

# **Community and Social Services Committee (CSSC) Report: November 2023**

## **1. Delegation at Board of Health**

The CSSC Chair presented at the Nov. 6, 2023 Board of Health budget meeting. She pled for more community consultation and for the us vs. them dichotomy to stop in reaction to a report that again appeared to confuse community as clients of services and community as the wider community, which includes vulnerable people, but also residents, businesses, and direct and indirect service providers. Specifically, the report highlighted some community concerns, but the list was far from complete. The Chair then unpacked what “concerns about personal safety” meant and the concerns that were not included.

It appeared that the Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Vera Etches, took her concerns seriously. Additionally, the OPH staff who prepared the report clarified that the report was a green document and that they would be consulting the wider community moving forward. However, we will have to wait and see if there are any changes in approach over time.

The recording of the meeting is here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=urVNewsKz7s&t=9633s>

The discussion on the Overdose Strategy Report starts at around 1 hour into the meeting. Resident delegations start at 2 h 10 minutes with Jerome and Carol, who are Sandy Hill residents. Councillor Plante presents at 2h20 and the CSSC Chair speaks at 2h26. The resident delegations were excellent and though there was no attempt at coordination, the delegations appear coordinated as the messaging was similar.

## **2. Community Liaison Committee**

This past month, the CSSC Chair has attended 1 Community Liaison Committee meetings in person. That committee is taking shape nicely. There are some administrative and action updates for that committee.

### **2.1 Administration**

- the Terms of Reference of the SHCLC were accepted by consensus at the Nov. 21, 2023 meeting.
- the deadline for expressions of interest in Co-Chairing the SHCLC is December 1, 2023. The co-chairs may be external or chosen from among committee members. The co-leads in coordinating the SHCLC will remain involved moving forward to provide support to the Co-Chairs
- the SHCLC website is under development and will hopefully be made public soon
- the SHCLC strategic plan remains under development; however, there have been some in-depth and important discussions around priorities and both divergent and convergent interests of different stakeholder groups.

### **2.2 Actions**

- The CSSC Chair participated in the SHCLC working group meeting on Nov. 9, 2023 to develop proposal ideas for the Substance Use and Addictions Program (SUAP) grant. It included two service providers and three residents. Members of other stakeholder groups were invited to attend but chose not to or were unavailable.

The ideas from that meeting were taken and combined into a draft proposal for a Community Overdose Response and Engagement (CORE) Team.

The Director of Oasis, Wendy Stewart took the lead on grant writing with support from the doctors at Oasis and the CSSC Chair. The Executive Director of Belong Ottawa, and the other residents from the working group had access to the draft proposal and the supporting documents during this drafting process.

A 10-page summary of the 35-page grant proposal was provided to the SHCLC on Nov. 21 for consensus, which it received after some questions from the committee, clarifications from SHCHC and the CSSC Chair, and commitments to further highlight the community-based elements of the proposal.

The grant application was submitted to Health Canada on Nov. 22 with 11 letters of support from political representatives, resident representatives, business representatives and service providers.

- Synapcity, a social enterprise organization for civic education and neighbourhood engagement, reached out to the CSSC Chair to ask if there were ideas or projects that ASH or the SHCLC would like to put forward for their Civics Boot Camp. Civic Boot Camp is a six-week learning opportunity where participants come together to explore crucial issues with a municipal lens.

For Civics Boot Camp, partner organizations are asked to provide case studies of projects or initiatives that could/would foster social good. Participants in the boot camp then research and design the project for the partner organization.

There are two or three ideas for case study submission from the CLC and the deadline is before the next meeting. The proposed ideas will be drafted and consensus on (a) potential submission(s) from the SHCLC will be sought via electronic communication and/or in person for those who do not have access to email.

Note that ASH will also be afforded the opportunity to submit case studies; however, the main interest of Synapcity is working with the liaison committee.

More information on Synapcity and the Civics Boot Camp is available here: [Civics Boot Camp - Synapcity](#)

- Next CLC meeting: January 22, 2024

### **3. Upcoming City of Ottawa Board and Committee Budget Meetings**

The CSSC Chair will be delegating at the upcoming Ottawa Police Services Board on November 27, the Community and Social Services Committee on November 28, and the Planning and Housing Committee on November 29. Two members of the ASH CSSC are also presenting at the Ottawa Police Services Board as residents and community activists.

The approved speaking notes for the OPSB are in Appendix B.

The subject of the City CSSC delegations likely focus on the SHCLC grant proposal and request for support for this project, as well as City cooperation around treatment access.

The subject of the Planning and Housing delegation will likely focus on housing for low-income individuals/families and supportive housing needs.

### **4. Safe Supply Advocacy**

The CSSC Chair continues to work on developing a document (with supporting material) that will help clarify the structure of safe supply administration, funding, etc. and how/what to advocate for.

The CSSC Chair submitted an ATIP for the documents related to the funding agreement between the federal government and Pathways to Recovery.

### **5. Other Issues**

CSSC Meetings remain on hold.

CSSC webpage updates remain outstanding. Updates and information can be provided upon request.

The CSSC Chair's delegation to the Nov. 6 Board of Health meeting was quoted in a CBC article: [Inhaling drugs surpasses injections in Ottawa, and experts want new tools to fight it | CBC News](#)

## Appendix A: Grant Proposal Project Details

1. Create a Community Overdose Response and Engagement (CORE) Team that will run for 3 years. The team will include:
  - a. 2 social workers
  - b. 2 nurses
  - c. 4 harm reduction workers
  - d. Integrated PWLLE
2. The Team will patrol the neighbourhood a minimum of 8 hours/day, 7 days/week and provide concierge service to respond to the needs of PWLLE and the wider community by:
  - a. Cleaning up litter
  - b. Cleaning up discarded needles
  - c. Finding services/space for PWLLE with nowhere to go
  - d. Responding to situations that require professional intervention
  - e. Collecting information and data about who needs services, which ones and why.
3. The Team will be coordinated by, and operated, out of SHCHC and Belong Ottawa (and perhaps the Mission; however, this not yet confirmed).
4. The CORE Team and project is intended to be an interim solution while more long-term and sustainable solutions are developed (e.g., affordable and/or supportive housing, treatment centres and services, deconcentration of front-line services, etc.). This intention is included in the grant proposal.
5. The organizational operating name that was submitted is: Sandy Hill Community Health Centre on behalf of all partners of the Sandy Hill Community Liaison Committee (Housed residents, People with Lived and Living Experience, Businesses and Service Providers in the Sandy Hill Community).
6. The SHCLC is written into the grant as an overseer of the project and the service providers executing the project will seek consensus from the SHCLC on any substantive changes or problems encountered.

## Appendix B: CSSC Chair's Speaking Notes for OPSB

Good afternoon,

Thank you for allowing me to speak today. My name is Calla Barnett, I am the Vice-Chair of Action Sandy Hill community association and I co-lead the coordination of the Sandy Hill Community Liaison Committee. I benefit greatly from white privilege. I am also a single, queer, disabled parent.

A pattern of increasing indifference in the response of Ottawa Police Services has become frightening. I fear for my safety. I fear for my child's safety. I fear for the safety of my friends and neighbours. And I fear for the safety of the vulnerable people who are forced to stay in our neighbourhood due to the concentration of services.

I am NOT here to complain about vulnerable people. I am here today because I want to share with you why this community is afraid and to ask, or even beg, for your help.

First, I would like to describe Sandy Hill, one of three distressed neighbourhoods in Ward 12 where we have the greatest concentration of frontline services than anywhere else in all of Canada.

In Sandy Hill, there is a shelter and abstinence-based treatment program; two drop-in programs; two meal programs; a food bank; a Consumption and Treatment Site; and to top it off, a for-profit safe supply clinic and a for-profit safe supply pharmacy all within 700 metres of each other. There are more frontline services, and two more Consumption and Treatments Sites 600 meters from Sandy Hill located in Lowertown.

We also have amazing community police officers, Constable Paul Stam and Constable Sebastien Lemay. They are caring, nuanced and respectful in their approach. But they are only 2 people.

Notwithstanding their incredible community support, the overall lack of appropriate response leaves the residents and vulnerable people of this community unsafe and unprotected. Some examples of this include:

1. A man was passed out in a resident's driveway. A witness saw him robbed. She called 911 to help him and was asked if he was really trespassing or if he had permission to be there. No police or paramedics were sent. He was robbed again. The witness intervened on her own.
2. A resident witnessed a confused man walking into traffic near the busy intersection at King Edward and Rideau St. He would walk in front of cars then back to the sidewalk. She called 911 and they told her it was not an emergency and to call the non-emergency reporting line. She did and stayed to witness the situation and to ensure he was not killed. Police arrived 20 minutes later, put him in their cruiser and dropped him off at Shepherds of Good Hope. There was no way to tell if he was homeless or high. Nobody checked. No paramedics were sent.

A pattern of indifference toward both the residents and vulnerable people in our Ward starts to emerge when I hear these experiences. There are many more. And I am frightened for my whole community because I question whether help will be sent if and when we need it.

## Appendix B: CSSC Chair's Speaking Notes for OPSB

Unfortunately, this pattern extends to some police officers:

1. There were some men drinking in the driveway beside my (former) apartment building on Daly Ave. They were sexually harassing my 20-year-old neighbour, who had forgotten her key. She called 911. Police responded 2 hours later. When they did, they told her sexual harassment isn't a crime, yet it IS criminal harassment.
2. An acquaintance of mine who stayed at the shelter for an extended period was very drunk and lying down in the middle of Daly Ave. between King Edward and Cumberland. My neighbour came to get me to help. There were two NRT police officers addressing loitering complaints because of people outside near the shelter less than a block away. I ran over to them to ask for help. They smirked at me and told me they would come when they were done what they were doing. They did not call for additional support.

I returned to help my neighbour and I tried to get my acquaintance to move while standing in the street to wave vehicles around him. The officers watched this occur. I ran back to the shelter, past the officers, to find my friend who stayed there. I found him and he came immediately to help. My acquaintance was made safe in seconds. The police officers could have helped us do the same thing and gone back to the loitering issue. They just didn't care. They did not check in with us, they simply got on their bikes and rode the other way.

These are just two examples and they are not the only ones that I have experienced myself or heard from residents and vulnerable people. These experiences of misinforming victims of crime, discouragement of reporting and refusal to help are commonplace.

These interactions frighten me because police refused to intervene to save someone's life and prevent a car accident. Because they don't know the criminal code. Because they are willing to leave residents, victims of crime and vulnerable people to fend for themselves. In my own case, it is even more frightening because I cannot run away.

Frankly, a mental health response team would be preferable in some of these cases. But not in all of them. And we don't have such a team in Sandy Hill yet. Until there is one, we need help in all these situations. We need 911 dispatch to treat us well and we need officers with empathy for all victims and perpetrators in this context.

If that takes extra training, then please budget for that training. If that takes more available officers in the area, please budget for it. Please budget for both.

I also understand that we may not have the highest crime rates in the City, but I ask you, if you are not responding quickly – or at all – are unfamiliar with the law and discouraging witnesses or victims from filing reports, how could the statistics reflect what is truly happening? Please start to address these issues for my neighbourhood and my Ward here, today.

Thank you for your time and consideration.