

HALDIMAND COUNTY POLICE SERVICES BOARD

Statement of Acknowledgement regarding the Board's Public Statements of September 23, 2020

The Haldimand County Police Services Board ("Board") has been informed that a number of complaints have been made to the Ontario Civilian Police Commission ("Commission") regarding communications posted on the Board's website on September 23, 2020.

We refer specifically to the following documents posted on the Board's website in relation to its regular meeting of September 23, 2020: "Police Services Board Position on Occupation of McKenzie Meadows" and "The Primary Concern and Focus of the Haldimand Police Services Board". For the purposes of this Statement of Acknowledgement, we consider them together and refer to them as the "communication."

The Board also received complaints from members of the public following the Board's meeting of September 23, 2020. In relation to the complaints received by the Commission, the Board understands that the majority of the complaints are similar in nature and in content.

The Board's Reflection Process

The Board has re-visited its September 23, 2020, communication. This Statement of Acknowledgement by the Board reflects the Board's recognition of the potential impact of its actions and identifies the steps it will take to address the underlying issues that informed its decision to release the communication of September 23, 2020.

The Board considered and passed a motion to approve this Statement of Acknowledgement at its meeting on January 27 2021.

The Board's Statement of Acknowledgement

After a careful review of its mandate under section 10(9) of the *Police Services Act*, the Board concedes that portions of the communication, specifically the language used and opinions expressed that suggest criminal behavior on the part of some protesters, falls outside of its statutory mandate and, therefore, should not have been part of the communication.

The determination of whether or not certain actions are criminal is the responsibility of the police, the Crown Attorneys, and ultimately the Courts. The Board acknowledges the reach of its communication beyond Haldimand County.

It acknowledges that the language used by a police services board must consistently reflect the standards expected of a body that provides oversight to policing in Ontario.

The Board wishes to assure the Commission that, by publishing this communication, it did not intend to inflame an already tense situation that did not directly relate to the mandate of the Board. The Board was and remains hopeful that a peaceful resolution can be negotiated.

It is important to note that the Board was motivated to raise questions about the Ontario Provincial Police's (OPP) implementation of its Policy¹, and of the Policy itself, based on numerous complaints it had received from some Caledonia residents who have been affected by the issues involving the McKenzie Meadows property and the road blockades.

The Board's Action Plan

The Board is committed to ensuring that its actions and communications reflect well on the whole community of Haldimand County as well as the OPP. To that end, the Board commits to take the following actions to address the concerns raised in the complaints and to ensure that its future actions and communications consider the whole community of Haldimand County and the requirements of its statutory mandate in providing oversight to the OPP.

1. Cultural competency training in Indigenous issues

There was a suggestion in the complaints provided to the Board that the communication shows racial bias by Board members, and that future members should undergo "racial sensitivity training."

Notwithstanding that the Board's focus in issuing the communication was on the policy and actions of the OPP in response to events related to the McKenzie Meadows property, and that the Board issued these statements following receipt of complaints from members of the public about the OPP the Board acknowledges that the communication has been interpreted by some as showing racial bias..

¹ A Framework for Police Preparedness for Indigenous Critical Incidents

Well before the communication and issues arising from it, the Board had discussed and supported the need for cultural competency training for its members. The Board has understood for some time that racial sensitivity or cultural competency training respecting Indigenous issues will be mandated in the new *Community Safety and Policing Act*, and that it will be provided by the Solicitor General, the Ministry with oversight for police services boards.

The Board had previously made enquiries of the Solicitor General as to when the training will be available. Because it is not yet available, the Board has decided that it will arrange for Indigenous cultural competency training within the next 45 days.

To this end, the Board has requested and received information regarding the Bimickaway training modules, developed and delivered by trained facilitators through the Indigenous Justice Division of the Ministry of the Attorney General and will initiate contact with Ministry staff to explore this and other professional development opportunities.

2. Implementation of a policy and review process for public communication by the Board

The Board commits to developing and providing to the Commission for comment and approval a communications policy to ensure that all public Board communications are in compliance with its statutory mandate within 30 days. The Board further commits to implementing such policy within 30 days of Commission approval.

3. Development of a process for creating and implementing the creation of an equity, diversity and inclusivity advisory group

The Board recognizes the benefit to the Board and its processes of having access to community-based equity, diversity and inclusivity (EDI) resources. The Board understands that this is a matter that is also contemplated by the new legislation. The Board intends to follow the lead of a number of other Boards and Police Services in the Province and proceed down this path.

Accordingly, the Board commits to passing a motion to approve terms of reference for an equity, diversity and inclusivity (EDI) advisory group within 45 days. Upon approval, the Board will publish on its website the terms of reference for the EDI advisory group, guidelines for recruiting members and a

recruitment and selection schedule. The Board commits to the establishment of an EDI advisory group by no later than December 31, 2021.

The Board looks forward to the enhancements to its processes that these action steps will introduce.

On behalf of the Haldimand County Police Services Board,

Brian Haggith

Chair