



Year End Report – 2024

Use of Force Options Utilized in the Field

St. Thomas Police Service

Incidents requiring *Use of Force* (Ministry Reportable)

2020 – 44 Ministry submissions (individual officer actions) for 26 incidents

2021 – 55 Ministry submissions (individual officer actions) for 37 incidents

2022 – 65 Ministry submissions (individual officer actions) for 34 incidents

2023 – 60 Ministry submissions (individual officer actions) for 40 incidents

2024 – 63 Ministry submissions (individual officer actions) for 39 incidents

Identified Trends in 2024

- The total number of annual incidents have increase by 9.4% from 2022 (20,682) to 2023 (22,628). 2023 to 2024 (23,451) saw another 3.6% increase - averaging 64 incidents/24hrs – increasing from 62 incidents/24hrs in 2023 and 56 incidents/24hrs in 2022.

- Incidents that are classified as requiring the Use of Force by our officers decreased by 2.5% from 2023, (40-39) however, there was a 5% increase in individual officer decisions to apply a Use of Force option (based on the presentation of a threat).
- There are strong indicators (from ongoing incident reviews) that our officers fully understand that a reasonable application of force requires awareness of the facts and circumstances of each particular situation, including the severity of the issue, whether the subject poses an immediate threat to the safety of officers or others and whether the subject is actively resisting or attempting to evade arrest by flight.

Race-Based Data Collection

A requirement of Ministry Reporting is on perceived subject race. In 2024, twelve (12) subjects identified as Black, East/Southeast Asian, Indigenous, Latino, Middle Eastern, or South Asian. In 2023 one (1), zero (0) in 2022.

The changing numbers in this category speaks to the changing demographics of the St. Thomas community, but also speaks to the transient nature of persons involved in criminal activities. Of the 12 persons who identify as racialized, 8 do not reside in the city of St. Thomas and have travelled to our community to engage in activities that brought them into conflict with police.

Firearms

In 2023, officers drew their firearm in thirty (30) operational incidents (13 in 2023). The most prevalent weapons that officers faced on the street were edged weapons and the potential for firearms. Six (6) separate incidents involved the dispatching of injured animals by the use of a firearm.

Eight of the incidents involving the drawing of firearms were by the Critical Incident Response Team (CIRT). These deployments are tactical in nature, CIRT is deployed in

high-risk scenarios, typically with pre-planning including arresting persons who are known to be violent or to have access to weapons.

Conducted Energy Weapons (CEW)

In 2024, the Conducted Energy Weapon (CEW) or more commonly known as the Taser, was used in deployment mode (probes were fired from the cartridge) 4 times (4 in 2023), and was used in display mode (de-escalation compliance option and no probes were fired from the cartridge) on twenty two (22) different occasions – individual officer actions (35 in 2023).

Undoubtedly, the CEW remains a very important tool available for police officers to de-escalate violent situations. This tool provides all around officer and community safety when it comes to encountering violent interactions.

Oleoresin Capsicum (OC Spray)

O/C (Pepper) Spray was not used operationally between 2016 - 2024 (Ministry submissions).

ASP Baton

The (ASP) baton was not used operationally between 2016 - 2024 (Ministry submissions).

Empty Hand Techniques

In 2024, Empty Hand Techniques were used in one (1) operational incidents (1 in 2023).

Police Service Dog (PSD)

PSD Rocky was deployed in one (1) incident in which he had bit a non-compliant, escaping suspect. K9 was not used in 2023 in a *Use of Force* situation where the subject was bitten. These are required Ministry Use of Force Reporting submissions due to the bite injuries sustained. The PSD remains a strategic de-escalation compliance tool for

many operational incidents that are perceived to be volatile. There is great value in the PSD patrolling as a supplemental resource for frontline officers.

Body-Worn Cameras (BWC's)

In 2021, all frontline STPS officers began wearing BWC's. The PSB's decision to implement this piece of equipment has provided visual and audio evidence that independently verifies police-citizen encounters and works to widely enhance citizen perceptions of police transparency and legitimacy. Equally, we are seeing positive cost-benefit analysis data that is reflecting a more streamlined approach to public complaint investigations, which offers evidence-ready video accounts, especially with Use of Force matters. There are compelling positive financial impacts to the swift resolution of these professional standards matters. Importantly, the ongoing and vital maintenance of our officers' mental and physical well-being due to the early clearance of conduct investigations is being positively addressed with this equipment. BWC recordings are proving to be a game-changer that definitively benefit the delivery of public safety services.

The often unpredictable environment that police operate in today has become the *new-normal* with an increase in matters pertaining to the social determinants of health. These non-core policing pressures are showing no sign of easing. As such, public safety personnel must adapt and improve Use of Force training to account for the large number of matters that are symptomatic of mental health, homelessness, poverty and substance use disorders. We remain committed to a continual review of our Use of Force incidents, our Use of Force training curriculums, and our equipment.

I have closely reviewed all of the *Use of Force incidents and Ministry reporting submissions* by our officers and their respective Supervisors throughout the year. I am satisfied that our collective *Use of Force* that was applied in 2024 was adequate, reasonable and effective in the delivery of public safety services to the community.

Scott Barnes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Barnes', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Deputy Chief of Police