

FIVE YEARS OF THE **FRAMEWORK APPROACH**



Canada has witnessed a significant rise in demonstrations, fueled by a combination of influences that have served to ignite public dissatisfaction. The surge in demonstrations stems from diverse factors, including international crises, environmental issues, and a mounting disillusionment with conventional avenues for change.

The evolution of demonstration activity has mirrored broader worldwide trends of discontent and activism. The demonstration landscape in Canada has seen a windfall of large scale, multi-jurisdictional movements over the last five years. In that time, police services and leadership have recognized the need for multi-faceted, scalable responses.

The National Framework for Police Response to Demonstrations and Assemblies (National Framework)¹, was endorsed by the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police (CACP) in 2019 and was conceptualized by the Policing with Indigenous Peoples (PWIP) committee. It is a pragmatic document that promotes an operationally sound, informed, and flexible approach to resolving conflict and consistently managing crises. Among other topics, the National Framework outlines the intersecting but separate functions of specialty teams with a focus on liaison work and the role of upper command in supporting the Framework Approach. The National Framework contributes to creating cohesive

interoperability at the national, provincial, municipal and First Nation policing levels when responding to issue-based conflict.

In 2019 an article was published², intended to establish a base understanding of the Framework Approach, the history of its creation, an introduction to Police Liaison Teams (PLTs) and to the national Police Liaison Officer Training Course. Significant progress has been achieved since the inception of the National Framework. The approach has been socialized nationally, partially due to a series of high-profile events where its application was highlighted.

Preparing for, managing, and responding to demonstrations and protests can be an intricate process. The effectiveness of the seven tenets of the National Framework have been apparent in addressing challenges related to contentious multi-jurisdictional demonstrations linked to issues such as resource extraction and police reform, events held in opposition to public health measures,

¹ https://www.cacp.ca/_Library/_documents/202002062047221602854342_cacpnationalframeworkforpolicepreparednessfordemonstrationsandassemblies.pdf

² https://www.cpcmagazine-digital.com/ccpt/0120_winter_2020/MobilePagedArticle.action?articleId=1558360#articleId1558360

and more recent demonstrations related to geopolitical issues. Some of these events involved occupations, border blockades, and traffic disruptions, and successfully captured widespread public attention. The tenets, or foundational principles, of the National Framework relate to working within the measured approach, relationship building, facilitating lawful, peaceful and safe demonstrations, impartiality, stages of conflict, interoperability, and education before enforcement.

There are several intersecting operational strategies for effectively responding to demonstrations. Police responses have adapted in an effort to ensure that demonstrations remain lawful, peaceful and safe. Police have improved at managing narratives driven by social media and recognize the need to balance stakeholder relationships. Police are also regularly attempting to create environments at demonstration sites that prevent criminal activity and see the necessity in ensuring that decision making is intelligence driven. Many jurisdictions in Canada have created, or are contemplating, multijurisdictional public order units, where clusters of teams are deployable on a regional scale, regardless of their police service of jurisdiction.

In early 2023, the Public Order Emergency Commission (POEC) released the final report from the Emergencies Act Inquiry, which examined the circumstances leading to the declaration of a public order emergency in



Car stuck in the Convoy for Freedom 2022, Ottawa

Ottawa in February 2022, and the subsequent measures taken by government and those responsible for responding to the emergency. The final report concluded with several recommendations validating the approach of the National Framework and PLTs, both of which were cited as best practices for police response to demonstrations.

PUBLIC ORDER EMERGENCY COMMISSION RECOMMENDATIONS 16-19

- Police services should have a contingent of PLT officers, or have entered into an agreement with another service to access such officers or appropriate expertise, as needed;
- Police services should create procedures, if they do not already exist, that clearly articulate the role of PLT within the context of major events, adopting, with appropriate modification, this or similar Frameworks;
- PLT, and major event commanders, as well as senior leadership, should receive specialized training and education on the CACP National Framework, and the role to be played by PLT officers and leadership in relation to major events; and,
- Police services should recognize the unique considerations that should inform a policing response to Indigenous-based demonstrations, including the need for cultural competencies in addressing them.

The National Framework has applicability for each element that may be involved in a public order response to demonstrations, including considerations for incident commanders, intelligence, PLT, crime and public order units. The unique role of each element, and their ability to intentionally and cohesively respond in a scalable manner leads to safer responses for police and safer outcomes for communities.

In response to the POEC recommendations, in 2024, the Government of Canada agreed that: “Trained Police Liaison Team officers can be of assistance during protests to support Canadians’ right to protest peacefully and safely. Even when arrests are justified, police will often choose to employ other strategies to deal with protesters such as Police Liaison Teams. By engaging with protesters, these teams attempt to maintain open lines of communication and aim to develop a relationship of trust, to facilitate a safe and lawful environment where protesters can exercise their freedom of expression and assembly.”³

PLTs are useful not only for proactive relationship building, but also as a tool for compliance, and are an imperative step when working through the measured approach, in concert with other operational strategies described above. When demonstrators



Occupy Toronto demonstration with tents in St. James Park, Toronto

Police Liaison Teams have emerged as a critical component of ensuring lawful protests take place in a way that protects both public and officer safety. By improving open communication between police and protestors prior to, during, and following protests, the Police Liaison Teams have become a core resource that allows for respectful, lawful protests while keeping community safety at the forefront.”

~Glen Lewis

Assistant Deputy Minister and Director of Police Services,
Policing and Security Branch, Province of British Columbia

intersect with local business owners and property rights, law enforcement must respond in a manner that upholds the rights of all parties while also recognizing the concerns of the community at large.

Currently overseen by the CACP PWIP Committee, the Police Liaison Officer Training Commission has carriage of the National Framework and coordinates the CACP national Police Liaison Officer Training Course and other training initiatives. The goal of the training is to provide nuanced understanding and provide an opportunity to join in a broad community of practice. A shared policing approach and training are particularly effective when demonstrations and events involve multiple police jurisdictions. The mandate of the PWIP Training Commission is to support police services on a national level to build organizational capacity in relation to the Framework/Liaison

¹ <https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/rsrscs/pblctns/2024-pblc-rdr-mrgncy-rcmmndtns/index-en.aspx>

Approach in a strategic manner, through training and awareness, and to socialize strategies to support police intervention during demonstrations and assemblies. This approach was also endorsed by the POEC. In 2023 the National Framework and course training standards were updated, and they are expected to be available on the CACP website in the near future.

An increasing number of law enforcement agencies are embracing the principles and methods outlined in the National Framework as part of their proactive approach to addressing issue-based conflict. In response to the frequency and complexity of demonstration activity, a growing number of police services in Canada are establishing PLTs, comprised of trained members responsible for ensuring informed liaison and effective communication with involved and affected parties in a conflict situation. PLTs can play a significant role in assisting to manage demonstrations effectively.

Currently the PWIP Police Liaison Officer Training Commission has trained 169 PLT officers, from 38 law enforcement services, and seven provinces representing federal, provincial, municipal, and Indigenous policing services.

The identification of senior members who understand the tenets of the approach and can champion it within police services, is imperative if seeking to build a course.

Where and when capacity allows, the PWIP Training Commission will offer supports or structured mentorship to ensure that expectations of the national course training standards are met.

The National Framework has contributed to interoperability internally as well as between police services. Police have been able to leverage the success of entities involved in the response to demonstrations, such as incident command, intelligence, PLT, crime and public order units, through community engagement coupled with strategic targeted enforcement. Over the last five years, the National Framework has been adopted, reviewed and adapted and rigorously tested through the management of contentious events. It has received positive attention from media and has been featured in interviews and podcasts. It has been socialized and scrutinized at all levels of policing with engagement from all levels of government, resulting in its recognition as a best practices document that aids in safer, lawful and more peaceful outcomes and a well-prepared police response.

- **Leslie Jean,**
CACP PWIP Training Commission

Further information to assist police services in the response to demonstrations and assemblies, and to contact the PWIP committee may be found here:



NOTES

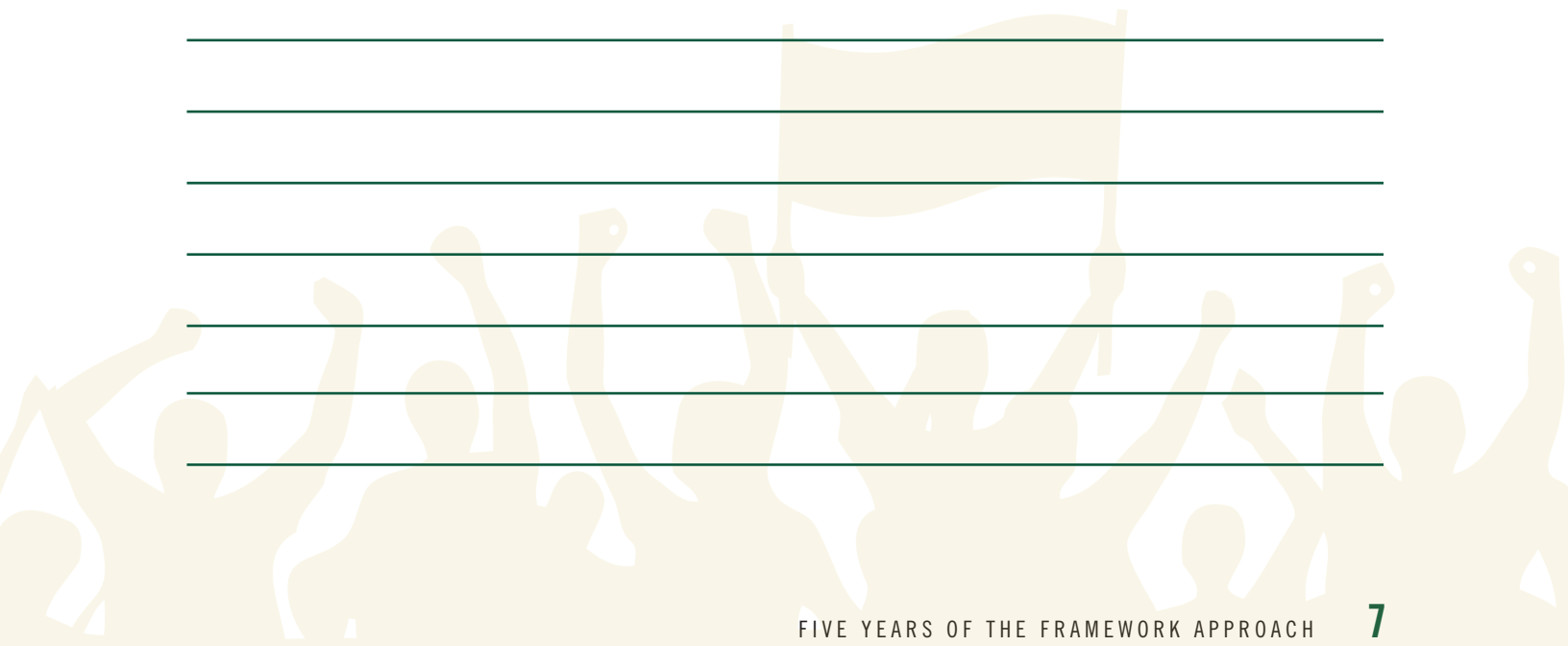




Photo front & back cover: Black Lives Matter Protest in Ottawa by the Chateau Laurier & American Embassy