

**Report to / Rapport au:**

**POLICY AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE  
COMITÉ DES POLITIQUES ET DE LA GOUVERNANCE**

**5 October 2023 / 5 octobre 2023**

**Submitted by / Soumis par:**

**Executive Director, Ottawa Police Services Board / Directrice exécutive,  
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**SUBJECT: POLICY DISCUSSION RE: DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION  
FROM CHAIR TO BOARD**

**OBJET: DISCUSSION STRATEGIQUE CONCERNANT LE DEVOIR D'ASSURER  
LA COMMUNICATION DE L'INFORMATION PAR LA PRESIDENTE A  
LA COMMISSION**

**REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS**

**The Ottawa Police Services Board's Policy and Governance Committee receive this item for discussion.**

**RECOMMANDATIONS DU RAPPORT**

**Que le Comité des politiques et de la gouvernance de la Commission de services policiers d'Ottawa prend connaissance de ce point afin d'en discuter.**

**BACKGROUND**

In March of 2022, the Ottawa Police Services Board (Board) requested the assistance of the City's Auditor General in reviewing the response of the Ottawa Police Service to the convoy protest that took place in January and February 2022. The Auditor General accepted the request and in February 2023, delivered her reports to the Board, the Service, and the City, depicting key events and describing how all parties could improve from similar future events. The Board subsequently accepted her report and developed an action plan to address all eleven of the recommendations directed at the Board.

The final report, including the Board's action plan, is available [online](#).

One recommendation arising out of the Auditor General's (AG) review concerned the dissemination of information from the Chair to the Board (Recommendation 4).

In particular, the AG recommended:

*“The Board should formalize, by written policy, its expectations related to dissemination of information by the Chair to the full Board. This should include the nature and extent of the information as well as the mechanism and timing of dissemination of that information.” (p. 16 of the Audit of OPS' Response to the Convoy Protest – The Role of the Ottawa Police Services Board)*

In response to the AG's recommendation, the Board committed to having its Policy and Governance Committee develop a new Board policy concerning expectations related to the dissemination of information by the Chair to the full Board, including the nature and extent of the information as well as the mechanism and timing of dissemination of that information. The Board also committed to undertaking a review of best practices of other boards of large police services as part of its policy development process.

## **DISCUSSION**

Board members, and in particular the Board Chair, may receive information related to their roles and responsibilities as Board members through a variety of mechanisms, including during Board meetings. However, communication also occurs through a number of informal methods, including impromptu meetings or discussions, ad hoc oral briefings at Board meetings, memoranda, telephone calls, e-mails, etc.

When a Board member is in receipt of information that is pertinent to the discharge of the Board's governance and oversight responsibilities, it is important to ensure such information is made available to the full Board.

The AG recommended the Board develop a policy to formalize its expectations related to the dissemination of information from the Chair to the Board, in light of her findings from her audit of the OPS' response to the convoy protest. She suggested the policy include the nature and extent of the information to be shared, as well as the mechanism and timing of the dissemination, recognizing it is not always practicable to convene the full Board whenever information needs to be shared – particularly during a fluid event.

The AG also recommended a review of best practices of other boards of large police services as part of the policy development process.

Board staff consulted staff from the police boards of the twelve largest municipal police services in the province of Ontario, namely: Toronto, Peel, York, Ottawa, Durham, Waterloo, London, Halton, Niagara, Hamilton, Windsor, and Greater Sudbury.

Peel, London, Durham, Halton, Windsor, Sudbury, Niagara, and Waterloo all confirmed that they do not have such a policy.

A number of the Boards consulted noted that while no formal policy exists, in practice, the Chair and Board staff are usually included jointly on correspondence and either the Chair or staff will disseminate any information received to the rest of the Board.

The only Board to have a policy related to communications and information sharing is Toronto. Their policy was one of the outcomes of the Honourable John W. Morden's review and report on the G20 Summit in Toronto in June 2010. It is attached for the information of the Committee as Document 1. The policy applies broadly to all members of the Board and speaks to:

- the nature of information to be shared, i.e. *any information pertinent to the Board's consideration of matters before it, or likely to come before it, or that is related to a prior Board decision, or that is of public interest;*
- the timing of the dissemination, i.e. *at the earliest opportunity;* and,
- the mechanism of the dissemination, i.e. *in the form of a formal Board report or briefing at a Board meeting or, in the case of information related to an item of an urgent nature, by some other means that is determined in consultation with the Board Chair.*

The policy also creates a mechanism for discipline of Board members who fail to follow the policy, pursuant to *Ontario Regulation 421/97, Members of Police Services Boards – Code of Conduct.*

The Policy and Governance Committee is being asked to provide direction on how it wishes to address the AG's recommendation to develop a new policy concerning the dissemination of information by the Chair to the Board. One option may be to adopt the same policy as the Toronto Police Services Board given it appears to address the key areas highlighted by the AG.

## **CONSULTATION**

Not applicable.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no financial implications.

## **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

Document 1: Toronto Police Services Board Policy: Board Members: Communication and Information-Sharing

**CONCLUSION**

The Policy and Governance Committee is being asked to provide direction on the development of a new policy concerning the dissemination of information by the Chair to the Board, in keeping with the AG's recommendation from *the* Audit of OPS' Response to the Convoy Protest – The Role of the Ottawa Police Services Board.