

**Report to / Rapport au:**

**OTTAWA POLICE SERVICE BOARD  
LA COMMISSION DE SERVICE DE POLICE D'OTTAWA**

**27 May 2024 / 27 mai 2024**

**Submitted by / Soumis par:**

**Chief of Police, Ottawa Police Service / Chef de police, Service de police d'Ottawa**

**Contact Person / Personne Resource:**

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**SUBJECT: REVIEW OF OPERATIONS FEBRUARY 16-18TH, 2024**

**OBJET: EXAMEN DE L'OPÉRATION 16-18 FÉVRIER 2024**

**REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS**

**That the Ottawa Police Service Board receive this report for information.**

**RECOMMANDATIONS DU RAPPORT**

**Que la Commission de service de police d'Ottawa prenne connaissance du  
présent rapport à titre d'information.**

**BACKGROUND**

The purpose of this report is to update the Board on the police operations supporting community safety on the weekend of February 16-18, 2024.

In March, the Chief requested an independent review of the operational planning and response to these events as well as others occurring within the City of Ottawa.

The review, conducted by Lansdowne Consulting Group Inc., was focused on the weekly Pro-Palestinian demonstration and march, and the demonstration and march associated to the first anniversary of the release of the Public Order Emergency Commission (POEC) report into the 2022 Emergencies Act. Both were scheduled with similar timing, to occur on February 17th, 2024, in the downtown core of Ottawa.

Police planning efforts were focused on preparing an operational plan to manage the collective demonstrations and marches for the following groups:

- Freedom Convoy Supporters from Ontario and Quebec
- Association of Palestinian Arab Canadians
- Carleton University Palestinian Student Association
- Youth Palestinian Association of Ottawa
- Unidentified counter demonstrators

It was this operational plan and execution that was to be the subject of much of the review.

## **DISCUSSION**

February 17, 2024 marked the first anniversary of the release of the Public Order Emergency Commission (PEOC) report summarising the public inquiry into the invoking of the Emergencies Act. A convoy of demonstrators from Ontario and Quebec attended Ottawa on February 17, 2024 to rally around this date. Coincidentally, a weekly Pro-Palestinian demonstration also took place the same day and location. In addition, a small number of counterdemonstrators attended each of the events. Both demonstrations were well attended with total numbers exceeding 750 demonstrators.

A total of 9 Provincial Offence Notices (PONs) were issued by police in relation to the protests, none of which involved the Pro-Palestinian demonstrators.

Following the demonstrations there was a group of about 50-60 Freedom Convoy protesters that remained in a downtown restaurant. Upon leaving the restaurant, they began a spontaneous public disorder incident involving excessive noise, fireworks and yelling and shouting. Frontline police resources attended this incident and the disorder continued intermittently for several hours with no enforcement actions or physical confrontations occurring.

The response to this activity greatly disturbed the local community and did not meet the expectations of residents and business.

## **FINDINGS**

The review identified a clear distinction between the operational planning processes and execution, and the frontline response to the spontaneous public disorder incident occurring after the demonstrations and marches.

To prepare for the demonstrations, the threat and risks were identified to the OPS planners allowing for risk based planning.

Both demonstrations and marches were successfully managed by the police. Upon demobilization a small team of officers was left in the downtown core to assist the frontline resources if required.

The OPS utilized best practices in a full spectrum of communications internal and external to the OPS, leading up to and during the demonstrations. The review team assesses that the OPS operational plan addressed most best practices and core concepts of planning seen in other police services and that the operational plan for these events was thorough and clear.

The review found that the transition of command from the operational plan incident commander to the platoon inspector could be improved. This would enhance a shared situational assessment and may have altered the stages of demobilization.

Once demobilized, the public disorder incident that occurred following the demonstrations and marches was attended to by the frontline police resources with the assistance of the core hardening team identified in the operational plan. The frontline response was dependent on the risk-based decision making of the attending supervisor.

The review team found there was a disconnect between the situational assessment provided to the platoon inspector and the actual situation that was occurring. This likely broadened the gap between the actions that the platoon inspector was expecting from the supervisor and the actions taken at the scene. Confrontations between the protestors and the police were limited to shouting, no violence or injuries. There was also intermittent fireworks being set off.

This review was conducted with the luxury of hindsight. Clarity around the situational assessment by the supervisor may have led to a stronger emphasis on enforcement driven tactics to address and discontinue the public order incident and more involvement by the platoon inspector.

A key component of continuous improvement is the identification of opportunities to enhance and optimize existing good practices. The review team identified XX such opportunities for the consideration of the OPS.

The recommendations report includes:

- Formalizing risk assessment processes to support the planning processes.
- Further developing the capacity of INTERSECT to include “real time” information provision to incident command and partners.

- Continuing to develop the Police Liaison Team to include a strategic and long-term commitment and include a deeper partnership with the OPS Race and Diversity Section.
- Include a “victim centered approach” to event and incident planning at the OPS
- Include regular debriefing within plans to promote continuous improvement.
- Improve processes to ensure smooth transition of command, including resources and situational awareness.
- Enhance use of social media/media releases within the operational plans including event wrap up, and
- Fully utilizing internal information systems to request rationales explaining the decision making and the situational assessment.

## **CONCLUSION**

OPS agrees with all of the recommendations identified in this review, many of which we are or have implemented in policy, operational planning and deployment. We are currently reviewing our Major Events Policy to align it with the new Community Safety and Policing Act passed earlier this year. We are working with the Board and the Ottawa People’s Commission to bring in new perspectives to this policy.

Furthermore, OPS is currently organizing a debriefing and holistic review that will involve all team members who attended the incident that evening. The purpose of the session is to share perspectives, understanding of one another’s roles and responsibilities and how each decision positively and negatively impacted the result.

No acts of violence occurred during this event or serious criminal matters. However, OPS understands and acknowledges the concerns and frustrations expressed by downtown residents.

In the past two years, the Ottawa Police Service has worked hard to improve our response to demonstrations. Key factors in that effort are transparency and ensuring the community is front of mind in the management of these events.

Since the time of this event we have continued to successfully manage public safety at multiple events and demonstrations, learning from each event and building on best practices.

I want to acknowledge the long hours, overtime commitments, and the unpredictable nature of their work, which can undoubtedly take its toll. Their resilience and unwavering commitment to safety are vital to understand. I have witnessed their professionalism

firsthand. We understand that these situations can be emotionally charged for many, and their ability to remain composed speaks volumes about their professionalism and dedication to service.