

## HAMILTON POLICE SERVICES BOARD

### - INFORMATION -

**DATE:** 2019 February 14

**REPORT TO:** Chair and Members  
Hamilton Police Services Board

**FROM:** Eric Girt  
Chief of Police

**SUBJECT:** *Overview of Hamilton Community Policing Centres*  
*PSB 19-011*

#### **BACKGROUND:**

The concept of Community Policing Centres was introduced in the 1980s with a purpose to create a closer connection between police officers and members of the community whom they served. The Centre provided a location and assistance to those for minor issues in a specific neighbourhood. The first Community Policing Centre made it convenient for members of the community to report crimes during an era when desktop computers and land-line phones were required to communicate. Various volunteer programs were based out of the Centres, and members of the community could drop by to file a report or make inquiries concerning police related matters.

Police Constables initially staffed the Centres and eventually were replaced by volunteer personnel to improve the use of police resources and deployment. Volunteers implemented crime prevention programs from the individual Centres under the supervision and guidance of a police officer. Over time with advancements in technology, the number of citizens attending the Centres diminished, as did the workload. The reduction in work load and visits to the Centres resulted in a decline in volunteer staffing.

Technological advancements positively impacted police delivery and included portable laptop computers, smart phones, call management telephone reporting, on-line reporting, and the use of social media.

Police Services continually sought out innovative ways to improve service delivery, and the closure of the Community Policing Centres did not impact the services provided by the police. Having a larger pool of volunteers in fewer locations allowed for programs to be offered at many more locations across the community. Volunteers were able to increase their presence and involvement in the community, while facilitating programs that achieved

results. These programs are recognized to be of value by the volunteers and are appreciated by the community.

### **Hamilton Police Community Policing Centre Evolution**

The concept of Community Policing Centres began in Hamilton in 1995 and evolved from just a few locations to eventually operating at a peak of eleven Centres, situated in specific locations throughout the City. Since 1995, Hamilton Community Policing Centres have been located in the following areas: Ancaster, Binbrook, Concession Street, Centre Mall, Dundas, Jackson Square, Landsdale Neighbourhood, Limeridge Mall, Ottawa Street, Robert Land Neighbourhood, Westdale, Waterdown, and Stoney Creek.

As was experienced with other Police Services throughout the country, technological advancements and innovations in police service delivery resulted in a steady decline of community members attending the neighbourhood locations. The volunteers kept log books to track the number of visits on a daily basis and the reason(s) for the community member to attend. Volunteers grew disengaged with occupying seats within the Centres, and voiced a lack of value associated with their duties. In 2011, changes were made in the structure and operation of the Hamilton Community Policing Centres, which facilitated the volunteers running programs out in the community, away from the Policing Centres. Volunteer numbers and programs flourished, and in 2013 the Hamilton Police Service was awarded the CISCO "Community Policing Award", in part due to the efforts of our volunteers.

In 2013, our "Community Policing Centres" were changed to "Crime Prevention Centres", in order to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of our staffing resources. Restructuring occurred within the Hamilton Police Service and Community Policing Centre Officers from the patrol divisions were redeployed to the Crime Prevention Branch. These officers were reclassified as Crime Prevention Officers and received additional training in crime prevention initiatives to improve services to our community. New initiatives included performing CPTED security audits and community presentations, while maintaining oversight of the centres and the programs being administered by the volunteers, which included Lock It Or Lose It, Speed Watch and Red Light Runner.

The Hamilton Police Service conducted an analysis and consultation process to examine the viability and effectiveness of the Community Policing Centres. As part of the external process, community members, councillors, and business owners were contacted for input and feedback concerning police services.

Consistently, the message being heard from the community was the need for increased police presence, visibility, and face to face communication with the police to address neighbourhood problems. The Community Policing Centres were not addressing the needs of the community or the needs of the volunteers.

The Hamilton Police Service had introduced technology and service innovations that were not present during the inception of Community Policing Centres. These innovations had changed the need for the police to provide services through the Centres. These innovations included a call management branch to provide telephone reporting services, on-line reporting from a computer or cell phone, social media expansion for information sharing, and CCTV camera operation.

In addition, the Hamilton Police Service introduced new policing services to the community in the form of NSP, the ACTION Team, the Mounted Unit, and the Crisis Response Branch. These services have increased police presence, visibility, and delivery with a strategic approach to problem solving based on intelligence led policing.

In 2013, the Hamilton Police Service consolidated its remaining Policing Centres (with the exception of Ancaster, Concession Street and Dundas) to a location at 460 Barton Street East. This location provided a larger area to enhance crime prevention training and allow seminars to be held.

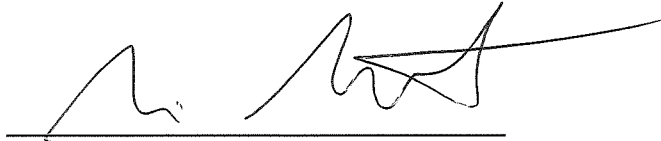
In 2014, the Hamilton Police Service consulted with the citizens, councillors, and BIA Executive Director to ascertain the needs and priorities of the Concession Street community. A statistical analysis was completed to determine the level of crime and calls for police assistance. The message conveyed from the Concession Street community was consistent with studies previously conducted in relation to other Community Policing Centres. The community identified increased police presence and visibility, as a key element, and the need for crime prevention education and support. The consultation process identified that the community needs were not being served by a community policing centre being physically located in the neighbourhood. The community expressed the need for police officer presence and timely response.

In 2017, the Community Policing Centre located at 460 Barton Street East was closed. As with previous Policing Centres throughout Hamilton, the Centre was not being visited even though volunteers were staffing the facility. The Hamilton Police Service consulted with the Barton Street BIA, which was next door to the Centre. The community expressed the need for police officer presence and response, not necessarily a facility.

The closure of Community Policing Centres has not diminished the services and programs provided. The current model deploys crime prevention officers and volunteers strategically from a centralized location in partnership with Divisional Crime Managers. The model enables officers and volunteers to provide crime prevention support and high visibility throughout every neighbourhood in the City of Hamilton as needed.

In 2018, the Hamilton Police Service initiated "Coffee with a Cop." On a monthly basis police officers attend coffee locations throughout the community to meet with members and

address any questions or concerns they may have. The Hamilton Police Service is continually looking for innovative ways to enhance public safety and wellness in our community, and are mindful of the needs of our volunteers.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Eric Girt', written over a horizontal line.

Eric Girt  
Chief of Police

EG/gh

cc: Frank Bergen, Deputy Chief – Support  
Greg Huss, Superintendent – Community Mobilization Division