

**Report to / Rapport au:**

**OTTAWA POLICE SERVICES BOARD  
LA COMMISSION DE SERVICES POLICIERS D'OTTAWA**

**23 October 2023 / 23 octobre 2023**

**Submitted by / Soumis par:**

**Policy and Governance Committee / Comité des politiques et de la gouvernance**

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**SUBJECT: NEW BOARD POLICY – COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION  
SHARING WITHIN THE BOARD**

**OBJET: NOUVELLE POLITIQUE DE LA COMMISSION – COMMUNICATION ET  
ÉCHANGE DE RENSEIGNEMENTS AU SEIN DE LA COMMISSION**

**REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS**

**That the Ottawa Police Services Board approve new Board Policy GA-16 –  
Communications and Information Sharing within the Board, as recommended by  
the Board's Policy and Governance Committee.**

**RECOMMANDATIONS DU RAPPORT**

**Que la Commission des services policiers d'Ottawa approuve la nouvelle  
politique de la Commission GA-16 – Communications et partage d'information au  
sein de la Commission, comme le recommande le Comité des politiques et de la  
gouvernance de la Commission.**

**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.

On October 5, 2023, the Board's Policy and Governance Committee met and discussed the creation of such a policy. The Committee noted that while the existing level of

communication and information-sharing within the Board and from the Chair to the Board has been effective, it is important to have expectations formalized in writing as a matter of good governance.

The majority of other boards of large police services in the province do not have such a policy with the exception of the Toronto Police Services Board (TPSB). The TPSB has a policy (Document 2) related to communication and information sharing that applies broadly to all members of their Board which 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 TPSB 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 directed Board staff to create a policy in keeping with the TPSB policy, to be presented to the Board for approval. The draft policy is attached as Document 1.

Aside from differences related to general formatting and style, the draft policy mirrors the TPSB policy with the exception of two additions which are highlighted in the draft policy for ease of reference, namely:

- Under Principle 1, the addition of “or Service” has been added to acknowledge that it is possible that material information may be received informally by a Board member from members of the Service other than the Chief or Command;
- Under Principle 3, a requirement has been added for the Chair to consult with either the Vice Chair and/or the Executive Director on how to share information of an urgent nature that should be considered before the date of the next regularly scheduled Board meeting. This requirement will assist the Chair with their communication and information sharing responsibilities particularly during a fluid event or situation of an urgent nature, by providing an opportunity to seek guidance and support from their fellow Board colleague and/or Board staff.

## **CONSULTATION**

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 (Document 2). 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.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no financial implications.

## **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

Document 1: Draft Board Policy GA-16 Communications and Information Sharing within the Board

Document 2: Toronto Police Services Board Policy: Board Members: Communication and Information-Sharing

## **CONCLUSION**

The Board is being asked to approve the new draft policy being proposed by the Policy and Governance Committee related to communication and information sharing within the Board. The creation and adoption of this policy is in keeping with one of the AG's recommendations from the *Audit of OPS' Response to the Convoy Protest – The Role of the Ottawa Police Services Board*, as well as the Board's corresponding action plan.