

Ottawa Police Service

An Agenda for Excellence for Major Events:
Police and Community Challenges

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A. The Ottawa Police Service: Core Values

The Ottawa Police Service operates on the basis of a commitment to a number of core values. These include the importance of respect for the Rule of Law, openness and accountability, and maintaining the highest ethical and professional standards.

The OPS is a learning organization that seeks out best practices and regularly reviews and renews its practices, skills-base and capacities. The OPS values innovation and seeks excellence in all areas of its mandate.

1. Our Mission: Serving our Community

The Ottawa Police Service (OPS) is dedicated to:

- safety and security of our community;
- working cooperatively with the members of our community ; and
- supporting our members personally and professionally.

The Ottawa Police Service is committed to community-based policing which the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police defines as:

“A means of police service delivery which recognizes that the maintenance of order, the prevention of crime and the resolution of crime and order problems are the shared concerns and responsibilities of the community and the police.”

Through extensive experience with cooperation, partnership, and dialogue, the OPS has become an acknowledged leader in seeking out collaborative, action-based solutions to police-community challenges.

The Community and Police Action Committee (COMPAC) and Partnership in Action (PIA) are two examples of collaboration with community partners based on six principles: respect and recognition, openness and sensitivity, commitment, active participation, patience with progress, and fairness.

2. Policing the National Capital: A Privilege and a Challenge

The OPS is privileged to serve a community that is part of Canada's national capital region. The presence of Canada's Parliament and other important national institutions means that our city is often the focus of national and international attention. As a result, the OPS is often called upon to provide police services around Major Events involving decision-makers and citizens (from our community and beyond) hoping to make their voices heard.

Because of the various jurisdictions involved in policing these types of events as well as their scale, the OPS often participates in joint operations with other law enforcement agencies. The fact that the national capital region includes an inter-provincial boundary also contributes to this phenomenon as do two separate economic trends – globalization and constraints on policing budgets.

3. Objectives for Policing Major Events

The Ottawa Police Services approach to Major Events policing flows from the following key objectives:

- to uphold the **democratic rights** of all individuals to freedom of opinion, expression, association and assembly as guaranteed under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms;
- to strengthen **community partnerships** through communication, consultation, collaboration and **transparency** in planning and operations;
- to ensure the **safety** and security of our community and our members.

The OPS will optimize public safety, preserve the peace, enforce the law and provide quality service in partnership with the communities we serve while upholding the fundamental freedoms of peaceful demonstrators. We value the right of free expression in a lawful, peaceful and responsible manner and will maintain appropriate communication with the public on all safety and planning issues related to major events and demonstrations in Ottawa.

B. Police and Community Challenges: Starting Points for Discussion

The Ottawa Police Service and the community we serve will face a number of challenges in dealing with Major Events in the future. These

are in part a result of new widely held concerns for public and personal security.

As a dynamic, learning organization, the OPS is committed to meeting these challenges by advancing an *Agenda for Excellence for Major Events Policing*. The following key issues and considerations will serve as a starting point for seeking input both from within the OPS and from the Ottawa community, and for further discussion and dialogue.

1. Crowd Management

Planning for Major Events policing is a complex process and should therefore begin as early as possible and include input from as many public officials and community representatives as can be incorporated as well as direct dialogue with protest organizers.

Major Events policing and, in particular, policies for crowd management should reflect OPS core values. Planning guidelines and tactical decisions should take these values and the key objectives for Major Event policing into consideration. These values and objectives should be clearly communicated to all participants as well as to the general public.

In general, strategies and tactics employed at large-scale events should aim to minimize fear and uncertainty in order to create a safe and peaceful environment for all participants as well as the community at large.

Operational plans and decision-making should consider the potential for escalation through the use of specific strategies and tactics. These include the presence and profile of technical aids (including tear gas, rubber bullets and water) and support units (canine, tactical, etc.) and the use of specific techniques for arrests and other actions.

These additional points should also be considered:

- any decisions taken in the course of an operation should respect statutory requirements, be clearly communicated to OPS members and the public and consistently applied;
- clear instructions should be provided on the use and continuum of force (see *Joint Operations*);

- to allow for sufficient rotation of teams and officer downtime to minimize stress, adequate staffing levels for the OPS, and other services in the case of joint operations, should be determined and deployed;
- operational plans should include provisions for cooperation with individuals and groups providing voluntary services to the public around Major Events (e.g. health, food and legal services);
- a systematic process should be established for debriefing following Major Events, both within the police service and with the broader community.

1. Communications

Good communication is a critical prerequisite for effective major event policing. This includes communication of information within the police service, communication between different agencies in the case of joint operations, and, perhaps most importantly clear, consistent and timely communication of information to the public, the media and all participants.

The importance of communication spans from operational planning, through the event itself and includes de-briefing after the fact. Key elements include:

- communications considerations should be central to the operational planning process;
- clear and timely information on the Operational Plan should be delivered to all assigned OPS members and important elements to the public, the media and all participants (street closures, transportation and emergency services information, etc.);
- the practice of communicating important information to the general public through the OPS internet site, the media and through other means should be maintained and improved. This should include the posting of health and safety tips and policy information;
- information should continue to be made available to the media through extensive briefings;
- communication with protest groups/organizers should be enhanced and regularized (see *Liaison Function*);
- lines of communication with protest organizers should remain open during operations (see *Liaison Function*).

2. The Liaison Function: an Open Lines Approach

In keeping with the critical importance of open lines of communication, sufficient attention and resources should be applied to liaison between police and event organizers.

For many years, the Ottawa Police has successfully liaised with organizers around labour disputes, demonstrations, and other large events. This positive achievement is attested to by many in the broader community. In order to build on this record, Major Event liaison in the future should meet the following criteria:

- the critical importance of liaison should be reasserted and its operation systematized under the responsibility of an OPS member of senior officer rank;
- the liaison mandate should be separate and independent from any intelligence gathering function;
- liaison protocol/policy should be developed with public input;
- officers assigned to the liaison function should receive adequate briefing and training (see *Briefing and Training*);
- the liaison function should be available 24/7 during critical periods around Major Events with proper organizational and technical support;
- at events, liaison officer(s) (ideally a team sized and equipped in relation to the scale of the event) should be onsite, easily accessible to event organizers and participants and clearly identified (e.g. vests).

3. Intelligence Gathering

Intelligence gathering is a necessary element of policing around Major Events. Nevertheless, intelligence gathering should not undermine the potential for dialogue between police and protest organizers during the planning phase or replace ongoing communication during an event.

4. Use of Public Space

Ensuring that access to public spaces is subject to as few limitations as possible should be an operational priority in policing Major Events.

This objective should be taken into consideration in the development of the Operational Plan (including but not limited to the choice of locations for command posts, officer downtime and staging areas) as well as in tactical decision-making during an event. Where limits to public access are required, information about these changes should be made broadly available at the earliest possible date.

5. Joint Operations

In the case of operations involving more than one police service, the overall command structure should be clear to all law enforcement personnel as well as to the public. In joint operations, efforts should be made to establish one set of policies and protocols for all agencies and officers involved. This is particularly important because each agency will bring with it the standards it is guided by within its own jurisdiction.

Specific examples where common policy is essential include: identification of officers, use of force guidelines, canine policy, etc. Common policy and implementation could be advanced through shared training materials and exercises and by advancing provincial standards.

6. Arrest, Search and Seizure

The handling of arrests in accordance with legal due process is a critical element of policing. Actions and tactics that will result in a police response and possible arrest should be communicated to protest organizers during pre-event dialogue and to participants during the event itself.

Decisions regarding arrests and search and seizure should be guided by statutory requirements as well as the overall objectives set out for Major Events policing. For example, the potential impact of an arrest on broader crowd dynamics should be kept in view.

Other considerations include:

- the Public Order Unit and other police teams should be adequately staffed and trained to manage orderly arrests and preserve the continuity of evidence in the case of arrests;

- the health and the safety of detainees should be considered in the planning of their release;
- all OPS members should be briefed on the statutory grounds for search and seizure;
- relevant facts concerning the event that might inform decision-making on search and seizure (e.g. gas masks, etc.) should be made available to all members.

7. Support and Specialty Units

Support and Specialty Units play important roles in Major Events policing. In order to be effective the deployment of these Units should be judicious and reflect OPS core values and the overall operational objectives. Specifically, in recognition of the need to minimize fear and the potential for escalation, consideration should be given to maintaining a low profile for these units and their technical aids until deployment is required. In addition:

- the OPS policy on the use of canine units for crowd control should be maintained to ensure that these units are not used in a manner that will place handler and dog within a crowd;
- the type and manner of deployment of technical aids carried by the Public Order Unit and Tactical Units in crowd control situations should be reviewed to ensure safety and best practices;
- Support and Special Units should be trained in crowd management and negotiation techniques (see *Briefing and Training*).

8. Briefing and Training

OPS members participating in Major Events policing can benefit from specialized training in a number of different areas. These include familiarization with special equipment, information about protest groups and their issues of concern, and improved policing techniques. Specific examples include:

- OPS members should be familiarized with issues and concerns central to a protest through briefings and concise materials. Consider inviting representatives of organizing groups to provide briefings. Offer to brief protest groups with background information on OPS policies, procedures and past practice.

- training and information that might improve capacity to participate in effective crowd management should be provided, such as:
 - civil rights and charter rights;
 - non-violent civil disobedience techniques;
 - arrest methodology;
 - sensitivity training;
 - anger and provocation management;
 - negotiation techniques;
 - mass-psychology and crowd behaviour;
 - collaborative management of crowd dynamics.