

Policy Number:	Policy Subject:
GA-11	BOARD COMMUNICATIONS AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH
LEGISLATIVE REFERENCE / AUTHORITY	N/A
DATE APPROVED	28 April 2008
DATE REVIEWED	2009, 2010, 2013
DATES AMENDED	23 February 2009 01 November 2010
DATE TO BE REVIEWED	2016
REPORTING REQUIREMENT	Address in Annual Report on Board Performance

BOARD POLICY

INTRODUCTION

The Ottawa Police Services Board has a responsibility to represent the public interest on matters of policing and to ensure community concerns are addressed in the policies adopted by the Board for the effective and adequate delivery of police services, and in planning for the future. To achieve this, the Board recognizes the importance of actively reaching out to local groups and residents to hear their concerns, and engaging them in ongoing, dynamic dialogue through a strategy of community engagement.

The Board also recognizes the important role that media can play in educating and engaging key stakeholders and the community on policing matters, fostering understanding about the Board and its work, and generating broad support for the Board's mandate.

The Board is committed to effective, timely and positive communications with all its community partners and has developed this policy to achieve its communications goals.

GOALS

The Ottawa Police Services Board is committed to effective and proactive communication that will:

- a) Engage stakeholders and the broader community through ongoing, dynamic dialogue.
- b) Improve Board members' understanding and knowledge of community concerns by soliciting regular input from stakeholders and the general public.
- c) Stimulate stakeholder discussion about law enforcement and crime prevention issues.

- d) Promote awareness and understanding of the Board, its role and its work.
- e) Demonstrate the Board's commitment to accountability and transparency.
- f) Foster positive relationships with City Council, the media, community stakeholders and the public.
- g) Provide the media, City Councillors and stakeholders with accurate and timely information about key Board initiatives and decisions.
- h) Manage issues effectively and in a manner consistent with the Board's communications goals.
- i) Support the objectives of the Ottawa Police Service as outlined in the Business Plan.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

It is the policy of the Ottawa Police Services Board that:

PART A – MEDIA RELATIONS

1. Unless otherwise specified, the spokesperson for the Board is the Chair of the Board. Should the Chair be unavailable, the Vice-Chair shall be the spokesperson for the Board.
2. In special circumstances, such as labour relations or where a Board subcommittee has been established on a specific issue, the Board may designate the member leading the negotiations, or the Chair of the committee, to act as spokesperson for the Board on the subject in question.
3. On matters of factual information, administration of the Board, or communicating a decision of the Board in response to an inquiry, the Board Executive Director may act as a spokesperson on behalf of the Board.
4. The Board Executive Director is responsible for informing the local media of the date and time of future Board meetings and news conferences held by the Board. He/she is also responsible for arranging news conferences and for coordinating joint events with the OPS Media Relations Section when both the Board and the Police Service are affected.
5. When required, the Board Executive Director will serve as a liaison between the media and the Board spokesperson when requests are received for interviews or comments.
6. The Board spokesperson shall be careful to speak only on matters within the jurisdiction and mandate of the Board and to avoid speaking about matters that fall under the jurisdiction of the Chief of Police.
7. When operational matters under the jurisdiction of the Chief of Police are likely to spark significant public interest or debate, the Chief will inform, where practicable, Board members before a public statement is made.

8. If warranted by the significance and seriousness of the matter, the Chief of Police and/or Board Chair may consult with the Board before information is released to ensure public release is appropriate and justified, and to receive advice on the format and tone of the communication.
9. Board members may communicate a position of the Board, however, should a Board member publicly disagree with a position of the Board, or should a Board member comment upon a matter not yet before the Board, she/he will clearly identify that they are speaking as an individual and not on behalf of the Board. Nor shall a Board member state the Board has taken a position on a matter until the matter has been voted upon.
10. Media releases shall be approved prior to release by the Chair, or in his/her absence, the Vice-Chair. Board members shall receive a copy of the release as soon as possible once it has been approved.
11. News conferences shall be called only at the discretion of the Chair, or in his/her absence, the Vice-Chair. Board members shall be advised of the event prior to its taking place.
12. Board members will respect the confidentiality appropriate to issues of a sensitive nature and those items disclosed or discussed in closed meetings.
13. Board members and staff will comply with all relevant legislation including the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.
14. Communications from the Board will be in both official languages using the City of Ottawa's French Language Services Procedure Manual as a guide. When required, the Chair may designate a French-speaking member of the Board to respond to media inquiries.

PART B – COMMUNITY RELATIONS

1. The Board will be proactive in communicating regularly with City Councillors, the media and community stakeholders about its work and significant initiatives such as the annual budget, by regularly issuing updates on its activities and decisions.
2. The Board will be proactive in engaging, educating and hearing from the public by holding up to four “public interest” meetings a year on topics of broad community concern or interest.
3. The Board will periodically invite primary external partners concerned with crime prevention and/or public safety to meet informally with the Board to discuss their concerns and priorities.
4. To inform itself and the public about the work and challenges of the Ottawa Police Service, the Board will periodically schedule, in consultation with the Chief, brief presentations to be heard at regular Board meetings from members of the Police Service in various units.

5. Communications from the Board will be in both official languages using the City's Ottawa's French Language Services Procedure Manual as a guide.

PRIMARY EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

- City of Ottawa Council and Senior Officials
- The local Media (mainstream and community-based)
- Crime Prevention Ottawa and other crime prevention, community safety and affinity groups
- School Boards
- The Business Community
- Volunteer Sector
- Ottawa Neighbourhood Watch Executive Committee
- COMPAC – Community Police Action Committee
- Liaison Committee for GLBT Communities
- Provincial and Federal governments
- Citizens and residents of Ottawa.