



From: Lauren Touchant, President of the Vanier Community Association
To: Councillor El-Chantiry, Chair of Ottawa Police Services Board
Mayor Watson, City of Ottawa
Cc': Councillor Fleury, Ward 12

Re: Recent decisions about OPS Board

Dear Chair El-Chantiry,

The Vanier Community Association is deeply concerned by your decision to cancel the February 28th Police Services Board meeting and replace it with a special meeting closed to public delegations. Your decision prevents any constructive discussions about past decisions and shocking events that took place during the Convoy occupation of our downtown, and means that citizens will have to wait until March 28th to have their voices heard. Your decision has three significant implications:

1. Democratic implications: Your decision to prohibit community participation and to cancel the February 28th meeting will continue to erode Ottawa residents' trust in their political institutions, and further weaken municipal democratic institutions. Ottawa City Council's interference with the operations of the independent OPS board, during the height of our City's biggest crisis in decades, is already cause for concern. This move represents, in effect, a win for core organizers of the Freedom Convoy, whose initial goal was to undermine and overthrow our democratic institutions.
2. Security implications: The threat is not over. Convoy participants continue to gather around the city, exploring opportunities to execute their disruptive agenda. We learned from the occupation that our critical infrastructure is extremely vulnerable, and that the City was unable to respond adequately to the threat. Your decision to cancel this meeting and not organize more meetings in a near future is placing the Ottawa community in a vulnerable situation. One of the key responsibilities of the OPS Board is to determine the objectives and priorities for police services. Short-term planning is required to mitigate any retaliation or further actions from the Freedom Convoy once the Emergencies Act is revoked or ends in about 3 weeks. Therefore, OPS Board must urgently draw on the lessons from over three weeks

of occupation to better prepare and respond if the Freedom Convoy was to proceed with further actions in Ottawa. Public input in this process is critical.

3. Societal implications: Ottawa residents, particularly residents from Centretown but certainly from those areas surrounding the core including our Ward, need to heal. Successful healing is conditional to societal understanding of the systemic failures that led to Ottawa residents' insecurity. It also requires them to understand the decisions made by elected officials and key agencies (e.g., OPS, By-Laws) that contributed to this debacle. This will only be achievable if the conditions for transparency and accountability within our political institutions are met.

We urge you to: 1) reconsider your decision to cancel the February 28th, 2022 meeting; 2) alternatively, to allow public participation at the special OPS Board meeting now scheduled for tomorrow, 3/ to organize regular OPS Board meetings going forward, while there is still a threat in the region.

Sincerely,

Lauren Touchant