



# **NIAGARA REGIONAL POLICE SERVICE**

## **Police Service Board Report**

### **PUBLIC AGENDA**

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**Subject:** Annual Report – Domestic and Family Violence Occurrences  
January 1 to December 31, 2024

**Report To:** Chair and Members, Niagara Police Service Board

**Report Date:** 2025-04-25

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### **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 511-2024 – Domestic / Family Violence Occurrences.
- The Chief is required to make a written annual report to the Board with respect to domestic/family violence.
- This report provides information to the Board for review and consideration of information relating to the Service's response to domestic/family violence.

### **Financial Considerations**

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

### **Analysis**

In accordance with By-Law 511-2024, the Chief shall make a written report to the Board on or before August 30 of each year in respect of the investigation of domestic/family violence occurrences. The report shall include:

- a) A summary of the written procedures concerning Domestic/Family Violence investigations, including changes since the date of the last report;
- b) The status of Service compliance with the said procedures;
- c) A summary of the training given to Members with respect to domestic/family violence;
- d) A summary of the steps taken by the Service to monitor and evaluate response to domestic/family violence occurrences; and
- e) A summary of the issues dealt with by the Domestic/Family Violence coordinating committee (DVCC).

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

- a) *“...a summary of the written procedures concerning Domestic/Family Violence investigations, including changes since the date of the last report...”*

The Service has specific policies related to the investigation of domestic/family violence occurrences. The following general orders (GO's) establish rules, procedures, and responsibilities for managing investigations into domestic/family violence incidents:

- GO 019.09 – Violent Crime Bail
- GO 052.07 – Mobile Tracking Emergency Response System (MTERS) Program
- GO 084.08 – Child Abuse and Neglect
- GO 114.13 – Domestic/Family Violence
- GO 115.07 – Assistance for Victims and Witnesses
- GO 173.10 – Parental and Non-Parental Abductions

GO 114.13 – Domestic/Family Violence meets all the requirements as outlined in Adequate and Effective Policing LE-024 Domestic Violence Occurrences.

The MTERS program is a personal alarm for individuals who are deemed “high-risk” victims of domestic violence and other serious violent offences. This alarm system is a GPS device that is carried by a client. Upon activation, the GPS device sends a signal to a monitoring centre, which in turn notifies the Service’s Communications Unit, and a call for service is generated. The MTERS program is facilitated and monitored through Victim Services Niagara (VSN).

Presently, there are 15 MTERS alarms allocated within Niagara with an additional 4 available if required by additional clients. On average, there are 15 MTERS alarms active within Niagara at any one time. In 2024, 18 clients were MTERS recipients and members of the Service responded to 13 MTERS alarm activations, 12 of which were determined to be unintentional/accidental. GO 052.07 – Mobile Tracking Emergency Response System (MTERS) Program sets out the policy and procedures respecting MTERS alarms.

The Domestic Violence Response Protocol, developed between the Service, VSN, Victim Witness Assistance Program (VWAP), and Sexual Assault/Domestic Violence Treatment Program, is a community-driven document that outlines how the community partners respond to incidents of domestic violence. In addition to presenting clearly defined roles and responsibilities for all service providers, the protocol delineates the approach and agreed upon principles of responding to domestic violence. This “best practices approach” results in a consistent, comprehensive, and knowledgeable response from community partners to the needs of the complainant/client.

The protocol includes:

- Domestic Violence Response Protocol
- Protocol Agency Representatives
- Statement of Principles and Beliefs
- Definitions
- Commitments and Responsibilities
- General Intervention Principles
- Dispute Resolution
- Community Resource Referrals
- Special Circumstance Investigations
- Confidentiality
- Duration of Protocol

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

The Service continually reviews compliance with Adequate and Effective Policing and policy directives, including GOs and community response protocols. The Service incorporates the following models, as designated by the Ministry of the Solicitor General:

- Ensuring that an adequate number of patrol officers have received the Domestic Violence Investigators Course, and domestic violence investigators receive updated and continued training in domestic violence; and
- Maintaining a specialized unit of domestic violence investigators, responsible for undertaking, managing, or reviewing the investigation of domestic violence occurrences.

The centralized Domestic Violence Unit (DVU) in 2024 consisted of 1 detective sergeant and 12 detective constables who are trained in conducting “enhanced domestic violence investigations”. The DVU mandate is to assist frontline uniform personnel with the investigation of all domestic/family incidents whether or not they involve violence, and to assume responsibility for the investigation of all domestic violence incidents that may result in criminal charges. Domestic violence investigators also provide increased monitoring of high-risk cases, consultation, and review of all reported domestic and family violence cases, as well as a closer working relationship with crown attorneys assigned to domestic violence cases.

The following chart illustrates the domestic violence statistics for 2022 - 2024:

Classifications	2022	2023	2024
Domestic-related Reports - Criminal Investigations	1143	1149	2951
Domestic-related Criminal Investigations - Charges	954	803	901
Domestic-related Criminal Investigations - No Charges	189	346	2050

The 2024 statistical report depicts a significant increase in domestic criminal investigations. When frontline officers respond to calls for service, they are classified by the dispatcher. For example, a domestic disturbance in the past would be cleared as a disturbance. Upon review by the Domestic Violence Unit, a disturbance often alleges an assault and is investigated as such. Thus, if a criminal offence was alleged, investigated, and deemed non-criminal or insufficient evidence to proceed, then it is now cleared as a domestic criminal investigation. This reclassification more appropriately captures the number of domestic-related criminal investigations being conducted by the Service.

c) *“...a summary of the training given to Members with respect to Domestic/Family Violence...”*

The Service continues to provide Service-wide training to investigators, frontline officers, and Communications Unit personnel. Specifically, members of the DVU attended the following training courses in 2024:

- Criminal Investigative Techniques Course
- Domestic Violence Investigators Course
- Search Warrant Course
- PEACE Interviewing Course
- Ontario Domestic Assault Risk Assessment Certification Course
- Investigative Interviewing Course
- Major Case Management Course

The Domestic Violence Investigators Course is scheduled annually and is available to all sworn members of the Service. This course was held in February 2024 and is scheduled to be held again in June 2025.

d) *“...a summary of the steps taken by the Service to monitor and evaluate response to Domestic/Family Violence occurrences...”*

In accordance with GO 114.13 - Domestic/Family Violence, a detailed initial report shall be completed in response to all domestic/family violence incident complaints, whether or not an offence has occurred.

All reported domestic incidents that involve an Intimate Partner Relationship are flagged in the Versadex Records Management System. These reports are then routed to the DVU for review and appropriate action (concluded if they are complete, or assigned for follow-up, as required).

The Service continues to enforce the Attorney General's Mandatory Charge Policy, by requiring officers to lay charges in all incidents involving violence, abuse, or conflict between past or present intimate partners, where there are reasonable grounds to believe a criminal offence was committed.

The DVU works collaboratively with Probation and Parole, domestic violence shelters, VSN, VWAP, Crown Attorney's Office, Family and Children Services Niagara, and community agencies to continually evaluate and monitor the Service's response to Domestic/Family Violence occurrences.

- e) *"...a summary of the issues dealt with by the Domestic/Family Violence coordinating committee..."*

DVCC meets on a regular basis to facilitate and monitor the domestic violence court process and provide a forum for information sharing, process review, problem solving, and to promote a coordinated, effective justice response to domestic violence, in a multicultural environment.

Throughout the year, the DVCC addresses a variety of issues. A brief summary of priority challenges included:

- Working with abusive men to ensure they receive appropriate services. Counselling is offered by two partnered agencies – Partner Assault Response (PAR) Program and I'm a Kind Man. The Crown Attorney's office and VWAP aspire to have an Early Intervention Program; however, to date this has not been implemented. The Crown Attorney office has two newly appointed Domestic Violence Crown Attorneys who, in concert with VWAP, are working toward the development of an effective early intervention program, best suited for the Niagara Region;
- Domestic violence victims living in rural areas have limited access to services, may become isolated from social and community supports, and may suffer in silence if they are being abused. The issue of rural geography also impacts the PAR Program provider's ability to deliver services, and an offender's ability to attend PAR sessions. Probation and Parole services also experience challenges in delivering an appropriate level of supervision of offenders. To overcome these challenges the Service continues to work with community partners to deliver adequate services in rural areas of the Niagara Region, including a presence at the Service's rural detachments of satellite probation and parole offices;
- There are two domestic violence shelters that offer support services for the Niagara Region. Safe, secure, and affordable housing is a key component of a community response to domestic violence. A significant number of women continue to stay in abusive relationships due to the lack of affordable housing or shelter availability within the Region. The shelters are generally fully occupied throughout the year;
- Agencies continue to report the need for services for elderly victims of domestic violence. The elderly present specific and unique challenges in accessing appropriate services. A coordinated effort is required to address these issues, and the Service continues to work collaboratively with its partners to assess appropriate responses on a case-by-case basis;

- Persistent challenges remain in the Family Court system due to high legal costs and the difficulty of obtaining a lawyer to proceed with legal aid certificates. Due to the challenges, numerous clients are forced into a situation where they have to represent themselves in Family Court proceedings; and
- Discussions continue regarding specific interim release conditions as they pertain to bail. Accused persons are often being released with a condition to provide police with an address within 24 hours after their release. It has been difficult to track the compliance of the condition and it is continually being discussed with members of the judiciary.

The Service remains compliant with By-Law 511-2024, respecting adequate service delivery in response to domestic and family violence.

### **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 511-2024, Domestic/Family Violence Occurrences  
GO 114.13 – Domestic/Family Violence

### **Other Pertinent Reports**

8.11 – 2024.05.23 – Annual Report – Domestic/Family Violence – January 1 to December 31, 2023.

*This report was prepared by Tara Henderson, Staff Sergeant, Domestic Violence Unit; and reviewed by Chris Lemaich, Inspector, Investigative Support. Reviewed and recommended by Dave Masotti, Acting Deputy Chief, Community Services.*



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### **Submitted by:**

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Chief of Police

### **Appendices**

Not applicable.