

Haldimand Police Services Board Response to Complaint about Comments and Posts of Prior Board

The current members of the Haldimand County Police Services Board are aware of complaints made about comments and posts of the Chair of the previous Board. This statement is made in furtherance of this Board's desire to resolve the outstanding complaints and to move forward in a positive and productive manner.

Although no members of the current Board were members of the prior Board, members recognize that prior and current Boards are the same corporate body, and that it falls to the current Board to address the complaints.

Accordingly, the Board wishes to address a number of matters that are related to the complaints.

First, the Board felt that it was appropriate to remove from the Board's website the transcript of the former Board Chair's remarks made to Haldimand County Council on February 8, 2022, as well as the written statement from the former Chair respecting the 2022 Ottawa Truck Protest and Blockades.

The Board removed these posts from its website as it is clear that they do not accord with either the letter or the spirit of the Board's Statement of Acknowledgement dated January 27, 2021 ("the Statement").

Second, in reviewing the Statement, each current Board member acknowledges and understands that the Statement accurately describes the duties and obligations of the Board and each of its members. Each Board member affirms its commitment to abide by the letter and the spirit of that Statement.

Third, the Board confirms that its members understand their obligations under both the Code of Conduct for Board members, being O.Reg 421/97 and the Ontario Human Rights Code ("the HRC") generally, and specifically in relation to making public statements. The HRC prohibits discrimination against any person on any of the twenty prohibited grounds set out in it, including race, colour, ancestry and ethnic origin. Section 9 of the Code of Conduct incorporates the HRC requirements.

Board members understand that both the Code of Conduct and the HRC must be considered in all public statements to ensure that any such statements do not cross the line into breaches of either. The best means of achieving this goal is to adhere to the Board's communications policy, and always consider in any communication its obligations under both the HRC and the Code of Conduct. The Board commits to doing so.

In the January 27, 2021 Statement, the Board committed to the establishment of an Equity, Diversity and Inclusivity ("EDI") advisory group on or before December 31, 2021. That was completed in conjunction with the EDI advisory group of the municipality.

The current Board members attended and participated in an EDI workshop on Tuesday May 30th, 2023 at the annual conference of the Ontario Association of Police Services Boards. The PSB current Chair attended a virtual education session on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, July 11, put on by Governance Solutions of Halton Hills. The session was attended by 100 public and private sector directors, board members and executives from across Canada. The Chair will refine his notes from the session and present them to the Haldimand Police Services Board at its September, 2023 meeting. At this session, there was discussion of a subsequent follow up session at a later date. If "Governance Solutions" does present a different session on the complex issue that is EDI, the Chair intends to attend that as well.

Further, the Board will schedule further training on EDI matters once the last two Board appointments have been made, as it is believed that the training is important, and that the entire Board should attend.

The current Board members understand their position as policing leaders in the community. They understand that public communication on policing issues must adhere to the standards on the Code of Conduct, the January 27, 2021 Statement and the HRC.

The examination of the complaints and development of this document addressing this Board's response to those complaints has been a valuable exercise for the Board. The process has crystallized its understanding of what types of comments fall outside the mandate of a Police Services Board.

In keeping with the important principle of transparency, Board Members have unanimously agreed to publish this statement on its website after it has been formally approved at the September meeting.