



NIAGARA REGIONAL POLICE SERVICE

Police Service Board Report

PUBLIC AGENDA

Subject: Annual Report – Canine Units – January 1 to December 31, 2024
Report To: Chair and Members, Niagara Police Service Board
Report Date: 2025-04-25

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 467-2024 – Canine Units.
- The Chief is required to make an annual written report to the Board with respect to the Canine Unit.
- This report will set out a summary of the procedures required by this By-Law and the status of Service compliance with the said procedures.

Financial Considerations

There are no financial implications relating to the recommendations contained within this report.

Analysis

In accordance with By-Law 467-2024, the Chief shall make a written report to the Board on or before August 30 of each year in respect of the Canine Unit. This report shall include:

- a) a summary of the procedures as required by this By-Law;
- b) the status of Service compliance with said procedures;
- c) confirmation of the development and maintenance of the Manual on Canine Unit services;
- d) a summary of the circumstances in which the Canine Unit has been deployed; and
- e) confirmation that Members have been trained in accordance with Section 5.3.

The following is a detailed response to the above-noted requirements:

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

The Service is required to have available to them, the services of canine tracking 24 hours a day. The Canine Unit is governed by the written procedures as set out in Canine Unit General Order (GO) 077.14 and the Canine Unit Manual. These written procedures include the circumstances in which a canine team will be deployed, the process for obtaining services, reporting relationships, equipment, training, and the selection process for canine handlers.

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

The Service is in compliance with this By-Law. The Canine Unit has an authorized strength of one sergeant and six constables. Qualified unit members conduct initial certification courses, annual recertification courses, and maintenance training for all handlers and canine teams pursuant to the Community Safety and Policing Act (CSPA). The 6 constables have general-purpose police service dogs, meaning they are trained for tracking, conducting searches and suspect apprehension. There are three dogs cross-trained for narcotics detection, two cross-trained for explosives detection, and two trained in firearms detection.

c) *“...confirmation of the development and maintenance of a Manual on Canine Unit services...”*

The Canine Unit Manual is reviewed on an annual basis and is available to all canine handlers on the Service's computer network.

d) *“...a summary of the circumstances in which the Canine Unit has been deployed ...”*

In 2024, the services of Canine Unit members were requested for 1,642 calls for service. Members of the unit also responded to calls for service supporting frontline officers, where police service dogs were not required. This number has increased due to officers conducting extra patrols in high crime areas. The number of police service dog deployments has decreased since 2023 due to the training of two new police service dogs and canine handlers, and time off incurred from injuries to both police service dogs and officers in the unit. New deployment techniques now require officers to use a higher level of scrutiny when deciding to use a police service dog for subject apprehensions. Based on a totality of the circumstances, there must be an immediate need to apprehend a subject for public and officer safety to utilize a police service dog for that purpose. Incidents where police service dogs conducting drug searches have also increased since 2022. Request for Explosive Detection Dogs to attend special event venue sweeps and Explosive Disposal Unit calls have also seen an increase.

Circumstances	2024	2023	2022
Request for Canine Unit Services	1,642	1,873	1,445
Police Service Dog Deployments	443	462	402
Tracking Subjects	269	316	268
Controlled Substances (Drug) Searches	8	8	6
Explosives Searches	10	3	3

- e) *“...confirmation that Members have been trained in accordance with Section 5.3...”*

All members of the Canine Unit are trained within the guidelines of Provincial Adequate and Effective Policing regulations relevant to Emergency Response (O. Reg. 392/23 and O. Reg. 87/24).

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 467-2024 - Canine Units
GO 077.14 - Canine Unit
CSPA O. Reg. 392/23 and O. Reg. 87/24

Other Pertinent Reports

8.8 - 2024.05.23 - Annual Report – Canine Unit – January 1 to December 31, 2023.

This report was prepared by Jeffrey Vanderspek, Sergeant, Canine Unit, in consultation with Matthew Whiteley, Staff Sergeant, Emergency Services Unit; reviewed by Matthew Hodges, Inspector, Emergency Operations. Reviewed and recommended by Darrin Forbes, Acting Deputy Chief, Operational Services.



Submitted by:

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Chief of Police

Appendices

Not applicable.