



EDMONTON POLICE SERVICE

REPORT TO THE EDMONTON POLICE COMMISSION/ Governance Committee

DATE: 2023 November 28

SUBJECT: After Action Review – Canada Freedom Convoy Protest

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That this report be received for information as per a motion from the EPC Governance Committee¹

INTRODUCTION:

This report will provide a brief overview of the Edmonton Police Service review of the police planning and response to the Canada Freedom convoy protests that occurred between January 29 through February 26, 2022.

BACKGROUND:

The Edmonton Police Service Incident Command Committee (ICC) provides governance over policy, procedure and operational deployment to major or critical incidents. Police commanders are trained to oversee the planning and management of Major Hazards, Critical Incidents, Crowd Management and Crowd Control based upon their knowledge, skills and training and in accordance with established policy and procedure. Decision making considers safety priorities and is based upon the best-known intelligence at the time. Commanders are adept at understanding or seeking guidance of lawful authorities and the lawful and ethical application of the law based upon reasonableness and necessity.

With respect to the Canada Freedom convoy protests, EPS relied on and sought out intelligence about the scope and scale of the event. An event commander was assigned to develop an operational plan, and the Commander and Incident Command Committee worked to mitigate risks to public safety while ensuring all individuals rights to lawful protest in accordance with Section 2 of the Canadian Charter of Rights were upheld.

¹ . It must be noted that this report was delayed as there was an active complaint and professional standards investigation against the EPS and the Chief of Police that has since concluded

In total, five significant Freedom Convoy protests occurred on consecutive Saturdays from January 29th through February 26th, 2022, and another related protest took place on Tuesday February 22nd during the Alberta Legislature, Speech from the Throne.

In some jurisdictions, large-scale convoy protests created risks of severe traffic congestion, extensive impacts to the emergency travel of first responders, potential for blockades of critical infrastructure, potential for vigilantism, and negative reputational impacts to the location of the protest. To mitigate the risk, the commander engaged in planning with numerous internal EPS and external CoE and provincial partners to create a collaborative, measured, and proportionate response to the convoys. The EPS Protest Liaison Coordinator was proactive in liaising with identified convoy and protest coordinators. Staffing plans were created using both internal and external agency supports. Staffing plans were developed to ensure sufficient resources were deployed to achieve the established mission and focus on safety priorities, but also consider the high impacts that these types of events can have on stretched operating budgets.

The operational plan was updated and adjusted following each local event with oversight from the Incident Command Committee and a Deputy Chief. Approximately 396 enforcement tickets were issued during the EPS deployments for offences including noise, distracted driving and other driving offences.

COMMENTS / DISCUSSION:

Convoy protests received prominent attention across many jurisdictions. There were amplified opinions expressed publicly about the convoy and local events and their impacts on community. Many political and community members in Edmonton vocally expressed opinions during the course of these protests including about the impact of EPS enforcement. Prior to the third week of protest, City Council sought its own response through the passage of a temporary noise injunction, an initiative that mostly impacted the public discourse and expectations around events but that did not change enforcement as the injunction was not enforceable by EPS.

Against this backdrop, the EPS maintained and delivered on its primary mission which was to ensure public safety for all Edmontonians and take measures to prevent blockades from being established that would impact critical infrastructure. We would note the following about the EPS response:

- At no time did any emergency service report that it was obstructed from response to emergencies, and there were no reports of any citizen being physically injured because of the protests, and no entrenchment of the convoy was achieved.
- There was certainly disruption and impacts to neighbouring communities during the four to six hours protests that impacted lawful enjoyment, as well as impacts to local businesses due to traffic and access issues. Concerns from some community members did impact deployments made by EPS and adjustments were made from week to week.
- There was valuable collaboration between partnering agencies and deployment of representatives within the Emergency Operations Centre was again extremely

valuable. Ongoing protest management is benefitting from learnings about resource management and the importance of mutual aid agreements which ensure sufficient resources are available when required.

- Air support and CCTV monitoring continue to prove highly beneficial for major events, ensuring operational flexibility in the moment that is not always available on the ground.
- Corporate communications efforts were challenged by the political discourse that weighed in on events and questioned whether EPS was balanced in its enforcement efforts. The tone of the discourse shows how politics can manifest around policing events and can be demoralizing for officers and the service as a whole.

In its efforts, the police must consider all enforcement and education options to find a reasonable balance in seeking the best outcomes, and to not create unintended consequences. Key takeaways from the convoys included:

Community Impact Assessment

- Continue ongoing dialogue with community and business leaders to seek input and feedback about perceived or experienced event impacts. Solicit ideas from these groups for what the community may deem important. Explain challenges and why certain strategies may or may not be applied.
- While the EPC must remain arm's length from dictating police operations, continue to provide the EPC with operational context through dialogue or interaction to help maintain an awareness of policing complexities.
- Continue to provide public messaging about the goals of various event policing strategy, and how the community can assist in promoting safety and lawful enjoyment.
- Provide more robust statements to reinforce EPS messaging including to correct misinformation, when required, regardless of its source.

Officer Wellness

- Continue to ensure our police officers and deployed staff are properly trained and briefed about their assigned roles and functions for major events.
- Continue to ensure that our members are provided wellness supports to allow them to defuse before, during and after an event as time permits.

CONCLUSION:

The frequency of protest in the City of Edmonton continues to see a year over year increase. The EPS continues to adapt to the ever-changing environment to ensure a proportionate police response is provided using any internal EPS or external resource appropriate for the circumstances presented or known at the time. The EPS has and will continue to progress our protest management practices ensuring they remain collaborative, measured and proportionate to the environment.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ATTACHED: N/A

Written By: Dean HILTON, Superintendent

Patricia MISUTKA, Executive Director

Approved By: Devin LAFORCE, Deputy Chief

A/Deputy Chief
Nicole Chapdelaine

Digitally signed by A/Deputy
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Dale McFee, Chief of Police:



Date: Nov 29, 23