

# **Decision Regarding Findings Report INV-24-36 Concerning Policing Provided by the Hamilton Police Service**

## **Decision By:**

Ryan Teschner, Inspector General of Policing

## I. INTRODUCTION

- [1] This decision addresses a complaint received by the Inspector General of Policing against the Hamilton Police Service (“HPS”), alleging that the police have reduced their patrol presence in the downtown core and increased their 911 response times. An inspector with Ontario’s Inspectorate of Policing (“IoP”) investigated the complaint to determine whether the HPS failed to comply with the *Community Safety and Policing Act, 2019*, SO 2019, c 1, Sch 1 (the “Act”) or its regulations.
- [2] Following a review of the inspector’s Findings Report,<sup>1</sup> which is attached to this decision as Appendix A, and for the reasons that follow, I conclude that HPS has complied with the Act and the regulations.

## II. BACKGROUND

- [3] I adopt the facts as outlined by the inspector in the Findings Report.
- [4] The complainant alleged that the HPS reduced its policing patrols in the downtown core of Hamilton, leading to a surge in violent crime. The complainant also alleged unacceptable delays in answering and responding to 911 calls.
- [5] Of note, the complainant was unable to point to any specific time or date or incident to provide additional context or details.

## III. ISSUES

- [6] This complaint did not focus on a specific incident, but instead alleged an overall failure by the HPS to provide adequate and effective policing in the downtown core of Hamilton since 2020. Accordingly, this inspection undertook a broader review of:
- i. The staffing and patrol initiatives of HPS related to Hamilton’s downtown core from 2021-2024,
  - ii. Violent crime statistics in Hamilton from 2021-2024; and
  - iii. 911 call statistics from the HPS between 2021-2024.

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<sup>1</sup> Section 123 of the Act requires an IoP inspector who completes an investigation of a complaint to report their findings to the Inspector General. This report is redacted to comply with the *Publication of Findings Reports and Directions under Sections 123 and 125 of the Act Regulation*, O Reg 317/24.

## IV. ANALYSIS

[7] While many may wish that police can be everywhere, any organization that delivers multiple functions over a large geographic space with limited resources must prioritize where they will be and how they will show up – and more specifically, they must strike a balance between proactive work and reactive work.

[8] Section 10 of the Act mandates police service boards (and the Commissioner, in the case of the Ontario Provincial Police) to ensure that adequate and effective policing is provided in the area for which they have policing responsibility.

[9] Section 11 of the Act defines adequate and effective policing as including the following functions:

1. Crime prevention.
2. Law enforcement.
3. Emergency response.
4. Assistance to victims of crime.
5. Any other prescribed policing function.

These functions must be provided in accordance with the standards prescribed in the regulations, and with the requirements of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and the *Human Rights Code*.

[10] The Act's *Adequate and Effective Policing (General)* regulation, O Reg 392/23 ("the Regulation"), provides specific standards for the delivery of each policing function. Additionally, it establishes that all policing functions are subject to a standard of reasonableness, having regard to:

1. The policing needs of the community.
2. The geographic and socio-demographic characteristics of the police service's area of policing responsibility.
3. The extent to and manner in which the policing function is effectively provided in similar communities in Ontario.
4. The extent to which past provision of the policing function by the police service has been effective in addressing the policing needs of the community.
5. Best practices respecting the policing function.

[11] Importantly, the legal requirement for the delivery of these policing functions is not, and can never be, a standard of perfection.

[12] The available data provided by the HPS was assessed to determine if any relevant trends could be discerned in the following areas: the deployment of HPS officers in the downtown core, violent crime trends; crime prevention and other initiatives; and 911 call volumes, answering times and response times.

## **Deployment of Police Officers**

[13] In respect of HPS deployment in the downtown core, the data revealed that:

- i. There was an increase in the average number of daily assigned foot patrol officers in 2024 (compared to previous years);
- ii. There was a slight decrease in the overall number of HPS patrol officers; and
- iii. The average number of officers available to respond to calls in the downtown core showed an upward trajectory.

[14] In addition, the Core Patrol Initiative, introduced in June 2023 and expanded in 2024, is a deployment model specifically designed to address policing needs in the downtown core. Under the Initiative, members assigned to CORE Patrol work 10-hour shifts, six days a week, and are exclusively assigned to patrol duties. This equates to approximately 35 hours of coverage for the downtown core per day over the number of officers assigned. This replaced the previous model, which saw only 37.8% of officer-time dedicated to patrol. This seeks to optimize officer presence in the downtown core, including an increased foot patrol presence in the high-priority downtown areas.

## **Violent crime trends**

[15] HPS violent crime statistics from 2021-2024 revealed that the level of violent crime in the downtown core area remained stable, accounting for approximately 4% of total reported incidents in that geographic area.

[16] Also, the overall severity of violent crime reported showed a decline in this period.

## Crime prevention and other initiatives

[17] The data established an increased, strategic focus by the HPS on crime prevention initiatives between 2021-2024.

[18] While the total number of initiatives declined, HPS' focus has demonstrably shifted toward more impactful, larger-scale (*i.e.* broader reach) initiatives that prioritize crime prevention and community engagement.

## Call volume, call answer to 911 and emergency response times

[19] The IoP review of the HPS 911 statistics revealed the following:

- i. A steady increase in 911 call volume between 2021-2023, followed by a slight decline in 2024;
- ii. The average call-answer delay for 911 calls rose in 2022 and 2023, but improved again in 2024 (returning to an average of 9 seconds);

[20] Importantly, despite a higher overall 911 call volume, HPS nonetheless delivered improved average emergency response times in 2024.

[21] HPS demonstrates a data-driven approach to its policing functions and its determinations about how to effectively deploy its resources. This includes focussing on crime prevention through community engagement, using a number of initiatives designed to have a broader and more significant impact.

[22] HPS deployment decisions illustrate that determinations about how to deploy officer resources are based on community need and a desire to maximize presence in areas that merit more policing attention. This has the benefit of balancing proactive policing presence to prevent and deter crime with the increased availability of sustained officer presence to respond to incidents as they arise.

[23] In the key functional areas that HPS is required to deliver, it has more than met the reasonableness standard based on the data that is available. This is borne out through low emergency response time averages, increased dedicated foot patrol presence in the downtown core, stable violent crime rates over a several-year period, and more focussed crime prevention strategies.

[24] Overall, the HPS and its Board (the “HPSB”) are properly applying the relevant factors set out in section 2 of the Regulation (*i.e.* the generally applicable standard) to determine how to reasonably deliver policing functions, including:

- i. That the policing needs of the community are considered based on information like police response time measurement, violent crime incidents and trends, and policing patrol hours available;
- ii. Geographic and community safety factors specific to the downtown core are baked into HPS operational decision-making; and
- iii. The extent to which the past provision of a policing function by HPS has been effective appears to have motivated performance improvements. The CORE Patrol initiative is an example of steps taken by the HPS to increase the dedicated patrol attention the downtown core receives.

[25] Furthermore, in establishing its 2023-2026 Strategic Plan,<sup>2</sup> the HPSB sought input from over 6,500 community respondents and 660 HPS members. A review of the Board’s plan reveals priorities that include a focus on “community safety priorities” including “violent and hate-related crime”, and the use of “education, analytics, enforcement and proactive community-based initiatives” to prevent and address crime.<sup>3</sup> It would seem that HPS’s Chief has gone about operationalizing these governance priorities.

[26] This should not, of course, be cause for anyone to rest on their laurels. Rather, there should remain a continued prioritization of data-driven and informed decision-making, governed by an engaged police service board that sets strategic priorities based on community safety needs. There should also continue to be a focus by the chief on maximizing public safety impact through a responsive approach to the deployment of resources.

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<sup>2</sup> Hamilton Police Service Board, [Hamilton Police Service 2023-2026 Strategic Plan: Roadmap for 2023-2026](#).

<sup>3</sup> Footnote 2, p 5.

[27] Finally, I stop to note that it is vital that the HPSB develop and publish a new strategic plan that will come into effect after the current one expires at the end of 2026. The HPSB must ensure that its next strategic plan complies with the new requirements of the Act, including the need to include “[q]uantitative and qualitative performance objectives and indicators of outcomes” that tie to the various policing functions that must be delivered.<sup>4</sup> This will assist the HPSB (and other boards across the province) in evaluating whether its strategic priorities are manifesting in a way that is improving the police service’s performance and overall community safety.

## **V. CONCLUSION**

[28] The HPS has complied with the Act and its regulations, and delivered its policing functions of crime prevention, law enforcement, emergency response and dispatch in the downtown core of Hamilton in a reasonable manner.

**Date:** July 30, 2026

***Original Signed By***

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**Ryan Teschner**  
*Inspector General of Policing*

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<sup>4</sup> Section 39 of the Act.

# FINDINGS REPORT

Hamilton Police Service

**Section 107(1)(a) Policing  
Complaint Investigation**  
(INV-24-36)

**Submitted to:**  
Ryan Teschner  
Inspector General of Policing of  
Ontario

**June 16, 2026**



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## ABOUT THE INSPECTOR GENERAL OF POLICING AND THE INSPECTORATE OF POLICING

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The Inspector General of Policing drives improved performance and accountability in policing and police governance by overseeing the delivery of adequate and effective policing across Ontario. The Inspector General ensures compliance with the province's policing legislation and standards, and has the authority to issue progressive, risk-based and binding directions and measures to protect public safety. Ontario's Community Safety and Policing Act embeds protections to ensure the Inspector General's statutory duty is delivered independently from government.

The Inspector General of Policing leads the Inspectorate of Policing (IoP). The IoP provides operational support to inspect, investigate, monitor, and advise Ontario's police services, boards and special constable employers. By leveraging independent research and data intelligence, the IoP promotes leading practices and identifies areas for improvement, ensuring that high-quality policing and police governance is delivered to make everyone in Ontario safer.

In March 2023, Ryan Teschner was appointed as Ontario's first Inspector General of Policing with duties and authorities under the Community Safety and Policing Act. Mr. Teschner is a recognized expert in public administration, policing and police governance.

For more information about the Inspector General of Policing or the IoP, please visit [www.iopontario.ca](http://www.iopontario.ca).

## INTRODUCTION

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This is a report to the Inspector General of Policing by an inspector appointed by the Inspector General, who has completed an investigation under Part VII of the [Community Safety and Policing Act, 2019](#) (CSPA).

## OVERVIEW OF INVESTIGATION

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### The Complaint

The complaint alleged that the Hamilton Police Service (HPS) had a decreased police presence in the downtown core and exhibited prolonged response times to 911 calls.

### The Subject Police Service

**Name of Police Service:** Hamilton Police Service

**Service Headquarters:** 155 King William Street, Hamilton, ON L8R 1A7

**Chief of Police:** Frank Bergen

Chief of Police since May 2021

#### **Service Total Strength: (Actual & Authorized)**

- Number of sworn members:  
Actual: 940  
Authorized: 922
- Number of civilian members  
Actual: 364  
Authorized: 397

#### **Geographic Service Area**

- 1118.31 Square Kilometers
- Community Population of approximately 620,063

### Applicable Legislative and Regulatory Provisions

[Section 11\(1\)](#) of the CSPA provides that adequate and effective policing means all of the following functions provided in accordance with the standards set out in the regulations, including the standards with respect to the avoidance of conflicts of interest, and with the requirements of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and the *Human Rights Code*:

1. Crime prevention.
2. Law enforcement.
3. Maintaining the public peace.
4. Emergency response.
5. Assistance to victims of crime.
6. Any other prescribed policing functions.

#### **Ontario Regulation 392/23: ADEQUATE AND EFFECTIVE POLICING (GENERAL)**

was reviewed having regard to the allegations made in the complaint.

## **SUMMARY OF THE INVESTIGATION CONDUCTED**

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### **Complainant Information**

An email was sent to the complainant advising them of the investigation. The complainant stated that the reduced police presence had been ongoing daily since 2020, with a noticeable rise in violent crime over the past two years. They also noted experiencing long hold times when calling 911 in recent years, though they acknowledged this had occurred only once, as they do not frequently contact police. The complainant indicated they were unable to provide specific dates, times, or details of the incidents referenced.

### **Hamilton Police Service Data Collection**

As part of the investigation, the Hamilton Police Service (HPS) was requested to provide information and documentation including: service statistics on the number of 911 calls received from 2021 to 2024 and from April 1, 2024, to the present, including average caller wait times; data on the number of officers assigned to the Hamilton downtown core during the same periods; statistics on the percentage of violent crime within the Service's jurisdiction from 2021 to 2024 and from April 1, 2024, to the present; and details of any initiatives or preventative measures implemented to address crime in the downtown core throughout these timeframes.

### **Hamilton Police Service 911 Call Statistics 2021 - 2024**

The HPS provided 911 call statistics for the period between 2021 and 2024. A review of the data revealed a steady increase in call volume from 2021 through 2023, peaking in 2023, followed by a slight decline in 2024. The average call answering delay rose in 2022 and 2023 but improved in 2024, returning to an average of nine seconds. These trends suggest a growing demand for emergency services over the years. Notably, despite the higher call volumes, the HPS demonstrated improved response times in 2024. However, it is important to note that some data for 2024 was incomplete due to technological issues on certain days, which may have influenced the overall results.

### **Hamilton Police Service Complement of Officers 2021 - 2024**

The HPS reported an increase in the average number of daily assigned foot patrol officers in 2024 compared to previous years. While the overall number of patrol officers remained relatively stable, a slight decrease was noted. However, the average number of officers responding to calls in the downtown core showed an upward trend.

Deployment strategies also changed with the introduction of the downtown Core Patrol initiative in June 2023 and its expansion in 2024. This initiative is a deployment model specifically designed to address policing needs in the downtown core. Under this model, CORE Patrol officers work 10-hour shifts, six days a week, dedicating 100% of their time to patrol duties—equating to approximately 35 hours of focused coverage per day. This replaced the previous model, which deployed officers on 10-hour shifts, seven days a week, but only dedicated 37.8% of their time to patrol, averaging 36.2 hours per day.

These changes reflect a strategic shift aimed at optimizing deployment and strengthening foot patrol presence in high-priority downtown areas while maintaining consistent patrol support throughout the reporting period.

### **Violent Crime Statistics 2021 - 2024**

The HPS provided violent crime statistics for the requested period of 2021 to 2024. Analysis of the data indicated that the proportion of violent crimes in the downtown core remained stable throughout this period, consistently accounting for approximately 4% of total reported incidents in that area. Service-wide, there was a slight increase in the percentage of violent occurrences, rising from 3.5% to 3.7% of total incidents. While the downtown area maintained a steady rate of violent crime, the overall increase across the Service suggests a broader trend. Notably, the severity of violent crimes reported in the downtown core showed a decline, indicating a potential shift toward less serious incidents in that area.

### **Initiatives and Preventative Measures 2021 - 2024**

The HPS provided information regarding its initiatives and preventative measures implemented between 2021 and 2024. Analysis of this information indicates a strategic evolution in both the number and focus of these efforts over time. In 2021, there was a higher volume of diverse initiatives aimed at addressing a broad range of community concerns. In subsequent years, the number of initiatives slightly declined; however, by 2024, the focus had shifted toward fewer but more impactful and large-scale projects, reflecting a more targeted and strategic approach to crime prevention and community engagement.

## INVESTIGATION FINDINGS

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I make the following findings, relying on the information collected during the investigation and summarized in part above:

1. **From 2021 to 2023, there was a steady increase in 911 call volumes and corresponding wait times, with a slight decline in 2024. The average wait time was calculated as nine seconds. Despite the higher call volumes, the HPS demonstrated improved response times in 2024.**
2. **Between 2021 and 2024, there was a deliberate strategic shift toward enhancing foot patrol presence in the downtown core, while maintaining a consistent number of patrol officers overall.**
3. **The proportion of violent incidents in the downtown area remained stable from 2021 to 2024. However, there was a modest increase in violent incidents across the Service as a whole. Notably, the severity of violent crimes in the downtown core declined during this period.**
4. **Over the years, there was a strategic evolution in both the number and focus of community initiatives. In 2021, a high volume of diverse initiatives addressed a broad range of concerns. By 2024, the approach had shifted toward fewer but more impactful large-scale projects.**

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