



## **SPECIAL MEETING**

Ottawa Police Services Board

Minutes 50

Wednesday, 26 January 2022, 1:00 PM

*Via Zoom*

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### **Board Members:**

**Chair:** Councillor D. Deans

**Vice Chair:** L.A. (Sandy) Smallwood

**Members:** B. Johnson, Councillor R. King, Councillor C. Meehan, D. Nirman, R. Swaita

## CONFIRMATION OF AGENDA

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**That the Ottawa Police Services Board confirm the agenda of the 26 January 2022 special meeting.**

CONFIRMED

## DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

## ITEMS OF BUSINESS

### 1. OPERATIONAL BRIEFING ON WEEKEND DEMONSTRATIONS

Chief's report

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The Service provided an overview of operational efforts underway in preparation for the anticipated demonstrations over the weekend of January 29, 2022. They indicated that there was a coordination of intelligence between agencies, and the Service noted expecting that the "Freedom Convoy" would arrive in Ottawa as early as Thursday, and likely remain through Sunday. Their destination remained Parliament Hill. Concern regarding counter-protests and other protest groups was expressed.

The Service recommended that Ottawans avoid the downtown core, if possible, and suggested that both visitors and residents be aware of traffic updates.

Operational plans in place had been informed by threat and risk assessments. The Service advised that they had been in contact with demonstration organizers, and the information suggested that it would be a fluid event that could go on for an extended period. The number of people involved was not known. Communications efforts were being coordinated between the OPS, the City of Ottawa, and other stakeholder agencies. A command centre for real time communications was going to be put in place in conjunction with the RCMP.

The Service indicated that they were actively tracking finances associated with the demonstrations, however they were unable to estimate an overall cost of their planned service response, given the remaining unknowns. It was noted that the

event was actively unfolding, and what had begun as a single expression of demonstration had changed substantially, having expanded to include a number of additional interested parties. The OPS indicated having connected with other police services across the country.

The Service noted that their priority was to the maintain safety of the demonstrators, their members and the community as a whole. The unpredictable nature of an event such as this was referenced.

A staffing plan had been developed for the weekend, and the Service planned to work with both RCMP and Parliamentary Protective Services. Police Liaison Officers were to be the participants' first points of contact.

Following the briefing, the Board had the opportunity to ask questions.

A question was raised regarding actions that would be taken should a highway or other major route be blockaded. The Service explained that there are a number of considerations when faced with unlawful activity, and that their reaction will depend on whether the blockade creates a large public safety risk. It was further noted that access to certain sites would be limited, and that the OPS plan had been put together to enable maximum flexibility with layers of scalable resources.

A question was raised regarding the availability of washrooms, food and other amenities for the demonstrators. The Service explained that logistics such as those are the responsibilities of the demonstrators. The OPS will provide direction and guidance to enable lawful demonstrations, however their needs such as food and shelter will be up to them.

A question was raised regarding cost impacts. The Service was unable to provide an estimate, however assured the Board that they would be providing a breakdown of costs after the fact. CAO Dunker noted that the Service has a \$3 million federal budget which offsets costs related to events such as Canada Day. She suggested that this might offset some of their costs, however the Merivale explosion may have exhausted some of the available funds.

A question was raised regarding whether the organizers had filed demonstration permit applications. No permit requests had been filed.

Following the Board's questions, Members of Council were invited to raise their concerns.

Councillor Catherine McKenney

- A question was raised regarding advice to residents of the downtown core.

- The Service explained that the current message was to avoid the downtown core for travel purposes. The Service aimed to keep roads open for vehicles that require access to downtown. They did not have information to suggest that people or businesses in the downtown region needed to remain indoors or shutter themselves. The Service indicated that they would alert the public if at any time their recommendations changed.
- A question was raised regarding the extreme rhetoric surrounding intentions of some of the demonstrators, and whether the Service had conversed with the Freedom Convoy about some of the more extreme views being expressed on social media.
- The Service indicated that the demonstration had remained peaceful throughout its move across the country, and that other jurisdiction suggested that the Freedom Convoy had been peaceful. The Service further noted that should that change, they would communicate that with the public. The Service continued to monitor demonstrators online. It was further noted that there is more than just one group descending on Ottawa.

Councillor Mathieu Fleury

- A question was raised regarding whether the existing truck routes within Ottawa had been communicated to the demonstrators.
- The Service explained that while there are truck routes in Ottawa, the purpose of the routes is to facilitate commerce. The incoming trucks were not expected to use the routes, given their intention of holding demonstrations.
- A question was raised regarding whether the Service could define a route of entry into the downtown core for the demonstrators to follow.
- The Service indicated that they, in conjunction with their City of Ottawa traffic partners, could proactively identify those. The Service noted that they intend to keep major intersections clear, and that the safety of citizens is paramount.
- A question was raised regarding protections in place for frontline employees who will be in contact with the demonstrators, given the subject matter of the demonstrations. The potential for demonstrators to be non-compliant with masking mandates was noted.
- The Service indicated that they were working with City partners and Bylaw

officers, whom they noted had taken the lead on enforcement. It was noted that business owners are encouraged to avoid escalating any such interactions, and that the OPS would be there for support if needed. The Service clarified that support may be triaged depending on the scale of risk.

- A question was raised regarding whether a wing of the OPS response team could be dedicated to Business Improvements Areas (BIAs) and their members. Concern was expressed regarding some of the larger retail centres in Ottawa's core as well as for the smaller retailers.
- The Service indicated that the liaison team will be tasked with information gathering related to the convoy, and information will be shared with the community as available.

#### Councillor Riley Brockington

- A question was raised regarding whether the Service had an idea of how many people and vehicles were expected.
- The Service noted that although the information is influx; the truck movement began on the West Coast and had swelled and shrunk as it has travelled. The Service was also monitoring other groups expected to participate in demonstrations over the weekend. The Service was anticipating in the 1,000-to-2,000-person range, however they indicated that it could change even with an hour.
- A question was raised regarding the impact of having transport trucks in Ottawa's downtown core, and whether there could be dedicated emergency vehicle lanes where trucks were prohibited. In addition, a question was raised where the 18-wheeler vehicles were expected to park.
- The Service noted that both concerns were under consideration and would continue to be until the conclusion of the demonstrations.

#### Councillor Laura Dudas

- A question was raised regarding whether the OPS were working in conjunction with Ottawa Public Health (OPH) to protect Service members from what is anticipated to be a large group of unmasked individuals, and whether there were supports in place for members facing added stress.
- The Service indicated that some members had been working for 14 days straight, and that members were facing increased stress. The Service was actively conducting threat-risk assessments to Ottawa residents,

businesses, and its own members. In terms of PPE, the Service has been in lockstep with OPH, and it was noted that members are well equipped. Further, the OPS have had a staffing plan in place since the emergence of Omicron, which holds officers in reserve in case of an outbreak.

Councillor Jeff Leiper

- A question was raised regarding anticipated frequency of communications between the Service and the press.
- The Service noted that their frequency of communication with media had not yet fully been determined, and that their plans were ever evolving based on the information at hand. The Service assured the Councillor that there would be regular communications through the appropriate avenues over the course of demonstrations.
- A question was raised on where residents and business owners should turn for the most up-to-date information on the demonstrations.
- The Service noted that they would do their best to provide information in a timely manner, but that it would ultimately be up to business owners whether they decide to open. They had imbedded a media person within the OPS planning team, who would coordinate Twitter, Instagram, and website updates.

**That the Ottawa Police Services Board receive this item for information.**

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ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 2:17 p.m.

NEXT MEETING

Regular Meeting - Monday, 28 February 2022, 4:00 PM