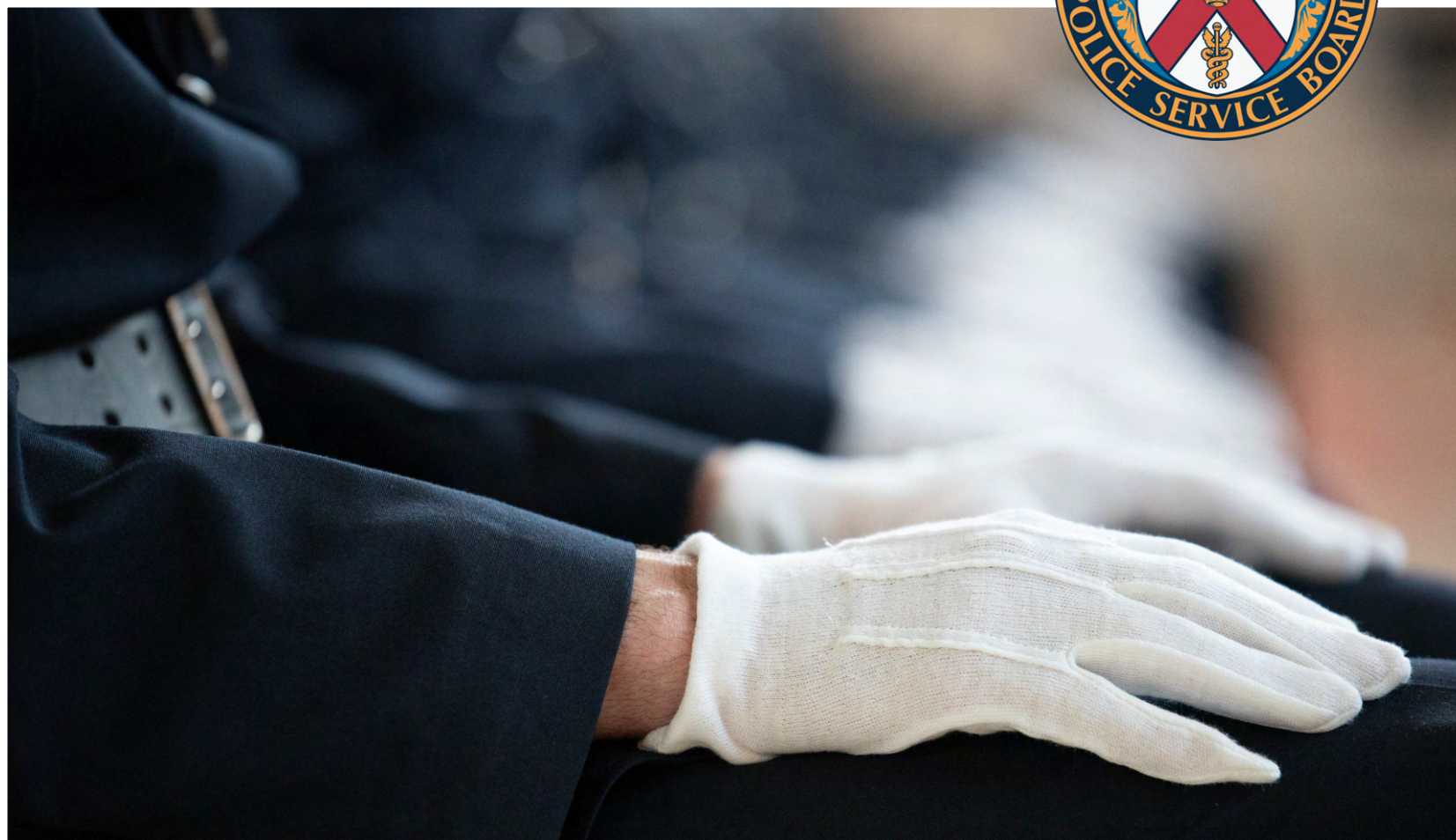


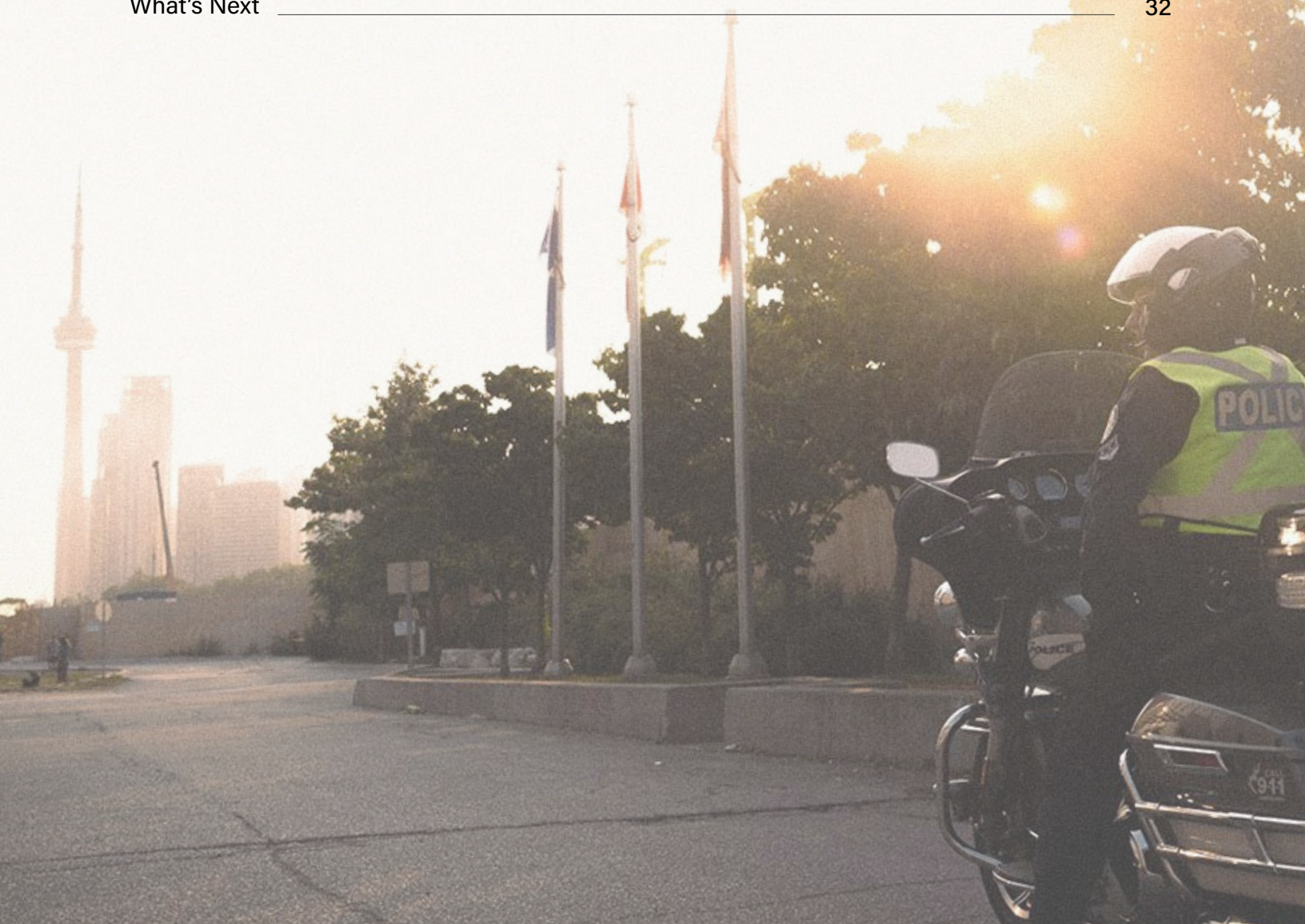


WHAT WE HEARD

*Insights Informing
the Strategic Plan for
Policing in Toronto*

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In Honour of the Land and Its First Peoples

The Toronto Police Service Board acknowledges that the City of Toronto exists on the traditional and treaty lands of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, as affirmed through Treaty No. 13 (1805), commonly known as the Toronto Purchase and the Anishnabeg of the Williams Treaty (1923). These treaties cover much of what is now the Greater Toronto Area, which covers the same lands where the Toronto Police Service and the Toronto Police Service Board operates today.

In addition to the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, this land has also been the traditional and ancestral lands of the Anishnabeg, the Haudenosaunee, and the Huron-Wendat peoples. Today, this land is home to many First Nations, Inuit, and Métis community members - people who live, grow, and raise future generations here, continuing deep connections to the land that stretch back thousands of years. Indeed, as part of the consultation for this report, we sought to listen to and hear from Indigenous community members.

By acknowledging this history and the enduring presence of Indigenous Peoples, the Toronto Police Service Board reaffirms its commitment to reconciliation, respectful engagement, and the upholding of treaty responsibilities in its work. Understanding this history is essential to the Board's commitment to reconciliation. It reminds us that our presence and responsibilities on this land are shaped by treaty relationships and inherent rights that must be respected and upheld.



Introductory Letter from the Chair

Over the past ten years, Toronto and its policing landscape have both changed profoundly. We've lived through difficult moments, faced hard truths, and taken steps - sometimes halting, often hard-won - toward greater accountability, compassion, and connection. This *What We Heard* report captures that evolution. It reflects not only how far we have come, but how much further we still need to go.

On behalf of the Toronto Police Service Board, I want to extend my deepest thanks to everyone who shared their time, perspectives, and lived experiences with us. Your honesty, your frustrations, and your hopes form the backbone of this report. Listening to you - residents, community partners, Service Members - has been humbling, sometimes uncomfortable, but always necessary.



This process has revealed both pride and pain. We heard stories of dedicated officers serving with integrity and care, and of community partners working tirelessly to make neighbourhoods safer and stronger. We also heard about the deep wounds that remain - the legacy of systemic racism, a decade of austerity and cuts, and the real consequences of an organizational culture that has not always lived up to its highest ideals. Acknowledging these truths is not a setback; it is the foundation of real progress.

The last decade has also shown what is possible. We have strengthened civilian oversight, expanded the understanding of community safety, and taken important steps toward equity, mental-health responsiveness, and reconciliation. We also recognize that some of the issues outlined in this report have already been identified by the Chief as his key priorities. But the work is far from done. The conversations reflected here remind us that change must be sustained, measured, and rooted in trust.

The voices in these pages call for a policing culture that listens deeply, acts transparently, and values partnership over posture. They call on us - Board, Service, and community alike - to keep showing up for one another with honesty and respect.

This report is not an ending, but a commitment. What we heard will guide the forthcoming *Strategic Plan for Policing in Toronto* and continue to shape how policing evolves in Toronto. Thank you for holding us to account and for believing that together, we can build a city where safety and trust truly belong to everyone.

With gratitude,

Councillor Shelley Carroll
Chair, Toronto Police Service Board

Executive Summary – What We Heard: Insights from Policing Consultations

What we heard captures more than 1200 voices – community members, advocates, service providers, business leaders, and Toronto Police Service Members – who shared their experiences and expectations for the future of policing in our city.

Their feedback is the foundation for the Toronto Police Service Board's forthcoming *Strategic Plan for Policing in Toronto*, the first to be developed under *Ontario's Community Safety and Policing Act, 2019*. This process was rooted in one shared goal: to listen honestly, act transparently, and build a police service that reflects the communities it serves.

Across every conversation, one message stood out: **trust must be rebuilt**, both within the Service, and between police and the public.

Communities want safety built on fairness, accountability, and respect. Service Members want leadership that supports, listens, and leads with integrity. Both groups called for lasting cultural change and genuine partnership, not symbolic gestures.

While some of what we heard was difficult, **it came from a place of hope**. We heard a belief that progress is possible when we face hard truths together. This report is not an end point, but a call to action to ensure those voices drive the change ahead.



What We Heard

Trust and Accountability

- Public trust in the Service is strained; Members also feel disconnected from leadership.
- Accountability must be consistent and transparent, both externally and internally.

Communication and Connection

- People want open, human communication, not bureaucratic messaging.
- Clear, honest updates and follow-through are essential to rebuild confidence.

Engagement and Representation

- Consultations must evolve into ongoing, reciprocal dialogue.
- Indigenous, Black, and Queer communities need intentional, culturally grounded, trauma-informed engagement.

Culture and Wellness

- Members described burnout and toxic workplace dynamics that hinder morale.
- Wellness must move from messaging to meaningful, accessible support.

Staffing and Development

- Chronic shortages and unclear promotion systems undermine morale.
- Members want fair advancement and investment in internal talent.

Collaboration and Partnership

- Communities want authentic participation in safety solutions.
- Strong support for expanding the Neighbourhood Community Officer Program.

Transparency and Measurement

- Progress must be measurable and public.
- Participants want clear indicators, timelines, and regular reporting on advancements and transformation.

A Shared Path Forward

This report is both an acknowledgment and a promise that the Board has heard and will act. The voices within *What We Heard* will directly shape the next *Strategic Plan for Policing in Toronto*, and guide future policies, training, and engagement practices.

Rebuilding trust will take time and consistency, but Toronto's residents and Service Members have shown that the will to change is strong. Together, they have charted a path toward a police service that is accountable, inclusive, and grounded in respect for every community it serves.





Introduction

Much of *What We Heard* will require sustained, long-term effort, particularly around culture change and organizational transformation. Real change takes time, but it is already underway.

We recognize the reality of “consultation fatigue.” People have shared their perspectives again and again, hopeful for progress, only to be disappointed when little changed. We are committed to ensuring that *What We Heard* drives real and meaningful change. It reflects the honest and courageous voices of our community and Service Members. These are voices that must be heard, respected, and acted upon.

The report's primary purpose is to meaningfully inform the Board's *Strategic Plan for Policing in Toronto (Strategic Plan)*, which establishes the foundation for adequate and effective policing aligned with community needs and the *Community Safety and Policing Act, 2019 (CSPA)*. This is a pivotal moment. The Board is developing its first *Strategic Plan* under the CSPA. The *Strategic Plan* will define priorities, objectives, and performance measures that promote safety, equity, and accountability across Toronto.

Along with meeting the requirements as outlined in the legislation, the *Strategic Plan* will aim to proactively address and meet the expectations of diverse communities, ensuring equity, inclusion, and meaningful engagement across all groups.

To those who spoke with us: **your voices matter**. The Board is committed to transforming this feedback into real, measurable steps toward safer, more inclusive communities.

We heard that accountability matters, from the public who expect transparency, and from Service Members, who want leadership that is present, responsive, and connected to their daily work. Members also shared that while wellness is a stated priority, there remains a gap between corporate messaging and their lived experience.

Community members voiced strong support for the Neighbourhood Community Officer (NCO) program as a model of effective community policing, but emphasized the need for more officers and longer tenures to strengthen relationships and trust.

We heard that Service Members care deeply about their work and are committed to serving Torontonians with professionalism and compassion. Yet many face burnout, heavy workloads, and the strain of doing more with less under growing public scrutiny.

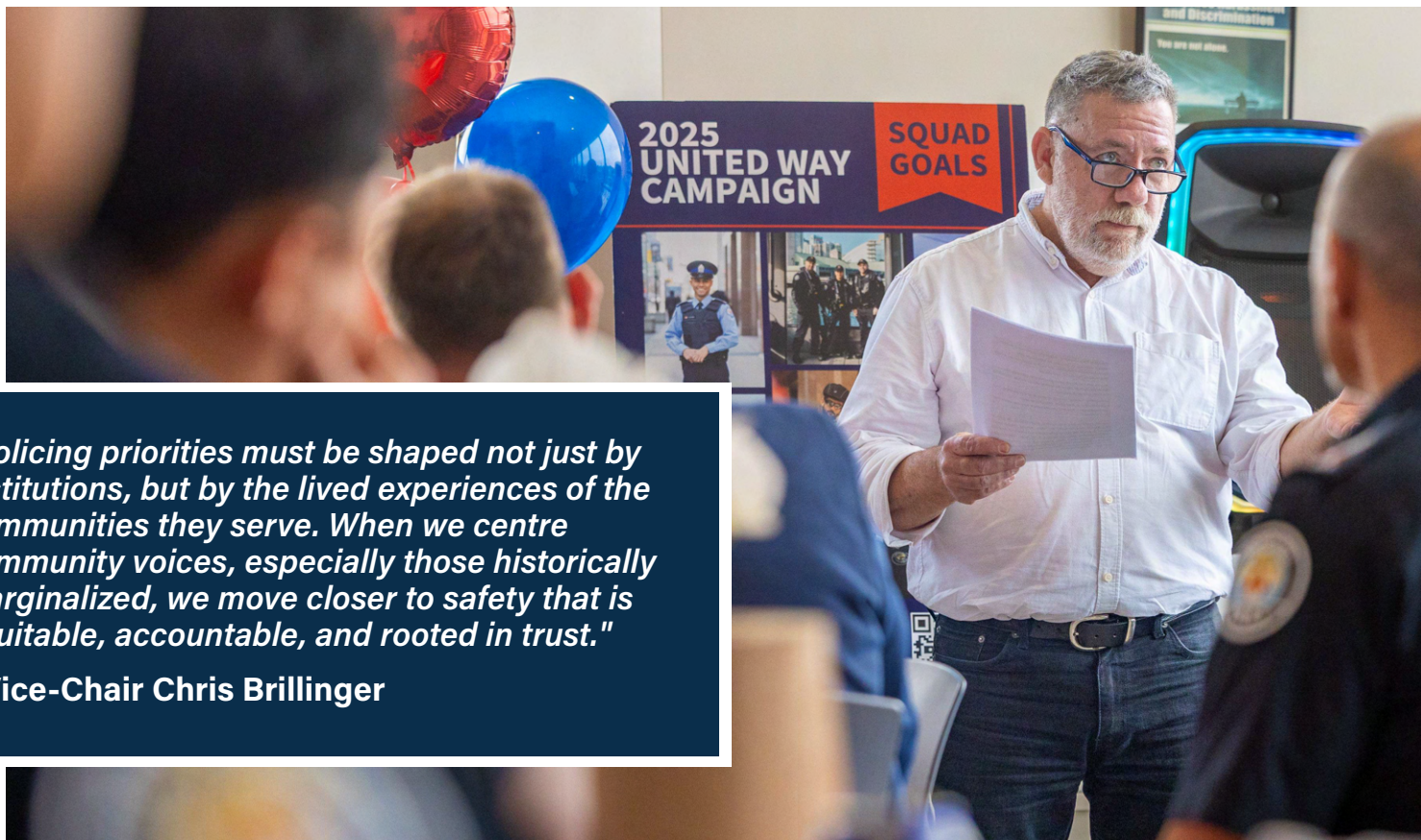
The consultations revealed a shared call for accountability, transparency, care, and connection. Communities asked for openness; Service Members called for responsive leadership. Despite pressures, there remains a deep

commitment to service, compassion, and professionalism. Rebuilding trust means embedding community voices, especially those that have been historically marginalized, into how policing is shaped and delivered.

While *What We Heard* includes difficult feedback, it also reflects a powerful shared desire for progress and partnership. We remain committed to supporting the Service as it continues to evolve and serve all Torontonians with integrity.

This report is not a checkbox. It is a commitment and a call to action to guide priorities, shape decisions, and hold us accountable to the people we serve.

**This is
*What We Heard.***



"Policing priorities must be shaped not just by institutions, but by the lived experiences of the communities they serve. When we centre community voices, especially those historically marginalized, we move closer to safety that is equitable, accountable, and rooted in trust."

- Vice-Chair Chris Brillinger

How Did We Get Here?

Under the *CSPA*, all police service boards must develop a strategic plan that outlines how they will deliver adequate and effective policing tailored to local needs. The plan must include clear objectives, priorities, and performance measures, and cover everything from crime rates and community satisfaction to interactions with youth, racialized groups, Indigenous communities, and individuals with mental health or varying neurodevelopmental abilities. It also needs to address resource planning, facilities, and technology. These plans must be reviewed every four years and made publicly available.

The Board could have easily met these requirements and produced a standard and compliant document. But instead, we recognized an opportunity to be honest with ourselves about our current practices and the way in which we carry out our governance mandate.

- *Do we consult enough?*
- *Have we heard from a variety of communities that represent the diversity of our city?*
- *Have we reached out to those who have been marginalized, and truly listened to their voices as a meaningful part of our policy development processes?*

The answer was a humbling *no*. It was as a result of this honest and humble introspection that we made the decision to ensure that the consultative process for the *Strategic Plan* would be a wide-ranging opportunity to engage with a variety of interest-holders, including Service Members.

We wanted to hear about the experiences, challenges and concerns from those who work with, and support, the Service. We also wanted to hear about what's working well, what we should be doing more of, and ways to better work together.

Finally, we wanted to better understand the ways that we can continue to build and strengthen trust in the Service. As we undertook this comprehensive consultative process, it became clear that it wouldn't be enough to simply produce a *Strategic Plan*. Many of the people that we consulted, both internally and externally, did so at what they felt was great risk to themselves. Whether it was a police officer being worried about reprisal, a community member who was concerned about being seen to work with police, or simply those who had participated in countless consultations over the years that they believed had been fruitless, the common thread among them was they needed to know *that they would be heard, that their concerns would be taken seriously, and that this process would be different than the others*.

We quickly understood that sharing *What We Heard* was just as important as the *Strategic Plan* itself. It amplifies the voices of those we consulted – voices often missing from these discussions. Importantly, it also holds us accountable to the process and to the hundreds of people who shared their time, pain, and hopes to ensure their police service is compassionate, effective, and trustworthy.

Purpose of the Report

This report serves several purposes. Primarily, *What We Heard* will inform the Board's *Strategic Plan for Policing in Toronto*, helping define priorities and objectives as the civilian governance and oversight body of the Service. It outlines key themes that emerged through consultation, which will be addressed through responsive objectives in the *Strategic Plan*. *What We Heard* and the *Strategic Plan* should be read together as complementary pieces of one ongoing effort.

Scope and Limitation

The consultations were led by the Board Office's small but dedicated Engagement Team. Despite limited capacity, they carried out city-wide consultations, often balancing planning, facilitation, follow-up, and analysis that required tight coordination and long hours.

Much of this work involved intense emotional labour. Engaging vulnerable communities that have experienced harm or trauma requires

empathy, patience, and a deep commitment to listening. Holding space for difficult conversations and managing expectations demanded an openness essential to genuine engagement.

The team found creative ways to extend their reach through partnerships and digital tools, tailoring outreach to meet the needs of diverse interest-holder groups. Reopening communication with historically underserved communities took time and care. While not everyone could be reached, the process laid essential groundwork for future dialogue.

We are committed to connecting with those we were unable to engage this time in future efforts. We recognize that this consultation marks the beginning of a more inclusive, city-wide conversation. Though demanding, the process succeeded in gathering diverse perspectives and reflecting the authentic voices of our city.

It is our hope that the authenticity of this process will shine through clearly throughout this report.

"Our strategic plan is not just a document, it's a reflection of what we heard from communities and Service Members alike. By grounding our priorities in these consultations, we ensure that the Board's direction is informed, inclusive, and responsive to the real needs of Toronto."

- Chair Shelley Carroll



Who We Heard From

Consultation and engagement were established early on as the cornerstone of this process. Work began in 2023 with a strong commitment to listening, learning, and building collaboratively. Midway through, the process paused for one year due to staffing transitions. We ensured that we continued the work with care and consistency.

As a result, the consultation unfolded in two phases. This approach allowed for continuity while adapting to staffing realities. Phase Two built on the foundation of Phase One, guided throughout by principles of transparency, inclusion, and respect.

Between February and September 2023, the Board Office led internal and external consultations with support from the Strategic Planning Unit and Senior Officers. Internally, seven focus groups and a Service-wide survey gathered input from uniform and civilian Service Members, highlighting concerns around staffing, career development, compensation, wellness, morale, training, communication, scheduling, and community engagement. Members also raised issues related to public safety, proactive policing, technology, crisis response, and gun and gang violence.

Externally, ten focus groups and an online survey engaged participants from community organizations, justice partners, schools, healthcare institutions, and advocacy groups. Feedback focused on improving mental health response, enhancing partnerships, strengthening traffic safety, addressing gun and gang violence, and increasing community engagement. Additional concerns included budget allocation, accountability, communication, recruitment

diversity, officer training, school safety, and system efficiencies. These findings will be used to inform the *Strategic Plan* and ensure both community and operational perspectives are reflected.

Phase Two began in January 2025, led by our Engagement Team, which designed tools and strategies to reflect the diverse needs of those they hoped to engage. Internally, over 150 Service Members participated in 15 focus groups, representing every Command, rank, and area. Additional consultations included interviews with 42 individuals through the Toronto Police Association and Senior Officers' Organization, and meetings with six Internal Support Networks involving 95 Members. In total, 287 uniform and civilian Service Members were consulted.

The Engagement Team also met with community members who work closely with the Board and Service, including the Board's Anti-Racism Advisory Panel (ARAP) and Mental Health and Addictions Advisory Panel (MHAAP), Community Police Liaison Committees (CPLCs), Community Consultative Committees (CCCs), and Auxiliary Members. These groups offered unique insights as both community members and volunteers familiar with Service operations.

Public consultations were held city-wide, and Board Members facilitated engagements with a variety of groups, including business leaders, security professionals, 2SLGBTQIA+ organizations, service providers who support survivors of intimate partner and gender-based violence, newcomer agencies, and local radio stations.



The Engagement Team also partnered with the City of Toronto's Community Safety and Wellbeing Unit, and worked with the leaders of its Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan, SafeTO. The SafeTO office helped to organize meetings with community members, City partners, and Community Safety Tables across Toronto.

Additionally, the Board's Indigenous Engagement Advisor led culturally-grounded consultations with several service providers to gather insights into organizational relationships with police and the safety needs of the communities they serve. In addition to team engagements, the Advisor conducted approximately 25 one-on-one interviews with a variety of Indigenous individuals, including Elders and youth, to explore participants' lived experiences and systemic safety concerns. These conversations prioritized the creation of safe, non-colonial spaces to facilitate honest dialogue, which help inform the understanding of the social determinants of justice affecting First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples.

The Engagement Team consulted approximately 450 members of the public. To broaden input, a feedback form was circulated internally and externally, inviting open-ended responses on community safety, engagement, perceptions of the Service, and recommendations for the *Strategic Plan*. In total, we received 358 responses.

In total, and across both phases and a variety of platforms, we heard from over 1200 community and Service Members.

Key Themes and Insights

As consultations unfolded, we heard a wide range of perspectives shaped by diverse experiences and priorities. Across conversations, several consistent themes emerged: the need for inclusive engagement, greater transparency, and stronger pathways for collaboration. We heard that building trust requires more than dialogue. It demands sustained action, accountability, and openness to change. These reflections helped to define both the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

We heard that many of the issues raised, such as trust in the Service, communication, engagement gaps, and culture change, are interconnected and shared across internal and

community experiences. Internal discussions highlighted operational pressures, workforce development, technology, wellness, and morale as key factors shaping Members' day-to-day realities. Community partners spoke about response times, collaboration, and the impact of systemic racism, emphasizing the need for continued work to address anti-Black and anti-Indigenous bias.

Together, we heard a strong call for a continued evolution in policing that connects sustained internal transformation with external trust-building, ensuring that the Service's culture, systems, and partnerships evolve to meet the needs of the communities it serves.



External Themes Raised by Community Members

Safety and Security

We heard from many community members that safety and security remain major concerns in their everyday lives. Rising crime, disorder, and antisocial behaviour have left many feeling uneasy. People voiced concerns about break-ins, car thefts, and random acts of violence. While some acknowledged reports that gun violence has decreased, their lived experiences tell a different story. Ongoing concerns about homicides, shootings, carjackings, hate crimes and violence in public spaces persist. Many also expressed alarm over the decreasing age of both perpetrators and victims of violence. Many cited deep frustration about the lack of investment in youth programs, employment opportunities, and broader supports. We also heard concerns that the justice system is too lenient, with consequences for crime seen as insufficient to deter further harm.

We also heard calls for more police officers and a return to core policing activities. Community members told us they want to see laws enforced more consistently, and violent incidents addressed with urgency. We heard that some feel the streets are unsafe, and there is a perception that minor traffic enforcement actions do not adequately address road safety concerns. Specific neighbourhoods in the city were mentioned as needing urgent attention due to its residents feeling unsafe.

We heard that greater police visibility is important. We heard that, if ignored, even small, recurring issues can create a lasting sense of unease. We heard that people want to feel safe in their own neighbourhoods and that police presence should be reassuring, not intimidating.

Calls for proactive policing also showed up frequently, with community members telling us that they want proactive policing, not just reactive responses. They also called for a clear message that our city stands behind the officers who dedicate themselves to protecting it. Overall, we heard a strong desire for policing that is responsive, respectful, and focused on making communities feel truly safe.

Intimate Partner Violence, Gender-Based Violence and Crimes Committed Against Women

In meeting with community organizations on the frontlines of supporting survivors of intimate partner violence (IPV) and gender-based violence (GBV), we heard that crimes against women must be consistently treated as an emergency and explicitly named as an epidemic that requires coordinated, prevention-focused efforts that move beyond acknowledgement to action.

We heard that the Service and Board must dedicate time to develop an integrated, year-round strategy on this issue. This plan should include community and Indigenous-led components, address systemic causes such as colonialism, patriarchy, and racism, and ensure accountability through clear metrics and ongoing evaluation.

We heard that training must be trauma-informed, frequent, and co-designed with community experts and survivors. Participants emphasized understanding coercive control, femicide risk factors, and the ways

abusers manipulate systems that sometimes criminalize survivors.

We heard concerns about limited collaboration and inconsistent front-line practices that erode trust. Participants called for clear policies and multidisciplinary approaches where police work alongside specialized community professionals. Service providers stressed being trusted as experts, noting, *"If you are looking for trust, you must trust us."*

We heard a strong call to address missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls and Two-Spirit cases, accept missing persons reports regardless of jurisdiction, and build stronger relationships beyond the jurisdiction of Toronto to more effectively address human trafficking. We heard that better data is critical to tracking femicide, filicide, and human trafficking, strengthening accountability, and evaluating progress. We heard that community partnerships must be genuine and sustained, and that engagement needs clearer structures and logistical support.

We heard particular concerns from human trafficking service representatives, who identified a critical need for the Service and partners to establish clear procedures for addressing unit takeovers, where trafficked individuals, typically women and children, are forced to live in a residential unit that has been occupied or controlled by traffickers, often without the legal tenant's consent. We heard that the absence of such a procedure has significant implications, including challenges in *Gladue* reporting (a legal principle that requires courts to consider the unique circumstances of Indigenous peoples during sentencing) and gaps in organizational reporting, leading to barriers in securing funding.

Finally, we heard that communication tools and public awareness efforts are underused with

participants encouraging proactive outreach to prevent violence and increase understanding across communities.

Specific Concerns from Newcomer Communities

We heard that newcomer communities face unique barriers navigating systems of safety and support. Urban design sometimes conflicts with first responder access, affecting safety and trust in public spaces. We heard that the Toronto Community Crisis Service (TCCS) offers a more compassionate, non-criminalizing response, and that collaboration between TCCS and police has improved confidence among newcomers. We heard deep concern about rising racism and hate-motivated incidents, with calls for clearer action and definitions of hate symbols.

We heard that many newcomers feel that Community Police Liaison Committees (CPLCs) often lack diversity, consistency, and openness to criticism. Participants called for clearer standards and genuine inclusion of newcomer voices. Newcomers want relationships that recognize power imbalances, cultural differences, and community resource limitations.

We heard that many newcomers feel that officers need to learn to make space for others by listening, sharing leadership, and engaging with humility. Trust with newcomer communities, in particular, must be built patiently and consistently. We also heard that system navigation remains difficult for newcomers, with confusing processes and communication gaps. Finally, we heard that the Service's dual role as both law enforcement and community service creates confusion for some newcomers about how and when each approach is used.

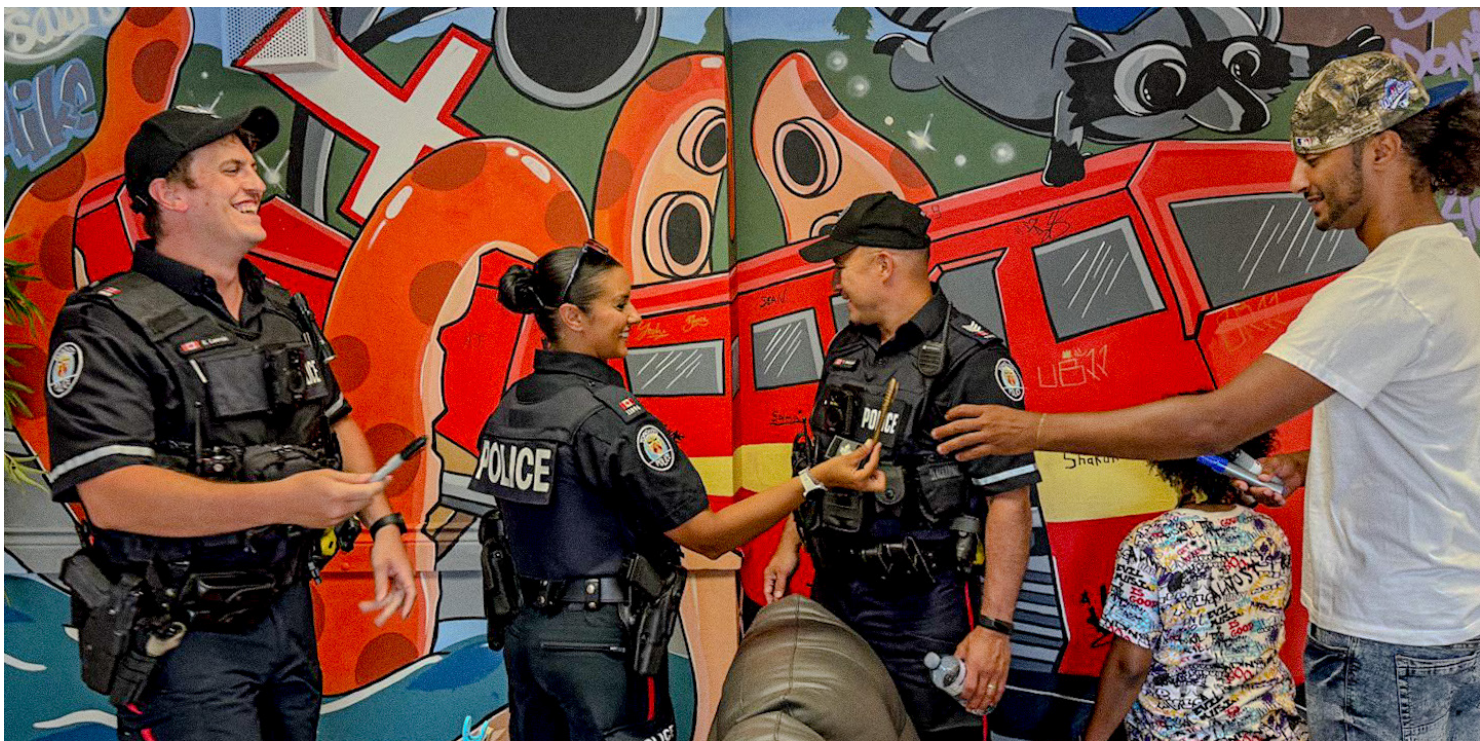
Neighbourhood Community Officer (NCO) Program

We heard strong endorsement for the expansion of the NCO Program, with many people emphasizing its vital role in fostering trust through consistent, relationship-based policing, particularly in communities with a history of strained relations with law enforcement. Over and over, we heard robust support for the program's growth, noting its effectiveness in allowing officers sufficient time to build meaningful relationships within the city. We heard that residents support having NCOs holistically integrated into all of the important parts of their communities, including in schools, places of worship, and community centres.

Not all feedback was positive, with some people describing the NCO program as inconsistent and insufficient in addressing broader systemic issues. Others questioned

how NCOs were assigned and how neighbourhoods where they worked were selected. We heard a frustration that many NCOs work directly with community organizations, but not necessarily the residents of the neighbourhoods to which they were assigned, creating a structural barrier to accessing them. We heard that there is a need for intentional, sustained engagement that goes beyond programmatic efforts.

In addition, concerns were raised regarding staffing shortages, which often resulted in NCOs being reassigned to emergent front-line duties or not completing their three-year tenure. We heard that, to ensure the program's success, it is essential that officers are allocated dedicated time to develop and sustain community relationships.



Organizational Collaboration

During consultations, many community members shared frustration related to their experiences working alongside the Service. Some had engaged through formal structures like advisory roles or committees, while others participated in informal or issue-specific collaborations. Regardless of the format, a consistent theme emerged: the collaboration sometimes did not feel genuine.

Community partners spoke about feeling tokenized. They described offering insights and expertise, only to see it overlooked or dismissed. Many had raised the same concerns for years without feeling truly heard. They reflected on the time and energy spent trying to drive change, often with little impact.

Rather than experiencing reciprocal relationships, partners often described one-way communication. The Service would present completed initiatives and seek feedback after decisions had already been made. Instead of being invited to co-design solutions, partners were asked to react to finalized work, leaving many feeling excluded from meaningful decision-making and disconnected from community initiatives.

We heard that partners want to be treated as equal contributors, not symbolic participants. They called on the Service and the Board to reflect on what partnership truly means, emphasizing shared responsibility, mutual respect, and recognition that effective policing requires community leadership and input. Meaningful collaboration is essential to building trust and improving safety, with

relationships that are reciprocal and based on shared ownership, particularly with sectors like health, housing, justice, and social services.

We heard calls for the police service to use its influence to advocate for funding and support for these areas, and for reallocating some functions to community organizations with expertise. Participants emphasized the need for culturally appropriate, multilingual, and accessible engagement practices. Future strategic plans, they said, must be built on genuine partnerships, grounded in listening, relationship-building, and co-created solutions.

Support for cross-sector collaboration was strong, with community organizations being viewed as valuable partners. At the same time, respondents acknowledged that staffing levels and time constraints often make it difficult to prioritize relationship-building. Resource disparities were also raised: while police infrastructure is well-funded, essential community services, such as shelters, outreach programs, and other social supports often remain under-resourced. Participants urged the Service to adopt a more collaborative approach to advocacy, recognizing that public safety depends on a well-supported ecosystem of services.

Across all feedback, the message was clear: listening, respect, and accountability are the foundation of successful engagement, collaboration, and community trust.

The Future of Policing

Throughout the consultations, participants encouraged us to look forward and reflect on how policing might evolve in a rapidly changing world. They asked us to consider how the Service could adapt alongside broader shifts in society, the workforce, and community expectations.

We heard a strong call to explore new models of service collaboration. Many participants pointed to initiatives like the Toronto Community Crisis Service (TCCS), among others, as promising examples. They urged a rethinking of traditional police roles and encouraged further exploration of removing certain responsibilities from police,

envisioning a system where police work in closer partnership with complementary services, such as security professionals, special constables, and community organizations.

In light of a growing police budget, participants asked us to think creatively and responsibly. They emphasized the need to explore alternative approaches and partnerships that could enhance safety, reduce costs, and better reflect the values and needs of Toronto's diverse communities.



Themes Shared Jointly by Community Members and Service Members

Pride and Gratitude

Throughout the consultations, the Engagement Team asked Service Members what they valued most about their work and what motivated them to show up every day, despite the challenges they faced. They also asked community members about their working relationships with the Service and what was functioning well. Responses varied, but a common theme emerged: a shared commitment to helping others and contributing to public safety.

Officers spoke about the honour and privilege of serving their communities, protecting the public from harm, and effectively bringing people to justice. Many described a strong sense of purpose in being able to make a difference in the lives of others. Community members and organizations echoed this sentiment, emphasizing the importance of collaboration with the Service.

They highlighted successful partnerships, particularly with Neighbourhood Community Officers (NCOs), and shared examples of impactful work that had strengthened local safety efforts.

Across both groups, there was a clear appreciation for the opportunity to support communities and contribute to meaningful change. Whether through front-line service or collaborative initiatives, participants spoke with pride about their ability to make a positive impact and help those in need.

This enduring commitment to making a positive difference reflects why both Service and community members continue to show up, even

in the face of hurt, frustration, and daily challenges. It is also a powerful reflection of the shared values that must continue to guide the important work ahead.

Trust in the Toronto Police Service

Through hundreds of conversations with Service Members and members of the public, one message came through with clarity: trust in the institution is under strain. Many residents expressed genuine appreciation for the work officers do, but others shared feelings of disconnection and concern. They spoke about long response times, inconsistent accountability, and a lack of transparency. Some questioned whether misconduct is properly addressed. These concerns have contributed to widespread skepticism and, in some cases, a loss of confidence in the Service.

Internally, Service Members voiced similar frustrations. They described unclear leadership, and human resources practices that felt unfair and demoralizing. Both uniform and civilian Members spoke about feeling undervalued and underappreciated, with some expressing a growing sense of disillusionment toward an organization they joined to uphold the law. They emphasized a need for tangible support and a desire to feel confident that the Service stands behind them. This call for visible backing reflects a deeper longing for trust, respect, and stability within the organization.

We heard that for some, trust in the Service is being undermined by systemic issues, internal

dissatisfaction, and community concerns. Fairness, accountability, and respectful engagement were consistently identified as essential to rebuilding relationships. Internally, some Service Members described feeling unsupported, citing leadership failures, inconsistent messaging, and a workplace culture marked by bullying and discrimination. Hiring, promotion, and complaint processes were often viewed as opaque and biased, further eroding morale and trust.

From the community, we heard concerns about unaddressed misconduct and poor communication. A lack of transparency in oversight reinforced the perceptions of some that police are not held to the same standards as the public. Many emphasized the need for clearer communication, stronger leadership accountability, and an expansion of the Neighbourhood Community Officer program to foster relationship-based policing.

Racism, colonialism, and discriminatory practices were also identified as major barriers, particularly for members of Indigenous, Black and Queer communities. We heard calls for increased cultural awareness, treaty knowledge, and greater sensitivity in police interactions. Across both internal and external voices, the message was clear: policing must continue to evolve in order to restore credibility and confidence in the Toronto Police Service.

Corporate Messaging and Information-Sharing

We heard that poor communication remains a major source of frustration both within the Service and across communities. Community members spoke of feeling excluded from

important conversations and questioned why budgets continued to grow while response times remained slow. We heard that information shared by police often feels distant, overly formal, and disconnected from lived experience, leaving many unsure how the Service supports vulnerable communities.

Internally, we heard similar concerns. Some Members described communication as fragmented, reactive, and focused more on managing perception than building understanding. Some said they felt overwhelmed by shifting messages and unclear direction, leading to confusion about priorities and disconnection from leadership. We heard a strong desire for clear, consistent updates, accessible information about roles and responsibilities, and communication that fosters collaboration rather than blame.

Across both internal and external perspectives, we heard calls for honest, timely, and human communication. Ultimately, those we engaged wanted communication that builds trust, strengthens relationships, and supports a more connected and responsive police service.



Engagement and Gaps in Engagement

We heard deep frustration from both community members and Service Members about how engagement has been approached. While Neighbourhood Community Officers were praised for establishing genuine connections, broader efforts were often seen as superficial, with limited opportunities for meaningful collaboration. Many felt decisions had been made before consultations began, creating a sense that the Service was not genuinely open to change.

We heard concerns about Liaison Officers not being members of the communities they serve, leading to disconnect and disappointment. Participants questioned how officers could effectively support communities without understanding their histories or lived experiences. Internally, Members also felt excluded from key decisions and overlooked despite valuable insights they could bring.

Across groups, we heard calls for engagement rooted in honesty, respect, and shared accountability. Participants emphasized the need for deeper, more inclusive dialogue, especially with Indigenous, Black, and Queer communities, and for an engagement strategy that prioritizes authentic relationships over appearances.

To strengthen trust and visibility, we heard recommendations for more direct interaction between Board Members, Service Members, and communities through ride-alongs, Divisional visits, and local gatherings. Including underrepresented Members, retirees, and those on leave was also seen as a way to bring broader perspectives to decision-making.

We heard strong support for culturally appropriate, multilingual, and accessible engagement practices, along with ongoing community meetings, youth outreach, and a

visible presence in underserved neighbourhoods. Overall, there was a clear desire for the Service to move beyond enforcement toward transparent, inclusive engagement that truly reflects the city's diverse voices.

Response Times

A consistent source of frustration we heard from community members was response times. People shared stories of calling 911 during crises, sometimes as victims, witnesses, or in urgent need, and being placed on hold. Others waited up to eight hours on the non-emergency line - some never received a reply, with others receiving a call back days later. Many felt this was unacceptable for a large, publicly funded service.

We heard that these delays went beyond operational issues, eroding trust. Community members described feeling frustrated and abandoned during vulnerable moments, questioning resource allocation and the Service's ability to fulfill its basic responsibility to respond in emergencies.

We heard similar concerns from Service Members. Officers spoke about chronic short staffing and the pressure of overwhelming call volumes, making it difficult to prioritize effectively. 911 Call Operators described the emotional toll of trying to reassure callers while knowing officers could not be dispatched quickly.

Overall, we heard that both Service Members and the public want the Service to respond with care and urgency, but shared experiences show that staffing and resource limits compromise its ability to meet response standards and support the community.

Organizational Consistency

We heard repeated frustration with the Service's lack of operational consistency. Community members described promising pilot programs that were quietly discontinued without explanation, leaving them doubtful about the Service's commitment to lasting change. They also spoke about frequent, unannounced transfers of key personnel, such as Unit Commanders, Inspectors, Neighbourhood Community Officers, and Liaison Officers, without proper transition. We heard that these changes disrupted relationships, stalled initiatives, and eroded trust in the Service's ability to support sustained, community-based work. Many felt the system prioritized internal structures over public needs.

Service Members voiced similar concerns. Senior Officers reflected on the emotional toll of being reassigned from communities and teams they had supported for years. Leaving behind files, initiatives, and relationships was difficult, and some questioned why their efforts were so easily set aside.

They also noted the lack of a consistent approach to tenure. While Neighbourhood Community Officers were assigned for a minimum of three years, other roles requiring continuity did not receive the same consideration. This inconsistency left many feeling undervalued and uncertain about the Service's commitment to long-term community work.

The combination of inconsistency, turnover, and reassignment was seen as a major barrier to continuity and succession planning. Community partners were often left frustrated, forced to rebuild relationships and re-establish trust with new Service Members unfamiliar with local priorities.

This pattern was widely viewed as a systemic flaw that disrupted progress, weakened relationships, and undermined confidence in the Service's ability to deliver lasting, community-driven outcomes. Both community and Service Members called for greater stability, transparency, and intentionality in role assignments and transitions.

Culture Change, Transformation and Evolution

Throughout our consultations, we heard a clear and consistent call for cultural change within the Service. Despite public commitments to transformation, progress is seen by some as slow. Participants described a workplace culture that can feel toxic, divisive, and resistant to change. We heard concerns about harassment, bullying, and microaggressions, and that leadership is often perceived as hesitant or risk-averse. Many leaders in the organization said they do not feel empowered to make decisions and fear being blamed if those decisions are unpopular, creating an environment that erodes trust, increases frustration, and lowers morale.

We heard reflections on deeper institutional culture and entrenched norms. While open exclusion has declined, a lingering fear of reprisal for reporting misconduct remains for many of the Members from whom we heard. The organization continues to be shaped by traditional hierarchies that limit inclusion and innovation. The paramilitary structure, though effective in emergencies, was seen as overly bureaucratic in daily operations, restricting communication and adaptability. We heard that the traditional top-down culture no longer resonates with younger generations. Many

new recruits view policing as a job rather than as a lifelong calling, and value transparency, wellness, and purpose over hierarchy. We heard that many want to understand the reasoning behind decisions, expect open communication, and reject the “suck it up and carry on” mentality.

From the public, we heard similar concerns about mistrust, systemic bias, and a lack of visible accountability. Repeated incidents of misconduct and social media narratives reinforce skepticism, especially among youth and newcomer communities.

We heard suggestions for improvement: embedding modernization principles across all levels, increasing transparency, and evolving systems to strengthen accountability.

Participants supported reframing reform to emphasize innovation, service delivery, and community impact. From the public, we heard interest in transformative approaches such as expanded de-escalation training, improved mental health crisis response, and greater investment in community-based alternatives.

Overall, we heard that meaningful cultural change requires openness, transparency, and sustained collaboration both within the Service, and with the communities it serves.

Evaluation and Metrics

We heard that to build trust and ensure accountability, the Service must strengthen how it tracks progress and measures results. These elements were seen as critical to demonstrating that organizational transformation is not just aspirational, but actively underway.

Public participants told us that updates on progress should be easy to understand, focused on outcomes, and readily accessible. They stressed the need for plain language

communications that clearly show what has changed, what remains to be done, and how the Service is responding to community concerns. We also heard that the Service must improve how it gathers and uses community feedback to better understand public needs, expectations, and satisfaction. This feedback should be treated as essential data, not just anecdotal input.

Internally, Service Members spoke about the need for better tools to monitor workplace trends and support informed decision-making. They highlighted gaps in data collection and analysis, particularly around resignations among underrepresented racialized groups. We heard that both quantitative data, such as emergency response times and crime solve rates, and qualitative insights from lived experiences, are needed to paint a full picture of organizational health and performance.

Participants also pointed to the importance of centralizing key data streams. Race-based data, use-of-force reports, and crime trends should be integrated to support equity-based reporting and more consistent analysis. Community members emphasized that progress on recommendations from oversight bodies must be publicly tracked. They suggested setting multi-year milestones and monitoring them throughout the life of the *Strategic Plan* to ensure accountability and momentum. Participants emphasized the importance of setting clear goals, establishing timelines, and embedding transparent reporting directly into the *Strategic Plan*.

Taken together, these insights reflect a shared desire for a change that is measurable, transparent, and responsive. Whether from within the Service, or across the city, participants made it clear that data must be used not just to inform decisions, but to build trust, demonstrate progress, and ensure that change is both real and lasting.

Internal Themes Raised by Toronto Police Service Members

Staffing, Recruitment and Retention

We heard that staffing shortages are a serious concern across the Service. Members noted that, despite hiring resuming after a decade-long freeze, staffing levels remain below previous benchmarks. Shortages affect front-line response, as well as specialized functions like court preparation, evidence handling, and investigative support. We heard about the strain of meeting growing demands with fewer resources.

Recruitment and retention were recurring themes. We heard that attracting and keeping new hires has become increasingly difficult. Many recruits now leave within a few years, creating instability and raising concerns about maintaining a workforce committed to the work. Chronic shortages contribute to high turnover, low morale, and operational fatigue. Members described excessive workloads, unsafe officer-to-population ratios, and a very junior workforce, including leadership teams with limited experience.

We heard that many Members feel undervalued and unsupported. Inadequate compensation, limited recognition, and a rising cost of living contribute to departures. Long commutes after demanding shifts were described as exhausting and often unsafe. Members called for competitive pay, better benefits, retention incentives, and recognition of their contributions. While some supported increasing recruitment, others emphasized the importance of maintaining high standards, stressing that public trust depends on hiring individuals genuinely committed to service.

We heard strong support for strategic workforce planning, with initiatives focused on improving

recruitment, retention, and front-line sustainability. These steps were seen as essential to building a healthier workplace, improving service delivery, and ensuring long-term organizational resilience.

Promotional Processes

Promotions were raised as a significant concern during consultations. Despite several changes to the promotional process over the years, trust in the system remains low. Service Members expressed frustration with practices they viewed as unfair, where personal connections appeared to carry more weight than qualifications or performance. Many felt the process lacks transparency and continues to favour individuals with informal advantages rather than those who demonstrated leadership and merit. A large number of Members believe that promotions and hiring decisions were predetermined.

We heard widespread concerns about fairness, consistency, and integrity within the promotional process itself. Members were frustrated by the constant changes to how promotions are handled. They shared that no two promotional cycles in recent years had followed the same approach, which made it difficult to prepare and created confusion across the organization. The process was often described as biased and inequitable, with favouritism and nepotism influencing outcomes. These perceptions contributed to low morale, decreased participation in the process, and a lack of trust in leadership.

Many Members said they chose not to apply for promotions, believing the outcome had already been decided. This sentiment was common

among both officers and civilian Members, though it appeared to be felt most acutely by civilians and officers seeking advancement to senior ranks. In response, we heard strong recommendations to establish promotional processes that were transparent, standardized, and inclusive. Members called for leadership to support career mobility through merit-based advancement, and to address systemic bias in hiring, training, and career development. They emphasized the need for clear criteria, consistent procedures, and fair access to opportunities.

Workforce Management and Development

Workplace development and succession planning came up often during consultations. Civilian Members shared deep frustration about the lack of clear pathways for growth. Advancement opportunities were frequently seen as being given to external candidates, or to officers who had transitioned into civilian roles. Many civilians felt overlooked and excluded from training, coaching, and mentorship. They expressed a strong desire for a meaningful path forward that recognized their contributions and invested in their future within the organization.

Concerns about access to professional development were widespread. We heard that opportunities for growth were often limited and reserved for hand-picked individuals, with no clear or transparent criteria. Career progression pathways, particularly for civilian Members, were described as unclear or, in some cases, non-existent. Participants pointed to roles with no natural progression, and very few promotional opportunities available.

We also heard strong calls to continue civilianizing the Service. District Special

Constables shared that they often felt underutilized, despite their intended role as a resource to alleviate front-line pressures. Although they wear uniforms and were brought in to support front-line officers, they said that they are not always given meaningful opportunities to contribute. In cases where they were assigned to pilot or special programs, we heard that these initiatives were often short-lived. Their unique role was seen as undervalued and in need of better integration into day-to-day operations.

A recurring concern was the Service's reliance on external consultants who some Members felt lack a deep understanding of the organization. Some Members felt that this approach signals a lack of trust in internal talent and capability, leaving them frustrated and disconnected. We also heard support for initiatives like conducting a Service-wide organizational census to benchmark diversity and strengthening succession planning to create clear and equitable leadership pathways.

Overall, we heard that these efforts were essential to rebuilding trust, improving inclusivity, and ensuring that career progression within the Service was based on competence, fairness, and transparency.

Professional Standards

We heard a number of concerns about Professional Standards during consultations. We heard that many Service Members viewed the investigative process as heavy-handed and overly punitive. Many believed that while the allegations appeared valid on the surface, they often lacked substance. Members described a lengthy investigative process, sharing that, in many cases, after months of reputational harm and personal stress, charges were quietly withdrawn or

unsubstantiated, leaving Members to question the purpose of the investigation, and the impact it had on their careers and well-being.

Members noted that investigations often resulted in serious mental health consequences for those under investigation. Investigations were said to take far too long, adding to anxiety and uncertainty. Members shared that many chose to leave the Service rather than endure a Professional Standards investigation, which they felt was more focused on embarrassment than on coaching, mentorship, or professional development.

We also heard concerns about fairness and consistency in how complaints and investigations were handled. Allegations of inconsistent treatment contributed to a broader sense of exclusion and mistrust. Members described the process as lacking transparency and accountability, with disciplinary outcomes that were not applied evenly across the organization.

We heard that the current approach to Professional Standards was undermining morale, trust, and Member wellness. Members shared the need for a more balanced and supportive model that still holds individuals accountable, but also prioritizes learning, development, and Member well-being.

Technology

We frequently heard concerns about technology and its underutilization within the Service. Many Members felt that existing programs were outdated, and newer tools were not being used to their full potential. We heard examples of Members continuing to rely on manual methods of data collection, including handwritten notes and spreadsheets, rather than using available applications designed for those purposes.

Members spoke about programs such as NG-911 systems and electronic memo books, noting that these technologies were not integrated in ways that allowed them to work efficiently together. The lack of interoperability was seen as a missed opportunity to improve workflow and reduce duplication.

Many Members pointed to neighbouring police services and questioned why similar technologies were not available within our Service. They described the inefficiencies caused by outdated systems as more than just inconvenient. These gaps were seen as barriers to productivity and service quality. Members believed that by updating and properly implementing available technologies, the Service could significantly improve its operations and better support its people.



Wellness

We heard an acknowledgement that, over the past decade, the Service has made significant progress in advancing Member wellness and comprehensive mental health support. We know that the tragic loss of a number of officers to suicide has been a profound catalyst for change within the Service, leading to the development of many important wellness initiatives. One such initiative is the addition of the *Because of the Line of Duty* classification to the Service's Honour Wall, to pay tribute to Service Members who have died due to injury or trauma sustained during the course of their policing duties.

We heard that programs addressing psychological health, peer support, early intervention, and trauma-informed care have expanded substantially. The Service has also strengthened access to confidential supports, improved training for supervisors, and fostered a more open dialogue about mental health. Together, these efforts reflect a deep and sustained commitment to the well-being of all Members.

However, we heard that there is still much to be done in this important area. We heard that Service Members view wellness in two ways: as a broader organizational culture of care, and as their personal experiences with the Wellness Unit. Across both areas, we heard frustration, disappointment, and disconnect.

We heard that there is a gap between corporate messaging and lived reality. While Members are encouraged to prioritize their health, staffing shortages and denied time-off requests often make this impossible. Many felt unsupported when seeking help, highlighting that the systems in place do not enable care.

We heard that interactions with the Wellness Unit are often discouraging. High turnover among case workers has meant that some Members have had

to restart processes repeatedly. Some have to coordinate their own cases to access accommodations. Support was described as limited, retraumatizing for those experiencing work-related trauma, and insufficient for caregivers.

We heard that wellness initiatives are unevenly applied across the Service. Some Divisions had active Wellness Committees, while others had none. Members involved in committees often filled gaps themselves, despite limited support, and questioned why wellness supports were not organizationally mandated. We heard that long-term leave and return-to-work processes often compromise recovery and dignity. The Wellness Unit often struggled to find suitable accommodations, leaving Members unable to contribute fully, despite willingness and staffing needs.

We heard clearly that wellness needs to move beyond messaging, and become meaningful, accessible, and supported by systems that reflect the realities of Members' work.



Morale and Organizational Support

We heard significant concerns about low morale across the organization by both civilian and uniform Members. This reflected a range of experiences shaping how people felt about their work and their place within the Service.

Staffing shortages were a major factor. Members described heavy workloads, covering gaps, and resulting burnout. Many felt disconnected, discouraged, and uncertain about their future.

We heard concerns about a lack of organizational support. When problems arise, blame often falls on front-line Members, while supervisors and managers are seen as less accountable. This creates pressure and uncertainty about whether the Service stands behind them.

We heard that Members feel scapegoated for broader issues, especially around training and performance. They want a culture where mistakes are treated as learning opportunities, with continued access to support and future opportunities.

Workplace culture was closely tied to morale. Harassment, discrimination, bullying, and microaggressions were described as persistent, creating fear and eroding trust, safety, and mental health.

We heard calls for better internal communication that acknowledges positive contributions alongside criticism. Supportive environments were often tied to strong supervisors and collaborative teams.

We heard support for a comprehensive Culture and Wellbeing Strategy to enhance

psychological safety, respond to recommendations, and monitor culture over time. Confidential surveys were recommended to ensure feedback informs decision-making.

Time Management

We heard widespread concerns about time management across the Service. Members described difficulty accessing earned time off, with staffing shortages creating pressure to forgo time off, even when needed most.

We heard from newer Members who felt that the only way to get time off from work was by using their sick bank, clearly not its intended purpose. They worried this practice could have long-term consequences, leaving them without support in the future.

We heard frustration about the mandate to work Regular Days Off exchange (RDOs) for large events, where officers could be asked to work on scheduled days off without overtime compensation. Members described this as unfair and demoralizing, especially amid burnout, low morale, and staffing shortages.

We heard that days off are considered essential for recovery, yet RDOs where members were pulled back into work created strain for front-line officers. Members highlighted the contradiction between this practice and the Service's messaging around wellness, leaving them feeling undervalued and frustrated. We heard a clear call for a culture where time off is respected, rest is protected, and wellness is reflected in meaningful systems that recognize the human cost of this work.

Internal Support Networks

We met with a range of Internal Support Networks (ISNs), Member-led resource groups within the Service. We heard frustration and a sense of being invisible, undervalued, and dismissed. Despite their commitment and expertise, ISN members felt their work was not always taken seriously.

We heard that ISNs often support recruitment and inclusion efforts voluntarily, acting as ambassadors for the Service and safe spaces for community and Member dialogue. They strongly value this role but feel excluded from developing meaningful solutions, even when the Service is addressing issues their communities have raised.

We heard that ISN members feel that they are rarely included in operational work, despite their knowledge of community dynamics, historical context, and emerging issues. Members expressed disappointment at being overlooked in assisting with investigations, recruitment, procedures, community engagement and strategic planning, including the development of the Service's Equity Strategy.

We heard calls for proper recognition and support. Members described relying on their own fundraising for events, and said contributions to initiatives and partnerships often went unacknowledged. Many felt more valued by their communities than by the Service. Overall, we heard a strong desire for respect, recognition, and meaningful inclusion, with ISNs being seen as trusted partners rather than symbolic representatives.

Specific Units and Areas with Unique Concerns

We heard from a range of units and areas across the Service, each sharing distinct challenges

and experiences. These included Communications (911 Call Centre), the Parking Enforcement Unit, the Auxiliary Program, Specialized Units, and members of the Community Police Liaison Committees (CPLCs) and the Chief's Community Consultative Committees (CCCs).

We heard that Communications Operators face chronic stress due to rising call volumes, staffing shortages, and limited support. Recruitment and training take at least 18 months, yet many new hires leave shortly after, upon realizing the enormity and stress of the job. This attrition, combined with job stress-related leaves, makes staffing difficult. Operators called for improved facilities, more staff, updated onboarding, and upgraded technology to manage calls and improve response times.

We heard that Parking Enforcement Members often feel undervalued and overlooked. High turnover, inadequate office space, and frequently disrupted work areas have left many feeling dismissed and disrespected.

We heard that Special Units struggle with staffing shortages impacting investigations, training, evidence handling, and work-life balance. Despite repeated requests, support is insufficient, leaving teams stretched thin.

We heard that Auxiliary Members want meaningful engagement but feel underutilized. Standardized approaches were recommended to ensure consistent recognition.

We heard that CPLCs and CCCs value collaboration but face limited resources. Dedicated support from the Service for outreach, materials, and communications was suggested to strengthen community connections.

An Acknowledgment of Where We Have the Most Work to Do

We acknowledge that there are certain groups with whom our relationship is particularly broken or lacking. This was reinforced throughout the consultative process. Black, Indigenous, and Queer communities in Toronto each carry distinct but interconnected histories of harm at the hands of police, which have led to a profound and enduring trust deficit.

For Black communities, generations of systemic racism and discriminatory practices have reinforced the perception of policing as a system of control rather than protection. Indigenous communities have endured centuries of colonial policing that sought to regulate, displace, and criminalize their cultures, leaving deep scars of dispossession and systemic injustice.

Queer and Trans communities have long experienced policing as a source of surveillance, exclusion, and indignity, rather than safety and respect. While the histories are different, the outcome is the same: a severe erosion of trust in policing institutions.

We recognize that separate, culturally responsive approaches to engagement that centre the voices, leadership, and lived realities of each community are the only way forward. We want to acknowledge and thank the members of these communities who, despite their own pain, frustration, and negative lived experiences with police, have chosen to sit with us, share their truths, and push for change in the hope of finding a way forward.

African, Black, and African-Caribbean Communities of Toronto

We heard from many members of Toronto's Black communities who shared longstanding concerns about their relationship with the Service. These conversations reaffirmed that deep-rooted historical issues continue to shape this relationship and remain unaddressed.

We heard consistent concerns about trust, representation, and collaboration. Systemic issues such as racial profiling, excessive use of force, and discriminatory practices were identified as major barriers to safety and meaningful engagement. For some, the trauma of past interactions has permanently fractured trust, leaving them reluctant to call 911 in an emergency or assist in police investigations. Rebuilding this trust, they said, requires a fundamental shift in how the Service engages with Black communities.

We heard about the history and lasting impact of over-policing and hyper-surveillance, from colonial enforcement to present-day patrols, including carding, the former Toronto Anti-Violence Intervention Strategy (TAVIS), and negative experiences with School Resource Officers. These experiences were deeply personal, often affecting families and communities, not just individuals.

We heard that the Service's lack of understanding of its historical relationship with Black communities hampers meaningful

progress. These perspectives aligned with longstanding advocates, advisory panels, and direct engagement with young Black men, all calling for urgent action on systemic anti-Black racism.

We heard similar frustrations from Black Members within the Service, who noted unequal treatment, biased practices, and a culture where anti-Black racism persists. They expressed disappointment at unfulfilled commitments and a lack of confidence in meaningful change.

We heard that the path forward must be shaped by those most affected. Community-led solutions, with Black Service Members and communities central to planning, are essential. Rebuilding trust requires sustained, intentional action to dismantle harmful practices and create systems that reflect the expectations of Black communities.

First Nations, Inuit and Métis Members of Diverse Urban Indigenous Communities of Toronto

There is no doubt that the relationship between police and Indigenous communities remains one of the most fractured and complex. In recognition of its historically inadequate engagement, the Board appointed its first Advisor of Indigenous Engagement in May 2024 to lead the development of culturally appropriate outreach and engagement strategies. The goal was to build stronger, trust-based relationships across Toronto and ensure Indigenous voices are meaningfully reflected in the Board's governance and oversight practices.

Over the past year, the Advisor has led extensive consultations with youth, Elders, Two-Spirit individuals, justice advocates, educators, and service providers. These conversations have informed both this report and the development of the *Strategic Plan*. In total, the Advisor engaged with approximately 25 individuals and numerous organizational representatives serving First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples.

Participants shared deep concerns about trust, representation, and meaningful change. We heard that distrust in policing is rooted in historical and ongoing trauma, profiling, harassment, and misuse of force. Indigenous officers were seen as potential bridges, but their roles often feel tokenistic within the colonial policing system. There were strong calls for trauma-informed, culturally grounded training and hiring practices that include lived experience and assessments of cultural understanding.

Many participants expressed that current engagement efforts feel superficial. They emphasized the need for trust, consistency, and a genuine understanding of Indigenous ways of being, knowing, and doing, alongside respect for traditional governance and treaty relationships. We heard calls to move beyond symbolic gestures, such as land acknowledgements, towards meaningful and sustained partnerships. Skepticism was also voiced in relation to both apologies and rigid procurement processes that fail to reflect Indigenous realities.

Concerns were raised about the authenticity of Indigenous representation within the Service.

Participants questioned whether Indigenous officers can fully and safely express their identity and cultural values within a paramilitary structure. We heard calls for the development of a process to ensure authentic representation to address false claims of Indigeneity, particularly when such claims are used to advance careers or occupy roles specifically designated for Indigenous individuals.

We heard that community roles such as the Aboriginal Liaison Officer requires legitimate representation which they emphasized, must come with lived experience and a deep commitment to an understanding of the communities and nations they serve.

Across all consultations, the message was clear: lasting change must be systemic, community-led, and rooted in Indigenous-defined measures of success. A dedicated and distinct approach to Indigenous engagement is required, one that evolves with community needs and is not limited to supplementary programs that merely propose to fill gaps. The *Strategic Plan* engagement process reaffirmed the Board's commitment to true reconciliation and the vitality of a forthcoming Reconciliation Framework that centres Indigenous voices and supports its oversight and governance responsibilities.

Participants emphasized the importance of accountability and reflection, urging the need for a comprehensive assessment of the Service and Board's reconciliation efforts to date. We heard that this assessment must be followed by action-oriented direction, supported by

monitoring and evaluation standards that are developed and defined in partnership with community.

True reconciliation demands a fundamental shift in how the Board and the Service understand and engage with Indigenous communities. It requires a commitment to justice, healing, and respect, and a willingness to listen, learn, and act.

Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual, and Other Sexually and Gender-Diverse Communities of Toronto

During consultations, members of Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual, and other Sexually and Gender-Diverse (Queer) communities in Toronto spoke about deep, enduring mistrust of police, rooted in a history of targeted harm and systemic neglect. Participants referenced the numerous Bathhouse Raids, which left lasting trauma and helped galvanize the modern Queer rights movement. We heard that more recent incidents, including Project Marie and the police response to the Bruce McArthur murders, have reinforced the perception of many that police prioritize criminalizing Queer communities over protecting them.

We heard from Queer Members within the Service who described being maligned, silenced, or tokenized, highlighting the challenges of being visible in an institution that has historically marginalized their communities.

Within Trans communities, mistrust was especially pronounced. Many declined to participate, citing fear and past harm. Those who engaged spoke of harassment, misgendering, and systemic neglect as victims of crimes. An incident involving a leak of the Gender Diversity and Trans Inclusion training video was cited as particularly harmful, exposing identities without consent, and highlighting for community members the very real risks and exposure to harm in working with the Service.

We heard that these experiences leave many members of Queer and Trans communities with little reason to view police as protectors.

Policing was often described as a source of surveillance, humiliation, and violence. Participants emphasized that trust cannot be rebuilt through symbolic gestures. Instead, they called for sustained accountability, structural change, and genuine partnerships with affected communities.

The depth of concern and historical context surrounding this issue point to the need for a tailored, community-led approach to engagement, ongoing dialogue, and responsive action. Participants emphasized that the responsibility to repair trust rests with the Service.



What's Next

So, what's next? We know that *what* we heard is important. We are immensely grateful to all of those who came forward to share their views, their experiences and their expectations for a better future of policing in Toronto. We know that some of these conversations were difficult and at times, retraumatizing. We know that voicing some of what we heard took great courage and strength. We thank everyone we spoke to and heard from for your candour, your openness, your bravery and your authenticity.

How we heard was also important. We learned that, as a Board, we need to continuously create safe spaces for people, the community as well as Service Members, to speak to us. We heard we need to meet people where they are and listen to them thoroughly and meaningfully. This means we need to shift our traditional methods of engagement, thinking outside the box to design more effective means of dialogue in the future. We heard that methods and means of communication and engagement cannot be unilaterally imposed by the Board or the Service. We need to work towards a mutually dynamic process, with community taking a leading role in developing this process.

Who we heard from – and who we did *not* – is also important. We know there are significant

gaps in engagement, and rationale for those gaps, much of which is rooted in history and trauma. We need to define and refine how we engage in that important context. We know that the onus is, and must always be, on the Board and Service to fill in those gaps. If we are not reaching certain communities, not reaching them effectively, or not understanding them properly, the responsibility to fix this falls on us.

As we noted at the outset of this report, *What We Heard* will be directly incorporated into *the Strategic Plan for Policing in Toronto*, to be considered by the Board in the spring of 2026. Those from whom we heard may see their suggestions, recommendations, insights and input in the themes, objectives, priorities, quantitative and qualitative performance objectives of our *Strategic Plan*, in clear and explicit ways.

In addition, it is our hope and intention that *What We Heard* will also inform revisions to our processes, training, Board Policies, Service procedures, consultation protocols, and engagement initiatives. These voices, these ideas will affect other areas, including the way we do business, the way we run meetings, the language and terminology we employ, evaluation mechanisms, and our accountability measures.



**This is
*What We Heard.***

