

# *OPS LGBTQ Liaison Committee Survey Results*



**December 2019**  
**Catalyst Research and Communications**

# OPS LGBTQ Liaison Committee 2019 Survey Results

## A. Introduction

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The Ottawa Police Service continues to be committed to providing bias neutral services to the LGBTQ2S+ community members in Ottawa. In the last 30 years, the GLBT Liaison Committee has played a vital role in improving services to the LGBTQ2S+ community in Ottawa.

In 2019, the OPS Liaison Committee took the opportunity to critically reflect on its work and structure in the current context of policing and the LGBTQ2S+ communities. A number of factors prompted this initiative:

- a) The OPS had received feedback from the LGBTQ2S+ community that the Liaison Committee was not ~~been~~ as effective as it had been in the past. This was in part because the context for the LGBTQ2S+ community had changed due to the successful advocacy and work done by the LGBTQ2S+ community.
- b) Capital Pride, over the past few years, raised a number of issues including the importance of addressing issues from an intersectional lens.
- c) A preliminary review of the minutes of the Liaison Committee between 2017 and 2019 and the foundational documents revealed a number of patterns that showed stagnation of the committee.
- d) The new Community Equity Council has established an LGBTQ2S+ committee to address intersectional issues that include sexual orientation and gender fluidity.

To support its reflection, the Liaison Committee undertook a survey of LGBTQ2S+ community members and OPS members. This report provides a summary of the 80 valid responses that were received out of 148 responses to the surveys.

## B. Methodology

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The primary tool for this report was a directed survey to two audiences:

- a) Service organizations that serve the LGBTQ2S+ community. (The list of organizations sent the survey is in Appendix A.)
- b) Members of the OPS who are part of or allies of the LGBTQ2S+ community (These individuals were solicited through an e-mail invite to the OPS members with a link to the survey.)

The survey opened on February 20<sup>th</sup>, 2019 and closed on April 8<sup>th</sup>, 2019.. There were 148 surveys received. Because of methodological challenges, only 80 surveys were considered valid.

The primary Identity of the 80 survey respondents was:

- 61 LGBTQ2S+ community members
- 19 police

Respondents were also given the opportunity to identify themselves beyond their primary identity. The survey reflects a good cross section of the community as shown in the table below.

	<b>Community Member responses “All identities that are relevant to you”</b>	<b>OPS Members responses “All identities that are relevant to you”</b>
a) A member of the LGBTQ2S+ community	34	8
b) A member of an LGBTQ2S+ organization	28	3
c) A member of the Ottawa Police Services	0	13
d) A member of a social service organization serving the LGBTQ2S+ community	24	3
e) A member of a health organization serving the LGBTQ2S+ community	15	1
f) Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Youth</li> <li>Congregation of United Church of Canada</li> <li>Married to a member of a local police service (not OPS)</li> <li>City of Ottawa employee</li> <li>A member of a visible minority.</li> <li>Member, Board of Directors, Ten Oaks Project (2017-18)... (provided details of their bibliography that could be self-identifying)</li> <li>Lesbian therapist serving the LGBT community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Heterosexual</li> </ul>

### **Geographical scope of influence**

People were also asked what was the scope of the organization that they were part of:

<b>Answer Choices</b>	<b>Responses</b>
a) Ottawa based	33
b) Provincial	3
c) National	4
d) Other (please specify)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>World Wide</li> <li>Regional</li> </ul>

## **Methodological Challenges**

There were a number of methodological challenges:

- a) 67 identified as police in the survey of which 48 only answered the one question – identity – so their survey was not valid.
- b) There was an initial problem with Question #3 which had multiple choices but only allowed respondents to select one choice. It was corrected after the first 7 surveys. The comments of the first 7 were reflected in the tabulations.
- c) There were concerns that there was no demographic information asked. The methodology was not soliciting input from individual members of the LBTS2+ community but from representatives from organizations and the Ottawa Police Services. The question about multiple identities was intended to recognize multiple social identity points.

## **C. What is Ottawa Police Services Doing Well?**

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### **Community Responses**

The most frequently mentioned action that the OPS is currently doing well was the work to engage with the community, through dialogue, community consultations, surveys, listening to community members, and acting with transparency and openness (19 comments), including having the Liaison Committee (8 of the 19 comments), either in its current form or some new mechanism. One comment also suggested changing the acronym of the committee, presumably to reflect the more inclusive and more current 2SLGBTQ+ designation. Having senior officials at the table was mentioned as a positive.

OPS visibility in the community was also highlighted (5 comments), including attending community events, community policing and community outreach.

The range of opinions in the LBGTQ2S+ community about police participation in the Pride Parade was reflected in the survey responses. Some commented that it was positive to see uniformed officers at the Parade, while others appreciated OPS for respecting the wishes of the community by not participating in the Parade.

“They appear, or give the impression, of neutrality to myself as a member of the LBGTQ... community. That being said I’m a white homosexual male and recognize my privilege over other segments of the same LBGTQ... community.”

Other comments included:

- Sensitivity training by members of the LBGTQ2S+ community, (3 comments),
- Treating the LBGTQ2S+ community no differently than others (3 comments),
- Responding quickly to issues raised regarding urgent safety issues.

## **OPS responses**

OPS members also highlighted community engagement and relationship-building most often as something OPS is doing well (5 comments out of the 12 OPS members who answered this question). Two responses mentioned training to keep members informed and educated, and two mentioned treating LGBTQ2S+ individuals like everyone else.

One person suggested that, although members in uniform are not in the Parade, OPS should still have the car with the rainbow decal to show support.

There were a few comments from the OPS that suggest that there needs to be an increase in bias neutral policing. (“OPS provides too much accommodation to the LGBTQ2S+ community” and “there should be no ‘special treatment’ for anyone.”]

## **D. What Needs to Change and Improve?**

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### **Community responses**

The top two areas for change from the community perspective were training and intersectional understanding.

- a. OPS needs to integrate an understanding of intersectionality into their work, and realize the experience of discrimination is compounded for LGBTQ2S+ members who are racialized or Indigenous or face other forms of marginalization.

“Handle media around race-based violence more transparently and thoughtfully, and recognize that the most vulnerable LGBTQ2S+ communities overlap with other areas of marginalization. If you treat people of colour in the city poorly, and sex workers poorly, queer people will not trust you either.”

- b. More dedicated, mandatory and comprehensive training is needed, so that OPS members better understand the realities of the LGBTQ2S+ community, the history of the negative relationship with police, intersectional analysis, trauma, de-escalation and using proper terminology. This needs to address all levels of the OPS from the front lines to the most senior officers.
- c. Improve community engagement and collaboration with LGBTQ2S+ organizations (4 comments) and greater visibility in the community, including through attending community functions and updating community organizations on serious cases.
- d. Visibility of the OPS in the Community: Community policing, more foot and bike patrols. Be aware that having uniformed officers at community events deters some people from participating.

“If we only see police officers in conflict or crisis situations then we lose the opportunity to see positive interactions. This, coupled with media emphasis on negative interactions, even those in other cities, creates the myth that all police are unethical or biased against LGBTQ2+ and/or visible minorities.”

- e. OPS member participation in the Pride Parade had no consensus. There were a wide range of suggestions from removing uniformed officers from the Parade to proposing the OPS needs to sit down with Pride organizers and sort out the difficulties.
- f. Visibility of LGBTQ2S+ in the OPS: More police officers who publically identify as members of the LGBTQ2S+, recruit more LGBTQ2S+ officers, including civilian positions within OPS staffed with people from LGBTQ community for liaison purposes.

### **OPS responses**

The key priorities for OPS respondents were outreach, community involvement and visibility, including actively seeking community feedback, attending more community events (including events that are not primarily LGBTQ2S+ events), and wearing uniforms to more events.

“Engage in more outreach to the community. OPS officers volunteer for youth and community centres all over the city, and play basketball and hockey and do the flotilla with at-risk and minority populations of all stripes... except LGBT. The "Mere Exposure Effect" is the only confirmed way of reducing bias - both of OPS members against the LGBT community and also of LGBT youth fears against the police”

There was recognition of the current context and the need to move away from a “we/they” attitude. The need for training and a learning environment in the OPS would provide members who do not have personal LGBTQ2S+ experience an opportunity to safely ask questions and learn.

A few comments suggest the need to build knowledge and bias neutral approaches in OPS when working with the LGBTQ2S+ community. Those comments suggested that hate crimes should not be a separate category and that members be encouraged to not work at the Pride Parade.

## **E. What are the Most Pressing Issues to Address?**

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The question being asked was “What are the most pressing issues that the Ottawa Police Services needs to continue to work with the LGBTQ2S+ community to address?” The responses are different depending on whether it is the community or OPS perspective.

	<b>Community Priorities</b>	<b>OPS Priorities</b>
1.	Responding to hate crimes/incidents.	Building relationships.
2.	Having an intersectional approach to the responses	Open OPS organizational culture.
3.	Outreach and engagement	Outreach and engagement
4.	Training for OPS members	
5.	Improve service delivery	

6.	Shift the OPS organizational culture	
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### **Community Priorities**

1. The top two priorities for the community were equal. Community members want police to take hate crimes/incidents more seriously and to help ensure safety for all LGBTQ2S+ people at home, at work, in their neighbourhoods, and in the city at large. Part of this is taking complaints seriously and more actively investigating cases of missing and murdered members of the LGBTQ2S+ community.
2. The understanding of OPS members about the intersection of different experiences of hate, bias and discrimination is essential to creating safety for LGBTQ2S+ residents of Ottawa. There is particular concern about the safety of racialized members of the community, trans people and those living in precarious situations, such as street-involved youth or sex workers. There is also an intersectional dynamic among trauma, mental health and being LGBTQ2S+ that results in discriminatory practices in our society. OPS must recognize that LGBTQ2S+ people have additional vulnerabilities that need to be taken into account.

“There is a lack of confidence in general with OPS that when responding to a non-violent situation with a community member in distress, especially a racialized person in distress, that this would not lead the police to escalate the situation.”

3. Outreach and engagement were often mentioned. OPS was encouraged to let the community know what actions they are taking, so that community members can support them. Trust, learning and listening take time, and a persistent ongoing commitment is needed. There were a number of suggestions including: more non-uniformed officers at community events and resolving the question of the role of police participants in the Pride Parade.
4. The training of OPS members, including on intersectionality and LGBTQ2S+ cultural competence, was identified as important. In particular, two respondents addressed the need for understanding the historical wrongs and longstanding homophobia that have contributed so significantly to the current mistrust of police.
5. Improve service delivery including not assuming gender, and address mis-gendering in reports, better follow up for victims and recognizing LGBTQ2S+ partner assault.
6. Organizational culture of policing needs to be addressed, as not all the responsibility can be placed on individual officers.

“Although I support many police on an individual level, the system is flawed and it is therefore the system and culture of policing itself that needs to be addressed.”

## OPS responses

The most pressing issues identified by OPS members who answered this question were:

1. Building bridges and building trust.
2. Ensuring OPS is open, transparent and safe.
3. Continuing outreach and community involvement

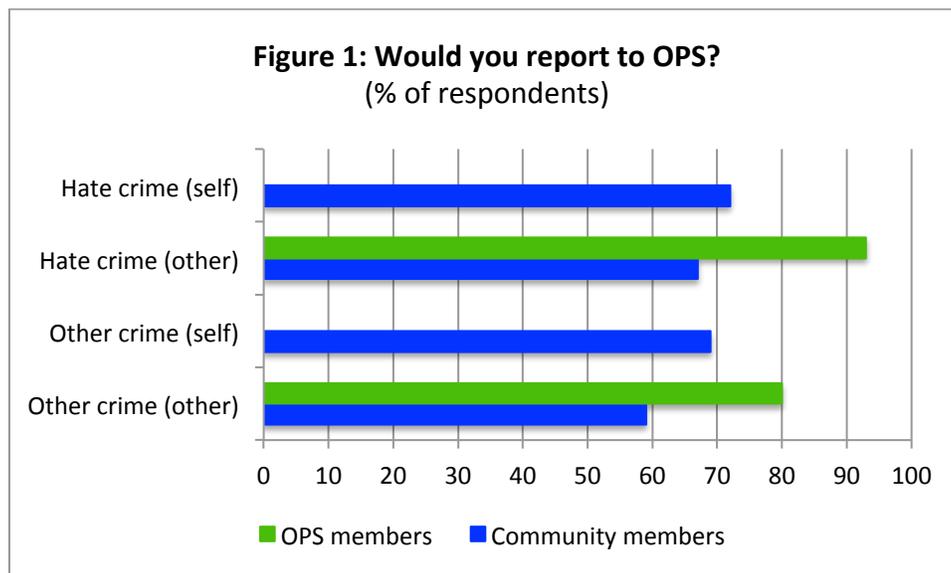
As with previous questions, there were also comments that expressed concerns that too much effort and attention was being devoted to addressing the needs of the LGBTQ2S+ community, or that the problems in the relationship lie with the community (e.g. the most pressing problem is “Pride’s hatred of police officers.”)

“We are not living in Saudi Arabia and the persecution of LGBTQ2S+ communities by agents of the state does not exist.”

## F. Would you Report a Crime to OPS?

A majority of both community members and OPS members who responded to this question would report a hate crime or other crime against a member of the LGBTQ2S+ community to the OPS.

As Figure 1 shows, 93% of OPS members would report a hate crime against another person and 80% would report another crime against a member of the LGBTQ2S+ community. No OPS members indicated they would report if they were the victim of the hate crime or other crime as an LGBTRQ2S+ person, although 8 OPS respondents identified themselves as members of the LGBTQ2S+ community.



In contrast, fewer community members would report a hate crime against themselves (72%) or others (67%) or another type of crime against themselves (69%) or another person who is a member of the LGBTQ community (59%). There were a few community responses that felt that they would “never report to the OPS” because of a lack of safety.

There were four main reasons that community members would not report a crime to the police.

- 1) OPS would likely not consider the act a hate crime. This is likely true because there are severe restrictions on what is defined as a hate crime. However the OPS could understand the crime as hate motivated and respond both to the victim and community in that context.
- 2) OPS would likely treat the victim as if they deserved it. There is a belief that some members of the OPS are biased in their service delivery approach. People offered a number of specific situations, however not all of them pertained to the OPS and were about other police forces in Canada or throughout the world.
- 3) OPS would not be considerate of the circumstances of the person (e.g. whether or not they are out), and so the person would not feel safe. This related to the level and quality of training that OPS members are perceived to be receiving. There is a sense that the training leads to a monolithic response to the LGBTQ2S+ community instead of seeing each person as an individual. The key practice for OPS then becomes about establishing a relationship with each individual where assumptions are not attributed.
- 4) Depending on the severity of the crime. Sadly there are some forms of behaviour that have been defined as inevitable but not acceptable (e.g. verbal abuse directed at LGBTQ2S+ community members). There is little desire to report the multiple micro aggressions that make community members feel vulnerable.

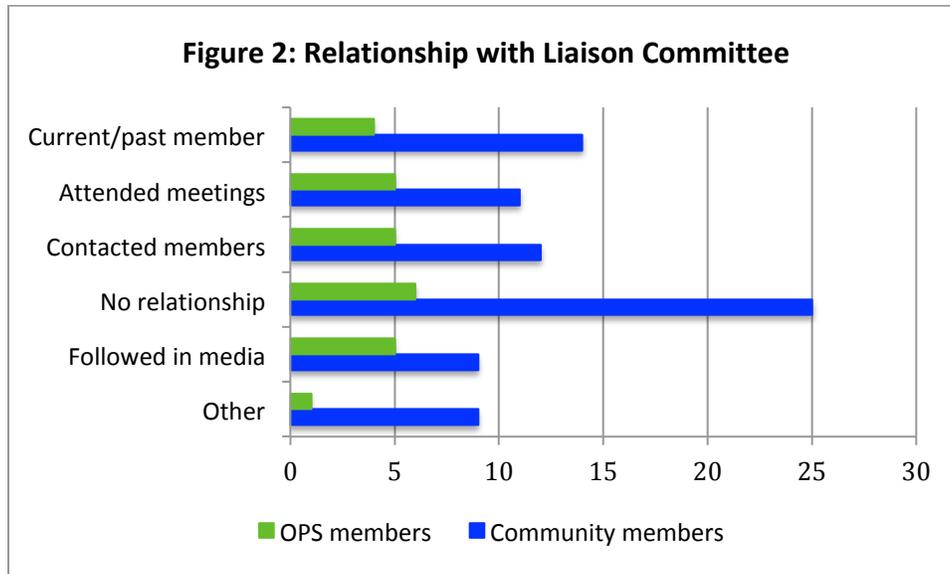
“We did report a LGBTQ2S-related crime and were told while the action in question (vandalism) was a crime it was not considered a hate crime. This was confusing to us as well as the patrol constable who didn't understand how the targeted violence was NOT a hate crime.”

## **G. The OPS Liaison Committee**

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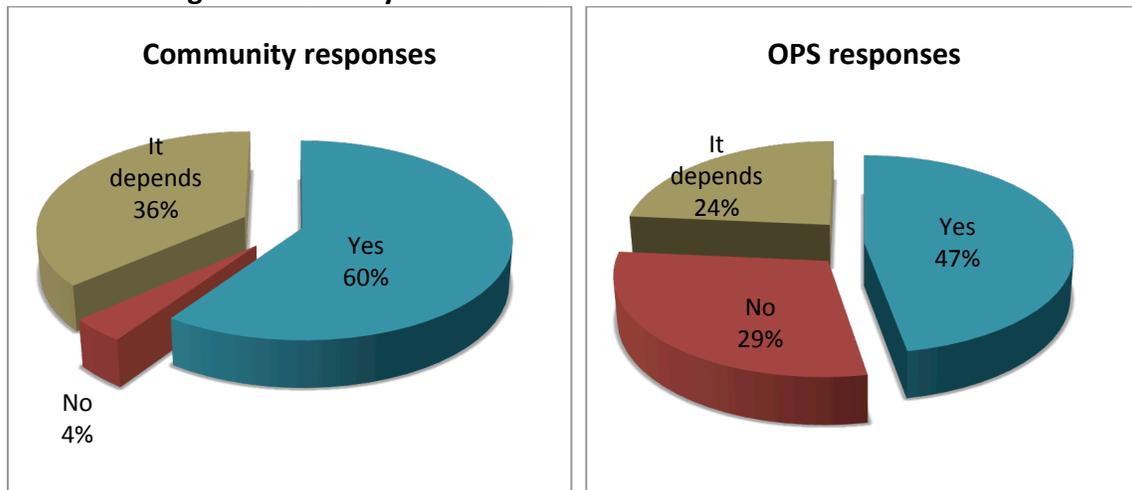
### **Contact with the Committee**

Of the people who responded to the survey, 39% had never had any relationship with the Liaison Committee. The others included current and former members of the Committee, individuals who had presented to or attended a meeting, and people who had followed the Committee's work through community or social media. (See Figure 2.) One community member commented that they had consciously decided to not participate with the Liaison Committee because they did not feel the Committee had the capacity to listen to the community to a meaningful level.



The survey asked if people would contact the Liaison Committee if they had an issue with the OPS that involved an LGBTQ2S+ community member, and the responses are summarized in Figure 3 below. A slight majority of community members would do so, although only 47% of OPS members.

**Figure 3: Would you contact Liaison Committee with an issue?**



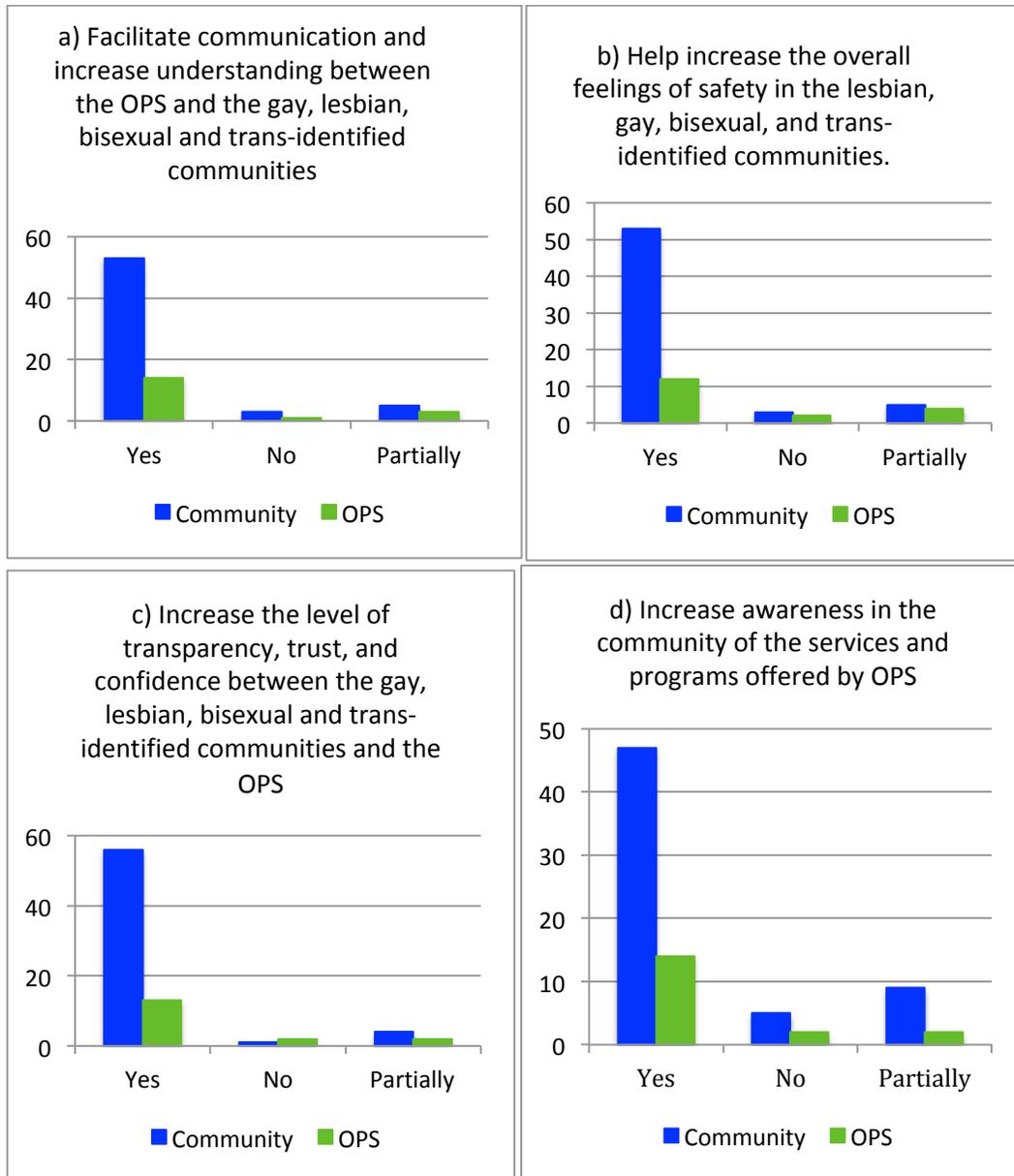
Those inside OPS indicated they would likely try to address the issue through internal police processes, through professional standards or through the OIPRD (Office of the Independent Police Review Director).

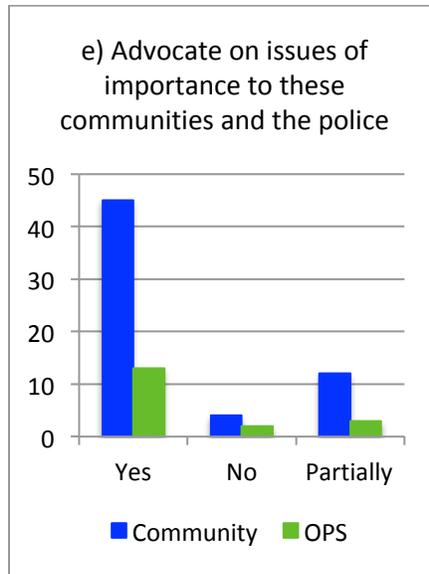
Community members who did not say “yes” indicated they were not confident that contacting the Liaison Committee would lead to addressing the issue. There were a number of community members who were not aware of the Committee.

## Mandate of the Committee

The survey listed the five elements of the mandate of the Liaison Committee and asked if those were still relevant for the LGBTQ2S+ community in Ottawa. The results are summarized in the charts below.

Overall, both community members and OPS members feel that all five parts of the mandate are still relevant.





## H. Moving Forward

Respondents were asked their views on four possible options for moving forward, and the results are summarized in the table below.

	OPS	Community
a) The current Liaison Committee be disbanded. A new committee be developed that reflects the current context and needs.	3	4
b) Keep the current Liaison Committee and make operational improvements.	5	17
c) The current Liaison Committee be disbanded. LGBTQ2S+ community concerns with the OPS would be directed to the new Community Equity Council LGBTQ2S+ intersectional committee.	4	3
d) Create a new City wide committee. The issues are systemic and need to be dealt with in a broader forum. OPS would advocate at the City of Ottawa to establish a City-wide committee to address LGBTQ2S+ community needs (similar to the City of Ottawa Aboriginal Working Committee which includes community organizations and key City services including: OPS, Ottawa Public Health, School Boards and City department leads.)	6	30
No response	1	7

Overall, the strongest support was for a city-wide committee to respond to the systemic issues that the LGBTQ2S+ community continues to face. Whatever structure is established needs to ensure an intersectional approach that recognizes the unique vulnerabilities of some LGBTQ2S+ community members and specifically racialized, indigenous and youth members, a renewed outreach and engagement approach to the LGBTQ2S+ community, and a better response to hate incidents;

## Appendix A

### LGBTQ2+ Community Resources List

Organization
1. AIDS Committee of Ottawa
2. Algonquin Pride
3. Alter Heros
4. Around the Rainbow (Family Services Ottawa)
5. Bruce House
6. Burke-Roberston LLP
7. Camp Ten Oaks
8. The Velvet Studio
9. Capital Pride
10. Capital Rainbow Refuge
11. Carleton University Gender & Sexuality Resource Centre
12. Canadian Centre for Gender and Sexual Diversity
13. Centretown Community Health Centre
14. CHEO – YouthNet
15. Children’s Aid Society of Ottawa
16. Connect Youth Inc.
17. Cornerstone Housing for Women
18. Dr. M. Lawson
19. Egale
20. FrancoQueer
21. Gai Ecoute (Interligne)
22. Gay Men’s Sexual Health Alliance of Ontario
23. Gay Ottawa Volleyball
24. Gay Ottawa Volleyball League

25. Gay Zone Gaie
26. Gender Independent Children and Trans Youth Support Group (Family Services Ottawa)
27. Gender Mosaic
28. GLBT Youth Conselor at Centretown CHC
29. In Harmony: A women's chorus
30. Jeunesse IDEM
31. Kind (PTS Ottawa)
32. La Federation de la jeunesse franco-ontarienne
33. Le BRAS
34. Living Well Counselling in Kilaloe
35. MAX Ottawa
36. OCASI Positive Spaces Initiative (PSI)
37. Older Wiser Lesbians (OWL)
38. Ontario Aboriginal HIV/AIDS Strategy
39. Open Doors for Children and Youth 40. Smith Falls
41. Open Doors for Children and Youth Carleton Place
42. Open Doors for Children and Youth Perth Office
44. Ottawa Carleton District School Board - Inclusive Safe and Caring Schools Initiative
45. Ottawa Date Squares
46. Ottawa Frontrunners
47. Ottawa-Gatineau Capitals Hockey
48. Ottawa Gay Men's Chorus
49. Ottawa Geek Market
50. Ottawa Knights
51. Ottawa's LGBTQ Softball League
52. Ottawa Out Golfing Group
53. Ottawa Senior Pride Network

54. Ottawa Wolves Rugby Football Club
55. Pembroke Regional Hospital – Community Mental Health Program
56. PFLAG Carleton Place and Lanark Country
57. PFLAG Ottawa
58. Pheonix Centre for Children and Families
59. Pinecrest-Queensway CHC
60. Planned Parenthood Ottawa
61. PPO – Insite Theatre
62. Prostitutes of Ottawa/Gatineau Work, Educate, and Resist – POWER
63. PTS – Gender Quest
64. QPOC-IT
65. Queering613
66. Rainbow Rockers Curling League
67. Rainbow Write – Through Jer’s Vision and Planned Parenthood Ottawa
68. Rainbow Health Ontario
69. Rideau Speedeaus
70. Robbie Dean Family Counselling Centre
71. Seaway Valley CHC
72. Support and Education for Trans Youth (SAEFTY)
73. The Outlaws
74. The Snowy Owl AIDS Foundation
75. Tone Cluster
76. TooToo Theatre
77. Trans Health Information Ottawa
78. Trans Lifeline
79. University of Ottawa Pride Centre Fierté
80. Valoris Centre for Children and Adults of Prescott-Russell
81. Wabano Centre for Aboriginal Health

82. Women's Sexual Assault Centre of Ottawa
83. YOUNCAN
84. Youthline
85. YSB – Counselling Intake & Mental Health Walk-in
86. YSB – Spectrum
87. YSB – Rainbow Youth Advisory
88. YSB – Youth Crisis Line 24/7