

Hamilton Police Services Board

Media Relations Policy

1. No Board Member shall purport to speak on behalf of the Hamilton Police Services Board (the Board) unless he or she is authorized by the Board to do so.
2. The official spokesperson for the Board is the Chair of the Board. In the event the Chair is unavailable, the Vice-Chair will be the spokesperson for the Board.
3. In the event a special sub-committee has been established (ie a labour relations sub-committee), the Board may designate the lead of that sub-committee to be the spokesperson on the issue that particular sub-committee was created for.
4. The Board Administrator may act as the official spokesperson on matters relating to administration of the Board or in matters relating to a decision of the Board in response to an inquiry.
5. The Board Administrator is responsible for informing local media outlets including traditional and emerging media of the date and time of upcoming Board meetings and news conferences held by the Board.
6. The Board will establish a list of local media both traditional and emerging; and will allow new journalists and emerging media outlets to register free of charge without impediment to be included on this list for notifications of all news conferences and meetings of the Board.
7. The Board Administrator will serve as a liaison between the media and the Board when requests are received for interviews or comments.
8. Media releases shall be approved prior to release by the Board Chair. In the event the Board Chair is unavailable the Vice-Chair shall approve the release.
9. Media releases shall be provided to all Board members as soon as possible in an electronic format and whenever possible shall be provided prior to their release to the public.
10. News conferences shall be called at the discretion of the Chair, or in the absence of the Chair, by the Vice-Chair. All Board members shall be advised of the event prior to it taking place.
11. The Board spokesperson shall speak only to matters within the jurisdiction and mandate of the Board and avoid speaking about matters that fall under the jurisdiction of the Chief of Police.

12. When operational matters under the jurisdiction of the Chief of Police are likely to cause significant public interest, the Chief will inform where and when practical the members of the Board prior to issuing a public statement.
13. 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.
14. A Board member who expresses disagreement with a decision of the Board shall make it clear that he or she is expressing a personal opinion. Board members must be cautious in expressing disagreement with a decision of the Board on the basis of the expression of a personal opinion. The Ontario Civilian Commission has stated that a Board member cannot define themselves for certain actions to be Board members and for other actions to be ordinary citizens, with respect to subjects which are clearly of interest to the Board. Although Board members have the right to freedom of speech, this right must be balanced with the statutory duties taken on as a member of the Police Services Board.
15. A Board member shall not state that the Board has taken a position on a matter until the matter has been voted upon.
16. Board members shall respect the confidentiality of information discussed in a closed meeting.
17. Board members and staff will comply with all relevant legislation including but not limited to the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Privacy Act*.

Chair Lloyd Ferguson