability at the core. The Board is responsible for appointing members of the police service, including the Chief of Police and Deputy Chief, and to ensuring that leadership is capable and committed to our community's safety. The goal is to build a positive and productive relationship with Chief VandeGraaf and the members of the police service as they execute the plan to ensure safety in our community. There is no denying the landscape of our community has changed over the years, and it will continue to change as we grow and welcome new residents and businesses to Cobourg. As a board, we need to understand the evolving environment and context police work within and comprehend local and provincial trends to be adaptive, providing the tools necessary for adequate service and playing our part in addressing community safety. As a Board, we remain committed to serving the citizens of Cobourg to the best of our ability. We are well aware that some people here tonight hope to hear

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more about the anonymous letter that surfaced over the weekend. The Board called a special meeting on Monday morning and reviewed the full letter, and found the allegations are troubling. The Board has referred the letter to the Inspectorate of Policing, and we will cooperate fully with any review concerning the facts and allegations made. The Inspectorate has a number of options available to them. We encourage the member who wrote the letter to come forward to help us understand things more fully. The Board hopes that any members who may be experiencing workplace issues will come forward so we can continue to make positive changes. We are now waiting for the next steps and direction from the Inspectorate of Policing, which will take time and we ask for your indulgent during this time. Any updates to the public will be provided when appropriate as we move through the process. Tonight, we want to hear from the community. Your participation in this meeting is invaluable, and we look forward to hearing your thoughts and suggestions. Together, we can work towards a safer, inclusive, and resilient community. Thank you

CHIEF PAUL VANDEGRAAF (CHIEF)

I am going to talk for a few minutes here so I want to make sure I get into position. Thank you for coming here tonight.

I stand before you at a pivotal moment for our community. For the last 15 months we have experienced something that has never been experienced in Cobourg, but has been the reality for many other communities. This is a moment where we must not only openly express our concerns about crime, safety, and the future of Cobourg, but to know the facts about the situation and what is being done about it. As the top law enforcement officer for the town of Cobourg, I felt it was important to update the public on where things stand as well as provide residents the opportunity to express their questions and concerns.

I understand the sentiment that many of you feel: a desire for a Police Chief who will take a strong stand against crime and prioritize the safety of our families and friends. Whether it's the theft of personal belongings, the worrying of increasing violence, or the unease that comes with a general sense of disorder, these are all valid concerns and need to be addressed. I want to assure you, that to the best of my ability as Chief, my top priority is that you feel safe in your homes, walking our streets, and enjoying our parks. Your call for a tougher approach to crime reflects

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a basic and deep-seated need for security and justice in our lives. Your voices matter, and I want to assure you tonight that I am listening.

However, as we advocate for a strong law enforcement response, we must also engage in a thoughtful discussion about what, quote, getting tough on crime truly means. A strong law enforcement response must respect the rights of everyone and stay within the boundaries of the law. A strong law enforcement response must also align with the civilian authorities that oversee the Service, such as the Board, as well as the Town Council that you elected. Finally, a strong law enforcement response requires resources to obtain the desired results without creating added burden for the taxpayers. As I also represent the members of the Cobourg Police Service, the capacity of our officers to execute daily is critical to the success of any police strategy. Toughness can manifest itself in many ways, and it is essential that we align our vision with the principles of justice, community, and most importantly sustainable solutions. As Chief, I can assure you that the Cobourg Police Service is fully and unequivocally engaged to restore public safety for every resident of Cobourg.

As I mentioned, the last 15 months has been a seismic shift that will have felt differently for each one of you in your own experience. The same can be said for the various organizations involved in the response to events as they unfolded, including our service. As front line workers responsible for your public safety, the police service is subject to public criticism and scrutiny which I fully appreciate. As Chief, the performance of the police service, real or perceived, is my responsibility which is why I felt it vital that the public be provided transparent information from the source, to ask questions, and to be heard. I know there are some here tonight that are not happy. For you, and all, I am here willing to listen and respond.

My job as Chief is to balance toughness with compassion. As we urge for a tougher stance on crime, we must also recognize that compassion and justice are not mutually exclusive. We all understand the importance of balancing enforcement with empathy. Our team recognizes the impact that the last 15 months has had on you. And they too are frustrated in instances and would love to see a different path forward.

As a service, our mandate is to provide effective community policing through the fair and consistent enforcement of laws. These months of changed and allowed our

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core function to become diluted. Often police are seen as the first resort for some and a last resort for many. Our members recognize this and are proud to lead. But we realize in many cases, others can and should lead. So when you ask me later why the police did not do something, I would ask that you pause and ask, should the police service actually do that, and if not, then we need effective referrals to the right agencies to accept their responsibilities.

Our job is to ensure for everyone that crimes are thoroughly investigated, that victims served with respect and empathy and all charges laid when appropriate. Per the Community Safety and Well-being Plan, the four priority issues are mental health, homelessness, poverty, and addictions. As such we need to remember what the core police mandate is, and then collaborate with services and agencies which need to lean in with their expertise and resources. This will assist all of us in achieving our mandate of community safety. But, I alone cannot be responsible for poverty, addictions, homelessness, and mental health. To say that, as many times those are the issues that are left for police to solve outside of those regular working hours. As we know, these complex challenges cannot be resolved overnight and although they can often and do intersect with law enforcement, they certainly aren't our sole core function.

Hearing our issues of capacity to deliver, the Police Board has heard and supported our request over two years and has provided the necessary funds to allow us to build capacity with our staff. We are still in the process of attaining them but once they are in place, the onus is on me to deliver. I will ensure accountability for any failing of our team if any of our core functions are not met.

In our call for a tougher stance, I will prioritize community policing, as I always have. This model fosters trust between law enforcement and the community. Community means many things, but it is all of us. I came here tonight to listen, and I hope you did the same thing. If we agree to listen to each other then imagine a community where residents, local businesses, law enforcement all collaborate to tackle crime. It is a community that takes an active role in crime prevention done simply like this meeting tonight.

So tonight is about a call to action. As I will touch on later in tonight's program, our team is growing to help increase the capacity to serve you better in how we deploy our team, and most importantly, the service we deliver. Your call is for me to be

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different. Maybe different is not the right word, but maybe refocused. This means how we deploy our team and most importantly the service they deliver. As Chief that is my responsibility, but I am not here announcing any new program. We are here to listen and distill your thoughts. But in the interim, we have launched an internal quality assurance officer to ensure that our officers have the necessary tools and training to best serve you and ensure that the daily service delivery matches your and my expectations. In turn my expectation for outcomes are going to increase. This will ensure the office of the Chief of Police has real time quality assurance data alongside crime stats. Secondly, we are enhancing the way we communicate with you. Access to information will increase through a subscription service so you can receive releases, updates, other information directly to a device you chose. That should be completed in the upcoming weeks as we're just finishing that project as we speak. The Police Services Board now live streams all its open meetings and has increased reporting about what matters most to you. Finally, and most importantly, I pledge to continue to have open meetings like this. Maybe smaller, maybe a chance to have a coffee, but opportunity. People ask me why I do this, and the answer is simple. Because it is the right thing to do.

So, what can we do as a community? I urge each of you to engage with us, attend these meetings, voice your concerns, and participate in discussions about crime abatement strategies. Let's work together to create a united front that emphasizes safety, accountability, and collaboration. A simplification of our mandate and undoing the dilution of responsibilities will allow me to direct our team to better address the areas where crime exists. When we direct our resources in a simpler fashion we get huge results. A recent example is the Chipping Park drug warrant, and the mobilization of many community resources including many Town Departments who are all here represented tonight to clear up some problematic residences.

To close this part of the evening, I want to reiterate that your desire for a police chief who is tough on crime is not only valid but essential. I pledge that our team will focus on our core mandate. We will be innovative in delivering on those expectations. We will ensure that toughness is blended with compassion, innovation, and community engagement. We will continue to embrace community partnerships that assist us in the broader public safety mandate. Together, we can create a future and a community where we all feel safe, respected, and valued. Let us move forward with a shared vision—one that encompasses both accountability

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and support, strength and understanding. Together, we can build a safer and more vibrant Cobourg.

I would like to end my opening remarks with a quote that I feel sums up my hope for tonight:

*Winston Churchill stated*

*'Courage is what it takes to stand up and speak; courage is also what it takes to sit down and listen.'* –

Thank you for coming tonight.

**STAFF SERGEANT SCOTT BAMBRIDGE (STAFF)**

Good evening, everyone. I'm Staff Sergeant Bambridge, and I am in charge of our operations Division of the Cobourg Police Service. We will now be opening for a question period. But first I will go over some of the ground rules. As we enter the question period, it's important to maintain a respectful, constructive dialogue. Here are some guidelines to ensure our discussion remains productive and courteous for all. Please use respectful language at all times. Hateful or offensive language will not be tolerated. Engage in the discussion with an open mind and a willingness to consider other perspectives. Keep your questions and comments relevant to the topic at hand. This helps ensure that the discussion remains focused and efficient. Our categories will be the Encampment, Crime, the Budget and finally traffic and road safety. Chief VandeGraaf will open each category with a brief introduction to the topic. We want to ensure that everyone who has a question for the Chief has an equal opportunity to ask that question. Please wait until others have asked a question before you ask a second one. If you wish to ask a question, you have the option to come to the microphone which is located in the middle of the room. If you prefer to write down your question and have it asked on your behalf, please complete the question form on the back of the agenda and submit it to a Community Safety Advisory Member or police member circulating around the room. If I can just ask the community safety advisory members to all put their hand up so they are easily and readily recognizable. Thanks team. They all have pens for your use as well. Each person will be given 1 minute to ask their question. When there are 10 seconds left, you will be given a cue by Lisa who will be holding up a blue paper. Chief will then provide his response. After the Chief has responded to

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your question, we will then move on to the next question. Finally, you can submit a question for follow-up later or after tonight by scanning the QR code which is also available on the agenda. I will also be around, and I have a number of business cards if you have a question that you don't want to ask tonight, please see me. You do not have to tell me your question tonight I will give you my business card. My email, my cell phone is all on there. Please reach out to me. I will now invite Chief VandeGraaf back up to introduce the first question period on the topic of the Encampment.

CHIEF

Thanks Staff.

There has been much speculation and misinformation about the situation at the Encampment and plans for its dismantling. I'd like to take the next few minutes to provide you with the information I have to bring everyone up to speed on where things stand. As of today, there are three people actively living there. Two more people were connected with resources for shelter with county outreach yesterday.

All three actively staying at the encampment have connected with the County Outreach and our HARP team, Sergeant MacDonald is here tonight, and know they will have to move in the very near future. We have been advised that they are working on their own plans for moving.

Like you, I see that there are many more tents. Largely these tents are empty or used for storage. As of today I have messaged Infrastructure Ontario to see what their intentions are for cleaning this up.

Collectively our service and other organizations are working very hard to end the encampment through choice and we have been somewhat successful so far. Like many things, sometimes that last mile is the toughest.

As you know, the opening of 310 Division has it's issues and I'm not going to comment on that other than to say that the lack of appropriate alternatives to living in a tent makes policing that much more difficult. We are very aware that the dispersion of the residents from Brookside is creating new sites in various areas of our town.



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Let me be clear on this next important part: setting up a tent in a public place is not a violation of the criminal code but it is a breach of municipal bylaws. With that said, Cobourg Police Service will unequivocally support any actions that the Town deems necessary to address these public security concerns, but we do not have the authority to arrest people for being homeless. I am fully committed to avoiding a repeat of the last 15 months, but that will require effort among various levels of government and community agencies. As for the sale of Brookside, that's outside of my circle of influence. We will work with the new owner to ensure their rights, the owner's rights, and responsibilities are fulfilled. Should the new owner make a lawful request for their private property, we will be prepared to act on that lawful request. The preferred approach is to wind the Encampment up voluntarily, and it looks that it is what is happening today. I will now take questions and comments from the public on this particular issue.

AUDIENCE

Sure, this won't take a minute. As you stated, Chief, we've been at this for 15 months now and since Canadian residents, born, raised in this country, living in abject poverty and through a series of events we found ourselves instantaneously with an encampment that's lasted this long. I'm happy to hear that we're finding a peaceful resolution and that this situation is coming to a close. My question to you Chief, is what are you going to do to ensure that this never ever happens again in Cobourg.

CHIEF

Thank you Mr. Bisson for the question. I appreciate your anger in that. I get it. I'm with you. We're at, we've been at this as I said a couple times, for 15 months and it started before that as we started to close unsafe homes in this community that created an encampment and we got caught being very reactive as a police service. I accept accountability for that. We reacted to encampments. But over time, we became proactive and what I can say to you is lived experience is valuable. I will not see as long as I am chief here, another encampment like this. [Applause]

We have the team to work fairly, collaboratively, with purpose, to honour dignity of human life, but also respect everybody else around the situation. I will repeat, I

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will work closely and proactively with the Town, and we will stop these as they occur. My team is better prepared now.

AUDIENCE

I've got plenty of these. So we're finding out now, based on this evening in your statements that there's only three people there. Where did they all go?

AUDIENCE

Can I add to that?

CHIEF

Sorry, I believe this is, can you add to that, sure, I think that is allowed. Scott? Yeah, ok.

AUDIENCE

I live next, very close to the encampment and I've been observing the dispersal of residents from the encampment to houses in my neighbourhood. And, I've gone and other residents have gone to the police service to bring this question forward. I was told someone would call. No one did, three times on this issue to say, what's the path what's happening? How do you prevent these drug dens from taking root in our community? I live where I can see them coming in and going out twice a day, in the morning to pick up and in the afternoon to deliver cash, and I've had a truck come across my driveway and look in my window, the kitchen window that faces out and look at it because I had the temerity last week to actually confront them to ask what are you doing in our neighbourhood and she said, I know where you live.

So, I go to the place and I say, here's what happened. They said, someone will call you. No call. I've had my backyard invaded. I've had people come into my house because I had regular appointments. Take me on city cab on King Street twice a week, back and forth. They knew me, I knew them. They knew when I was going to be out and those three yard invasions were to find my house key, which they found eventually. I didn't know they would do that and the only reason I realized they found the house key was the third time I came home early and I see a guy from my door, I look up to the backyard jump the back fence and I'm thinking ok, now I better look around and sure enough, they used my showers, they used my toilets.

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Dirty, not flushed. Not ok. And I'm saying all right, I get the police audit thank you very much it was really helpful, but I have to put out the money and expense to put all the security lights in to change the locks on the doors to have my yard lit up and yet, I can still have this kind of interaction with the homeless, but I just say drug dealers and drug traffic and have no protection from the police. I walk by there I've been accosted, people standing in my road, blown out of their minds yelling at me for stealing some of their stuff, wanting it back, not letting me pass. I just hear them out and then go my way. I have an expensive bike I don't ride it, why? Because I was told by the person that did the audit that they'll come and get it and sure enough, the one time I rode it, this new bike, two guys on bikes followed me and when I stopped and took out my phone, they when in the other direction. So my question is, what is ... is it reasonable for us to expect the police will have a plan to deal with drug dens being established in neighbourhoods. People coming into the neighbourhoods, clearly are not there for neighbourly reasons. They told me they were doing laundry. Who then put stuff by the way, in children's park at that corner of the neighbourhood that I am in. Went and put stuff in there and I said what are you doing and what did you just put there? They said to me, we have rights, end of discussion. So, my question is, again, what is reasonable for us to expect the police to have a plan to deal with that before it sets in and makes it harder

[Applause]

**CHIEF**

Thank you for the question and Mr. Bisson, where did he go? First off, ma'am, if I don't catch your name, but Staff Sergeant Bambridge is going to give you a card. When I heard about police accountability tonight, I'm not going to defend, I'm not going to argue, and I'm not going to label either. I'm going to accept. I'm going to listen. Scott's going to connect, and we're going to see if there is room for improvement from my team. You'll hear a bit later about an experience of something I encountered on the weekend. So the question is where did they go? Mr. Bisson, they went to that lady's neighbourhood.

I don't know where they went, I don't know who they are. I never set foot in the encampment, but I can tell you, they went somewhere because prior to encampments, they were somewhere. So, our obligation, ma'am, to your question. There you are, sorry, I lost you. What so we do, well, um, we do the best we can

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within the parameters of our law to exercise our legal authority to get search warrants and arrest people, and you've heard some of those most recently, so we do that. We work very collectively with the Town because it is amazing when you bring many people to work, how easy the job is and, in fact, fire safety is a great avenue for us to ensure that there is safety for those people who are living there. These are human beings that have nowhere else to be so they end up being somewhere and sometimes those locations are not safe. We use public help to make sure those situations are safe. We use LUSI to make sure that there is not power issues that have fires that cause harm to your neighbourhood or to the people within that house. We use emergency management, we use building standards, property standards. We use all of these tools to make things safe. Mr. Bisson and I met originally, at a meeting like this at Battel Crescent, and he was equally irate with me for the issues there. And we did it proactively, we learned after 413 Division. We learned after 351 John, we learned after, I lost track of them all now, but we'll learn from your neighbourhood too. We are better for it. Scott has your card. We will ensure that we are moving quickly, expediently, and we have another neighbourhood that this blew up on and the fact that the collaborative town team came together, proved it. What I am trying to say is, when we lean into agencies or organizations or partners that have more tools in their tool chest, we have a better public safety message. But to your point, we've let you down as a police service. Scott's going to start that remedy tonight. Thank you for your comments and questions.

[Applause]

AUDIENCE

Along those same lines, we have some of the people in the encampment to camp on our property on the west end of Cobourg. So you mentioned about when they are camping on public land it's a bylaw issue, but this is happening on private land and it's been going on for about four months and we've also been in touch with both bylaw and police services also, so it'd be interesting to know what you can do to address the issue on private property. We also have an obvious drug, known drug dealing going on also in that neighbourhood. Unfortunately, in conversation with a lot of younger kids in our neighbourhood, they have grown very interested in what is going on there. And that is one of the direct results of having these behaviours going on on a daily basis. As recently as two nights ago, someone came

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into the neighbourhood to and they knocked on the wrong door and a security camera caught them. They're supposed to go two doors down so like we know this drug dealing is going on on a regular basis and are there anything that can be done to curb that known drug behaviour as well as removing people from private land?

CHIEF

Thank you. Let's go to private land that's the easy answer. When we're into a private property position it's like the sale and current transfer of Brookside. It becomes a very different and somewhat easier problem to solve when it's private property. You've heard me talk ad nauseam about the Waterloo decision doesn't apply to private property. So, if I have private property, just like if somebody you have in your backyard and someone decided to set up a tent in your backyard, you could say, get out of my backyard. That's actually easy for my team. They show up and they say get out of the yard. Just get, you're not allowed to be here, get going and we have a easy, clear authority under the Trespass to Property Act to affect an arrest should we be required. So whoever the private property is person, they have to call us and they have to say get these people off my property, that's where it starts and if any of my team hasn't followed that simple path, I would be I let me say I'll be very surprised that's that that's the easy way to go.

Now, what do we do about the drug trade? Drug trafficking is something that is flagrant now. And what we have to do is be repeatedly visible. That's where I go back to having my team having the capacity to be visible, and I appreciate councils and the board's opportunity for us to grow capacity so that we can be more visible. Unfortunately, TV has done policing a real disharm because A it's American laws which aren't the same as Canadian, and B it's just not that easy. So I am equally disturbed that kids are watching this, and it's becoming normalized. so, we have some work to do in that prevention space too, around getting back into the schools, and I really hope with a few more people that we can get back into the schools and really talk about the old VIP programs or the Dare programs or whatever it's called these days. We got to get back into school. I hope I've answered that question. Sir.

AUDIENCE

You spoke that you've learned so much the last 15 months, but you never one set foot in the encampment. That's pretty shameful. Every single officer in here should

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be cringing. Longtime resident born and raised here. We all know the corruption has gone on in this department over the decades, so now that the encampment and crime go hand in hand and now dispersing camp and they're now all over this town. What guarantees do you have that we are going to be safe cuz most of us don't have any faith in any of you anymore. Like, none. We call you you, you pawn things off as fickle matters and you don't show up. But the Tim Hortons are very well guarded, the church parking lots are very well guarded, and there's never a cop walking around. So like, what guarantees do you have that we're actually going to be safe. What are you going to do?

CHIEF

What I'm going to do? Like I've said to you, we are here tonight to listen to what what those issues are. I'm hearing again at another one of these Town Hall meetings that our staff could be better in responding replying and getting back to. Our accountability, we're in that space of getting back to our core function, and our core function is law enforcement. I will just leave it to say words are words actions are actions and let my actions speak.

AUDIENCE

I really hope your actions do speak because you've got a lot of work to do  
[Applause]

AUDIENCE

Hi, as well as the drug houses that are known to the community, there are also a couple of vehicles that the public knows are dealing drugs. We know the guy's name. He has a very distinctive truck, and he is all over town delivering drugs and it's been going on for a long time. And my question to you is, if all of us know that, then why is there no arrest, or enforcement? He's at the encampment regularly He was also in the, I believe it was the Bank of Nova Scotia ATM room delivering drugs just a couple of nights ago. We know who he was delivering. If we know all of this, why is nothing done?

Again, our officers work within the confines of the laws and the parameters of the law, so when and if our officers have the reasonable grounds to exist, to believe a crime has existed, I would expect them to take those, that information. I can assure you that if it is that obvious and that noticeable our team would and should be

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engaging in that. So again, we need to return to that core mandate. We are returning to that core mandate and I can assure you that sometimes it's just not as easy as one would say. We see it we know it we feel it. I can guarantee you if it was that easy, we would have my officers would have an arrest every night so. I again, I appreciate your comment. I'm not making excuses. We will be far more in tune, not that we're out of tune, but listen. Returning to the core mandate will help us get back to what we need to do better

There's three minutes left for any more questions on this topic before we move on to the next.

AUDIENCE

I went back and read the annual reports and the teaching plans. Neighborhood watch was mentioned as a was listed in the 2015-2017 strategic plan, and that strategic plan had a report card that went through what was done, not done, what needed to be done and neighborhood watch showed that nothing had been done. That word, those words, neighborhood watch, didn't show up again in any of the subsequent strat plans or in any of the annual plans. Our neighborhood is certainly interested in setting up a neighbourhood watch and I went to the police station to say we're interested in setting up a neighbourhood. Watch what support can we expect? Someone will call you. Well, I'm asking my question tonight because no one called me, so I'm hoping to get an answer. Does neighbourhood watch, is that on your list of things in terms of community partnership, community outreach, what support will you offer to neighborhoods on Community Watch.

Do you think it's

[Applause]

CHIEF

Neighborhood watch is a is a program that's been around for many many many decades. And over time, our neighborhoods have become less joined we don't know our neighbors necessarily as well as there was a time where you knew the neighbors you knew all the kids that were on the the street you knew them you watch them grow up and and then life changes right and things develop so neighborhood watches change the old theory of a neighborhood watch got the signs in the window. Signs on the street corners. That that time is an era gone by, so I would actually suggest most of my team even know how to initiate a

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neighborhood watch program. But we have a community safety advisory Council here tonight, that's like a community neighborhood watch. We can definitely revisit a neighborhood watch, but I'm at a capacity issue in the in the Cobourg Police Service where my officers are responding to calls for service and we don't have that crime prevention officer because I need everybody to have all able-bodied officers in the space. So, are we able, can we make a neighborhood watch? I said in my opening remarks, we're innovative. We're looking for us to work together for a better and safer place, so if we want to revisit what a Cobourg version of neighborhood watch is I'm really excited about that. And you can call me and I'm probably one of the older guys in the building who actually get one started. I think I've done that before.

STAFF

Chief, we'll take this as the last question, pending any from the proctors on this subject.

AUDIENCE

Hi. So you mentioned that will you were Chief, something like the encampment would never happen again. Yeah so, Infrastructure Ontario whether it's in writing or not have a no eviction policy. So my question to you is let's say this property got managed by Infrastructure Ontario. There's some grass there's some corners, what's to stop an encampment from happening here if it was managed by Infrastructure Ontario?

CHIEF

Our lived experience now we be able to direct them a lot better and how to get out of it a lot quicker.

AUDIENCE

So you were advising in structure Ontario and how to manage that?

CHIEF

Nope. Nope. Infrastructure Ontario are the owners of the property, they manage it their way. We could have been, like I said we were reacting to space, we are in a



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far more proactive space to assist any property owner in moving things a lot a lot further, quicker, and faster along the pathway to ending it.

AUDIENCE

okay thank you

CHIEF

I'll add one thing to that we also need a place for people to go. It's not just moving people. It's about where are people going to go? So it's about making sure the infrastructure exists that we can enable a successful move faster.

AUDIENCE

My comment is a little bit to more a longer range. If you've been listening to the news today, you'll be you'll be hearing a lot of talk about large numbers of people and the USA get across the border coming into Canada. So you think that this situation you're managing right now is not going to balloon. I think somebody in the organization, I think may come under Ron's uh Ron Kerr's group of people. They need to start monitoring what's going on in the rest of Ontario and start thinking about what kind of additional planning uh they may need to get into and be proactive before we get swamped.

CHIEF

I'm hoping the federal government has their eyes squarely on that sir.

Thank you very much, we'll move on. And a lot of these will bleed into one another, but we'll move on to the second topic here, which is in the general sense, crime.

In May of this year, we launched the dynamic patrol to increase our police presence in the community, identify and arrest individuals who are in breach of bail conditions, return individuals who face charges back to the jurisdiction, and crack down on drug traffickers that operate in our community. These initiatives have proven successful, and we will continue to pursue criminal activity of all types that threaten our community.

Transcript

As with many other communities in Ontario, Cobourg faces significant challenges when it comes to illegal drugs. As you know, the distribution and use of illegal drugs brings with it a host of criminal and anti-social behaviour, including violence, theft, fraud, and public displays of intoxication. I am committed to addressing the most serious elements of criminality in our community, but am also deeply concerned about the public infractions that are the end result of drug use and untreated mental illness.

Let me be clear on this point: if you are a drug dealer or associated with organized crime, you will be identified, investigated, and arrested. That is my promise. Keep in mind that modern criminals are very sophisticated which requires extensive investigation for a successful prosecution. Investigative complexity means it takes time and effort to fulfill the requirement of proving someone guilty in a court of law which is very different than the court of public opinion. I would ask that you be patient and trust me when I say that we are committed to enforcing the law in Cobourg.

Unfortunately, we require two other pillars to successfully fulfill its objectives: social services to assist those impacted by the dismantling of illegal operations, and a justice system that keeps criminals behind bars. In other words, our impact of being tough on crime depends on other organizations and government doing their part. It also depends on how well you, the community, work with us in identifying crime for a successful arrest and prosecution. As mentioned, I am committed to doing what we are mandated to do and call on our partners to address the issues that undermine our efforts.

Tonight is not about politics, municipal, provincial or federal. But credit is due where it is due. As Chief, I am applauding Premier Ford, Minister Piccini and the Ontario government for calling on the federal government to urgently amend the Criminal Code of Canada by tightening bail legislation in order to keep repeat violent offenders off the streets. The provincial government wants the federal government to immediately adopt the following measures to enhance public safety, including but not limited to:

Restore mandatory minimum sentencing for serious crimes, to ensure appropriate penalties and justice for victims

**Transcript**

Remove bail availability for offenders charged with serious offences like murder, terrorism, human trafficking, intimate partner violence, drug trafficking, criminal possession or use of restricted or prohibited firearms, and robbery (ie. carjackings and home invasions)

Mandate a three-strike rule requiring pre-trial detention for repeat offenders so they are not allowed back on the street to commit crime.

As for social services, I strongly support a recovery based model that allows those willing to change their lives to be provided with the resources they need to be successful. This goes beyond emergency sheltering and requires an end-to-end system to address addiction, mental illness, and housing. Again, these issues are not criminal and require a more robust response from those responsible.

We worked to implement increased crime prevention opportunities, and CPTED Audits, expanded the CCTV network, and leveraged the V13 Policetech Accelerator to launch the camera registry.

Finally, our community, no surprise to anybody here, has seen an increase of incidences of theft and public nuisance. Our calls for service have dramatically increased, which puts pressure on our members and our resources. The cost to the taxpayer to effectively deal with these types of incidents is staggering. Our approach will require a more community-based approach.

Last weekend, we received a call from a person who was unhappy with the service delivery.

Last weekend, we received a call from a person who was unhappy with the service delivery. The person called the police because they were at an event where it was a free event for youth in our community to be engaged in sport. Somebody there dropped a crack pipe it fell onto the ground and it smashed he called the police it took us over three hours to get there. So when I spoke with them and I have his permission to use this example today. I spoke with them I said let me the research. This is what happened in that three-hour span. One officer made an arrest on King Street for a person wanted on outstanding warrants. They had to go for bail hearing. While the officer was dealing with that person, another person acted outwardly and had to be dealt with by the same office. The second incident ongoing at the same time, one of our officers had to assist community paramedicine for an

Transcript

elderly person who they couldn't hear from or see from so they had to enter into the residence forcefully. A third officer was at another call. There was a family dispute a tragic event that by only the grace of God go that we do not have, but a young lad had to be taken to the hospital for care. And we had a cracked, crack pipe. So I ask you, which three which of these three core police functions should I not do, to do the work that some other agency must lean into. I repeat we need the capacity, we have the capacity, we're growing our capacity, to be better at our core function and I expect others to lean into theirs.

I guess s time for questions on this topic. Anything on the crime or related issues?

AUDIENCE

Chief, I'm going to ask a question on someone's behalf.

Close to where I live a drug house has developed the increase in traffic and people is unnerving. Our property has people looking for items. The park is unsafe for me to take my grandchild to I tried to take him to another Park and was told it is unsafe. My question is, how are you going to make these child Parks safe again?

CHIEF

Yeah, how am I going to make Parks. So that's a partnership with the municipality. Again we need to hear. Us making Parks safe, we deal with people. We deal with misbehaviour in the Parks. If we're talking about the cleanups or lighting or all of the things, then we are part of the town, and obviously the town would engage in any and all of those conversations and to make us, to make those park safer. Again, that speaks to increased visibility. That that speaks to our officers getting out of the cars into those Parks. Knowing which Parks we're talking about. Knowing which ones they are, and making sure we're doing the best to be I guess visible for a start, action second.

AUDIENCE

Hi. So you said you have uh currently have enough resources to do your core functions. Um your published solve rate for theft under 5,000 for 2023 21% or 22%. That's not good. If you already have resources, you know, if I was Well let's just say

Transcript

it this way, if I was in a job where my core competencies were on public display like a job that you have, I would say a fail rate of 79% is not good. So what are you doing about that?

CHIEF

Excellent. Thank you. Yeah clearance rates are part of the crime severity index and the data that's produced by Stats Canada. Crime Severity Index are measured by comparative communities across Canada, so the clearance rate or solve rate for offences, specifically, theft under, I don't have the provincial number in front of me, but I would suggest it's probably not too far off of where we are. You have to look at what a theft under would exist. And the opportunities to solve all of those steps are smaller than. So what we do is every year we produce our statistics, we annual we an we make sure that our clearance rates are consistent or improving. I am very happy with some of the solve rates. Breaking enters and theft unders are areas that we're improving, so that goes again to I want to make sure we're correcting we are building the capacity that we require and that's what the board has done both in the last budget and this budget. And it takes time to train and onboard new officers. So our intent to move forward with that quality insurance piece is to make sure we are solving those crimes that we can solve and clearing those ones that we can so my expectation is we're going to see hopefully see that number increase.

AUDIENCE

Hello there um I'm just wondering with all the video we see of the people going through the cars at night. If I come running outside and slam the door on somebody's leg that's in my car and break his leg what happens?

Cause that's what coming to. People are going to start taking it into their own hands. It's on my property.

CHIEF

The criminal code speaks very clearly about what is reasonable in self-defense of property in persons section 25. Thank you. In all seriousness sir, we get it. We get

**Transcript**

a lot of ring camera video some of it's good some of it's not so good. Even when it's really good sometimes it's tough to identify. We do our best. Lots of bulletins. I'm not condoning violence in any circumstance. I would really ensure that you call the police, and in your scenario maybe before you slam a door on someone's leg.

**AUDIENCE**

I mean we're doing all we can. Everybody's putting lights up, motion lights, cameras, locking all the gates, and everything. And they're still getting in, and that's ridiculous.

**CHIEF**

I always say. So for a short period there when I was building in my home, I had to live in Peterborough, and I left my car unlocked, and it was rifled through. And I I kind of quickly realized, you know what I'm not going to leave anything in my car that I don't like or care about. Don't, let me finish before, you should throw something at me, let me finish before you do. I would rather then just take what's left in the car versus break my car and I have all that hassle trying to fix the windows and everything else. That being said sir, you should be able to park your car in your driveway and not get up in the morning and have to look at ring camera footage or finding your car is gone through. So, I get it, but it is something that we are dealing with across the country, and we are no different here. But we're working towards a better tomorrow.

**AUDIENCE**

We're going to call it the way it is we've got a drug problem in this town, and what's happening is your capacity to be able to shut down places like Battell and James and John and all these other things are contingent about the social services being able to handle the dozens of people that are going to come out of these drug houses that are using them as shelter. So my question to you is this, when 310 divisions opens whenever that happens, and the County hopefully someday gets its beds in place, are you well position to be able to execute your mandate in shutting down drug houses?

**CHIEF**

Transcript

Full stop, yes. I have the right people and the right number of people and I have the right partnerships to work with the town in shutting down the house. The drug problem we have the right people, the right place, and the right time to do it. Again, you are not wrong, we started the encampment exercise by shutting down a residence that was an unsafe habitation for anyone. Regardless of what you think of people, what you think of their circumstance, the people that were living at Division Street the other side of the street, Battel, John, Major, Meredith. We will shut these places down. They shut one down Wednesday, Thursday, earlier this week. Another one, the same process. My team is ready. We did Chipping Park. It was amazing amount of work. We have great partnerships with the Port Hope Police Service, so when we need extra bodies, they're here. I am so proud of the work that my team has done, and we have more in the tank.

AUDIENCE

You came into my neighbourhood and shut down dealers that had illegal Firearms loaded guns. They had hundreds of grams of different types of drugs and that was a block away from where my wife has a daycare, and walks around with six little ones every single day. That took two months because we were proactive in our neighbourhood. We know how to fight this, and we work collaboratively with the police services. It took two months instead of 10 years shutting down Battell. I've been watching crime stats in my neighbourhood since Battell shut down. It's been night and day, but the creep is there. And if we don't start to stand up and work collaboratively with our Police Services, if they're ready to go, we need to help them. I want signs at every entrance point into freaking Chipping Park saying something like you're being watched. We need to protect our own communities and if you're there, I'm there too. I'm sure everyone here wants to solve this problem. I refuse to accept my community being safe when this lady's community has got my problem that we had before. She needs relief like we've been experience, and if she needs to be vigilant with her neighbors, then we'll leave that charge. We need leadership. Are you ready to work with us to shut down these drug houses?

[Applause]

CHIEF

Transcript

I figured everyone would applaud. So another gentleman in the back. Sir, I have you to prove that I'm better. I didn't get your name sir. I don't like names sometimes. Your comments resonate very strongly with me, and I will own them. My accountability to this group who took time out of their lives today to make a difference is this. I am, I'm leading a Police Service which is in its lane, committed to doing what is right, what is legal, and what is expected by all of the eyes that are on me. I am solely accountable. I report to the Police Services Board. Sir, your message echoes through their voice monthly as I report. Sir, you have my commitments we will put both of our best feet forward and ensure that we chase this monster around until it leaves Cobourg.

[Applause]

Thank God you're here cause I would be talking about budget next.

AUDIENCE

Maybe this will be on budget. I'd like to ensure that we understanding this. The 2013 Police Services annual report noted and I quote, organized crime groups continue to target Cobourg and the surrounding area. Now, that jumped out on me because I had, before reading that, watched a news program that talked about approach to dealing with drug activity and homelessness in Alberta. And they said they received a report from the police services, to them, that that clearly identified that organized crime cartels with connections to Montreal and Mexico were behind and active in those drug activities within the cities in Alberta. So when I saw in the 2013 report talking organized crime targeting Cobourg, I immediately began to think, is that going on in our community are we also being victims of drug cartels that are much harder to deal with much. You can shut down a drug den they pop up elsewhere because they're supported by big money from this. And there's a lot of money to be made, and so they're recruiting and I'm watching the activity on my street grow. I'm thinking these people are making a lot of money, and they're doing a lot of business, and I don't think it's just local. So my question to you is, what does organized crime mean in the Cobourg context?

CHIEF



Transcript

We can go on for hours about organized crime. And I am by no means the expert. Really quickly, is we are a GTA community, right. So we're on the 401, so all of the 401 corridor communities do definitely have ease of access for organized crime. And organized crime maybe it's drug cartels from Mexico or whatever but it's also outlaw motorcycle gangs. It's, there's lots of various levels of organized crime, so we do feel it. No if, and, or, but. We know, we think, we believe that a lot of the drugs that come here are all on the 401 corridor are infecting Brockville Belleville, Trenton, all the communities along the 401. So the full impact is theft, we have the distraction thefts that were occurring there about a year and a half or two years ago. So that is definitely something that is a widespread auto theft. We just launched a new partnership because of that organized crime on of auto theft. So the scope for organized crime is not new. It's well before 2013 and what it will look like something very different than 2020 to 2033. So, yeah. We are fully engaged with the various provincial agencies. We have the new act, actually requires that we have an intelligence officer identified as an extra body in the space specific to deal with things like organized crime.

AUDIENCE

I just want to make sure our expectations are realistic.

CHIEF

Sure. Yeah so, we continue to work with our provincial partners. police services large and small to affect crime at the highest level, but and also the local level. Really, we have to, we have to make sure that we're doing both. Sir.

AUDIENCE

Um, I'm just adding on what I was stating earlier, but you're speaking of all these improvements that you want to make rebuilding the community relations, actually fighting crime, doing that your core mandates. Is there a timeline you have in place to actually show that there's an improvement? And if there is, what is that timeline? And if you don't meet that timeline what's the next step? You step down, and we get somebody else in charge that can?

CHIEF

Transcript

Yeah, so very quickly, the timelines will be monthly. You'll see our reports hit of the monthly Police Services Board. So you'll see our progress as we move forward each and every board. That's a monthly event. You'll see our annual reports result results. As far as me stepping down, I would ask that you speak with the Police Services Board. They are my boss and I serve it their pleasure.

Okay, oh sorry.

AUDIENCE

We have one here too

AUDIENCE

How big is the current police force, and within the force do you have a team that's dedicated to just looking after drug crimes. You mentioned earlier about the three situations in the crack pipe. Were there only three officers on a shift that day? I assume like maybe you have teams?

CHIEF

Actually, I believe there was five working that day, but some of those calls take two officers. Just the nature of the work. um again, I don't have the exact number could have been three or five, but I think it was more like five on that particular day. So um yeah, we have a team we are a criminal investigative unit which made handles all major crimes as well as specifically around drug and the organized crime in that in that kind of space. Our sworn compliment, once this budget goes through Council and is hired, it will be 49 sworn officers.

AUDIENCE

And you need more?

CHIEF

Yes. You talk to Chair. Again more. But more is the right answer, it's we have to build the capacity slowly. So we have to make sure we're hiring the right people, we have to make sure we're training the right people, and they have the right skills, knowledge and abilities to do the job well. That's important, and it takes good time.

Transcript

As we always call it is good time spent to train officers to be well understood, trained, and experienced to deliver quality product. So as we move into that with more capacity like think, we can get back into school and do those things, but for a while we were just basically calls for service. Answering calls for service. So I'm very confident that as we move forward in the next year or two we'll have that capacity to do that.

AUDIENCE

So in my mind, five people on a shift doesn't seem like a lot of officers to service this community.

CHIEF

Our calls have increased dramatically. We're November 7<sup>th</sup>, I did a quick analysis of my calls for service before I came tonight, and we've already exceeded last year's calls for service. So I can tell you that the board has understood this. They've been completely supportive of my asks two years in a row, and we worked very collaborative with our police associations to ensure that we have the right amount of officers. And one of the new things we're going to do which is going to help me, I always lose that gentleman, help me be accountable, is that we are positioning supervisors to be supervisors and not call takers so that we and have the supervisors ensuring their members are doing all the things that we ask and expect of them to do.

AUDIENCE

Thanks

AUDIENCE

Thanks, Chief VandeGraaf. On the topic of building capacity, there's growing concern about how many of the Cobourg Police Service officers are actually on paid leave currently. So can you confirm how many or what percentage of your police force is on paid leave and how that affects your ability to effectively deliver policing in the area.

CHIEF

Transcript

Yeah, thanks very much. So we filed a report with the Police Services Board at the Board's request. It's a very deep question. I want to respect the officer's privacy. The job that we do every day carries with it a psychological harm. I, I don't know a police officer I've worked with that's not managing an occupational stress injury, so I want to acknowledge that up front. I have to be very careful with my response. Privacy matters, but currently, we have eight officers off going back to 2017. Six with permanent restrictions from frontline policing. So yeah, out of our, we have eight officers currently off. Sorry?

AUDIENCE

Versus how many on?

CHIEF

Our sworn, the board has been very proactive and allowing me to replace those people. So again, we are building our capacity back to 49 so we with the with the addition of the six now, we're moving from 43.

AUDIENCE

Hi Chief, just going back to responding. Outside my house not that long ago, was a young man and a woman there. There four vehicles. Four police vehicles there, and they were there for a half an hour. And all they would do was speak to the people, the young guy in the back of the in the back of Cruiser shirtless smoking, vaping, whatever. And after about a half an hour they just let them go on their way. Why not take them down to the detachment, and just kind of find out what's going on with them there rather than four vehicles at this call?

CHIEF

The Charter of Right and Freedoms has the right to, not to be arbitrarily detained. So if we were to have to remove them from anywhere to bring them back to the police station, the officers would have to have the legal authority to arrest them. I'm assuming, I don't know the nature of that call. Scott, can you make sure this person has a card so we can touch base with that. But my suggestion would be that the officers didn't have the articulable cause to arrest them and bring them to the Detachment.

Transcript

AUDIENCE

Okay, that is my main issue. Is just having four vehicles there for this issue.

CHIEF

Yeah, listen,

AUDIENCE

For about a half an hour and

CHIEF

I don't know the nature of the call, sir. So I want to be very cautious that I don't speak out a turn. Again, Scott has your card. I would ask that Scott just follow up that's so you can get an honest answer. You deserve an honest answer. I I I don't know the nature of the call, when it was, or how it, but I know that when we get the data we can give detailed answer. yeah yeah thank you.

AUDIENCE

Chief, I just like to step in for two seconds a couple of the comments have been about Community engagement, and that is kind of why the community safety advisory committee came about. So please, there's eight of us on the committee, six of us are here tonight. Please reach out to us have conversations with us and if you're interested in being involved, apply to be a part of the committee so that you do have a voice and your getting involved in the solutions that we're coming up with.

CHIEF

Thank you.

The next area that we'll cover is budget.

Over the past year, we have received significant feedback from residents about the increase in crime and the growing feeling of being unsafe in our neighbourhoods.

We're hearing more of it tonight.

Transcript

These concerns are valid and deeply felt, and they underscore the importance of our work and the need for adequate resources to address these issues effectively.

*The budget that we presented this year, not that long ago, provides the necessary resources to ensure we can re-focus our efforts on our core enforcement and police functions*

It will not be news to anyone that we are witnessing increased demands for police services.

We continue to strive to enhance our services and respond to a steady increase in the demand for service, driven by a number of factors, including the growth of our community, the rising societal issues, and the evolution in community needs and expectations.

This includes not only responding to crimes but also addressing a wide range of community issues that dilute our primary focus.

Our officers are stretched thin.

In 2023 we had 13,747 calls for service which was already a 22% increase

And as of today, as I said earlier, 15,414 calls for service.

Again, we talked about the drugs, and I'm just going to move forward.

At the end of October, Chair Kerr and I presented a proposed 2025 operational budget estimate that with transfers from corporate services and reserves, worked out to \$7.8 million from Levy Funding. That's about a 5.50% increase from 2024

Highlights of the budget include: Projected increase in salary and benefits, Additional staffing and training costs to meet with the new act, the Community Safety and Policing Act which has put new and robust allegations on us and the Board to be effective and adequate. And some Capital estimated at \$320,000 which again, comes from *Corporate Services and doesn't rely on any taxpayers dollars.*

We're hoping that that dollars moves forward in building a road safety unit, a couple of replacement admin vehicles, and obviously nothing stops with Information Technology

Transcript

Before the question is asked, when we talk about the building I had lots of feedback at of the building. My job as a chief of police, to work with the Board, is to create the strategic vision forward. We're in a building that was constructed in 1904. My job as Chief was to identify their strategic responsibility to engage a conversation. We had a facility needs assessment done. That's started the conversation. It is a conversation. No shovels in the ground. No one's writing cheques. No one's picking paint colours. It's a started conversation and it rests with the municipality to deliberate because under the Act, the municipality is responsible to provide an adequate and effective facility. I will not be talking about the police facility again until other people, other than me, want to engage in that conversation. My job as strategic leader, is to identify the problem so that we can future ready ourselves. That is what we and our team has done. Any question on budget or things like that?

STAFF

We have a couple proctor questions on this as well.

AUDIENCE

Good Evening.

CHIEF

Hi Cathy

AUDIENCE

You're not supposed to say my name

CHIEF

Sorry, hi Jane

AUDIENCE

I'm a resident of Cobourg, and I have been for close to 40 years. I wasn't born here and I didn't grow up here, but I had seen the town change a lot over those years. One of the things that we noticed this year was how much our property taxes went up. Is that due to the fact that maybe we were maybe under paying, which I doubt?

Transcript

Or is it because of the resources that are needed? And how much of that is going to affect the Police Service Board? How much will go to you? And will it allow, I mean our our community has increased 30% in the last few years. We've got buildings, like houses, going up everywhere which is going to increase our population, which is going to increase everything. Is the Police Service going to be able to handle all these people that we have living here

CHIEF

Ah, yeah, so as far as tax rates, we understand that in any municipality, the cost of policing is always one of the largest items. We understand that. It always is. Here in Cobourg, we do a fair job at offsetting those costs with some of the Corporate Services revenue. The growth of a community does put added pressures on police, and that's why we continue to future cast to determine added strength and capacity for our team. So um, as it sits today, we're better. As the next projected houses over the next decade tend to increase, one would think that there would have to be an increase, or a change, or a reimagining of what um the numbers look like. So, um it's hard to say, to be quite uh honest, but I can tell you that um taxes are taxes I guess and we um we will continue to be future ready.

Scott, proctor questions?

AUDIENCE

Okay. Is there a review of the recent anonymous letter? And if so, who is paying for that?

CHIEF

The question has been answered by the Chair. Any further comments that I could possibly make in relation to that might interfere with the Inspectorate of Policing, so I will not be talking about that.

AUDIENCE

Uh I'm just going to add a little comment. We all know that there is, there will, most likely be a provincial election coming up early in the year. And maybe a federal election coming up not too long after that. And a lot of your questions with regards to finances, that are outside of the scope of what the police services can and should



Transcript

be doing, you ask those people who come to your door asking will you support me? Ask them what they're doing for social services addressing the people who are homeless. Ask them what they're doing about increasing budgets so that the police services can have the numbers that they need to keep us all safe. Ask them what they are going to do about every single question that you have because that's the time to do it they want your vote. Let them be accountable for it. Thank you.

[Applause]

AUDIENCE

I'm going to talk some numbers here Chief.

CHIEF

I'm sorry?

AUDIENCE

We're going to talk about some numbers, okay? Actually what we're going to talk about is the concept of the taxpayer getting value for money. Millions of dollars every year being spent in regards to policing services, and from the comments I've heard tonight and the many many conversations I've had with business owners, taxpayers, and residents in Cobourg, we are not getting value for money in regards to the way that your Police Services on the ground the Frontline workers are interacting with the individuals that we've heard have issues and are being ignored. I was talked to one lady today she was having an issue with her neighbour. It took nine calls to the police for a simple individual on your team to take her seriously, walk over to the neighbour, tell him to knock it off, and it was the end of the story. Nine calls. Until one of your officers realized that they could just do something decent for a fellow citizen to end an issue that's been ongoing. Are you ready to ensure that we get value for money from the frontline people? And I get it, I respect them cause if they don't go to work every day, we're all in big trouble. Are we going to get respect for the taxpayers who are funding your operations through the service levels that we get? We want value for money.

CHIEF

Transcript

Yep, uh value for money is definitely um something in always in everything we do, and what we want, but it's also in perception of what value for money is. I can tell you that I truly believe the way we're restructuring our platoons is a tangible result that will result in value for money. Creating the quality assurance officer directly reports to my office, that I'm measuring quality assurance and crime data simultaneously, will ensure you're getting value for money. Value for money is will be reflected in how we report these things to the Board. Value for money is reflected in the men and women who come to work every day and deal with the same frustrations that you're feeling, sir. So uh, value for money, in my opinion, is there in Cobourg, our officers do deliver, and we see, and I'm accountable to ensure they are value for money.

AUDIENCE

Value for money, is not having nine calls to deal with one problem. Value for money is not this lady over here being ignored and not getting answers. Value for money is not the guy at the Pioneer who, when he gets stolen, even though it seems not a big deal to the police officers, taken seriously. Will you send a message to your people on the ground that the taxpayer who's funding their salaries, want to be respected because we're footing the bills?

CHIEF

My officers very clearly know the accountability that sits in my office, and having the new officers who's here tonight, listening to everything that's happening. I assure you my officers will hear what the community is saying it's value for money sir. Directly, as I meet with them regularly, they will hear it. The expectations are there, my role is to deliver.

AUDIENCE

I have a copy here of the absentee report that I picked up the last Board meeting and the number there was 13 off sick.

CHIEF

Not all of those are officers.

Transcript

AUDIENCE

Okay, um, but however, they still contribute to the operation of the Cobourg Police Service.

CHIEF

Yeah, sure, sure. Like any business, we have individuals who are off on a variety of reasons, be it health concerns. Really, it is a privacy issue. I just I think I wanted, I think the question was around the officers and how many officers I want to answered. I just kind of want to leave it there. I think the officers who are off, who are or people who are not well deserve that privacy and respect.

AUDIENCE

I guess my other comment would be the length of time that some of them are off sick.

CHIEF

I I I would encourage you to when they come knocking at your door. Cindy's called the election tonight. Um, when they come knocking on your door, ask the candidates what they're doing about reform to the WSIB Act.

AUDIENCE

Okay

AUDIENCE

Chief, a couple questions here that are actually related. So, I will try to keep it succinct for you. Um One question is around expansion due to increase population in Cobourg. And the question related to that is, might there be a merger of CPS with Port Hope and OPP?

CHIEF

Uh, that that's a decision of Councils above me. Um, recently Cobourg Council has sent a letter to neighbouring municipalities. My understanding is the neighbour municipalities, I'm not sure whether it's exclusively, or at least one, has decided

Transcript

right now they're just going to receive the information. Future amalgamations, whatever that looks like, that's for municipal councils to decide. I have this town to focus on right now.

Over here, oh we got right here

AUDIENCE

Sorry. Um You spoke of 310 Division, John Street, you speak of United Church by the way, and the ability to bring that downtown Cobourg in control, and you're saying that you will do that. I happen to be somewhat responsible for very hard group of people, who, who are trying to get their life together and I'm not seeing that change. So I need to understand, and I need to be able to talk to somebody about how we're going to do that together.

CHIEF

Excellent, Scott will definitely share cards. I'll talk to you about two initiatives that we've begun to explore. Sometimes we get caught in our own way so I had a team just returned from St Thomas. And they looked at a uh a really unique program, not the shelter side, but the uh use of special constables in a downtown area which is something that we're going to hear more about next week. We're also sending a team to Peterborough. They have a community first program. Uh we're going to explore that. I'm not a believer in going to a community and cookie cutter in anything from another community, but we're going to be looking at how we are going to better deploy to ensure that our downtown is and continues to be safe. There was some uh information out that somebody was asking me earlier. I guess it was later last week, about the amount of assaults. And I think we had like around 100 assaults overall this year and 28 of them were downtown. So they're not like every assault in the communities happening downtown and that's separating a lot of the other stuff, so. We're, we're going to move forward downtown and any small town is always very important. It is the life blood of a town, um and and we understand that. It's the sustainability of the visibility. The downtown Dynamic Patrol worked, but again it's that ability to sustain that for the long term we haven't had. um We are now, like I've said before, we're starting to get that capacity. So, I'm I'm encouraged that we'll be able to do that, but Scott is going to work together, the community safety advisory council is here to listen. The Board's here to listen.

Transcript

Counsellors are here to listen. Um And together, we will definitely make a difference, and I appreciate your offer of support.

AUDIENCE

Also, talking to real estate agents which happen to know the community well. Most of downtown is for sale, so if you really need a new police station, I'm sure there's a few at least.

CHIEF

I'm going, I'm going to I'm going to park that. Um, I started the conversation. Sir, if you want to continue it there's members of council here. I'll leave it to you.

AUDIENCE

Okay, now I have a number of people in my house that are school teachers. Now, there is a lot of crime within actual school rooms started by students. That just doesn't seem to be able to be dealt with. I know that when I went to school probably a century ago, half a century ago, the um we had police come in and talk to us. We had discussions about the integrity of our neighbourhood, about who we were as people, about a number of attributes in the family. What was right and what was wrong. In your budget, and I'm going to tie it back to budget, that's where we are right now uh Your budget which was \$27.8 Million you said if I'm wrong?

CHIEF

7.8 not 27.8.

AUDIENCE

Seven, oh. I was wondering cause I was thinking that was

CHIEF

Poor Ron Kerr just had a stroke

AUDIENCE

Transcript

Now, I was adding a police cars and I thought you had a lot of. So the um in your budget and when you forecast for your strategies as to how you're going to look in 5 to 10 or 15 years. Even though you probably won't be chief at that point. The Are Do we have a. Well, 15 years from now, let's be honest.

CHIEF

I think we went to school that same century ago so I'll give that I'll agree with you on that.

AUDIENCE

So do you have a forecasted strategy and do you have forecasted numbers because it won't matter who your political party is because the the government's run bureaucracy the politicians play a part game right.

CHIEF

So um, the forecast for our Police Service is what we started last year we we forecasted what we would need over the next two years. uh The board did meet that. We kind of flipped the numbers around, but we hit our forecast numbers. As the town continues to grow and things continue to spread, whatever that looks like, obviously we'll we continue to forecast we'll continue to have. This year is the last year of our strategic plan so there will be a new community engaged strategic plan that will be created with by the Board. That will obviously have human resources, our people, and different things in it. Your question around schools, we were at a point as many services. oh Let me go back here, we're so fortunate to live in Cobourg in some ways because our schools want our officers in the schools. And there's a lot of communities in Ontario who don't want the uniformed officers anywhere near the schools. I hear regularly from principals and teachers that they want to see our officers. They both in a response model, as well as a proactive education model. We are again trying to rebuild that time and space where we can assign officers to that very important function. So that is in our forecast, and that'll be in our strategic plan.

AUDIENCE

Transcript

Okay, so if I call Staff Sergeant Bambridge. If I call Staff Sergeant Bambridge, I will be able to get a copy of the Strategic Plan, the one you're going forward with.

CHIEF

The current one is on our website. You can grab that. uh The current one we're not, we're just going to start developing it in 2025, sir. So it's a four year cycle, so we'll start that probably... I'm getting no help from the Board, so we'll start that some point early next year.

AUDIENCE

Good, thank you very much.

AUDIENCE

Chief, just listening uh to some of the comments tonight. I had an experience at the hospital yesterday, and one of the things you go through there is triage. And it strikes me, that in uh your job there must be a degree of triage. I mean if you have a a call for a a broken crack pipe versus a gunshot or whatever, uh you're going to um have to assign or whatever whoever does that. I wonder if you might comment on that please.

CHIEF

Yeah absolutely we um every call type is triage is classified as a type of call, no different than a hospital if you had. That's a great analogy uh sir. So um our team triages every calls, and and we manage to do everything we need to do. um In the time we can do it some calls take two officers the this one call this might have taken four officers. So, um um we work with our dispatch in Owen Sound, they're our provider for dispatch. They know how to classify calls. We will hit those priority calls, and our response times for priority calls are better than expected. Our team does a really good job. And Scott knows exactly where I'm leaning. I can guarantee you why there's four cars at this particular call, that I know nothing about, because it came in as the serious call, and they all went. And then once we're on these calls, it's just a matter of getting to the next one. So we triage them. We we provide reports and we are going to start delving into that data a bit more.

AUDIENCE

Transcript

Thank you

AUDIENCE

Just to kind of lean into the last question I asked. I'm personally not concerned about the privacy or I don't want to infringe on any privacy of the officers, but I think noting that so many officers are off dating back to 2017 lends to the culture of the Cobourg Police Services. And obviously that starts with you, and as we've heard here tonight also this Board. So how is something like that going to be addressed by you and this Board moving forward to ensure that the Cobourg Police Service is adequately staffed, and can deliver this mandate that we keep hearing about tonight.

CHIEF

So 2016, the First Responders PTSD presumptive legislation came in and we felt it across the country, but specifically Ontario, we felt the impact. The Board was very proactive and allowed me to replace those officers who were off. um We've embedded in enhanced partnerships with our police associations, both senior and the regular Association. uh Increased mental health uh availability through bargaining and through health benefits. We've increased a new mental health app just recently released. um We have a wellness committee that just reported at the Police Services Board, two meetings ago, I believe the last meeting. um So we're doing all of those things to be better at how we handle and treat our staff. As far as replacing staff, it goes back to collective bargain and bargaining agreements, and the board has been very proactive. The percentages of people of police officers who are off in the province of Ontario is sitting around 20%, regardless of the shoulder flash. So our goal is to collectively work with our police associations to reduce that number.

AUDIENCE

I think that the letter that we saw, um and I know you already said that you wouldn't comment on it, but there's some very clear language in there that that is very likely to have come from internally at the Cobourg Police Service. When there's a third part investigating, and again that leads into the culture that is at the Cobourg Police Service, how long is the turnaround time on something like that?



Transcript

CHIEF

I have no idea because we're in a new era with the Inspectorate of Policing.

AUDIENCE

So as a financial planner, part of my job is to set up group plans for employers. Normally in a group plan, when somebody's on disability, there's a 2-year uh own occupation clause, which basically says that if you can't do your own job we will pay you disability for two years, and after two years, uh the valuation changes and it's any occupation. If you can't do any job, then you're on long-term disability. I find it exceptionally um interesting that police officers have up to eight years of own occupation and fully funded benefits. Given the discretion that you have to uh to to hold, and I agree that they deserve their privacy, how much is this costing us? You have a 7.8 million dollar budget how, much are these disability benefits at 100% costing the taxpayer?

CHIEF

Uh the last budget report was \$1.8 Million.

AUDIENCE

Whoa, you're telling me, on a \$7.8 million budget, we're paying \$1.8 million for officers that aren't showing up for work?

CHIEF

And the officers that we've hired to replace them.

AUDIENCE

Okay, okay. What is your role in that? Did you have anything to do with that happening, and do you have any control over those officers and their situation?

CHIEF

I respect those officers who are struggling through the occupational stress injury WSIB is an arms length Crown Corporation who sets the timelines. It is not

Transcript

consistent with what you might be aware of as far as long-term disability plans or private insurers.

AUDIENCE

I respect that.

CHIEF

The lock in if you will is six years with an automatic extension, if required based on whatever they do. Has nothing to do with us. Once the person is off for x amount of period, they receive basically all of their losses earnings, benefits directed from WSIB. We have top up provisions within our Collective Agreement benefits. They're still our member, they're still part of our team, but these are. These things are provincially regulated. The reg, the uh First Responders Act that was brought in place in 2016 um was well intentioned and deserve to protect our officers, but WSIB was not prepared and they're not managing. And I've said this many times and I provincially stand there to say we need to be better in this space we need to make sure our officers are getting better getting, better more appropriate care quicker, and they need to change their systems. And ultimately municipalities need to stand up and talk to WSIB about what is the long game for this. Not an individual municipality, and definitely not a police service.

AUDIENCE

Okay, so let me be very very clear for everybody to understand as the chief of the police of Cobourg do you have, you as the chief, any impact in regards to this situation being in in current.

CHIEF

None.

AUDIENCE

So this is at the Board level or the Union level or the ...

CHIEF

Transcript

No, no, it's not the provincial level. It's a WSIB when a person suffers an injury, we support our people. We get them we get them all the care they need, but it's a workplace injury. It's no different that person falls over and hurts their leg or hurts their back. The psychological injuries are complex psychological injuries that are managed by WSIB. Their their their length of time off, their restrictions the return to work plans, those are all outside of us. I have an obligation on Human Rights Code and under WSIB policy to create accommodated work whenever and as ever possible, and we do that.

AUDIENCE

Okay, so just to be clear, and as many people know, I don't like these kinds of problems. When we've got legislative issues at levels of government, different agencies are costing us money and we get nothing in return. So what you're telling me is that you're not on my radar, the Province should be on my radar on this. Is that correct?

CHIEF

That is correct.

AUDIENCE

We'll remember this at the next election.

AUDIENCE

Just one more thing, um I can't remember what the time period was when you announced that there were 157 Wellness calls that the Cobourg Police Service covered. And I'm just wondering if wellness checks would best be served by a different organization than the Cobourg Police Service which could mean that you would be working on crime.

CHIEF

Yeah yeah. um Depends what the wellness check is. A lot of those, if we define a lot of them, yes you're 100% right. There are great best practices nationally, internationally about better people serving the wellness check. Some of them, there's a safety concern, about the safety for people, maybe a nurse or whatever.

Transcript

Our M-HEART program, it's a great program where officers and critical Health Care or Mental Health nurses are in the same car as an example of what those Wellness checks are. So but you're not wrong there is definitely a lane where others can lead and let us do different things.

AUDIENCE

So how would we go about getting that to occur? Who who would we approach to see that that happens to release more officers to do what I think, what most of us would like to see is fighting crime in our community?

CHIEF

The opioid epidemic is a health crisis.

AUDIENCE

So, the health department. Thank

AUDIENCE

So dove tailing off the uh return to work. um How many of those officers have you made modified agreements with? Like, there are ways to, I guess, change the change the return to work culture. If you extended an offer and said you coming back to work modified duties by this date, by this time, we'll work with WSIB. Have you taken that hardline stance with those people that have been off for years?

CHIEF

Sorry, I I am going to be really clear here. I respond to WSIB. The minute they come to me, and say hey chief these are the restrictions do you have accommodated work? We say yes or no. Sometimes the restrictions are such that we don't, so it's not up to us to reach out. Say so we have currently one officer who's returned to work working accommodated doing different duties based on those restrictions. Return to work is restriction determined.

AUDIENCE

So one out of the how many?

Transcript

CHIEF

Eight.

AUDIENCE

One out of the eight.

CHIEF

So when WSIB reaches out to us and says sir, we're ready Chief or HR's team, so and so's ready to return to work, and these are the restrictions. We uh we have an obligation it's really simple, and how we follow through that process and we try to put that in place.

AUDIENCE

So you do nothing until WSIB says let's let's go this way?

CHIEF

We try to get our people back to work, but we're not allowed to. WSIB serves the restrictions upon us. This is driven by WSIB.

AUDIENCE

I've worked with WSIB before and they are pretty reasonable if you take a hardline stance and say we will modify no if, ands, or, but, get this person back here.

CHIEF

And we do that on every one of these circumstances. It's not a musculoskeletal injury, a complex psychological injury is very different sir.

AUDIENCE

Okay, thank you.

AUDIENCE

Transcript

Just have a question. Why isn't there more transparency on the crimes going on in Cobourg. Like, I think it should be mentioned on the news so we know and are aware of what crimes are happening in our neighbourhood.

CHIEF

Sure, so uh we did indicate earlier that we are going to enhance the way that is being delivered. um It's going to be a subscription service. I'm not sure what exactly that's called, so that's going to be come discussed at our next board meeting. We are going to be continually putting the crimes that occur and the stats, and everything that we have that's going to be going up. We're going to be changing a bit of the communication at the monthly board meeting. Our operational report, it sits at the board meeting every month, and it's available on escribe and it's available on our website. um So there are lots of ways already that information is available, and we are looking at enhancing that. So, if you want to know exactly what's happening in your neighbourhood we're also looking at rebuilding our interactive crime map. It's a little bit dated. um We're going to be looking at updating that, and um you can sign up. You can be the first one to sign up for that subscription, and you're going to have more stuff landing in your emails than you probably want to read.

AUDIENCE

What about names?

CHIEF

Releasing names. uh Yeah, it's uh it's obviously a hot hot conversation in this community. um We have a very robust media policy I know probably some of you in this room don't agree with it, and I understand that. um The Board understands our position on the purpose of naming why we name and what we name. um I think I've beaten that one up a fair amount. um and uh Again, when we have specific events, functions, or initiatives we tend to release names. But we live we live in our publicly available media policy which is consistent with best practices around the area.

AUDIENCE

Transcript

I I just want to make a comment. In the last 15 months, I had a drug house in Battell shutdown in my neighbourhood, had another bust up the street with armed people, somebody came and did a robbery on Division and Elgin and ended up in my neighbourhood. The police response, uh starting with Battell, which was there for over a decade. Only took two months for the last druggers to get out of my community thanks to your support and and and the Cobourg Police Services. I'm willing to give you the benefit of the doubt. But I'm watching because to be honest with you, the track record speaks for itself. And if you're committing to everything that you're doing this hard on crime, and keeping us informed, and engaging the community, and making sure that your police officers respect the taxpayer. Okay, but I'll be watching, and all of us will because there's been a breach of trust here. Our police services are an important component of the safety and security of this community. Based on the comments that I've heard tonight and the comments I've heard for months, you got your work cut out for you to regain our trust. I'm willing to give it the benefit of the doubt. But if this is all hot air, I'll be watching and we're going to have this talk again. You need to prove to us that you're serious about this, and we need to see results. On so many of these meetings I go to at different levels of government you basically promise the sun and all we get is crap. You better meant it this time, and we want to see results.

CHIEF

Thank you for that. um It might be a perfect time for me to get away from the mic. um And I'll go back, I'll go back to my original quote.

AUDIENCE

It's not personal.

CHIEF

No I don't take it personal, I stand

AUDIENCE

It's been a long year and a half.

CHIEF

Transcript

I stand, I stand in front of every woman and man who serves my service. I'm accountable for their actions. I've made commitments here tonight, that I intend to fulfill. My quote from Winston Churchill was such, it takes courage to speak takes courage to listen. Collectively we've been very courageous tonight thank [Applause] you.

STAFF

All right everyone, just a few comments to wrap up. First, I want to thank everyone who took the time out of their busy schedules to be here. A comment, and Lisa I'm going to go off script, so please get the hook ready. Just a quick comment that I got from some other police leaders in the province. We have to be better, and we plan to be better. Trust me. Your thoughts, feedback, concerns, and feelings are all valid and valuable. We will bring back the themes, concerns, and expectations to our team and continue to reflect on where we can continuously improve. A reminder that if we did not get to your question today, you can submit a question for follow up by scanning the QR code on the agenda. If you Google me, you will get my contact information. If you don't, call the front desk and ask, and I will get back to you. Thank you to the Lions Center staff for helping set up, the community safety advisory committee, and our members for their assistance at tonight's events, Please take a treat or coffee on the way out and have a safe night, everyone.

[Applause]