

# STRATFORD POLICE SERVICE BOARD

A meeting of the Stratford Police Service Board was held on the 18th day of February 2026 at 4:30 p.m., Stratford Rotary Complex – Mansbridge Rm., 353 McCarthy Road W., Stratford ON

**PRESENT:** Martin Ritsma – Chair, Harjinder Nijjar, Dan Mathieson, Lisa Wilde, Travis Blum, Chief Greg Skinner, Inspector Mark Taylor, Acting Deputy Chief Jason Clarke, Sergeant Rob McMillan – Police Association, Constable Colby Bond, Constable Katie Brine, Constable Olivia Chartrand, Constable Garrett James, Hank Zehr – Zone 5 Police Service Advisor, Councillor Rob Edney – Town of St. Marys, members of the public, members of the media, Casey Riehl – Executive Assistant

## MINUTES

### 1. Call to order

Martin Ritsma, Chair, called the meeting to order at 4:30 p.m.

### 2. Reading of the Land Acknowledgement and Moment of Silent Reflection

Martin Ritsma read the Land Acknowledgement and asked for a moment of silent reflection.

### 3. Reading of the Respectful Conduct Statement

Martin Ritsma read the Respectful Conduct Statement.

### 4. Adoption of the February 18, 2026 Agenda and Addition of Agenda Items

**Motion by** Lisa Wilde | Travis Blum,

**THAT the agenda for the regular meeting of February 18, 2026, be adopted as presented with the addition of Item 14.2 – OAPSB Spring Conference Sponsorship. Carried**

### 5. Declarations of Pecuniary Interest and the General Nature Thereof

None declared.

### 6. Adoption of the Minutes from the Regular Meeting of January 21, 2026.

**Motion by** Dan Mathieson | Harjinder Nijjar

**THAT the minutes of the regular meeting of January 21, 2026, be adopted as printed. Carried**

## **7. Presentations/Delegations**

### **7.1 Introduction of New Constables**

Acting Deputy Chief Jason Clarke introduced the four newest constables who have graduated from OPC in December to the Board. The constables have started working with SPS and training with their coach officers.

- Colby Bond – Elmira, ON is currently assigned to A Platoon working with coach officer Constable Mac Nichol;
- Katie Brine – St. Marys, ON is currently assigned to D Platoon working with coach officer Constable Brittany Bilyea;
- Olivia Chartrand – Stratford, ON is currently assigned to B Platoon working with coach officer Constable Erica Babb;
- Garrett James – Stratford, ON is currently assigned to C Platoon working with coach officer Constable Brent Poppe.

Acting Deputy Chief Clarke, on behalf of the Service and the Police Service Board officially welcomed the new constables.

Olivia Chartrand thanked everyone present and her experience has been great, members of the SPS have been very welcoming and she is happy to be working for such a great Service. They have learned a lot in their short period of time and everyone has been very supportive.

Chief Skinner stated that it has been difficult to recruit good candidates over the last few years and the Chief is thrilled that Stratford has such a caliber of candidates that have wanted to stay local and give back to their community. These four constables are exemplary candidates and he could not be happier with their level of knowledge, skills and abilities that they are bringing to the Service. He welcomed them all to the SPC and he appreciates them being here.

## **8. Business Arising from Previous Minutes**

### **8.1 Police Station Update**

Acting Deputy Chief Clarke reported that RPL Architects is finalizing the feasibility study and should have it completed later this week. He is anticipating he will be able to share the report with the City and Board soon.

## 8.2 Update on Stratford Mall Visibility & Crime Prevention Strategy

As requested at the last PSB meeting, Chief Skinner shared some statistics on what is happening in and around the Stratford Mall over the last 3 years:

- 2023 – 129 calls for service
- 2024 – 161 calls for service
- 2025 – 183 calls for service
- For a total of 473 over the last three years
- 3% of the calls to the mall were for violent crimes (this includes the four robberies at the jewelry store);
- Shoplifting, assaults and alarms were the most frequent calls responded to;
- All of the robberies happened between 4-9 p.m., otherwise there is not a specific time of the day that stands out as a higher call time;
- On a monthly basis, February and November are the busiest months, followed by October and August;
- The highest number of calls that were responded to in a month has been 49

They are looking at crime prevention by focusing on visibility and environmental design to try and support the businesses that are at the mall and make it safe for the patrons that use the mall.

Martin Ritsma stated that at the last meeting with the mall owners, they are appreciative of the increased presence of police at the mall. Auxiliary and Special Constables are also visiting the mall as part of patrolling. There will be further discussion regarding a possible police kiosk at the mall.

Dan Mathieson inquired if when the Chief moves this plan forward, could he broaden the strategy and look at the downtown core and the mall, two commercial nodes, and how they could be balanced off? The Chief agreed that this would be a good idea.

## 9. Correspondence Received

None noted.

## 10. Chairs Report

### 10.1 Strategic Plan Initiative

Martin Ritsma stated that the online survey was extended one week to February 17, 2026. The consultants are happy with the response from all stakeholders. There have been some inquiries if the survey met AODA standards and Mayor Ritsma stated that he confirmed it was compliant.

Travis Blum inquired if there has been a timeline presented of when the Board can expect to see the results of the survey and the completion of the strategic plan. Martin Ritsma will confirm with Consilium on dates.

Sergeant McMillan stated that the membership was encouraged to participate in the survey and feels that at least 75% of the members participated.

## **11. Governance Report**

None noted.

## **12. Receipt of Monthly Statistical Reports (January 2026)**

### **12.1 Statistical Reports for Stratford, St. Marys and Perth South (January 2026)**

Board Members have been provided the January 2026 statistical reports for Stratford, St. Marys and Perth South. Inspector Taylor provided the following summary and review:

The Stratford Police Service experienced an overall increase in calls for service across all three policing jurisdictions—Stratford, St. Marys, and Perth South—during January 2026 when compared to January 2025. A significant contributing factor to these increases was the poor weather conditions experienced throughout the month, resulting in increased traffic-related occurrences and demands for service.

### **Stratford**

- 1,588 calls for service in January 2026, compared to 1,440 in January 2025.
- 105 MVCs recorded, up from 78 in January 2025.
- The increase is attributed primarily to adverse weather conditions causing hazardous road environments.
- 28 theft-of-property occurrences, compared to 1 in January 2025.
- Three individuals have been arrested and are believed to be responsible for the majority of these incidents.
- Of the 28 occurrences, seven were linked to a single individual, all occurring on January 13th.
- 18 more Provincial Offence Notices (PONs) issued.
- 90 additional charges laid compared to January 2025.
- Increased traffic stops and officer visibility contributed to the rise.

### **St. Marys**

- 183 calls for service in January 2026, compared to 137 in January 2025.
- 13 MVCs, up from 8 the previous year.
- The rise is consistent with the region-wide impact of poor weather conditions on driving safety.
- 15 more traffic tickets issued year over year.
- 24 additional charges laid due to increased officer-initiated activity.

### **Perth South**

- 143 calls for service in January 2026, an increase from 130 in January 2025.
- 4 more MVCs than January 2025, attributed to winter road conditions.
- 42 additional charges laid.
- 13 Provincial Offence Notices issued.
- Increased MVCs and proactive patrol activity contributed to the overall increase in calls for service.

Across all jurisdictions, the Stratford Police Service observed a clear and consistent increase in calls for service during January 2026. The most significant factors influencing this rise were:

- Severe and prolonged poor weather conditions, leading to higher numbers of MVCs and traffic-related calls;
- Increased proactive patrols, resulting in more Provincial Offence Notices and charges;
- A notable spike in theft occurrences in Stratford, with suspects identified and arrests made.

The Service continues to monitor trends closely and adjust deployment strategies to ensure effective response to community needs.

**MOTION by** Dan Mathieson | Harjinder Nijjar

**That the monthly statistical reports for January 2026 be approved as presented. Carried**

#### 12.2 November & December 2025 Crime Stoppers Reports

Chief Skinner reviewed the latest reports from November and December 2025:

- (3) Tips in November and (6) tips in December

- (2) follow-ups in November and (2) in December
- No charges were laid or arrests made
- There were (139) total tips received in 2025, (117) of those tips resulted in follow-ups;
- There were (9) arrests made, (1) case cleared and (1) case approved for a reward in 2025;
- There were (4) weapons recovered last year;
- \$3,200.00 in property recovered, \$1,500.00 in cash recovered and \$1,000.00 worth of drugs recovered in 2025

**MOTION by** Lisa Wilde | Travis Blum

**That the monthly Crime Stoppers reports for November and December 2025 be approved as presented. Carried**

### 13. Chief's Report

#### 13.1 Financial Reports – January 2026

Board members received the January 2026 financial reports, Chief Skinner reviewed the following information:

- As of January 31, 2026 the Services would expect to have spent approximately 8.3% of the annual budget, to date the Service has only spent 3.4% or the equivalent of \$560,000.00. This is misleading due to the grant reconciliations that are weighted to the provincial governments fourth fiscal quarter, which is the SPS first quarter. Much of the SPS grant reconciliations come from the 3<sup>rd</sup> round of NG-911 grants;
- The average budget per month is \$1.2 million per month and he would expect the actual expenditures in February to reflect that number;

Travis Blum inquired about the Contractor's budget line item and the increase in the numbers. Chief Skinner explained that this line is for the IT contracts and most of this money is recuperated through the NG-911 grant. It eventually offsets this line item; however it does not appear clear in the initial financials.

**MOTION by** Dan Mathieson | Harjinder Nijjar

**That the monthly accounts as of January 31, 2026, be approved as presented. Carried**

#### 13.2 Public Complaints

Chief Skinner reported that there were no public complaints in the month of January received from the Law Enforcement Complaints Agency (LECA) against SPS officers.

There was one outstanding complaint from 2025 where an informal resolution was reached during the investigation and LECA has signed off on the complaint being closed.

## **14. New Business**

### **14.1 Assault Style Firearms Compensation Program**

Acting Deputy Chief Clarke provided a brief description about the recent assault style firearms compensation program.

Canada's federal "gun buyback" is designed to compensate eligible owners for assault-style firearms prohibited federally since May 1, 2020 (the prohibited list has expanded since then).

Key operational points most relevant to Police Services / Boards:

- This program applies to prohibited "assault-style" firearms;
- Participation is Voluntary - Owners may choose to participate for compensation by the end of March 2026 but must still come into compliance (dispose/deactivate) by the end of the amnesty;
- Amnesty end date: The federal program materials state the amnesty ends October 30, 2026;
- Collection model: After declaration/approval, collection is intended to be via RCMP, "police of jurisdiction," or mobile collection units.

While participation to obtain compensation through the program is voluntary, compliance with the law is not. All owners who do not participate in the program must dispose of or permanently deactivate their prohibited firearms and devices before the amnesty period ends on October 30, 2026. Owners in possession of a prohibited firearm or device following this date will be non-compliant with legislation and could face some criminal liability.

As of this date, Acting Deputy Chief Clarke is not aware of any police service in Ontario who has opted into the program. Our policing partners remain consistent on being focused on gun violence and prioritizing operational resources toward core public safety and policing functions.

The OAPC states that this program is not a policing or public safety priority in Ontario. The OACP cannot endorse the program and will not facilitate outreach to municipal or Indigenous police services. The Ontario government has stated it will not support the program, and participation will ultimately be up to each local police service and its Police Service Board.

Data shows there are (54) clients in the Stratford area with a total of (83) of these types of firearms.

**Motion by** Dan Mathieson | Harjinder Nijjar

**THAT the Stratford Police Service Board supports the Stratford Police Service not actively participating in the administration or delivery of the federal ASFCP (Assault Style Firearm Compensation Program) prioritizing operational resources toward frontline policing responsibilities, including criminal use of and illegal firearms. The Stratford Police Service will continue to accept voluntary surrender of firearms, consistent with established service practice and public safety priorities. Carried**

**Motion by** Dan Mathieson | Travis Blum

**THAT the Stratford Police Service Board sends a recommendation to the OAPSB that they collectively petition the Federal Government to clarify many of the aspects of the Assault Style Firearm Compensation Program as it relates to local Police Services in the Province of Ontario. Carried**

14.2 OAPSB Spring Conference Sponsorship

**Motion by** Harjinder Nijjar | Travis Blum

**THAT the Stratford Police Service Board sponsor the Ontario Association of Police Service Boards Annual Spring Conference in the amount of \$500.00. Carried**

## 15. Consent Items

15.1 Taxi License Approvals

**Motion by** Lisa Wilde | Harjinder Nijjar

**THAT on the recommendation of the Chief of Police, the Stratford Police Service Board approves Rodney Barrington (City Cab Inc.) and Rosemary Morris (Aunt Gail's Taxi) for taxi licenses. Carried.**

15.2 New Stuffed Dusty's

Chief Skinner brought one of the small stuffed toy Dusty's that the Service has recently received. The Optimist Club has generously provided the Service money to fund the first run of the stuffed Dusty's. They can be

purchased, but they are also in the cruisers for officers to give to vulnerable young people who are involved in an incident to provide them with a little bit of onsite support if the real Dusty is not available to be with them.

### 15.3 Retirement Announcement

Chief Skinners shared a statement with Board members announcing his upcoming retirement after 40 years in policing. Chief Skinner's last day of service in Stratford will be March 2, 2026. He is ready for new leadership to take the Service to the next level and confident that the Board will continue to prioritize the best interests of the community and the Service.

He thanked the Board for their ongoing support over the last 7½ years. The partnership has achieved a number of gains for the Service and the community. He thanked the members of the SPS for all their hard work and support over the years. Most of all he would like to thank the community for the confidence and respect that they have shown to the members of the Service. Communities do not need to be policed; a police service needs to police alongside the members of the community.

Mayor Ritsma thanked Chief Skinner for his four decades in policing and his last seven years with Stratford. His legacy will be well-judged.

## 16. Adjournment to Go into Closed Session

**Motion by** Travis Blum | Lisa Wilde

**THAT the Board convene in closed session pursuant to subsection 44(2) of the Community Safety and Policing Act, 2019, for the purpose of considering the following matters:**

- a. Personal matters about an identifiable individual;**
- b. Litigation affecting the Board;**

**Carried**