
2024 OPERATING BUDGET BRIEFING NOTE

Toronto Police Service – Annual Operating Budget for the Mounted Unit, 24 Shades of Blue podcast and Communications Consulting

Issue/Background:

- On January 18, 2024, the Budget Committee requested the Chief of the Toronto Police Service (the Service) to provide a briefing note on the following:
 - The annual operating cost of the Mounted Unit, including their role in crowd control and assisting in missing person searches;
 - The annual operating cost to produce the “24 Shades of Blue” podcast; and
 - The annual operating cost of communications consulting.

Key Points:

Mounted Unit

- Since 1886 the Service’s Mounted Unit has proudly used horses to keep Toronto communities safe. The Mounted Unit is the longest serving unit in the history of the Service and its rich history and tradition is entwined with that of the city and the Service.
- The Mounted Unit provides support services to the front line members particularly in the areas of crowd management and community patrol. The Mounted Unit is also an asset in divisional focused problem-solving initiatives and high visibility policing.
- The Unit has 24 horses that are stabled at the Horse Palace on the Exhibition grounds.

Crowd Management

- At events, a Mounted Unit officer provides for a highly visible police presence. From their elevated vantage point on top of the horse, the officer can anticipate threats in the crowd, monitor crowd dynamics, communicate directions or observe for missing persons.
- The Mounted Unit and use of horses is recognized as the most effective non-violent way of moving a large crowd. It is universally recognized that, when it

comes to crowd management, a horse is equal to having at least 10 officers on the ground.

- Mounted Unit is a vital component of the Public Order Unit when responding to large planned or spontaneous demonstrations, sporting events or celebrations. A horse is a large animal that people at crowded events will make way for without any elevated use of force or struggle. As a result, the Mounted Unit officer, in coordination with uniformed ground officers, is an effective de-escalation tool for large scale crowds.
- The last several years in Toronto have seen a marked increase in demand for crowd management policing resources - from the 2021 protests due to COVID-19 related mandates to the recent demonstrations in response to the Middle East conflict.
- At times, crowd control events are spontaneous and can quickly escalate requiring the reallocation of policing resources as evidenced during a large music festival in 2022. The arrival of the Mounted Unit was remarked as the key reason the event was resolved without major incident.
- The Mounted Unit had 82 deployments in a crowd management role in 2022 and 84 deployments in 2023.
- When FIFA World Cup arrives in Toronto in 2026, the Mounted Unit is expected to play a significant role in crowd management as all events are expected to draw large crowds.
- The Mounted Unit has also become a key component of a Provincial Hub model response to Public Order events in which the capacity of a smaller outside agency is insufficient to effectively police a crowd management event. The Mounted Unit, as part of the Toronto Police Service Public Order, has deployed to support external agencies such as Ottawa Police Service and Kingston Police Service on 8 occasions since 2021. All of these deployments were subject to cost recovery.

Divisional Support

- The Mounted Unit is routinely requested to attend community events in all neighbourhoods throughout the City in support of Divisional Community Response or Neighbourhood Officers. The horses help remove or breakdown the barriers that prevent the youth or children to feel comfortable to approach and interact with police. The Mounted Unit attended 143 community events in 2023.
- The Mounted Unit is routinely called upon to support Divisional efforts for missing person searches involving the elderly, vulnerable persons, children and suicidal individuals. Horses have the ability to travel through very dense and rough terrain and cover a lot more ground than an officer. It is more time and cost efficient to use mounted patrols especially in large areas of

greenspace. The Mounted Unit was deployed to 66 searches for missing persons in 2023.

- The Mounted Unit provides a highly visible police presence in specific neighbourhoods to help solve community problems and to assist local police divisions with crime management initiatives. Some examples of these deployments included assisting divisional officers with large unruly crowds during pandemic related lockdowns and at Woodbine Beach during the Canada Day and Victoria Day weekends that saw large groups launching fireworks at first responders, families and each other.
- The Mounted Unit provides a vital presence in the Entertainment District every weekend to support the divisional officers. Mounted officers have an advantage to officers on the ground in that they can observe crowds at greater distances and observe pre-fight indicators. The officer can also quickly cover ground to attend to the disturbance, often preventing it from escalating.
- When not engaged in specific Divisional support initiatives, Mounted Unit officers routinely patrol Divisions to provide highly visible proactive patrols. Given their size and visibility Mounted officers are an effective proactive crime deterrent and provide a greater sense of security to residents, businesses and people frequenting public areas. In 2023, the Mounted Unit conducted 963 unique directed patrols of key areas throughout the City of Toronto.
- As part of their regular directed patrols or when providing Divisional support, Mounted officers routinely respond to radio calls for service. The Mounted Unit contributes to the Divisional response by attending these calls and thereby allowing a response car to be freed up for other calls for service. In 2023, the Mounted Unit was dispatched to 475 unique radio calls for service.
- The Mounted Unit annually participates in several parades throughout the City, including the Santa Claus parade and Warriors Day Parade at the CNE.
- The Mounted Unit is often requested to participate in ceremonial events such as honour guard details or as part of the Chief's Ceremonial Unit for funerals. Other annual commitments include Mounted Unit attendance at The Kings Plate, CNE opening and the Royal Winter Fair.

Table 1: 2023 Statistics – Mounted Unit

Community Events	143
Crowd Management	84
Tours	95
Ceremonial Events	55
Searches	66
Entertainment District	110
Parade	5
Divisional Assistance (deployments)	21

Training Days (Basic Equitation Course, In Service, search)	110
Mounted Unit Troop Training	45
Radio Calls	475
Vehicle stops	93
Provincial Offence Tickets and warnings	50
Directed Patrol	993

- The Service's Mounted Unit is the largest municipal operational Mounted Unit in Canada. As a result of this expertise, several other police services rely on the Service to provide training, guidance, and accreditation to their Mounted Units. The Service's Mounted Unit is the gold standard of operational Mounted Units in North America with several agencies often reaching out for counsel.
- Where possible, the Mounted Unit leverages available opportunities to identify cost savings for the overall unit operating budget. The Mounted Unit routinely has members of the public coming forward with the desire to donate funds for the purchase of horses and the required equipment. The last 7 horses were purchased from the generosity of these donors thereby not incurring additional costs to the unit's operating budget.
- Additionally the unit leverages interest accrued from a Trust Fund bequeathed to the Mounted Unit in the will of a long time benefactor to the Toronto Police Service and Mounted Unit. The unit leverages the annually accrued interest from this account to purchase equipment and attend training opportunities for the officers at the unit.
- The Mounted Unit also has a volunteer program in which accredited civilian riders attend the unit and exercise some of the horses, assisting the unit in maintaining the herd's peak health, reducing medical expenses and maintaining peak performance.
- Table 2 below outlines the operating costs and associated staffing for the Mounted Unit.

Table 2: Mounted Unit Operating Costs and Staffing

	2021 Actuals	2022 Actuals	2023 Actuals	2023 Approved	2024 Proposed
REGULAR SALARIES	4,741,722	4,652,158	4,874,905	4,670,700	4,577,000
BENEFITS	766,638	751,531	813,197	760,500	752,400
PREMIUM PAY	147,052	254,935	334,824	148,200	148,200
MATERIALS & SUPPLIES	174,075	220,823	207,671	205,900	221,700
TOTAL EQUIPMENT*	23,807	17,299	51,179		
SERVICES & RENTS	229,663	218,142	231,215	252,300	253,300
REVENUE*	17,153-	25,097-	101,825-		
TOTAL	6,065,805	6,089,792	6,411,167	6,037,600	5,952,600

Staffing Summary

Uniform	38	38	37	38	37
Civilian	1	1	2	2	2
Total	39	39	39	40	39

**Purchasing of horses would be reflected under the Equipment category and is funded through donations, as such there is no annual budget for equipment. Since donations fluctuate year to year, there is no annual budget and actuals are reflected at year-end.*

- The Mounted Unit has an unmatched ability to effectively and safely manage crowds and is an integral part of the Service’s overall response to large scale events, demonstrations and protests. The Unit is able to successfully manage large scale events that could potentially turn violent, thus reducing the requirement for additional officers and costs and lowering the risk of injuries to officers and the public.

Communications Activities

- The Toronto Police Service has a robust media relations and social media program that is operational 7 days a week, 365 days a year to ensure policing information is shared each day with the media and the public.
- It is extremely important to the Service to communicate timely, accurate police information that is in the public interest or that impacts public safety.
- The Service is active each day on:
 - Social media channels including Twitter, Instagram, Facebook and TikTok
 - Media Relations: daily activity may include news releases, media interviews, media responses, news conferences and media availabilities
- The Service has sought new ways to reach a broader audience to build understanding about policing and strengthen public trust. TPS is always looking for ways to reach new audiences, and at times have sought outside expertise to assist with implementation.

24 Shades of Blue Podcast

- The podcast, 24 Shades of Blue, is part of a larger program to communicate with the public.
- It allows the Service to provide a more in-depth look at public interest issues, or a behind the scenes look at different Units such as the Emergency Task Force. It also allows the Service to focus on the background about missing persons and cold cases.
- The Service is always looking for ways to reach new audiences and the 24 Shades of Blue podcast has enabled that (including a younger demographic, aged 18-34).
- At the time of the contract, the Service did not have in-house capacity and it was important that the medium be external to the Service to avoid the perception that it was solely self-promotion or used as a platform to counter any criticism.
- The podcast was discontinued in the fall of 2023. Some episodes completed in 2023 may air in 2024.
- The total cost to produce the podcast was \$0.291 million as outlined in Table 3 below.

Table 3: 24 Shades of Blue Podcast Costs

	2020 Actual	2021 Actual	2022 Actual	2023 Actual	TOTAL
24 Shades of Blue Podcast	53,607	69,360	117,675	50,432	291,074

- 57 episodes were produced and spanned a broad range of policing topics – governance, cold cases, missing persons, etc.
- Generally, episodes get 19,500 plays on audio streaming services and approximately 75,000 views on the YouTube channel. An episode featuring the TPS Emergency Task Force was viewed over 10,000 times.
- The content developed will be further repurposed for additional public outreach opportunities.

Communications Consulting

- Between 2021 and 2023, the Service secured professional services from Navigator, a strategic advisory and communications firm, to provide communications advice and services including research, communications campaign planning and implementation, media training, speech writing, various project work and counsel.
- The average annual cost for these services was approximately \$0.142 million.

- The current contract ended on December 31, 2023. The Service has not yet completed a competitive procurement process for 2024 for communications consulting work.

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