



Hamilton Police Service Board Public Communications on Matters of Significant Interest Policy P-038

Effective date: September 10, 2026
Reviewed:
Amended:

Applicable Legislation

The Community Safety and Policing Act, 2019 (CSPA)

s.38(2) of the CSPA: In addition to the policies required by subsection 38(1), a police service board may establish policies respecting any other matters related to the police service or the provision of policing.

Policy Statement

This policy supplements the Board's Media Relations Policy (approved October 22, 2015). It sets out when the Board considers issuing a public media statement or release, and what it can and cannot say about matters before the Special Investigations Unit (SIU), the Law Enforcement Complaints Agency (LECA), and the Inspectorate of Policing (IoP).

Policy Application

1. Purpose

This policy establishes clear criteria for when the Hamilton Police Service Board (Board) considers issuing a public media statement or release about a Matter of Significant Interest, and provides high-level guidance on what the Board may say about matters before the SIU, LECA, or the IoP.

2. Definition – “Matter of Significant Interest”

A “Matter of Significant Interest” means an occurrence, issue, or ongoing matter involving the Hamilton Police Service (Service) or the Board that has generated,

or could reasonably be expected to generate, significant public concern, media attention, or scrutiny of policing or police governance in Hamilton — including, but not limited to a matter before the SIU, LECA, or the IoP.

3. When the Board May Consider a Statement or Release

The Board shall consider issuing a media statement or release where a matter meets the definition in Section 2. Examples of matters that may trigger consideration include, but are not limited to:

- a) LECA has accepted or initiated a complaint or systemic investigation into the Service, the Chief, or the Board;
- b) The IoP has commenced an inspection or investigation of the Service or the Board;
- c) A Service member is charged criminally in connection with the performance of their duties;
- d) Publicly circulated video, audio, or imagery of a police interaction has generated significant community concern or sustained media coverage;
- e) The matter raises questions of systemic racism, discrimination, or disproportionate impact on an equity-seeking community;
- f) A large-scale or multi-agency emergency affecting the community has occurred;
- g) Misinformation about the role of the Board, the Chief, or an oversight body is circulating in a way that could undermine public confidence; or
- h) A previously acknowledged SIU, LECA, or IoP matter has concluded.

Meeting one example is sufficient to warrant consideration; however, it does not automatically require a statement. In Consultation with the Executive Director, the Chair shall use judgment as to whether the level of public interest warrants a statement.

4. What the Board Can and Cannot Say About SIU, LECA, and IoP Matters

The SIU, LECA, and the IoP are independent bodies that conduct and report on their own investigations and inspections. At a high level, while a matter is active before any of these bodies:

- a) The Board can: confirm it is aware of the matter and which body is responsible for it; explain, in general terms, the role and independence of that body; direct the public to the Service's or the oversight body's own updates; and, once the matter has concluded and been publicly reported, comment on any resulting policy, training, or governance response.
- b) The Board cannot: disclose facts about the incident itself; comment on the likely outcome, or on the guilt, innocence, or fault of any individual; identify or describe the conduct of an officer, complainant, or witness beyond what has already been made public; or suggest the Board has taken a position, consistent with the Board's existing rule that no position exists until a formal vote.

Where there is doubt about whether something may be said, the Board chair shall default to the general acknowledgement described above and consult legal counsel before saying more.

5. Approval and Consultation

All statements and releases issued under this policy remain subject to the provisions of the Board's Media Relations Policy, including approval by the Chair (or Vice-Chair in the Chair's absence) and circulation to all Board members as soon as possible, and prior to anything being sent out to the media and/or public.

The Chair may consult with the Chief of Police before issuing a statement, and may consult with legal counsel where the matter involves an active SIU, LECA, or IoP matter or is otherwise contentious.