



# Community Equity Council

## Media Release

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April 29<sup>th</sup>, 2020

The Ottawa Police Service Community Equity Council received information on Monday, April 27<sup>th</sup> that two memes were circulated within the Ottawa Police Services and into the broader Ottawa community. One meme consisted of a caption and photographs of current and former members of the Ottawa Police Service including one member that tragically committed suicide. The meme was demeaning and racist.

Our first thoughts went to the Ottawa police members that were represented in this meme. At a time where the Ottawa community is asking police members to go to work and maintain their responsibilities for our collective safety, they have colleagues that are showing them a racism that is unacceptable in our world today. We have been informed that the OPS have provided immediate support to those members and their families.

Our thoughts were also with the vast majority of OPS members that would consider this meme to be a violation of their values and contrary to the way they conduct themselves everyday serving the citizens of City of Ottawa. This action was truly an insult to the entire Ottawa Police Services. It demonstrates intolerance towards racialized communities and insensitivity towards OPS members.

Systemic racism and everyday micro-aggressions are part of everyday life for some members of our community. There are many community members during this time of COVID-19 who are already experiencing a sense of vulnerability, particularly members of Indigenous, Faith based and racialized communities. This incident provides further evidence for some community members, who have lost faith in the OPS as a public institution, that the OPS will not keep them safe and respect them. And more significantly it does harm to building relationships between the OPS and the community.

Chief Peter Sloly and his leadership team have initiated an investigation into this incident. We understand that an investigation may never determine who initiated this meme or who chose to circulate it, however we are committed to finding out if and why this type of behavior seems acceptable to some and tolerated by others.

The CEC community members strongly support the Ottawa Police Services in its multiple initiatives to address an organizational culture that condemns any form of racism as well as workplace bullying. We are committed to working with the OPS on these issues. We know that these actions undermine the relationships amongst OPS members and between the OPS and the community.

Our esteemed community co-chairs, Sahada Alolo and Gérard Etienne have called on us to take this as an opportunity to get better as a collective community. If there is any place, mindset or environment in the Ottawa Police Service that propagates, tolerates, or ignores this type of behavior, it needs be eradicated. The community members of the CEC have taken on the responsibility to work with and ensure the OPS becomes a more inclusive and equitable organization. We want to start with a fundamental marker – we will show mutual respect, understanding and acceptance for each other and call out any behavior that undermines those basic principles.