



## Wilfrid Laurier University Special Constable Service Recommendations Review

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**Submitted to:** Executive Leadership Team

**By:** Dr. Carrie B Sanders and Dr. Ivan Joseph

## Background

A critical element of [Laurier Strategy: 2019-2024](#) is to foster a highly personalized, equitable, diverse, and inclusive community in which all members can experience a strong sense of belonging. To have that experience, every member of our community must feel welcome, valued and safe.

To advance this goal, the development of an institutional strategy for EDI was launched in fall 2020 and includes an Action Plan for Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Indigeneity. A review of the Special Constable Service (SCS) is one initiative within that action plan, with a specific focus on the way the service interacts with Black, Indigenous, racialized members of the Laurier community and how reports of racism are responded to and addressed.

An external review of the SCS was commissioned and a report was released in May 2021. That report offers recommendations for the university to consider in its exploration of how Black, Indigenous and racialized members of the Laurier community perceive the SCS and their own interactions with special constables. The reviewers also looked at how reports of racism are responded to and addressed by the SCS and how the SCS can contribute further to creating a culture of inclusion on Laurier campuses. The committee also discussed the LGBTQ2s+ members of the community and their lived experiences also informed our conversations and findings.

With that report in hand, an internal committee comprised of diverse Laurier stakeholders was appointed to review the recommendations made by external consultants. Tasked with deciding whether or not to implement each recommendation, the committee met bi-weekly for six months to discuss, evaluate and reach conclusions. Each member of the committee brought their own lived experiences to this committee. The conversations were vulnerable, and challenging at times, as we strived to reach common ground to bring clarity in the way forward for the university. The members agreed that each recommendation would be accepted or rejected by consensus: unanimity would lead to a final determination.

Those decisions are contained within this report. Each recommendation made by the external consultants is followed by the decision reached by the Laurier committee as to whether it agrees or disagrees. The committee also provides a brief response to clarify the decision.

At the end of this extensive process, the Laurier committee is confident it has represented the university's vibrant, diverse community in a fair and thoughtful manner. In doing so, the committee believes its work will further the university's stated goal of fostering a sense of belonging by ensuring all community members feel welcome, included and safe.

*Note about language:* Please see the glossary at the end of this document for definitions of key terms.

## Committee Membership

The following members of the committee were selected to represent Laurier's diverse campus stakeholders:

- Co-Chairs: Dr. Carrie B. Sanders, Director, Centre for Research on Security Practices, Professor Department of Criminology and Dr. Ivan Joseph, Vice-President Student Affairs
- Pegah Jamalof/Shane Symington, Students' Union Representatives
- Ann Marie Beals, Graduate Students' Association Representative
- Dr. Terry Roswell, Faculty Representative
- Dr. Adam Lawrence, Dean of Students
- Dr. Barrington Walker, Associate Vice-President, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion
- Dr. Darren Thomas, Associate Vice-President, Indigenous Initiatives
- Candice Joseph, Alumni Relations
- Kristin Bridge, Manager, Special Projects (Student Affairs)
- Megan Csanits, Administration Support

## Recommendations and Decisions

The recommendations in the 2021 external review were offered by the three individual consultants rather than as a committee. Each reviewer was invited to write a separate report in their own voice to ensure they could convey their unique findings and recommendations drawn from community input as well as their own individual expertise and experience.

In some cases, the external consultants reached differing conclusions. An example of a conflicting conclusion is the call by one reviewer to dismantle the Special Constable Services while another reviewer recommended increasing resources to bolster the Special Constable Services. As a result, there may appear to be some incongruities in their recommendations presented below. However, the committee members felt it was important for us to come together and provide clear direction to the university to respond to the review.

### 1. COMPREHENSIVE RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 1.1 Dismantle the SCS

**Decision:** The committee does not agree on or endorse the recommendation to dismantle the SCS.

**Committee Response:** The committee recommends that the university should conduct a detailed review of SCS activities, roles, and responsibilities and look at de-tasking and re-tasking the SCS by re-allocating resources to better serve the students and the greater Laurier community. De-tasking the SCS refers to removing certain community responsibilities, such as certain aspects of mental health response and support, from SCS officers and re-defining their role considering these changes. Re-tasking the SCS officers with the emphasis of student and staff safety from an equity lens will help create a better community of care surrounding our

Brantford and Waterloo campuses. The committee suggests increasing and re-allocating funding and resources to enhance community response and support programs to better benefit the health and well-being of our students, staff, and faculty. Additionally, the implementation of financial visibility and transparency when regulating new SCS operations is recommended to ensure adequate funding is available to areas supporting community safety, gender violence support, anti-oppression, anti-racism and cultural safety training (a term the committee believes to be more fitting than “cultural compliance training”).

### **1.2 Increase SCS presence and proactive patrols**

**Decision:** The committee does not agree on the recommendation to increase SCS presence and proactive patrols.

**Committee Response:** The committee believes an increase in SCS presence and proactive patrols would cause harm to our racialized communities and therefore negatively affect our students, staff, and faculty. However, an increase in proactive campus *engagement* should focus on being visible, accessible, and able to connect. While a level of surveillance on campus is necessary, it should remain balanced between traditional policing and community engagement, potentially including an SCS presence that blends in with campus life. The committee discussed the position of a “Community Relations Officer” to connect SCS with different communities on and off campus to offer support and services. The committee felt strongly that an increase of engagement and involvement in the Laurier community is necessary. However, this should not lead to an increase in racial profiling which should be tracked and monitored through reporting procedures following every SCS incident.

### **1.3 Conduct a specific Laurier Brantford campus review**

**Decision:** The committee agrees on the recommendation to conduct a Brantford-specific review.

**Committee Response:** Laurier’s Brantford campus has a vastly different layout and downtown core compared to the Waterloo campus and therefore requires different types of services to provide an equally safe and comfortable student, staff, and faculty experience.

### **1.4 Conduct an SCS staffing review of the hiring process and of retention**

**Decision:** The committee agrees on the recommendation of an SCS staffing review surrounding the current hiring process and for improved retention.

**Committee Response:** Regarding hiring, the job description of an SCS officer should be re-defined outlining the differences between SCS officers and Waterloo Regional/Brantford Police officers. The staffing review should include special attention regarding officer retention. Additionally, an increase in the hiring of equity-denied individuals is suggested and necessary. However, an increase in community care, community engagement, diverse support, and inclusion must be implemented prior to an increase in inclusive hiring.

## **2. COMMUNITY-BUILDING RECOMMENDATIONS**

## **2.1 Undertake a uniform review**

**Decision:** The committee agrees on the recommendation to review the current SCS uniform.

**Committee Response:** The uniform review committee should have diverse voices and perspectives. Care should be made to ensure that the SCS understands the current barriers that the uniform presents to building meaningful relationships with our diverse community members. A new SCS uniform should directly align with the revised roles and responsibilities of SCS rather than appearing as full law enforcement. Potentially including campus partners such as the Students' Union and Graduate Student's Association or university departments such as the Centre for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion would allow for students and staff to provide input on a new uniform emphasizing safety and support rather than law enforcement. Additionally, the uniform review should extend to other SCS factors such as vehicles and third-party security officers.

## **2.2 Improve the communication strategy**

**Decision:** The committee agrees on the recommendation to improve or create a communication strategy.

**Committee Response:** Within an improved communication strategy, the committee suggests an internal and external approach to provide a clear definition regarding the roles and responsibilities of an SCS officer. While maintaining a geographical context specific to each campus, a new social media strategy/presence should include a holistic and integrated approach to building better relationships with staff and students. Ideally, this recommendation will help bridge SCS with current and prospective students to show how they can be helped rather than "policed."

## **2.3 Develop intentional strategies focused on relationship-building with students, faculty, staff and stakeholders**

**Decision:** The committee agrees on the recommendation that an increase in relationship-building between SCS and students, faculty, and staff would be beneficial.

**Committee Response:** While the committee agrees with the decision to build better campus relationships, authenticity is required when creating these relationships. Additionally, there may be some members of the community who are resistant to these relationships. It is important that those who are resistant to this increased engagement are heard and that SCS should only be included when invited.

## **2.4 Increase community partnerships**

**Decision:** The committee agrees on the recommendation to increase community partnerships, taking into account the specific characteristics of each campus.

**Committee Response:** The SCS can form community partnerships that add value to Laurier's students, staff, and faculty. Community agencies can augment SCS offerings by providing

expertise and specialized supports, especially for diverse individuals who are underrepresented and marginalized. Again, an emphasis on genuineness and authenticity is an important element of this recommendation

### **3. TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **3.1 Increase mental health and sexual assault training**

**Decision:** The committee agrees on the recommendation to increase mental health and gender violence training.

**Committee Response:** An increase in mental health and gender violence training should be viewed from a campus-specific lens, as Waterloo officers will require different training than Brantford officers owing to the difference in student, staff, and community experience. Connecting to the recommendation to re-allocate funding and re/de-task SCS, the committee also suggests a follow-up procedure be implemented following every incident surrounding mental health. If possible, an entirely separate mental health unit would be beneficial to both campus operations, similar to the models at the University of Guelph, Western University and the University of Waterloo.

#### **3.2 Implement the problem-solving model “SARA” (Scanning, Analysis, Response, Assessment)**

**Decision:** The committee agrees on the recommendation for SCS leadership to implement a problem-solving model such as SARA.

**Committee Response:** The SARA problem-solving model is valuable for assessing the different needs of the two campuses and for evaluating the implementation of a new SCS program. This allows for the development and evaluation of responsive and intentional programs following implementation to ensure they are achieving their required purpose and to make additional changes if needed.

#### **3.3 Implement cultural safety training**

**Decision:** The committee agrees on the recommendation that cultural safety training would be beneficial.

**Committee Response:** The implementation of cultural safety training should be approached cautiously and delivered in a thoughtful and intentional manner. Its priorities should include developing a tracking system of situations handled and providing training surrounding subconscious discriminatory actions such as racial profiling.

### **4. ACCESS AND SAFETY RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **4.1 Physically and centrally locate a base of operations**

**Decision:** The committee agrees on the recommendation of a centrally located base of operations on/close enough to Laurier's campuses.

**Committee Response:** The SCS base of operations should not overlap or interfere with the Laurier student campus services. SCS should be an independent location easily identified and well known to students so as to increase flow and access for students. Students should be able to quickly and easily approach SCS in a comfortable space where they feel welcomed and receive the service they require.

#### **4.2 Implement a student safety patrol program**

**Decision:** The committee agrees on the recommendation to implement a student program to support student safety and wellness.

**Committee Response:** To support community members and complement the work of SCS, the committee suggests developing a student-led emergency service that would work with the health and wellness departments under Student Affairs for training and support. The university would work with the Students' Union to discuss the future role of its existing Emergency Response Team service to utilize them for other campus wellness operations and situations.

### Summary

This report offers 11 decisions that the committee believes will improve the way the Special Constable Service interacts with Black, Indigenous and racialized members of the Laurier community. The committee is confident that the outcome of its review will be beneficial in enhancing SCS operations and ensuring that all members of the Laurier community feel a greater sense of safety, support and inclusion.

The committee co-chairs wish to express a sincere sense of gratitude towards the members of the committee for participating in this review. In addition, the entire committee would like to thank the university community for its input, expertise, and diverse opinions, and looks forward to seeing the evolution of Laurier's Special Constable Service.

### Next Steps

A formal report will be created and the findings of the committee will be presented to the Cabinet in June 2022.

## Glossary

- **Community of Care:** where individuals discuss mental health and personal issues openly and without stigma
- **Community Relations Officer:** an individual who assists in managing the relationships between a department or company (in this case SCS) with the greater campus community.
- **Cultural Compliance Training:** an instruction to achieve cultural competence and the ability to appreciate and interpret other cultures accurately. The committee unanimously decided to refer to what is often called “cultural compliance training” as cultural safety training to better reflect the purpose and meaning behind the term.
- **De-Tasking:** delegation of current police tasks towards more appropriate organizations and institutions, thus reducing the negative consequences of police engagement in unsuitable activities and reducing the police budget.
- **Inclusivity:** the practice or policy of providing equal access to opportunities and resources for people who might otherwise be excluded or marginalized, such as those having physical or mental disabilities or belonging to other racialized and unrepresented groups.
- **Marginalized Individuals:** groups and communities that experience discrimination and exclusion (social, political, and economic) because of unequal power relationships across economic, political, social, and cultural dimensions.
- **Re-Tasking:** To remove or re-assign certain roles and responsibilities to different positions and individuals.
- **SARA (Scanning, Analysis, Response, Assessment) Problem Solving Method:** The SARA problem-solving model adds value to and emphasizes the importance of assessment following the implementation of a new program.
- **SCS:** Special Constable Services
- **Sense of Belonging:** feeling of security and support when there is a sense of acceptance, inclusion, and identity for a member of a certain group.