

APPENDIX 8: BOARD COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

1. The Board recognizes the value in having consistent messaging to ensure a cohesive public profile. To this end, the Chair of the Board is the official spokesperson for the Board. The Chair or Board may appoint a Board Member as a spokesperson for specific matters.
2. Media inquiries made to the Board Office will be directed to the Chair, appointed Board spokesperson, or answered by the Executive Director as appropriate.
3. The Board spokesperson shall consult with the Board prior to responding to media requests for interviews on significant or sensitive matters and, as appropriate, consult with the Chief Constable.
4. When responding to media enquires related to public complaints against the police or legal matters, the Board spokesperson shall be cognizant of the confidentiality and process provisions, including appeals, under the *Police Act* and the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, and that the Chief Constable is the Discipline Authority for sworn members under the rank of Deputy Chief Constable. The Board may wish to seek legal advice in determining appropriate public comment for its spokesperson.
5. A Board spokesperson shall be careful to only speak on matters within the jurisdiction and mandate of the Board, and not interfere with the legislated authority of the Chief Constable.
6. Most news items regarding the Vancouver Police Department are operational in nature and properly the domain of the Chief Constable and his staff. However where operational matters may be likely to spark significant public interest or debate, the Chief Constable will inform Board members before a public statement is made. This may be done by e-mail or telephone, or via the Board Office. The purpose of informing the Board is as a courtesy, to ensure that Board members are aware of major occurrences.
7. On some occasions the matter may be of such significance or seriousness that consultation and discussion with the Board before information is released is justified and necessary. These occasions include, but are not limited to:
 - Major financial expenditures that are outside the approved operating or capital budget
 - Departures from the Police Act or Board policy
 - The VPD's public position being at odds with municipal, provincial or federal government, the Police Complaint Commissioner, or a court decision
 - Release of information relating to public complaints that may cause the public or media to draw wider inferences about the VPD's policies, objectivity or integrity

The purpose of consultation with the Board is to determine whether public release is appropriate, and, if so, to provide the Chief Constable with advice and counsel on the format and tone of public releases, and to provide the Board with an early insight into the Chief Constable's strategy and follow-up plans.

8. As a general principle the Board Chair or delegate shall speak on behalf of the Vancouver Police Board, ensuring that all statements reflect the current strategy, plans and policies approved by the Board. The Chief Constable or delegate shall speak on behalf of the Vancouver Police Department, ensuring that all statements reflect the current strategy, plans and policies approved by the Board. The Chair and the Chief Constable shall consult, as needed, to ensure the proper coordination, timing, and dissemination of information to meet particular circumstances.
9. Board media releases and information to media outlets shall be published on the Board's website.
10. The Board Office shall respond to media requests for information released at its public meetings and Minutes of the public meetings shall be made available on the Board website. The media shall be referred to the Department's Media Liaison Unit for response on issues within the authority of the Chief Constable.
11. To the extent reasonably possible the Board and the Police Department shall be sensitive to the impact of public statements on stakeholders such as the City, the Police Complaints Commissioner, the Solicitor General, the RCMP and other police departments and shall make reasonable attempts to notify and collaborate with such stakeholders prior to releasing of information.
12. The Board shall, at least annually, schedule an informal session or workshop with City Council so that City Council, the Police Board, and the Police Department have an opportunity to understand each other's current priorities and issues.