

## HAMILTON POLICE SERVICES BOARD

### - INFORMATION -

**DATE:** October 15, 2020  
**REPORT TO:** Chair and Members  
Hamilton Police Services Board  
**FROM:** Eric Girt  
Chief of Police  
**SUBJECT:** *School Liaison Officer Program*  
*PSB 20-084*

#### **BACKGROUND:**

The Hamilton Police Service School Liaison Officer Program was first introduced in 1994 to help provide a means of positive engagement and relationship building for officers with youth.

The program is offered at no cost to schools in the Hamilton area as a means to support a safe, inclusive and equitable school environment. The officers work to build relationships with students and staff and become part of the school community. There are 11 officers providing service to 196 schools (with the termination of the program at Hamilton Wentworth Public Schools the number of schools is reduced to 91).

The primary responsibility of the Hamilton Police Service School Liaison and Community Service Officers is to create a safe learning environment among all of our Elementary and Secondary Schools utilizing proactive policing and interaction with students, staff and community partners. Officers participate with child and youth events, school meetings, consultations, investigations, school lockdown drills, pre-diversion referrals, formal and informal restorative measures. The School Liaison and Community Service Officers will take appropriate action in relation to emergency and public disorder incidents on or near school property. Officers regularly liaise with school board administrators, school personnel, youth serving agencies and other areas within our Service in relation to policing, school-related concerns or investigations.

The officers also work with schools to help ensure that the ministry of Education and the ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services "*Provincial Model for a Local Police/School Board Protocol*" is followed. This protocol mandates that certain types of incidents that occur in a school environment must be reported to police. The incidents are:

- all deaths;
- physical assault causing bodily harm requiring treatment by a medical practitioner;

- sexual assault;
- robbery;
- criminal harassment;
- relationship-based violence;
- possessing a weapon, including possessing a firearm;
- using a weapon to cause or to threaten to cause bodily harm to another person;
- trafficking in weapons or in illegal drugs;
- possessing an illegal drug;
- hate and/or bias-motivated occurrences;
- gang-related occurrences;
- extortion;
- non-consensual sharing of intimate images; and
- bomb threats.

The majority of school based investigations are for assaults.

It is worth noting that in 1996 the total number of youth involved in crime was 4,451 or 12.3% of the total youth population in Hamilton. The total number of youth (ages 12-17) involved in crime in the City of Hamilton for 2019 was 1,089 which represents just 3.1% of the total youth population in Hamilton. While a number of factors contributed to this decrease the School Liaison Program and the officers involved certainly contributed to this positive trend of diverting more youth away from the criminal justice system.

The HPS continue to find new ways to engage and educate youth to decrease youth crime and violent crimes, wherever possible. The HPS School Liaison Officers, Community Youth Officers, and Divisional Youth Officers have continued to participate in intelligence led policing initiatives, liaising with front-line officers in areas including the Strategic Targeted Offender Program (STOP) and school drug sweeps.

In 2019, the goals of Hamilton Police Youth Services were adopted by the HPS 2019-2021 Business Plan:

- Community Safety: to ensure the safety of the communities we serve.
- Engagement and Partnerships: To foster effective relationships with all of our communities.
- People and Performance: To increase professional development, leadership and training opportunities.

The School Liaison Officers assist in facilitating external programs and initiatives in which the HPS and community partners engage in collaboratively, helping to reduce youth crime in our community and contribute to the achievement of these goals.

With the termination of the School Liaison Officer program at the Hamilton Wentworth District School Board the service will explore other means of building relationships with youth, such as through Pro-Action or other community agencies, stakeholders and events.

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

Eric Girt  
Chief of Police

EG/W. Mason

cc: Ryan Diodati, Deputy Chief – Support  
Will Mason, Superintendent – Community Mobilization Division