

Overbrook leader calls for increased police patrols in neighbourhood after shooting

Alex Robinson

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In the wake of a shooting that rocked an Overbrook housing development on July 14, a community leader has called for an increased police presence in the area.

"We think there needs to be proper police staffing levels. Right now, they're not where they need to be," said Rawlson King, president of the Overbrook Community Association. "Maybe due to summer holidays, but we ideally want to see more patrols in Overbrook, both by police and Ottawa Community Housing security."

The shooting, which was the city's 21st of 2015, came just after the Ottawa police department redeployed some officers temporarily working with the guns and gangs unit elsewhere at the beginning of the July. The unit had been bolstered for the last six months after last year saw a record 49 shootings.

During that time, police seized 55 guns, arrested 221 gang members and associates, and charged them with more than 1,000 offences.

The extra officers were reassigned to their home units just as the police department was entering what have historically been the city's busiest months for shootings.

OCH announced via Twitter on July 14 that it will be increasing patrols after the shooting, but King hopes the police will follow suit.

"If the police are having staffing problems right now, which reduces the number of patrols, there will be less police visibility especially in the summer when there are more incidents of gun violence," King said.

While King said he would leave it up to the police as to whether a redeployment of resources away from the guns and gangs unit was premature, he hoped more would be done.

King also called for more investment towards improving the conditions in OCH developments, like the one on Lilas Private, where the shooting took place.

"If you treat people with more dignity and respect, they become more integrated in a community," he said. "People are prouder about their community if they're proud of where they live... It is incumbent on the city to not be the region's greatest slum lord."

Rideau-Rockcliffe Coun. Tobi Nussbaum said he would leave it up to the police to determine what their operational needs are in the fight against guns and gangs.

Nussbaum looked to assure residents their neighbourhood is still safe and said the Lilas Private shooting, which resulted in the arrest of two men, was an isolated incident.

"It's really important that the events were not random, meaning the people knew each other and were attending the same party and were known to the police," he said. "While I'm not trying to dismiss the severity of the incident, this shows ordinary citizens of Overbrook are not at risk."

King and Nussbaum pointed to the fact there is already a lot of work being done in the community to curb violent crime.

The Rideau-Rockcliffe Resource Centre has been working on putting together a post-incident neighbourhood protocol for Overbrook. The protocol will set out a plan to help residents when violent crime occurs in their neighbourhood. A draft of the plan has been developed in partnership with Crime Prevention Ottawa since it was announced after a pair of shootings in Overbrook earlier in the year.

Several community partners are also working on putting together a youth program for young people in the neighbourhood who might be vulnerable to joining gangs.

"Wider efforts in the community that ensure there are opportunities for young people are an important part of a crime prevention strategy," Nussbaum said.



A community leader has called for increased police patrols in Overbrook after the neighbourhood was rocked by a shooting on July 14.

“My sense is that the focus of preventing these types of attacks and incidents in the future is more than just the police response. The police are an important element. They play an important role, but we need to look at the wider picture.”

With files from Erin McCracken