

REPORT TO THE POLICE SERVICES BOARD



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Community Engagement

Type of Report:
Public

Background

In December 2023, the Board adopted a policy titled “Engagement with the Community.” This policy aims to enhance the Board’s ability to represent the public interest effectively as the civilian governance and oversight body for the Durham Regional Police Service (DRPS). It supports the Board in understanding the perspectives, positions, and experiences of citizens and partner agencies regarding policing and community safety. By increasing awareness of the Board’s role, authority, and actions, and by clearly communicating its purpose and priorities, the Board aims to strengthen public trust and confidence in the Police Service.

Discussion

The policy commits the Board to make presentations to Regional Council, local municipal Councils, local MPPs and meet with a minimum of six community groups annually representing the diversity of the Region to enhance community engagement. The Board recognized the need for a plan to identify and engage with community groups, and in June, Board members consulted the DRPS Diversity Advisory Committee (DAC) for advice on prioritizing groups for outreach in 2024. At that meeting, members of DAC expressed their support for ongoing exchanges with representatives of the Board, and the suggestion was made for them to make an appearance once a year to the Board.

DAC feedback highlighted the following points:

- The importance of transparency, in particular in relation to interactions between the police and the community. An example cited was the potential publication of data on the location of traffic stops. The Service should openly communicate data to enhance trust.
- The increased reliance of youth on social media for information.
- The importance of two-way communication between the community and the Board/Service.
- Engagement with the community should be predictable, consistent and regular.
- The Service should prioritize gathering data on its own internal diversity and continue to enhance its efforts to recruit new members that are representative of the community.
- The importance of reaching out to newcomers and the organizations that support them.

In continuing the Board's community engagement efforts, Board Member Karen Fisher presented to the DRPS Youth Advisory Committee on October 3, 2024, and questions were posed in the following areas:

- Content of Board member training
- Criteria and process for becoming a member of the Board
- Youth involvement in auto theft and firearms offences and prevention efforts
- Definitions of adequate and effective policing
- The assessment of trust and confidence in the police
- Assistance to youth victims

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Board continue its community engagement by reaching out to the following groups. These groups were identified based on the discussion with DAC and input from the Equity and Inclusion Unit. This outreach aims to enhance the Board's visibility, gain a better understanding of community safety issues in Durham, and build trust in the DRPS.

- PFLAG Durham Region
- Community Development Council Durham
- Durham Children's Aid Society
- Dnaagdawenmag Binnoojiyag Child & Family Services
- Congress of Black Women of Canada (Whitby/Oshawa Chapters)

The Diversity Advisory Committee has been informed of the Board's intentions and given the opportunity to provide comments. A member of DAC will be invited to attend the Board's presentations to these groups. A different set of groups would be put forward next year.

It is further recommended that the Board invite DAC to make a presentation to the Board at an upcoming meeting.



Bill Clancy
Executive Director