

**MEMORANDUM TO:** All Chiefs of Police and  
Commissioner Thomas Carrique  
Chairs, Police Services Boards

**FROM:** Richard Stubbings  
Assistant Deputy Minister  
Public Safety Division and Public Safety Training Division

**SUBJECT:** **Guidance to Police Services Boards Regarding Meetings**

<b>DATE OF ISSUE:</b>	<b>March 23, 2020</b>
<b>CLASSIFICATION:</b>	<b>General Information</b>
<b>RETENTION:</b>	<b>Indefinite</b>
<b>INDEX NO.:</b>	<b>20-0024</b>
<b>PRIORITY:</b>	<b>High</b>

I am writing further to several inquiries we have received in relation to challenges with hosting police services board meetings due to the impact of COVID-19 on in-person activities.

The *Police Services Act* (PSA) outlines the duties of police services boards with respect to board meetings, while requiring that each board establish its own rules and procedures in performing its duties under the Act. While the Act requires that boards meet at least four times a year, it is quite common across the province for boards to meet more frequently, often on a monthly basis in order to fulfill their duties.

While this is ultimately a local decision, the ministry is taking this opportunity to provide clarification that may support boards in continuing to meet via alternative methods in absence of the ability to meet in-person. Notably, the PSA does not require that police services board meetings be held in-person. While police services board meetings are to be open to the public, there is flexibility for public meetings to be held virtually if a board deems this to be appropriate and if the virtual meeting can be made open to the public. With respect to board meetings conducted virtually, police services boards should take all feasible measures to facilitate public and media participation in open meetings.

Of note, there are specific circumstances that allow for issues to be discussed in-camera and these circumstances remain in-force during the emergency. A board may exclude the public from all or part of a meeting if it is of the opinion that:

- a) matters involving public security may be disclosed and, having regard to the circumstances, the desirability of avoiding their disclosure in the public interest outweighs the desirability of adhering to the principle that proceedings be open to the public; or
- b) intimate financial or personal matters or other matters may be disclosed of such a nature, having regard to the circumstances, that the desirability of avoiding their disclosure in the interest of any person affected or in the public interest outweighs the desirability of adhering to the principle that proceedings be open to the public.

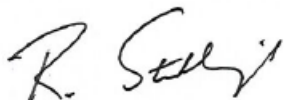
Further, a board may choose to delegate any authority conferred on it within the PSA to two or more of its members (or one member in the case of collective bargaining). Boards are encouraged to consider reviewing their rules and procedures, taking into account the ability to delegate, should it be facing challenges in arranging for all members to participate in decision-making at this time.

As a friendly reminder, should police services boards have questions regarding their obligations with respect to meetings, or any of their duties under the Act, during this time, I would encourage you to work with your Police Services Advisor. Should you require legal advice, please ensure to reach out to your legal counsel.

For any questions, you may wish to reach out to your Police Services Advisor or you may contact Jeeti Sahota, A/Manager of the Operations Unit at [jeeti.sahota@ontario.ca](mailto:jeeti.sahota@ontario.ca).

I hope this information is helpful.

Sincerely,



Richard Stubbings  
Assistant Deputy Minister  
Public Safety Division and Public Safety Training Division