



Item No. 10.3.2
Board of Police Commissioners for the Halifax Regional Municipality
December 3, 2025

TO: Chair O'Malley and Members of the Board of Police Commissioners for the
Halifax Regional Municipality

FROM: Bill Moore, Commissioner of Public Safety

DATE: November 20, 2025

SUBJECT: **BoPC Policy on Use of Force**

ORIGIN

Action 3.4 under the Board of Police Commissioners' 2025-2026 Workplan:

Work with HRP to produce policy on Use of Force

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Board of Police Commissioners for the Halifax Regional Municipality:

1. Adopt in principle, subject to a period of public comment, the policy entitled Use of Force for inclusion in the Board of Police Commissioners' Policy Manual, as outlined in Attachment 1 of this report; and
2. Request a presentation from HRP and HRD detailing what data is collected when a use of force incident occurs, how that data informs policy and standard operating procedures, and what organizations the data is shared with and for what purpose.

BACKGROUND

Reviewing and/or updating policies on use of force has been a theme in several recent reports received and considered by the Board, including the 2022 Defund Report (Recommendations 2-5), the 2023 Mass Casualty Commission Final Report (Recommendation P. 57) and the 2024 Halifax Independent Civilian Review Into August 18 2021 Encampment Evictions (the Independent Review; Recommendation 8). In 2023, following a request from the Board, the HRP published its Use of Force policy online. In 2024, the

provincial Department of Justice issued Nova Scotia Policing Standards on a range of issues, including Use of Force.

[Section 25 of the Criminal Code](#) provides police officers with the ability to use force in the lawful execution of their duties, as long as they are acting on reasonable grounds. In other words, the use of force must be necessary, proportional to the threat level, judged from the perspective of a reasonable officer on the scene. Subsection 4 outlines the circumstances under which a peace officer is justified in using force:

When protected

(4) A peace officer, and every person lawfully assisting the peace officer, is justified in using force that is intended or is likely to cause death or grievous bodily harm to a person to be arrested, if

- (a) the peace officer is proceeding lawfully to arrest, with or without warrant, the person to be arrested;
- (b) the offence for which the person is to be arrested is one for which that person may be arrested without warrant;
- (c) the person to be arrested takes flight to avoid arrest;
- (d) the peace officer or other person using the force believes on reasonable grounds that the force is necessary for the purpose of protecting the peace officer, the person lawfully assisting the peace officer or any other person from imminent or future death or grievous bodily harm; and
- (e) the flight cannot be prevented by reasonable means in a less violent manner.

The Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police has produced a [National Use of Force Framework](#), which includes a [graphical representation](#) of the various elements involved in the process by which a sworn officer assesses a situation and acts in a reasonable manner to ensure officer and public safety. The Framework represents a process by which an officer assesses, plans and responds to situations that threaten public and officer safety, and provides a foundation for police service use of force policies across the country. The proposed policy included in Attachment 1 references this Framework and was prepared in collaboration with two members of the Board who have between them expertise on the police use of force and a medical background.

The RCMP has comprehensive policies on the Use of Force and the Incident Management Intervention Model (IMIM). The HRD is guided by these National policies and procedures.

DISCUSSION

The authority to use force is one of the key elements that distinguishes sworn officers from other members of society. Therefore, the reasonable use of force is central to the duties of every officer. Providing broad oversight of police use of force speaks to several important functions of Boards of Police Commissioners under Section 55 of the *Police Act*, including maintaining adequate, effective and efficient policing and ensuring that police services are delivered in a manner consistent with community needs, values and expectations. Appropriate oversight of police use of force may also enhance public trust of police.

Though it is under review, HRP's current Use of Force policy was first issued in 1996 and has not been updated since that time, with the exception of the addition of a section on Incidents Involving Use of Conducted Energy Weapon, in 2011.

The approach of Canadian police forces on Use of Force has evolved since HRP's policy was first issued. For example, Section D(4) of HRP's current policy states that "In a majority of cases, some level of physical force will be necessary to effect an arrest or protect others". This is in contrast with the 2024 Nova Scotia Policing Standards on Use of Force, which state that "Officers should use strategies and techniques to decrease the intensity of a situation, improve decision-making and communication, reduce the need for force, and increase voluntary compliance." Similarly, in April 2021, the RCMP updated its Incident

Management and Intervention Model annual recertification training and its Incident Management and Intervention Model graphic to place more emphasis on communication, crisis intervention, and de-escalation.

This emphasis on communication, crisis intervention and de-escalation is also reflected in two recent reports received and considered by the Board. The Independent Review, which recommends that HRP Use of Force policy be revised, states that HRP's new policy "should emphasize that the goal is to not use force and that force should be used only as a last resort. Every available option other than force should be exhausted before a resort to use of force is justified." Similarly, the Mass Casualty Commission Final Report recommends that the RCMP replace the existing use of force provisions within its *Code of Conduct* with principles set out in the Finnish *Police Act*, which emphasizes minimal use of force.

The proposed Use of Force policy sets out the BoPC's expectations for the HRP's Use of Force, emphasizing the protection of life, accountability, and alignment with legal standards and community values. Specifically, the proposed BoPC policy provides direction to the Chief to produce an HRP Use of Force policy that:

- Aligns with the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police National Use of Force Framework;
- Is in compliance with the legal framework for police use of force;
- Emphasizes de-escalation, including that the goal is not to use force, and that force should only be used as a last resort;
- Includes a duty to intervene to stop inappropriate force used by colleagues, and to report when this occurs;
- Addresses the Use of Force in several important contexts;
- Ensures that force is generally only applied using approved methods, equipment, and weapons for which proper training has been obtained;
- Outlines training requirements, which shall include special consideration for vulnerable populations, and reference to techniques that are not endorsed by HRP;
- Includes a plan to ensure the subject's wellbeing after a use of force option is deployed; and
- Outlines reporting requirements for the Chief.

While the policy, if adopted, would apply to HRP and not to HRD, the policy requests that the HRD adhere to the reporting requirements, as outlined in the proposed policy.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no immediate financial implications to this report. Any future financial implications arising from implementation of the recommendations will be addressed in staff reports and HRM departmental budgets as required.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The Board of Police Commissioners is comprised of four citizen members and three Councillors. Meetings are live webcast on Halifax.ca. The agenda, reports, video, and minutes of the Board are posted on Halifax.ca.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Police Act 2004 section 55 states:

The function of a board is to provide

...

(b) the administrative direction, organization and policy required to maintain an adequate, effective and efficient police department

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 – Use of Force

A copy of this report can be obtained online at halifax.ca or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210.

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Use of Force

Original Implementation Date		Approved by	
Date of Last Revision		Approved by	
Effective Date of Last Revision		Approved by	

Purpose

This policy sets out the intent of the Halifax Board of Police Commissioners for the use of force by the Halifax Regional Police. The Board is committed to overseeing the delivery of fair, effective, efficient, equitable and accountable policing services in keeping with community values, needs, and expectations of all community members. The Board places the highest value on the protection of life and the safety of officers and the public alike.

The RCMP has comprehensive policies on the Use of Force. The HRD is guided by these National policies and procedures.

Definitions

In the context of this document:

Board means the Halifax Board of Police Commissioners

Chair means Chair of the Board of Police Commissioners

Chief officer means the Chief of Halifax Regional Police

Chokehold means any restraint which results in applying direct mechanical pressure or compression over the structures in the anterior portion of the throat. A chokehold can disrupt airflow or ventilation due to obstruction of the trachea or other upper respiratory structures or anterior neck structures.

De-escalation means a range of verbal and non-verbal strategies and tactics used to lower the intensity of potentially volatile situations with the aim to reduce the necessity or level of force required for successful incident resolution

HRD means the Halifax Regional Detachment of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police

HRP means the Halifax Regional Police

Use of force means when a force option is discharged at or applied on a person, or a weapon is displayed to a person, in an operational setting.

Vascular neck restraint, also referred to as Carotid Control Technique (CCT), means a physical control technique that applies compression of the vascular tissue along the lateral aspects of the neck, resulting in temporary decreased cerebral blood flow, and may result in temporary loss of consciousness.

Policy of the Board

It is the Policy of the Board that:

General

1. The chief officer shall establish an operational policy with respect to the use of force by HRP's sworn members that covers all elements of use of force options and associated equipment that are issued and trained on, and that aligns with the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police National Use of Force Framework¹.
2. The chief officer shall ensure that HRP's use of force policy is in compliance with, the legal framework for police use of force as outlined in section 25 of the Criminal Code of Canada, the *Human Rights Act*, the *Nova Scotia Police Act* and its Regulations, and with the Nova Scotia Policing Standards on use of force.

Mission, Vision and Values

3. The chief officer shall ensure that HRP's use of force policy aligns with the mission, vision and values, as outlined in HRP's Strategic Plan,² and the Principles of Policing, as outlined in the Police Board By-law³.
4. The chief officer shall ensure that HRP's use of force policy expresses the value of both police and civilian well-being and governs the conditions under which force can be used.
5. It is understood that the potential for a need to use force is inherent to policing, and that use of force can be necessary to protect both members of the public and of the police alike, as well as property. Each use of force option shall be adherent to law, consistent with protecting community safety and minimizing injury, and promote public trust in and uphold the honour of the police service.

Essential Elements

6. The chief officer shall ensure that HRP's use of force policy emphasizes de-escalation, in that:
 - a. In every interaction, the goal is not to use force and that force should only be used as a last resort; and
 - b. When reasonably feasible and practicable in the circumstances, there is a general duty to avoid the use of force. This means that officers will attempt to de-escalate situations when reasonably feasible in the circumstances. This includes verbal warning(s) to gain compliance before resorting to use of force. Officers must continually assess a situation as it evolves, and seek ways to de-escalate, even after force has been applied, to prevent a need for further use of force,
7. The chief officer shall ensure that HRP's use of force policy includes a duty for sworn officers to intervene to stop inappropriate force used by colleagues, and to report when this occurs.
8. The chief officer shall ensure that HRP's use of force policy addresses the use of force in the context of:

- a. Body Worn Cameras, once adopted for use by HRP, recognizing the value of recording the full context of each time a use of force option is used;
 - b. Vascular neck restraints, recognizing the risk of permanent injury if improperly applied, and the challenge of using such restraint techniques judiciously, safely and effectively in accordance with approved training;
 - c. Conducted energy weapons, recognizing situations exist where such weapons may be less effective and pose an increased risk of injury;
 - d. Canine Units, recognizing the specialized role that such units play and the unique risks that apply both to persons and to the canine members;
 - e. The options that will be considered to capture a fleeing vehicle that puts officers and other individuals at risk;
 - f. The use of police vehicles to apply force, recognizing the inherent risk of injury.
9. The chief officer shall ensure that force is only applied using approved methods, equipment, and weapons for which proper training has been obtained and certifications for that training are currently in place. This does not preclude improvisation in emergency situations when approved methods, equipment, and weapons are not feasible or available. A lack of current certification where a certification previously existed should not necessarily preclude the use of a method, equipment or weapon in cases of an emergency situation when no other alternative is practicable

Training

10. The chief officer shall ensure that every use of force option includes a training and maintenance of skills schedule. Any new use of force option, including those deployed by drones, shall include a training and maintenance of skills program before it is implemented.
11. The chief officer shall ensure that HRP's training on use of force recognizes that certain populations, such as children, pregnant persons and persons in crisis have specific vulnerabilities that must be taken into account when they are subjected to the use of force.
12. The chief officer shall ensure that training includes guidance around the use of force on vulnerable populations, such as children, pregnant individuals, and persons in crisis.
13. The chief officer shall ensure that all sworn members are given periodic training on de-escalation.
14. The chief officer shall ensure that training includes reference to techniques that are not endorsed by HRP. This list does not preclude improvisation in emergency situations when approved methods, equipment, and weapons are not feasible or available.
15. The chief officer shall ensure that a written record is maintained of the training courses taken by sworn members on the use of force and de-escalation.

Deployment Aftercare

16. The chief officer shall ensure that HRP's use of force policy includes a plan to ensure the subject's wellbeing, including requesting a medial health assessment, if necessary, as soon as practical, after a use of force option is deployed.

Reporting requirements

17. The chief officer shall annually report to the board the total number of the following occurrences over the past year sworn members have engaged in while on duty:
 - a. Use of Physical Control—soft, if an injury occurred to anyone from the application of that force;
 - b. Use of Physical Control—hard;
 - c. Use of Vascular Neck Restraint;
 - d. Intermediate Weapon display or discharge/application;
 - e. Firearm display or discharge;
 - f. Police Dog display or bite;
 - g. Use of Specialty Munitions; and
 - h. Use of Weapons of Opportunity.
18. The chief officer shall annually report to the board the total number of incidents requiring use of force over the past year. That number shall also be reported as a percentage of the total number of incidents reported during the same year.
19. The Serious Incident Response Team (SiRT) independently investigates all serious incidents which arise from the actions of police in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, including those that result in serious injury or death. Any use of force resulting in serious injury or death is a Matter of Immediate Strategic Significance. As such, subject to security or operational concerns, the chief officer shall report the content of any debriefing or lessons learned following any use of force resulting in serious injury or death to the board.

Review

20. The chief officer shall ensure that HRP's use of force and de-escalation policies, training and tactics are reviewed at least every two years and when the *Police Act* is amended.
21. The chief officer shall ensure that HRP's use of force policy is reviewed following the completion of any audit conducted by the Department of Justice's Public Safety Audit Unit which the Board deems has direct relevance to HRP's use of force policy and that any findings are incorporated in an updated policy.

Halifax Regional Detachment

20. The HRD shall review their policies for alignment and integration with this policy.
21. The HRD is requested to adhere to the reporting requirements, as outlined in clause 17.

Public Posting of Policy

22. The chief officer or designate shall notify the Chair once HRP's policy is publicly posted and when any revisions to that policy are publicly posted.