



NIAGARA REGIONAL POLICE SERVICE

Police Service Board Report

PUBLIC AGENDA

Subject: Annual Report – Public Order Units
January 1 to December 31, 2024

Report To: Chair and Members, Niagara Police Service Board

Report Date: 2025-01-27

Recommendation(s)

That the Niagara Police Service Board (Board) receive this report for information.

Key Facts

- The purpose of this report is to advise the Board that the Niagara Regional Police Service (Service) is in compliance with By-Law 495-2024 – Public Order Units.
- The Service has had a Public Order Unit (POU) since 2022.
- The Chief is required to make a written annual report to the Board with respect to POU.

Financial Considerations

For the year ended December 31, 2024, the POU incurred net expenses of \$710,515.54. Of this amount, \$514,983.42 (72%) were labour-related costs. Overtime costs were the main contributing factor, totalling \$318,222.24 for the year. Uniform costs amounted to \$19,117.75. Items purchased included combat shirts, pants, tactical shirts, tactical pants, and other uniform items.

For the year, the unit acquired necessary minor machinery and equipment in the amount of \$223,125.29. Items acquired included less lethal platforms, less lethal munitions, a long-range acoustic device, conducted energy weapons, helmets, and protective armour.

Analysis

In accordance with By-Law 495-2024, the Chief shall provide the Board with a written report on an annual basis in respect of the POU. The report shall include:

- a) a summary of the procedures concerning POU services as required by this By-Law;
- b) the status of Service compliance with said procedures;

- c) confirmation that Members have been trained in accordance with Section 4.3;
- d) confirmation of the development and maintenance of the manual on POU services; and
- e) a summary of the circumstances in which the POU has been deployed.

This Board report will outline each of the above and confirm our compliance with the By-Law:

- a) *“...a summary of the procedures concerning POU services as required this By-Law...”*

Section 7(2) of Ontario Regulation 392/23 of the Community Safety and Policing Act, 2019, requires provisions for a Police Service to maintain the public peace.

“...The following standards for adequate and effective policing, relating primarily to maintaining the public peace, are prescribed:

1. *Maintaining the public peace shall include the functions of a POU.*
2. *A POU shall have the capacity to deploy to a public order incident...”*

In May 2022, the Service created its own POU and is no longer reliant on a Shared Services Agreement with Hamilton and Waterloo Regional Police Services.

General Order (GO) 150.07 – Civil Disturbances and Mass Arrests defines the circumstances justifying the deployment of the POU, the notifications required, and the manner in which the deployment is approved and activated.

GO 259.01- Public Order Unit reflects the fact that the Service now has its own POU, and this policy also addresses the circumstances that call for the notification of appropriate officials in relation to Sections 63 to 68 of the *Criminal Code of Canada* in relation to unlawful assemblies and riot situations.

- b) *“...the status of Service compliance with said procedures...”*

The Service is in compliance with legislative requirements. The Service’s procedures regarding the POU fulfill the legislative requirements listed within Section 8 (2) of Ontario Regulation 392/23 of the Community Safety and Policing Act, 2019.

“...Procedures respecting the deployment of a public order unit for planned and unplanned public order incidents...”

In April 2022, members were selected for the Service's POU. These officers took part in the Basic Public Order Unit training course administered by officers with the Hamilton POU.

- c) *"...confirmation that Members have been trained in accordance with Section 4.3 ..."*

The POU Training cadre will address the ongoing training of members of the POU. This training will take place semi-annually, with one week set in the spring and the other in the fall.

In 2024, 4 Service instructors were trained to facilitate POU annual training. Our Basic Training Course is in compliance with the Ontario Police College provincial standards.

In 2024, 3 members of the POU were trained as Less Lethal Instructors, 5 members trained as Search Managers, 3 members were trained as Remotely Piloted Air Systems (RPAS) pilots, and 2 additional members were trained as Police Liaison Team members.

- d) *"...confirmation of the development and maintenance of the manual on POU services..."*

The Service has created a POU manual outlining legislative requirements pertaining to the POU, as well as the training and testing members are required to participate in.

- e) *"...a summary of the circumstances in which the POU has been deployed..."*

On March 13, 2024, members of the POU conducted a ground search in the areas surrounding the Bruce Trail south of Merritt Street, St. Catharines to support the investigation of a missing person. An extensive area was covered in detail by the POU; however, the missing person remained outstanding.

April 8, 2024, the Hamilton and London POU's assisted the Service's POU during the solar eclipse event along the Niagara Parkway in Niagara Falls. Due to inclement weather a smaller than expected crowd turned out for the event and the supporting teams were released.

On May 14, 2024, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, and the Premier of Ontario, Doug Ford, attended the Port Colborne Engineering and Operations Centre. Approximately 55-75 protestors attended and attempted to block ingress to the site and disrupt the Prime Ministers departure. Members of the POU maintained a peaceful demonstration and facilitated an uninterrupted visit by the dignitaries.

On June 7, 2024, an unsanctioned event commonly referred to as "Beach Day" occurred with the largest concentration of high school and post secondary youths

attending Sunset Beach in St. Catharines. Several disturbances occurred resulting in the intervention of the POU and patrol resources. Approximately 1000 youths attended the event.

On June 8, 2024, Pride in the Park was hosted by the City of St. Catharines in Montebello Park. As a result of protestor action that was taken at the previous year's event, the Service's POU took a proactive approach and provided a visible presence, which resulted in a peaceful event in 2024 with no reported issues.

On June 9, 2024, the POU was deployed to Toronto for a joint POU event, the Walk with Israel, which occurs annually. The event was attended by over 55,000 participants and a highly organized and vocal contingent of protestors. This was a cost recovery deployment paid for by the City of Toronto.

On July 1, 2024, Canada Day celebrations in Niagara Falls saw 60,000 participate in celebrations between Clifton Hill and Murray Hill along the Niagara Parkway. The POU was deployed to facilitate a peaceful event. Shortly before midnight the POU was called to attend Sherkston Shores in the City of Port Colborne to respond to a disturbance involving approximately 500 young people. The POU attended and was successful in dispersing the gathering and preventing further incidents and injuries from occurring.

On July 5 and 6, 2024, the POU was requested to attend the Born and Raised Concerts at Montebello Park in the City of St. Catharines. The concerts drew thousands of members of the public to the weekend performances. Members of the POU and uniform resources stood by to ensure that peace was maintained.

On July 9, 2024, members of the POU conducted a ground search for a missing vulnerable person in the City of Niagara Falls. An extensive search was conducted by POU members in support of the investigation.

On July 21, 2024, a Palestinian protest was held in Niagara Falls including protest members from Toronto and Hamilton. The protest intended on walking onto the Rainbow bridge to rendezvous with protest members on the American side. Hamilton and Waterloo POU members attended and assisted the Service's POU in securing the bridge and escorting the march through the City of Niagara Falls. Approximately 700 protest members attended.

On August 2 and 3, 2024, the Service's POU assisted with the Canal Days event in the City of Port Colborne. Concerts were held on both dates, culminating with their main show on Saturday evening. A crowd surge occurred resulting in a stampede, which breached the perimeter fence. Approximately 14,000 people attended the event exceeding the approved capacity. The POU coordinated with event organizers to mitigate the situation and maintain order.

On September 28, 2024, during the Niagara Grape and Wine Festival, a Pro-Palestinian protest was held downtown in the City of St. Catharines. Prior to the Palestinian event, on the same day, the POU was deployed to the Rainbow Bridge to maintain order during a Freedom Convoy protest where protest members walked onto the bridge to meet with counterparts on the American side. The POU was successful in preventing disruption to commerce at the Rainbow Bridge, as well as maintaining order during the St. Catharines Palestinian protest. The Grape and Wine Grande Parade was not disrupted, and order was maintained.

On October 3 and 4, 2024, the POU conducted evidence searches in support of Major Crime regarding a homicide, which occurred in Niagara Falls. Extremely dense and challenging terrain was covered over the 2-day ground search.

On October 5, 2024, the POU supported the Hamilton Police Service's POU at their University Homecoming event both in the city and at McMaster University. Throughout the day and night, approximately 10,000 young adults attended the unsanctioned event. This was a cost recovery deployment paid for by the City of Hamilton.

On October 11, 2024, a planned protest occurred at the Welland Courthouse at 102 East Main Street. The POU attended and liaised with event organizers. Approximately 55 protestors attended, gathering at the intersection of Cross Street and East Main Street, and at the front of the courthouse.

On October 30, 2024, the POU conducted an evidence search at Grimsby Secondary School in response to the detonation of an explosive device.

On November 14, 2024, the POU conducted a ground search for a missing person along the Niagara River, in Niagara-on-the-Lake. Members searched the area and also utilized an RPAS to scan the challenging areas of the shoreline and Niagara River.

On December 31, 2024, the POU was deployed to Clifton Hill in Niagara Falls for the annual New Year's Eve event. Approximately 35,000 people attended despite the inclement weather. Members of the POU along with frontline patrol resources maintained a high visibility presence ensuring that peace was maintained.

For the reasons stated above, the Service remains in compliance with By-Law 495-2024 as it relates to POU's.

Alternatives Reviewed

Not applicable.

Relationship to Police Service/Board Strategic Priorities

To comply with the provisions of Board By-Laws and to maintain compliance with Adequate and Effective Policing requirements.

Relevant Policy Considerations

Board By-Law 495-2024, Public Order Units
GO 150.07 – Civil Disturbances & Mass Arrests
GO 259.01 – Public Order Unit

Other Pertinent Reports

8.8 – 2024.04.25 – Annual Report – Public Order Units – January 1 to December 31, 2023

This report was prepared by Matt Whiteley, Staff Sergeant, Public Order Unit Commander, in consultation with Curtis Custers, Finance Unit, and Jesse Miller, Inspector, Emergency Planning. Reviewed by Darrin Forbes, Superintendent, Emergency Services. Recommended by Todd Waselovich, Deputy Chief, Operational Services.



Submitted by:

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Acting Chief of Police

Appendices

Not applicable.