



Niagara Regional Police Service Professional Standards Unit Investigative Report

Date of Incident: December 17, 2023

Date of Complaint: May 9, 2024 - Reported to OIPRD
May 28, 2024 - Assigned for investigation

Investigation Type: Service Complaint

File No. NR24-102
OIPRD#: 240016475

Complainant: HILL, Sabrina

Police Service: Niagara Regional Police Service

Investigator: Inspector Lynda Hughes
Professional Standards Unit

Finding: No Further Action

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SUMMARY OF COMPLAINT

Sabrina Hill's complaint to the OIPRD (now LECA) stems from an incident at the St. Catharines Bus Terminal on December 17, 2023. On that date an interaction occurred between the complainant and uniformed members of the Niagara Regional Police Service (NRPS).

As a result of that interaction, the complainant alleges that the Service they received from members of the NRPS on that date was lacking as it related to encounters with certain community members.

Sabrina Hill specifically stated: "Many police services across Canada and other cities worldwide have developed strategic action plans and policies to prevent these types of overt, traumatizing incidents. Sadly, no such plan exists to improve police encounters with the 2SLGBTQQIA+ community in the Niagara Region."

The OIPRD determined the complaint to be a policy/service complaint and directed the NRPS to investigate pursuant to section 63 of the Police Services Act.

The material was received by the NRPS on May 28, 2024, and Inspector Lynda Hughes took carriage of the investigation.

INVESTIGATIVE CHRONOLOGY

1. Reviewed O.I.P.R.D. complaint submitted by Sabrina Hill
 - As per direction from OIPRD, focused on the specific allegation related to strategic plans
2. Reviewed CAD Call of NRPS Incident 23-139566
3. Reviewed Strategic Plan:
 - a. 2019-2021
 - b. 2022-2025
 - c. 2020-2022 Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Strategic Plan
4. Chief of Police – Community Inclusion Council
5. NRPS Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Unit
6. Reviewed related NRPS General Orders (policies)
7. Reviewed related training for officers

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OIPRD COMPLAINT

At the outset of this investigation, the investigator reviewed the complaint form that had been submitted by Sabrina Hill. The standard form contains a section in which all complainants are asked to complete a summary of their complaint. In this section, Ms. Hill detailed her complaint which was approximately two pages long and alleged misconduct on the part of two officers (see attachment).

The OIPRD/ LECA determined that the circumstances did not rise to a level of misconduct by the officers, and it was not in the public interest to send the complaint for investigation. They did however assign the complaint to be investigated as a policy/service complaint as it related to strategic plans and *"encounters with the 2SLGBTQQIA+ community in the Niagara Region."*

NIAGARA REGIONAL POLICE SERVICE INCIDENT #23-139566

Summary:

On December 17, 2023, at approximately 10:50 am, uniform members of the NRPS were dispatched to the St. Catharines Bus Terminal for an unwanted person call. Information received from security was that a female was refusing to leave when requested.

Officers arrived on scene and learned that a female (now known as the complainant Sabrina Hill) was recording at the bus terminal and as a result had been asked to leave by the on-duty security officer. Officers spoke to Hill who would not identify herself and continued to record the interaction. Four different officers engaged with Hill for more than an hour, attempting to get her to leave as directed. Ms. Hill stated she would leave only if she was served with a Provincial Offences Act Notice.

The information the officers had at the time, provided from the security officer at the bus terminal, was that the complainant was committing an offence under the Trespass to Property Act, namely failing to leave when directed. The officers were acting in good faith during the interaction and attempted to resolve the situation with the complainant for over an hour to no avail. Ultimately the complainant was served with a Trespass Notice from the security officer and a Trespass to Property Act ticket for failing to leave when directed and left the area.

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ANALYSIS

In her complaint form, Ms. Hill alleges that officers (one in particular) treated her with a hostile attitude which was due in part to the NRPS having no “*strategic action plan*” or policy in place to improve “*encounters with the 2SLGBTQQA+ community in the Niagara Region.*”

During the investigative process, several documents were reviewed, which will be outlined here.

Strategic Plans:

The NRPS has had an overall Strategic Plan since 2019. Stemming from the work on that Strategic Plan, the service also developed a Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Strategic Plan and a Chief of Police – Community Inclusion Council, all of which are available on the NRPS public website.

The 2019-2021 Strategic Plan was developed through an Internal Environmental Scan, External Environmental Scan, External Stakeholder Focus Groups, and a Community Satisfaction Survey. One of the goals of the plan was to foster a culture of community collaboration and engagement and work with community stakeholders and diverse communities in order to better reach out and work to solve community issues. Another goal was to create a Community Police Diversity Advisory Committee to foster collaboration in diverse communities.

The 2020 – 2022 Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Strategic Plan was developed from the 2019-2021 Strategic Plan and includes portions on the importance of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion to Policing and working to erode barriers while fostering open communication, mutual understanding, and engagement. As part of the plan, a Diversity Officer was implemented to advance efforts to engage communities of focus and implemented programs such as “Diversity Tours” to provide members an introduction and opportunity to interact with Niagara’s diverse local community.

The Chief of Police - Community Inclusion Council was developed to collaborate and engage with community partners who represent equity seeking groups. The current council includes representatives from external organizations who each represent diverse communities of focus within the Niagara Region. As part of this initiative, meetings are held regularly through the Office of the Chief to ensure feedback is received and partnerships continue to be strong.

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The 2022-2025 Strategic Plan continues with the objective to “promote a culture that embraces equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI)” which is achieved through ongoing training for members and reducing systemic barriers. Stakeholders focus groups that were part of the development of the plan included members of PFLAG, Positive Living and OUT Niagara.

In addition to the elements of the Strategic Plans listed above, the NRPS also has a dedicated Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Unit that are instrumental in engaging with community groups to ensure collaboration with the service is ongoing. The EDI unit hosts internal information sessions for members as well as arranging external events with community partners and members. In 2023 these events included Pride Niagara flag raisings, the Niagara Unity Awards, Pride in the Park (show of support / Recruiting tent), Hieeee Tea, LGBTQ2S+ scream Annual Ball, Quest Community Health Centre BBQ and the Serving with Pride Gala. In 2024, members continued building strong relationships with PRIDE Niagara. This included a community tour attended by the Executive Leadership Team, a flag raising ceremony at Headquarters at the completion of the CoP-CIC meeting, as well as the Unity Awards and support for Pride in the Park.

Policies:

Members of the NRPS are governed by several General Orders (policies) which outline duties and responsibilities. The relevant policies to this investigation include:

- 1) **Training and Career Development-** Training Advisory Committee includes a member of the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion committee (evaluating and updating existing training programs, advising the Training Unit of any changes and emerging training needs)
- 2) **Diverse Communities-** covers implementing initiatives on the principles of equity and fairness embodied in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Ontario Human Rights Code and the Community Safety and Policing Act.
- 3) **Domestic Violence-** The NRPS Training Unit regularly updates training, with input from Community Specialists, as it relates to sensitivity toward persons of diverse backgrounds, including Indigenous, racialized, ethnic or linguistic minorities, LGBTQ+, and/or persons with disabilities.

Training for Officers:

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Training for new recruit officers hired with the NRPS is extensive. During the initial training phase prior to attending the Ontario Police College (OPC), lessons include instruction on the Ontario Human Rights Code, Community Policing, Diversity, and Respectful Workplace.

Training at OPC entails further diversity training which includes lessons and discussion such as “Policing and your 2SLGBTQ+ Community”, and OACP “Supporting the 2SLGBTQ+ Community.” Training for recruits at OPC also covers communication, de-escalation and scenario-based training.

Once graduated from OPC, recruit officers receive further training prior to being assigned to duties of a full-time officer. This comprehensive instruction includes live action and simulator training on judgment scenarios, de-escalation techniques, communication, and diversity. All recruits participate in a Diversity Tour of various community groups to increase awareness and understanding as it relates to police interaction and perceptions of community members. Part of the tour includes having members of 2SLGBTQIA+ Niagara speak.

Training for sworn members is always evolving and includes mandatory training from the Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion (CCDI) covering Diversity and Inclusion Fundamentals and Unconscious Bias.

Other resources available to members includes Ontario Police Video Training Alliance (OPTVA), and Canadian Police Knowledge Network (CPKN) training on a number of topics including Hate Crimes and 2SLGBTQ+ modules. The NRPS is regularly in contact with other services who provide training material for officers including Toronto Police and Durham Regional Police.

The information summarized above is an indication of the ongoing commitment by the NRPS to ensure ALL members of the community are treated fairly and without bias. The NRPS understands that continuous education for officers will assist in building upon and improving relationships with the diverse communities we serve. Although measures to improve relationships are in place, the effort to ensure those relationships remain positive will continue.

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CONCLUSION

It is unfortunate the complainant had a negative interaction with members of the Niagara Regional Police Service on December 27, 2023. That incident, however, is not indicative of an overall problem with the policies and procedures of the NRPS.

The complainant alleged that *"no such plan exists to improve police encounters with the 2SLGBTQQIA+ community in the Niagara Region."* As outlined in this investigative report, the NRPS does have Strategic Plans, training, and dedicated units to improve relationships with the diverse communities we serve. These strategies are the "framework for a collective commitment to providing quality policing services to the residents of Niagara". As indicated in the 2020-2022 EDI Plan, "we are committed to improving the diversity of our workforce, enhancing relations with communities of focus, and embedding the principles of diversity, equity and inclusion within the culture of our organization".

No further action is required.

Submitted by: *Lynda Hughes*

Inspector Lynda Hughes #9196
Professional Standards Unit

Date: 2024-07-25