



# NIAGARA REGIONAL POLICE SERVICE

## Police Service Board Report

### PUBLIC AGENDA

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**Subject:** Impaired Driving and the Discontinuation of Name Publication  
**Report To:** Chair and Members, Niagara Police Service Board  
**Report Date:** 2025-07-04

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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 inform the Board that the Niagara Regional Police Service (Service) has discontinued the practice of regularly publishing the names of all individuals arrested for impaired driving-related offences.
- The Service had previously issued media releases, typically on a weekly basis that included lists of all individuals arrested and charged with impaired driving (alcohol and/or drug).
- The practice was believed to act as a deterrent and contribute to impaired driving prevention; however, there is no evidence to support this claim.
- Other impaired driving initiatives will continue, and new strategies will be explored, as impaired driving remains a top priority for enforcement, education, and prevention.
- Discontinuing the regular publication of names does not prevent the release of an individual's name under specific circumstances, such as serious incidents. It also does not affect the issuance of media releases related to Reduce Impaired Driving Everywhere (RIDE) programs or other traffic enforcement initiatives.
- This report has been prepared to provide context, as this change in practice is expected to attract media interest.

### Financial Considerations

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

### Analysis

Impaired driving remains one of the leading criminal causes of personal injury and death in Canada. In response, police services across the country have implemented various initiatives to reduce these incidents within their jurisdictions. One such initiative in

Niagara was the publication of the names of all individuals charged with impaired driving offences.

Since January 2014, the Service regularly published these lists. Compiled weekly by the Traffic Enforcement Unit (TEU), the lists were distributed through media releases by the Corporate Communications Unit. While there is no empirical evidence demonstrating that this practice deterred impaired driving, it was introduced based on two assumptions:

1. Publicly naming individuals might cause embarrassment, thereby discouraging impaired driving.
2. Because impaired driving charges result in an automatic 90-day administrative licence suspension, publishing names could encourage members of the public to report individuals who continued to drive while suspended, preventing the continuation of the offence.

The second assumption was thought to assist in identifying and arresting repeat offenders, though there is no data supporting its effectiveness. It is important to note that the 90-day suspension is an administrative consequence triggered by the charge itself, not a predictor of future offences. In cases where repeat behaviour is a concern, police may impose conditions upon release through an undertaking or request specific bail conditions during a hearing, if appropriate.

Table 1 provides data on the number of individuals charged with impaired driving-related offences since the Service began publishing these lists in 2014. Notably, the data shows no measurable impact on annual totals, offering no evidence that the publication of names acted as a deterrent.

Table 1:

<b>Charged Impaired Driver Statistics</b>			
<b>Year</b>	<b>Impaired by Alcohol</b>	<b>Impaired by Drug</b>	<b>Total</b>
2014	474	0	474
2015	483	0	483
2016	538	1	539
2017	528	0	528
2018	432	1	433
2019	433	48	481
2020	360	108	468
2021	377	130	507
2022	428	71	498
2023	458	79	537
2024	464	62	526

It is important to note that any time information is released by the Service, it introduces potential risk and liability. Discontinuing the practice of publishing all names of

individuals charged with impaired driving helps mitigate these risks. One consistent issue has been confusion caused when individuals with the same name are mistaken for those listed in public releases, leading to reputational harm for uninvolved members of the public.

#### Environmental Scan:

As part of this process review, an environmental scan was conducted with neighbouring police services to determine their current practices regarding the publication of names for all impaired driving arrests.

The following police services were consulted:

- Hamilton Police Service
- Halton Regional Police Service
- Peel Regional Police
- Toronto Police Service
- Waterloo Regional Police
- York Regional Police

None of these services currently publish regular lists of all individuals charged with impaired driving-related offences.

In December 2018, York Regional Police began publishing the names, ages, and hometowns of those charged with impaired driving. The goal was to make impaired driving “socially unacceptable” and to alert the public to individuals who may be driving under suspension. However, the practice was discontinued in May 2019 due to challenges with data verification and concerns over public backlash.

Similarly, Halton Regional Police Service had engaged in this practice, but following a 2023 review that showed no measurable impact on impaired driving rates, they also chose to end it. Their focus has since shifted to providing broader educational information about impaired driving on local roads.

#### Considerations:

Several factors were taken into account during the review process:

- Deterrence – While public exposure may discourage some individuals from impaired driving due to shame or reputational harm, this appears to be anecdotal, as no evidence supports its effectiveness.
- Transparency – Publishing names can demonstrate the Service’s commitment to enforcing impaired driving laws, potentially increasing public trust.
- Public Safety - Sharing names may help alert the community, especially in cases involving repeat offenders.

- Accountability – Public consequences may encourage individuals to take responsibility for their actions.
- Presumption of Innocence – Publishing names before conviction may unfairly damage reputations, as all individuals are presumed innocent until proven guilty.
- Privacy Concerns - Even though arrest records are public, widespread dissemination of names can have lasting personal and professional consequences, for both individuals and families.
- Stigmatization – Publicizing names can disproportionately impact certain communities and cause undue shame for first-time or borderline offenders.
- Unequal Impact – Individuals with greater resources may better mitigate reputational damage, while others could face long-term harm.

#### Future Direction:

Given the lack of measurable benefit and the fact that other Ontario police services do not regularly publish names in all impaired driving arrests, the discontinuation of this practice aligns with modern policing standards. It also protects individual rights and reduces the Service's organizational risk.

The Service recognizes that transparency, public education, and evidence-based crime prevention remain essential. In place of name publication, a new initiative will be launched to release anonymized, aggregated data monthly. This will include:

- Age
- Sex
- Niagara resident or non-resident
- Municipality/location of arrest
- Driver's license class (G1, G2, G, etc.)
- Driving experience (less than 5 years / more than 5 years)

This data-driven approach will provide meaningful public education while allowing the Service to:

- Identify hotspot locations for focused enforcement;
- Develop customized deterrence strategies;
- Tailor educational outreach to overrepresented groups; and
- Maintain privacy and uphold individual rights.

This shift supports the principles of evidence-based policing and ensures that enforcement strategies are guided by actionable data, rather than unproven assumptions. In alignment with this long-standing change in practice, the Service remains committed to its partnership with Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) Canada, supporting impactful initiatives that reduce impaired driving in our region through education and prevention.

While the publication of all names will cease, media releases related to impaired driving will continue. These include updates on RIDE campaigns, highlighting locations and general statistics such as the number of vehicles stopped and arrests made, as well as case-specific releases, such as media releases for serious collisions involving injury or death where impaired driving charges are laid, or in instances involving repeat offenders, where a public release is deemed appropriate.

This change reflects the Service's commitment to responsible information sharing, balanced with the need to protect individual rights and uphold public trust. By adopting an evidence-based data-driven approach, the Service will continue to prioritize road safety, while enhancing transparency and accountability in a more effective and equitable manner.

### **Alternatives Reviewed**

Not applicable.

### **Relationship to Police Service/Board Strategic Priorities**

Niagara Regional Police Service 2022-2025 Strategic Plan - Goal 1: Public Safety, 5.0 Enhance road safety, 5.3 Enforcement related to alcohol and/or drug impaired driving, 5.4 Number of traffic enforcement initiatives, 5.5 Number of traffic education and safety initiatives.

### **Relevant Policy Considerations**

Not applicable.

### **Other Pertinent Reports**

Not applicable.

*This report was prepared by Mario Lagrotteria, Deputy Chief, Community Services, in consultation with Stephanie Sabourin, Manager, Corporate Communications.*



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#### **Submitted by:**

Bill Fordy, O.O.M. #9615  
Chief of Police

### **Appendices**

Not applicable.