



Red Lake–Ear Falls OPP Detachment Board

Communications Policy

(Based on the Community Safety and Policing Act (CSPA), 2019 requirements)

1. Purpose & Scope

This policy establishes clear guidelines for communication practices that promote transparency, accountability, and public trust in accordance with the *Community Safety and Policing Act (CSPA)*, 2019. It applies to all Board members and designated staff involved in communication activities. It covers interactions with municipal councils, the public, the media, and other stakeholders.

2. Principles & Legal Foundations

This Board commits to communication grounded in the principles of transparency, respect, inclusion, and procedural fairness, as required under the CSPA and Regulation 408/23. All communication must uphold the highest standards of professionalism, confidentiality, and cultural sensitivity. The Board is committed to publishing strategic plans, annual reports, and directions to the Detachment Commander in a timely and accessible manner.

3. Roles, Authority & Delegation

Authorized Spokespersons

Only the Board Chair or other designated spokespersons are authorized to speak publicly or issue formal statements on behalf of the Board. Staff support will be provided to assist with the preparation and review of communications, including press releases and media statements.

Handling Public and Media Inquiries

Board members are expected to refrain from providing official comments or information to the media or the public unless specifically authorized. If approached for comment, members should:

- Direct inquiries politely to the Board Chair or the designated communications officer.
- Clearly state whether offering personal opinions, ensuring they are not mistaken for official Board positions.
- Avoid discussing confidential or sensitive information.
- In critical or sensitive situations, all media engagement must be coordinated through the Chair or the communications lead.

Personal Opinions

Members must clearly distinguish personal views from Board positions when communicating publicly and ensure compliance with the code of conduct set out in Regulation 408/23.

For certainty, no Board communication may comment on or direct operational policing matters, consistent with Sections 37-41 of the *Community Safety and Policing Act (CSPA)*, 2019.

4. Public Engagement & Channels

The Board will use appropriate platforms, including the Board website, social media, public meetings, and press releases, to engage with the community. All communication channels will be managed to ensure accessibility, inclusivity, and responsiveness to diverse communities, including Indigenous peoples, racialized groups, and persons with disabilities.

Website and Social Media Posting Protocols

Official Communication Channels

The Board maintains official communication through the following platforms:

- The Board's website
- The Board's Facebook Page and Instagram Account

These channels are used for approved public notices, Board updates, meeting information, and other governance-related communications.

Approval Process

All content intended for publication on any official Board platform must be approved in advance of the Chair.

- The Administrator drafts or prepares proposed content.
- The draft material is submitted to the Chair for review and approval

- No post, whether on the website, Facebook, Instagram or other platforms may be published without explicit authorization from the Chair.

Posting Procedure

Once approval is received:

- The Administrator posts the approval content to the appropriate platform(s)
- The Administrator ensures that all posts adhere to Board communication standards, including accuracy, professionalism, confidentiality, accessibility and respect for the operational independence of the OPP Detachment Commander
- When content is posted across multiple platforms, the messaging must remain consistent and aligned with approved wording.

Consent Standards

All website and social media content must:

- Reflect the Board's governance role and avoid commentary on operational policing matters.
- Distinguish clearly between governance communications and any operational updates, which remain the responsibility of the Detachment Commander.
- Avoid posting confidential, sensitive or unverified information
- Be written in a professional, inclusive, and accessible manner
- Comply with privacy legislation, including MFIPPA, and the Board's Code of Conduct requirements.

Emergency or Critical Event Posting

For critical or sensitive incidents, the Board will follow the Communication and Response Protocol described in Section 5

- Any public messaging related to governance, oversight or transparency must still be approved by the Chair before posting.
- Posts related to operational elements of the event will not be issued by the Board and remain the responsibility of the Detachment Commander.

Monitoring and Maintenance

The Administrator will be responsible for monitoring and maintaining the Board's website and social media platforms to ensure information remains accurate and up to date.

5. Critical Events & Sensitive Situations

A critical event is any occurrence that may significantly affect public safety, community trust, the Board's reputation, or its ability to fulfil its responsibilities. Examples include serious injury, an officer-involved incident, a major policy failure, or any matter that attracts considerable public or media attention.

This definition is informed by the Toronto Police Service Board's concept of a "Critical Point," which describes situations that quickly escalate operational, reputational, financial, or governance risk and require the Board's immediate attention. It also reflects guidance from Ontario's Inspectorate of Policing, which encourages municipal police service boards to adopt formal "Critical Point" policies and establish clear information-sharing protocols with police leadership during significant or high-impact events.

The Board recognizes that not all communications during a critical event are appropriate for Board comment. Operational information, investigative details, or statements concerning active police activity remain the responsibility of the Detachment Commander. The Board's role is to focus on communication related to governance, oversight, accountability, and community reassurance, while avoiding interference in operations.

This approach aligns with policing best practices, as outlined in Managing Officer-Involved Critical Incidents by the Police Executive Research Forum, which frames critical incidents as serious events requiring coordination between operational leadership and governance bodies.

By combining these perspectives, the Board acknowledges that critical events extend beyond operational matters to include those that influence governance, accountability, and community confidence. This broader definition supports the Board's duty under the *Community Safety and Policing Act (CSPA)*, 2019 to ensure transparency and effective communication while maintaining clear respect for operational independence.

Communication and Response Protocol

When a critical event occurs, the Board will follow a structured process to manage communication, assess risk, and coordinate an appropriate response.

1. Immediate internal notification to the Board Chair, the communications lead, and, where appropriate, legal counsel.
2. Preliminary assessment to determine whether the event meets the criteria for a critical event.
3. Verification of facts through reliable, authorized sources before making any public or internal statement.
4. Coordination with the Detachment Commander to confirm which elements of the event fall under operational communications.

5. Preparation of approved Board messaging limited to governance-related matters, including expressions of support, transparency commitments, or confirmation of oversight processes.
6. Designation of the appropriate spokesperson to ensure alignment between the Board's communication and the service's operational updates.
7. Notification of the full Board and relevant partners, including police leadership and municipal officials, as applicable.
8. Coordination of all public or media communication through official channels, maintaining transparency while protecting sensitive information.
9. Monitoring media coverage and public reaction, with adjustments as necessary to preserve accuracy and trust.
10. Post-event review to assess the effectiveness of communication and identify improvements for future incidents.

All communication about critical events must balance transparency with confidentiality, ensuring operational independence is maintained at all times.

Sources Referenced:

- Inspectorate of Policing of Ontario, *Advisory Bulletin: Municipal Police Service Board Policy – Critical Points* (2024)
- Toronto Police Service Board, *Critical Points Policy* (2023)
- Police Executive Research Forum, *Managing Officer-Involved Critical Incidents* (2019)

6. Privacy, Data & Misconduct Reporting

All personal and confidential information received by the Board shall be handled in accordance with applicable privacy laws, including the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA), and regulations governing Regulated Interactions.

Board members and staff are required to follow formal procedures for reporting suspected misconduct, including whistleblower protections against retaliation, in accordance with the Community Safety and Policing Act (CSPA) 2019 and Regulation 408/23.

Complaints or concerns must be directed as follows:

- Complaints regarding the Board or Police Leadership (including governance issues, failure to comply with legislation, or breaches of the Board Member Code of Conduct) should be submitted to the Inspectorate of Policing of Ontario (IoP) at www.iopontario.ca.
- or by email at complaints@iopontario.ca.
- Complaints about individual police officers or members of a police service should be filed with the Law Enforcement Complaints Agency (LECA) at www.leca.ca or by email at info@leca.ca.

- Complaints about Board employees or contractors will be managed through the Board's internal human resources and complaint procedures.

Conflicts of interest must be disclosed promptly and managed in accordance with Regulation 408/23.

7. Training & Continuous Improvement

Board members should receive training on communication protocols and media engagement that aligns with the mandatory human rights and systemic racism training to ensure effective, respectful, and lawful communication practices. This policy will be reviewed and updated regularly, at a minimum in line with the Board's strategic planning cycle, to incorporate feedback and evolving best practices.

8. Sample Clauses

Authority Statement

"Only the Chair or designated spokesperson(s) may issue formal statements on behalf of the Board. Individual members must preface any personal comments with a disclaimer that their views do not represent the Board."

Critical Point Definition

"Critical events are defined as occurrences that significantly affect public safety, operational effectiveness, community trust, or the reputation of the Board, and that require immediate notification to the Chair or the OPP Detachment Commander and a structured public communication response."

This definition is informed by the concept of a 'Critical Point' adopted by the Toronto Police Service Board (2023) and Ontario's Inspectorate of Policing (2024), which encourages boards to establish clear communication and information-sharing protocols during significant or high-impact events. It also reflects recognized policing practice, as described by the Police Executive Research Forum (2019), regarding the management of officer-involved critical incidents.

Privacy Clause

"All confidential information will be handled in accordance with the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA)* and related legislation. Unauthorized disclosure is prohibited."

Communication Flowchart for Critical or Sensitive Incidents



