



Hamilton Police Service Board Social Media Policy P-039

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

The Board will use Instagram and Facebook accounts to promote transparency, strengthen public understanding of civilian police governance, and complement — without duplicating — the operational communications already carried out by the Service through its own social media channels.

The Board's social media accounts will speak to governance, oversight, and Board business — never to operational policing matters, ongoing investigations, or calls for service.

This Policy operates alongside, and does not replace, the Board's existing (or future) policies on Board Communications, Complaints, Records and Information Management, Accessibility, and Code of Conduct for Board Members (Ontario Regulation made under the CSPA). Where a conflict arises, those policies and the Board's obligations under the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (MFIPPA) and the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (AODA) take precedence.

Definitions

“Board's Accounts” means the official Instagram and Facebook accounts created and administered on behalf of the Hamilton Police Service Board.

“Service's Accounts” means the operational social media accounts maintained by the Hamilton Police Service under the authority of the Chief of Police.

“Governance content” means content relating to the Board's mandate, decisions, meetings, priorities, and civilian oversight function.

“Operational content” means content relating to the day-to-day delivery of policing, including investigations, enforcement, calls for service, and public safety alerts, which remains the sole responsibility of the Service.

Guiding Principles

The Board's use of Instagram and Facebook will be governed by the following principles:

1. Governance, not operations. The Board's social media accounts will focus exclusively on the Board's own governance role — its decisions, priorities, meetings, and members — and will not report on or comment upon operational, investigative, or enforcement matters, which remain the responsibility of the Service.
2. Complementary, not duplicative. The Board's social media accounts will not recreate, restate, or paraphrase content the Service has already published on its own accounts. Where the Board wishes to recognize or amplify the Service's work, it will do so by liking, sharing, or resharing the Service's original post rather than issuing a reworded version of it.
3. One-way, moderated communication. The Board's social media accounts will not accept public comments. This is a deliberate choice to keep the accounts focused on clear, factual, one-way public education and transparency, and to avoid the moderation burden and reputational risk associated with unmoderated

public commentary on police-related content, consistent with the experience of other Ontario police services and Boards.

4. Accuracy and approval. All content will be factual, professionally presented, and approved through the workflow before posting.
5. Political neutrality. The Board's social media accounts will not be used to promote, endorse, or feature any candidate for elected office, and will observe heightened restrictions during municipal, provincial, and federal election periods.
6. Accessibility and inclusion. Content will be created with accessibility in mind (alternative text, captioning) and will reflect the diversity of the Hamilton community.
7. Transparency and accountability. The Board will use its social media accounts to help the public understand what the Board does, how it makes decisions, and how members of the public can engage with or bring matters to the Board.

Content Framework

What the Board will post:

- Summaries of decisions made at Board meetings (e.g., policy approvals, budget decisions, directions issued to the Chief of Police under section 31/CSPA authority).
- Notices of upcoming regular, special, and public Board meetings, including how members of the public can attend, depute, or view the livestream/minutes.
- A monthly short-form video or profile feature of the Chair or a Board Member, introducing who they are, their background, and their perspective on civilian police governance (see Appendix A to this policy).
- Milestones in the Board's work: the annual Strategic Plan, the Board's Annual Report, results of the Chief of Police performance review process (at a level of generality appropriate for public disclosure), announcements of agreed upon bargaining agreements, etc.

- Recognition of provincial and national policing observances (e.g., Ontario Police Week, National Police and Peace Officers' Memorial Day, Truth and Reconciliation Day, Crime Prevention Month) framed from a governance/community perspective.
- Board recruitment and public engagement opportunities (e.g., citizen appointee vacancies, public consultations, the complaints process).
- Likes, shares, or reposts of Hamilton Police Service content that the Board wishes to amplify or publicly commend — shared as-is, without being rewritten, to avoid duplicating the Service's own communications work.

What the Board will not post:

- Operational updates, incident details, ongoing investigations, calls for service, wanted/missing persons notices, or any content that is the Service's operational responsibility.
- Original commentary on specific enforcement actions, charges, or individuals.
- Responses to individual complaints, allegations, or public criticism raised in comments or messages — these will be redirected to the Board's formal Complaints Policy or to the Service, as appropriate.
- Personal opinions of individual Board members on matters not yet decided by the Board.
- Content that could reasonably be seen as promoting or opposing a candidate for elected office (see Section 11).
- Paraphrased or reworded versions of the Service's own posts; where the Board wants to recognize the Service's work, it will like or share the original post.

Interaction Management

The Board's social media accounts will be configured so the public cannot post comments on Board content.

This approach reflects both the Board's intended use of the Accounts (education and transparency rather than public dialogue or complaint intake) and the documented experience of other Ontario police services, which have had to restrict or disable

comments due to hateful, abusive, or inappropriate public commentary. Disabling comments removes the need for continuous moderation while avoiding reputational risk to the Board, the Service, and members of the public.

Content Approval Workflow

All social media content will be approved by the Executive Director of the Board prior to being posted on the Board's social media accounts. Should the Executive Director determine certain content may warrant prior approval by the Board, she will reach out to the Chair or Vice Chair to obtain their consent.

Coordination with the Hamilton Police Service

The Board and the Service perform distinct roles, and their social media presences should read as complementary rather than duplicative. The Board Executive Director or appointed Board staff member, will maintain informal contact with the Service's communications unit to:

- a) Avoid scheduling conflicts or duplicated announcements;
- b) Identify Service posts that are appropriate for the Board to like or share (e.g., posts recognizing officer commendations, community events, or milestones); and
- c) Ensure any joint initiatives (such as a joint public safety campaign) are clearly attributed to the appropriate body.

The Board will not attempt to originate content on operational matters even when working jointly with the Service.

Accessibility

In keeping with the Board's obligations under the AODA and its general commitment to inclusive communication, content posted to the Board's social media accounts will, wherever practicable:

- a) include descriptive alternative text on images;
- b) include captions or on-screen text for video content (including the monthly Board Member video feature);
- c) avoid text embedded only within images; and

d) use plain, easily understood language.

Privacy

The Board's social media accounts will comply with the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (MFIPPA) and will not disclose personal information about identifiable individuals (including complainants, employees, or members of the public) without a clear legal basis or consent. Video or photo content featuring Board members will be produced with their knowledge and consent. Members of the public appearing incidentally in Board content (i.e., at a community event) will not be identified by name without consent.

The Board's Executive Director, or appointed staff member, will maintain a log of content approval signoffs.

Monitoring and Annual Reporting

The Executive Director will track basic performance measures and will provide the Board with an annual summary of the Accounts' activity and alignment with this Policy.

Appendix A to Board Policy P-039

2027 12 - Month Social Media Content Plan

This calendar sets out a monthly theme and sample content for the Board's social media accounts. It is a planning tool, not a rigid schedule: the Executive Director will adjust timing to reflect the Board's actual meeting dates, decisions, and emerging priorities, and will continue to like or share relevant Service content throughout the year in addition to the items below. The monthly "Meet the Board" video (featuring the Chair or a different Board Member each month) recurs every month and is listed once here rather than repeated in each row.

Month	Governance / Observance Focus	Suggested Content
January	New Board year; Chair/Vice-Chair elected at first meeting of the year	Welcome message introducing the Chair and Vice-Chair for the year and the Board's priorities.
February	Black History Month	Board reflection on equity and inclusion in police governance; share relevant Service community content.
March	International Women's Day (Mar 8) 'Accelerate Action' theme	Spotlight on women serving on the Board or in Board leadership roles.
April	National Volunteer Week (mid-April)	Recognition of community volunteers and Board committee members; share Service auxiliary/volunteer content.
May	Ontario Police Week (May 9-15), Victims and Survivors of Crime Week (May 0-15); Emergency Preparedness Week	Chair's video message recognizing Police Week; like/share Service Police Week content rather than reposting it.
June	National Indigenous History Month; Pride Month	Board statement on inclusive, representative governance; share relevant Service community-event content.
July	Mid-year Board update	Recap of the Board's Business Plan / Community Safety and Well-Being Plan progress at the year's midpoint.
August	Summer meeting schedule / back-to-school safety	Notice of the Board's fall meeting schedule; share (not restate)

Month	Governance / Observance Focus	Suggested Content
		Service back-to-school safety messaging.
September	National Police and Peace Officers' Memorial Day (Sept 26); National Day for Truth and Reconciliation (Sept 30)	Board acknowledgment of memorial observances and the Board's reconciliation commitments.
October	Crime Prevention Month	Governance-level messaging on the Board's role in crime-prevention priorities; share relevant Service prevention tips.
November	Remembrance Day; municipal budget season; Crime Prevention Week (Ontario) (Nov 1-7); National Community Safety and Crime Prevention Month	Board's remembrance message; public update on the Board's budget approval process and timelines.
December	Year in review; Nation Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women	Summary of the Board's key decisions and milestones for the year; thanks to community partners; look ahead to next year.

Recurring Elements (in addition to the themes above)

- “Meet the Board”: a short video or photo profile of the Chair or a Board Member, rotating monthly, introducing who they are and why civilian governance matters.
- A short recap of decisions and directions to the Chief of Police arising from that month's regular Board meeting, posted within a few business days of the meeting.
- Notice of the date, time, and (where applicable) livestream link for the Board's next regular or committee meeting.
- Selective likes/shares of Hamilton Police Service posts the Board wishes to recognize publicly.
- Board media releases and statements.