



Office of the  
Auditor General  
City of Ottawa



# Audit of the Ottawa Police Service's Response to the Convoy Protest – The Role of the Ottawa Police Services Board

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February 9, 2023

# Context

- The convoy protest that took place in Ottawa in January/February 2022 was an unprecedented event.
- Because of these events, the Ottawa Police Services Board requested that the Office of the Auditor General consider conducting an audit of the Ottawa Police Service's response to the convoy protest.
- The scope of this presentation is focused exclusively on the role and activities of the Board.

# Background – Police Boards

- The *Police Services Act*, R.S.O. 1990, c. P.15 (*PSA* or the Act) governs policing in Ontario and establishes the authority and responsibilities of municipal police services boards.
- Boards are responsible for the provision of adequate and effective police services in the municipality.
- A board can give direction to the chief of police but cannot direct the chief with respect to specific operational decisions or the day-to-day operation of the police service.

# Audit Objective and Scope



## Objective

- To assess whether the OPSB undertook all necessary and appropriate action, leading up to and during the convoy protest, to fulfill its mandate to provide adequate and effective police services in the City of Ottawa.



## Scope

- Limited scope - OPSB's role in the context of their responsibility of providing adequate and effective police services
- The scope **excluded**:
  - Activities of the OPS or the City of Ottawa (planning/operational decisions)
  - Structure of the OPSB and its membership as this is established by the PSA

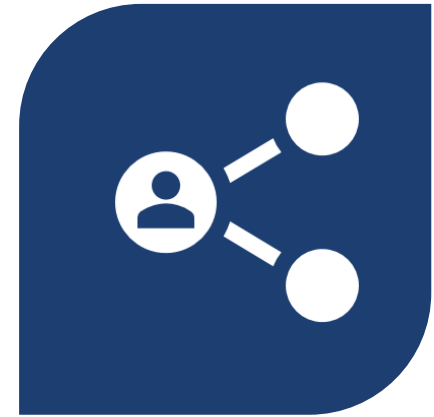
# Findings



The Board was not notified of the protest in a timely manner as per the Major Events Policy (CR-17)



A fulsome consultation on objectives and priorities of the event by the Board did not take place in the planning for the protest

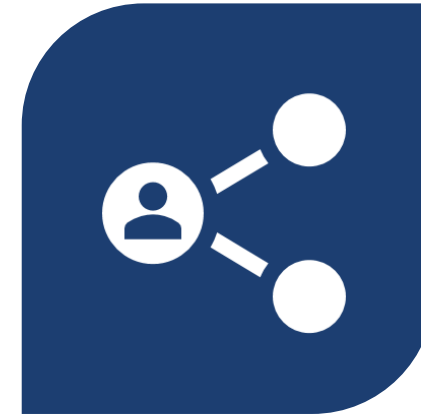


The Board was not provided sufficient operational information to effectively perform its oversight duties until closer to the end of the protest

# Findings



There was limited transparency in the process to vet and hire an Interim Chief of Police during the convoy protest



Some key information received by the Chair of the Board was not properly disseminated to all board members

# Findings



The Board does not have a process to formally assess the skills and expertise of existing Board members against the Board's established needs



There are opportunities to improve Board orientation and training

# Findings



The significant time commitment required by Board members exceeded the expectations communicated



The Board's administrative support has limited resources



# Findings



There were breaches of procedural rules by the Board during the protest

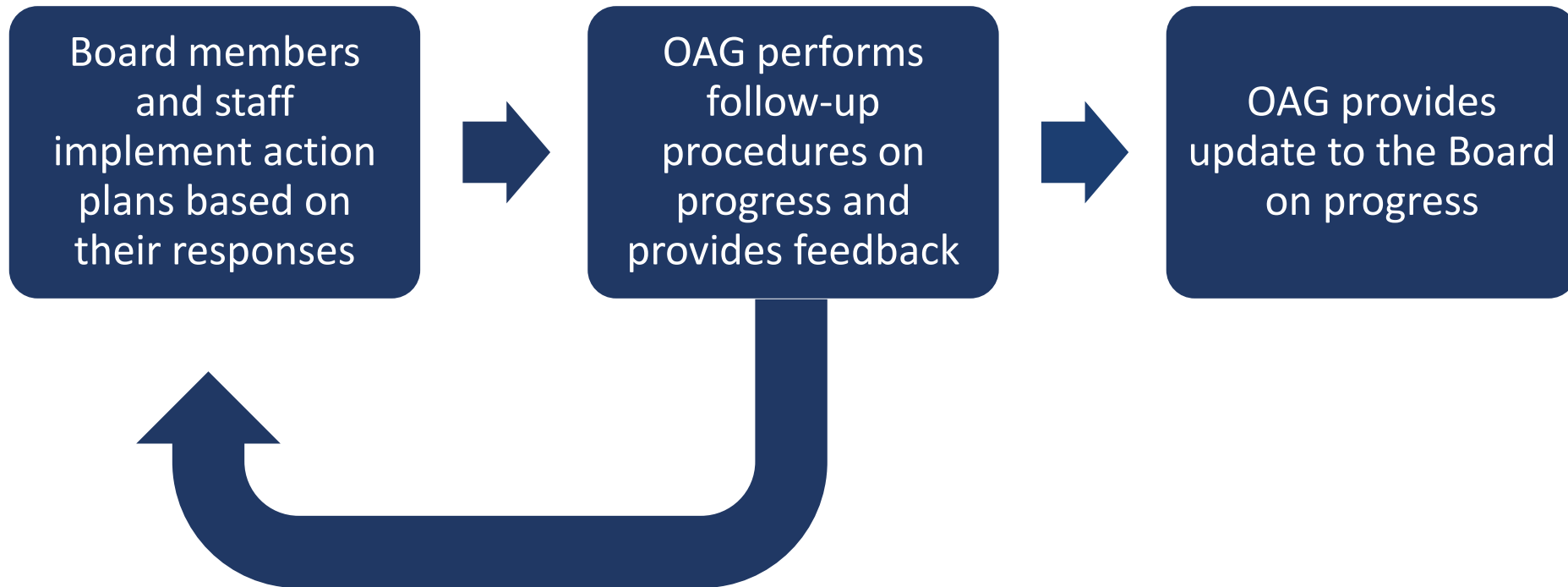


The City Solicitor was present at closed board meetings while also providing feedback to the City on motions affecting the Board's composition, creating a perceived conflict of interest

# Conclusion

- The Board initially did not clearly understand its role relative to a major event.
- The Board took steps to request operational information and asked questions of the OPS consistently throughout the protest, though fulsome information was not provided until much later in the event.
- Meaningful consultation with the Board on objectives did not take place.
- The Board's ability to effectively undertake their oversight responsibilities during the convoy protest was impacted by a lack of timely access to operational information.
- During the convoy, the Board contravened some legislative and procedural rules which impacted overall transparency.
- Opportunities exist to further develop the capacity of the Board.

# Next Steps



# Questions?

