



Interview Summary: Superintendent Craig Abrams (Ontario Provincial Police)

Superintendent Craig Abrams was interviewed by Frank Au, Mark Pritchard, Eric Brousseau, and Misha Boutilier on August 16, 2022. Questions about this summary should be directed to Frank Au.

Background

Craig Abrams is Superintendent of Operations for the East Region of the Ontario Provincial Police (**OPP**). He has more than 20 years of experience with the OPP, including in criminal investigations, homicide, and managing regional criminal operations. He has sat in on Critical Incident Commander (**CIC**) training courses but is not a designated CIC.

January 24-28: Pre-Arrival Intelligence, Engagement, and Planning

Pre-Arrival Intelligence

Before January 24, 2022, Superintendent Abrams became aware through intelligence reporting that multiple convoys were planning to head to Ottawa. He received many intelligence reports from Project Hendon, an OPP-led intelligence sharing network that tracked the convoys' movement. Superintendent Abrams learned from these reports that the convoys had strong support and that the protesters did not have an exit plan and that many were planning to stay until all COVID-19 mandates and restrictions were lifted.

OPP Pre-Arrival Planning and Coordination with OPS

On January 24, Superintendent Abrams was appointed to serve as the OPP's Strategic Commander in charge of policing the Freedom Convoy. He established an Emergency Operations Centre that included traffic, crime, communications, and OPP Provincial Liaison Team (**PLT**) staff. He and his team adopted a plan focused on traffic and highways that aimed to police the 400-series Highways and Highway 17 to keep the peace, ensure public and officer safety, and maintain a safe flow of traffic. This plan included contingency plans for potential highway blockades.

Superintendent Abrams took steps to coordinate planning with the Ottawa Police Service (**OPS**). He spoke regularly with the Ottawa-based INTERSECT group, a coordinating body for public health and safety issues run by OPS that includes representatives from the Sûreté du Québec (**SQ**), the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (**RCMP**), the Canadian Armed Forces, the Parliamentary Protective Service (**PPS**), the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (**CSIS**), OC Transpo, and the Gatineau Police. By January 2022, Superintendent Abrams had served on INTERSECT for three years. Superintendent Abrams also contacted OPS then-Deputy Chief Steve Bell and they agreed that Bell would be Abrams' principal contact at OPS.



Two OPP officers, Inspector Dawn Ferguson and Staff Sergeant Lisa Nicholas, also helped coordinate with OPS. On January 25-26, OPP assigned Inspector Ferguson to serve as OPP's CIC at the National Capital Region Command Centre (**NCRCC**), a coordinating centre located at a RCMP building in Orleans where the OPS incident commander was based. Staff Sergeant Nicholas was based at a separate OPS command centre and assisted Inspector Ferguson by coordinating traffic with OPS. OPP coordinated control of Highway 417 off-ramps with OPS to prevent vehicle backlog. OPP also assigned a public order unit (**POU**) to Ottawa, initially to assist PPS, and later to assist OPS.

PLT Engagement with Freedom Convoy Leaders

OPP PLT officers and OPS officers engaged with Freedom Convoy leaders before their arrival in Ottawa. OPP PLT officers engaged with Freedom Convoy leaders to determine where they planned to stay and park along the way to Ottawa and to address potential conflicts related to participants' opposition to local public health measures. Superintendent Abrams was aware that OPS officers also engaged with Freedom Convoy leaders to discuss where convoy participants should park and which Ottawa streets they should take.

OPS Pre-Arrival Planning

On January 27 at a 9:30 a.m. INTERSECT meeting, Superintendent Abrams learned that the OPS planned to allow 3000 vehicles to enter the City of Ottawa. OPS told Superintendent Abrams that Freedom Convoy vehicles would be parking on three of the four lanes on Wellington St., and that Freedom Convoy organizers had agreed to keep a single lane open. He learned that OPS had identified streets to permit convoy vehicles to park on as well as overflow areas. He recalls discussion during INTERSECT calls of having protestors park at Ottawa's hockey arena and busing them downtown, but OPS did not do so and Superintendent Abrams thought this option was unrealistic. It was clear to Superintendent Abrams that OPS was planning for a one-to-two day protest.

At the time, Superintendent Abrams was not concerned with OPS's decision to allow 3000 vehicles to enter the City of Ottawa. He was aware from Project Hendon reports that the Freedom Convoy had strong support and that participants had no exit plan. However, he stated that OPS had considerable experience policing major events, and that on the basis of prior OPS experience, he trusted that OPS had made arrangements or agreements with the convoy organizers that made OPS comfortable with its decision to allow 3000 vehicles to park downtown.

January 29-February 4: OPS Use of OPP Resources, and Planning and Command Challenges

OPS Initial Reaction to Arrival of Freedom Convoy

On January 28-29, the convoys arrived at Ottawa without incident. By January 29, it became clear to Superintendent Abrams that OPS could not handle the convoy participants and that the OPS was in a state of confusion. In a call on the afternoon of



January 29, Inspector Ferguson told him that OPS officers in the NCRCC were in crisis mode, that they were cursing and swearing, and that they were yelling orders at each other and partner agencies. Superintendent Abrams understood that OPS was clearly struggling to determine what its operational plan was.

On January 31, Superintendent Abrams participated in an INTERSECT call during which Deputy Chief Bell stated that OPS was planning for a protracted event and was looking at a four-week sustainability plan. Superintendent Abrams explained that he was surprised by the four-week estimate and hoped that OPS and OPP could resolve the event more quickly.

Challenges and Concerns about OPS's Use of OPP Resources

On January 29, Superintendent Abrams contacted Deputy Chief Bell to offer 18 OPP officers to OPS, and Bell told Abrams that he would pass the offer along to his incident commanders. Superintendent Abrams had not received a response to this offer by 7:00 p.m. that evening, and he made another offer of assistance at that time. That same day, OPS advised that it did not need the 18 OPP officers.

On January 30, OPS requested and OPP provided 18 officers, but OPS failed to use these officers. That evening, Inspector Ferguson informed Superintendent Abrams that OPS had only deployed 2 of the 18 officers and attributed OPS's failure to deploy the other 16 officers to command dysfunction and poor coordination within OPS. Superintendent Abrams removed the 16 undeployed officers and contacted Deputy Chief Bell to advise him of the problem. According to Superintendent Abrams, Deputy Chief Bell apologized respecting what he characterized as a disconnect and stated that he would try to rectify it. Superintendent Abrams's assessment of these incidents was that OPS lacked a plan and was not organized enough to be able to use OPP's resources.

OPP officers made Superintendent Abrams aware of additional concerns about OPS's utilization of OPP resources between January 29 and February 4. First, OPP PLT team members told him that OPS's lack of an operational plan frustrated their attempts to integrate with OPS's PLT team. Second, OPP Inspector Ferguson informed him that there was a disconnect between OPS Major Incident Commander (**MIC**) Superintendent Marc Patterson, who was based at the 245 Greenbank Road OPS office, and the OPS Incident Commander located at NCRCC in Orleans. Third, OPS told OPP that it would deploy OPS members to assist OPP members policing the downtown core, but failed to provide an adequate number of OPS officers to support the number of officers provided by the OPP. When Superintendent Abrams informed Deputy Chief Bell of this last problem, Deputy Chief Bell told him that OPS was struggling with staffing issues and officers calling in sick. Following this conversation, more OPS members deployed to the downtown core.

Command and Planning Challenges at OPS

Superintendent Abrams observed that Chief Sloly was acting as a de facto major critical incident commander (**MCIC**) for the Freedom Convoy event. OPP officers informed him that the OPS PLT Co-ordinator, Staff Sergeant John Ferguson, could not authorize his



PLT members to make small deals with protestors and instead had to seek approval from OPS command headquarters. OPS command headquarters would in turn seek approval from Chief Sloly and then communicate Chief Sloly's approval or rejection back to Staff Sergeant Ferguson. This not only delayed PLT's operations, but also frustrated them because Chief Sloly frequently rejected PLT's proposed actions. Superintendent Abrams stated that that Chief Sloly's conduct was contrary to the principles of the MCIC and CIC program, which is predicated upon allowing the trained and experienced incident commander to make operational decisions. Superintendent Abrams explained that the role of the chief and the strategic-level commander is to consider resource requests and to provide input on the plan, not to be involved in operations on a day-to-day basis. Superintendent Abrams stated that in a properly functioning CIC system, the chief would not be responsible for approving PLT actions. Rather, either the CIC would approve these actions or the CIC would grant approval authority to the staff sergeant commanding PLT.

Superintendent Abrams also reported that OPS planners and the OPP planners assisting them were receiving contradictory directions. At OPS's request, OPP assigned two members, Inspector Younan and Staff Sergeant Gauvin, to help OPS develop plans. Chief Sloly had requested plans for three scenarios: (1) mass removal of protestors, (2) intersection-by-intersection clearance of protestors, and (3) preserving the status quo. On February 3, Superintendent Abrams was advised that OPS Inspector Michel Marin had informed the OPS planners and the OPP planners assisting them to scrap the 3-scenario planning because Chief Sloly wanted a new, different plan, and that Inspector Marin's intervention had left the planners confused as to what they should be doing. Superintendent Abrams contacted Deputy Chief Bell, who informed him that Inspector Marin lacked authority to issue planning directions and that the planners should be reporting to OPS Superintendent Jamie Dunlop, who was leading planning even though Superintendent Patterson was serving as the OPS MIC.

Superintendent Abrams also observed that Chief Sloly announced the closure of all Highway 417 off-ramps and the bridges connecting Ottawa and Quebec without consulting OPP. Pursuant to the Operational Plan, the OPP and the Ontario Ministry of Transportation ("**MTO**") were responsible for the closure of ramps. Closing all ramps off Highway 417 would have created significant resource issues for the OPP and MTO. Superintendent Abrams learned for the first time that Chief Sloly wanted to close the off-ramps and bridges when Chief Sloly announced this plan at a press conference on February 4 and stated that OPS was acting in response to new information. OPP Inspector Ferguson informed Superintendent Abrams that OPS commanders, including OPS's Incident Commander in the NCRCC, were surprised by Chief Sloly's announcement. Superintendent Abrams called Deputy Chief Bell and informed him that OPP did not think this plan would be effective and that it would take time to operationalize because OPP lacked the staff required to do so immediately. Superintendent Abrams also asked Deputy Chief Bell whether there was any new intelligence that supported the off-ramp and bridges closures and noted that he (Abrams) was unaware of any, even though OPP was providing much of OPS's intelligence information. Deputy Chief Bell told him that there was no new intelligence and that OPS had no plans to close off-ramps and bridges.



On February 4, Superintendent Abrams had what he characterized as a formal conversation with Deputy Chief Bell about OPS's lack of a plan and unified command structure. He explained that by unified command structure, he meant that OPS needed to be unified within itself because it was not at the time. He told Deputy Chief Bell what his OPP officers had relayed to him: that OPS was disorganized and poorly coordinated. He also told Deputy Chief Bell that OPS's maintenance of multiple command centres at the 245 Greenbank Road OPS office where OPS's MIC, Superintendent Patterson, was based, the OPS headquarters on 474 Elgin Road, and at the NCRCC in Orleans where OPS's Incident Commander was based, were contributing to these problems. Deputy Chief Bell agreed that OPS needed to formalize operations and told Superintendent Abrams that OPS was trying to develop a plan and a unified command. In characterizing the conversation, Superintendent Abrams explained that it was an uncomfortable situation but he felt compelled to raise his concerns and offer advice.

February 5-7: Chief Sloly's "Rampage," the Coventry Road Incident, and OPS's Request for 1800 Officers

The February 5 "Rampage" and OPP's Response

On the morning of February 5, Inspector Younan informed Superintendent Abrams that Chief Sloly had sent an email to OPS command staff at 6:30 a.m. that demanded the closure of all roads, bridges, and off-ramps and requested OPP to assist with the clearing of intersections in downtown Ottawa. Inspector Younan told Superintendent Abrams that Chief Sloly was requesting OPP participation in "surge and contain" operations. Inspector Ferguson told Superintendent Abrams that same morning that OPS officers working at NCRCC described Chief Sloly as being on a "rampage." Superintendent Abrams also learned that OPS was considering night-time takedowns of intersections, which he explained were contrary to OPP protocol because they involved higher risk than daytime operations.

Superintendent Abrams' view was that Chief Sloly was stating what he wanted done in the absence of an operational plan. Superintendent Abrams wanted to see an operational plan before committing OPP resources to particular operations so that he and his trained POU and critical incident commanders could evaluate officer safety, public safety, and potential liability risks. Superintendent Abrams told Inspector Ferguson that OPP would not participate in Chief Sloly's intended "surge and contain" operations without receiving such a plan.

On February 5 at 3:45 p.m., Superintendent Abrams, Inspector Younan, and the head of OPP's PLT program, Inspector Marcel Beaudin, spoke with Commissioner Carrique. During the call, Superintendent Abrams and Inspector Younan shared their concerns about Chief Sloly's behaviour with Commissioner Carrique, including the "rampage," Chief Sloly's assumption of the MCIC role, the problems with PLT engagement, and the lack of an operational plan. Inspector Beaudin also shared the OPP PLT team's concerns. Commissioner Carrique informed Superintendent Abrams, Inspector Younan, and Inspector Beaudin that he spoke with Chief Sloly on February 4 and that Chief Sloly was contemplating taking down intersections on February 9-10. He also informed them that



Dr. Peter Collins, a forensic psychiatrist, was starting to engage with OPS. Superintendent Abrams explained that he shared his concerns about Chief Sloly's actions with Commissioner Carrique so that the Commissioner could mitigate those concerns by engaging with Chief Sloly.

Challenges in OPS Use of PLT and the Coventry Road Incident

On February 6, Superintendent Abrams spoke with Inspector Beaudin and the OPP PLT team assisting OPS. Inspector Beaudin informed Superintendent Abrams that he had outlined to Superintendent Patterson an appropriate path forward for PLT that would be consistent with the principles outlined in the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police National Framework for Police Preparedness for Demonstrations and Assemblies. Inspector Beaudin told Superintendent Abrams that OPS still lacked a plan and an integrated approach to use PLT, and that he was concerned that OPS was planning to conduct hard takedowns of intersections on February 9-10 without first engaging with protestors and communicating to them that they were acting unlawfully.

Following that conversation, Superintendent Abrams connected with Deputy Chief Bell and told him that OPS needed to take a measured approach and allow PLT to engage with protestors. Superintendent Abrams informed Deputy Chief Bell that the OPS PLT Co-ordinator, Staff Sergeant Ferguson, was not permitting PLT to make autonomous decisions because OPS command did not support this.

Later on February 6, Superintendent Abrams learned that OPS officers arrested protestors as they were removing fuel from the Coventry Road site pursuant to a negotiated agreement with OPS and OPP PLT officers. Protestors were using the Coventry Road site as a fuel distribution centre, and OPS wanted to cut off the downtown core protestors' access to fuel from that site. After PLT officers successfully negotiated the removal of the fuel to ensure public safety at the Coventry Road site, Superintendent Patterson identified an opportunity to conduct enforcement and directed OPS officers to arrest the protestors removing the fuel as soon as they left the site and entered the neighbouring roadway.

Superintendent Abrams observed that the Coventry Road incident had an immediate and strong adverse impact on PLT's relationships with protestors and ability to communicate with them. He stated that the incident nullified the goodwill and trust that PLT was trying to build with protestors, and that PLT engagement following the incident never reached the level of success that he hoped to see before the incident. He was informed that, after the incident, the OPS PLT told OPP PLT officers to leave Ottawa because it was impossible to repair the damage the incident caused to PLT's work.

On the evening of February 6, after the Coventry Road incident, Superintendent Abrams participated in a call with Chief Sloly, Acting Deputy Chief Patricia Ferguson, and Superintendent Patterson. Superintendent Abrams stated that Chief Sloly invited him to that call because Chief Sloly had heard that OPP PLT was pulling out of Ottawa. Superintendent Abrams told Chief Sloly that OPP was committed to staying. During that call, Superintendent Patterson admitted that he directed POU to arrest the protestors



removing fuel from Coventry Road without notifying the OPP or OPS PLTs. Superintendent Patterson claimed that protestors could not make the connection between PLT engagement and the arrests. Superintendent Abrams voiced his disagreement with Superintendent Patterson and stated that protestors could link the PLT engagement to the arrests. Chief Sloly voiced neither approval nor disapproval of Superintendent Patterson's actions.

During this same call, Chief Sloly also discussed his plan to clear the Rideau/Sussex intersection. Chief Sloly told call participants that he wanted the intersection cleared on February 7, and that it was their job to make it happen. Superintendent Patterson informed Chief Sloly that he needed to postpone the Rideau/Sussex operation until February 9 to assemble the necessary resources. Chief Sloly accepted the delay but told Superintendent Patterson that he wanted the intersection cleared by no later than February 9. Superintendent Patterson also described an OPS plan to conduct snatch-and-grab arrests of Freedom Convoy leaders off Ottawa streets with POU support.

Chief Sloly also discussed the process for requesting resources from other police agencies during the February 6 evening call. Chief Sloly told his OPS commanders to tell him how many officers they needed, and he informed them that he would ask for double that number from other police agencies.

OPS Request for 1800 Officers

On February 7, Superintendent Abrams learned that OPS had requested 1800 officers from OPP and other police agencies. Superintendent Abrams stated that he was skeptical of the request because of Chief Sloly's statement at the February 6 evening meeting that he would ask for double the officers that his commanders determined were required. Superintendent Abrams questioned whether Chief Sloly actually needed 1800 officers or only needed 900. Superintendent Abrams described the 1800-officer request as an arbitrary number that was not accompanied by an operational plan. He explained that OPP needed to see an operational plan because OPP also had to devote resources to policing protests and blockades at border crossings in OPP's East Region, the Niagara region, Sarnia, and Windsor's Ambassador Bridge.

February 8-9: Arrival of Integrated Planning Cell and Planning Meetings with OPS

Arrival of Integrated Planning Cell and February 8 Planning Meeting with OPS

On February 8 at 9:00 a.m., Superintendent Abrams participated in a call with Commissioner Carrique, Chief Superintendent Carson Parady, and other members of senior command. During that call, Superintendent Abrams learned that OPP was establishing an Integrated Planning Team headed by Chief Superintendent Parady to assist OPS and that Chief Superintendent Parady would be travelling to Ottawa.

On the evening of February 8, Superintendent Abrams attended a meeting between OPS commanders and the Integrated Planning Team. During that meeting, Deputy Chief Ferguson shared a three-page concept of operations document that outlined a 7-point



plan to resolve the situation in Ottawa. Superintendent Abrams viewed the document as a high-level overview that did not provide sufficient detail about officer numbers and the roles of specific teams for the Integrated Planning Team to use to move forward. The Integrated Planning Team told Acting Deputy Chief Ferguson that it needed a more developed operational plan with greater detail. Acting Deputy Chief Ferguson stated that she would provide the Team with a more developed operational plan the following day.

February 9 Planning Meeting with OPS

On the morning of February 9, Chief Superintendent Pardy told Superintendent Abrams that OPS would not be providing a more developed operational plan and that Chief Sloly wanted OPP commanders to meet with him instead. Chief Superintendent Pardy, Superintendent Abrams, and RCMP representatives met with Chief Sloly, Deputy Chiefs Bell and Ferguson, Superintendent Patterson, various OPS staff sergeants, and OPS general counsel Christine Huneault at 12:00 p.m. that day. At the meeting, Chief Sloly presented another concept of operations document and provided the OPP and RCMP participants with three pages listing different combinations of officer numbers required to action the contemplated operations; the last such page listed nearly 1800 officers. According to Superintendent Abrams, Chief Sloly and the document he provided did not provide a breakdown of how OPS planned to use those resources.

After Chief Sloly presented the plan, he told Superintendent Abrams that OPP had not sent 1500 officers per day to Ottawa as Ontario Solicitor General Sylvia Jones had announced on February 6. Superintendent Abrams told Chief Sloly that he provided the 1500 figure to the Solicitor General's office as part of a package of breakdowns and total numbers and informed it, prior to the statement, that the figure was not a daily count, and that the announcement was poorly worded. Chief Sloly responded that the media release was intentional and was the product of politics in the Solicitor General's office.

Following that discussion, Superintendent Patterson presented a proposed operation to clear the Rideau/Sussex intersection that evening starting at 11:00 p.m. Superintendent Abrams was concerned about the proposed operation and asked Superintendent Patterson direct questions about it. First, Superintendent Abrams asked how Superintendent Patterson intended to remove the trucks parked there. When Superintendent Patterson stated that OPS planned to use retired OPS officers to drive the trucks out, Superintendent Abrams informed him that this plan was not feasible because the trucks were not running and might need repairs. Superintendent Patterson next stated that OPS could use Canadian Armed Forces military tow trucks. When Superintendent Abrams asked whether OPS had made an aid to the civil power request under the *National Defence Act* to the federal government to use the military tow trucks, he was advised by Superintendent Patterson that such a request was not necessary. Second, Superintendent Abrams asked whether PLT was engaged in planning the Rideau/Sussex operation. Superintendent Patterson told him that PLT was engaged and approved the plan, which Superintendent Abrams knew was not the case.

After Superintendent Patterson presented the Rideau/Sussex operation, Chief Superintendent Pardy and Superintendent Abrams told Chief Sloly that OPS needed to



take a measured approach and emphasized that police actions in Ottawa would impact protests and blockades across the country. Superintendent Abrams stated that Chief Sloy became animated in response and stated that he did not want to hear about impacts on the rest of Canada because Ottawa was the head of the hydra and taking out the Ottawa protestors would solve problems elsewhere in Canada.

Following this discussion, Superintendent Abrams told Chief Sloy that he would not support OPP members participating in the Rideau/Sussex operation that evening. RCMP planners then interjected and told Chief Sloy that OPS should pause the Rideau/Sussex operation and delay commencing operations until the week of February 14 so that a more developed operational plan could be created and additional RCMP officers could be transferred to Ottawa. RCMP Sergeant Darwin Tetreault told Chief Sloy that RCMP could bring in as many as 400 POU officers to assist OPS. Superintendent Abrams stated that Chief Sloy became heated in response and demanded that RCMP promise that it would deploy 400 POU members to Ottawa by the week of February 14. Chief Sloy stated that he would go to the federal Minister of Public Safety if this promise was not kept. RCMP planners told Chief Sloy that they needed to obtain RCMP command approval before they could promise additional officers.

After the meeting ended, Acting Deputy Chief Ferguson thanked Superintendent Abrams for asking questions to challenge the Rideau/Sussex operation and informed him that she had been asking similar questions and had not obtained any answers. The following day, Deputy Chief Bell sent Superintendent Abrams a text message that thanked him for his input and stated that the input helped OPS's planning process move forward.

Police Build-Up and Enforcement Operation

After the February 9 meeting, the Integrated Planning Cell headed by Chief Superintendent Parry developed an operational plan. Superintendent Abrams supported the Integrated Planning Cell's work by mustering the OPP officers (excluding the POU resources) needed to support the plan, overseeing their deployment, and managing the necessary logistics. By February 14, OPP support to OPS had increased from 60 officers per day to 150 per day. On February 15, Superintendent Abrams was informed that 400 additional OPP members would arrive by February 17. Superintendent Abrams stated that OPP managed accommodation and logistics for the additional OPP members who arrived because OPS was overwhelmed and unable to do so. He also explained that the deployment of OPP officers was delayed during this period because OPS failed to provide timely instructions or provided shifting instructions. In one instance, OPS initially instructed OPP officers to engage in foot patrol and contain some intersections but shortly after deployment, changed course and asked for assistance with traffic patrol, thereby creating logistical challenges.

On February 15, Superintendent Abrams received a message from OPP's PLT team that expressed concerns about political interference with their work. The OPP PLT team informed Superintendent Abrams that, as a result of the City of Ottawa's negotiations with protestors, protestors were informing PLT members that they had met with Ottawa Mayor Jim Watson and wanted to continue to meet with Mayor Watson rather than police.



Superintendent Abrams explained that the City of Ottawa's negotiations hindered PLT's work because PLT could not get the protest leaders to focus on police. The OPP PLT also expressed concern that it was not being allowed to fully integrate with the OPS PLT.

Superintendent Abrams described a February 17 incident in which 50 RCMP officers attended the OPP Command Post and advised that they had been told that RCMP and OPS members would now start being deployed from that location. The OPS and OPP Incident Command Team met to determine a plan of action. It was agreed that the OPS would keep its Command Post open and the RCMP would deploy to that Command Post the following morning. This joint solution ensured the successful deployment of RCMP and OPS officers.

By February 17, Superintendent Abrams had learned that OPS had announced the creation of a "Red Zone" in downtown Ottawa. The Red Zone was a controlled access area encompassing 4-5 blocks south of Wellington Street in which police officers patrolled key intersections and asked drivers and pedestrians transiting those intersections whether they had a lawful purpose to enter the Red Zone. Superintendent Abrams explained that OPS messaging communicated that the Red Zone was authorized by powers conferred under the *Emergencies Act*, which took effect after the federal government declared a public order emergency on February 14. Superintendent Abrams explained that OPP officers had been stopping vehicles before the February 14 emergency declaration pursuant to common law, *Highway Traffic Act*, and *Criminal Code* authorities, but that the declaration and the emergency powers the federal government subsequently enacted provided additional authority for OPP officers to control foot traffic as well as vehicle traffic.

The February 18-20 Enforcement Operation and the Post-Operation Phase

Between February 18-20, OPS, OPP, and RCMP POU officers conducted an enforcement operation that cleared areas occupied by protestors in downtown Ottawa. On February 22, OPS, OPP, and RCMP entered a maintenance phase to control the cleared area. OPP officers continued to stop vehicles and pedestrians entering the Red Zone and inquire if they had a lawful purpose to enter it between February 18-22.

On February 23, the federal government revoked the declaration of a public order emergency under the *Emergencies Act*. After the revocation, OPP members asked Superintendent Abrams whether they still had authority to stop pedestrians and vehicles entering the Red Zone. Superintendent Abrams was satisfied that OPP officers continued to have lawful authority to stop pedestrians and vehicles entering the Red Zone and directed them to continue to do so. Superintendent Abrams explained that he believed that common law authorities, such as *R. v. Waterfield*, [1963] 3 All E.R. 659, *Dedman v. The Queen*, [1985] 2 S.C.R. 2, and *R. v. Clayton*, 2007 SCC 32, authorized these actions because the Red Zone was as small as possible, stopping entrants was necessary to protect the public, the police were not prohibiting entry to the Red Zone for a lawful purpose, and the police intended to cease stopping entrants as soon as possible. Superintendent Abrams explained that police also had authority to stop entrants under



the common law power to make an arrest to prevent breach of the peace, the road closure provisions of the *Highway Traffic Act*, and *Criminal Code* authorities.

On February 24, Superintendent Abrams was satisfied that the lawful authorities to conduct those stops had ceased because of new intelligence that indicated that there were no real concerns that protestors would return. OPP members were directed to cease stopping cars at intersections, fall back into an observation mode, and to only engage if there were obvious breaches of the peace.

[Use of Federal and Provincial Emergency Powers by OPP](#)

Superintendent Abrams stated that OPP officers did not use authorities granted under the federal *Emergencies Act* or the Ontario *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act* when they deployed to Ottawa. He explained that authorities granted under the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act* did assist OPP to protect provincial highways by creating offences for blocking and stopping traffic above and beyond *Criminal Code* offenses such as mischief and breach of the peace.